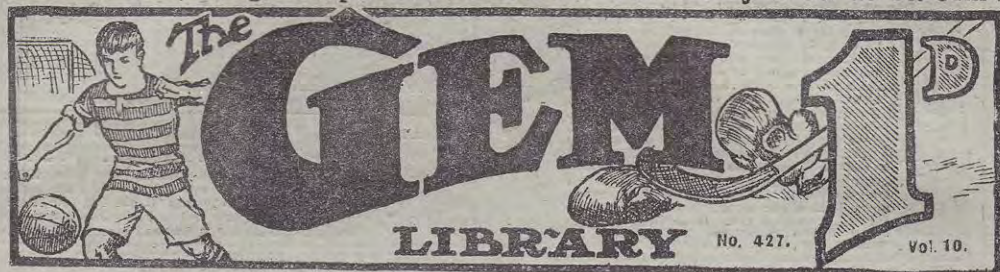


THE ELEVENTH MAN!

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



"A train!" panted Figgins. The New House junior had breath for no more. As if in some horrible nightmare he saw Cousin Ethel dash into the hedge, and heard her cry of terror, and then she disappeared. (A Thrilling Scene in the Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale in this issue.)

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THE ELEVENTH MAN!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Levison trapped neatly enough, but the Swifts left half was giving nothing away. He went for Levison and the St. Jim's junior fumbled badly, practically letting the Wayland player take the ball. (See Chapter 8.)

CHAPTER 1.

Arthur Augustus' Accident.

"MY aunt, what a fog!" Tom Merry of the Shell Form of St. Jim's gave vent to this remark, and jammed on his brakes at the same time. In addition to being unpleasant, the damp, yellow fog was making cycling precarious work.

It was almost impossible to see a yard in front of one's handlebars, and already Tom Merry had had one or two narrow escapes. He had another narrow escape now, and

just saved himself from the ditch by colliding with Jack Blake.

"Ass! Duffer!" yelled Jack Blake. "Sorry, Figgy!"

The School House Fourth-Former had screwed his handlebars round and collided with Figgins of the New House. Figgins promptly screwed his machine round, and yelled.

"You burbling young ass, Blake! Sorry, Gussy!"

"G'wreat Scott!" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arey. "Figgy, you weckless wuffian! Groooh!"

There was no one for Arthur Augustus to collide with, and he thought he was destined to ride into the hedge. His

Next Wednesday.

"THE ST. JIM'S WAR-WORKERS!" AND "THE PRIDE OF THE FILM!"

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monocle dropped from his eye and flew out behind him at the end of its black silk cord. Then the suspense was over. Arthur Augustus was "coasting" down a steep bank into a muddy ditch.

"My onlay toppah! Ow! Yaroooh!"

A root of a tree struck Arthur Augustus' front wheel, and stopped his machine dead, but the swell of St. Jim's went on. He dived over his handlebars, seemed to hang suspended in midair for a fraction of time, and then came down.

He thudded into the muddy ditch with a squelching sound. For an instant his immaculate trousered legs waved spasmodically in the air, then they shot down, and there was another squelching sound.

Arthur Augustus was lying full length in about two feet of soft mud.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gussy, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther jumped off their machines. Figgins & Co. of the New House came cycling back at a furious pace, and Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby rushed to the ditch.

"Gussy, you duffer! Oh, my aunt!"

Jack Blake shrieked with laughter and rolled against Herries. Herries held his sides as if suddenly attacked by acute pain in the short-ribs.

Three minutes ago Arthur Augustus had gone into the ditch, immaculate even to his silk shoe-laces. Now he loomed up in the fog in front of the juniors, a weird and awful-looking object.

His good-looking, aristocratic face was plastered thickly with black mud, and his usually beautifully-groomed hair was covered with green slime.

He was holding his hands well out on each side of him, and black slime was running from his finger-tips. The sight was too much for Tom Merry & Co. They shrieked themselves hoarse.

Arthur Augustus stared at them in mingled wrath and horror.

"Tom Mewwy, you wottah! Blake, you uttah wuffian! Figgay, I shall administrah a fwightful thwashin'—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy, you jewel!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Do it all over again! I'll lend you a bike!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Jolly good jape, anyway, Gussy!"

"You feahful duffah, Lowthah!"

"Gussy must have a jolly fine sense of humour to jape himself, you chaps!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "There are not many fellows who'd do that just to amuse their pals!"

"You shweikin' wottah!"

"Congrats, Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus glared at the humourist of the Shell, and absent-mindedly put his very muddy monocle into his still more muddy eye. Then the full horror of his position dawned upon the swell of St. Jim's.

"Gweat Scott! Whatwaw shall I do, deah boys?" he gasped. "Any moment Cousin Ethel may awvive!"

"Rather!"

"You might have waited until she had come, Gussy, before you brought off the wheeze," said Lowther reprovingly. "It would have amused her no end."

"You uttah ass! I shall have to wush home and change and have a bath!"

"It's either that or rub yourself down with a handkerchief, I suppose."

"You sillay duffah, Figgay!" gasped Arthur Augustus, looking down his mud-plastered form. "The wotten stuff is dwyin on me. I am in an uttahly wotten state!"

"Borrow a spade and dig yourself out, then."

"Or go back in the ditch and wait until Cousin Ethel passes," gasped Tom Merry. "We won't tell her."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors stood round the swell of St. Jim's, shrieking with laughter. He really was in a ghastly state. He became desperate at the possibility of Cousin Ethel arriving at any moment.

"Pway lend me a bicycle, Blake, you weckless wuffian! I shall wace back to St. Jim's like anythin'. It weally is the onlay thing to be done in the cirms. If Cousin Ethel should awvive pow—"

"She has arrived, Arthur!"

The words rang out in a pretty, girlish voice, and were accompanied by the sound of a bicycle-bell.

Arthur Augustus gasped aloud, in horror.

"Gweat Scott!"

He wheeled round, but there was no time to even think of an escape. Cousin Ethel had arrived, an exceedingly pretty girl—looking prettier even than usual, with her furs close up under the delicate little chin.

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She cycled into the middle of the juniors, and jumped from her machine.

"I do hope I am not late," she said, laughing. "Am I, Figgins?"

"N-no," stammered the long-legged New House junior. "Not at all. Only about ten minutes."

Figgins blushed, but it was too foggy for anyone to see. Then Cousin Ethel caught sight of Arthur Augustus. She started in amazement.

"Who—who is that?"

"Gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Cousin Ethel, I wewget to say—as a matter of fact— Pway pardon my wushin' away, as there has been a howwible accident."

And, to Cousin Ethel's amazement, the swell of St. Jim's wheeled round and fled down the road at a racing pace. Tom Merry, Figgins, and Jack Blake choked back their laughter. Cousin Ethel was laughing, but it was a sympathetic laugh.

"Poor Arthur!" she said. "Will he be very long if we wait here for him?"

"Only about two hours," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"But it is only a few minutes' run back to St. Jim's!"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"It wouldn't matter if we were in the quad, Cousin Ethel," he answered. "Gussy never has changed a suit of clothes in less than two hours, and he must have a bath as well this time— My hat, hear that, chaps?"

"Oh, good egg!"

"Hooraay!"

Quite suddenly the silence which fog always seems to produce was broken. The sudden noise was nothing very sensational, only the opening verse of a song.

But the song was "It's a long, long way to Tipperary," and the catchy air stirred the juniors' blood as very few other songs could have done. It meant that Colonel Carr-Hilton's regiment was passing along the main road on its way to Wayland Junction and the Front.

Tom Merry turned Cousin Ethel's bicycle round for her, and the girl sprang lightly into the saddle. Figgins & Co. were already pedalling ahead, for it was the passing of Colonel Carr-Hilton's regiment which had brought the St. Jim's juniors and their girl chum out in the damp, miserable fog that afternoon.

They all cycled forward for the cross-roads at a scorching pace, in spite of the fog. The steady tramp of feet was making the juniors' blood thrill.

CHAPTER 2.

Cousin Ethel's Danger.

"PWAY stop, deah boys! Tom Mewwy, pway stop!"

Arthur Augustus came scorching up the lane at a furious pace. He joined Tom Merry & Co. before they could reach the main road.

Arthur Augustus was in a state of enthusiasm, and was wearing a macintosh over his muddy clothes.

"Cousin Ethel, deah boy—deah gal I mean—pway excuse my awful atiah!" he panted breathlessly. "I caught sight of the troops, and bowwowed this coat frowm Lumlay Lumlay. I had to wush back—"

"Don't apologise, Arthur!"

"Bai Jove, but I am in a fwightful state, and I had to wush my face in a bwook."

"There they are, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"See the colonel?"

"Bai Jove, yaas!" cried Arthur Augustus. "Pway give them a wousin' cheer! Thwee of the best, deah boys!"

"Hooraay!"

The juniors cheered themselves hoarse. With ghostly suddenness the khaki-clad Tommies loomed up out of the fog, to disappear again almost as suddenly.

They were smoking, and laughing, and singing. There was not a glum face to be seen anywhere.

They were going to the firing-line, some, perhaps, to death; but they were taking light hearts with them. It was an everyday scene, of course; but the steady tramp and the hearty singing sent the St. Jim's juniors' blood racing through their veins.

"My aunt, aren't they a topping lot?"

"Bai Jove, yaas!"

"Hooraay!"

The regiment passed on, some of the men calling out to the juniors. They looked fine with their heavy overcoats turned up to the ears.

Jack Blake suddenly wheeled round.

"What about the railway-bridge, you chaps? We could see them splendidly from there"

"Good egg!"



"Levison, what are you going to do?" asked Mellish. The cad of the Fourth did not answer. He struck a match, then to Mellish's horror, plunged the light into the haystack! The dry hay caught instantly, flaring up in one rapidly growing red flame. (See Chapter 9.)

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Tom Mewwy, pway lend me youah bicycle as I have been wunnin' like anything—"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Figgay, I must wequest the loan. Jack Blake—"

"Rats!"

"Help Cousin Ethel to mount, Gussy," chuckled Tom Merry. "Make yourself useful, for you aren't exactly ornamental to-day."

But there was no need for Arthur Augustus to help his cousin on to her bicycle. Figgins was seeing to that, clumsily, but with plenty of zeal. Most of the juniors were already in their saddles.

"Kerr, you wottah, lend me your bicycle. Digbay, as a friend, I ask you— Hewwies, you boundah—"

"Rats, Gussy!"

"Cut-across the field, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "You'll be there as soon as we are. Steady, Blake!"

The juniors scorched ahead, Figgins and Cousin Ethel leading the way.

It was only a short distance to the railway-bridge, and the first part of the journey was down a steep hill. At the bottom of this there was a right-angle turning, and a finishing run along by the line.

Figgins and Cousin Ethel led the way at a great pace. The tall leader of the New House juniors glanced uneasily at the girl chum, although for the moment the fog had lifted at that spot.

"Not too fast, Cousin Ethel!" Figgins said. "We might run into a bank of fog—"

"Oh, I'm all right, Figgins!"

"Yes, but there is a nasty turning, you know, and the road is greasy."

Figgins spoke more from a natural sense of caution where Cousin Ethel was concerned, than from any real feeling of danger. He really did not think there could be any danger. But suddenly there was a sharp metallic snap.

At the same instant Cousin Ethel's machine shot ahead, as

if she had removed her hand from the brake-lever. Figgins shouted in fear:

"Cousin Ethel!"

"The brake has snapped! Oh!"

The words came back in a terrified, startled voice from the girl chum, and they carried to nearly all the St. Jim's juniors. Then Cousin Ethel was swallowed up in a bank of fog.

The New House junior's face went deathly white, and the perspiration started to his forehead. In a flash he thought of the right-angled turning at the bottom of the hill, and the thin, natural hedge which separated the road from the railway-line.

If Cousin Ethel's brake really had given out, then nothing could save her from the hedge, and— Figgins thought of the steep railway embankment beyond, and of the shining metal lines! If Cousin Ethel were flung down on the line it might mean death for her; it could hardly mean less than very serious injury.

In a terror Figgins had not often felt before, he let go of his own brakes and even pedalled. He did not think of the railway-line for himself. He thought of nothing but a desperate desire to overtake Cousin Ethel by some means; and he cycled down the hill wildly.

And Tom Merry and Jack Blake were scorching just as hard behind him. The three great rivals of St. Jim's had never been more completely moved by a common impulse or in a greater fear than they were at that moment.

"There she is!"

"Figgins, old chap, what are you going to do?"

Clear-brained and cool as always, Tom Merry tried to think of a plan. Figgins heard, but did not answer. No plan at all had come to him. He was conscious of only his overwhelming desire to go faster, to reach his girl chum's side again.

That it might only be to accompany her in the horrible dash through the hedge did not trouble Figgins.

The juniors dashed on after their girl chum. Figgins was now within a few yards of her. It seemed that in another few seconds he would be able to stretch out his hand and touch the slim, terrified little form.

"Oh, good, Figg!"

"Good old Figgins!"

But Tom Merry and Jack Blake shouted too soon. Figgins was almost up with Cousin Ethel when, suddenly, he saw the railway-hedge dead in front of her.

It was too late. In another instant Cousin Ethel would crash into the hedge, and Figgins could do nothing. He cycled on wildly, but he knew it was hopeless.

The leader of the New House juniors was as white as death.

Then, abruptly, a fresh horror came to the juniors. There was the sudden, shrill whistle of a steam-engine.

"A train!" panted Figgins.

The New House junior had breath for no more. As if in some horrible nightmare, he saw Cousin Ethel dash into the hedge. He heard her cry of terror, and then she disappeared.

Figgins did not touch his brakes. He had forgotten all about his own danger.

"Figg, old chap!"

Tom Merry shouted wildly, but again it was too late. Figgins had also dashed into the hedge.

There was a thud, and the junior was flung over his handlebars. But his luck held. He had struck a far thicker portion of the hedge than Cousin Ethel had, and it stopped his progress. Figgins was hurled to the ground, but he was still at the top of the embankment. He, at any rate, was in no danger.

The deep rumble of a goods train sounded in his ears. Figgins, half dazed, staggered to his feet, ready to do anything that could be done to aid his girl chum.

Just for an instant he saw Cousin Ethel lying prone on the

down line. His brain worked with lightning-like rapidity. It was a down train which had passed the signal-box. Already the roar of the engine was almost deafening.

In another instant— Figgins did not dare to think of what another instant would bring forth. He rushed wildly down the steep embankment, with Tom Merry and Jack Blake only a few yards behind him.

The train came thundering on. Figgins could see through the fog the vague outline of the engine, and in one awful moment he knew he could never get to Cousin Ethel's side in time.

Figgins never forgot that instant of suspense. He ran as he had never run before. He shouted in a hopeless attempt to stop the train. His heart almost stopped.

Then suddenly someone sprang on to the line from the opposite embankment.

Almost beside himself as he was, Figgins could make out the form distinctly. He could even recognise the St. Jim's cap. It was a St. Jim's junior who was coming to the rescue; a St. Jim's fellow who was risking his life without a thought of self.

Figgins saw him spring to Cousin Ethel's side. The train was almost upon them!

The new-comer stooped down and snatched up Cousin Ethel's unconscious form. Then he wheeled round, and sprang clear just as the train thundered by. Figgins shouted wildly.

Had the unknown rescuer and Cousin Ethel escaped? Or had it been just too late? Figgins did not know, and he could still do nothing, for the train was rumbling past, separating him and Cousin Ethel.

Tom Merry seized the New House junior by the arm.

"Figg, it's all right, old chap!"

"I— Merry, if it isn't!"

"But it is; it must be!"

Tom Merry, usually so cool and reliable, was not cool now. He, too, was beside himself, and Jack Blake was just as bad.

The sudden voice of Arthur Augustus made them all start violently.

"Anythin' the mattab, deah boys?"

"Set!" breathed Tom Merry, and none of the three uttered a word.

There was nothing to be gained in shouting the terrifying news to Arthur Augustus. It would be time enough to tell him what had happened when the train had passed, and they could cross the line.

But the train was moving with painful slowness now, and there was a grinding of brakes. What did that mean? Figgins felt his heart throb painfully. Was it possible that the engine had struck Cousin Ethel and her would-be rescuer, and that the driver had seen the accident and was stopping? It was a question none of the three dared ask themselves.

"I say, what are you doin' on the line, deah boy?" shouted Arthur Augustus. "Pway don't get wun ovah befoah the chawity match! Bai Jove, the train is stoppin'!"

Figgins could have shouted aloud in fear and dread.

The train had slowed down to a crawl. It was unmistakably stopping.

CHAPTER 3.

Ernest Levison—Hero!

"THE—the train has stopped, Merry!" Figgins ground out the words in a voice he did not recognise as his own. He was anxious for the captain of the Shell to take the lead now. Figgins was in the grip of a great fear.

Tom Merry wheeled round. "Sprint for the back of the train!" he said quickly. "We must get round her!"

He started off as hard as he could run, but Figgins gained upon him rapidly. Always a champion sprinter, Figgins surpassed himself that afternoon. He led the way round the tail of the train at an amazing pace.

"Here, what are you youngsters doing on the line?"

The guard shouted from his window, but the juniors took no notice. They raced on.

Suddenly Tom Merry gave vent to a wild whoop.

"Figg, it's all right! Blake, Cousin Ethel's all right!"

Figgins choked and dashed ahead. The fog was still thick, but he could make out Cousin Ethel's form lying at the side of the line, on the embankment, with a St. Jim's junior on his knees at her side.

The junior's back was turned to the others, but he looked round as Figgins dashed up. Like Figgins, he was very white.

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"It's all right, Figgins!" he said, through his teeth. "Cousin Ethel is coming round all right!"

"Levison!"

Figgins jerked out the name, and Tom Merry repeated it.

"Levison!"

Tom Merry, Jack Blake and Figgins stopped dead. Cousin Ethel was already sitting up, and her little, neatly-gloved hand was resting on Levison's arm. She seemed to have a perfectly clear knowledge of what had happened.

Tom Merry rushed impulsively up to them.

For longer than Tom Merry could recall, Levison had been known as the cad of the Fourth. It was a nickname which had been thoroughly earned in the past. No one who knew Levison's record could doubt that.

But now? Tom Merry was always generous. Levison may have been the cad of the Fourth in the past, but if he had saved Cousin Ethel, he should never be called that again in Tom Merry's presence.

"Levison, you rescued Cousin Ethel?"

"Yes, Tom, he rescued me!" said Cousin Ethel, with a catch in her voice. "Figgins, did you see?"

"Yes, I saw all right!"

Levison looked from the juniors to Cousin Ethel. The girl chum's hand was still resting on his arm.

"Oh, it was nothing!" Levison said, in a lowered voice, and flushed to the roots of his hair.

Cousin Ethel jumped to her feet. She was badly shaken, but she was not hurt. Her pretty eyes sparkled as she held out her hand to Levison.

The fellow all the juniors of St. Jim's had known as the cad of the Fourth looked round vaguely in the fog. He was openly embarrassed.

Tom Merry stared at him fixedly.

"I suppose you saw Cousin Ethel crash through the hedge, Levison?" he asked quietly.

"Y-yes!"

"And then you rushed on the line in front of the train, and—saved her?" added Figgins.

"It—it was easy enough, Figgins!"

"I don't think it was easy, Levison," said Cousin Ethel quietly. "I shall never forget, anyway!"

"Rather not!"

"Levison, will you shake hands?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We've had plenty of rows in the past, but—but if you'll shake hands—"

Levison flushed again. For an instant he witheld his hand. When he did hold it out Arthur Augustus had come up. The swell of St. Jim's was flustered and frightened.

"Bai Jove, has anything happened?"

"Levison has just saved Cousin Ethel's life!"

"Levison?" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Weally! Pwaw what happened, deah boys?"

"Cousin Ethel fell on the line, and Levison jumped in front of the train and saved her!" said Figgins, in a low voice. "If he had been a second later, they would have both been killed."

"Levison did that? Bai Jove!"

Like Tom Merry and the others, Arthur Augustus was bewildered for the moment. Knowing Levison, as they all did, an act of unselfish courage was the last thing they had expected to find in him.

The startling fact could not be accepted instantly.

But Arthur Augustus was generous, too, perhaps more so than any of them. He dropped his hand on Levison's arm.

"Bai Jove! If you did that, Levison," he said, "I wogard you as one of the vewy best fellas in the world!"

"Rats, D'Arcy!"

"I shall considah it a vewy gweat honah if you will shake hands with me!" went on Arthur Augustus. "Deah boys, pwaw give Levison a wousin' cheer!"

"Yes, three of the best for Levison!" cried Figgins, and he started the cheering in a voice which was not nearly so steady as usual.

The others joined in heartily. Levison stood still, listening. He was looking down at the ground, and he had unconsciously slipped his hands into his pockets.

Cousin Ethel smiled.

Somehow she liked Levison's embarrassment. She had never liked him before; but she did now, as he stood there so confused and ill at ease.

Arthur Augustus listened to Jack Blake's account of what happened, and the swell of St. Jim's started the cheering afresh when Blake had finished the few whispered words. Arthur Augustus was almost as unnerved as Figgins was.

"I twast we shall see a great deal of you in the futchah, Levison!" he said. "I twast you will come to tea in Study No. 6 to-night!"

"It's vewy decent of you, D'Arcy—"

"Wats, deah boy, wats! I hope that befoah long it will be poss for me to do you a wippin' good turn! If evah the

chance does come, I will do anythin' to make up feah what you have done to-day, Levison!"

"Good old Gussy!" cried Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah—I mean, wot, Figgay—"

"Good old Gussy!"

The juniors were openly excited. It could not very well be otherwise; but through it all Tom Merry could not help his natural coolness and level-headedness coming to the front.

But Tom Merry was not pleased with himself at that moment. There was a frown on his face, and he was biting his lip.

Of them all, he, perhaps, knew Levison's character best. He had had so many dealings with the cad of the Fourth, and it was so seldom that Ernest Levison had shown up well in these dealings.

If Tom Merry had recalled the previous friction between the Shell Form of St. Jim's and Levison, he could not have found a single instance where Levison had played the game. Now the cad of the Fourth had more than played the game. He had done a splendid thing.

Tom Merry did his utmost to centre his thoughts on Levison's last deed. Surely, all that had gone before was atoned for now, and yet— The captain of the Shell found himself again and again looking at Levison with a suspicious glance.

Tom Merry was angry with himself for his vague, unfounded doubts. But they would not be dismissed. Even when he shook Levison's hand, the Shell junior looked puzzled.

But with the other juniors it was different. They were ready to cheer Levison, and to do anything for him. Tom Merry gritted his teeth.

He, too, would be ready to do anything for Levison. He struggled hard to dismiss the vague doubts which he could never have expressed in words.

"It's because he has always been an outsider," thought the captain of the Shell. "What a suspicious beast I must be to think badly of a chap just because he always has been a rotter!" Lumley-Lumley turned over a fresh leaf, and why can't Levison?"

It was sound enough reasoning, but somehow it did not carry conviction to Tom Merry's mind. There was such a big difference between Levison and Lumley-Lumley! Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had been an outsider, certainly, but never in the same mean, caddish way Levison had.

Still, Levison had done a big thing that afternoon, one of the biggest things done by a St. Jim's junior for many a long day. Tom Merry thought of that, and he tried hard not to think of Levison's past.

"Yes, we must all have tea in No. 6!" he said.

"At four-thirty!"

"Yaas, wathah, Jack Blake!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! What a pittay Cousin Ethel can't come!"

"Well, she can't!" laughed the girl chum. "I shall have to go home now, and I shall have to walk, I expect. My machine must be in a shocking state!"

Cousin Ethel and the St. Jim's juniors crossed the line again as the train steamed on. Cousin Ethel's machine certainly was in need of skilled treatment.

"Bai Jove! And it is vewy neahly a mile to where you are staying, deah girl!"

"Yes; isn't it awful!"

"Wathah! Weally, Figgay, pwaw don't dig me in the ribs, deah boy!"

Figgins went pink.

"You wanted to borrow a bike just now, Gussy," Figgins said carelessly. "You can have mine if you like."

"Bai Jove! It's awfully wippin' of you!"

"Oh, that's all right!"

"And you will walk back to St. Jim's, Figgay?"

"Yes, I shall walk," said the New House junior, looking down at his boots. "See you chaps at half-past four in Study No. 6."

"Yaas, wathah. Bai Jove, I must wemark that you have acted in a vewy friently and wippin' way in lendin' me your bicycle, deah boy!"

"Don't mention it," said Figgins, and he walked away.

Cousin Ethel was saying good-bye to Levison. Tom Merry and the other juniors stood a little apart. They did not want to overhear what their girl chum had to say to the junior who had saved her life.

A moment or two later Cousin Ethel was shaking hands with the others. She seemed to have recovered from her shock.

Arthur Augustus suddenly faced round in alarm.

"Bai Jove, I was forgettin'—"

"Eh?"

"What's the matter now, Gussy?"

"I was forgettin', Blake, that Cousin Ethel is going into Wylcombe, so some of us will have to walk back with her."

As her cousin, I weally must insist upon the gweat pleasure in spite of the uttally wotten state of my attiah."

"Ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Duffer!"

"Bai Jove! Howevah, I suppose you are wewewwin' to my mudday clothes. Of course, it would be uttally impos for me to be seen with a lady dwessed like this; but on a foggay day—"

"Rats!"

"Frabjous ass!" whispered Tom Merry, grinning. "What do you think Figgins lent you his bicycle for? He's going to walk back with Cousin Ethel. They've started already."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus felt for his monocle, and viewed the parting forms of Cousin Ethel and Figgins. The swell of St. Jim's turned away thoughtfully.

"Pewpaws, attah all, Figgay's offah of his bicycle was not such a vewy friently act," he said. "As a mattah of fact, I must now wegard it in the light of watah a wotten piece of sharp pwactice."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howevah, I can wemonstwat with him latah," said the swell of St. Jim's. "Come on, Levison, deah boy! We will buwy home, and have a weally wippin' tea."

Levison's eyes sparkled unpleasantly, but none of the other juniors saw that. They were being more generous to the cad of the Fourth than he deserved, for Levison was a long way from turning over a fresh leaf yet.

CHAPTER 4.

The Spread in Honour of Levison.

BAI JOVE, Levison is late, deah boys!" Tom Merry and Jack Blake said nothing. Figgins, Fatty Wynn, and Kerr had just come into Study No. 6, and Manners and Lowther of the Shell were already there.

Jack Blake, Arthur Augustus, Herries, and Digby, the chums of No. 6, had been hard at work preparing the feast, and things had gone off without a hitch. Fatty Wynn had kindly offered his invaluable services in arranging the menu, and nothing that could be done had been left undone.

The table groaned under the weight of good things. The juniors were all ready and hungry. They were only waiting for Levison, and he was not expected to be very late.

"Bai Jove, I hesh someone comin', deah boys!"

"Yes, he's coming."

"Open the doah, Hewwies."

But there was no need to open the door. It was flung open with a crash.

"Pway come in, Levison, deah boy, as we are all weady."

"Rats, Gus!"

Arthur Augustus rose frigidly to his feet. Instead of Levison, it was D'Arcy minor who was standing in the doorway. The scamp of the Third was inky about the collar as usual, and his hair was ruffled.

Arthur Augustus viewed his minor with open disapproval. "Weally, Wally, I cannot help wegardin' you as a young wagamuffin!"

"Rats!"

"Waltah, as your eldah bwotah, I must pwotest!"

"Good!" grinned Wally, looking round the study suspiciously. "My aunt! You don't say you have asked that rotter Levison to a feed like this?"

"Levison isn't a wottah."

"Oh, isn't he?" scoffed D'Arcy minor. "A fat lot you old fogeys know, don't you? Levison is a rotten outsider!"

"On the contwary, Levison is a wattlin' fine fella, Wally. He saved Cousin Ethel's life to-day in a vewy bwave and wippin' mannah."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Waltah—"

"Levison wouldn't save anyone's life except his own," said the Third Form fag, with a grin; "and then he wouldn't do it in a brave and ripping manner. You old fogeys are awful asses if you're standing Levison a feed. Much better stand it to the Third Form."

"Pway wetiah from this studay, Wally."

"Oh, I'm not going to stay and watch you asses fall on Levison's shoukler and weep!"

"I'm not in the wotten habit of fallin' on anyone's wotten shoukler! I must wequest you to wetiah at once, Waltah."

"Right-ho!"

But D'Arcy minor did not move. He stood in the doorway, looking round with growing suspicion. Although he said nothing, he was very puzzled that Tom Merry & Co.

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should be standing a spread to Levison, the cad of the Fourth.

And there could be no doubt that is what Tom Merry & Co. meant to do, for Levison was coming along the passage now. Wally stepped aside for the Fourth-Former.

"They are all waiting for you, Levison," he grinned. "Gussy said something about falling on your rotten shoulder and weeping."

"You uttah young ass, Wally!"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!" snorted Wally. "I didn't come here to listen to you cackling. Any old hen can do that."

"Wally, in anothah minute I shall have to administah a frightful thwashin'!"

"Go bon! Anyway, Kildare sent me."

"Kildare?"

"Yes, Tom Merry," grinned Wally. "Kildare says the small 'bus starts for Wayland to-morrow at two o'clock, and that all of the junior eleven who aren't going to cycle over must turn up at the school gates to the minute. Wayland Swifts are putting out a very warm side, because they mean to win the Charity Shield."

"We shall have a say in that, kid."

"Rather!" chuckled Wally. "Kildare wants you to field the best possible team. So if you want to strengthen the forward line you'd better stand the whole five down, and I'll bring along a few from the Third Form."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kildare didn't say that in as many words," said Wally airily; "but I know he'd be glad. Oh, and Kildare wants the names of our team to-night to send to the Wayland paper."

"Right-ho!"

"It ought to be a wattlin' good game, bai Jove!"

"Rather!" agreed Wally. "And we ought to win, too, because Crampton, their crack centre-forward, isn't turning out. In a game like this it would be much better to play a few reliable Third-Formers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Drop Gussy, for instance."

"What uttah wot!"

"And Manners isn't what he used to be."

"Here, what's that?"

"And Kerr's as slow as a funeral without a horse," added Wally, as a parting shot. "You take my tip, Merry, and play a few Third-Formers!"

And the fag scudded away.

Tom Merry laughed, and shut the door behind him. All the juniors liked D'Arcy minor, and they were pleased with the news the fag had brought them.

The Wayland Swifts match had long been dreamed of, ever since a local magnate had given the shield. Tom Merry & Co. and their chums had had pleasant visions of bringing the beautiful shield home to the old school, and if Crampton, their opponents' crack forward, was not playing, there was a really good chance of winning.

"Of course, it would be a gweatah honah to beat their full team, deah boys."

"Oh, they are much older and stronger than we are."

"That's yewy twue, Figgay."

"And their reserve centre-forward is pretty good."

"Rather!"

"It ought to be a ripping game, anyway," said Tom Merry. "We shall have to play up like Trojans. Take a pew, Levison. We can pick the team while we have grub."

"Yes, do let's start on the grub, you fellows!" pleaded Fatty Wynn. "I haven't had anything to eat since lunch, and then I only had—"

"About half a hundredweight of varied catables, that's all!"

"Oh, I say, Digby!"

"Ringing off, you fellows," exclaimed Tom Merry, "and pass the sausage-rolls this way! There oughtn't to be much trouble in picking the team for to-morrow. We have Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the bulwarks of the side."

"I wish I were playing."

Tom Merry started slightly, and looked across the table. Levison had spoken the words in a quiet but meaning voice. He was facing his hosts with a half-defiant gleam in his usually shifty eyes.

"I'd give anything to play in the team against Wayland Swifts," Levison repeated. "I've never had a real chance of getting into the St. Jim's junior side."

Tom Merry did not answer. What Levison said was utterly untrue. He had had just as good a chance as any other junior of getting a place in Tom Merry's eleven.

Levison had been tried again and again at practice, and he had always been found wanting. He was not a bad footballer; but he was not up to the St. Jim's junior eleven standard. It was the same with a good many other Fourth-



Tom Merry turned on Levison. "Take your coat off," he said briefly. "I'm going to inquire into this business afterwards." (See Chapter 7.)

Formers; but they had all had their chances of gaining a place in the team.

No one could accuse Tom Merry of favouritism. He wouldn't have played Manners or Lowther—his special chums—if he had not long since been convinced that they were the best juniors in the school in their respective places.

Arthur Augustus looked rather flustered, and felt for his monocle.

"Weally, Levison—"

"Oh, I know you have played me in practice games, but that isn't the same as having a chance in a real, important match!" interrupted the end of the Fourth.

"That's vevy twue, but—"

"But you chaps don't think I'm good enough," added Levison a little bitterly. "There are one or two who think differently, though—Melish, for instance."

A trace of a smile played about Tom Merry's mouth.

Melish could scarcely be called a judge on football. Figgins looked at Levison uneasily.

"Why not practise hard, Levison?" he said. "You—you would be bound to come on, and when you have had more practice—"

"Thanks!" said Levison, with a sneer. "I know how much nearer I should be to getting into the side then."

Tom Merry flushed up, and bit his lip. The hinted favouritism was most unfair; but the captain of the Shell did not let the hot words that rose pass his lips.

The memory of what Levison had done that afternoon was still strong in the mind of the juniors.

"Let's leave the team-picking until afterwards," Tom Merry remarked quietly. "Pass Levison the cold tongue."

The cold tongue was passed. But the feed was a failure. There was something in the air which was not often felt when Tom Merry & Co. had a spread together.

In a way Levison was spoiling the whole thing, and no one could say why. He did not fit in with Tom Merry & Co., and it seemed improbable that he ever would.

Even Fatty Wynn appeared relieved when the feast was over and Levison rose to his feet. The affair had been rather a dismal frost.

Levison faced the juniors with a curious expression on his face.

"It was awfully decent of you fellows to ask me here."

"Pway don't mention the mattah, Levison—"

"Oh, it was—awfully decent!" said Levison. "D'Arcy, could I have a few words with you? It's nothing important, but if you haven't got anything to do—"

"Yaas, wathah—"

"Will you walk back to No. 9 with me?"

"Wathah!" said Arthur Augustus heartily. "Pway excuse me, deah boys!"

And the swell of St. Jim's followed Levison from the study.

CHAPTER 5.

Levison's Request.

"D'ARCY, do you remember what you said this afternoon?"

Levison stopped outside the door of Study No. 6 and faced Arthur Augustus. The cad of the Fourth looked grim and determined.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I wemembah saying a good many things, deah boy, as I was vewy flustered at the time," he remarked. "I don't wemembah any particular observatun!"

"It was just after I had rescued Cousin Ethel?"

"I wemembah congwatulatin' you—"
"Do you remember saying you'd do me a good turn if you could?" exclaimed Levison. "You spoke about it being a vewy big thing you'd do."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Did you really mean it?"

"Bai Jove, yaas!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I considah I gave my word of honah, and if there is anything I can do—"

"There is something."

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye, and looked at Levison with a very friendly glance. The swell of St. Jim's had meant what he had said when he made his generous promise to Levison, and he was glad if the opportunity to make it up to Cousin Ethel's rescuer had come so soon.

"I am vewy glad if there is anything I can do, Levison. Pway explain mattahs—"

"I'd give anything if I could play in the Wayland Swifts match, D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You see, I think I am good enough, only I don't think I have had a real chance," went on Levison hastily. "I'd give anything if I could play!"

Arthur Augustus removed his monocle from his eye and thoughtfully polished it. He was not quite sure of his ground, but he thought he understood what Levison was drifting at.

"You want me to mention the mattah to Tom Mewwy?" he said doubtfully.

"No, that wouldn't be any good."

"No, I suppose not, as Tom Mewwy is honah bound to pick what he considahs the best team—"

"Besides, he wouldn't play me at any price!" replied Levison hotly. "I know Tom Merry better than you. I don't want any favours at Tom Merry's hand!"

"Weally, Levison—"

"I mean, Tom Merry doesn't think much of my football, and—naturally wouldn't make a change in the side."

"I see—"

"But I'd give anything if I could play," went on Levison. "I'd give anything if I could play outside-right against Wayland Swifts!"

"Bai Jove—"

Arthur Augustus started. He was beginning to understand the drift of Levison's remarks now. For Arthur Augustus was to play outside-right in the team.

The swell of St. Jim's looked very ill at ease.

Levison saw that, and went on quickly.

"Of course, I know it's a big thing to ask a fellow to stand down out of the Wayland Swifts match, and if you hadn't made that promise after I had rescued Cousin Ethel, D'Arcy, I'd never have dreamt of mentioning it—"

"Bai Jove—"

"You understand that, don't you?"

"Yaas, wathah; onlay—onlay this is not weally a personal request," answered Arthur Augustus. "If the mattah onlay concerned me, I should not hesitate to fulfil my promise. But this is a vewy important match, and Tom Mewwy is welying upon me—"

"And you think if I played in your place it would mean losing the match?" sneered Levison.

"No, wathah not; I wasn't suggestin' anything of the kind—"

"If you were, it would be rather going against Kildare's opinion," went on Levison. "Mellish told me that Kildare said to Rushden that he'd like to see me playing outside-right against the Swifts."

"Did he really?"

"Ask Mellish if you don't believe me," said Levison.

Arthur Augustus started, and looked very ill at ease indeed. The idea that Kildare might think there were other juniors more worthy of a place in the team was a new one to the swell of St. Jim's.

It was not altogether unlikely that Kildare had said that, though. Levison was a well-built fellow, and if he had been practising lately he might have come on.

Arthur Augustus was quite flustered at the thought that

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he might have been playing in the team when there was someone else better than himself who was anxious for a place.

"Bai Jove! Pway let's go and discuss the mattah with Tom Mewwy, Levison—"

"What will be the good?"

"We can tell him what Kildare said."

"Oh, I'm not going to do anything like that!" said Levison in alarm. "Kildare may have forgotten. Besides, Tom Merry wouldn't listen!"

"Then I uttally fail to see what can be done, deah boy!"

"No; nothing can be done unless—"

"Unless what?"

Levison looked at Arthur Augustus sharply. The swell of St. Jim's was very simple in some ways. But in spite of that Levison was not quite sure of his ground.

"Unless you would stand down from the team for me, D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove—"

"Of course, I wouldn't ask you if Kildare hadn't made that remark about my footer, and if you hadn't promised to do me a good turn."

"Yaas, wathah, an' I would willingly stand down, although I am vewy keen on playin', an' if Tom Mewwy will agree—"

"Oh, Tom Merry mustn't know anything about it," said Levison irritably. "I thought I'd made that clear."

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy must know!"

"No, he needn't. At least, he needn't until a few minutes before the match."

"Gweat Scott!"

"I heard you tell Merry and the others you were going to cycle to Wayland for the game," went on Levison quickly. "Well, let them go on thinking you will do that."

"Yaas, wathah, but—"

"Well, suppose you didn't turn up, but I did in your place?" said Levison. "Of course, I should explain to Tom Merry that you had stood down for me, and, as he wouldn't have anyone else there in footer togs, he'd have to play me."

"Weally, Levison!"

Arthur Augustus looked frigidly at the cad of the Fourth. Levison saw his mistake. He hastened to remove the bad impression his words had made on the swell of St. Jim's.

"Of course, I don't mean that you are to enter into a plot against Merry."

"No, I should wathah think not!"

"I dare say when I tell Merry what Kildare said to Rushden, he'll be ready for me to play."

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that," exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Weally, though, why can't you tell Tom Merry what Kildare said now?"

"Because—because it would be too much like bloying my own trumpet!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a pause, which was an embarrassing one to Arthur Augustus.

Levison had a plausible tongue, and he had made out a good case for himself. If Kildare really had made that remark about his football, Levison had some claim to a place against the Wayland Swifts.

Arthur Augustus saw that, but there was something in the scheme he did not like a little bit.

"I would much wathah lay the mattah befoah Tom Mewwy, Levison!"

"I won't agree to that."

"Weally, if you considah the affair—"

"I have considered it!" snapped Levison. "Of course, if you mean to back out of your promise about doing me a good turn—"

"Gweat Scott, I trust I am not in the habit of bweakin' my promises, especially to a fellow who has acted so wippily as you did this afternoon!"

"Then you'll stand down?"

"Bai Jove—"

"Yes or no?" interrupted Levison. "It's no good beating about the bush. Will you promise not to say a word to Tom Merry or anyone else, and will you promise not to turn up until the match has started to-morrow?"

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye, and viewed Levison doubtfully through it.

"Will you give me your word of honah that Kildare weally made that remark about your footah?"

"Yes, and Darrel said something as well, only I forget what that was."

"Then I will agree to your plan," said Arthur Augustus uneasily. "I must wegard it as wathah a wotten plan, but in the cires, I can do nothin' but agree. I trust Levison, you will play up like anything, and do your vewy best to win the game for St. Jim's."

Levison chuckled.

"You bet I will. Not a word to anyone, mind. And—end thanks awfully!"

Levison scudded away, and Arthur Augustus stood looking after him. There was a decidedly puzzled expression on his face.

The swell of the Fourth turned and walked slowly back towards Study No. 6 in a very uncomfortable frame of mind.

CHAPTER 6.

Mellish is Surprised:

TAP!

Levison started, and Mellish hastily threw a cigarette up the chimney. Levison, who had also been smoking, opened the window.

A tap on the door of Study No. 9 often caused a good deal of commotion amongst the inmates of that apartment.

The tapping was repeated.

"Open the door, you chaps!"

Levison heaved a sigh of relief.

"Open the door, Mellish," he whispered. "It's only some junior."

Mellish looked uneasy, but he obeyed. He usually did obey when Levison gave a command.

"Right-ho, you chaps!" he sang out. "The lock's caught!"

Mellish succeeded in getting the door open, and Tom Merry looked into the room. There was quite a cloud of tobacco smoke still in the study, in spite of the open window. Tom Merry blinked, but he did not venture into the unpleasant atmosphere.

"Is Lumley-Lumley here?" he asked briefly. "I want him to come over as first reserve for to-morrow's match."

"Why did you select Lumley-Lumley reserve, Merry?" said Levison jealously.

The captain of the Shell raised his eyebrows. He had picked Lumley-Lumley as reserve because the millionaire's son was the best available forward.

In his heart Levison knew that, but it did not suit him to admit it.

"I'll tell Lumley-Lumley if you like," he growled out.

"I expect he'll look in here before dormy bell."

Mellish stared at Levison in blank amazement.

"But, Levison—Oh!"

Levison had hacked his study companion on the shins under the table. Mellish did not understand why he had been hacked, but the expression on his chum's face frightened him. Mellish held his tongue.

Tom Merry looked from one to the other.

"What were you going to say, Mellish?"

"I? Oh, nothing, Merry!"

The captain of the Shell shrugged his shoulders. After all, it did not matter much what Mellish might or might not have been going to say.

The captain of the Shell turned on his heel.

"Don't forget to tell Lumley-Lumley," he said. "He'll probably cycle over. The kick-off is for two-thirty."

"I'll tell him all right."

"Thanks awfully."

And Tom Merry swung along the corridor to see the rest of his team. Mellish jumped to his feet in astonishment.

"How—how can you tell Lumley-Lumley about the footer, Levison?" he exclaimed. "You jolly well know he's in the sanatorium because they think he's got a touch of the 'flu. He went straight there after seeing the troops pass!"

"Yes, I know that."

"But—"

"You mind your own business, Mellish!" snapped Levison.

"That is, unless you want a thick ear!"

"You—you want to score off Tom Merry by letting him go to Wayland without a reserve player!"

"Then you do want a thick ear?"

"No!" whined Mellish in alarm. "No, really. It's nothing to do with me, old chap. In fact, I think it is rather a good jape!"

"Then hold your tongue!"

"All right, Levison," said Mellish meekly.

But he kept looking at Levison out of the corner of his eyes.

It was rather beyond Mellish, and he felt he was being unfairly treated in being kept out of the plot. There was something else which was puzzling Percy Mellish as well, and he tried to lead up to it diplomatically.

"Did you have a decent spread in Study No. 6, Levison?" ventured the Paul Pry of the School House, after a pause.

"How do you know I was in Study No. 6?"

"Oh, I heard the fellows talking!"

Levison grunted, and went on with his preparation. Mellish looked at him uneasily.

"D'Arcy minor was speaking about it," he ventured again. "The little beast said Tom Merry & Co. were giving a spread in honour of something you had done."

"Did he?"

"Yes, Levison. And there was a rumour that you had saved Cousin Ethel's life at the risk of your own. Of course, I knew—"

"What did you know?"

"N-nothing!" added Mellish hastily. "You—you didn't save Cousin Ethel's life, though, did you?"

"Yes, I did!"

"Mum—my hat! Then the story D'Arcy minor told about you jumping in front of a train and—saving Cousin Ethel when there wasn't a second to spare was true?"

"Why shouldn't it be?"

"Oh, of course there is no reason why it shouldn't be," said Mellish quickly. "In fact, it's just the sort of thing I should expect you to do!"

Levison grunted.

"Suppose you dry up now, and mind your own business!"

"Right-ho, Levison, only I'd like to congratulate you!"

"Rats!"

"I wish I'd been there to see!"

"Why?"

"N-no reason, Levison, of course, but you are a chum of mine, and—"

"Dry up!" snapped the cad of the Fourth. "I've had enough of your cackle!"

And Mellish lapsed into silence; but he still looked at his study companion out of the corners of his eyes. There was an unmistakable air of disbelief on Mellish's face.

Levison could not help noticing it, and it exasperated him. Before long he got up and slouched out of the study without a word. Mellish jumped to his feet and whistled softly to himself.

The Paul Pry of St. Jim's at least found it difficult to believe that Levison had become a hero at a moment's notice.

CHAPTER 7.

Levison Plays for St. Jim's.

"HOPE the Study No. 6 kids aren't going to be late!" Tom Merry made the remark as he looked out through the doorway of the visitors' dressing-room on the Wayland Swifts' ground the following afternoon.

All the St. Jim's junior eleven, with the exception of Jack Blake, Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus, had made the short journey to Wayland by 'bus. The Study No. 6 chums were cycling over.

But they ought to have been here by now.

In another five minutes the match was timed to begin. The officials were already on the field, and the huge crowd round the ropes must not be kept waiting.

Tom Merry looked a little anxious.

"Hope nothing has happened to the kids."

"Oh, they'll be here in time!" said Figgins. "Did you see them start?"

"No; they left before we did—"

Fatty Wynn, the St. Jim's goalkeeper, gave vent to a sudden shout.

"Here they come, anyway! Trust Jack Blake for being on time!"

"Good!"

Tom Merry turned away from the dressing-room door in great relief. This charity match with Wayland Swifts was a very important fixture, and the St. Jim's juniors considered they had a really good chance of taking the shield home with them.

The sight of Jack Blake leading the way on to the ground was a welcome one to the junior captain of St. Jim's.

"Come on, Blake—"

"We've none too much time!"

Jack Blake ran his bicycle up to the pavilion, and stood it against the wall. There was a puzzled expression on his face.

"Is Gussy here, Merry?"

"Hasn't he come with you?" exclaimed Tom Merry, looking round hastily. "He said yesterday at tea that he was going to cycle over—"

Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby looked more puzzled than ever. The chief of Study No. 6 caught Tom Merry by the arm.

"Can't make it out!" he said quickly. "We waited for Gussy at the school gates until it was too late to go back and look for him in the School House. We thought he must have changed his mind and come over by the 'bus after all."

"No, he didn't do that!"

"My hat!"

Jack Blake looked round blankly. There certainly was not a sign of Arthur Augustus to be seen anywhere.

Tom Merry became very anxious again.

The St. Jim's juniors often japed Arthur Augustus about his football, but really the swell of the School House was quite a clever, reliable forward. He was fast, and could centre splendidly, and to start the match against a team like Wayland Swifts without his assistance would be courting disaster.

Jack Blake knew that better than any of them.

"My aunt, Gussy must have been somewhere in the school when we left!" he exclaimed. "He wasn't in Study No. 6, certainly, but he may have been in dormy."

"Then he can't possibly turn up in time for the start."

"Hither not!"

"What are you going to do, Merry?" asked Digby anxiously.

"Blest if I know!"

"Play short until Gussy comes."

"Better put Lumley-Lumley in the side!" exclaimed Kerr, with natural caution. "Lumley-Lumley is pretty good, and it will never do to play one short even for a few minutes."

"Lumley-Lumley!"

Tom Merry started. He looked round in dismay, for Lumley-Lumley had not come over in the 'bus, either. Now the junior captain of St. Jim's came to think of it, he had not seen the millionaire's son all day.

"Lumley-Lumley isn't here!"

"Was he cycling over, too?"

"Yes, I think so!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in growing dismay. "I asked Levison to tell him yesterday to come over as first reserve."

"He isn't here, anyway!"

"No, he isn't here!"

Riggs spoke quickly and anxiously. Already the referee had whistled once or twice to bring the visitors from the dressing-room. Wayland Swifts had been leg-loosening in front of goal for some time.

Jack Blake wheeled round.

"Merry, there is only one thing to do, then?"

"Play short until Gussy turns up?"

"There is nothing else, is there?"

"N-no."

Tom Merry stopped speaking. Levison had just come into the dressing-room. He was in football togs, and was wearing a light coat over them.

The cad of the Fourth looked pale, but he faced the juniors without much embarrassment.

"It's no good waiting for D'Arcy, Merry," he said coolly.

"No good—"

"What do you mean, Levison?" flashed Jack Blake.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I mean D'Arcy isn't coming—at least, he isn't coming to play. He has given his place in the side to me."

Tom Merry started violently.

"What?"

"Didn't you hear what I said, Merry?" sneered Levison.

Tom Merry had heard all right, but he did not understand. Just for a moment it flashed across the mind of the hero of the Shell that Levison was playing a crooked game again.

If the St. Jim's junior side once started the game with Levison in the forward line, it would be no good Arthur Augustus turning up a few minutes late. There could be no change in the side once the game was started.

Levison seemed to guess what was passing through Tom Merry's mind.

"Oh, it's straight goods!" the cad of the Fourth said. "D'Arcy agreed to stand down for me, and won't be here until after half time. He won't be in footer things then, so it's no good waiting for him."

"When—when did Gussy agree to this?"

"Yesterday, after the tea in Study No. 8, Merry," answered Levison.

"And you persuaded him to stand down?"

"He—he offered to, in a way—"

"You must have asked him to do it, Levison," said Tom Merry, in a low, tense voice.

"D'Arcy was quite willing, anyway."

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. For the moment his old distrust of the cad of the Fourth overshadowed the memory of the big thing Levison had done when he saved Cousin Ethel.

Tom Merry did not trust Levison. He knew he must have used cunning and unscrupulous arguments to persuade Arthur Augustus to drop out of the team in this way. It was not Arthur Augustus' way to let St. Jim's down in an important match or in anything else.

And the swell of the School House had let St. Jim's down.

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this afternoon. Levison was not to be compared with Arthur Augustus as a footballer.

Tom Merry bit his lip and looked at Jack Blake, but the chief of Study No. 6 had no suggestion to make. There really was nothing to do but to play Levison in the side.

The impatient shouts of the spectators caught Tom Merry's ears. In another minute the referee would come into the dressing-room to find out the reason for the delay.

Tom Merry turned on Levison.

"Take your coat off," he said briefly. "I'm going to inquire into this business afterwards."

Levison's eyes glinted. He had won. The plot had worked splendidly! Levison was to play in one of the most important matches on the St. Jim's junior fixture card!

A moment later the St. Jim's side were running to take their places on the field.

CHAPTER 8.

A Draw.

"BAI JOVE!"

Arthur Augustus gave vent to the exclamation in a gloomy voice. Ever since a few minutes to two he had been cycling along the pretty, peaceful lanes of Sussex, killing time.

But the swell of St. Jim's was not in harmony with the peacefulness of his surroundings. He was ill at ease, and in anything but a comfortable frame of mind.

"Bai-Jove, it's three o'clock!"

One of the Wayland church clocks had just struck the hour, so the football match would be well advanced into the second half. The game would be over in less than half an hour, by the time Arthur Augustus reached the Swifts' ground.

Unconsciously, the swell of the School House pedalled faster, an anxious expression on his face. Suppose St. Jim's had lost? Suppose Levison had let the side down? Tom Merry would not mince matters when he met Arthur Augustus, if that had happened.

Somehow the swell of St. Jim's felt his conscience prick him. He ought not to have stood down from the side, and yet he did not see how he could have helped it.

"I suppose I ought to have been moah weolote, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "It was not very honorable of Levison to hold me to my promise in a match which really affected St. Jim's moah than it did me. I only trust he has played a wippin' game—"

"Well played, Swifts!"

"All together, Wayland!"

The cheers from the football-ground reached Arthur Augustus, and made him cycle faster than ever. The spectators were still cheering when Arthur Augustus paid his sixpence at the turnstile.

He ran on to the ground, and heaved a sigh of relief.

St. Jim's appeared to be holding their own. Fatty Wynn had just kept out a hot shot, and Kerr was booting the ball right up the field.

Tom Merry was streaking along after it in a whirlwind fashion.

"Play up, dear boys—"

"Gus!"

The word rang out in an excited, heated voice. The next moment Wally D'Arcy—Arthur Augustus' minor—rushed up and seized the Fourth-Former by the arm.

Curly Gibson, Joe Frayne, and a whole crowd of Third Form fags, were with Wally. They all seemed heated and excited.

"Gus, you rotter—"

"Weally, Wally—"

"So you are!" shouted D'Arcy minor. "You've lost the shield for St. Jim's by not turning up!"

"Pway don't be so uttally wide, Wally—"

"So you have!" cried D'Arcy minor furiously. "St. Jim's are a goal down, and that aas Levison missed a sitter! Look at that!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus did look. Tom Merry had been in possession, and he had whipped a perfect pass out to Levison.

The cad of the Fourth blundered badly. From where Arthur Augustus stood, it almost looked as if Levison had fumbled the half-back opposed to him. Anyway, the ball had gone over the line out of play, and a fine chance was missed.

D'Arcy minor looked stormy.

"He's been doing it all the afternoon, and it was really Levison who let the Swifts get their goal—"

"Is the score one nil for Wayland, Wally?"

"Yes; and Levison let them through by finking that half!" retorted D'Arcy minor. "But it isn't Levison who is losing the match for us—it's you, Gus!"

"Weally—"
 "So it is!"
 snapped the fag.
 "Come on, you
 chaps!"

The Third-Formers marched off in a body, and Arthur Augustus worked his way through the large crowd towards the pavilion. The swell of St. Jim's was watching every kick, and the depressed expression on his face grew stronger.

Wayland Swifts were attacking again, and playing up well. But for Kerr's beautiful kicking, and Fatty Wynn's brick-wall-like defence under the crossbar, things would have gone badly with Tom Merry's side.

As it was, matters were none too satisfactory.

There was only about a quarter of an hour left of the game, and St. Jim's had yet to score. The worst of it was they did not look like doing it, though.

"Play up, St. Jim's! All together, deah boys!"

Tom Merry wheeled round. Just for a moment he caught sight of the elegant form of Arthur Augustus, then someone blundered into him, and Tom Merry was in the thick of it again.

He emerged from a great tussle with the Swifts' centre-half, and whipped the ball out to Levison again. The Fourth-Former trapped neatly enough, but the Swifts' left-half was giving nothing away.

He went for Levison, and the St. Jim's junior fumbled badly. He practically let the Wayland player take the ball. "Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye, and viewed Levison through it in dismay. The swell of St. Jim's was quite close to the touchline, and scarcely a dozen yards away from Levison.

"Poah goodness' sake play up, Levison! Play up like anythin', bai Jove!"

Levison scowled darkly. He had wanted to play in this match as much as he had ever wanted to do anything; but he was not enjoying himself.

The half opposed to him was a fine, bustling player, who did not stand upon ceremony. He was perfectly clean and fair in his methods, but he was certainly using his weight.

As a matter of fact, he was not a great deal heavier than Levison; but he had heaps more dash, and the cad of the Fourth had been bowled over the line two or three times already. He seemed to have made up his mind not to let it occur again, and the consequence to the St. Jim's forward line was disastrous. Levison was spoiling almost every movement which required dash and pluck.

Tom Merry's face was dark and anxious.

"Go at him, Levison!" he rapped out once. "Don't flinch!"

Levison scowled, but he refused to take any risks.



"Here, what are you youngsters doing on the line?" shouted the guard from his window, but the juniors took no notice as they raced on. (See Chapter 3.)

Tom Merry gritted his teeth, and made a great attempt to rush through single-handed. He outwitted the centre-half with a clever swerve, and beat one of the backs.

The other defender nipped in just in time, and rather luckily charged down the Shell junior's shot. It was rank bad luck for Tom Merry.

"Hard luck, Mewwy, deah boy!"

"Play up, St. Jim's!"

"Only ten minutes to go!" shouted D'Arcy minor. "Ten minutes, you old fogeys!"

It was very useful information that Wally gave Tom Merry & Co., and it spurred them on.

Kerr stopped a dangerous-looking rush with a fine overhead kick, and Jack Blake found himself in possession.

Instinctively, the chief of Study No. 5 screwed round to pass out to Levison.

"Here, Blake!"

Tom Merry rapped out the words, and Jack Blake understood. The junior captain did not want the ball to be sent to Levison, and Levison ought not to have been upset at that. The cad of the Fourth certainly had done nothing since Arthur Augustus had been on the ground to gain the confidence of the rest of the St. Jim's forward line.

Jack Blake wheeled round again, cleverly beat the half-back, whom Levison seemed to funk so much, and whipped the ball in towards Tom Merry.

The Shell junior trapped, and was away like a flash.

The Third Form juniors, led by Wally, raised a deafening THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 427.

cheer. The cheer grew wilder, louder! Tom Merry was going through the defence in splendid style.

He left the halves beaten to the world, and swerved past the right-back in his stride. Then he stopped dead, and the other back lumbered past, and Tom Merry was right in front of goal.

The captain of the Shell raced ahead, and glanced once quickly at the net. Then he shot.

Thud!

The Wayland goalkeeper flung himself across his goal-mouth, and got the tips of his fingers to the ball. It was a splendid attempt to save, but it did not succeed.

The ball crashed into the net, and the scoring was one all, with scarcely five minutes more of the game to run.

"There's just time, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah, Tom Mewwy!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"P'way wush them, deah boys! Wippin', Blake—absolutely wippin'!"

But Jack Blake lost the ball, perhaps through excitement, and for three of the all important five minutes, there were some desperately fast mid-field exchanges.

The Swifts were holding their own again.

Then, when it looked almost certain the game would end in a draw, Jack Blake got going again. The junior from the broad-acred county ploughed his way through the home defence at an amazing pace. He seemed to beat everyone in front of him. The Wayland right-back forced Blake out towards the line, though, and Levison seemed to wake up suddenly. He changed places with Jack Blake, and the chance of a lifetime seemed to have come St. Jim's way.

Levison was absolutely unmarked, while there were two players on Jack Blake. Still, the chief of Study No. 6 had only to pass in to Levison, and it looked as if a score must follow.

"Here you are, Levison!"

Jack Blake flashed in a perfect pass, which Levison could not help taking. The cad of the Fourth dashed ahead.

Tom Merry held his breath. It seemed that Levison must score now. There was no one at all in front of him.

"Well played, Blake!"

"Go on, Levison!"

"Yaas, wathah. Wush through on your own!"

But a Wayland back was streaking across the goal-mouth, and Levison saw him. The Fourth-Former hesitated; then, as the full-back dashed up, Levison funkcd abominably. He did not even attempt to shoot.

He drew back instead, and let the Wayland player kick the ball out of the ground.

"My only toppah!"

"Funk!"

The word came in a shout from D'Arcy minor. Then there was dead silence. Arthur Augustus, standing close to the touchline, had his monocle in his eye, and was viewing Levison through it. Tom Merry stood still, with utter dismay on his face.

Levison had thrown away St. Jim's great chance of winning the match!

There was not time for another chance like that to come. The game must end in a draw now.

That would mean a replay, and Wayland Swifts would be able to field their full team, which included Crampton, a crack centre-forward, in the next match. It almost looked as if Levison had thrown away St. Jim's chance of winning the shield at all.

Tom Merry turned away in disgust. It was as much as he could do to keep hot, angry words from passing his lips.

A minute later the whistle went for time, and the players trooped off the field.

There was laughter and confidence amongst the Wayland players, for they seemed to have very little doubt about the result of the replayed match, when they would have Crampton to help them.

Arthur Augustus watched the players coming towards the dressing-rooms with doubt and misgivings. He thoughtfully polished his monocle until he caught sight of Tom Merry's stormy face.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy looks frightfully watty!" mused the swell of St. Jim's. "In the cires, I think I will wetink until the deah boy has had time to think mattahs ovah, and cool down."

And Arthur Augustus moved away through the crowd towards the exit.

CHAPTER 9.

The Burning Haystack.

"WALLY, have you seen Gussy?"

Tom Merry asked the question in a heated, indignant voice as he came off the football-field. Curly Gibson, D'Arcy minor, and a whole crowd of St. Jim's Third-Formers, were standing in the doorway of the visitors' dressing-room.

Wally looked at the captain of the Shell defiantly. D'Arcy minor was quite capable of hauling his elder brother over the coals himself. In fact, he was constantly doing it; but Wally usually became aggressive when anyone else had anything to say against Arthur Augustus.

The scamp of the Third looked aggressive now.

"Yes, I saw Gus a few minutes ago, Merry."

"Where is he now?"

"Blessed if I know. Funk, Levison!"

D'Arcy minor muttered the last portion of his remark as Levison passed. Really, the fog did not mean the Fourth-Former to hear, but Levison heard all right.

He flushed a bright pink, and bit his lip.

"Did you speak to me, D'Arcy minor?"

"No. I was just making a remark to Curly Gibson," grinned Wally. "I'll tell you what I said, if you like, though."

Levison scowled, and walked on. There was no need for him to go into the dressing-room, for his coat was hanging on his bicycle by the railings, and Levison had no wish to meet the other members of the St. Jim's side just now.

Tom Merry walked past him without speaking, and Levison scowled again. He mounted his bicycle, and rang the bell furiously as Curly Gibson got in the way.

Curly Gibson chuckled aloud.

"My hat, isn't Levison in a fine old rag, Wally?"

"He's a rotten funk!"

"Rather!"

"And that story about his saving Cousin Ethel is so much bosh!" said Wally heatedly. "A fellow who would jump in front of a train wouldn't funk at football! No ass, except a Fourth-Former or Shell duffer, would believe that. Tom Merry & Co. must be off their chumps!"

D'Arcy minor, Curly Gibson, and the other fags stood looking after Levison, and the cad of the Fourth knew they were watching. He cycled on through the crowd, morose and vicious-looking.

The fog was returning to the Sussex valleys, and Levison was tired and angry. He knew he had played a rotten game, but his anger was not with himself. It was all directed against Tom Merry and Jack Blake and Figgins, and all the other St. Jim's players who had put up such a good game.

Certainly Levison could not accuse the other juniors of having "starved" him in the matter of passes. Levison had been well played to by the rest of the team, so he ought not to have felt anger on that score.

Perhaps the reason for his anger was that the others had played such a good game, while he had failed. Levison had been put out before by the same thing; it hurt him to realise his own inferiority. It was easy for the cad of the Fourth to work up wrath against Tom Merry & Co. from that foundation, and his face became darker and more sullen-looking as he wheeled his machine through the narrow exit.

"You wait until we meet you at St. Jim's," called out someone, with a pleasant laugh. "We shall have Crampton then, you know."

Levison muttered an ungracious reply, and walked on.

Once outside the ground he mounted his machine, just as the fog swept across Wayland in a thick bank.

"Hallo, Levison!"

Levison glanced back and scowled. It was Mellish who had greeted him. Mellish was cycling hard to catch him up.

"My hat, you did play a ripping game, Levison!"

Mellish spoke in a friendly voice, but he got anything but a friendly reply. Levison was in an abominable temper, and was making no effort to rid himself of it.

"It was jolly rotten the way Jack Blake and Digby treated you!" the Paul Fry of the Fourth ventured. "They only gave you the ball when you were marked, and that Wayland half ought to have been turned off the field."

"A fine lot you know about football, don't you?"

"Anyway, I'm only saying what a lot of the spectators said."

"Rot!"

"No, really, Levison—"

But Levison scowled so darkly that Mellish did not repeat his sentence. For about five minutes they cycled along in silence. Then Levison abruptly jumped from his machine.

"I'm going to light my bicycle-lamp," he growled. "Got any matches?"

"Yes, rather!"

ANSWERS

Mellish jumped off his machine as well. It was not really lighting-up time yet; but the fog was making it almost as dark as night, and the lamps might as well be lighted now as later on.

The two juniors propped their machines against a five-barred gate, and Mellish took a box of matches from his pocket. He was just about to strike a light when Levison caught his arm.

The sound of familiar voices and the ringing of cycle-bells carried to the two juniors, and Levison's face darkened again.

He could not see the approaching cyclists because of the fog, but he could distinctly hear what they were saying.

"If it hadn't been for Levison we should have won."

"Rather!"

"Gussy ought to be boiled in oil for standing down for the rotten funk!"

"He will be, when we get back to St. Jim's," answered Jack Blake's unmistakable voice wrathfully. "Gussy's generosity goes a bit too far at times."

"Levison funked right from the kick-off!"

"Rotten!" growled Herries. "A Third-Form fag would have put up a better game! Your lamp's out again, Dig."

"Bother!"

Levison's face had gone white with anger. He caught Mellish by the arm again.

"Jump over the gate," he whispered. "I'm not going to speak to those brutes!"

Mellish grinned to himself. Levison had certainly heard an unbiased opinion of his football at last, but it showed no signs of humbling the cad of the Fourth.

He was in a furious rage by the time he and Mellish had climbed over the gate.

They stood in the shadow of a haystack and waited.

Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby had dismounted, and were standing just on the other side of the fence, but they had not seen Levison's and Mellish's machines. The chums of Study No. 6 were still talking about the game.

"And isn't Tom Merry in a fine old rage?" said Digby, striking a match. "He was fairly boiling over."

"No wonder—"

"It wouldn't have mattered if Levison had played up."

"Rather not!"

"A chap can't help being a rotten footballer, but he can help funking," said Jack Blake indignantly. "Levison simply ran away from that half-back."

"Awful funk!"

Levison's fingers clenched down on his palms, and he bit his lip. If what Jack Blake & Co. were saying had not been true, it would not have mattered so much.

But it was true, every word of it. Levison had funked, and he knew it!

But that did not mean that the cad of the Fourth accepted what was said in the right spirit.

"The part that beats me," Digby said, shutting his bicycle-lamp with a snap, "is that Levison showed up so awfully well when he saved Cousin Ethel. If old Diggy hadn't actually seen him rescue her, I would never have believed it."

"Jolly funny—"

"Yes, it's funny," said Digby, throwing the still lighted wax-vesta over the hedge. "Come on, you fellows!"

The juniors sprang on their machines, and pedalled away, just as the lighted wax-vesta fell to the ground close to Mellish.

"My hat!"

Mellish gave vent to the exclamation in a startled voice. The match had fallen amongst some loose hay at the foot of the roofed-in haystack, and the hay caught alight instantly.

Mellish started forward to stamp out the miniature fire, but Levison caught his arm. There was a wicked gleam in the eyes of the cad of the Fourth.

"Leave it alone, Mellish!"

"But—"

"Leave it alone, I tell you!"

Mellish looked from the miniature fire to his study companion. The smaller junior was openly scared.

"The whole haystack will catch alight!"

"Let it!"

"But—"

"Let it catch alight!" hissed Levison. "It's nothing to do with us. Digby set fire to it; we didn't."

Mellish gasped aloud.

He knew that Levison wanted the haystack to catch on fire, and so cause trouble to the chums of Study No. 6. Mellish was not the least averse from trouble coming to Jack Blake & Co. in that way; but the Paul Pry of St. Jim's had a very great desire to save his own skin from every sort of trouble.

Levison was still staring at the miniature fire Digby had accidentally caused.

"Let's clear off," said Mellish, in a whining voice. "It has nothing to do with us, as you say, but let's clear—"

"Wait a minute."

"But—"

Mellish did not finish his sentence. The fire was dying out—for the hay at the foot of the stack was damp through the fog.

Already the few flames had died away into a mere smoulder.

In another minute the fire would be quite out.

Levison watched the smouldering red glow fade away. He was still biting his lip, and thinking of what Jack Blake & Co. had said about his football. And in his heart Levison wanted to see the whole haystack flare up.

But it was not going to do that. The last smouldering spark amongst the loose hay had died away.

Levison suddenly wheeled round.

"Lend me those matches again, Mellish!"

"W-what for?"

"Lend me those matches!"

"No, I couldn't. I've lost them; I haven't got any, really—"

But Levison's fingers had closed upon the other junior's wrist, and the look on his face frightened Mellish. He handed over the matches, badly scared.

"Levison, what are you going to do?"

The cad of the Fourth did not answer. He struck a match, then to Mellish's horror, plunged the light into the haystack!

The dry hay caught instantly, flaring up in one rapidly-growing red flame.

Mellish uttered a little cry of terror.

"Levison, what have you done?"

"Nothing!" ground out Levison. "It's what Digby has done! Over the gate as quickly as you can!"

But there was no need to urge Mellish to hurry. He had vaulted the gate before Levison had, and a moment later the two juniors were pedalling at a racing pace along the foggy road.

As Levison and Mellish cycled away, a youngster of about thirteen, suddenly darted from an outbuilding close to the haystack. He had a scared, startled expression on his face, but he rushed to the haystack, and tried to beat out the flames with a spade.

But it was too late to stop the fire now.

The haystack, if not the outbuilding next to it, was doomed.

CHAPTER 10.

Arthur Augustus is Bumped.

TAPI

Arthur Augustus started and looked across Study No. 6 towards the door. Someone was beating with his knuckles on the panels.

The swell of St. Jim's opened his mouth to answer, but changed his mind at the last moment. He sat on in the easy-chair in front of the fire, and absently-mindedly polished his monocle. He had just come in from Wayland after the football-match, and was alone in Study No. 6.

Tap-tap!

The knock on the door was repeated, this time with the aid of feet.

"Gussy, open the door!"

"Open the door, ass!"

Arthur Augustus shifted his position a little, and replaced his monocle in his eye. He recognised the voices of Tom Merry and Jack Blake. But the swell of the School House did not answer.

Tom Merry & Co. began thumping on the door furiously.

"Gussy, you burbling duffer!"

"We know you are inside, you ass!"

"Kangaroo saw you go in!" shouted Jack Blake. "Gussy, if you don't open the door, we shall bust it in!"

Arthur Augustus started, hesitated, then decided it would be better to appease the angry-voiced juniors. Arthur Augustus coughed doubtfully.

"Hallo, deah boys!"

"Open the door, ass!"

"Yaas, wathah; I would willingly—"

"Then do it, duffer!"

"That is to say, I would willingly open the doah, onlay I am vewy busy just now—at least, I am going to be vewy busy," answered Arthur Augustus. "In the cires, I must ask you all to wethah to some othah studey foah your pwep—"

"Ass!"

"Duffer!"

"Bust the door open, chaps!" cried Jack Blake. "It'll only mean screwing the lock on again. All together!"

"Weally, Jack Blake! Gweat Scott!"

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The juniors in the passage were sending their shoulders against the door with convincing energy. They were not making very much noise, but the door was giving.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet.

"Pway wotah, deah boys! Jack Blake, as a friend, I ask you to wotah—"

Thump!

"Tom Mewwy, deah boy—"

Bang!

"Figgay, you wottah— Bai Jove!"

There was one last sounding thump, and the door flew open.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell, Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby of the School House Fourth, and Figgins & Co. of the New House, all stood in the doorway. They glared at Arthur Augustus with warlike glares.

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle further into his eye.

"Hallo, deah boys—"

The "deah boys" advanced into the study, and Arthur Augustus backed towards the window. He waved his hand loftily.

"I wathah feel that I ought to explain about this aftahnoon's footah, Tom Mewwy—"

"Groo—"

"If you undahstood all the wathah complicated circs—"
"Collar him!" shouted Jack Blake. "Collar the young ass—"

"Altogether, chaps!"

"Rush him!"

Arthur Augustus gasped aloud.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy! Jack Blake, I twust you will not be unwise enough to wouse my tempah! Figgay, you wottah— Yah! Owuw!"

Tom Merry & Co. rushed at Arthur Augustus, and collared him. Jack Blake took him round the knees, while Figgins seized him round the neck. To complete the movement, Fatty Wynn butted into the small of Arthur Augustus' back, and there were not many St. Jim's juniors who could withstand a butt from the Falstaff of the New House.

Arthur Augustus went down with a thump.

"You wottah! You weekless wuffians—"

"Sit on his head, someone," ground out Tom Merry. "Don't hurt him, but sit gently on his head!"

"Tom Mewwy, you bwute! Figgay, take your wotten knee out of my wibe—"

"Stand him on his head for a start," cried Herries.

"Digbay, I uttably refuse to be stood on my head," shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Weleaso me instantly, or there will be vewy sewious twouble—I am losing contwof of my tempah—"

"Brrrr!"

"Tom Mewwy, you weekless duffah, pway let me explain—"

"Explain, then!"

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as the other juniors allowed him to sit up. "It was uttably imposh me to turn up foah the footah match this aftahnoon as I had given my word of honah to stand down foah Levison—"

"Shrieking ass—"

"What did you stand down for Levison for?" ground out Tom Merry. "Like your cheek standing down for anyone! If you didn't want to play you should have told me, and then I could have picked someone else—Reilly, or Noble, or anyone instead of Levison."

"Yaas, wathah, that is what I wanted to do, deah boy—"

"Then why didn't you do it?"

"Because I had given my word of honah to do Levison a good turn," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "He uttably refused to let me talk the mattah ovah with you, Tom Mewwy—"

"Yes, I dare say he did—"

"Of course, I wealised that it was not altogethah a nice ideah to pretend to be going to play and then not turn up, deah boys," exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "But now that I have explained mattahs, you will agwee with me—"

"Rate!"

"Really, Hewries—"

"Yes, really," growled Herries. "What about taking the burbling young ass to Towser's kennel and let the old dog worry his trousers a bit."

"Oh, uttah ass, Hewries—"

"Oh, bump him!" cried Tom Merry. "Bump him until he admits he has been a silly duffer."

"I shall nevah admit such an uttably untwue thing—Digbay, weleaso me. Kerr, if you dare to touch me—Tom Mewwy, you bwute— Yah!"

The angry juniors seized Arthur Augustus' elegant form again, and banged him down on the study floor. The swell of St. Jim's shrieked aloud.

"You weekless wuffians, you are wumpung my gobbah—"

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"Admit you're a silly ass, then."

"I absolutely refuse—"

Bump!

Arthur Augustus was bumped down again and promptly gave vent to a yell. He thoughtlessly flung his arms round Fatty Wynn's neck. This was not a wise proceeding, for the bulky New House junior fell upon him.

"Ow! Yarocoooh!"

"You brought it on yourself," choked Lowther. "You don't mind being called it for once, Wynn—"

"Wemove the fat duffah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Pway wemove him; he is cwushing me to death—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Admit you're been a silly ass, then!"

"I refuse! Ow! Fehaphs, in the circs, I was a twiffe unwise—"

"Say, you were a silly ass!"

"No, weally— Gweat Scott! Yaas, you uttah wottahs, I admit it! I was stwangelly unwise and tactless—"

"That won't do, Gussy!"

"It will have to do, you wagging wuffians! You know vewy well that it is entially imposh for me to say I was a sillay ass— Yah! I refuse— Blake, you villain! Munnahs, you bwute! Groocoooh! Yaas, I was a sillay ass!"

Arthur Augustus choked out the words, and the other juniors jumped to their feet. The swell of St. Jim's gasped, tried to arrange his tie, and rose from his uncomfortable position.

He jammed his monocle in his eye, and glared at the juniors through it.

"You—you wuffians!" he shrieked. "Tom Mewwy, I must considah you as the wingleadah of this wotten attack—"

"Right-ho!"

"Then pway guard yourself!" howled Arthur Augustus. "Pway pwpwpare yourself for a fwtighful thwashin—"

"Rate!"

"Jack Blake, get out of the wotten way—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jack Blake, if you do not get out of the wotten way—"

Arthur Augustus choked in his indignation. Before he could continue the study door was pushed open, and Kildare, the brawny captain of St. Jim's, looked into the study.

Instinctively the juniors wheeled round.

There was a very grave expression indeed on Kildare's face. Tom Merry whisked softly to himself.

Something very serious must have happened to make the captain of St. Jim's look like that.

CHAPTER 11.

Kildare's Grave News.

"I HAVE just had a most extraordinary telephone-message from Wayland, you fellows!"

Kildare spoke briefly, in a low, tense voice. Tom Merry glanced at Arthur Augustus, and the dishevelled swell of St. Jim's started.

"Bai Jove, about the footah, deah boy—"

"About something which happened after the footer," answered Kildare. "A very serious charge has been brought against a St. Jim's junior."

"My aunt!"

Tom Merry looked grave. As captain of the St. Jim's junior eleven he was, in a way, responsible for the team.

"What is it, Kildare?"

"Something I can scarcely believe," exclaimed Kildare. "A junior set fire to a haystack on Brooks' farm—"

"Gweat Scott—"

"Wait a minute, D'Arcy!" exclaimed Kildare. "It seems that Brooks' son was at the football match, and when he got home he went into a barn or some other outbuilding. As he was coming out he saw a St. Jim's junior deliberately setting fire to the haystack—"

"My only Aunt Jane—"

"What wot, deah boy! As if a St. Jim's fellah would do such an absolutely wotten thing—"

"Rather not!"

"It was Mr. Brooks himself who rang me up," went on Kildare in a steely voice. "I told him to send his son to the telephone. I'm expecting a call any minute now."

"But—but how did the kid know it was a St. Jim's fellow?"

"That's what I want to speak to young Brooks about—"

"My hat, yes!"

"Brooks' farm, too; that's close to the footer ground—"

"Yaas, vewy close indeed, Tom Mewwy, deah boy—"

"Ahem!"

Digby gave vent to the exclamation with a start. He turned to Jack Blake hastily.

"You remember, we stopped by Brooks' farm to light my bike lamp," Digby exclaimed. "I saw the old haystack, but it wasn't on fire then."

"No, there wasn't a fire then—"

Jack Blake stopped speaking because the study door had been pushed open again. This time it was Levison who stood in the doorway, white-faced and terribly scared-looking.

"Some—someone wants you on the telephone, Kildare."

"Ah!"

The captain of St. Jim's darted away, and Tom Merry & Co. bolted after him. Arthur Augustus was the last to reach the doorway, but he could not join the other juniors in their run towards the telephone-box.

Levison was barring the way.

"D'Arcy, I—I want to speak to you for a minute."

"Yaas, wathah, but not at pwsent, Levison. A vewy dreadful thing has happened—"

"I must speak to you at once."

"A little latah, Levison—"

"No, now!"

Levison was standing right in the middle of the doorway. Arthur Augustus had to stop. He looked at Levison in dismay.

The cad of the Fourth was very white indeed.

"You know who it is who has just rung Kildare up, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah—"

"It's young Brooks from that farm at Wayland, and—and I answered the telephone as I happened to be passing the box—"

"Bai Jove, then you know what the young ass has to say—"

"Yes, I know what he has to say," answered Levison, wetting his lips. "D'Arcy, young Brooks saw the haystack being set on fire, but—but he has made one big mistake. He thinks the stack was set on fire on purpose."

"Bai Jove, I agree with you that that must be a mistake—"

"I know it was, because I set it on fire by accident," said Levison desperately. "I was lighting a cigarette, and dropped the match amongst the hay—Melish was with me—and I suppose young Brooks saw me trying to stamp out the fire—"

"Gweat Scott!"

"I'm telling you this because you are one of the few fellows in St. Jim's I really trust," went on Levison, in the same desperate tone of voice. "Of course, it was all an accident, really. But—but the Head won't believe that of me—if I am once suspected."

"But if young Bwooks recognised you, you must be suspected—"

"Brooks saw me, but he only recognised me as a player for St. Jim's," said Levison. "He recognised me as the outside-right, and—and—"

"Pway go on, as I am uttably in the dark as to what you are diving at—"

"And Brooks thinks my name is D'Arcy."

"Gweat Scott! My only toppah!"

"It wasn't my fault that young Brooks thinks that," exclaimed Levison. "Nearly everybody on the football ground thought I was you, for the team sheets still had your name down. No one knew we had changed places except our own players, and your brother and a few more."

"Bai Jove, I suppose that it true! I twust, howevah, that you are goin' to be honahable ovah the mattah and explain at once to Mr. Waiton—"

"D'Arcy, if I explain to Raliton I shall be sacked!"

"The affah was an accident—"

"Raliton will never believe that of me although he might of you," said Levison in a quick, shaky voice. "D'Arcy, you promised to do me a good turn for saving Cousin Ethel—"

"Weally, Levison, are you twyin' to suggest that I should tell lies to Mr. Waiton, and say I set fiah to the wotten haystack, Bai Jove?"

"There's no need to tell any lies. If you just refused to say anything about the affair—"

"My onlay toppah!"

"Just for to-day, anyway, and I'll be ill or something, and get put away into the infirmary," pleaded Levison. "If you explain that you had nothing to do with the fire at once, young Brooks will be brought to the school, and he will recognise me. Perhaps he will be brought to St. Jim's to-night—"

"Yaas, wathah; but the thing you are asking is uttably imposs—"

"You've got plenty of money, and could pay for the haystack!"

"Yaas, I could pay for the haystack," said Arthur Augustus faintly, "although I have no ideah what the wotten things cost. Considaring how wippily you behaved in

saving Cousin Ethel, I am prepered to waise the money to pay for the damage!"

"But that won't be any good—if you explain you didn't do it!" exclaimed Levison. "Couldn't you cycle over to Brooks' farm, and—and stomp up, on condition he made no more fuss about it?"

"Bai Jove, yaas, I could do that!"

"And you wouldn't give me away?"

"I twust I am not in the wotten habit of giving fellahs away, Levison!"

"No, of course you are not. Perhaps Brooks wouldn't ask any questions, and if you paid up well— But here comes Tom Merry back again. D'Arcy, will you promise?"

"I must think the mattah ovah, as I am all in a w'etched futtah!"

"Will you promise to see Brooks?"

"I will promise to pay foah the haystack, and I will do my best to get you out of the wotten bizpax!" said Arthur Augustus, in dismay. "I cannot pwomise more than—that on the spur of the moment, Levison; but I twust—"

"I must go!" whispered the cad of the Fourth; and he slipped from the study before Arthur Augustus had finished his sentence.

Arthur Augustus sat down in the easy-chair, and let his monocle slip from his eye.

Levison had been in such a state of fear that at times he had been almost incoherent, and the swell of St. Jim's had not had time to grasp the full details of what it was Levison wanted him to do. Arthur Augustus was trying to grasp them now, when the study door was flung open.

But those who entered were not Tom Merry and the other juniors back again from the telephone-box. Instead Arthur Augustus saw Harry Noble, Bernard Glyn, and Clifton Dane grinning in at him.

Harry Noble chuckled aloud.

"Taking a well-earned rest after the footer, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus started. St. Jim's had not heard yet, then, that Levison had played in Arthur Augustus' place in the Shield match.

The swell of St. Jim's waved his arm feebly.

"Pway wethah, deah boys!"

"That's a nice way to greet fellows who have come all the way from the porter's-room with a letter for you, Gussy. I must say!"

"A lethah foah me, deah boy?"

"Yes, from Cousin Ethel."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus took the letter, and tore open the envelope, for once in his life doing it untidily with his fingers. It was a long letter, but a paragraph on the last page caught Arthur Augustus' attention and riveted it.

"And, Arthur," Cousin Ethel had written, "I hope you were serious when you promised to do Levison a good turn if the chance presented itself. I think you were, and I know you will not hesitate to pay the very big debt I owe the boy. We have all so gravely misjudged."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus jumped to his feet. Cousin Ethel had written a great many more things about Levison and his brave act on the railway-line, but it was that one paragraph which decided Arthur Augustus.

Generous to a fault, he thought he saw his way clearly now. As Cousin Ethel said, a great debt was owing to Levison, and it must be paid. By some means the cad of the Fourth must be saved.

Arthur Augustus had stood down from the football team at Levison's wish; but that was really a small thing. This was the big chance of repaying the cad of the Fourth for what he had done for Cousin Ethel! It all seemed very clear to Arthur Augustus. He must get Levison out of his scrape somehow.

The only question was—how?

Harry Noble, Bernard Glyn, and Clifton Dane had left Study No. 6, but Tom Merry & Co. might be back at any moment. Arthur Augustus knew that, and he did not want to meet his chums.

He had given his word of honour to tell no one about Levison's trouble.



"Bai Jove, if onlay Bwooks will listen to weason!" said Arthur Augustus, half aloud. "If he will, it is just poss I can awwange mattahs. Bai Jove, I shall have to wace all the way to Wayland!"

And Arthur Augustus ran from the room and down to the bicycle-shed.

Five minutes later he was cycling hard along the road which led to Wayland.

CHAPTER 12.

Lumley-Lumley Gains Some Information.

"D'ARCY, stand up, please!"

Mr. Railton gave the order in a stern, steely voice, which cut through Hall in a nerve-racking, unpleasant way.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet and stood facing the Housemaster.

It was the morning following D'Arcy's visit to Mr. Brooks. Arthur Augustus had intended to make a hurried call; but, unfortunately for the swell of St. Jim's, the interview with Mr. Brooks had lasted much longer than he expected, with the result that the Fourth-Form junior had not been present at call-over, nor was he present at prayers. In fact, Arthur Augustus only got into the dormitory a few moments before lights-out.

Such a glaring case of breaking bounds meant only one thing, and now Jack Blake looked worried and anxious, although he had known that something like this was bound to happen. Morning prayers had just been said, and Lumley-Lumley, fresh from the sanny, touched Jack Blake on the arm.

"What's the trouble, Blake?"

"Blessed if I quite know, old chap!"

"Silence!"

Mr. Railton rapped out the word, and faced Arthur Augustus again. The swell of St. Jim's had just put his monocle in his eye, but he was fidgeting with the silk cord in an unusual way.

There was not a sound to be heard in the crowded Hall. "D'Arcy, a Mr. Brooks, a farmer in Wayland, has brought a very serious charge against you," said Mr. Railton sternly. "He accuses you of having deliberately fired one of his haystacks in the fog after the football match yesterday."

The Housemaster spoke in incredulous tones, and there were one or two audible chuckles. The idea of Arthur Augustus being guilty of such an act was unthinkable to those who knew the swell of St. Jim's.

Everybody in Hall, including Mr. Railton, expected a warm denial of the charge instantly. Instead, there was a dead silence.

"D'Arcy, you heard what I said?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"Then answer me!"

"Bai Jove, I—I am glad to say the mattah is settled, sir!" floundered Arthur Augustus. "I am afraid I bwoke bounds last night; but I had to because it was vewy important, and I quite forgot to ask foah a permit—"

"What has this to do with the amazing charge brought against you, D'Arcy?"

"A vewy gweat deal, sir, as I onlay bwoke bounds in ordah to cycle ovah to see Mr. Bwooks," answered Arthur Augustus a little wildly. "I talked the mattah ovah with Mr. Bwooks, and the mattah was settled."

"Settled?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir, as I paid foah the haystack—"

"You paid for the burnt haystack?" gasped Mr. Railton.

"Boys, dismiss! D'Arcy, come to my room!"

The fellows filed from Hall in blank amazement. Jack Blake's face was a study in bewilderment and incredulity, and Tom Merry was speechless.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the millionaire's son, was the first to speak when once the juniors were in the passage outside.

"What's the wheeze, anyway?" Lumley-Lumley asked, laughing. "You don't mean to say you chaps believe Gussy set fire to a haystack, do you?"

"My hat, no!"

"What happened, then?"

"Blessed if I know!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "All we heard was that Brooks rang up the school, and said his son had seen Gussy set fire to a haystack—"

"How did young Brooks know it was Gussy, anyway?"

"I don't know," answered Tom Merry. "Gussy's pretty well known, of course. Young Brooks seemed quite certain

"Rats!"

Lumley-Lumley wrinkled his forehead and lapsed into silence.

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"Years ago, before his father had become a millionaire, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had lived through a strange experience. For a long time he had lived in the streets of the Bowery, New York, and later in other equally unsavory places, and if Lumley-Lumley had learnt many things that were bad he had at least gained one advantage. His wits had been sharpened to an amazing point.

If they had not been sharpened, the junior would have gone under in those old, evil days. But they had been sharpened, and so in many ways Lumley-Lumley was old for his years.

He listened to the excited and alarmed buzz of conversation round him for a minute or two, then walked away. The junior, who had once been known as the Outsider had still thoughtful lines across his forehead.

He sauntered to Study No. 9, but of his two study companions only Mellish was there. Levison was in the hospital with influenza, as was supposed.

Mellish looked up with a startled face.

"Hallo, Lumley-Lumley!"

"Hallo!"

Lumley-Lumley answered without looking at the Paul Pry of the Fourth. The millionaire's son was still thinking hard. He sat idly on the window-ledge, gazing out across the quadrangle.

"My hat!"

Lumley-Lumley gave vent to the exclamation in a sudden shout, and Mellish jumped.

"W-what's the matter, Lumley-Lumley?"

"Quite a lot of things," answered the millionaire's son, his face transfigured with a smile, and he flashed from the room.

Swinging along at a rapid pace, Lumley-Lumley made for the telephone-box. It only took him a moment to find the number he wanted in the telephone book.

"Double six two, Wayland, please!"

There was a burring sound; then a faint "Hallo!" came along the wire. Lumley-Lumley pressed the receiver closer to his ear.

"I want to speak to Brooks, junior. Ah! You are Brooks, junior?" said Lumley-Lumley, in a keen, clear voice. "That's good luck to start with. I want to know how it is you are certain it was a junior named D'Arcy who set fire to your father's haystack, Brooks."

"I saw him, sir," came back the decided answer.

"Yes; but how did you recognise him?"

"Because I'd seen him at the football-match," answered the farmer's son. "D'Arcy was playing outside-right for St. Jim's against Wayland Swifts, and it was the outside-right I'd seen in the match who set fire to our stack."

Lumley-Lumley started violently.

"Was that the only way you recognised him?"

"Yes; but it was good enough," answered the youngster. "I know I couldn't have made a mistake; and although I was in bed last night when D'Arcy called to see father—"

"Thanks!" said Lumley-Lumley. "You've told me all I want to know, I guess."

And he hung up the receiver, and darted from the telephone-box. The next moment he had Mellish by the arm.

"I might have known you would come spying after me!" the millionaire's son said scornfully. "But I'm glad you did."

"No; really, Lumley-Lumley—"

"Oh, don't trouble to tell lies!" flashed the millionaire's son. "And I'm not going to hurt you. Is that rumour true that Levison played outside-right for St. Jim's against Wayland Swifts yesterday?"

"Y-yes. D'Arcy stood down for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lumley-Lumley laughed quietly, and walked away. Once again he had obtained all the information he wanted.

"As easy as falling off a chair, I guess!" he mused. And he walked on, with an easy smile on his keen face.

CHAPTER 13.

The Truth about Levison.

"HASN'T the kid turned up yet?"

Tom Merry looked in at Study No. 6 and asked his question in an alarmed voice. Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby were seated on their table, looking dismayed and alarmed.

The interval between first and second school had arrived, and none of the juniors had seen Arthur Augustus since he had been ordered to accompany Mr. Railton to his room.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had just come across from the Shell class-room to see if there was any news. Behind the Terrible Three of the Shell were Figgins & Co. of the New House.

All thoughts of the rivalry which existed between the two

Houses of St. Jim's was forgotten now in the trouble overhanging Arthur Augustus.

Jack Blake shook his head.

"No; he hasn't turned up yet."

"Then let's go to Kildare."

"We've been there already, Figgy," answered Jack Blake. "He doesn't know anything. No; Gussy isn't here, Lumley-Lumley!"

"I guess he's coming along the passage now, though."

"Oh, good!"

"Yes; it's the young ass, right enough!"

The juniors crowded into Study No. 6, Figgins & Co. bringing up the rear, with Arthur Augustus between them. The swell of St. Jim's was as elegantly clothed as ever, but his face was a little white.

"Pway don't push me, Figgy, deah boy! You are yumpin' my collar!"

"Ass!"

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Double ass!" hissed Jack Blake. "What has happened? What have you been doing all the morning?"

"Sittin' in Mr. Wailton's woom, bai Jove!" answered Arthur Augustus, in a weary voice. "I wewget to say that Mr. Wailton is in a vewy unwesoonable mood. I explained that it was uttaly imposso foah me to give details of the burnt hay-stack, and that the mattah was settled cuttially to Mr. Bwooks' satisfaction."

"You howling ass!"

"Silly duffer!"

"What did Railton say, anyway?" put in Lumley-Lumley, with a quiet smile.

"A gweat many things, deah boy; and I am wathah afwaid that—that I shall be sacked fwom St. Jim's—"

"Of course you will, if you don't explain, ass!" shouted Jack Blake.

"It is uttaly imposso foah me to explain—"

"But you didn't set fire to the rotten haystack?"

"That isn't the point, deah boy, as there are some vewy complicated ciroes—"

"You raving lunatic, Gussy!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Wait a minute, you chaps!"

The quietly-spoken words were from Lumley-Lumley, and all the juniors turned to look at the millionaire's son. Lumley-Lumley was sitting on the window-ledge, his hands in his pockets.

"I'd like to ask Gussy some questions, if you don't mind."

"I am afwaid I cannot answah any questions, Lumley-Lumley, deah boy."

"Some of 'em you can," answered the millionaire's son. "You stood down from the Wayland Swifts match for Levison's sake, didn't you, Gussy?"

"Yaas; wathah!"

"And you did that because you had promised to do Levison a good turn for his having saved Cousin Ethel?"

"That is true; but pway don't ask anything more, as—"

"But that good turn wasn't enough for Levison," went on Lumley-Lumley. "He asked you to do something else for him."

"I wufuse to uttah anothah word—"

"Right-ho!" said Lumley-Lumley coolly. "Only I happen to know it was Levison who burnt the haystack. Anyway, it was the fellow who played outside-right for St. Jim's against Wayland Swifts; for young Brooks has just told me so over the telephone."

"Bai Jove!"

"Lumley-Lumley, are you sure of that?" flashed Tom Merry. "Levison did play outside-right for us; of course!"

"Yes, I'm sure."

"My hat!"

In a flash Tom Merry understood matters. He faced Arthur Augustus heatedly.

"Gussy, you are taking the blame for the burnt haystack to shield Levison!" he cried. "And you are shielding him because you promised to do him a good turn for saving Cousin Ethel!"

"I wufuse to answah, and I must ask you all to give your words of honah that you will not breathe a word to anyone!"

"Rats!"

"I must insist upon your giving your words of honah, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus earnestly. "Levison saved Cousin Ethel's life. I would wathah be expelled from St. Jim's than he should be."

"Gussy, you old ass!"

Tom Merry stared at the swell of the School House in silence. They saw Arthur Augustus' point now, and for a moment no one could say anything.

Lumley-Lumley was the first to break the pause.

"I don't see that, Gussy."

"You would if you had seen the whipping way Levison

jumped in front of the train and saved Cousin Ethel, deah boy."

"Rats!"

"Weally—"

"There was nothing in it!" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley. "Any ass could have pulled Cousin Ethel off the line!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"And anyway," went on Lumley-Lumley, "Levison didn't do it."

"My hat!"

"But—but I saw him save her, Lumley-Lumley!" exclaimed Figgins, shuddering at the memory of those few awful minutes on the embankment. "I saw him rush in front of the train!"

"No, you didn't!"

"But—"

"I tell you you didn't see Levison do anything!" growled Lumley-Lumley. "As a matter of fact, he stood on the embankment in too great a funk to move, when there was nothing to funk at all, for anyone could have pulled Cousin Ethel clear of the train!"

"Lumley-Lumley, who did save her?" flashed Tom Merry. "Oh, I pulled her clear of the line, if you want to know!" said the millionaire's son. "I wasn't going to let any of you know, because you'd go and make a fuss over nothing. That's why I put Cousin Ethel down on the embankment and cleared off. I suppose Levison came up directly afterwards, and naturally Cousin Ethel thought he had done it. I wouldn't have told you now except for that ass, Gussy."

And before any of the juniors had time to speak Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, once the rank outsider of St. Jim's, slipped from the room.

CHAPTER 14.

The Replayed Shield Match.

"BAI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus gasped audibly as Lumley-Lumley left Study No. 6. The swell of St. Jim's dropped back into an easy-chair, limp and overcome.

But he was not allowed to remain there.

Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins yanked him by his feet, and Monty Lowther seized him by the coat-collar.

"All together, you fellows!"

"Rush him to Railton's room!"

"Rather!"

"And if he won't come quietly," said Lowther, "we'll frog's-march him there."

Arthur Augustus gasped again.

"Weally, deah boys, pway wesease me!"

"Rats!"

"More rats!" cried Tom Merry. "You are going to see Railton, and you are going to explain that you had nothing to do with the burnt haystack. You needn't give Levison away."

"No, wathah not, although I considah Levison has acted in a wemarkably wotten mannah."

"Rotten!"

"He always was a rotter, and I believe he always will be!" said Tom Merry through his teeth. "We'll settle accounts with Levison afterwards, though. What you've got to do now is to explain to Mr. Railton, Gussy. He'll take your word of honour all right."

"Yaas, I suppose so," admitted Arthur Augustus. "If, howevah, he has any doubts, I can pwove an abili, because I wode home fwom Wayland anothah way, and my minah and Curly Gibson and Joe Frayne saw me."

"Oh, you young ass, Gussy!"

"Weally, Digby, I fail to see—"

"Rats!"

The juniors rushed Arthur Augustus along the passage at racing pace, and thumped on Mr. Railton's study door. The Housemaster gave a quiet invitation to come in.

"That's for you, Gussy!" chuckled Tom Merry. "You go and explain."

"Bai Jove—"

"In with you, ass!"

"Weally, Blake, I would wathah have more time to think ovah the mattah—Yah! Groo-ho!"

A violent push from behind sent Arthur Augustus sprawling into the Housemaster's room, and Tom Merry shut the door behind him. Then the juniors looked at one another and grinned.

Arthur Augustus would not be likely to have a pleasant time with Mr. Railton, but Tom Merry & Co. knew that the Housemaster would never doubt D'Arcy's word. The trouble was over now, and the only thing left to be done was to square accounts with Levison.

That could wait until the cad of the Fourth came out.

of the school hospital. But Tom Merry & Co. had not long to wait, for there never had been anything the matter with Levison's health.

As Arthur Augustus knew, Levison had only pretended to be ill to escape from the trouble which he had brought upon himself. It was another of Levison's spoofs.

The juniors of the Fourth met the cad as he came out of the hospital. Tom Merry was in charge of the affair, and Levison was properly tried and convicted of being a cad.

Levison stormed and uttered all sorts of threats, but Fatty Wynn sat on him during the trial. The sentence Tom Merry passed was a severe one of bumping and frog's-marching, the juniors chosen to execute judgment being Wally D'Arcy and the other fags of the Third.

Wally & Co. did their best, and Levison had reason to know it.

But, all said and done, the cad of the Fourth escaped very lightly, for Mr. Raitton never discovered who set fire to the haystack, and even Tom Merry & Co. never suspected that the stack had been burnt on purpose.

Only Mellich knew that, and he was not likely to tell anyone that Levison had deliberately caused the fire in the hope of bringing trouble to Jack Blake, Digby, and Herries. Mellich was far too scared to mention the affair again.

As for Tom Merry & Co., the absorbing interest in the forthcoming replayed shield match blotted out everything else.

The county association had ordered the replay to take place the following Saturday, at two o'clock, on the St. Jim's ground. Punctually to the minute Wayland Swifts took the field, this time led by their crack centre-forward, Crampton.

But St. Jim's were stronger, too, this time, for Arthur Augustus was in his proper place at outside right.

In a whirl of excitement Tom Merry kicked off, and the great game started at a furious pace. Leading his forwards in splendid style, Crampton tried to dash through. But Kerr pulled him up. The Scottish junior stopped the ball dead, then booted away with a huge kick.

Back the leather came, but the St. Jim's defence was sound. They booted and kicked from any angle, and what the backs let go by Fatty Wynn attended to with his sturdy feet.

Then the St. Jim's forwards got going, and the change Arthur Augustus made to the side was apparent at once.

"Heah, deah boy!" Jack Blake heard the call from the wing, and screwed round. He got in a beautiful pass to Arthur Augustus, and the next moment the swell of the School House was scudding along the touchline at a fine pace.

There was no faking the Wayland burly half this time. Levison, watching from the pavilion, bit his lip. Arthur Augustus had crashed into the visiting left-half with the force of a battering-ram.

"Sowwy, deah boy—" Arthur Augustus flashed on, working in towards the centre of the field.

"Here!" Tom Merry breathed the word, and Arthur Augustus whipped the ball towards the captain of the Shell. Tom Merry shot with a first-time kick.

"Thud!" "Oh, hard luck, Tom Merry—" "No luck, kid—"

The ball had struck the further upright, and had rebounded into play. A splendid chance seemed to have gone begging through rank, bad luck.

"Sorry, Gussy—" The words died away on Tom Merry's lips. Jack Blake had dashed up and had got his foot to the ball, just as the Wayland back kicked to clear.

There was another sounding thud, then a rousing, deafening cheer. Jack Blake had the ball, and was dead in front of goal.

"Shoot, deah boy—shoot like anythin'!" "Bang!"

Jack Blake put all the strength of his powerful right leg behind the kick. The ball flashed away, and the Wayland custodian flung himself full length across his goal-mouth in an attempt to save.

But it was a vain attempt. He never had a chance of even touching the ball. To the huge joy of the St. Jim's partisans the old school was one up after only a quarter of an hour's play.

The rest of the first half was fought out at a cup-tie pace, but when the breather came there had been no further score.

After the change over Wayland made desperate efforts to draw level, and for a time held the upper hand as far as the exchanges were concerned. But George Figgins & Co., of the St. Jim's defence, never looked like being beaten, and THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 427.

before long Tom Merry was leading another splendid dash up the ground.

The ball was flashed from one forward to another with machine-like precision. The St. Jim's forwards were sweeping up the ground with an ease which amazed Kildare on the touchline.

"Well played, St. Jim's—" "All together now!"

"Yaas—all together, deah boys— Bai Jove!"

The ball had come out to Arthur Augustus again. He trapped it in his stride, and swerved past the full-back. Then he centred, and there was another rousing cheer.

Arthur Augustus had dropped the ball right into the goal-mouth.

There was a great rush, a fine pass by Jack Blake, and Tom Merry was through.

Thud!

Again the ball was sent right to the back of the net.

After that the form St. Jim's junior eleven showed bewildered, and delighted Kildare and the other seniors watching. There seemed to be no holding Tom Merry & Co.

Only Levison was disappointed. The cad of the Fourth had wanted St. Jim's to lose, and instead they were winning—winning hands down.

Within twenty minutes from time Lowther streaked in from the left wing and netted with a lightning-like shot, and before the end Tom Merry scored his second goal by going through single-handed.

St. Jim's were leading by four goals then, and the match was won and lost. St. Jim's had won the beautiful shield, and, in addition, had the pleasure of knowing that charity had benefited to a double extent through the replay, for both "gates" would go to the Belgian Relief Fund.

When the whistle went for full time there was an excited rush by the spectators, and Crampton, captain of Wayland Swifts, was the first to congratulate the winners.

"You were too good for us," he said generously—"heaps too good!"

"I wathah fancy we had a lot of wippin' luck, deah boy!"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Cwampton—Howevah, I see you are onlay speakin' in a figurative sense," said Arthur Augustus. "Tom Mewwy, I wipose the St. Jim's team come at once to Studay No. 6: foah we have a weally wippin' spwead waitin'—"

"Heccray!"

"Of course, it will be wathah a cwush, for there will be eleven of us, and Lumlay-Lumlay—"

"Blow the crush!"

"Come on, chaps!"

"Yaas, pray come on!" said Arthur Augustus. "It will be an awful pittay if the wabbit-pies Mrs. Taggles has made get cold! Come on, Wynn, deah boy! Huwvy up!"

But there was no need to urge Fatty Wynn to hurry.

In the race for the School House he was only outdistanced by Figgins, the recognised sprinter of St. Jim's.

In Study No. 6 the juniors found Lumley-Lumley waiting for them. But the millionaire's son had only accepted the invitation on the understanding that not a word was to be said about his rescue of Cousin Ethel.

The table was literally crowded with good things. "Well, you haven't spoilt the shop for the ha'porth of tar, Gussy!"

"No, wathah not! Pway take chairs, and if there is anything else we want to eat we have onlay to wing the bell."

"My hat!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "My—my aunt!"

And the juniors sat down to one of the best spreads of the whole term.

THE END.

Next Wednesday:

"THE ST. JIM'S WAR-WORKERS!"

Another grand, long, complete school tale of TOM MERRY & Co.

Order your copy of "The Gem" in advance.

.. THE .. PRIDE OF THE FILM.

A Magnificent New Adventure Serial Story.

By VICTOR CROMWELL.

The First Instalments.

REGGIE WHITE, an orphan, is befriended by MR. ANTHONY DELL, a millionaire film-producer, and given a position as actor in his company.

A scene is being filmed near an old house, and Silas Shock, the operator, climbs on to the roof of a shed to take the picture.

The roof collapses, and Mrs. Horace Dell—Dell's sister-in-law—who is acting in the piece, picks from the ruins a pocket-book, which is found to be full of banknotes.

A man named Stancombe then snatches the notes from her and hurries off, on being tracked down, he says he has placed the notes in the hands of the police.

Mr. Rankin, a neighbour of Mr. Dell's, who has been using the name of Startlefield, learns through some papers found with the banknotes that he has a son living, of whom—owing to a quarrel with his wife, now dead—he has not previously heard. He determines, therefore, to engage detectives to find his missing boy.

(Now read on.)

Birds of a Feather.

It is quite surprising how some startling events, that we expect will lead to all kinds of remarkable developments, have a knack of simmering down to nothing and leading nowhere.

And this is precisely what seemed to happen to all the wild struggle for the banknotes, with the rival claims of Stancombe, the blackmailer, and Johnson Sprague, the lunatic.

Both of these men suddenly dropped right out of sight, the notes remaining, as far as Reggie could discover, in the custody of the police, till Mr. Startlefield should be able to prove that they had belonged to his deceased wife.

All the next few months Reggie was very busy, for Mr. Dell's business had developed and grown out of all knowledge. And all the while it was a case of "Reggie here" and "Reggie there," for in that firm, no picture seemed complete without him.

And a singular fact was that as the popularity of these moving-pictures grew, so Reggie's surname receded out of sight. No one called him "Reggie White," or "Mister White," or "Master White." It was "Reggie" all the time.

First the employees took the hint from Mr. Dell, and spoke of him that way to each other, and later to himself.

Then the public got hold of the idea, and after that it boomed.

The first time Reggie saw the extent to which his first name had become his only name was outside a Brixton picture-palace, where a large board announced:

"REGGIE FILMS SHOWN HERE
EVERY MONDAY, TUESDAY, AND WEDNESDAY."



"I say, pater," said Hubert, "I was a howling cad when I knew Reggie White, and I don't think he'll want to have much to say to me." "Oh, nonsense!" said Mr. Startlefield. "Reggie is a good fellow." (See page 20.)

And that notice flew all over London in less than a fortnight.

With increased popularity came scores of offers from rival firms. Reggie found himself besieged with invitations to join, not only British companies, but to go as far as Nice, Verona, Chicago, Los Angeles, and even Sydney.

These offers came in such curious ways. Sometimes people waited for him mysteriously and whispered their offers. Other times they boldly wrote or wired him at Mr. Dell's offices.

One rich picture-producing firm in Los Angeles cabled Mr. Dell:

"Name your price. We'll buy you and your firm and all your bag of tricks as well as the boy."

To which Mr. Dell wired back:

"Done. Offer accepted, provided you send United States President to fetch us away."

But the queerest experience of all was when a cablegram from New York was delivered addressed:

"Reggie. England."

It reached. The officials were not blind to what the picture-palaces displayed.

Once or twice during those busy days of boom, Reggie met Mr. Startlefield. On the last of these occasions he was surprised at the sprightliness that had come into his manner.

"Reggie, my boy," he said, "I'm getting on the track. Thanks to you, I feel I shall find my poor little deserted son."

"You have had some news, then?" asked Reggie.

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Mr. Startlefield nodded.

"After many disappointments," he replied, "and who should you think is the man I am getting it from?"

"That lunatic!"

"You mean Johnson Sprague? No; I'm getting it from the blackmailing wretch Stancombe, the man Sprague nearly killed. As a matter of fact, I believe Stancombe knows where my son is at the present moment, and won't tell me, because he hopes to get a higher price by holding out. Of course, I know it is no good giving in to any such nonsense as that, because he would go on raising his price as fast as I followed him."

"I think you are right," said Reggie.

Mr. Startlefield spoke with some feeling.

"It is a terrible condition for one to be in," he said. "All these years to think that one had no kith or kindred, and then to hear such news. Just fancy, too. Bargaining with a rogue to get one's own son, and knowing that one must make it a matter of bargaining. I have stated my terms, and I won't add a penny. I know it is the only way."

Reggie fully understood. Stancombe was exactly the kind of man who would go on raising his price, and getting something on account, and never telling his secret while Mr. Startlefield had a cent.

"The man is angry with me, too," said Startlefield, "because he had just discovered the truth about Samson Skewes' money and my real name. He thought he had a gold-mine in me, and when he heard that I had settled up that old trouble, he nearly went mad with mortification."

It was some time after this conversation that Reggie unexpectedly met two old acquaintances—he could hardly call them old friends. They were the two Nixons.

It was very strange that Reggie did not recognise Hubert Nixon at first, and could not make out what had happened to him, when at last he recognised him, and at the same moment he saw what had made the recognition so difficult.

Hubert Nixon had always aped the dress and manners of a young man, though he was still a boy, probably not much older than Reggie himself.

Now, suddenly, he was dressed in almost absurdly boyish costume. The effect was, of course, to give him quite a different appearance from what he had usually had.

Reggie saw the wonderful pair, father and son, at Charing Cross. They were gazing into an art shop as if they were keenly interested in the pictures displayed in the window; but from the way the elder Nixon was looking every now and again somewhat impatiently at his watch, it was clear that they were waiting for someone.

Reggie stood back a little way, half inclined, out of sheer bravado, to go up and talk to them, when suddenly they were obscured by a man who came up from the direction of the War Office.

Undoubtedly this was the man for whom they had been waiting, for after a word of greeting all three strolled off together, crossing the road in the direction of the Admiralty Arch.

And Reggie stared with all his eyes, for he had recognised the new-comer.

It was Stancombe, the blackmailer.

"What is in the wind now?" he asked himself.

The New Son and Heir.

It was not long before Reggie discovered the meaning of Stancombe's intimacy with the Nixons, and incidentally why Hubert Nixon had suddenly abandoned all his efforts to appear a full-grown man of the world.

Two days after seeing the meeting at Charing Cross Reggie was just about to enter the picture factory at Mitcham—Mr. Dell always called it "factory" in preference to "studio"—when he heard his name called.

He turned round. There was Mr. Startlefield.

"Just the lad I want," said Startlefield. "I have got my boy. I have come to terms with the enemy at last, and my son has been brought to me."

"I should like to meet him," said Reggie.

"You shall," said Startlefield. "In fact, I want you and him to be friends. I think that you are just the sort who would do him a lot of good."

Reggie mentally pictured that boy as a workhouse foundling, apprenticed out to some insignificant line, gaining at length no higher place than—at best—a skilled workman might occupy.

He himself had been in the position that a boy of the poorer classes would be almost forced to occupy, if he had no friends or relatives to make a good foothold for him.

"Can you come in now?" suggested Startlefield. "My boy is in the house."

Reggie could spare the time, and, intensely interested in

the thought of meeting the newly-found son of such a wealthy home, he followed into the mansion.

"You must promise to be a friend of the boy," Startlefield kept saying. "I feel sure that he wants company like yours, as I don't think he has had the right kind of companions. If you could only spare the time, I'd take you both for a trip around the world, so as you could get to know each other better."

"Send my son here!" said Startlefield to the servant, as they entered the study.

A moment later the new-found heir was brought.

Reggie opened his eyes and gazed in astonishment, for the boy before him was Hubert Nixon.

To say that he was startled would be to put the case mildly. He was almost thunderstruck. And in this he was by no means different from young Nixon, whose face in one brief second had flushed crimson, and then toned to a pasty, dough colour.

"You two boys have met before!" cried Mr. Startlefield.

Curiously enough, it was Hubert Nixon who answered first. He had evidently primed himself up to meet difficult situations, and, though he had been taken unawares for a moment, he was by no means nonplussed, and was quite able to give a good account of himself.

"Why, it is Reggie White!" he said. "One of the best fellows I ever met in my life!"

He turned to Mr. Startlefield.

"I say, pater," he said, "I'm afraid that this is rough luck on me. I was a howling cad when I knew White, and I don't think he'll want to have much to say to me!"

"Oh, nonsense!" said Mr. Startlefield. "Reggie is a good fellow!"

"Yes, pater, I know that. But I wasn't," said young Nixon. "I was a jolly bad lot when I knew Reggie White. I keep telling you it is no good my being here. I had better go back to my old people. Bad as he was, Mr. Nixon was very decent to me, and it is too late for me to get out of the ways he taught me and turn over a new leaf!"

Reggie was amazed, for the once blustering, bullying, overbearing Hubert Nixon was speaking with a snivel, and in really well-acted tones of hypocrisy that would have put Samuel Pecksniff, Esq., to the blush.

"You see," explained Mr. Startlefield, "my son was adopted in his early youth by a man called Nixon. Quite a well-off man, but, I understand, of rather shady antecedents, and it is hard for my boy to fit himself to a new life!"

"It would be," said Reggie, in non-committal tones.

"It is a most remarkable story," went on Mr. Startlefield, "and one that would read like a romance. This man called Nixon lost his real son when the boy was an infant, and adopted a little foundling from London to take his place."

Reggie showed great interest in the story.

"The whole difficulty of our getting together," went on Startlefield, "was that there were several things in Mr. Nixon's past that he did not wish to bring out, but which, of course, had to be told."

"Such as his real name not being Nixon at all, but Causeway," suggested Reggie, "and his living at Bampton?"

As Reggie said these words he was conscious that Hubert Nixon gave a most satisfied and triumphant look. The next moment he understood why he had done this.

"Exactly," said Mr. Startlefield; "but I wonder how you got to know Mr. Nixon's story. I will say this for Mr. Nixon—that though he was reluctant to part with his adopted son, and also reluctant to disclose anything about himself, when he consented at last to do so he told me everything, and never kept back any incident, however damaging it might be to himself."

"What that means for one in his present position, which is extremely good, it is impossible to say. But, of course, he was man-of-the-world enough to know that one can't go to a perfect stranger and dump a strange boy on him and say, 'This is your son.' He was aware that proof was wanted, and in giving that proof he would need to tell some unpleasant facts about himself."

"And Mr. Nixon supplied the proof?" suggested Reggie.

"Very unwillingly," replied Startlefield.

"I want you two boys to be friendly," he said, a little later, "so I'll leave you together a bit."

To this suggestion Reggie was apparently quite agreeable. He wished to have a chat with Hubert Nixon, as he had one or two fairly direct questions to ask him, and as soon as they were alone he began the attack.

"What piece of roguesy is this?" he inquired.

(Another long instalment of this splendid serial story next Wednesday. Order your copy early.)



THIS WEEK'S CHAT

Whom to Write to —
EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON ST. LONDON E.C.
OUR · THREE · COMPANION · PAPERS!
"THE MAGNET" THE "PENNY" CHUCKLES.
— LIBRARY — — POPULAR — — 1/2 —
EVERY MONDAY | EVERY FRIDAY | EVERY SATURDAY.



For Next Wednesday:

"THE ST. JIM'S WAR-WORKERS!"

By Martin Clifford.

The fine, long, complete story which will appear next week is one of Mr. Clifford's very best humorous efforts. In it you will read how Dr. Holmes allows some of the Shell and Fourth Form boys to help in the task of filling the places of Wayland tradesmen's employees left vacant by calls under the Derby scheme. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in the successful roles of chimney-sweep's boy and grocer's assistant, is screaming funny, of course. So is Fatty Wynn as aide in a confectioner's shop. Fatty's devotion to duty greatly pleases his "boss," but that individual is not quite so pleased when he discovers how very active the Welsh junior has been in another direction. Tom Merry and Mony Lowther get sacked from a bill-posting job on account of Lowther's falling to the temptation offered of practical joking; but these two go to the grocer's—whence Blake and D'Arcy have already been kicked out—and, after all, succeeded in accomplishing better work than any of their chums among

"THE ST. JIM'S WAR-WORKERS!"

QUEER QUERIES.

The pile of letters which I receive every day, often includes some with questions which fairly make me gasp. One of my readers—not a girl—asked me the other day who was the handsomest fellow among the St. Jim's juniors? What does it matter, anyway, and who am I that I should presume to judge in such a matter? I don't recall having had that particular query before, but there is one type of question which I am receiving in constantly increasing numbers. Quite a lot of my readers seem to have gone in for the compilation of lists of fellows in the various Forms at St. Jim's and Greyfriars. I don't object in the very least. The keenness shown is flattering to Messrs. Clifford and Richards, and is strong testimony to the lifelikeness of the yarns and their powers of grip. But when these same keen readers send their lists to me, and ask that I will go through them with the greatest care, and tell them whom they have left out—then, I must own, I think enthusiasm is being carried a trifle too far.

I am a very busy man, you know, and I have not time to make lists of this sort, or to search back numbers for possible omissions. I do not yield to the keenest of all my readers in interest in the stories of our two famous authors, but my interest has never taken precisely this form. Will my correspondents note that, much as I should like to oblige them, I cannot do so in this particular way?

TO CORRESPONDENTS GENERALLY.

Please don't forget the request I have made several times lately that your letters should bear your names and full postal addresses. I warn you that if you omit these items, you may have to wait a long time for an answer, for I cannot, under present conditions, give much space to Replies in Brief.

BACK UP THE COMPANION PAPERS.

It looks to me very much as if some of you have failed to take my warning as to the absolute necessity of ordering in advance from your newsgagents. I knew that the new regulations as to returns made necessary by the need for paper economy, would affect us to some extent, because no newsgagent will lay in supplies for chance customers if he has to risk having them left on his hands. But I did hope that the great majority of my readers were staunch enough to do as I asked, and I see now some reason to doubt it. Back up, all of you! Speak to your chums about it, and if you find that any of them are dropping the papers through sheer slackness of this kind—well, just tell them that it isn't what you would have expected of them, and that you hope they will see the error of their ways at once. This is an anxious time for all

editors and publishers, but I count upon my big circle of loyal readers to help me to come well through it.

NOTICES.

Avondale Cricket Club (juniors) will be glad to arrange fixtures with other clubs in their neighbourhood.—Hon. Sec., R. Quarendon, 15, Tantallon Road, Baltham, S.W.

Gunner A. Ford, 44072, "B" Battery, 175th Brigade, R.F.A., 54th Division, B.E.F., France, would be glad to have back numbers of the "Gem" and "Magnet."

D. Whaley, 32, Arcadian Gardens, Wood Green, N., would be obliged to any reader who could tell him where he can get the words and music of the song: "There is a Taverna Down Town."

A. Butlin, Deck Boy, H.M.S. Galeka, Salonika, Greece, asks for copies of the "Gem," "Magnet," and "Penny Popular."

D. R. Lambert, 145, Gwydir Street, Cambridge, wants to buy clean copies of Nos. 302 and 319 of the "Gem," and no numbers, also clean, of the "Dreadnought" from the date of the amalgamation with it of "The Boys' Journal," up to, and including, No. 154.

Ernest W. Jackman, 18, North End, East Grinstead, would be glad if any Army reader could give him news of his relative, Albert Jackman, of a London regiment, who has been in the Army since the war began.

Charles Dagostino, 210, Garngad Road, Townend, Glasgow, wants to form a Gem Athletic Club in his neighbourhood, and would be glad to hear from readers interested.

Stoker W. D. Friend, 32 Mess, H.M.S. Valiant, c.o. G.P.O., London, would be glad to correspond with a girl reader, and would also be grateful for back numbers.

E. S. Eddleston, 2, Holme Slack Lane, Deepdale, Preston, says he has a considerable number of cigarette cards for sale, and would be glad to hear from the reader who lately asked where he could get these.

Geoffrey Groggs, 155, Harborough Road, Northampton, would be glad if any reader could spare him No. 218 of the "Gem."

H. Alexander, 67A, Langthorne Street, Fulham Palace Road, London, S.W., desires to buy clean copies of "Through Thick and Thin," and "The Boy Without a Name," and is willing to pay above the published price.

A. E. Nixon, c.o. Mr. H. Haraldsen, Exchange Buildings, Newcastle-on-Tyne, has a number of "Gems," Volumes 1, 2, 3, and 4, which he is willing to let fellow-readers have for the cost of postage.

J. Rill, 221, Station Road, King's Heath, Birmingham, is particularly anxious to get the following "Gem" stories: "Cast out from the School," "Loyal to the Last," "Hero and Rascal," the Christmas Double No., and any others in which Talbot plays a principal part.

H. Missen, 3, Muswell Avenue, Muswell Hill, N., wants to buy any number of the "Gem" earlier than 290, and any number of the "Magnet" earlier than 275.

Will "Bradford," who lately wrote to the Editor on a very grave subject, send on, in confidence, his name and full address?

Arthur Shaw, Sherford Street, Bromyard, wants to buy back numbers of the "Gem," and would be glad to hear from any reader who has them for sale.

Private Wilfred Jones, 139, Bury Street, Unthank Road, Norwich, has a number of copies of the Companion Papers, and of the "B.F. 3d. Library," which he says he will be pleased to forward to any girl reader having relatives or friends at the front, who would like them.

A. W. Harper, 25, Wemington Road, Bethnal Green, N.E., would be glad to hear from any readers, boys or girls, interested in forming a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, with, as main object, the sending copies of the papers to our soldiers in the trenches.

Your Editor

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.

Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

GIRLS AT THE OFFICE.

The office is really a different place.
And every man works with a smile on his face
It's "After you, miss!" as we bow with a grace,
Because we have girls at the office.

The office-boy formerly looked such a wreck,
But now with clean collars his form he'll bedeck;
Indeed, it is whispered he washes his neck,
Because we have girls at the office.

We "Mister," each other most formally now,
And never by any chance kick up a row;
Our conduct is excellent, all must allow,
Because we have girls at the office.

Even using strong language the seniors all shrink,
And the manager never goes out for a drink;
The effort it costs them you really can't think,
Because we have girls at the office.

Nobody seems in a hurry to leave,
And the tales that go round—well, you'd hardly believe—
That powder's been found on the governor's sleeve,
Because we have girls at the office.

Where it will end no one knows—no one cares,
But it makes one careful about what one wears,
And it's costing now about double in fares,
For those who work at the office.

Sent in by T. K. Davies, Strefford.

ASKED AND ANSWERED.

Algernon Adolphus, an ardent angler, attended an anglers' association annual.

After "ale-ing," abnormally, Algernon attempted an address, and "Americanised" an awful amount about angling achievements amazingly accomplished.

As Algernon's anecdotes appeared ancient, an apathetic audience assumed airs and attitudes accordingly.

Affronted and annoyed, Algernon afterwards angrily asked an acquaintance:

"Are anglers' associations always all asses?"

"Ay," answered Algy's acquaintance; "Anani-asses!"
Sent in by C. Gerber, Manchester.

A PRESSING NEED.

An old lady, whose husband was ill, fetched the doctor to him.

After seeing the patient, the medical man remarked to his wife:

"I will send him some medicine, which must be taken in a recumbent posture."

"A recumbent posture—a recumbent posture!" she murmured, after he had gone. "I haven't got one, but I'll ask Mrs. Smith if she has one to lend me."

Accordingly she went at once to her neighbour.

"Have you a recumbent posture you can lend me, Mrs. Smith?" she asked. "I want to put some medicine in it for my husband."

Mrs. Smith was equally as ignorant as her neighbour, and, thinking that for which she asked was an essential asset to every home, she answered: "I had one, but I'm sorry to say I've lost it!" Sent in by P. W. Williamson, Salford.

FALSE HOPES.

The red man, who had fled from America after a quarrel with a fellow-brave, found himself penniless and alone landing from a vessel in a great English port.

Suddenly, however, his heart filled with joy, and grasping his tomahawk, he wheeled it excitedly round his head.

There fell upon his ears the war-whoop of his tribe, host!" answered by that of their bitterest foes, "Ek-ow-Ek-ow-oo!"

With a yell, he dashed into the next street, whence came the roar of battle.

But, alas! the rival papers, "Post" and "Echo," had been issued, and it was only the newboys rending the with their shrieks.

The disappointed "brave" buried his face in his hair and glided mournfully towards the cold, black waters of the docks. Sent in by H. W. Goodman, Burton-on-Trent.

"LOST!"

The editor had lost his pen—

—and he was how he wrote—

And found the editorial pen

He groined on the floor.

For nearly half an hour or so

He hunted far and near;

Around, within, above, below,

Except behind his ear!

Sent in by Herbert Amey, Paddington, W.

A CHANGE OF "TUNE."

"You play very well," said the music-teacher, "but have not had good instruction. If you will promise practise four hours daily, I will make a good artiste of in a year or two, and will only charge my usual terms, the way, where do you live?"

"Next door," was the reply. "I've just got lodgings there."

"Oh—er—I forgot to mention that your fingering is and it is too late to correct it. Take my advice, and give music altogether." Sent in by E. W. Morley, Nottingham.

FORTUNE'S FAVOURITE.

The raw recruit, who was orderly man at the mess, looked very hot and uncomfortable as he dined on rations, and the men at his table were "chipping" unmercifully.

It seemed to the recruit that hundreds of dishes were held out to him, and the owners of them were all clamouring to be served first.

He was suddenly interrupted in his task, however, by call of "Shun!" just behind him, and, turning round, saw an officer behind him.

This was the orderly officer whose duty it is to go round the messes to take any complaints that are made.

The recruit, however, was blissfully unaware of this, and simply grinned, wiped his perspiring brow, and returned his task.

"Don't you know who I am?" thundered the officer. "I'm the orderly officer!"

Then the recruit spoke.

"Oh, are you?" he stammered. "You're blooming lucky! I'm the orderly man!"

Sent in by Pte. M. Muir, No. 9500, R. S. I., Arr.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

THE BOYS' FRIEND, 1d.,

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