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by
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.



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CHAPTER 1.

Arthur Augustus Runs for It.

"LEVISON!" said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Yes, Levison. That's the name."

"I've heard it before."

Tom Merry, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, pursed up his lips thoughtfully. He was certain he had heard that name before, but where he could not, for the moment, recollect.

Jack Blake thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets reflectively.

"I believe I know the name," he said, with a nod. "It's not a common one, either, but I don't know where I heard it. There never was a chap at St. Jim's of that name, that I know of."

"Nevah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, polishing his eyeglass. "There certainly nevah was, deah boy. I should have heard of it."

Tom Merry laughed.

"He might have been here before your time, Gussy, you know."

"Bai Jove, you know, I nevah thought of that."

And D'Arcy, too, became thoughtful, as if it had suddenly dawned upon him that the ancient foundation of St. Jim's had really had a little history prior to his arrival there.

"Well, I know the name, and we shall soon see if we know the chap," said Tom Merry. "You say he's coming to St. Jim's to-day?"

"Yes; so I heard from Kildare. He's coming into the Fourth Form," said Blake. "I only hope they don't put him into our study, that's all."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"When will he be here?"

"Three o'clock train. I think I'll stroll down and meet the chap at the station," Blake remarked. "I'm curious to see him, and see if I know him. The name's as familiar as

THE NEW BOY'S SECRET.

A Splendid Long, Complete Tale of
Tom Merry & Co.

— BY —

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

anything. And I don't feel much inclined to settle down to anything this afternoon."

"Same here," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! I am feelin' quite wotten, you know."

And then, as the dinner-bell rang, the three juniors went into the dining-room, but with appetites less keen than usual.

A shadow still hung over the old school of St. Jim's.

The boys could not forget the vault where Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had been laid to his rest.

Lumley-Lumley had been called the Outsider of St. Jim's. He had earned, and had obtained, the dislike of all the best fellows in the school, and even those least particular in their ways had thought Lumley-Lumley "the limit."

But all that was forgotten now.

Death wiped out all stains.

The fellows only felt regret for the boy who was gone, and a painful shock from the terrible and unexpected happening in their midst.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon, but it was pretty certain that the juniors of St. Jim's would not enjoy it much.

Even the football practice had been dropped by tacit consent.

The arrival of the new boy, Levison, was a welcome interruption to the gloomy train of thought in every mind at St. Jim's, and Jack Blake and his chums, Herries and Digby and D'Arcy, were glad of an excuse for a stroll down to the village.

"May as well go," Digby said, as they came out after dinner. "Nothing to do at home, that's certain. Can't play footer."

"Wathah not!"

"Good!" said Herries. "I'll take Towser for a run."

"Weally, Hewwies—" began Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Herries fastened a freezing look upon the swell of St. Jim's.

A LONG, COMPLETE TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

No. 142 (New Series).

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"Got any objection to Towser, ass?" he inquired.
"Yaas, wathah! The bwute has no respect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs, as you know vewy well, and—"

"Rats!"
"If you say wats to me, Hewwies—"
"Rats!"

Arthur Augustus pushed back his cuffs. Then he remembered, and let them slip over his wrists again.

"Undah the cires., I cannot administah a feahful thwashin', Hewwies."

"Lucky for you, ain't it?" said Herries.

"Weally, you know—"

But Herries was already striding off to the kennels for Towser. Herries felt the general despondency as much as anybody else, but his bulldog was a comfort. Monty Lowther had declared that if Herries were wrecked on a desert island he would be perfectly happy so long as he had Towser with him.

Gr-r-r-r!

That agreeable sound announced the arrival of Towser. D'Arcy kept a wary eye upon the bulldog as they walked out of the gates. Towser had accounted for a great many garments belonging to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in his time. Towser was really a greedy dog. Besides the one free bite the law had allowed him, he allowed himself a great many more; and that made Towser unpopular, with everyone excepting Herries. Herries wanted to know what Providence had given Towser a splendid set of teeth for, if it wasn't to bite with.

Gr-r-r!

"Keep that wotten beast still, Hewwies."

Herries made no reply. He walked straight on, without looking at D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's repeated his remark.

"Will you keep that wotten beast quiet, Hewwies?"

No reply.

"Hewwies, keep that bwute quiet, will you?"

Silence from Herries.

D'Arcy jerked his chum by the sleeve.

"Hewwies, old man, are you deaf?"

"Hallo!" said Herries. "Were you talking?"

D'Arcy almost exploded.

"I was shoutin' at you, you ass!" he exclaimed wrathfully.

"I weally believe my voice could have been heard as fah as the waylway station in Wylcombe."

"What were you shouting about?"

"That howlid Towshah."

"Rats! You were talking about a rotten beast," said Herries. "Towser is a splendid, handsome, well-bred animal, so it couldn't possibly apply to him."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, you ass!" D'Arcy shook Herries violently by the arm, to engage his attention.

There was a fierce growl from Towser.

Gr-r-r-r!

"Look out!" yelled Blake.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumped back.

Towser evidently imagined that the swell of St. Jim's was attacking his master, and that was a thing Towser wouldn't have thought of allowing.

He came for D'Arcy with his jaws open.

"Bai Jove! Keep him off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy dodged round Blake, and round Digby, and then round Herries. Towser followed him with a deadly look of determination.

"Shoo!" gasped D'Arcy. "Shoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep him off, Hewwies."

"You shouldn't excite him," said Herries. "He thought you were going for me. He went for a tramp once who pitched into me, and you should have seen that tramp afterwards. Don't look at him, and he may let you alone."

"You—you uttah ass!"

Arthur Augustus was not likely to look away from the bulldog, when Towser was following him with a deadly gleam in his eyes. The swell of St. Jim's was not frightened himself. He would have faced a battery of cannon, as far as that went, without a pause, unless it was to adjust his eyeglasses. But he was thinking of his beautifully-creased trousers. It was one thing to face danger; it was quite another to have one's garments torn.

"Keep him off, Hewwies, you wascally boundah!"

"Well, don't look at him."

"Ass! Oh! Bai Jove!"

Towser, probably encouraged by D'Arcy's retreating, made a sudden rush.

The swell of St. Jim's skipped across the road.

"Yow! Stop him!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gr-r-r-r!

Arthur Augustus fairly bolted.

Down the road he went, with his eyeglass fluttering at the end of its cord, and one hand holding on his silk hat, sprinting at a spanking speed, with Towser close behind.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

Herries wiped his eyes.

"Towser won't bite him," he said. "He knows D'Arcy. Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared as the swell of St. Jim's and the bulldog disappeared in the direction of the village. They quickened their pace, and hurried on to overtake D'Arcy as soon as they could.

CHAPTER 2.

Not Nice!

"A, ha, ha!"

"There he is!"

The chums of the Fourth had come in sight of the railway-station in Rylecombe High Street. Outside the station was a heap of packing-cases, and on the topmost packing-case was seated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with Towser watching patiently below.

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and looked at the chums appealingly.

"Dwive that howlid beast away!" he said imploringly. "I had a feahfully nawwow escape with my twousahs as I got up heah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause whatevah for wibald laughtah," said Arthur Augustus. "Hewwies, keep that fwightful beast of yours undah contwol."

Herries slipped a cord into Towser's collar, and held it.

"It's all right now," he grinned. "You can come down."

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy descended gingerly from his perch. Towser eyed him, and growled, but made no further movement. The loungers in the station entrance were grinning. Arthur Augustus gave them a haughty stare as he entered the station. He could see nothing whatever in the incident to grin at.

"Well, we're early," said Blake, looking at the station clock. "This is what comes of Gussy running races with bulldogs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to allow you to descwibe the mattah in such a wiculous way, Blake," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I wegard you as an ass."

"Thanks! Well, we're early."

"Pewwaps we may as well have a stwoll wound the town, then," said D'Arcy. "I'll show you a place on the wivah where we can get some skatin' in the wintah."

"H'm!"

"And we can call in at Mothah Murphy's and get some gingah-beer."

"H'm! As we're only a minute and a half early, we may as well go on the platform," said Blake blandly.

"Look here, Blake, if that is your ideah of a joke, pwotendin' we are early—"

"Well, we are, a minute and a half. Come on!"

"I wegard you—"

"This way!"

"I certainly considah—"

"Follow your leader."

The juniors went on the platform. They were well known to the old porter, and had the freedom of the station.

The train was already in view in the distance. The juniors waited for it to come in, standing by the automatic machine on the platform. Digby improved the shining hour, so to speak, by inserting pennies and extracting butterscotch.

The train rattled into the station.

"Now look out for the chap," said Blake. "We shall know whether we know him now. I'm sure I know the name."

"Bai Jove, so do I, you know!"

"Here he is!" said Digby.

From one of the carriages alighted a lad of about their own age, with a slightly narrow face, and eyes of great keenness. He did not look athletic, but he looked wiry, and his chin was very determined. The expression of his face was not wholly pleasant. It seemed as if a sneer was for ever lurking about his lips, and a mocking light always ready to gleam in his eyes.

D'Arcy gave a start as he saw him.

"I've seen that chap before!" he exclaimed.

"By George, and I believe I have!" exclaimed Blake.

"Where, deah boy?"

Blake rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I can't remember."

"Yaas, it's exactly the same with me."

"Well, let's speak to him," said Digby. "He must be the chap; there's no other kid among the passengers."

"Oh, he's the kid, right enough!"

The chums of Study No. 6 walked across to the new-comer. He was glancing up and down the platform, and calling to a porter about his box. The box was dumped out upon the platform with rather a bump. It was a heavy one.

"You careless bounders!" said the boy, with an angry stare at the guard and the porter, who had dumped down the box between them. "Do you want to smash my things?"

The two men stared at him. They had been a little careless, perhaps, but a schoolboy's trunk can generally stand a little rough handling. And, anyway, that was not the way for a boy to speak to grown men. The guard stepped into the train again without replying, and the old porter of Rylcombe stood by the box and stared at the new-comer across it, as the train moved out of the station.

The new-comer, in going towards his box, had turned his back upon the juniors of St. Jim's. He had not noticed them yet.

"Which did you speak to me, my lad?" said old Peter majestically.

The ancient porter of Rylcombe, who was popularly believed to have seen the first railway train that ever was run in England, was a character in the village, and was generally treated with a semi-comic respect by the St. Jim's boys.

"Yes, I spoke to you," said the new-comer, "and that other blackguard."

"Other w-w-what?"

"Blackguard," said the new-comer coolly, and showing his teeth in a grin. "Handle that box a bit more carefully, please. You jolly well won't get a tip from me in any case."

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "This is a wathah nice chap for St. Jim's—I don't think!"

"What-ho!" said Blake.

The old porter stared at the boy.

"I ain't never been spoken to like this by a St. Jim's boy afore," he said. "Which I suppose you're for the school?"

"I should think you could see the address on my box, old boy. Haven't you got any eyes in that wooden, stupid head of yours?"

Old Peter gasped.

"You may be going to St. Jim's," he said, "but if I was a little younger I'd take my strap and larrup you for talking like that, young sir."

And the old man stomped away indignantly.

"Here, I say, you haven't got the box," called out the new junior. "Carry it out to the cab, if you have such a thing as a cab in this deadly hole of a place!"

The porter did not turn his head.

"Porter! Porter!"

Old Peter stamped on in high dudgeon.

"You insolent old blackguard!" shouted the new boy. "Come back and take my box, or I'll report you to the company!"

"Which you can report, and welcome," said old Peter.

"I don't touch your box, young sir; not if I know it."

And the old man stomped off.

The new junior uttered an angry exclamation,

"The old fool! What am I to do?"

"I should recommend a little more politeness to an old fellow, a man old enough to be your grandfather," exclaimed Jack Blake indignantly.

The new junior turned round, and stared at him coolly.

"Would you?" he said. "And who may you happen to be?"

"I'm Blake, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's," exclaimed Blake, turning very red in the face.

"Well, Blake of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, will you oblige me by keeping your advice till I ask for it?" suggested the new boy.

Jack Blake breathed hard.

"Bai Jove," said D'Arcy—"bai Jove! I wathah think that a feahful thwashin' is what this wothah needs."

"Order!" said Blake. "Can't row with a new boy on the first day. Look here, Levison—Your name's Levison, I believe?"

"Yes—Ernest Levison."

"Well, look here, we came to the station to meet you."

"What for?"

"To meet you, I say."

"Yes; but what do you want to meet me for?" asked Levison suspiciously. "You don't know me, and I don't know you. What's the little game?"

"Bai Jove!"

Jack Blake controlled his temper with difficulty.

"There's no little game on," he said. "We had nothing to do this afternoon, and we came to meet you because we

thought a little attention like that would be only decent to a new boy. We thought we were going to meet a decent chap, you see. Sorry for the mistake."

"Bai Jove, had him there!" said D'Arcy.

To the surprise of the juniors, the new boy only grinned. He had a peculiar sense of humour himself, and he seemed to be able to appreciate a dig, even if it was at his own expense.

"All serene," he said, "only don't pile it on, you know. I'm a new boy at this school; but I've been to a public school before, and I know all the ropes. You can't pull the wool over my eyes."

"I don't know what you are driving at," said Blake impatiently.

Levison laughed.

"Oh, come, you may as well own up!" he exclaimed. "You came here to work off some jape on a new kid, and you've dropped the idea because you see I'm fly."

"Bai Jove!"

"Nothing of the sort."

"You'll allow me to keep my own opinion about that," said Levison drily.

Blake flushed crimson.

"Do you mean that you doubt my word, you utter cad?" he exclaimed.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"We needn't argue about it," he said. "No need to have a row that I can see. So long as you don't try any japes, all serene. If you do try any, you'll find that I can keep my end up."

"Of all the uttah wottahs—"

"What am I to do about this box?" said Levison, interrupting Arthur Augustus D'Arcy without the slightest ceremony. "If you belong to St. Jim's, you fellows, I suppose you can tell me how to get it to the school?"

"You can have it put in the hack, or leave it here to be sent on."

"I want to take it with me. There are some things in it that might be broken," said Levison. "These porters are careless asses. Is there some station-master here I can complain to about that impertinent old fool?"

"Oh, shut up! We'll help you get the box out."

"All serene! Hang it!" exclaimed Levison suddenly.

"Keep that confounded dog away! Hold him; he's mad!" The cool, half-insolent carelessness of Ernest Levison's manner had suddenly vanished. He made a spring to place the box between himself and Towser.

The dog, unnoticed for the moment, had been looking at the new-comer with a steady, fixed stare, and a strange thrill had run through him—a thrill that meant he was about

BOYS WHO DO NOT READ "THE GEM."



The Boy Who Cannot Find Playmates.

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A School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

**NEXT
THURSDAY:**

to spring. The juniors did not notice it, but Levison's keen grey, half-greenish eyes seemed to let nothing escape them.

"Hold that dog!" he shouted. Herries grasped at Towser's collar just in time. The bulldog was launching himself forward at the new boy.

"Hold him, you fool!" The startled Herries grasped the collar hard, but Towser fairly dragged him towards the new boy in his effort to get at Levison.

Blake promptly grasped the collar, too, and between them the bulldog was dragged back, growling savagely, and his eyes fairly flaming at Levison.

"The brute's mad!" shouted Levison. "He ought to be shot!"

Herries snorted. He could not understand what was the matter with his dog, but he wasn't inclined to hear a word against Towser.

"He's all right now," he exclaimed. "I suppose you were looking at him?"

"What?" "Towser doesn't like being looked at."

"The infernal beast! Take him away! A chap's not safe near him."

"Bai Jove, that's quite wight, Hewwies, old man! That dog certainly has no respect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs."

Herries looked grimly at the new boy.

"Towser doesn't like you," he said. "He wasn't funning just then, he was in earnest. You'd have been hurt if he'd got hold of you. Do you want my opinion of you, Ernest Levison? You're a cad—a rotter! A fellow that a dog takes a dislike to is no good, especially when it's Towser. I don't want to have anything to say to you."

And Herries dragged Towser away, the bulldog still turning his head towards Levison and growling and showing his teeth.

CHAPTER 3.

One Who Knew Lumley.

"BAI JOVE!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Blake and Digby stared at one another. The incident had taken them wholly by surprise, and they did not understand it. Towser, though he had a rather terrifying appearance and playful little ways that strangers sometimes took too seriously, was really a quiet and affectionate dog, and would not have hurt anybody. The sudden and unaccountable dislike he had taken to the new boy was startling. There came into Blake's mind the old proverb, that a fellow who is not liked by dogs or children is no good. The juniors had already had a sample of Levison's nature—cold, carping, suspicious, ill-natured. Was it possible that Towser, with the blind instinct of an animal, had read his nature so accurately, and read it as worse than the juniors yet imagined it to be?

It was an uncomfortable thought, and Blake tried to shake it off.

"Sorry, Levison!" he exclaimed. "You mustn't mind Herries, you know. He's simply wrapped up in that blessed dog. Towser's been a bit excited this afternoon, and I suppose he hasn't got over it, as a matter of fact."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway don't think of what Hewwies said."

Levison's lip curled.

"I don't care what Herries says or Herries thinks, if Herries is that chap's name," he said. "He can go and eat coke! If that brute tries to bite me again, I'll shoot it or poison it! Look here, are you going to help me with this box?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors carried the box to the exit from the platform. There Levison gave up his ticket, and old Peter received it with a heavy frown. Then he took the box from the juniors, shouldering it himself.

"I wouldn't touch it for that young person, Master Blake," he said, "but I'll carry it for you young gent's."

"Thank you vewy much, Petah, deah boy," said D'Arcy.

"Well, be careful with it, you old donkey!" exclaimed Levison. "There are breakable things in that box."

"Look here," said Blake roughly, "if you can't speak to Peter civilly, you'd better keep your mouth shut, Levison! We don't like that sort of thing."

Levison gave his shoulders a shrug—a shrug that the juniors had already noticed, and which had a peculiarly exasperating effect upon them.

But the new junior did not reply in words, and the matter dropped; but he did not address any further incivility to the old porter. Indeed, when the box was deposited on the roof of the hack, he tossed the old man a sixpence.

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Old Peter took the sixpence and looked at it, and then deliberately threw it out into the middle of the road.

Levison gave another shrug.

"His loss, not mine," he remarked.

He stepped into the hack.

"You fellows coming?" he said. "Look here, if it's true about your coming to meet me, I'm much obliged. Come in."

The juniors exchanged glances, and then stepped in. Jack Blake looked round for Herries, but Herries was already gone. He was evidently keeping to what he had said about having nothing to do with the new boy.

The hack rolled off towards St. Jim's.

"Look here!" exclaimed Blake suddenly. "Haven't we met before, Levison?"

Levison stared at him.

"Not that I know of," he said.

"I've heard the name Levison before."

"Quite possible. It's not a common name, but it's not uncommon, either. There was a Captain Levison killed in the war; you may have seen it in the papers."

"Yaas, that's poss."

"Oh, you know the name, too, do you?" said Levison.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"So do other fellows at St. Jim's," said Digby. "Tom Merry said he was certain he'd met somebody of that name."

"Who's Tom Merry?" asked Levison, without moving a muscle.

"A chap in the Shell at St. Jim's."

"Never heard of him."

"But the curious thing is, that I think I know your face, as well as your name," said Blake, wrinkling his brows in deep thought. "Are you sure I haven't met you before somewhere?"

"I don't remember it if you have. I never knew anybody named Blake, to my knowledge," said Levison carelessly.

"It's very odd."

"Oh, there are chance resemblances, you know," said the new boy, in a perfectly cool and unconcerned manner, as if the subject bored him somewhat. "I don't see that it matters, either way. Will you chaps tell me something about St. Jim's? I've heard that a son of Lascelles Lumley-Lumley, the millionaire, is there."

The juniors' faces clouded.

"He was there," said Blake shortly.

Levison looked at him.

"Has he left, then?"

"He's dead!"

"Dead!"

"Yes," said Blake quietly. "Did you know him?"

"Yes," said Levison, whose face showed surprise, but no other emotion whatever. "I knew him just slightly. My uncle in London had some business dealings with his father, and I happened to meet him at the office. We spent an hour or two together looking round London while the old fogies were talking business in old Lumley's office. I expected to meet him here, and renew the acquaintance. And he's dead!"

"Yes."

"How long?"

"He died on Monday evening."

"The funeral—"

"There hasn't been a funeral," said Blake. "His father is expected back to England—he's been in South America—every day, and until his arrival, the coffin has been left in the vault under the St. Jim's chapel. Mr. Lumley-Lumley may be at the school to-morrow. Then the funeral will take place."

"Poor chap!" said Levison. "It's rotten! I expected—"

He broke off, and did not speak again. But Blake, scanning the hard, unmoved face, could see that the new-comer had entertained no sentiments of friendship towards Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. Without being uncharitable, Blake felt that Levison had hoped to chum up with the millionaire's son, simply because he was a millionaire's son, and that his only feeling on hearing of Lumley-Lumley's untimely fate, was one of personal disappointment.

CHAPTER 4.

Tom Merry Agrees with Towser.

TOM MERRY was standing on the steps of the School House, chatting with Manners and Lowther, when the hack from the station came up the drive. The Terrible Three were unusually subdued in their manner. The death of Lumley-Lumley had cast a shadow on the school which was not likely to lift soon. Try as they would, the boys could not forget that the Outsider of St. Jim's lay in the vault under the chapel. No one had liked the Outsider, but that made no difference now. They thought of



The new boy's hand went quickly up to the rack, and he took down a postcard. It was addressed to Tom Merry, in a boyish hand, and the postmark on it was Friar Dale (See page 11.)

him with sad faces, and spoke of him in whispers. Fellows were still going about on tiptoe, and the shouts that usually rang on the playing-fields on a half-holiday were silent now.

The Terrible Three were killing time. As a rule, they had plenty to do; but they were idle now. They did not feel that it would be the thing to play footer. Lumley had not been a friend of theirs, but he was dead. And Tom Merry could not forget that last sad scene in the sick-room, when the Outsider had asked him to remain with him till the end, and he had done so.

The arrival of the hack was a break in the monotony of the afternoon. Tom Merry remembered the new boy, whose name was familiar to him, though he could not remember where he had heard it before. He wondered whether he would know the new boy's face. The hack came plodding slowly up the drive, and at the same time Herries came round from the direction of the kennels. Herries had just taken Towser back to his quarters. He came up the steps of the School House, pausing a moment to look at the hack with an expressive sniff.

Tom Merry caught his look.

"Hallo," he exclaimed, "you know the new fellow, Herries?"

Herries shook his head.

"No, I don't, and I don't want to!" he exclaimed.

"You've seen him?"

"Yes; we met him at the station. He's a rotter."

"How on earth do you know?" demanded Monty Lowther.

"He wasn't labelled as one, I suppose?"

"Towser doesn't like him."

"Towser?"

"Yes. Towser wanted to go for him."

"The beast!"

"Yes, he's a beast—that's just it!"

"I was speaking of Towser," said Lowther blandly.

"Oh, don't be a fathead!" said Herries crossly. "I believe in a dog's instinct. When you see a dog take a dislike to a chap, you know that that chap isn't fond of animals. A chap who isn't fond of animals is no good. You mark my words, that chap Levison will turn out to be a rotter. I'm going to have nothing to do with him. If he's put into No. 6, I shall change into another study."

And Herries sniffed again, and went into the house. The Terrible Three grinned at one another.

"Good old Towser!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Fancy being tried and found guilty by Judge Towser!"

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**NEXT
THURSDAY:**

**A School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

"There's something in it, though," said Manners. "Dogs know the kind of fellow they can trust, I believe."

"We won't condemn the new chap on Towser's evidence alone, though," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "Give him a chance."

"Oh, rather!"

The hack stopped, and the door opened. Blake and Digby and D'Arcy stepped out, followed by Ernest Levison. Tom Merry looked at him, and wrinkled his brows in an effort at remembrance.

"You've seen him before?" asked Manners.

"His face seems familiar."

"Same to me."

"I've seen him, or somebody like him, somewhere," said Tom Merry. "It certainly wasn't anyone I knew well, though—I suppose I just met him somewhere—perhaps at some place where we played out."

"Very likely."

Levison was talking to old William, the driver. He was speaking in the same tone he had used to the porter at the railway-station. Whether he intended it or not, there was always a sarcastic tone in Levison's voice, and a half-sneer upon his face.

"How much?" he said.

"Four shillings," said William.

Levison laughed.

"If you think I'm going to pay a charge like that, you've got it wrong," he remarked. "I'll give you two."

"Four shillings, young master."

"Stuff!"

"Weally, Levison—" began Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Levison turned to the swell of St. Jim's, and looked him directly in the face.

"I believe this is my business?" he remarked, in a sort of interrogative way.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then would you mind leaving me to manage it my own way?" asked Levison, with a bland smile.

"Bai Jove!"

"Now, then, driver, how much do you want? You can't spoof me, you know."

"The fare is two-and-six," said William stolidly, "and sixpence each for the hextra passengers. That's charging nothing hextry for the box, but I am willing to leave that to you, sir, if you are a gentleman, sir."

Levison laughed again.

"If I cannot be a gentleman without being swindled, old man, I think I won't set up any pretensions in that direction," he remarked. "I will give you two shillings for your fare and twopence for the box."

"Which the hextra passengers—"

"Nothing for them. You should have told me."

"But—"

"That's all right," said Blake, in disgust. "We'll pay our own tanner each. William is entitled to charge it."

"Stuff!" said Levison. "Don't pay! Two shillings is enough."

"I insist upon payin'," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in his most stately manner. "Here is the cash, William."

And he passed eighteenpence up to the driver.

"Which you are a gentleman, Master D'Arcy," said old William, taking the money, and unbuttoning a pocket and giving Levison a glance which inferred that he considered the new boy very far from being a gentleman, too. But Levison did not mind.

"I want two-and-six from you now, sir," said William.

Levison took out a two-shilling piece, and added twopence to it.

"There's your fare," he said. "You can take it or leave it. I sha'n't give you a tip, for your impertinence. Isn't there a school porter or something here to take down my box? There ought to be."

William looked at the two shilling-piece and two pennies in the palm of his horny hand. Then he fixed a steadfast gaze upon Levison.

"Fourpence more, please," he said.

"Rats!" said Levison.

"Weally, Levison—"

"It's an imposition," said Levison. "You can bring an action against me if you like. My name's Levison, and you know my address."

"Which I think—"

"Never mind what you think; you're paid to drive, not to think," said Levison, with cheerful insolence. "Put that box off, and get away."

Taggles, the school porter, was on the scene now. Levison looked at him, and pointed to the box, which the driver made no motion to touch.

"You're the porter, I suppose?" said Levison.

Taggles touched his hat. He did not like the new boy's manner; but a new boy and his box were generally productive

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of a tip, and Taggles received anything from threepence upwards with gratitude, proportioned to the size of the offering.

"Yes, sir," said Taggles.

"Get that box down, then."

The new boy's tone was still less likeable as he gave that order. As Taggles said afterwards, in mentioning the matter to Mrs. Taggles—he generally did mention matters to Mrs. Taggles—"the young gent was no gent, because he didn't seem to 'ave any idea that servants might 'ave feelings." In which probably Taggles was quite right.

"Suttingly, sir," said Taggles.

Taggles might have feelings, but he never allowed them to interfere with a prospective threepence, sixpence, or shilling. He lifted the box down.

"Careful!" said Levison. "There are breakable things in that box."

"Suttingly, sir."

Taggles bore the box into the house. The driver sat on his box still, looking at the two shillings and twopence. Minds did not work very fast in Rylcombe, and old William had not yet made his up.

Levison turned to follow Taggles in. Then William raised his voice.

"Which you owe me another fourpence, sir," said William.

Levison looked at him over his shoulder.

"You've had all you're going to get from me," he said.

"I'll complain to the 'Ead."

"Complain, and be hanged!"

And Levison went in.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wogard that chap as a mean wottah! Here's a tannah for you, cabby!"

Old William touched his hat.

"Thank you, sir. You're a gentleman, sir."

"Gentleman for the low price of sixpence," murmured Monty Lowther. "Who wouldn't be a gentleman at the price?"

Old William blinked at him, and drove away. The juniors remained in a group on the steps to discuss the new boy.

"Well," said Tom Merry, "I don't believe in being imposed on by cabbies or anybody, but I think the chap might have paid William."

"Yaas, wathah."

"We went to meet him at the station, and joined him in the hack to keep him company," said Digby, "and he let us pay! Poof!"

"Wotten!"

"I was rather thinking that Towser was hard on him," said Tom Merry. "But I'm rather inclined to back up Towser now. Towser knows a thing or two."

And the others agreed that Towser did.

CHAPTER 5.

Mellish's New Chum!

TAGGLES paused near the stairs with the box. It was somewhat heavy, but not quite so heavy as Taggles made out. Taggles had a way of bracing himself for the lightest burden, and shouldering it with many grunts—having found that the tip varied in proportion to the exertions he made.

"Mighty heavy, sir," he remarked, as he rested the box on the floor.

"Stuff," said Levison.

"Eh?"

"Stuff! The box is not heavy. Get it along!"

Taggles gave the new boy an expressive look, and shouldered the box again, this time without grunting, and carried it up. He knew that Ernest Levison was to be in the Fourth Form, and he carried the box up to the Fourth Form dormitory without a pause.

There he set it down and grunted.

"Thank you," said Levison.

Taggles puffed and blew.

"I suppose I can get a wash here?" said Levison, glancing up and down the row of white beds, each with a neat wash-stand next to it.

"Yes, sir."

"Good!"

Taggles puffed and blew, and blew and puffed.

Levison took off his jacket, and pushed up his cuffs. He swamped water into a basin, appropriated a cake of soap from one of the washstands, and began to wash his hands and face.

Taggles stood puffing.

He was waiting for his tip, and an extremely unpleasant expression was growing on his face as it dawned upon him that a tip was by no means a certainty.

Levison coolly finished his wash, and then looked round for

a towel. He took the nearest one, and began towelling his face.

Taggles coughed meaningly. Levison looked at him over the towel.

"What are you waiting for?" he asked.

Taggles glowed indignantly.

"Nothing," he said.

"Then don't wait."

"Sure you wouldn't like nothing else done?" asked Taggles.

"Thank you, nothing."

"Remember the porter, sir."

"I don't see any particular reason for remembering you," said Levison. "But I dare say I sha'n't forget you. You can go."

Taggles grunted.

"Some of the young gents give me 'arf-a-crown for carryin' up their boxes, sir," he remarked, thinking that the new boy was either very obtuse or very mean.

"Do they?" said Levison indifferently. "They must have a lot of money to throw away, I should think."

"Sometimes it's a shilling."

"Then I should say you've got a jolly good berth here."

"I wouldn't," said Taggles. "I wouldn't refuse any small gift from a young gentleman, if he was short of money."

This was putting it very plainly, and if Mr. Railton had heard Taggles make that remark to a new boy, Mr. Railton would have put it very plainly to Taggles. But Taggles's plainness of speech did not avail him. As a novelist would say, it booted not.

"I don't suppose you would," assented Levison. "I dare say you like to get hold of all the money you can, whether it belongs to you or not. The colour of your nose looks like it."

Taggles flushed.

"You let my nose alone!" he exclaimed.

"I'm sure I don't want to touch it; in fact, the sooner you take it out of my sight, the better I shall be pleased."

Taggles stood rooted to the floor. He had never even heard of a new junior like this before. Ernest Levison was a surprise to him. And he had seen many and many a hundred of new boys in his time, and he had believed that he was acquainted with every variety of boyhood.

"No good hanging on," said Levison, towelling himself cheerfully. "If you want to know, I don't believe in tipping."

"Most of the young gents is very generous," said Taggles.

"Ah! Don't you get any wages here?" asked Levison sweetly.

"Yea," said Taggles, in wonder. "Of course."

"Then I don't see why you should be paid by the boys as well as by the Head-master. If you ask me for money I'll report you."

Taggles almost sank on the floor. His favourite threat with the boys when they bothered him was, that he would report them. To have a new boy, who had not been ten minutes at St. Jim's, threatening to report him, was something of a novelty. Taggles gave Levison one expressive look, and left the dormitory.

Levison finished his towelling, readjusted his collar, and descended the stairs. Few would have taken him for a new boy as he walked along with perfect coolness, apparently as much at home at St. Jim's as if he had been there all his life. He met a lad of his own age in the passage, who looked at him curiously. Levison returned his stare with as insolent a look as he could summon to his features—which is saying a great deal.

"You'll know me again, I suppose?" he remarked. "Are you one of the chaps who think they have met me before? There seem to be a lot of them here."

The junior shook his head.

"I've not seen you before," he said, "and I can't say that I want to see you again. I suppose you are the new chap—Levison?"

"Yes. Have you heard the name, too, like the rest?" asked Levison, in a tone of sarcastic unpleasantness.

"No, and don't want to hear it. I was looking at you because you are to be in my study in the Fourth."

"Oh!" said Levison, looking at the other with new interest.

"I'm to be in your study. What's your name?"

"Mellish."

"Where's your study?"

Mellish looked the new boy up and down. Mellish was called, in the School House, the cad of the Fourth, and he deserved his name. Mellish was calculating, as he looked at Levison, whether he was worth toadying to, and whether he had enough money to make civility worth while, and whether

he was sufficiently a boxer to make it advisable to treat him with respect. His conclusion was, that Levison had money, for he was well-dressed, and very self-confident, but that the new boy did not look as if he would part with any of it very easily. Still, Mellish was without a chum at the present moment, owing to the late happenings in the school, and he thought he might do worse than make-up to the new boy.

"I'll show you the study, if you like," he said.

"Thanks. I can get my books and things into it. I've been told to report myself to the House-master, too, but that can wait."

"Come on, then."

Levison followed Mellish to his study in the Fourth-Form passage. It was the smallest study in the passage, but Mellish explained that it never had more than two occupants, and so they had as much room as any of the other Fourth-Formers, who generally went three or four to a study.

"There's four in No. 6 Study," Mellish explained. "Blake, Digby, D'Arcy, and Herries. We have more room than they have, as a matter of fact."

"I suppose you've had the study to yourself up till now?"

"Only for a few days."

"Some fellow left?"

"No—died."

Levison started.

"Was it Lumley-Lumley?" he asked.

Mellish nodded assent.

"Yes, he was in this study. We were great chums."

"Were you?" said Levison, looking at him. "You don't seem very cut up."

"Oh, I'm cut up, of course," said Mellish, in a tone of perfect indifference. "We were great friends. He was a millionaire's son, you know, and his father is expected every day at St. Jim's. He's Lascelles Lumley-Lumley, of Lumley's, Limited, one of the richest—"

"I know more about him than you can tell me," said Levison. "I knew the chap."

"You knew the Outsider?" exclaimed Mellish, in surprise.

"Oh, was that what you called him?"

"Yes. He was always called the Outsider here."

"Then I take it that he wasn't popular?" said Levison, with a grin.

"No, he wasn't—quite the other thing, in fact. But, of course, the fellows aren't talking about that now. He had his good points," said Mellish. "But where did you know him?" he went on curiously. "Did you know him well?"

"I knew him in London, for a few hours," said Levison; "that is all. But I knew him well, all the same. We got very chummy, and he told me a lot of things about himself. You see, we went into a place to grub, and he had an attack of illness there, and I looked after him, and that was how we became confidential."

Mellish stared.

"I must say you don't look the kind of fellow to look after a chap who's ill," he remarked.

"You don't think so?"

"No. I— But, of course," added Mellish, "he's a millionaire's son. I forgot that."

An ugly look came over Levison's face.

"Are you much of a boxer?" he asked.

"No," said Mellish, surprised at the question. "I don't go in for that sort of thing. It's not in my line."

"Then you'd better be a little more careful how you talk to me. I am."

Mellish backed away a little.

"Oh, all right," he said. "I didn't mean to offend you. Look here, as we're going to share this study, we may as well be friends. It's small enough as it is, and it's worse if we're on bad terms in it."

Levison nodded.

"All right," he said. "I've been in a smaller study than this—"

He broke off.

"You've been to school before?" asked Mellish.

"Yes."

"What school?"

Levison did not seem to hear the question.

"I think I'll get my visit to the House-master over," he remarked. "Can you tell me where to find him?"

"You haven't told me what school you used to go to," said Mellish.

"I never answer questions," said Levison, in his rudest manner. "Where is the House-master's room?"

Mellish grinned.

"I never answer questions!" he said, in his turn. "Find out!"

Levison looked at him angrily for a moment, and then burst into a chuckle. It was one of his peculiarities that he could enjoy a joke just as much when it turned against himself. He did not reply to Mellish, but left the study and shut the door.

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

ANSWERS

NEXT
THURSDAY:

Mellish stood with a curious expression upon his face, his forehead wrinkled, and a strange light gleaming in his eyes.

"Why doesn't he give the name of his old school?" he muttered aloud. "What's he keeping that a secret for? Is there something in it he's ashamed of, I wonder?"

Mellish grinned at the idea. He was the Peeping Tom and Paul Pry rolled into one of the school, and he never could bear that a secret should be kept from him. He no sooner suspected that the new boy had a secret than he resolved to discover what it was.

If there were nothing in it he would gratify his curiosity, at all events; and if it turned out to be something that gave him a hold upon the new boy, so much the better. Mellish was glad that the new boy had been put into his study.

CHAPTER 6.

Tea in Tom Merry's Study.

TOM MERRY came upon Levison as he entered the house. The new boy was looking up and down the main passage of the School House, evidently trying to find somebody or something. Tom Merry had not taken to the new boy in the least—in fact, he had felt a sensation of repulsion on making his acquaintance. But Tom Merry was good-natured to a fault, and he did not allow any sentiment of that sort to stand in the way of obliging a stranger. He crossed over to Levison.

"Are you looking for anything?" he asked.

"Yes," said Levison. "The House-master."

"Mr. Railton?"

"That's the name. I suppose you don't have more than one House-master here, do you?" said Levison, with that curious jeering note in his voice which gave his most ordinary remarks an unpleasant ring.

"Only one in each House, of course," said Tom Merry quietly. "There are two Houses here. Mr. Railton is the master of the School House, and Mr. Ratcliff of the New House. I suppose you're to be in this House?"

"Yes."

"I'll take you to Mr. Railton's study."

"Thanks!"

Tom Merry did so, and tapped at the door. The deep voice of the House-master bade the new-comer enter, and Levison went in and closed the door.

Tom Merry went on up to his study, where Manners and Lowther were getting tea. The Terrible Three had asked the chums of Study No. 6 to tea that afternoon, and the Fourth-Formers were expected every minute. Not that the juniors felt in any humour for jollity under the shadow that was on the school. But it was that very shadow which made them so downhearted, that made them want to seek one another's company round the tea-table. It was dispiriting to think that the footsteps of the Outsider would never be heard in the passage again, though they had never liked him.

Monty Lowther was stirring up the fire, and planting a kettle upon the blaze. Manners was laying the table. There was a new jar of strawberry-jam on the table, and Manners removed the paper top very carefully. Manners was careful in everything, and he could make toast as well as he could take photographs, and he was the head of the School House juniors in the classics—in fact, only Kerr of the New House was his equal in that line.

"Not here yet?" said Tom Merry, as he came in, throwing down a packet on the table. "There's the ham, kid."

"Good! Now we're ready."

"Kettle will soon boil," said Lowther, looking up, with a very pink face. "No good making the tea before they're here."

"Not a bit of it."

"Put the ham on a dish, Tom."

"What's the matter with the paper?" asked Tom Merry innocently.

"Oh, let's make a decent show."

"You're getting jolly respectable in your old age, Manners."

"Bai Jove, you look very cosy in here!" said a voice at the door, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in, followed by Blake and Herries and Digby. "Are ye early, deah boys?"

"Not at all," said Tom Merry, as Manners hastily turned the ham into a plate. "In fact, you're a few minutes late."

"That was Gussy's fault," said Blake. "He would stop to change his necktie."

"Weally, Blake—"

"I explained to him that it was of no consequence, as we were only visiting the Shell, but he would do it."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, now you're here, make yourselves useful," he exclaimed. "You can butter the toast, Blake. Gussy can get the jam out."

"With pleasuah, deah boy!"

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Blake began to butter the toast.

"I hear that new chap has been put in Lumley-Lumley's old place," he remarked. "He's sharing Mellish's study."

"Well, from what I've seen of him, I should say that Mellish is about the likeliest chap in the School House to get on with him," said Monty Lowther.

"Just what I thought. It's curious about that chivvy of his," Blake went on, with a puckered brow. "Do you know, I'll swear I've seen him before, and I can't help fancying that he remembers it, too, though he denies it."

"Bai Jove, Blake, that's accusin' the chap of speakin' untwuly, you know."

"Well, I don't want to do that exactly, but that's the impression he gave me," said Blake. "Of course, I may be wrong."

"Yaas, I wegard that as extremely pwob," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy assented. "As a mattah of fact, you vewy fwequently are w'ong, aren't you, Blake?"

"Ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Can I come in?"

It was a voice from the passage. The Fourth-Formers had left the door half open when they entered, and another face was looking in now. A slight shade came over Tom Merry's face as he saw Levison, but he did not allow it to dwell there for a moment.

"Certainly," he said. "Come in, by all means."

Levison came in.

The other fellows were silent. Levison's coming seemed to have cast a sort of damp over their spirits.

"This is Blake's study, I believe?" said Levison, looking round.

"No, it's mine."

"Oh! I heard Blake's voice, and concluded it was his," said Levison.

Blake coloured a little. If Levison had heard his voice he had doubtless heard what he said, too. But in that case, how came Levison near enough to hear him without his footsteps being heard in the study? Had he come silently down the passage on purpose to hear without being heard? At that thought Blake ceased to feel any regret that the new boy might have heard himself spoken of unkindly. It was right that listeners should hear no good of themselves.

"This is the Shell study," explained Tom Merry. "This passage is the Shell passage. The passage at the end belongs to the Fourth."

"Oh, I see. My mistake," said Levison blandly. "I don't see that it matters, though, as I wanted to speak to Blake, and he's here."

"Better stay to tea now you're here," said Tom Merry.

He could hardly say less. He did not take to the new boy, but he wanted to be hospitable and kind.

Levison was not slow to accept the invitation.

"Thanks, I will," he said. "You're very kind."

"Here's a chair. Do you like toast?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Here you are."

Monty Lowther had made the tea, and he now poured it out. Under the genial influence of tea and toast the juniors thawed a great deal, and were prepared to make the best of their new acquaintance.

"You wanted to see me," Blake observed, remembering presently that Levison had stated that he was in search of his study when he happened upon Tom Merry's.

"Ah, yes," said Levison. "Mr. Railton told me to find you."

"Yes. Anything I can do for you?"

"That's it. He said you were the head of the Fourth Form in the School House, and you'd show me round a bit, and put me up to things, you know."

"Oh! I will, certainly," said Blake, though he did not particularly relish the duty. "I'll do anything I can."

"Thanks!"

"In the first place, this is Tom Merry's study, and these chaps are Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther," said Blake, with his mouth full of toast. "You can sort them out for yourself."

Levison laughed.

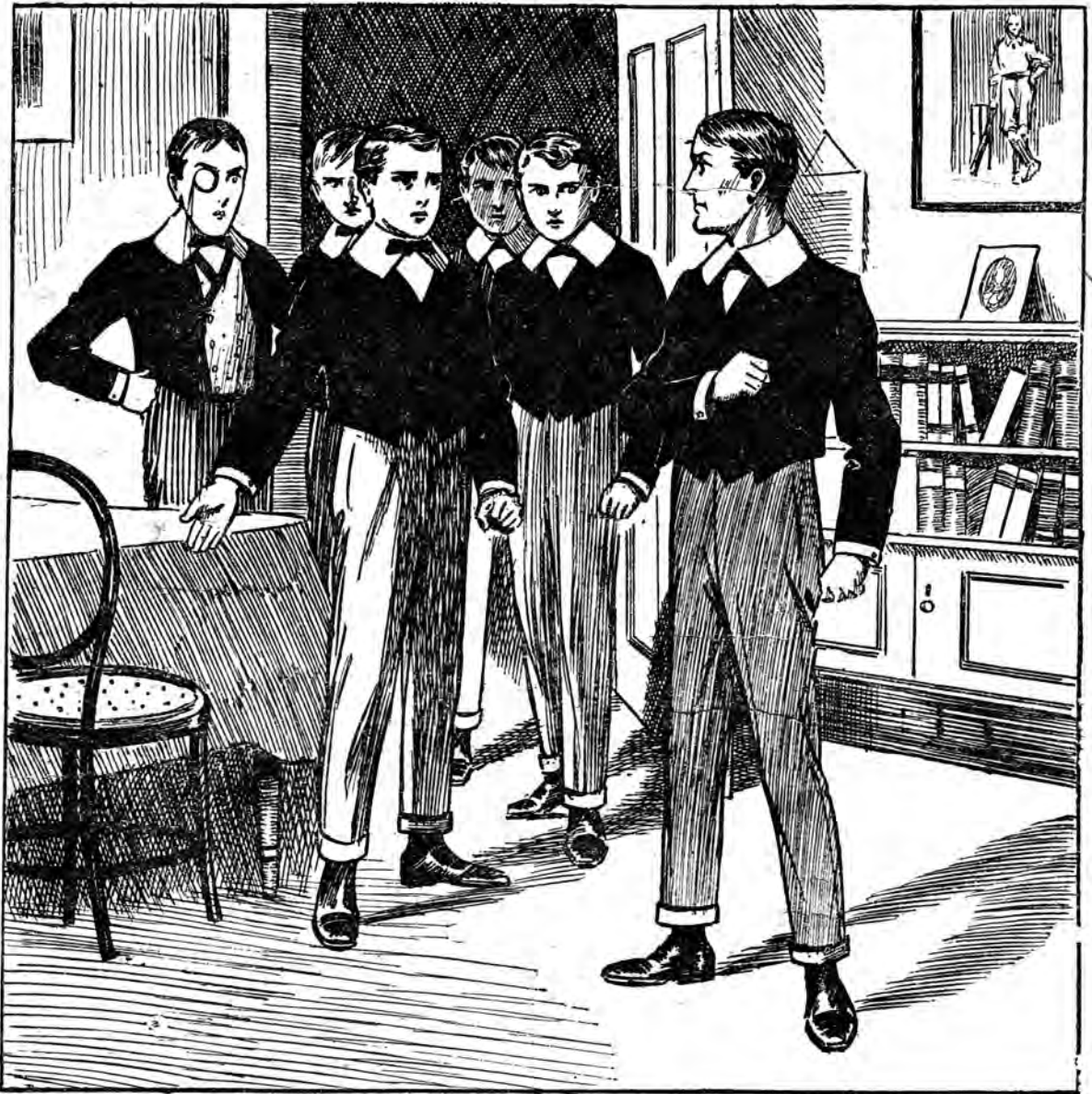
"Good!"

"I wegard that as a wotten way of intwoduclin' a fellah, Blake," said Arthur Augustus. "It is weally vewy bad form."

"Go hon! You can do it over again if you like, Gussy," said Blake. "Pass the jam, Dig. Can't you see I haven't any?"

"Allow me," said Levison.

He passed the jam to Blake. Tom Merry was not the possessor of a jam dish. He had possessed several, presented to him by Miss Priscilla Fawcett, his old governess, but each had gone the way of the others in turn. Glass and crockery were did not last long in the junior studies. The jam was in



Levison rose quickly to his feet, confronting the juniors as they came in. "What do you want?" he exclaimed angrily. "I should think you might wait for an invitation before tramping into a fellow's study like this!"
(See page 12.)

the original three-pound jar, and it was a little heavy to pass round the table, though certainly it was growing lighter every minute. Levison stared into the jam-jar as he lifted it, with an expression of surprise upon his face.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom Merry, catching his expression. "Nothing wrong with the jam, is there?"

"Do you usually keep dead mice in your jam-pots?" asked Levison.

"What?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Dead mice?"

"What do you mean, Levison?"

"Look here!"

Levison's slim white fingers went into the top of the jar, and reappeared, holding a little brown mouse, which was evidently not alive, for it made no motion in his grasp.

The juniors stared at it with horror. Manners, who had helped himself to jam, pushed his plate away. D'Arcy, who had eaten a considerable quantity of it, assumed a very sickly look.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I—I didn't see it in the jar!" exclaimed Manners.

"Did you look?" asked Levison.

"Well, no, but—"

"Bai Jove! I feel wathah wocky inside, you know! I—I think I will wetiah fwom the studay, deah boys."

"Oh, sit tight!" said Lowther. "It won't hurt you."

"I can't understand it," said Tom Merry, staring. "That was a new jar of jam, and it had never been opened till Manners took the paper off, ten minutes ago."

Levison made a motion of tossing the mouse into the fire.

"Well, that settles it," he said. "I think I'll have some jam. After you, Blake!"

Blake shook his head.

"I don't think I'll have any," he said.

"Pooh! It's all right."

D'Arcy rose to his feet. His face was very pale.

"I—I think I'll wetiah, deah boys," he stammered. "I—I feel wathah sea-sick, you know."

And he rushed from the study. The other juniors sat looking very uncomfortable, with the exception of Levison, who helped himself to jam and ate it with a good appetite, as if the discovery in the jam-pot did not affect him in the least.

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A School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

CHAPTER 7.
Not a Pleasant Guest.

TOM MERRY sat down, looking and feeling very uncomfortable. The jam-jar was placed on the shelf. No one but Levison felt inclined to touch it. The juniors contented themselves with toast. Fortunately, there was plenty of that.

"Do you have many mice in this school?" asked Levison. "I've never seen any," said Tom Merry. "There are rats round the stables, but not many. I've never seen mice in the School House."

"Oh, it's a jolly old place, isn't it?"

"This part of it is new. It's very curious about that mouse. I simply can't understand it, but it must have been in the jar when it came here."

Levison laughed, showing his teeth in the curious way he had whenever he parted his lips at all.

"Well, after that, things seem to have a peculiar flavour," he remarked. "Do you notice anything curious about the tea?"

"The tea! What's wrong with it?" asked Lowther, rather warmly; for he had made the tea, and he rather prided himself upon the way he did it.

"Oh, nothing," said Levison—"unless it has a rather curious flavour! But if you fellows don't notice it—"

"I don't, for one."

"Nor I," said Digby.

"Nor I," growled Herries. Herries was not in a very good humour. He had determined to have nothing to say to the new fellow, yet here he was at the same tea-table with him within the first hour of Levison's arrival at the school. He could not very well help himself. Levison had come in as a guest of Tom Merry's, and Herries could not very well act in a pointed manner towards him in another fellow's study. But Herries did not like the position.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

He lifted the lid of the tea-pot, and looked into the steaming opening. Then he uttered an exclamation.

"Ah! I thought so!"

His slim fingers went into the tea-pot, and he drew forth a mouse, dripping with the hot tea.

The juniors jumped up.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Digby.

"Hang it all, Tom Merry, this is too bad!" exclaimed Blake, turning quite pale. "I've had three cups of tea, and that—that—Ow!"

Monty Lowther's eyes seemed to be about to start from his head as he stared at the mouse in Levison's hand.

"It—it wasn't in the pot when I made the tea?" he stammered.

"Rats! It must have been!"

"I tell you it wasn't!"

"Then how could it have got in?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"I—I remember now the tea had a taste," stammered Digby, very white in the face. "I—I— Excuse me, you fellows, I think I'll—I'll go."

He almost staggered from the study, with a curious sound in his throat. Levison's hand swept towards the grate again.

"There goes the second one," he said. "I suppose, as a matter of fact, this study is swarming with mice!"

"I can't understand it," was all Tom Merry could say.

"I'd like another cup of tea, please."

"What!" ejaculated Blake. "You don't mean to say that you're going to drink the tea all the same?"

"Pooh! I'm not squeamish."

"Well, I'm not squeamish, I hope," said Blake, "but I couldn't touch that tea again. What I've drunk already makes me feel queasy. I think I'll go into the open air a bit, Tom Merry, if you don't mind. I feel as I did the first time I got on a Channel steamer."

And Blake left the study. Herries followed him without a word. He did not feel so queasy as Blake, but he was glad to get away from the new boy. It was curious how Herries' dislike, founded upon the incident of Towser, had grown in so short a time.

The Terrible Three looked at each other in dismay.

They had intended that little tea-party to cheer up themselves and their friends in the Fourth, but it was having quite the opposite effect.

Levison alone seemed undisturbed. He ate and drank quite cheerfully, and as the Shell fellows fell silent, he chatted away.

His talk was chiefly about London, and about a long holiday he had had abroad. He did not mention his former school. Tom Merry tried to rouse himself from his gloom for the sake of courtesy to his guest. The Shell fellows would have been very glad to see Levison leave, for they were feeling very queasy themselves. But the new boy showed no sign of hurrying over his tea.

He turned the conversation upon Lumley-Lumley at last—a subject the chums of the Shell would have been very glad to

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avoid. But Levison, having told them that he had known Lumley-Lumley in London, might be excused for wanting to know some of the particulars of his life at St. Jim's, and the gloomy end of his career there.

"I hear that he was called the 'Outsider' here," he remarked.

Tom Merry nodded.

"You didn't like him?"

"I don't care to say so, considering that he's dead," said Tom Merry sharply.

"Well, you could hardly have given him that name if you had been fond of him," Levison remarked.

"I don't know that I gave him the name."

"I suppose he wasn't easy to get on with," suggested Levison.

"I'd rather say nothing about him. We made it all up before the end, and I don't care to talk on the subject."

That would have been enough for most fellows, but Levison did not seem in the least rebuffed. The chums learned later, when they knew Ernest Levison better, that he was not to be turned from anything he had set his attention upon. He did not look a specially determined youth, but there was a quality of dogged obstinacy in him.

"Well, you see, he was a friend of mine, in a way, though I only knew him for so short a time," said Levison. "You you know what he died of?"

"He had an illness—something he had been keeping dark for a long time. There was a motor accident, and the shock brought on a severe attack," said Tom Merry, compelled to reply upon the distasteful subject.

"But the malady—what was that?"

"I don't rightly know—some curious nervous complaint, which had an effect upon the heart."

Levison nodded slowly.

"That's it! He had an attack of it while I was with him in London," he said. "It was in a restaurant, at lunch, and he had been taking more wine than perhaps he should have. He turned white and cold all of a sudden, and lay like a dead chap in his chair for five minutes or more, but he recovered before a doctor could be brought, and he was in a furious temper at my sending for one."

"That was just like Lumley," said Monty Lowther.

"He came round, and we parted jolly good friends," said Levison. "I was looking forward to meeting him here. I met him just after leaving—my old school."

Levison had evidently been about to utter the name of his old school, but he checked himself in time.

"What school were you at?" asked Tom Merry, to change the subject.

It was an ordinary question enough to put to a new boy, and there was no trace of inquisitiveness in it, but Levison did not choose to answer it.

"I was speaking about Lumley," he said. "I hear that his father is expected at the school, and the funeral's not to take place till he comes."

"That is so."

"Where is Lumley now?"

"The coffin was placed in the vault under the chapel," said Tom Merry.

"Would it be possible to see him?"

The chums of the Shell stared at Levison.

"I suppose you can't want to see him," said Tom Merry, abruptly. "What on earth do you mean?"

"Well, he was my friend, you know," said Levison coolly.

"Why shouldn't I see him?"

"It wouldn't be allowed. I don't suppose the coffin will be opened, even when his father comes, unless he comes very soon. Hang it all, what a ghoul you are, Levison!" exclaimed Tom Merry irritably. "I wish you'd get off the subject."

"Then you think I shouldn't be allowed to see him if I asked the Head?"

"I think you'd very likely get your ears boxed if you asked it."

Levison laughed.

"Then I shan't ask. Look here, is it possible to get into the vault—possible for a chap to get in, I mean, without raising a row?"

"No. Taggles keeps the key."

"Taggles! The school porter?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry shortly.

"H'm! Not much chance of his obliging me," said Levison, with a grin. "We had rather a little spar after he carried my box in. Is the vault entered from inside the chapel?"

"Yes, but there's an entrance from outside, too."

"And Taggles has the key of that?"

"Yes."

"Where does he keep it?"

"Look here, are you thinking of getting the key and entering the chapel vault without permission?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Suppose I am?"
 "Then you'd better not."
 "I may have a reason."
 "No reason but morbid curiosity, I suppose?"
 "Perhaps—perhaps another reason. I certainly sha'n't explain what it is—yet. Perhaps it's a good reason. Still, if I can't get the key—Where did you say Taggles kept it?"
 "I didn't say anywhere."
 "Well, say now."
 "He keeps it on his bunch," said Tom Merry. "But you won't be able to get hold of it, and I wouldn't help you if I could. And look here, if I catch you nosing round the chapel vault, I'll jolly soon stop you."
 "Do you always talk to your guests in this polite way?" asked Levison blandly.
 Tom Merry turned crimson.
 "I—I'm sorry! I forgot. But really, Levison, you're enough to provoke anybody!" he exclaimed.
 "Curious;—the fellows used to say that at—at my old school."
 And Levison rose, and, with a careless nod to the chums of the Shell, passed out of the study. Tom Merry drew a deep breath.
 "I'm jolly glad that chap's not in the Shell," he said.
 And Manners and Lowther said with one voice, in cordial agreement:
 "What-ho!"

CHAPTER 8.

Gore Does not Score.

LEVISON strolled downstairs in the cool, nonchalant way which showed that his self-possession was complete—too complete really for a new boy. A little modesty and awe would have been more in place, but perhaps because this was not his first public school, Levison was quite himself. But perhaps that was his nature, and certainly, looking at his keen, hard face, no one would have expected him to be flurried or put out by a trifle. He coolly returned the stares of the boys he met, and many of them passed the remark to one another that he was a cool customer. Gore of the Shell, who was given to ragging new boys, stopped him in the lower passage.
 "New boy?" he asked.
 "Yes," said Levison.
 "Name?"
 "Levison."
 "Form?"
 "The Fourth."
 "Been to school before?"
 "Yes."
 "What school?"
 "Find out!" said Levison coolly.
 There was a chuckle from a group of juniors near at hand, and Gore turned very red. Levison had answered his previous questions so meekly that he had not expected that rebuff. He was not the fellow to take it quietly.
 "What do you mean?" he exclaimed roughly.
 "What I say," replied Levison. "Don't you understand English?"

Gore breathed hard.
 "I'm a Shell fellow," he began.
 "My dear chap, I don't care whether you are a Shell fellow, or a Shell-fish," said Levison, with a bland smile.
 And there was a chuckle again.
 "I'm not used to taking cheek from Fourth-Form kids," said Gore, "and especially not from new boys."
 "Oh, you'll get used to it!"
 "What!"
 "Deaf?" asked Levison. "I should recommend an ear trumpet."

Gore simply stared. The fellows round were laughing now. Levison was evidently able to give as good as he got, in the matter of a wordy war.

"Well, you cheeky young sweep!" exclaimed Gore, at last.
 "Anything else?"
 "Yes," shouted Gore, "there's a licking, too. Take that." And he drove his fist straight at Levison's mocking face. Gore might not be able to hold his own with his tongue, but his fist was always ready. But Levison dodged the blow quite easily, and caught Gore's wrist. Then he uttered a sudden exclamation.
 "Hallo! Hallo! What's this?"

He held up a cigar, which to all appearance he caught as it slipped from Gore's sleeve. The fellows stared at it.

"Well, you ass, Gore!" exclaimed Kangaroo of the Shell. "I knew you smoked cigarettes, but I never knew you'd take on cigars. You utter ass!"

"What do you mean?" shouted Gore. "It isn't mine."
 "Why, I saw the new fellow catch it from your sleeve."
 "It's a lie."

"What!" said the Cornstalk junior, coming towards Gore with a grim expression upon his sunburnt face. "It's a what, Gore?"

Gore faltered a little.

"Well, I didn't mean that," he said, "but you're mistaken. It's not my cigar, and it wasn't in my sleeve."

"Oh, rats!" said several voices.

"I tell you—" shouted Gore.

"What is this? What are you doing with a cigar, Levison?"

It was Kildare's voice. Kildare, of the Sixth, the captain of the school, had just come on the scene. He looked at the cigar in Levison's hand with an angry brow.

The new boy met his eyes calmly.

"Gore—if that's the chap's name—can tell you," he said.

"Is it yours, Gore?" exclaimed Kildare.

"No, it isn't."

"How did you get it, Levison?"

"I'd rather not say."

"Then you'll take a hundred lines for having a cigar in your possession," said the captain of St. Jim's angrily.

"Oh, very well!" said Levison, unmoved.

Kildare went into his study. There was a hiss for Gore, and he looked round almost wildly at the circle of faces.

"Cad!" said Bernard Glyn. "Why didn't you own up?"

"Rotter!" said Kangaroo, turning on his heel.

"Yah! You ought to have owned up."

"I tell you the cigar wasn't mine," said Gore, hoarsely.

"I'll swear it. I've given up smoking; and I never smoked cigars at any time. They'd make me sick."

"You had it in your sleeve."

"I didn't!"

"Why, we saw the new fellow take it."

"He must have had it in his hand all the time," exclaimed Gore, desperately, though he felt himself how improbable that explanation was.

There was a general sniff of disgust and disbelief.

"Cad, for not owning up," said Clifton Dane.

"I tell you—"

"It's no good telling us crammers, Gore, when we saw for ourselves."

Gore seemed to be on the verge of a fit. Levison dropped the cigar into his pocket.

"I'll keep this, if Gore doesn't claim it," he remarked, and strolled away.

He paused as he passed the letter-rack in the hall, and glanced at the letters placed there ready for the fellows to take them; glanced up carelessly enough. But suddenly his face changed, and his look became fixed, and the colour wavered in his cheek. His hand went quickly up to the rack, and he took down a postcard. It was addressed to Tom Merry, School House, St. Jim's Rylcombe, Sussex, in a boyish hand, and the postmark on it was Friardale. Levison thrust it hastily into his pocket. The handwriting was that of Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove Form at Greyfriars School, near Friardale; and any fellow at St. Jim's could have told Levison that there was an impending football match between the juniors of the two schools.

"Hallo!" said Kerruish, of the Fourth, glancing at Levison. "Letters for you already, and you haven't been here two hours, eh?"

"Yes," said Levison coolly.

And he walked away with Tom Merry's postcard in his pocket.

CHAPTER 9.

The Missing Postcard.

FIGGINS, of the Fourth—of the New House at St. Jim's—came across with Kerr and Wynn, and looked into the School House door. There was a general exclamation of:

"New House cads!"

"Kick them out!"

But Figgins held up his hand with a grin.

"Pax," he exclaimed, "I've come over to see Tom Merry, about the match on Saturday. Is he in?"

"In his study, I believe," said Jack Blake, who had just come downstairs. "He's been standing a tea, with dead mice in the teapot and the jam-jar. Gussy's in our study, wrestling it out. He looks as he did on the Channel steamer—you remember."

Figgins chuckled.

"I remember! Hallo, who's that chap?"

He was looking at Levison, who was just walking away from the letter-rack. Figgins's glance followed him in some surprise.

Blake turned his head to look.

"Oh, that!" he said carelessly. "That's the new chap—Levison."

"I believe I've seen him before somewhere," said Figgins. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 142.

Blake laughed.
"There are a lot of fellows here who think they've seen him before, or heard his name somewhere," he remarked; "but Levison doesn't own up to knowing anybody except poor Lumley-Lumley."

"Oh, he knew the Out—H'm! He knew Lumley?"
"Yes, he knew him in London. It's a curious thing," said Blake. "I'm certain I've seen the chap somewhere, and he gave me the impression that he knew me, and yet he won't admit it. It's odd."

"And he doesn't seem to want to tell us the name of his last school," Mellish remarked, joining in the conversation.
"Have you noticed that?"

"Well yes," said Blake.
"What's he keeping it secret for, then?"
"I don't know."

"Depend upon it, there's something rotten about it, or he wouldn't keep it dark," said Mellish. "I thought you might know."

"Well, I don't," said Blake shortly.
He moved away with Figgins. He did not like the cad of the Fourth. Mellish shrugged his shoulders carelessly. He had gained the information he wanted.

"Levison's been having tea with Blake and the rest, and he hasn't told them the name of his last school," Mellish murmured. "It's pretty plain that he's keeping it dark. But I rather think I shall bowl him out—what?"

And Mellish chuckled as he walked away, turning the matter over in his mind. Blake and Figgins went up to Tom Merry's study. The Terrible Three were there, and they had cleared the table to do their preparation.

"Found any more mice?" asked Blake.
"No," said Tom Merry curtly.

"Figgins wants to see you about the match. I've brought him up."

"Sit down, Figgy," said Tom Merry cordially. "I don't know that I've got anything to tell you. Wharton said he would come over from Greyfriars to arrange the details, by word of mouth, and would let me know which day he could get an exeat. But I haven't heard from him yet."

"Have you had your postcard?" asked Blake.
"What postcard?"

"There was one for you in the rack when I went there to look for letters," said Blake, "since the last delivery, I suppose."

"Was it in Wharton's fist?"
"Yes."

"Then that's it," said Tom Merry. "Let's go down and get it."

And they went downstairs. Tom Merry ran his eyes over the letter-rack, and looked puzzled.

"There's no postcard here," he remarked.
Blake glanced over the rack.

"Sure you haven't taken it?" he asked.
"Quite sure."

"It was just here, sticking just underneath this letter for Kildare," said Blake, looking puzzled. "I was going to take it and bring it to you, only—I didn't. It was here right enough."

"Perhaps somebody else took it?" suggested Figgins. "It may be some other obliging chump—excuse me—obliging fellow who's taking it up to Tom Merry at this very moment."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Tom Merry, "and if it's Skimpole, he may have put it in his pocket and forgotten all about it."

"Well, we can easily inquire. The postcard must be somewhere."

The juniors inquired.
Nobody, however, seemed able to tell them anything about the missing postcard. Nobody seemed to have taken it. A good many had seen it in the rack, just under Kildare's letter, and some had observed that it was in the hand of Harry Wharton, the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

Nobody knew anything further of it.
Skimpole was found and questioned, and that brainy youth made a great effort and detached his attention for one moment from the deep problems he was busy upon, to answer that he hadn't seen the postcard.

"You're quite sure?" asked Tom Merry. "You might have taken it with the idea of bringing it up to me, you know."

Skimpole shook his head.
"Or you might have taken it by mistake."

"Not at all. I have not been to the letter-rack to-day."
"You may have forgotten all about it."

"Really, Merry—"
"Well, you know what an ass you are!" said Tom Merry.
"Really—"

They left Skimpole; there was nothing to be got out of The Gem Library.—No. 142.

the brainy man of the Shell. They asked questions right and left, with the same result.

Tom Merry was beginning to look worried.
"I can't understand this," he exclaimed. "It looks to me now as if somebody has taken the postcard and is suppressing it for a silly joke."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had joined in the search. "If that is the case, Tom Mewwy, I should suggest givin' the jockh a feahful thwashin'!"

"We've got to find him first," Figgins remarked.
"Perhaps he's in the tuckshop," suggested Fatty Wynn.

They stared at Fatty Wynn. Fatty's mind naturally ran to the tuckshop, under all circumstances.

"What on earth do you mean?" demanded Blake. "Why should he be in the tuckshop?"

"Well, we might look there, I mean," said Fatty Wynn. "If he isn't there, we might discuss the matter more fully over a—little refreshment!"

Blake snorted.
"Well, I think it's a good idea," said Fatty Wynn. "This going about inquiring seems to make a fellow hungry."

"Bai Jove!"
"I think I'll wait for you chaps in the tuckshop, in fact," said Fatty Wynn. "You can let me know if you find the postcard."

And Fatty Wynn rolled away, leaving Figgins and Kerr to continue the search with the School House fellows.

"I don't catch on to it at all," Tom Merry remarked, his brow wrinkling. "It's rotten, because if I don't get that postcard, I sha'n't know when Wharton's coming, or whether he's coming at all. You're sure it was in his fist, Blake?"

"Quite sure. You see, I looked at the card to see whether it might be for me, and in reading the address, I couldn't fail to recognise the handwriting."

"I wish you had read the message, too," said Tom Merry. "What the dickens can have become of the thing? Hallo! Here's a fellow we haven't asked. Kerruish, have you seen anything of a postcard belonging to me? It was on the rack half an hour ago."

Kerruish shook his head.
"Sure, no!" he said. "I remember seeing it there, just before Levison took his letter. Haven't you had it?"

"Levison!" exclaimed Tom Merry, without answering the rather superfluous question. "We haven't asked him yet, you chaps. I don't know where he is."

"Curious that Levison should be having correspondence so soon," said Herries, who had joined the searchers in time to hear Kerruish's remark. "Fellows don't usually have letters addressed to them here before they get to the school."

"Oh, you're down on Levison!" said Blake. "I suppose you'll be suggesting next that Levison boned the postcard, because Towser tried to bite him at the station!"

"Towser knows something," said Herries. "He knows when a fellow's not to be trusted. If Levison had any possible motive for taking the postcard, I'll bet he's the chap who has taken it."

"What possible motive could he have?"
"Oh, I don't know!"

"It might be a rotten jape!" suggested Figgins.
"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, we'll ask him if he's seen it, anyway," said Tom Merry. "No harm in that. Does anybody know where he is?"

No one knew apparently.
"He may be in his room," said Blake. "He has Mellish's study, you know. Let's look for him there, at any rate."

And the juniors hurried up to the Fourth Form passage, and knocked at the door of Mellish's study, and opened it.

CHAPTER 10.

Strangely Found.

LEVISON was in the study.
He was sitting there, reading something he held in his hand, when the door was opened, and he hastily thrust his hand into his pocket.

He rose quickly to his feet, confronting the juniors as they came in, with a flush in his cheeks, and an angry gleam in his eyes. Tom Merry and Figgins and Kerr, Blake and D'Arcy and Herries were there, and after them came Mellish, who intended to learn all there was to be learned of the matter. The chums took no notice of the cad of the Fourth, and evidently did not regard him as one of themselves; but that made no difference to Mellish.

"What do you want?" exclaimed Levison angrily. "I should think you might wait for an invitation before tramping into a fellow's study like this!"

"We knocked," said Tom Merry quietly.
"Well, I never asked you to enter."

"Oh, we don't stand on ceremony to that extent here!"



Taggles paused near the stairs with the box. "Mighty heavy, sir," he remarked. "Stuff!" said the new boy. "The box is not heavy. Get it along." (See page 15.)

said Jack Blake. "We want to see you, Levison, that's all!"

"Well, you've seen me, if that's all you want. Good-bye!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We're not quite done yet," said Tom Merry. "A postcard, addressed to me, was in the rack an hour ago, Levison. Did you see it?"

"I'm not in the habit of looking at other fellows' correspondence! Is that a custom here?"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed, but he kept back the angry retort that rose to his lips.

"No," he said. "Don't pretend to misunderstand me! If you looked for letters for yourself, you could not avoid reading the addresses on letters for other fellows."

"I didn't look for letters for myself."

"That won't do! Kerruish saw you!"

Levison bit his lip. Kerruish was not with the juniors, and it had not occurred to him that Tom Merry might have been asking questions, and that the Manx lad had mentioned the little incident.

"Bai Jove! The boundah is lyin', you know!"

"I'm not lying!" said Levison fiercely. "I didn't look for letters for myself! I just looked over the letter-rack, that's all, without expecting to see one—just in a casual way!"

"But you found one for you?" said Tom Merry.

"Well, yes," said Levison, remembering Kerruish again.

"Yes; I found one, as it happened."

"Did you see a postcard for me?"

"No."

Levison's face did not falter in the least as he spoke the direct falsehood. But somehow the juniors did not believe him. There is always something about a lie, however well told, which marks it as false—a something intangible, but very real, which cannot escape a keen observer. The juniors did not trust Levison, and they did not believe that statement.

"I'm sorry to have to doubt any chap's word," said Tom Merry slowly. "But you've just told us something—well, you were very near a lie when you said you hadn't looked for letters, Levison! This may be another truth of the same sort—so near a lie, that one can't tell the difference!"

"If you've come here to insult me in my own study, Tom Merry, you'd better get out! I'm not the kind of chap to take it quietly!"

"You declare that you didn't see my postcard?"

"No; I didn't!"

"Was it a letter or a postcard you took for yourself?"

"A letter," said Levison, after a moment's hesitation.

(Continued on page 16.)

COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS

A TALE OF TOM MERRY'S CHUM

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD

CHAPTER I.

Off to School.

ETHEL CLEVELAND stood in the open doorway, looking out. There was a touch of frost in the air; the wind was crisp and keen. It brought the colour into Ethel's cheeks. She made a charming picture as she stood there, framed in the doorway, though she was quite unaware of the fact—a picture of bright English girlhood, with her bright eyes, soft round cheeks, and lithe, graceful figure.

But there was a shade of seriousness upon the young girl's brow. Ethel was leaving home—leaving for school. She was waiting there, for the vehicle that was to convey her to the station.

She looked as she felt, serious and thoughtful. Her lines had hitherto fallen in pleasant places—her young life had been a happy one—not that she had been wholly without troubles. Her father's death—she could faintly remember that—and of late, her mother's ill-health, had cast a shadow upon the house. But, happy or not, the old life was ending now—ending to-day. Her mother had been ordered abroad for her health, and Ethel was going to a boarding-school.

A new life, full of possibilities, lay before her. What would St. Freda's be like? What would the girls be like, and Miss Pynne, the principal? Would she be anything like little Miss Pynne, the governess who had hitherto had the charge of Ethel's education? If so, the girl thought, with a smile, she would get on very well at St. Freda's. For little Miss Pynne was Ethel's devoted slave, and everything that Ethel did was right in her eyes, and had not Ethel been really a sensible and willing pupil, her education would have been in a parlous state.

Mrs. Cleveland was gone—she had left for the south the day before. There was nothing now to hold Ethel to her home, and she was anxious to leave for St. Freda's. Miss Pynne was to take her there—or, rather, as a matter of fact, Ethel would take Miss Pynne there, for Ethel's was always the guiding mind of the two.

What would St. Freda's be like?

Ethel knew girls who were at boarding-schools, but she had only a vague idea what they were like, and at St. Freda's she did not know a

soul. As a matter of fact, Ethel knew more of boys' schools than of girls' schools, for she had a cousin at a public school in Sussex, and had often visited St. Jim's for the cricket and football matches—when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, her cousin, had very proudly walked his pretty cousin round the old school, and shown her off to the admiring and envious eyes of the other fellows. Ethel was "Cousin Ethel" to a great many boy chums at St. Jim's. If St. Freda's were like St. Jim's, she would like it immensely; but—

What would it be like?

"Ethel!"

The girl, absorbed in her thoughts, did not hear the small, piping voice. She was looking out into the gardens, deep in a reverie.

"Ethel!"

Little Miss Pynne came along the hall, and Ethel started, and looked round. Miss Pynne was fair and forty, if not fat, and she was about the same height as her pupil. Miss Pynne looked very prim and neat and orderly. She had a little bag in her hand, and a carefully-rolled umbrella hooked on her arm. There was a sound of wheels outside just as Miss Pynne came to the door.

"You are quite ready, Ethel?"

The girl nodded.

"Quite ready, dear."

"Here is the trap. James, pray be very careful with those boxes—especially with the hat-box."

Two minutes more, and the trap was bowling down the lane, and the wind was blowing Cousin Ethel's fair curls back from her face, and bringing the scarlet into her cheeks.

The girl's eyes sparkled.

But her spirits were not high. There was a slight cloud on the fair brow, a slight drooping of the pretty little mouth.

Ethel was feeling lonely.

She was going out into a new world—alone. If only she had had some companion—someone with whom to exchange conjectures and confidences! There was Miss Pynne, but Miss Pynne, though kindness itself, was not exactly the confidante Ethel wanted. Miss Pynne's conversational abilities extended very little beyond "Yes, dear," and "No, dear."

Ethel thought of her cousin Arthur. He had told her that he would get

leave from St. Jim's if he could, and see her on the journey to St. Freda's. But evidently he had not been able to come.

Ethel sat very silent.

Miss Pynne, who was in a state of mental perturbation, wondering whether her hat-pins were fastened securely enough to resist the strong wind, was not in a mood for conversation, either.

In the lane, a lad in uniform was plodding along slowly towards Cleveland Lodge. He stopped at sight of the trap, and began waving his arms frantically.

It was the telegraph-boy, from the village. The trap stopped at once.

The lad came up to the side of the vehicle, touching his cap. He had a telegram in his hand.

"For Miss Cleveland, mum."

Cousin Ethel took the telegram.

The colour wavered in her cheek for a moment. The thought was in her mind that it might be from her mother—that it might mean that something was wrong.

She opened it hastily.

Then, as her eye ran quickly over the message on the strip of paper within, she smiled. Miss Pynne was looking at her anxiously.

"What is it, Ethel dear?"

Ethel laughed.

"It's from Arthur—the dear boy!"

She banded the telegram to Miss Pynne. The little governess adjusted her black-rimmed glasses, and read:

"Dear Ethel,—I've got leave, and I shall be at Wayland Junction to meet you. Look out for me."

"ARTHUR."

It was from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

Miss Pynne smiled.

"It is very kind and thoughtful of him, Ethel dear."

"Yes, isn't it?"

The trap bowed on again.

Cousin Ethel's face was brighter now, and her eyes were sparkling. She looked very cheerful when she took her seat in the train with Miss Pynne opposite.

And as the train approached Wayland Junction, needless to say Cousin Ethel was looking out of the window, and as soon as the train entered the station, she caught sight of a group of juniors standing on the platform.

CHAPTER 2.

Cousin Arthur.

"BAI Jove!"
"Hallo!"
"That's the twain!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who spoke. Arthur Augustus, the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, was looking a perfect picture. Nothing could have exceeded the elegance of the cut of his etons, unless it was the beautiful pattern of his waistcoat, or the glossiness of his silk hat. From his natty boots to his gold-rimmed eyeglass, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was elegance itself. The two other fellows wore school caps, which showed off D'Arcy's glossy topper to the best advantage.

The two were Tom Merry, of the Shell Form, and Figgins, of the Fourth. There were many juniors at St. Jim's who had been eager to come, and Arthur Augustus, to do him justice, was willing to bring them. But only two had been able to obtain leave, and those two were Tom Merry and Figgins.

Tom Merry looked very handsome and tidy, as he usually did; but Figgins was more than usually elegant. Figgins was, as a rule, careless in his dress, and his neckties had always offended the vision of Arthur Augustus. But on an occasion like this, Figgins could come out strong. Figgins was in his Sunday best, and his necktie was only a little on one side, and his boots shone with a polish almost as aggressive as that of D'Arcy's silk hat.

Figgins had hesitated long between a cap and a topper, and finally, the others being impatient, had rushed off in a cap. He pleaded, in answer to D'Arcy's remarks on the subject, that it was more comfortable, and that Miss Cleveland would not be in the least likely to notice what he was wearing. An argument at which Arthur Augustus took the liberty of sniffling.

As the train came into the station, Figgins turned pink, and then crimson. He caught Tom Merry by the shoulder, and the Shell fellow turned and looked at him, with considerable surprise as he noted the changing hues of Figgins's countenance.

"Hallo! Anything up?" he asked.
"I was going to—to ask you—"

"Go ahead."
"Is my necktie quite straight?"

Tom Merry grinned.
"Well, about as straight as it always is," he replied.

"Oh, come," said Figgins warmly, "you might tell a chap how it looks! Is it on one side?"

"Yes, I'm afraid it is, a little," said Tom Merry, cocking his eye thoughtfully at the necktie.

"Well, which side? Quick, the train's coming in!"

"Left."

Figgins put up his hand to the necktie, and gave it a drag to the right.

"Is that all right?" he asked hastily.

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Bai Jove, it's all wight, and no mistake," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his gold-rimmed monocle upon the necktie. "Wathah too much wight, I should say."

"Too much to the right?" asked Figgins anxiously.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Figgins gave the troublesome necktie a drag back to the left, and it came undone, and the ends streamed out in his hand.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Figgins glared.

"You cackling duffers—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Look here—"

"Sowwy! I've got to look aftah my cousin," said D'Arcy, and he stepped towards the train, which had now stopped alongside the platform.

Cousin Ethel was waving her hand from the window.

The three juniors lifted hat and caps, and ran towards the carriage. Figgins made a hasty effort to clutch his necktie into place, but naturally without success. Tom Merry tore open the door of the carriage, but it was Arthur Augustus who extended a graceful hand to assist the ladies to alight.

Cousin Ethel smiled brightly at the juniors.

"I am so glad to meet you here," she said softly. "I was feeling very lonely."

"The pleasuah is on our side, deah boy—I mean deah gal," said Arthur Augustus. "With your permish, we are goin' to see you as fah as St. Fweda's."

"Have you leave for so long?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Then I shall be delighted, of course."

"It will be ripping," said Figgins eagerly, as Cousin Ethel's glance turned upon him. Then he coloured to the hue of a beetroot. His necktie was streaming over his waistcoat, and Cousin Ethel's eye had involuntarily rested upon it.

"A—a slight accident," murmured Figgins. "I—I—"

"It was so kind of you to come and meet me," said Cousin Ethel, apparently not noticing Figgins's confusion, and thereby putting him more at his ease. "I think my boxes ought to be taken out of the luggage-van."

"I'll see to it!" exclaimed Figgins eagerly, and he rushed off.

The boxes were already on the platform, and the train was about to move on. Figgins paused where the boxes lay to tie his necktie.

Cousin Ethel had to change trains at Wayland, and she had to wait ten minutes. Figgins saw the boxes placed upon a trolley and trundled off to another platform for the St. Freda's train, and then he returned to the group.

Tom Merry had lifted a little bag out of the carriage, and an umbrella neatly folded. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stretched out his hand for them.

"Thank you, Tom Mewwy."

"Nothing to thank me for," said Tom Merry blandly.

"I am goin' to cawwy them."

"Rats!" said Tom, in an undertone, Cousin Ethel being for a moment occupied in helping Miss Pryne to adjust her veil, and having no eyes for the juniors.

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and stared frigidly at his companion.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"More rats!"

"I am goin' to cawwy my cousin's bag and umbrellah."

"You're jolly well not."

"I insist—"

"You can jolly well insist till you're black in the face!" said Tom

Merry warmly. "But I'm jolly well going to carry them, so there!"

"Look here, Tom Mewwy—"

"Scat!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I'm goin' to cawwy that bag, and I insist upon your immediately handin' it ovah to me."

"Rubbish!"

"I decline to have my wemarks chawactewised as wubbish. I should be sowwy to have to thwash you in the pwesence of a lady, but—"

"You'd be jolly sorry for yourself if you began."

"Look here, you boundah—"

"Rats!"

Arthur Augustus took hold of the bag. Tom Merry did not let go. It looked like a tug-of-war for a moment.

"I twust, Tom Mewwy, that you



"As your eidah," resumed D'Arcy, "I should wegard it as my dutay to look aftah you."

will not attwact Ethel's attention by a scene of unseemly dispute," said Arthur Augustus.

"I'm going to carry this bag."

"Pway don't be an obstinate ass."

Arthur Augustus gave a jerk. Tom Merry gave a jerk, too, and jerked the bag away from the grasp of Arthur Augustus. The swell of St. Jim's gave him a wrathful glare through his eyeglass.

"You uttah wottah—"

"Cave!"

Cousin Ethel was looking round. Perhaps she had caught a tone of the suppressed but wrathful voices. The train was gliding out of the station, and Miss Pryne gave a sudden cry.

"My bag!"

"Your bag, dear?" said Ethel.

"Yes! Oh, dear! I have left it in the carriage—and my umbrellah!"

"Oh, no, you haven't!" exclaimed Cousin Ethel. "Tom has them."

Miss Pryne gave a little gasp of relief.

"Oh, thank you so much, my dear boy! How very thoughtful of you to take them out of the carriage!"

(The continuation of this story is in No. 1 of the NEW "Empire" Library. One Halfpenny. Now on Sale.)

THE NEW BOY'S SECRET (Continued from page 13.)

"Blake, old man, will you call Kerruish?"
 "Yes, rather!"
 Jack Blake stepped out of the study. Levison looked at Tom Merry, with a bitter smile.
 "Is this a catechism," he asked, "or a trial? I suppose Kerruish is the principal witness for the prosecution—is that it?"
 "I want that postcard!" said Tom Merry.
 "Do you think I've got it?"
 "I don't know."
 "Why should you imagine that I want your postcard?" said Levison. "It's ridiculous on the face of it!"
 "Well, I don't know why you should want it; it might be simply curiosity. I know Mellish has been licked more than once for reading other fellows' correspondence. You may be a chap of the same sort. I don't say you are, but you give me that impression, and you lied to me once, or so near lied that it makes no difference!"
 Levison gritted his teeth. Tom Merry was usually very civil, but when he was driven to speak plain English, his English was very plain indeed.
 Kerruish came into the study with Blake.
 "What's wanted?" he asked.
 "You saw Levison take his letter from the rack a while ago?"
 "Yes," said Kerruish, in surprise. "What about it?"
 "Did you see whether it was a letter or a postcard?"
 "No. Hold on, though! I think it was a postcard. But I wasn't looking, and he put it in his pocket very quickly," said the Manx junior.
 "Oh, he did, did he?" said Herries. "What about Towser now?"
 "Oh, blow Towser!" said Blake.
 "Look here, Blake—"
 "Do you remember which part of the rack he took it from?" asked Tom Merry quietly. "The left or the right?"
 "The left."
 "Under Kildare's letter, then—that big letter that's waiting for Kildare?"
 "Yes; just there!"
 "That's where my postcard was, I think, Blake?"
 "Exactly!" said Blake.
 Tom Merry turned to Levison again, with a gleam in his eyes. The new boy at St. Jim's had changed colour slightly.
 "It's beginning to look rather clear to me," said Tom Merry. "You took a letter—which looked like a postcard to Kerruish—from the same ledge of the rack where my postcard was. You still say you had a letter?"
 "Of course!"
 "Will you show us the letter?"
 Levison bit his lip.
 "Certainly not!" he said. "I'm not likely to show my private correspondence to a set of inquisitive kids!"
 "We don't want to see your private correspondence. We only want to see the envelope. Show us the envelope addressed to 'Levison, St. Jim's.' That's all."
 Levison did not speak.
 Every eye was upon him now, and in spite of his nerve and his cool impertinence, the new boy was faltering.
 "Show us that envelope," said Tom Merry, his voice rising a little, "and I'll ask your pardon for having doubted your word. But if you don't show it, I shall think that you have lied—that it was not a letter at all, but my postcard, that you took from the rack—though for what reason, unless it was caddish curiosity, I don't know."
 Levison breathed hard for a moment.
 "I'd show you the envelope willingly enough," he said, "if it were still in existence; but I'm not in the habit of carefully preserving old envelopes. I threw it into the fire when I opened the letter."
 The juniors glanced towards the grate. A fire was burning there, and though no trace remained of burnt paper, it was certain that if an envelope had been tossed into the glowing coals, it would have been consumed in a moment. Levison's explanation was perfectly plausible, but it had not the ring of truth.
 "Very well," said Tom Merry, after a moment's pause—"very well, we'll say the envelope is destroyed! I won't call any fellow a liar till I'm forced to. But you haven't burnt the letter, I suppose? We don't want to see your private letters, but I must ask you to show us that letter—one line, to show that it's genuine, will be enough. I suppose you could find a single line in it that it wouldn't matter if anyone saw."

Levison's nostrils dilated a little. It was as if, in spite of all his cunning, he was being caught in the invisible folds of a net. A frank and open nature has this advantage over

a false and deceptive one—that when matters are brought fairly out into the open, the liar feels as if all his customary defences have failed him, and does not know where to turn for aid, since falsehoods will no longer serve him.

"Well?" said Tom Merry.
 Levison's eyes gleamed a little, as if an idea had flashed into his brain. He smiled mockingly as he met the glance of the hero of the Shell.

"You seem to have pretty well made up your mind that I have the postcard," he remarked, in as careless a tone as he could assume.

"I am waiting for your proof about the letter."
 "I don't care to show you the letter."
 "We will undertake not to read it—a glance at it, to prove that it has a real existence—will be enough."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "And if I don't care to allow it—"
 "Then we shall conclude that you have my postcard."
 "And then?"
 "We shall search you for it."

Levison laughed lightly.
 "Is that sort of ragging allowed at St. Jim's?" he asked mockingly. "When I was at—at my old school, the prefects would have stopped that sort of thing."

"Shut the door, Figgy."
 Figgins closed the door, and, as an additional precaution, turned the key in the lock. Levison's eyes dilated a little. He was locked up in the study with half a dozen fellows, each of whom was more powerful than himself if it came to a struggle. But the mocking smile remained upon his face.

"I think I'll get out of this," he remarked.
 He advanced upon Tom Merry. The captain of the Shell grasped him and stopped him. Levison threw his arms round Tom Merry, and struggled for a moment. Then he reeled back, gasping. He had not succeeded in shaking Tom Merry. It was like the rush of a wave upon a rock, the wave receding in broken foam.

Levison panted.
 "That won't do you any good," said Tom Merry calmly. Levison smiled in a curiously feline way.

"Well, if a gang of you have come here to rag me, I suppose I've no chance," he said. "At the same time, I don't see why my private letters should be seen by everybody. You say you have lost a postcard—"

"I say my postcard was taken from the rack."
 "There are such occurrences as fellows taking things, and shoving them in their pockets, and forgetting all about them," suggested Levison. "Suppose a fellow took the card down, intending to carry it up to you, and forgot—"

"I've asked nearly everybody about it."
 "You might have taken it yourself and slipped it into your pocket, intending to read it later, and forgotten it."

"Nonsense!"
 "Unless, of course, you are infallible," said Levison, sarcastically. "I mean, any common or garden chap might have done it."

"I did not do it."
 "I say you might. I shouldn't wonder if you have the blessed thing in one of your pockets now," said Levison, with a yawn. "Such things have happened to me. This may be a jape of yours, too, to set the fellows against me. Look here, then—turn out your pockets, and I'll turn out mine. If you've not got the postcard, I'll show the letter."

Tom Merry looked at him steadily.
 "What do you mean, Levison? You know I've not got the postcard."

Levison shrugged his shoulders.
 "I don't know anything of the sort," he said. "I suspect that you have tried to fix this on me because you don't like me. It's easy enough to get up anything against a new fellow who hasn't a friend in the place. It's rotten mean; but I dare say that doesn't make any difference to you."

Tom Merry flushed crimson.
 "Don't mind the cad, Tom Merry!" said Blake. "Let's have that postcard off him. I know he's got it."

"Put it to the test," said Levison. "Let Merry turn out his pockets, and then I'll turn out mine. I say this is a scheme against me, or else a mistake of Merry's. I've a right to ask to see whether Merry's got the card or not."

"Rot!"
 "Wats, deah boy?"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Herries. "He's only trying to gain time; but let him have his way. We don't want a cad like that to be able to say he didn't have fair play. Turn your pockets out, Tom Merry. It won't take a minute."

"He doesn't want to," said the new junior, tauntingly. "Merry objects."

Tom Merry clenched his hands.
 "I'll turn them out, to satisfy the fellows," he said. "Not to please you. As for you, you've got the postcard, and you

know it, and if I find it on you, I'll give you the licking of your life, afterwards."

"I'll take the licking without lifting a finger, if I've got the postcard."

Tom Merry thrust his hands into his jacket pockets, and turned out the lining. There was a general exclamation of surprise.

From one of the turned-out pockets a postcard fluttered to the floor. Blake stooped and picked it up. It was addressed, in Wharton's hand, to Tom Merry, School House, St. Jim's. It was the missing postcard!

CHAPTER 11.

Mellish Requires a Loan.

JACK BLAKE held up the postcard silently. Tom Merry stared at it blankly.

A sneering smile crossed Levison's face.

"Is that the card?" he asked.

"Yes," said Blake.

"Then I hope you're satisfied?"

"Bai Jove!"

Levison turned away towards the fire, with a careless whistle, and sat down. Tom Merry took the card from Blake's hand.

"I suppose this is it?" he said slowly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

There could be no mistake about it. The fellows were all looking curiously at Tom Merry. They did not believe for a moment Ernest Levison's hint that Tom Merry had known that the card was there, and had purposely worked this up against the new boy. But it was very curious that Tom Merry should have put the postcard in his pocket and forgotten about it. It was not at all like the hero of the Shell. He was not wont to be absent-minded. Even Skimpole was seldom so absent-minded as this.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy again. "It's vewy remarkable! You are an absent-minded beggah, Tom Mewwy, and no mistake!"

"I can't understand it," said Tom Merry at last.

"Oh, you forgot about it?" said Blake.

"I haven't the slightest recollection of seeing it before. In fact, I didn't know that a postcard had come for me until you told me in my study, Blake."

"You must have taken it down in passing the rack, and forgotten."

"I suppose it's possible," said Tom Merry slowly.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy, it's quite poss. These things do occur, you know," said D'Arcy sagely. "I wemembah once forgettin' that I had a new silk hat, and goin' out in my old one on a Sunday, you know. It's wemarkable, but quite true."

"I don't understand it."

"No. It's wathah difficult to forget about a toppah, but—"

"I don't understand this."

Levison yawned.

"Well, if you fellows are finished here—" he began.

Herries unlocked the door. The discovery of the postcard had silenced even Herries for the time. But Herries looked unconvinced. Herries's faith in Towser was unshaken, and he did not trust the new boy a quarter of an inch.

"We're going," said Blake.

Tom Merry turned to Levison, a troubled look on his handsome face.

"I don't rightly understand this," he said. "I've never had a lapse of memory like that before. I can't catch on to it at all. But I suppose I have been unjust to you. I beg your pardon."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Levison. "If you put it like that, I take back what I said about it being a scheme against me. I'm willing to believe that it was a lapse of memory. It's all right."

"Well, I'm sorry."

"It's all right."

The juniors left the study, all of them silent and puzzled. Herries paused in the doorway, and the others stopped for him. Herries looked straight at the new boy, who smiled and showed his teeth.

"You're jolly deep," said Herries, in his slow way. "You're too deep for me, Levison. But I don't trust you. I believe there's some trick about this."

"Trick! What do you mean?"

"I don't know. But I don't believe in you. I want you to understand that, that's all."

"Oh, come on, Herries!" exclaimed Blake. "The whole thing's explained, and Levison comes out of it all right."

"Yaas, wathah."

Herries looked obstinate.

"All I've got to say is, that I don't believe him," he

said. "I don't know how he's worked it, but it's a trick of some sort."

And the big Fourth Former moved away with his heavy tread. The others followed him in silence. Levison had cleared himself, certainly; yet no one there trusted him any more than before. It was curious, but they all felt that it was so.

Mellish remained in the study. He closed the door after the juniors. There was a glitter in Mellish's eye that would have warned Levison of mischief, if he had known the cad of the Fourth better.

"Good!" said Mellish, in a tone of approval.

Levison stared at him.

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

"I mean it was very clever."

"Clever?"

"Yes."

Levison drew a deep breath, looking at Mellish all the time. His thin hands were clenching, till it seemed as if the nails must be driven into his palms.

"I don't understand you," he said at last.

Mellish laughed.

"Are you sure of that?"

"I said so."

"When a fellow comes to a school, and one sees that he has been to a school before, and he declines to mention the name of that school," said Mellish easily, "what is one apt to think about it, would you say?"

Levison yawned.

"Is that a conundrum?"

"No," said Mellish. "It isn't a conundrum; it's a question. I will answer it if you won't. One naturally suspects that the fellow left his last school under a cloud of some sort."

"Indeed!"

Levison spoke the word quite calmly, but his lips came hard together.

"Just so," said Mellish, with a nod. "That is what a fellow would suspect, if he took the trouble to think it over. I have taken the trouble to think it over."

Levison gave another yawn.

"What then?" he asked. "Suppose—for the sake of argument—that there was anything in it, you'd know nothing for certain without knowing what school it was?"

Mellish grinned.

"Quite true," he said. "And in that case, if I were interested in the matter, I should take the trouble to find out the name of the school."

"Why?"

"Oh, mere curiosity, of course!"

"You might find it difficult."

"I might," assented Mellish. "But in this case, as it happens, I found it particularly easy."

Levison gave a bound. Mellish had surprised him out of his cynical coolness.

"What!" shouted Levison.

Mellish laughed with enjoyment.

"Ah! Have I startled you?"

"A little," said Levison, relapsing into his old manner. "Not that it matters. I don't care if you have made the discovery—except that I wouldn't gratify your caddish curiosity. But you haven't found out."

"Yes, I have found out, my boy. There was your box in the dorm., you know," said the cad of the Fourth, with relish.

"You've been looking at that?"

"Yes."

It was locked. You wouldn't dare to force it. By George, if you have, I'll complain to the Head!" exclaimed Levison, his eyes glittering.

"I've done nothing of the sort. You'll find the box exactly as you left it," said Mellish coolly. "I've been called a rogue sometimes, but never a fool. All I have done was to remove a label, and discover what was on an old label that I detected underneath."

Levison turned white.

"And what was that?"

"It was the name of a place to which the box had been sent on some earlier occasion."

"The name of a school, in fact?"

"Precisely."

"And you make a point of that," said Levison contemptuously. "If you must know, the box was bought second-hand in London—you get just as good a box, at half the price, if you get it second-hand."

But Mellish only chuckled.

"You can tell that to babies," he said. "It won't do for me. Why were you so interested in Tom Merry's postcard?"

"I wasn't."

"Then why did you take it from the letter-rack?"

"I thought that matter had been cleared up plain enough."

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"So did the others; but I didn't. There is such a thing as sleight of hand," grinned Mellish. "Such a thing as grappling with a fellow, and taking the chance of slipping a postcard into his pocket. Keep off!"

He dodged round the table as Levison ran at him. The new boy paused, his face white, his breath panting.

"Keep off, you fool," said Mellish. "If you lay a finger on me, I'll go straight to Tom Merry and tell him everything. You'd know what to expect then?"

Levison stood still, clenching his hands hard.

"Then you don't mean to give me away?" he said.

"Why should I?"

Levison breathed a little easier.

"We're study mates, and you're the sort of fellow I can get on with," said Mellish coolly. "I'm your friend so long as you're mine."

"Done!" said Levison.

His look and tone expressed a relief he could not conceal. Mellish smiled.

"We're friends then?" he asked.

"As long as you like," said Levison.

"Good. By the way—"

"Well?"

"Could you lend me a half-crown till Saturday?"

There was a sneer on Mellish's lips as he asked the question. Levison drew a quick breath. He understood.

"No," he said very quietly, "I couldn't."

"Perhaps it would be better for you if you could."

Levison stood still, silent for some minutes.

"I have a postal order here," he said. "It's for five shillings. Give me half-a-crown change, and you can have it."

Mellish took the postal order. The name of the payee was not filled in; it was an order that anyone could cash. The cad of the Fourth felt in his pockets, and produced a shilling.

"That's all the change I have," he said. "Can you wait till Saturday for the rest?"

"Yes," said Levison.

CHAPTER 12.

A Worry on the Mind.

TOM MERRY came into his study alone. The postcard had been read, and the other juniors had parted from him downstairs. There was a deep trouble in Tom Merry's face, and it drew the eyes of Manners and Lowther on him at once.

"What's the matter?" they asked together.

Tom Merry threw the postcard on the table.

"That's from Wharton," he said. "He's coming over tomorrow."

Lowther picked up the card. The message on the back from Harry Wharton, of Greyfriars, was brief:

"Dear Merry,—I shall have an exeat on Thursday, and shall be able to run over to St. Jim's, and see you about the arrangements for Saturday. I shall get to your place about five.—Always yours, HARRY WHARTON."

"Good!" said Lowther. "He'll get here after afternoon lessons are over, and we shall be able to stand him some tea. Luckily we are in funds. I hope no more dead mice will turn up in the jam."

"I've chucked the rest of that jam away," remarked Manners. "I wonder how Levison could go on eating it after what he found in it. He must have an inside of gutta-percha, I should think."

Tom Merry nodded absently.

"But what's the matter, Tommy?" asked Manners, looking at him. "There's nothing on the postcard to bother you, is there? I shall be glad to see Wharton, for one. He's a very decent chap."

"Nothing on the postcard—no."

"Then what is it?"

"I don't know what," said Tom Merry. "Either I'm losing my senses, or something's happened that I can't understand at all."

"Expound."

Tom Merry explained the incident of the postcard. His chums listened with attention, and considerable surprise was manifested in their faces.

"It's jolly odd," said Manners. "I've never known you do an absent-minded thing like that before, Tommy."

"Nor I," said Lowther. "I suppose these things do happen; but I don't quite understand it."

"That's how I feel," said Tom Merry. "I've laughed often enough at Skimpy's absent-mindedness, and his coming into the classroom with his hat on, or going out for a walk without it. But even Skimpy never took a letter and put it in his pocket, and forgot at once that he had received it, I believe."

"It's odd."

"But there it is. It makes me feel as if I can't trust my

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blessed brain any more," said Tom Merry, looking distressed. "If your brain serves you a trick like that, it's not to be relied upon, I think."

"Well, such things do happen, you know," Monty Lowther remarked, as the only comfort he could give,

Tom Merry laughed ruefully.

"I know they do; but I don't like them to happen to me."

The chums were uncomfortably silent. Manners and Lowther could not understand it any more than Tom Merry could.

The door of the study opened, and Herries put his head in. There was a rather mysterious expression upon Herries' face.

"Hallo!" said Lowther, rather gruffly. "Blow Towser!"

"Eh?"

"Hang Towser!"

"What!"

"Towser can go to the dickens."

Herries stared at him.

"What are you driving at?" he exclaimed. "What's Towser doing?"

"Nothing that he should, I expect, and heaps of things he shouldn't," said Lowther. "But it's all right, if you haven't come to talk about Towser. I thought you were just going to spring him on us."

Herries snorted.

"Well, I wasn't. I wasn't thinking of Towser. Though, as a matter of fact, speaking of Towser—"

"There he goes!" groaned Lowther. "I knew he would."

"Well, you started the subject," said Herries. "Speaking of Towser—"

"Don't!"

"Don't what?"

"Speak of Towser."

"Look here—"

"Speak of anything else," implored Lowther. "Talk of shoes and ships and sealing-wax, and cabbages and kings. But spare us Towser."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" growled Herries. "Speaking of Towser—"

"Cheese it!"

"Speaking of Towser, it's remarkable that he—"

"Ring off!"

"It's remarkable that he should have got on to that new chap's character so quickly," said Herries. "Of course, Towser is an awfully intelligent dog. I could tell you stories about his intelligence—"

"It is wrong to tell stories," said Lowther solemnly.

"Oh, don't be a goat! I could relate personal experiences of his intelligence that would make you fairly sit up—"

"Make us lie down and go to sleep, you mean."

"Ass! Well, leaving that out, the way Towser got on to that new chap's character was a marvel. You're all finding him out now."

"I don't know," said Tom Merry. "I certainly suspected him of taking the postcard, though what his motive could be I can't imagine. But he cleared that up satisfactorily enough, as far as he was concerned."

Herries gave another expressive snort.

"That's what I've looked in to see you about," he said.

"What do you know about it?" asked Lowther, with interest.

"I'd have told you before if you hadn't jawed," said Herries. "That chap explained it all beautifully, and got out of it nicely. He gives me the impression of being the sort of chap who can always explain things. But I don't believe a word of it."

"But the postcard was in my pocket," said Tom Merry.

"I don't care."

"I must have taken it and forgotten it—"

"You don't do those things as a rule, do you?"

"No," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head, "and it's a worry on my mind to think I've done it once."

"Then don't think so. I tell you it's a trick," said Herries impressively. "He's taken us in somehow."

"How do you know?"

"I feel sure of it."

"But why?"

"Because I know he's a rotter. Mind, I don't say I can tell you how he worked it—he's too deep for me, I confess that. But it's a trick of some sort, and he's taken you in. That's what I came here to say. Don't let that worry your mind, Tom Merry, because it's not as he made out. He had that postcard when we went into the study. How he got it into your pocket, I don't know, unless he's a blessed magician. But there it is. And that's all."

And Herries left the study. He paused a moment in the doorway to look back, and make the impressive statement.

"Towser knew him. Towser never makes a mistake. That's all right."

Then he departed.



Levison put his slim fingers into the tea-pot, and drew forth a mouse, dripping with hot tea. "Ah! I thought so!" he exclaimed. (See page 10.)

He left Manners and Lowther grinning. Their faith in Towser's sagacity was not equal to that of Herries. But Tom Merry was looking very thoughtful.

CHAPTER 13.

When Greek Meets Greek.

DAME TAGGLES, the proprietress of the little tuckshop behind the elms in the quad, was about to close and lock her door, when Mellish of the Fourth came in. Mrs. Taggles was never loth to spare an extra minute or two for a late comer, and she drew back the door again. Maggs, of the Fourth, and Belknap, of the Shell, followed Mellish in. They were fellows very like Mellish, and chummed with him when he had any money. He evidently had money now; his late visit to the tuckshop showed that.

"What can I do for you, Master Mellish?" asked Mrs. Taggles, glancing at the postal order in the Fourth-Former's hand.

"I want you to change this, Mrs. Taggles," said Mellish, throwing it on the counter in an airy way, "and trot out the tarts and the ginger-pop."

"Certainly, Master Mellish."

And Mrs. Taggles handed over the five shillings for the postal order, and forthwith supplied the articles required. Mellish slipped two shillings into his pocket, and the other three were expended in a feed. Maggs and Belknap were quite enthusiastic about Mellish. They assured him that they had always said that he was a decent chap and a splendid fellow, and ate tarts and drank ginger-beer at the same time. And Mellish had quite his money's worth in flattery. That was probably what he was spending it for. Mellish was very far from being generous; but, like most fellows, generous or mean, he liked to be called generous and considered liberal and free with his money.

Dame Taggles, having netted all the part of the fund that Mellish was disposed to expend, showed some signs of impatience to get her little shop closed. The light gleaming from the windows still attracted other eyes. Fatty Wynn, of the New House, looked in, clad for a sprint round the quad.

"Hallo! Who's feeding here?" he asked.

"We are," said Mellish. "Come and have a ginger-pop?"

"Thanks awfully," said Fatty, much astonished at such an offer from Mellish. "Have you been robbing a bank, old man?"

"Oh, I'm in funds!"

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"Jolly good! I wish I were."

"I'm getting a bigger allowance now," said Mellish, in a lofty way. "I expect to have a good deal more money in the future. Come and have a ginger and a tart."

"Well, I never refuse an offer of that sort," said Fatty. And he looked out into the darkness of the quad., and addressed someone invisible: "I say, I sha'n't be a minute, you chaps."

"You jolly well won't be," said the voice of Figgins. "Come and finish your sprint, and don't spoil your wind with gorging!"

"Just one tart."

"Rats!"

"Mellish is standing treat."

"Mellish! The sky will fall next. Whom has he been robbing?"

"I'm not asking you, anyway," scowled Mellish, as Figgins looked in at the doorway. "You can buzz off!"

"I shouldn't accept if you did," said Figgins cheerfully.

"Come on, Fatty!"

"I haven't had the ginger."

"You're not going to. Come on!"

"But the tart."

"Bosh! Come on!"

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Lend a hand, Kerr."

Kerr came in, grinning, also in running clothes. They took an arm each of Fatty Wynn, and propelled him out of the tuckshop, in spite of his protests. The sound of footsteps and exostulations died away in the shadowy quadrangle.

"Dear me, how late it is!" said Mrs. Taggles, addressing the clock.

The juniors took the hint. As Mellish evidently did not intend to extract the other two shillings from his pocket, Maggs and Belknap had nothing to wait for. They rose from the high stools, or, rather, slipped down from them.

"Well, that was a good feed," said Belknap, as they left the tuckshop together. "Your pater giving you a bigger allowance, Mellish?"

"Yes, that's it," assented Mellish.

"And he's going to keep it up?"

"Oh, yes!"

"What luck!" said Maggs enviously. "My pater screws me down to a bob a week, and I get a tanner in stamps from my married sister. Lot of good that is to a chap at St. Jim's, ain't it?"

"Who on earth's that?" exclaimed Belknap, as a shadowy form loomed up under the elms.

The three juniors started nervously. It seemed as if a phantom form had detached itself from the shadows. But it was only the new boy.

"It's all right," said Levison quietly.

"You—Levison?"

"Yes," said Levison. "I see you've been having a bit of a feed, you fellows. Your pater is making you a decent allowance—eh, Mellish?"

"Yes," said Mellish.

"And he's going to keep it up—eh? You'll have more money in the future?"

"Yes," repeated Mellish defiantly.

"How good!" said Levison carelessly.

They went into the School House together. Both Mellish and Levison had preparation to finish. They went up to their study, the other two fellows going their own ways.

Mellish was feeling uneasy. He knew now that Levison had been watching the feed in the tuckshop, though for what purpose he could not imagine. But he was beginning to feel vaguely afraid of the new boy. Yet, he held the trump card—that was certain. He knew the new boy's secret!

"Better get the prep. done," said Levison easily.

"Rotten to have prep. on the first night. We didn't at—at my old school. But it's got to be done."

"Yes," said Mellish.

"I want to talk to you afterwards."

"Oh!"

They finished their preparation in silence. Then Levison looked at the little metal clock on the mantelpiece—a clock that had belonged to Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, and was of American manufacture. He had brought it with him from New York. There were many things belonging to Lumley-Lumley in the study, and it was likely that they would remain the property of Mellish, as it seemed to be nobody's business to inquire about them. When Mr. Lascelles Lumley-Lumley, the millionaire, arrived, he was not likely to trouble his head about a clock and a bookcase and a square of Brussels carpet and a few books. Mellish was already congratulating himself on being the heir of the Outsider.

"Nine o'clock!" said Levison.

"Bedtime's half-past," said Mellish, rising and stretching

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his limbs. "I think I'll go down into the common-room for a jaw with the fellows before bed."

"I want to speak to you first."

"Well, go ahead!"

"It's about Lumley-Lumley."

Mellish shifted uneasily.

"Blessed if I like that subject, Levison! Can't you find something a bit more cheerful to talk about?"

"No."

Mellish set his lips.

"Then you'll talk it over with somebody else. I don't like it. I'm going down."

Levison crossed to the door, and placed his back to it. There was a smile on his face, but it was a smile that was more threatening than a frown could have been.

"You are not going down yet," he said.

Mellish clenched his fists.

"You'll stop me?"

"Yes, if you try to pass before I've spoken what I want to say."

"You—you cad! You expelled cad!" shouted Mellish. "Get out of the way! Do you think you're going to bully me? Why, I could get you shown up before the whole school with a word! You'd be kicked out of here to-morrow if the Head knew!"

Levison smiled still more.

"And you?" he asked.

"I! What do you mean? I'm in no danger, am I?"

"I think you are. A thief would surely be expelled from any school!"

"A thief! Do you dare to call me a thief? What do you mean?" demanded Mellish, in a fury with which fear was mingled.

"I mean that I have missed a postal order from my writing-case," said Levison, in low, distinct tones. "I mean that I have the number, and can prove that I bought that postal order myself to send to a firm in London for some things. I have the counterfoil, and the postmaster where I bought it could prove the purchase. I mean that I have missed this postal order."

Mellish turned white with fear.

"You—you plotting hound! You gave it me!" he shrieked.

"Did I?" said Levison unpleasantly. "How are you going to prove that? What did I give it you for? Are you going to the Head to explain that you were blackmailing me? Yes, my boy, blackmail is the word. You can only deny that you were a thief by admitting that you were a blackmailer, and I fancy that you would be expelled from St. Jim's for either of those little failings."

Mellish sank helplessly into a chair.

"You scoundrel!" he gasped.

Levison laughed lightly.

"I might call you by fancy names, too," he remarked, "but what's the use? We'd better be friends. I don't blame you for making money when you had the chance, and you can't blame me for nipping it in the bud. It's a case of Greek meeting Greek, you know, and honours are easy."

Mellish grinned faintly.

"I sha'n't say anything," he said, after a pause.

"Of course you won't; and I sha'n't, either. Let the matter drop," said Levison, with a gesture of indifference; and he moved from his position by the door. "I've offered you my friendship already. I offer it again."

"All right."

"And now about Lumley-Lumley."

Mellish did not utter a word of objection this time. Whether he felt any friendly feelings towards the new boy is very doubtful. But there was no doubt at all that Levison's cunning and unscrupulousness had cowed him.

"Taggles has the key of the vault, and Lumley-Lumley is in his coffin in the vault," said Levison. "I want to see him."

Mellish started up with a white face.

"What! And at night! Are you mad?"

"No, quite sane," said Levison, with perfect coolness.

"Look here, I have a reason. What the reason is I'll tell you afterwards, if what I suspect turns out to be correct. If I'm wrong, no need to say anything about the matter."

"I don't follow you."

"It doesn't matter; you'll see later, perhaps. I want to get the key from Taggles, and get into the vault."

"Impossible!"

"There's no such word to a chap who means to have his way. I want to get that key from Taggles, and you're going to help me."

Blustering words rose to Mellish's lips, but under the keen, penetrating eye of the new boy he could not utter them. He collapsed into the chair again.

"Oh, all right!" he muttered. "I'll help you."

CHAPTER 14.

Getting the Keys.

"GOOD-EVENING, Taggles!"

Taggles, the school porter, twisted round in his chair before the bright fire in his lodge and grunted. He had a glass of gin-and-water, hot, at his elbow, and a pipe in his mouth, and, the duties of the day being done, was making himself comfortable. He frowned majestically as the new boy at St. Jim's and Mellish entered his lodge.

Levison greeted him with a cordial smile.

Taggles grunted.

"Which it ain't a good-evening," he said. "It's cold, and it's misty. And I ain't glad to see any blessed boys in my lodge. Go hout!"

"I've come to explain—"

"Go hout!"

"About that little joke of mine in the dormitory to-day," said Levison pleasantly. "I'm sorry you took it so seriously. You surely didn't think I would let you carry up that heavy box without a little recognition? Ahem!"

Taggles's rugged face assumed a more amiable expression. Levison's quick eyes all the while were roaming over the room. Where did the school porter keep his keys?

If he had them about him, Levison's task was likely to be a difficult one, though he would not have abandoned it on that account. But as the thought passed through his mind he reflected that the porter would not be likely to keep a large and heavy bunch of keys on his person after the day's work was done.

Little escaped the keen eyes of the new junior. In sixty seconds after he was inside the lodge he detected a bunch of keys hanging on a nail with a hat hanging over them. He could see the end of one key, and that was enough.

He glanced at Mellish, and closed one eye, the agreed-upon signal that he had discovered the whereabouts of the keys.

"Which, if that's your intention, young gent., I'm glad to see you," Taggles was saying. "Which it was a werry heavy box, it was, and I'm not so young as I used to be."

Levison laid a shilling on the table.

"That's all right, Mr. Taggles, eh?"

The "Mr. Taggles" pleased Taggles, who was seldom promoted to the rank of Mr. His horny hand closed on the coin.

"Thank you kindly, Master Levison. You're werry kind."

"Not at all," said Levison blandly. "I'm sure you've earned it, Taggles. I wish I could make it five. Come on, Mellish."

He stepped back. Mellish made a step towards the fire, as if to warm his hands, caught his foot in the rug, and stumbled against the table. Over went the little table, and over went the glass of gin-and-water, flooding Taggles's knees and scalding him, for it was very hot.

The school porter jumped up with a wild yell.

"Ow! I'm scalded! I'm burnt! Ow!"

Levison made one step to the corner where the hat hung, reached up for the bunch of keys, unhooked them, and thrust them under his coat.

It was done almost in a second.

Taggles, hopping in pain and anger, never looked at Levison. As soon as he could spare attention from his soaked trousers, he glared at Mellish.

"You clumsy young hass!" he roared.

"I'm sorry!" said Mellish cheerfully. He did not look very sorry. "It was an accident. I'm very sorry, Mr. Taggles."

"You've broke the glass! You'll pay for that!" howled Taggles. "I'm scalded! I'm soaked! Ow! You young idiot!"

"Oh, an accident's an accident," said Levison. "Mr. Taggles seems annoyed, Mellish, so we'd better go. Good-night, Taggles!"

The porter grunted, and the two juniors quitted the lodge. Taggles's voice could still be heard within, and the shriller voice of Mrs. Taggles mingled with his hoarse tones. Levison grinned.

"You did that jolly well, Mellish," he exclaimed.

Mellish chuckled softly. He was rather proud of the way he had served Taggles, and any ill-natured trick was pleasing to Mellish.

"You've got the keys?" he asked.

"Of course! You know which is the key of the chapel vault, I suppose?" asked Levison.

"Yes, I could pick it out."

"Good! I'll take it, and drop the bunch near the lodge. When Taggles misses them he can hunt for them, and find them, and he'll think he dropped the bunch. Anyway, he won't be able to fix it on us."

"That's all right."

Levison paused in the glimmer of the lamp that burned over the gates. Mellish ran his eyes over the big, heavy

bunch of keys, and picked out a long, rusty key with a curious crossed end.

"That's the key of the vault. I've seen Taggles use it lots of times."

"Good!"

Levison detached the key from the bunch, and slipped it into his jacket-pocket. His eyes were glittering with satisfaction.

"Now I'll drop the bunch near Taggles's door," he remarked. "Come on."

It was very dark in the quad., especially where the shadows of the elm trees fell. As Levison and Mellish started towards the lodge there was a patter of feet in the darkness, and they stopped. Even as they stopped, three running forms came from the gloom and crashed against them. Mellish reeled against a tree, and Levison staggered and fell, and the bunch of keys went with a crash to the ground.

"Oh!" cried a voice.

"Ow!"

"Who's that?"

"New House cads, I expect! Collar them!"

"Hands off, you fools!" groaned Levison, recognising Tom Merry's voice.

"Hallo, I know that voice!" said Tom Merry, peering through the gloom. "Is that the new chap, Levison?"

"Yes, hang you!"

"Thanks! What are you mooning about in the dark for, making chaps run into you when they're doing an evening sprint?" demanded Tom Merry indignantly.

"You ass!"

Levison staggered to his feet. The sudden encounter had startled him, and he had been very much shaken. But what troubled him most was the thought that the chums of the Shell would have heard the keys crashing on the ground, and would guess what his purpose was in being out of the house at that hour. He was not long left in doubt upon the subject, either.

"You dropped something," said Monty Lowther. "I heard it fall. It sounded like a big bunch of keys."

"Yes, I heard it, too," said Manners. "Sorry I can't lend you any matches. Come on, you chaps. We shall catch cold if we stand still in these togs."

"Wait a minute," said Tom Merry quietly. "That was a bunch of keys you dropped, Levison."

"What if it was?" said Levison defiantly.

"Was it Taggles's bunch of keys?"

"Find out!"

"I know you had an idea of stealing his keys and paying a visit to the vault," said Tom Merry. "You said so, or as good as said so. You're not going to be allowed to do anything of the sort unless you can give a jolly good reason."

"Who will stop me?"

"I will. If you want to see that poor chap again, ask the Head, and he'll allow it if he thinks fit, or wait till Mr. Lunley comes. But you sha'n't go nosing round in the vault alone."

Levison forced a laugh.

"Well, I've lost the keys now," he remarked.

"Then they were Taggles's bunch?"

"Yes."

"You had taken them from his lodge, I suppose?"

"Exactly."

"You'll leave them where they lie, then," said Tom Merry.

Levison drew a hissing breath.

"Suppose I don't choose to?"

"You'll come straight into the School House now, or I'll call Taggles and tell him his keys are here," said Tom Merry.

Levison laughed.

"Then I'll come with you. I don't want to be reported to the Head."

"Very good. Taggles will see the keys when he comes out of his lodge in the morning," said Tom Merry. "That's all right. Come on."

And Levison, with extraordinary meekness, allowed himself to be marched into the School House by the Terrible Three. Mellish followed, grinning, in the dark. He knew that Levison had the key of the vault in his pocket. Tom Merry had jumped to the conclusion that Levison had just taken the keys, as he had found the juniors just outside Taggles's lodge, and he did not guess the cause of Levison's meek submission.

CHAPTER 15.

The Chapel Vault.

"BED!" said Kildare, looking into the junior common-room. "Make a move!"

And the juniors moved. It was half-past nine, the bedtime for the Lower Forms at St. Jim's. Levison rose from his seat in a corner of the room, and yawned. Tom Merry had kept an eye on him since the incident in the quad., but the new boy had shown no inclination to leave the House.

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

But Tom Merry was not satisfied. He tapped Jack Blake on the shoulder as the juniors moved towards the door.

"Well, my son?" said Blake affably. "Still bothering about that blessed postcard? Forget it; these things do happen."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, no! I want to speak to you about Levison. He's got a scheme of visiting the chapel vaults, and he tried to get Taggles's keys this evening. They're left lying in the quad, somewhere. I think he may try to get hold of them. I don't know what his game is, but it's horrible to have the fellow nosing about the vault, considering what—that is there. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," said Blake, with a shudder. "What a morbid beast! The Head would be down on him like a sack of coke if he knew."

"I think he ought to be stopped."

"Yes, rather!" said Blake emphatically.

"Well, that's why I've mentioned it. He'll be in your dorm., and perhaps you'll be able to jump on him if he tries to get out."

"You bet I will!" said Blake.

Levison went up to the Fourth-Form dormitory with the rest of his Form with perfect nonchalance of manner. It was hard to believe that this was his first day at St. Jim's. He might have been there for years.

Blake spoke to him bluntly.

"You don't get out of this dorm. to-night," he said.

Levison stared at him.

"I suppose I shall do as I choose," he remarked, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"That's just where you make your mistake," said Blake calmly. "You won't! We're not going to have any ghastly prowling about in the vault. I wonder you've got enough nerve, even if you are such a morbid beast."

Levison laughed.

"I might have a reason," he said.

"What reason?"

"I prefer to keep that to myself."

"You'll keep yourself in the dorm., too. Mind, I shall sleep with one eye open, and if I don't hear you shifting someone else will. And you'll get it in the neck."

Levison shrugged his shoulders again, and walked towards his bed, as if the discussion was quite indifferent to him.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I regard the chap as a beast, you know. Fancy wantin' to prowl wround the vault when poor Lumley-Lumley is there in his coffin! It's howwid!"

"Rotten!" said Herries. "But what can you expect of the fellow? Didn't Towser want to go for him at the very first meeting? What about Towser now?"

Levison went to bed without another word. Kildare put the lights out. There was the usual run of talk from bed to bed ere the juniors went to sleep, but the new boy did not join in it.

Either he was asleep, or he affected to be so. The talk died away at last, and deep and regular breathing took its place.

The Fourth Form dormitory slept.

Eleven tolled out from the clock tower—eleven dull, heavy strokes through the quiet night. As if the sound had moved him, a junior sat up in bed in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House.

It was Ernest Levison.

He sat listening. The night was cold, and he pulled the bedclothes tightly round him as he sat. His eyes seemed to gleam in the darkness like a cat's. There was not a trace of sleepiness in Levison's face, if it could have been seen. Yet he had certainly had a fatiguing day.

The last sound of a closing door had died away below. Levison knew that the bedtime for the Fifth was ten o'clock, and that the Sixth were generally in bed by half-past, though those grandees of the top Form were left to decide that matter for themselves, as a rule. Only a few masters were likely to be up at eleven.

Levison quietly left his bed, after listening a few minutes, and stepped towards Mellish's bed. The cad of the Fourth was sleeping very uneasily. The task of the night was weighing on his mind even in slumber. The strokes of eleven had roused him a little, though not to wakefulness. The lightest touch of Levison's hand was sufficient to bring him broad awake.

"Hush!" whispered Levison, as two startled eyes opened.

Mellish shifted uncomfortably.

"Is that you, Levison?"

"Yes."

"Better give it up, and get back to bed. It's a-c-o-l-d."

"Come, out with you!"

Mellish set his teeth.

"I won't go into the vault," he said. "I've told you that. I wouldn't go in there for a thousand pounds."

"I don't want you to, you coward. I want you to help me out of the house, and wait for me outside. Besides, I don't know my way about here yet."

"I showed you the place."

"It's different in the dark. Look here, you've got to come!"

Mellish lay silent for a moment. He did not want to go; yet his curiosity was keenly aroused. Had his courage been equal to it, he would gladly have gone.

"What's the game?" he whispered. "What are you going for?"

"For a reason."

"Can't you tell me the reason?"

"It's a secret—now."

"Better get back to bed. I—"

"Come! And don't make a row."

He jerked the bedclothes off Mellish. The latter shivered, and was a great deal inclined to call out, and put an end to the expedition by waking Blake. But he did not. He was curious, and he was afraid of Levison. He dressed himself quietly, and Levison led the way from the dormitory. He closed the door behind him softly.

"How do you get out of the house?"

"There's a window in the hall, but—it's too early for that—the light's on still. We shall have to try a back window."

"Lead the way, then."

They crept down the back stairs. Mellish opened a window softly. He knew the way, even in the almost pitchy darkness, without a fault. Many a time had he crept out of the window with Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, to visit the Green Man at late hours, and play cards there—with Lumley—who now lay so cold and still in the vault under the chapel.

Mellish shivered at the thought that the last time he had opened that window Lumley had been with him, and had given him a hand down on the outside. He kept his thoughts to himself, however, and dropped to the ground unaided, and Levison dropped after him. They were in darkness, broken by a glimmer of starlight, and in the shadows of great buildings and trees. It was all new and strange to Levison, but Mellish knew every inch of the way, in darkness or in daylight. He had trodden it often enough.

"Where now?" asked Levison.

"This way! But hush; we're not far from the kennels." Levison followed Mellish by a path unseen and unknown to himself, but without a pause.

They came out of the shadows of the buildings, and into the clear starlight, and passed the ruined tower. Now Levison recognised his surroundings. He had examined them very keenly during the daylight, with a view to this. He felt in his pocket to make sure that the key was there.

The chapel, with its old grey walls heavy with ivy, loomed up before them. Grim and ghostly enough it looked in the dimness, with the ivy shaking and rustling in the wind.

Levison's nerves were of iron; but Mellish started at almost every sound, and even in the darkness Levison could see his face, it was so white.

They exchanged few words. In a few minutes more they stopped before a deep, low porch, covered with ivy in clinging dark masses.

"Is this the place?" asked Levison.

"Yes."

"Good! Show me the door."

Under the porch it was black as pitch. Mellish showed no readiness to enter the chilly portal. He was looking back towards the School House with a startled face. Levison muttered impatiently:

"What are you stopping for? Are you afraid of the shadows?"

"Hush! You can see the windows of the Fourth Form dorm. from here."

"What about it?"

"Look! I saw a light! Ah, look!"

Levison followed his startled glance. In the distant gloom from the dark mass of buildings a light glimmered in a window. It was only for a few moments, and then all was plunged in black shadow again.

"They're awake!" said Mellish.

"Are you sure that's the dormitory window?"

"Yes. They've missed us."

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't care. I don't suppose they'll take the trouble to come after us."

"You don't know them," said Mellish, with a shiver.

"Blake will come. Most likely he'll call Tom Merry, and half a dozen of them will come here to see if we're in the vault. They're up against this."

"I don't care! I shall have time to finish before they come."

"Finish!"

"Yes."

"In—in heaven's name, Levison, what are you going to do?"

"That's my business. Show me where the keyhole is." They entered the dark porch, Mellish trembling in every limb. He felt over the low oaken door, banded with iron, that was set in the thick stone.

"Here's the door, and here's the keyhole. Feel it!"

The key grated in the lock.

"All serene!" said Levison.

"You're as cool as ice, hang you!" muttered Mellish, his hand, trembling, touching Levison's, and finding it quite firm.

"Why not?"

"You know what's in there," muttered the other. "Lumley—dead!"

"Well, if he is dead, he cannot hurt us."

"Oh, I can't talk to you! What did you bring me here for?" muttered Mellish hoarsely. "I sha'n't come in."

"Please yourself about that."

Lumley pushed open the little door he had unlocked.

"There's a flight of steps inside," muttered Mellish. "It goes down right under the chapel. Mind you don't fall."

"Good!"

A match flared out, and Levison, shading it with his hand, lighted a dark-lantern he produced from under his coat. He sent one shaft of light into the black opening before him, and then shut it off.

"Wait here!" he whispered. "If those fellows should come, you can call out."

"All right!"

Levison descended into the vault.

CHAPTER 16.

The Dead.

MELLISH stood alone in the deep, dark stone porch, shaking in every limb. He was terrified; he hardly knew why. After all, what was there to be afraid of? If Tom Merry & Co. came to stop that visit to the chapel, which they regarded as desecration—well, they would not hurt him. He had no cause to be afraid of them. As for the vault, he was not called upon to enter it. Even if he had, what was there to fear? A dead youth, who had been his friend in life.

There was nothing to fear.

He knew it, yet he was shaking like a leaf in the wind.

It came into his mind that it was Levison whom he feared more than anything—Levison, that junior with the cold, icy voice, the cool, determined brain, the penetrating eyes, that missed nothing.

Mellish stood trembling in the darkness.

What was Levison doing?

He listened.

In the dead, still silence, broken only by the distant whisper of the wind in the leafless trees, the faintest sound was audible.

With straining ears, close to the half-open door, he tracked Levison through the vault.

He heard him descend the steps with feet that did not falter—a steady tread, as steady as if he were strolling in a garden in the sunlight. At the bottom of the steps he halted, and Mellish knew that it was to flash the lantern to and fro, and ascertain his bearings. A gleam or two of light came from below as the lantern moved, and glimmered in the dark porch.

Then the footsteps, fainter now, went on.

Levison was moving round the vault, in search of what he had come there to see—the coffin on its trestles.

Mellish shuddered. Would the new junior dare to approach it, dare to touch it? There was nothing to fear, true.

But Mellish knew that he would have fainted with terror if he had descended alone there in the darkness.

What was Levison doing now?

The footsteps had ceased.

Mellish strained his ears.

He remembered Levison asking if the coffin had been screwed down, and his satisfaction at hearing that the lid had been left unfastened, so that if Mr. Lumley-Lumley arrived soon enough, he could look upon his son once more before he was consigned to the earth.

Did he intend to open it, then, and gaze upon the features of the dead?

Why?

He had known Lumley-Lumley—known him slightly. But he had not been his friend. If anybody had ever been Lumley-Lumley's friend, it certainly was not Ernest Levison.

Then why should he wish to gaze upon the dead face? Was it possible that mere morbid curiosity could gain such an ascendancy, in such a cool, calculating nature as Ernest Levison's?

It was not likely.

Yet—

Mellish strained his ears to listen. What was Levison doing? He could hear nothing now. Twice the junior approached the oaken door, tempted to descend, and see what the junior inside the vault was doing, and twice he receded in fear. Then, setting his teeth, curiosity overcoming terror, Mellish pushed the oaken door wider open, and stepped inside upon the stone stair.

Below, in the gloom, he caught the glimmer of the lantern. Its light fell in a shaft across the blackness of the vault.

He could not see Levison. The latter was not standing in the light of the lantern; he was swallowed up in the blackness.

But the shaft of light fell across something—something that Mellish knew—something that stood upon trestles—the coffin of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

Mellish could see part of the coffin, where the light touched it, and his head swam with horror as he saw it.

For he saw that the coffin-lid was removed.

The coffin was open!

Mellish stood upon the steps, clinging to the oaken door, his heart beating like a hammer, his eyes dancing.

What was Levison doing?

The question seemed to shriek in his ears. What was that sound he heard? What was it? With creeping flesh he listened.

"Lumley—Lumley, old man!"

Levison's voice, soft and eerie and creepy in the darkness.

He was speaking to the dead boy.

Mellish stood rooted.

What did it mean? What horror was this? Was Levison mad?

Mad!

That must be the explanation—that was all it could be. He was mad—mad to penetrate into the gloomy vault at midnight, and speak to the boy who was dead as if he were still alive!

Low as Levison's voice was, the deep, hollow vault seemed to boom with echoes of it. The echoes died away, and there was silence—stony silence.

Mellish listened with a heart almost ceasing to beat.

Silence!

Then a sound! What was that sound? A sound of cloth rustling—of a body that was raised.

Mellish clung to the door. His tongue was cleaving to the roof of his mouth; his eyes no longer saw. Levison was mad—mad!

Again, through the hollow arches of the vault, that eerie whisper:

"Lumley!"

"Oh, Heaven!" muttered Mellish.

He would have fled, but his limbs refused to stir. Horror and deep, unreasoning fear, held him chained. He was like one in the grip of a nightmare, unable to stir hand or foot—helpless, fascinated.

What was Levison doing?

What was that? What was that?

A voice—low faint tones—not Levison's! Who else was in the vault?

Who else? Nobody else, nobody except—except the dead boy! Yet there was another voice—a voice Mellish knew.

He broke from the grip of terror.

With a wild shriek that rang through the vault in thunderous echoes, Mellish turned and fled up the stair again and out into the porch—out into the cool night air, his brow streaming with sweat.

He shrieked again, unconsciously, as he ran—shrieked and shrieked. He ran into a group of dark forms, and hands closed upon him, and grasped him, and he fought and struggled in unreasoning fear, striking and clawing and shrieking.

"Hold him!" cried a voice. "It's Mellish! What's the matter with him? Mellish, are you mad?"

CHAPTER 17.

The Dead Alive.

MAD—mad! For the moment Mellish was mad—mad with fear! But, as he recognised Tom Merry's voice, he ceased to struggle, and sobbed with sudden weakness. The juniors stood round him in amazement and consternation.

They had expected to find Levison and Mellish at the vault, but they had not expected this. Blake had awakened to find the two juniors gone, and he had awakened his chums, and called Tom Merry from the Shell dormitory. The juniors had found the window the two had left open behind them, and they had followed, angry, and determined to prevent the intrusion into the chapel vault. They had arrived too late for that; they had arrived to receive Mellish, flying from an unnameable dread, shrieking with terror till the quadrangle rang with it.

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A School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

Tom Merry held the junior by the arm. Mellish had utterly broken down; he was clinging to Tom Merry, and sobbing like a child.

Anger died away at the sight of that. The juniors were puzzled, and not a little alarmed. What was the matter with Mellish?

"Mellish, what has happened?"

"Tell us what has happened, deah boy?"

"My Heaven!" stammered Mellish. "My Heaven!"

"What is it?"

"Oh—oh!"

"Where is Levison?" asked Jack Blake quietly.

"Levison! In the vault!"

"What has he done?"

"The coffin—he has opened it!"

Tom Merry clenched his hand.

"The brute! But what is there to be frightened at? What is the matter with you?"

Mellish groaned.

"I heard him," he muttered hoarsely.

"What!"

"I heard his voice!"

"Whose? Levison's?"

"Yes—yes! But the other——"

"What are you saying?"

"I heard his voice," said Mellish, trembling. "I tell you, I heard it."

"Whose voice?"

"Lumley's!"

Tom Merry grasped him firmly.

"Are you playing a horrible joke on us, Mellish?"

The cad of the Fourth groaned again.

"Do I look like it? I tell you, I heard his voice!"

"Lumley's voice?"

"Yes."

"Lumley—dead!"

"I know he is! But I heard his voice. I thought I should go mad! Oh!"

"Bai Jove! He is mad," said D'Arcy. "He was frightened by the dark, you know, and lost his wits, deah boys."

"I suppose that's it."

"I heard his voice!" repeated Mellish doggedly.

"Is Levison still in the vault?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes."

"Then we'll jolly soon see about it. Come on, you chaps!"

Leaving Mellish there, the juniors hurried on to the porch. Mellish remained clinging to a tree. He was too weak and unnerved to take a step further, though every whisper of the wind frightened him to trembling.

Tom Merry and his comrades entered the porch, and Tom Merry led the way into the vault. The chums did not hesitate. Levison was in the vault, and they meant to know what he was doing there.

The light glimmered from the gloom of the vault. The lantern was standing on the floor. There was a sound of rustling, and a weak groan.

Then Levison's voice:

"Buck up, old fellow!"

The juniors halted, struck motionless. Whom was Levison speaking to?

They listened with tense nerves, their hearts almost ceasing to pulsate.

Would a voice reply—or was Levison mad—mad with fear, and babbling to himself there in the darkness?

They listened.

"Buck up! I'll soon have you out of this!"

"Yes—yes! Thank Heaven you came, Levison!"

Tom Merry clutched Blake's arm. Blake was shaking like an aspen.

"Good heavens!" said Digby.

"That's Lumley's voice."

"What—what—wh—"

"He's not dead!"

"Gweat Scott!" muttered D'Arcy, through his chattering teeth.

"Not dead!" whispered Herries.

Their voices were audible in the silence. Levison's sharp, rapping tones came back from the gloom.

"Is that you, Tom Merry?"

"Yes." In spite of himself, Tom Merry's voice shook.

"So you followed me?"

"Yes."

"You're in time to be useful," said Levison, with his chuckle—a chuckle that sounded almost terrible in that place, and under those strange circumstances. "Lend me a hand with Lumley."

"Levison, what has happened?"

"Nothing."

"Is Lumley alive?"

"Yes."

"Alive! Good heavens! Alive!"

"Yes. He was in a trance."

"Oh!"

"That's why I came here—to see," said Levison. "It's lucky for Lumley you didn't succeed in stopping me."

"Why didn't you tell us? If we had known—if we had had the faintest suspicion——"

"I preferred to keep it to myself till I was sure," said Levison coolly. "Don't stand talking there. Help me with him. He's as weak as water, and a bit heavy for one chap to carry."

"God bless you, Levison," said a faint, quivering voice.

"Heaven bless you!"

"Good!" said Levison. "It's the first time anybody's ever blessed me, I think; it's quite a change. Pick up the lantern and show a light, some of you; don't stand gaping there!"

Levison's tone was not pleasant. What had happened had not changed him in the least; the same cool, cynical, and insolent manner was his still. But he had earned the right to be obeyed.

Digby picked up the lantern, and turned it upon Levison and his burden. Levison held the Outsider of St. Jim's in his arms—a ghostly figure. Lumley-Lumley was deadly white, and seemed only half conscious. There was a spot of blood upon his cheek.

His eyes met Tom Merry's wildly.

"Heaven knows how glad I am of this, Lumley!" said Tom Merry softly. "Let me help you, old chap."

He took the lad in his arms, and, helped by Blake, carried him out of the vault. The others followed.

Lumley-Lumley shivered in the night air, and Levison wrapped his coat round him. They carried him towards the door of the School House. There was, of course, no thought of entering the place quietly now. The sooner the whole house was awakened the better, with the strange news they had to tell. Mellish joined them shivering, scarcely able to believe his eyes.

"He's alive!" said Blake.

"Alive! Alive! But——"

"It was a trance!"

"Oh, what fools we were!" said Digby. "He had a kind of trance once before—you remember. We might have guessed."

It was easy to say so after the event. No one had ever known that Jerrold Lumley was subject to trances, at St. Jim's—he had never said so. The curious fit he had had once had not been specially noted. And Dr. Short had believed him dead.

Blake rang a loud peal at the School House door. There was a light burning in the hall still, but the house was locked up for the night.

It was some minutes before the door was opened. It was opened by Mr. Railton, the House-master himself.

He stared blankly at the sight of the juniors.

"Tom Merry! Boys! What does this mean?"

"We have news, sir—don't be startled—Lumley-Lumley——"

"Lumley-Lumley!"

"Yes, sir, he's—he's not dead!"

"Not dead!" cried Mr. Railton.

"No, sir."

"What do you mean, Merry?"

"Look, sir."

Blake pulled the edge of the coat aside, and showed Lumley-Lumley's face. The master of the School House gave a violent start.

"Lumley!"

"Yes, sir."

"Come in—come in! Bring him in! I will ask you no questions now, Merry, but one—who discovered this?"

"Levison, sir—the new fellow."

"I shall not forget this, Levison. Give the poor lad to me, I will carry him up to bed. Kildare!" The captain of St. Jim's had just come down, called up by the loud ringing of the bell. "Kildare! It is Lumley—he was not dead! Will you ring up Dr. Short at once, and tell him—and tell him to come here?"

And Mr. Railton carried Lumley-Lumley upstairs. From the pale, cold lips of the Outsider of St. Jim's came no word.

CHAPTER 18.

A Surprising Recognition.

THAT it was a nine day's wonder at St. Jim's we need not say.

The next morning it was all over the school, and both Houses rang with the strange tale.

Levison was the hero of the hour.

Levison, whom no one had taken a liking to, whom even his own study-mate feared and disliked, had the school at his feet.

He was called upon to tell the story a hundred times, and he told it carelessly enough, as if attaching little importance to his own part in it.

But that was only on the outside; inwardly, Levison was intensely gratified by the sensation he had made, and the kudos that came to him; and by the fact that Tom Merry & Co. were put quite in the shade by his exploit.

The fact that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley might have been buried alive but for Ernest Levison was enough to make the latter a hero.

His iron nerve, too, in penetrating alone into the vault at dead of night, on such an errand, won great admiration, though some of the fellows said it was unnatural and uncanny.

But the result had been the saving of a life—and anything could be glossed over and excused for that.

Levison was called before the Head the first thing in the morning, to explain. He did so in a perfectly unconcerned manner.

He had known, he explained, that Jerrold Lumley was subject to trances. Lumley had had such an attack when he was with Levison in London. In their talk afterwards, he had told Levison about that strange malady, and asked him to say nothing of it—for Lumley's ruling passion was a desire to be considered as "hard" as he wished to be, and a hint that he was weak or nervous was enough to throw him into a fury. That his strange complaint could ever visit him severely enough to cause a risk of his being mistaken for dead, had never crossed his mind, so far as Levison knew. It was not a thought that would present itself to the boy's mind, his attacks having been so brief at all previous times, seldom for more than a few minutes.

Levison had never thought of such a thing, either, until he arrived at St. Jim's and learned that Lumley-Lumley was dead.

Then it had crossed his mind that there might be some doubt in the matter, especially when he learned that the juniors had only very vague ideas of what complaint the boy had died of.

He had determined to discover for himself if there was anything in his surmise that Lumley-Lumley might be only in a trance.

At this point the Head interrupted him.

"You should have acquainted me with your suspicions, Levison," he said.

"You would have considered them only a fancy, sir, I thought."

"Probably," the Head had to admit; "but I should have caused Lumley-Lumley to be seen by my medical man again before the coffin was screwed up."

Levison smiled in a way that was not complimentary to the medical man, or to the medical profession generally.

"Dr. Short had already certified him as dead, sir," he replied. "He would have gone to the coffin with the feeling that Lumley was dead, and that he was wasting his time. And he would have left him for dead, sir."

The Head looked at Levison. It was quite true; but what kind of a boy was this who could work out such calculations?

"Besides, sir, it wasn't a mere look at him that was required," went on Lumley. "I pricked his cheek with a needle, to see whether blood was flowing yet—and it was! Then I was certain. I chafed and massaged him then till he opened his eyes—he was already partially recovered from the trance, though goodness knows how long he would have stayed insensible but for me. Very likely he would not have come to himself before the funeral."

The Head shuddered.

"Do not speak of that, Levison, it is too terrible to think of. Oh, what a terribly narrow escape! Levison, I wish you had spoken to your masters instead of carrying out this investigation single-handed. I think you have been too self-sufficient in the matter. But that is a slight fault, when I think of what you have done—that you have, in all probability, saved a life—and prevented a fearful calamity. Levison, I am glad you came to this school—I am deeply grateful to you."

"Thank you, sir!"

And the Head shook hands with Levison, and dismissed him.

Immediately he was outside the Head's study, the other fellows were thronging round him.

There were no lessons that morning. It was impossible for the juniors to put the slightest attention into their work, and the masters had wisely resolved to grant a morning's holiday to celebrate the recovery of Lumley-Lumley.

The juniors gathered in groups in the passages and the quad, to discuss the wonderful happening.

Levison, for the time, was monarch of all he surveyed. Only Herries still held out. Herries admitted that the new

boy had done a great thing—that he was clever, and had heaps of nerve, but—

"But he's a rotter," said Herries. "He's a rotter, all the same. I don't want to say anything against him, and I won't! But he's a rotter."

And that remained Herries's fixed opinion. But no one listened to Herries. Ernest Levison was the general hero for the time.

Nothing else was talked of all the morning. Bulletins from Lumley-Lumley's room were eagerly read. They were put up on the notice-board in the hall every hour, so keen was the interest of the whole school in his progress. He was well—Dr. Short, amazed to find him alive, had pronounced that he was not only certain to recover, but was practically recovered already. It was only the trance that had held him in its grip; and the effects of that were wearing off.

A telegram was received from Mr. Lascelles Lumley-Lumley that morning, to say that he had landed, and was coming on to St. Jim's immediately. And gladly enough the Head sent a reply wire to tell the millionaire that the son whom he had already learned was lost to him, was yet alive, and ready to greet him on his arrival at the school.

The endless discussion of the subject ebbed towards noon, and in the afternoon the boys went into the class-rooms with minds freed of it a little, and gave some slight attention to their work.

After school, Tom Merry was told that Lumley-Lumley wanted to speak to him, and he was taken up into the sick chamber.

He was surprised by the change he saw in the junior. The colour had come back into Jerrold's cheeks, and the light to his eyes. He turned his glance upon Tom Merry with a smile. Tom Merry grasped his hand.

"Thank Heaven, Lumley!" he said.

"I have thanked Heaven," said Lumley, in a low voice, and the words sounded strange enough from the lips of the fellow who had been called the Outsider of St. Jim's. "I have done that, Merry. The doctor says I'm strong enough to travel if I like to-day, and I'm leaving with the governor. You know my governor, I guess?"

A big, bronzed gentleman came over from the window, and shook hands with Tom Merry. The Shell fellow remembered Mr. Lumley-Lumley. He had seen the millionaire when he brought Jerrold to St. Jim's.

"I wanted to say good-bye, Tom Merry," said Jerrold. "I'm going abroad for a holiday, to pick up after this. It's been a rotten time. Of course, I didn't know it. I was unconscious all the time I was in the coffin—I never knew anything till I opened my eyes and saw Levison leaning over me. I guess I'm glad that chap came to St. Jim's—and so are you, dad, eh?"

"I guess so, Jerry," said Mr. Lumley, with a rather tremulous smile. "I guess I'll take care of you after this, too. You won't be in danger again."

"I'm sorry you're leaving," said Tom Merry simply, "I hope you'll come back."

The Outsider smiled.

"You want me to come back?" he said.

"Yes."

"I believe you, Merry. I don't know if I shall ever come, but thank you for saying so! Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, old chap!"

A few words more, and Tom Merry turned to leave. Mr. Lumley went to the door with him.

"I want to see the lad who saved Jerrold," he said. "I haven't seen him. Will you ask him to step up here?"

"Certainly, sir!"

Tom Merry descended the stairs. Monty Lowther was waiting for him there.

"Wharton's come," he said.

"Oh, good!"

Tom Merry had almost forgotten the promised visit of Wharton, of Greyfriars, for the moment. A handsome junior in a Greyfriars cap came forward, and shook hands with the hero of the Shell.

"I hear you've had some excitement here," he remarked.

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry. "You've heard about it already, then? The fellows are full of it. Where's Levison, Monty?"

Harry Wharton started a little at the sound of the name.

"Levison!" he said involuntarily.

"Do you know him?" asked Tom Merry.

"I knew a chap of that name once."

"He's a new fellow here," said Tom Merry. "It was he who discovered that Lumley was only in a trance. Mr. Lumley wants to see him before he goes, and he's asked me to send him up. Where is he?"

"In his study," said Mellish, with a grin.

Tom Merry looked at him.

"In his study! Sure?"

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A School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Yes, rather! He went there immediately after lessons, and the fellows haven't been able to induce him to come out."

"Oh, he's tired of yarning, I suppose! Come on, Wharton; we pass Levison's study going up to the Shell quarters! We'll have tea going in two jiffies!"

Harry Wharton nodded, and walked with Tom Merry into the Fourth Form passage. Mellish looked after them with an evil grin. He knew why Levison was shut up in his study—he knew that Harry Wharton was the last person in the world Levison wished to see; but it was far from Mellish's intention to utter a word of warning. So long as the new boy's secret was valuable to him he was willing to keep it.

Levison had twisted out of his power almost as soon as Mellish had got him into it. But that left the cad of the Fourth with no object in refraining from gratifying his dislike. He was careful not to appear openly on the scene, for he was afraid of Levison. But if Tom Merry brought the two face to face—Mellish chuckled at the thought, and went out into the quadrangle, whistling very cheerily.

Unsuspecting the secret intention of the cad of the Fourth, Tom Merry walked along the Fourth Form passage with Lowther and Wharton. He tapped at Levison's door, and turned the handle. The door was locked.

Tom Merry knocked again.

"Who's that?" called out Levison's voice from within.

"Tom Merry!"

"I can't be disturbed now!"

"Mr. Lumley wants you. He's upstairs in Lumley's room," said Tom Merry, through the door. "He wants to see you before he goes."

"Oh, all right!"

The door was unlocked. It swung open, and Levison came out into the passage, without a suspicion that Tom Merry was not alone.

He came face to face with Harry Wharton.

As he saw the Greyfriars fellow his face paled, and he made a hasty movement as if to retreat into the study, but it was too late.

Harry Wharton was staring at him with blank surprise.

"Wharton?" muttered Levison. "Oh, what rotten luck!"

"Levison!"

CHAPTER 19.

The Secret.

TOM MERRY looked from one to the other.

"You know each other?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!" said Harry Wharton. "Levison was at Greyfriars some time back. He was in my Form. How do you do, Levison?"

"Oh, out with it!" said Levison savagely, his face flushing. "Tell them before me—not behind my back! Have it out! I had to leave Greyfriars, and now I shall have to leave St. Jim's! Hang you! What did you want to come here for?"

Harry Wharton eyed him steadily.

"Still the same old Levison!" he said. "I never intended to say a word about your being expelled from Greyfriars; it was no business of mine. You had no right to enter this school without letting the Head know, but I should not have interfered."

"Had to leave Greyfriars!"

"Expelled!"

The words were buzzing along the studies. A dozen fellows had heard them. Levison bit his lips till the blood came. Yes; he was still the same old Levison—still the same distrustful, suspicious, restless nature. And it was that old nature that had betrayed him to the boys of St. Jim's. Too late he realised that he had misjudged Wharton once more, as he had always misjudged him at Greyfriars—that Harry would not have said a word if left to himself.

He bit his lip hard.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, adjusting his eyeglass, and favouring Levison with a steady stare. "So that's the secret, is it? Gweyfwiahs was your old coll! Bai Jove! I wemembah you now! I knew I had met you before! It was at Gweyfwiahs!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed D'Arcy, growing excited. "I wemembah! You were a wotah then, and you played some wascally conjuwin' twicks on me!"

"Conjuring tricks!" said Monty Lowther. "Yes; I remember hearing of them! So that accounts for the mice in the jam-pot, and the cigar in Gore's sleeve, and the postcard in Tom Merry's pocket—eh?"

Levison laughed cynically.

"I suppose I may as well own up," he said. "Yes; you've got it right. I was turned out of Greyfriars, for no fault of my own, as I think. I kept it dark, because I knew I shouldn't be admitted at St. Jim's if it were known here. It's a good distance from Greyfriars, and I thought I could keep out of the way of any of the fellows who might come over here to play matches. When I found that Wharton was coming, I—"

"So that is why you took the postcard?"

"Because I saw it was in Wharton's hand—yes. I wanted to know if he was coming over, and exactly when, so that I could lie low. You see how it's turned out!" And Levison laughed recklessly. "Now, go and tell the Head, and get rid of me from St. Jim's! You all want to!"

"I shall say nothing," said Tom Merry. "I suppose it must come to Dr. Holmes's ears, as it's already being buzzed over the whole House. If it does, you will have to face it out, that's all."

Levison laughed savagely.

"I shall tell the Head myself, now. It's the only thing to be done!"

"I have an ideah—"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy!"

"I wufuse to wing off! I was as eagah as anybody to be weliieved of the pwesence of this decidedly unpleasant person," said the swell of St. Jim's, with dignity; "but, undah the cires, of his havin' wescued Lumley-Lumley fwom the gwave, I think we might ovahlook his wotten conduct genewally, and give him a chance. My ideah is—Pway don't walk away, Levison. My ideah is for your benefit, deah boy!"

"What do you mean?" asked Levison, stopping.

"I mean that if you ask Mr. Lumley to intercede for you with the Head, Dr. Holmes will vewy likely allow you to wemain, in wecognition of what you have done."

Levison started. Curiously enough, the thought had not occurred to him. But a plain and straightforward course seldom does occur to one accustomed to following devious paths.

"Thank you!" he said. "There may be something in it. I'll try."

And he did—with good results for himself. For the Head, although shocked and annoyed to discover that a boy who had been expelled from another school had been entered at St. Jim's, was not inclined to be hard upon the boy who had saved the life of Jerrold Lumley.

But for that occurrence, Ernest Levison would most surely have departed from St. Jim's that very day, with a very plain letter from the Head to his father. But, as it was, Dr. Holmes felt that he could not send away the junior who, in so short a time at the school, had done so signal a service.

"Under other circumstances, Levison," said the Head sternly, "I should have sent you away. As it is, I shall give you a chance. I hope you will prove worthy of it. You may go!"

So Levison had his chance, but whether he proved worthy of it is another story. That afternoon the tea-party in Tom Merry's study was interrupted by the announcement that Jerrold Lumley was going.

The boys crowded out to see him carried into the big motor-car. They cheered Mr. Lumley and his son as the car rolled away, and the fellow who had been called the Outsider of St. Jim's smiled cheerily and waved his hand.

And so departed Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, followed by the good wishes of all—all only too glad that the dark shadow had been lifted from the school in this way—the shadow that had lain heavily upon their spirits. Lumley-Lumley was living, and on the high-road to recovery, and all was sunny again, and the fellows of St. Jim's went about their various avocations with lighter steps and lighter hearts.

THE END.

NEXT THURSDAY.

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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 left on the island, but is rescued by the captain of a "trader," named the Peter and Mary Harris. When they arrive at Kingston the captain receives a visit from the admiral, who thanks him for the kindness he had shown to Oswald. Oswald then goes to his new ship, the Cynthia, which immediately leaves for San Andrade. On the way they encounter a storm, which makes them five days late. When they do arrive at the island, Captain Garvin refuses to let them land until the morning. At this, Oswald declares in the cockpit that the captain is a coward.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Quarrel and an Interruption—The Deserted Island—Mr. Briggs Makes a Prisoner and Loses Him.

But his anxiety had made him unjust. Captain Garvin's refusal to land was only a wise precaution that any commander who valued the lives of his crew would have taken.

What pitfalls for them might there not be on the island? In the darkness might they not walk into any ambush laid for them by the pirates if the pirates were in the neighbourhood? And it was not improbable that they were.

Captain Garvin had carefully thought the whole matter out, and had come to the decision that to land in the darkness would be the height of folly.

"He is a coward!" cried Oswald scornfully. He was striding up and down the midshipmen's quarters with clenched fists.

"He is afraid of a band of rascally pirates!"

He laughed bitterly and scornfully, then stopped suddenly, for Garvin, the captain's nephew, rose to his feet, with his face white with anger.

"The captain is as brave as any officer in the Navy," he said, in a voice thick with passion; "and it is only a fool and a cur who would dare to call him a coward!"

Maxwell gripped Garvin by the arm.

"Let him alone; the poor chap is beside himself!" he muttered. "He doesn't know what he is talking about now."

"Captain Garvin is my uncle, and I shall not stand by and hear his courage called into question. You hear that, liar?"

Oswald flushed a dusky red. He knew that he was in the wrong, and he knew that Garvin was but doing rightly in defending his uncle's good name, but in his present bitterness of spirit he would admit nothing.

He was mad with inactivity, and he seized upon the opportunity to work off some of his superfluous energy.

"You called me a liar?" he said, advancing towards Garvin threateningly.

"Yes, a liar!" repeated the boy defiantly. "A vile liar!" he added, with a sudden outburst of passion.

"For Heaven's sake," cried Maxwell, trying to perform the part of peacemaker, "stop! Smith, take back what you said about the skipper. You were wrong. There isn't a braver man afloat. Take it back, man, and Garvin here will take back what he said."

"What I said I said!" cried Oswald defiantly. "I said that the captain is a coward to delay an hour in executing his orders and landing on that island!"

"Harsh and hasty judgment, Mr. Smith!" said a voice behind Oswald. For a moment not a sound broke the utter silence that reigned. Oswald stood as though turned to stone. He could not see the speaker, yet he had recognised the voice.

It was Captain Garvin himself. Then at last he turned and stood before the captain, with white face and downcast eyes, abashed and ashamed.

"A coward, Mr. Smith! If you were a man and of my own rank you know how I would avenge that word. As it is, what can I do, what can I say to you?"

There was a curious look on the captain's face.

"I am sorry I have been mistaken in you," he said slowly. "One of the first lessons you should have learned was to respect and trust your superior officers. I thought you had learned that lesson. And yet, because you are piqued, because, for the sake of the safety of my ship's crew, I have found myself obliged to come between you and your desire, you turn against me, and call me by that name which, to an honourable man, is the foulest and vilest in the English language."

Oswald stood silent. He deserved the captain's contempt. He had allowed his passion to carry him away. He had called Captain Garvin a coward, and yet, though he had called him by this name, he knew in his heart that a braver officer never trod a deck.

And now young Garvin proved the nobility of his character. "Sir, the fault was not all Smith's. I am to blame, first of all. I goaded Smith to saying what he did. I don't think he meant the word he used—I know he didn't. He was half mad with anxiety to get upon the island again. He was thinking of the young girl who saved his life, you know, and—and—"

The speaker hesitated, and Oswald turned and looked him full in the face.

"You did not taunt me. You cannot take any blame of this on your shoulders," he said. "The fault was all mine. I was mad; I did not know what I said. I am sorry and ashamed. You must not try to shield me, Garvin—I am not worth it."

The captain stood looking from one boy to the other, and as he looked his eyes suddenly flushed with pride.

There was a kinder look in his eyes as he turned to Oswald. "You say that you are sorry—that you did not mean the word you used—that it was spoken in anger—unjust anger?"

"I am sorry, sir, and ashamed—bitterly ashamed. I was ashamed of myself even while I was speaking—even before I knew that you had heard."

"Then the matter shall end here. It will be a lesson to you, Smith, to use a bridle on your tongue in future."

The captain turned away as he spoke, and for a moment they all stood silent and astounded at the sudden and unexpected ending of what had threatened to be, for one of them at least, a very serious business. But before the captain had gained the door, Oswald rushed forward.

"Sir, I deserve punishment! Punish me as you think fit, and I will accept any punishment gratefully. I beg your pardon for the word I used—it was unjust, undeserved. I knew it while I spoke—I know it now more than ever."

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A School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
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**NEXT
THURSDAY:**

"I want nothing more than that, Smith. No one can do more than admit a fault, and recall a word spoken in anger. You beg my pardon; I grant it. Forget the matter, as I do."

He held out his hand to Oswald as he spoke, as though the lad was an officer of his own rank and station.

Oswald grasped it, and pressed it to his lips, and, with a queer smile on his lips, the captain hastily went from the place.

"And I ask your pardon, too, Garvin," Oswald said, coming back into the cockpit. "You are a good fellow. I didn't deserve that you should stand up for me as you did, and I will never forget it."

"There's nothing to talk about," said Garvin, shaking hands with Oswald. "It was my fault as much as yours. I ought to have taken Maxwell's advice, and left you alone. However, perhaps we shall be better friends after this."

"I know we shall," Oswald said heartily. "I never guessed before what a good fellow you were!"

Never had Oswald known a longer night than this. All through the night Captain Garvin kept a bright look-out on deck, lest the pirates, being in the neighbourhood, should attempt an attack on them in the darkness.

But of the pirates, nothing was to be seen or heard. It was a dark night, without a moon. By the captain's orders, no lights were burned on the Cynthia after sunset, and she lay rolling on the swell like a huge black shadow against the scarcely less black night.

The island lay under her bows, not discernible against the inky sky and sea. Not a light was to be seen; the place appeared to be utterly deserted.

All through the night, Oswald paced the deck of the Cynthia, peering through the darkness, his eyes turned always in the direction of the island.

What had happened there since he had last seen its shores?

When his watch on deck was over, he did not turn in with his companion, but remained on deck all through the night—the night that seemed to him to be everlasting, without end.

But at last the dense blackness lifted, and gave place to greyne. Presently a faint primrose light grew in the east—so faint, so delicate at first as to be almost imperceptible, yet as the minutes passed it took a warmer hue.

From primrose it changed to pink. Suddenly a bright yellow beam of sunlight shot athwart the sky, and then, with a rush, the dawn came out of the sea.

Yet for a long time a grey mist hung over the island, blotting it out completely from their sight. All were on deck now.

But meanwhile they were not idle. All was being got forward in readiness to lower away the boats at a moment's notice.

The cook and his mates were busily preparing breakfast some hours before the usual time, and as soon as it was ready the men breakfasted on deck.

As the sun rose, so the mist grew lighter and lighter. Presently, as though through a veil, objects became distinguishable.

First the tree-tops, then little by little the undulating land, and then the foreshore, against which the waves curled and broke in white foam.

The mist was gone, the sun was shining down gloriously from a blue sky, and Oswald stood on the deck of the Cynthia and looked once again upon the island where he had so nearly found a grave.

He could see the great wooden house standing on the hill-top among the trees, but of a living creature there was no sign. The place seemed deserted.

The captain gave his orders quickly. Mr. Briggs was to take charge of one boat, Oswald another, Maxwell of a third. The boatswain, Mr. Bigben, was placed in charge of the cutter, and the crews were told off to the boats.

Armed with cutlass and pistol, each man stood at his post, and then the order came to lower away the boats.

A moment, and they were afloat; but a few moments more, and their crews were in their places.

"Give way!" cried Mr. Briggs.

And the little flotilla shot away from the Cynthia's side, making direct for the island.

There was no one there to oppose their landing on the sandy shore. There was no sign of a living creature, except the old man-crabs that scuttled away at their approach. It was like a deserted place—a place that had been visited by a plague—for on every side was the evidence of man's handiwork, but nowhere was man himself visible.

Animated by the spirit of eagerness that whitened Oswald's cheeks and made his hands tremble, his crew bent to their oars, and sent their boat ahead of all the others.

They were the first to run their boat up on to the sandy shore—the first to leap out.

Standing up in his boat, Mr. Briggs shouted an order to them to keep back and wait for his coming.

"Who are you, you young whipper-snapper, that you put yourself before your superior officer?" he asked, with a sneer, when he stepped out of his boat.

"I beg your pardon, sir!" said Oswald quietly. He had learned his lesson the night before.

"Beg my pardon—you may well! Fall back, sir! Take your men into the rear!"

It was done to annoy. The second lieutenant knew as well as any other man on board the Cynthia the special interest that Oswald had in the island.

With exasperating slowness, Mr. Briggs mustered his men in leisurely fashion. Minute after minute he waited, till the men were beside themselves with rage, and threatening to break out beyond his control.

But at last even Mr. Briggs dared delay no longer. The captain was, he knew, watching them with his glass from the deck of the Cynthia.

"Forward, then!" he said at last. And at a trot the men dashed forward and up the slope towards the house on the summit of the hill.

They passed through the wood where Oswald had halted his men on that memorable night, and, clearing the wood, came to the open before the house. And still there was no sign of a human being. The door of the house stood open. It all wore that nameless, deserted look which settles on a place so soon after its occupants have departed. Yet Mr. Briggs approached the place with caution.

"Who knows," he thought, "that behind those windows scores of pirates may be lurking, ready to pour a hail of shot into them the moment they should emerge from cover."

And now he called Oswald forward.

"You know this place; lead the way!" he ordered.

Oswald knew the spite that prompted the man to give him the position of danger, but he accepted it willingly enough.

Followed by his boat's crew, he dashed across the clearing at the top of his speed.

Not a pirate showed his nose at any of the windows. There wasn't a human being in the place. Oswald smashed in the window with the butt of his pistol, and sprang into the room—the same room which he remembered so well. It was bare and empty. The furniture—much of it broken—had been flung hither and thither. All that was of value had been taken.

Before the broken and splintered door of the cupboard where he had spent that awful night Oswald paused. He was wondering dimly why the door was broken. He had not known that Norah had locked it again, and flung away the key, and so gained time for him.

Meanwhile the men were busily ransacking the house from top to bottom. Not a room but what they entered. And everywhere the same sight greeted them—disorder, and every appearance of hasty flight.

Seeing that Oswald had not been attacked, Mr. Briggs had passed the clearing, and his men came trooping into the house.

"The villains have gone!" he said, in a loud voice. "Well for them that they have! But we shall have them yet!"

Maxwell came up, and laid his hand on Oswald's arm.

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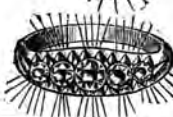
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