

"THE SPIDER OF THE NORTH!" OUR GREAT NEW STORY OF MILL-LIFE STARTS TO-DAY!

The GEM 2^D

LIBRARY
OF
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

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A ST. JIM'S JUNIOR TURNS PAVEMENT ARTIST!

(An astonishing episode from the gripping, long, complete school story, entitled: "Disowned By His Father!" contained in this issue.)



Address all letters: *The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.* Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

My dear Chums,—A magnificent programme of topping yarns may be looked for in next Wednesday's GEM. You will have no room for disappointment. As the weeks slip by the fact gets better and better recognised that the GEM is not merely the paper with a punch, but a splendid weekly which gives the best there is in school and adventure fiction. It is always there, right on the spot, just where it is wanted—a cheer-up paper with the best sort of motive running right through it. GEM yarns always have an uplift in them, something to bite at after, and which assists to make the grim battle of life easier and smooth out the kinks.

"TAMING A TARTAR!"

By Martin Clifford.

This is a prime story, with Mr. Selby in the forefront. I shall not say "as usual," for the master of the hilarious Third Form does not get all the lime-light he might have. The reasons are plain. At St. Jim's there are more important people than Mr. Selby, though the latter is not of this opinion. We all know Mr. Selby, but it is impossible to carry on in the manner of a speech and say we all like him, for the plain fact is you can't altogether appreciate the pugnacious, puffy little man with the small mind and the sidgety ways. He is inclined to be a bully, and the world has precious little use for bullies; they get in your way, and upset the apple-cart. Mr. Martin Clifford has selected Selby as one of his chief figures in next week's jolly, splendidly interesting story of St. Jim's. Mr. Clifford always hits Mr. Selby off well. You would know him in the pitchiest dark night by the way he walks and the sound of his voice.

In the coming yarn Mr. Selby is seen getting fairly on the nerves of the juniors. It's his manner that puts people on edge and makes them raspy; but, as you will see in next Wednesday's sparkling tale, the St. Jim's fellows are generous. Schoolboys are all built that way. The fellows at St. Jim's have always kept the flag flying in this respect. Mr. Selby has been extra-trying; he would have worried the scalp off a hairy Ainu. But still, it is known at St. Jim's that the "Tartar" has a birthday, and a smart plan is formed to make things pleasant, for once, by doing full honour to the unpopular master. You will read what happens with zest. Mr. Selby is no brick, but there's no reason why he should not have a cake! All that I need say further is—look out for a highly diverting yarn, and tell your chums about it!

"SPORTSMEN'S LUCK!"

By Gordon Wallace.

Those genial, happy-hearted fellows, the Thunder Creek Sportsmen, make their welcome appearance in a first-class story in next week's GEM. You would have to go far to find a better company of fellows—sportsmen all, and what's more, chaps with a big mission in life, which is generally the case with genuine sportsmen. You will be interested in

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 796.

the reappearance of a certain shifty character in this tale. The Thunder Creek champions have had dealings before with this shady rogue. In the new yarn they tumble upon him again, and it makes grand reading. The scamp has much ill-gotten treasure hidden securely away where nobody could possibly hit on it—that's what he thinks. But he was not counting on the expert swimming abilities of the Sportsmen. He who hides can find, but sometimes there are others more than equal to the task.

"THE SPIDER OF THE NORTH!"

By David Goodwin.

Tom Compton, the lad of pluck and endurance, has an uphill fight of it in his struggle with the man of power and resource who has vowed ruin to the mills. In the second instalment of this great story (see next week's GEM) you find the well-named "Spider" spinning his webs in the dark, preparing sinister schemes for the destruction of everybody who stands in his way. And Tom Compton stands in his way! A most unequal contest, this, it will be said; but Tom does not flinch from the role for which he has been cast by Fate. He goes right on, undaunted by all the deadly array of power and bitter spite of the plotter in the dark. This thrilling story is making a big name for itself. In grim reality and fierce, dramatic force it is second to none!

Your Editor.

"CLAPTON ORIENT" FOOTBALL COMPETITION RESULT.

In this competition three competitors sent in correct solutions of the picture. The First Prize of £5 has therefore been divided among:

E. Leslie Hineks, 23, Mackenzie Street, Longsight, Manchester; N. Willis, Whelford, Leekhampton, Cheltenham Spa; Frances Morton, 7, Eyre Street, Pallion, Sunderland.

The Second Prize of £2 10s. has been divided among the following eight competitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

Mrs. A. T. Cole, Thorpe Morieux, Bury St. Edmunds; Ian Wright, 11, Inchaffray Street, Perth, N.B.; L. Bachelor, 19, Kettering Road, Levenshulme, Manchester; N. Axon, 63, Nugget Street, Oldham; A. Mills, 8, Whitecross Road, Hereford; O. Mills, 8, Whitecross Road, Hereford; F. Marshall, Tanyard, Cranbrook; Charles H. Morton, 7, Eyre Street, Pallion, Sunderland.

Forty competitors with two errors each divide the ten prizes of 5s. each. The names and addresses of these prizewinners can be seen on application at this office.

SOLUTION.

Clapton Orient has had a hard struggle for a long time. Every difficulty which could beset a football club appears to have fallen to their lot—lack of decent ground, indifferent support, and, above all, lack of funds. But their magnificent esprit-de-corps has pulled them through.

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

Tuck Hampers and Money Prizes Awarded for Wit.
SEND IN YOUR AMUSING STORY NOW.

This Wins Our Tuck Hamper! CRACKED!

At one of the Yorkshire inns there is a pianist who can vamp to any song that any singer wishes to sing. He cannot read a note of music, yet, in the local phrase, he "Can play owt!" Recently, however, he met with an unexpected check. A new volunteer hummed over the air, but the pianist failed to get the key. "Let's try it again," he said. And they tried it again. Still, it was of no use. A third trial brought no better result. Then the pianist turned to the singer, and in anger cried: "Sitha, Aw've tried tha on t' white 'uns, Aw've tried tha on t' black 'uns, an' Aw've tried tha on t' black an' white 'uns mixed. It's no use; tha's singing between the cracks!" A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious tuck, has been awarded to: E. Ellery, 1, Church Lane, Dinnington, nr. Rotherham.

NATURAL CURIOSITY!

Wee Willie: "I say, faither." Faither: "Noo, I suppose yer gaun (as ask another redecklous question? I've telt ye already that I dinna ken whether a man wha' does guid is a good-doer or a do-gooder, or whether the seat o' war is what the standin' army sits down on when it's tired. If it's one o' they silly questions, off ye go tae bed, mind that." Wee Willie: "But it's no silly this time, faither." Faither: "Well, what is it, then?" Wee Willie: "What did the Dead Sea dee of?" Faither: "Off tae bed this mornin'!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Clark McCarthy, 44, Norman Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow.

CRICKET LANGUAGE!

On returning home from the office, a newly-married husband found his wife with tears in her eyes. "What is the trouble?" he asked anxiously. "What a brute that man Hobbs must be!" the young wife replied sadly. "It says that when he went in he started punishing the bowlers. He cut Tyldesley twice in the first over, and then knocked him all over the field. Dean interfered, but he did not do much good, because Hobbs sent him flying to the boundary out of the way. Heap came up to see what he could do, but Hobbs ran straight out and hit him over the pavilion. Then Cook tried, and what do you think Hobbs did to him? Why, he skied him, and I expect the poor man would have been killed if some man with square legs hadn't run up and caught him."—Half-a-crown has been awarded to: L. C. Jones, The Grange, St. Anne's Road, Blackpool.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON. THE GEM LIBRARY.

No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.



A plucky Lancashire boy sets out to track down the "Spider" whose evil power has become the curse of Lancashire. This is famous David Goodwin's most powerful story.

CHAPTER 1.

The Man with the Blue Goggles!

WHOO-OO! Whoo-oo! Whirr-rr-r! "Ugh!" grunted Tom Compton, raising himself sleepily from the straw mattress that lay on the floor of his meagre room. "I wish those buzzers were at the bottom of the sea!"

The ear-splitting din that woke him was made by a score of factory steam-whistles hooting and shrieking their loudest to call the great cotton-spinning city of Dunchester to its toil in the mills. The first rays of the chilly spring dawn straggled through the window, and Tom roused himself. It is not pleasant to be awakened by a "buzzer," but he was used to it, and did not want to lose a quarter.

He was just leaving the comfortless bed on the floor, when his eyes lit on a piece of neatly-folded paper pinned to the wall just above his straw pillow. He took it down and looked at it curiously.

"Addressed to me," he said, opening it; "this is a rum go. Who could have got in here to leave it? 'To Tom Compton, Piecer at Barton's Mill.'"

He lit a scrap of candle, for little daylight straggled into that room till the sun was up, and read the note, a frown growing on his face the while.

"Don't go to the mill," ran the missive, in a clear, bold hand. "Johnny Barton's house is doomed. Many have fallen, and his is the next to go."

"The Spider is spinning his web. If you don't know what that means, don't try to find out. You will lose your place to-day, anyway, and if you go to Barton's, perhaps your life as well. I risk mine to give you this warning. Say nothing, but keep away."

"A FRIEND."

Tom read it through twice carefully, and examined it back and front.

"'A Friend,' eh?" he said, stuffing the letter into the pocket of his coat and hastily beginning his toilet. "I wish I knew who my 'friend' is—it would comfort me a lot to punch his head. That note's a dodge to scare me into staying away and losing my place, so's my friend can get it. Yes, I wish I had him—Hallo!"

A dull, muffled boom smote on his ear. It came from a distant part of the city, but the window of Tom's room shook and rattled to the concussion, and a strange, confused noise followed the shock after a short pause.

"An explosion!" muttered Tom, his face darkening. "Can it be another mill blown up? There is something queer going on in Dunchester, after all, though I've always laughed at it. Well, there's no time to go and see. I must hurry to work."

He checked himself at the door. Something impelled him to pull that note out and read it again. Somehow the sound of that muffled explosion, still ringing in his ears, lent a new menace to the note. Tom glanced through it once more, and then bit his lip, and started for Barton's Mill, where he earned his daily bread.

Tom's was a hard life, but as things go in the great cotton-spinning districts, he had not much to grumble at. There was not another "big piecer" of his age in all Dunchester, for he was only sixteen, and since he started work as a half-timer five years ago—which means a boy working half his time at the mill and at school the other half—unusual sharpness and handiness had brought him out of school ties and through the simple cotton work as a "little piecer," who attends the full-grown spinner and pieces up the threads when they break.

As a big-piecer he made seventeen shillings a week, with the additional work of thumping little-piecers older than himself who were envious and thought they could bully him. That was a mistake—Tom was not to be bullied. He was big for his age, well-built, and with muscles and sinews like steel bands. If he was left alone, there was nobody better tempered; but it was not safe to push him too far, nor to bully a smaller boy when he was near at hand. He had a strong, frank face, and was afraid of nothing.

But this morning, as he walked to the mill, while the drab streets rang to the clatter of a thousand pairs of clogs on the feet of the spinners and weavers going to their work, a puzzled frown sat on his face.

At first he was inclined to take no notice of the anonymous note; but now a strange doubt grew upon him swiftly.

There was something wrong with Dunchester. He had been told so a score of times, but pooh-poohed the idea. What if accidents took place in the mills? They always did; his own father had been killed by a whirling wheel-band. The croakers said there were more now—that the regular Dunchester spinners were always the victims, and that strangers and foreigners took their places. Tom had laughed.

Mills were blown up, it was said, and

machinery wrecked. Well, there were always occasional boiler explosions, and as for damage—why, some dismissed bad character would sometimes spoil some of his former employer's gear, if he got a chance. Again, said the croakers, trade was going to the bad. Firm after firm, especially the oldest and best, went broke through some strange cause, mill after mill was closed; and the hands went out to starve. Tom had scoffed at the idea that there was anything sinister at the bottom of all this, but now he suddenly altered his mind.

"I'll show this note to the boss!" he muttered. "I can't believe anything will happen to our mill; but if it does, Johnny Barton will be ruined, and a lot of us turned out to starve."

He turned into the mill yard, and, as usual, he was one of the first to arrive. The doors were not open yet, but John Barton, the owner, turned up a minute later, and he made it a rule to let the hands in himself. He was a big, kindly-looking man, and the shadow which lay over Dunchester had left its mark on him, for his face was anxious and drawn. He was popular with his hands, which is more than can be said for most mill-owners, and he had an especial liking for Tom. The boy stepped hastily over to him as soon as he entered the yard.

"Can I speak to you a moment, sir?" he asked.

John Barton looked surprised. There was something in the boy's face that compelled attention, and he nodded kindly.

"Be quick, then, lad," he said. "What is it?"

"If you'll step aside here, sir, I'll show you," said Tom. "This paper—Tom handed him the note—" was pinned over my bed last night. I thought you might like to see it. I don't take any stock in it myself."

John Barton read the missive, and as he scanned the bold handwriting his face seemed to grow grey and old. He stood for a moment, staring before him, saying no word.

"Thank you, lad," he said at last, putting his hand on Tom's shoulder, and his voice was deep and hoarse. "I'm glad you showed me this. I've a word to say to the hands about it before we start."

The yard was now thronged with men and women, spinners, weavers, card-room lasses, and boy piecers.

John Barton mounted himself on a packing-case, and his strong voice called for attention.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 796.

"Lads and lasses," he cried, "a word with you before we start work! This paper"—he held up the strange note—"was left at Tom Compton's by someone unknown. It holds a warning that our mill is doomed, that my ruin is only a question of hours, and that any man who works here to-day may lose his life." He paused. A quick, deep hum of anger and defiance rose among the crowd.

"You are all Lancashire lads and Lancashire lasses," cried Barton. "You know well enough that the great cotton trade that keeps us all is being cut to the heart. What are all these horrible accidents that are taking our best hands from us? Why are there double the deaths in the mills there used to be? What are the strange faces we see in our midst? And why is firm after firm of the old ones we know going smash, the hands turned out to starve, and new masters, who are not even Englishmen, holding the reins?"

"The Spider is spinning his web," said a harsh voice among the crowd. There was a sudden silence. All tried to find who the speaker was, but he was not to be found. They turned to John Barton again.

"Those are the very words in this cowardly letter!" cried the mill-owner with a fierce laugh. "What do they mean? You all know, lads, that some secret service is at work among us—some strange power that doesn't lack money, and is able to plot and murder and work ruin in our midst."

"Ay, we know it too well," said the crowd with a fierce growl.

"Now, lads, I'll show you my hand. I stand or fall by the contracts we all start work on to-day. If we pull together, we shall keep the ship afloat. Will you stand by me?"

The hands answered with a deep-voiced cheer.

"Remember, you are threatened with death if you work here. If any among you are afraid, let them leave while there is yet time."

"Let anyone nobbut turn his back," cried a boy's voice, "an' we'll souse him in the horse-trough fore he goes his ways!"

A roar of approval followed, and the hands flocked towards the door of the mill.

"Thank Heaven I'm backed by Britishers," said Barton in a low voice, his strong face showing his gratitude. "And by British boys," he added, clapping Tom on the back. "And now, lads, to work!"

The doors were flung open, and the hands hurried into the changing-rooms, for Barton looked after the comfort of his hands. The men and boys shook off their clogs and changed into their white linen working clothes. Tom was ready first, and he slipped into the mule-room, which, at Barton's, was always made ready overnight, before anyone else entered it. The night-watchman had his place by the power-rooms, and had gone home some time since. He was too aged and decrepit to be much use, but he was

an old soldier, and Barton would not turn him away.

"Now for a double-quick day's work!" cried Tom, turning his thin shirt-sleeves up. "Why, what the—good heavens! What's wrong with the mules?"

He stepped hurriedly forward to one of the big mule-carriages of the spinning-room in amazement and dismay. The whole machinery of the mule—which is the hand and brain of cotton-spinning gear—had been forcibly tampered with and ruined. The creels were wrecked, and the straps at the wheel-head were cut through.

"Done for!" gasped Tom. "Every mule in the place is smashed! There's been treachery at work here!"

He stood aghast for a moment. The mill was three-storied, and a faint sound grated on his ear from the floor above. He dashed up the stairway just as the rest of the hands came trooping in.

"Empty!" said Tom, glancing into the first-floor rooms. But a second look showed him that the same secret foe had been at work. The carding-room machinery was wrecked by a skilful hand. Tom darted up the next flight into the weaving-room.

A cry broke from his lips. There, before his eyes, was the unknown enemy at last.

Bending over the last of the frames, cutting it swiftly through with a True-fitt saw, was a man in neat blue serge and a motor-driver's cap. But it was another that made the most sinister figure—a heavily-built, hunched creature, who stood by like some evil-looking vulture. The creature wore a soft felt hat pulled low over his face, and a pair of thick blue goggles.

Tom stood for a second, and then, fierce rage welling up within him at the ruin that had been worked, he sprang straight at the creature's throat.

"You villain, I've got you now!" he cried.

"Help! Here, help!"

A Strange Advertisement I

THE man in goggles sprang away with a guttural oath, and made a rush for the window. In a moment Tom had an arm round his neck and jerked him back.

But he found his prisoner more formidable than he thought. Heavy as he looked, the man spun round like a cat, and flung his arms round Tom with a powerful grip. A knife flashed in his other hand, and Tom made a desperate twist to avoid the stroke. He barely succeeded, for the blade slit his coat at the shoulder, and made a skin-deep wound.

"Hans!" cried the man in goggles, as Tom gripped the wrist that held the weapon, and tore himself from the man's clasp. "Hans!"

The long man threw himself suddenly on Tom and pinned him against the wall by the arms. The boy, muscular as he was, found himself in the grasp of an immensely powerful man, and struggle as he would he could not get free.

The instant the man with the goggles was loose he dashed to the window and nimbly slipped through on to the leads. Tom's assailant, holding the young "piecer" fast, looked coolly back over his shoulder, to see that his companion—who was evidently his master—was getting safely away. As the other was vanishing out of the window Tom heard a footstep on the stairs, and shouted wildly for help; but the cry was stifled,



"Lads and lasses," cried the mill-owner, "a word with you before we start work. This paper"—he held up the strange note—"holds a warning that our mill is doomed, that my ruin is only a question of hours, and that any man who works here to-day may lose his life." A quick, deep hum of anger and defiance rose among the crowd.

for his captor, holding him jammed against the wall with his knee, clapped one hand over the boy's mouth. The man in goggles disappeared rapidly along the leads, giving a harsh, dry cough as he went, and as soon as he was well away the long ruffian whirled Tom away from the wall, hurled him across the room, and was out of the window before the boy could recover his balance.

The hands came pouring into the room just as Tom, with a cry of anger and disappointment, rushed to the casement and vaulted out in pursuit. If he could keep the fugitives in sight they might yet be stopped.

The long man was disappearing round the corner of a chimney-stack as Tom lit upon the leads and dashed after him.

"Which way now?" said Tom eagerly to himself as he reached the spot.

There was no sign of either of the men. The roofs of the mills and houses, joining, led in all directions; one might have travelled half a mile along them. Tom darted from point to point, glancing in every direction, and his heart sank as he failed to find any trace of the fugitives.

"There are half a dozen ways down to the streets," he thought, "through roof-traps or empty houses, and that's the way they must have come. But which way have they gone now?"

A mocking laugh and a guttural command reached his ear, the sound coming up from the street. Then followed the whir and buzz of a motor-car. Tom dashed to the edge of the roof and peered over.

He was just in time to see the two scoundrels he was pursuing whirling round the corner and away out of sight in a powerful motor-car.

"Ha," exclaimed Tom, hurrying back to the mill over the roofs, "there's money and power behind all this villainy! John Barton was right. Why, that car alone cost at least £800! I'll get to the bottom of this, if it's to be done."

He was just about to climb in through the window, when something on the leads caught his eye. It was a fat, Russian-leather-bound notebook, with a gold pencil at the side.

"Ho, ho!" he said. "This will give me a leg-up in the search. One of them must have dropped it in his flight. I'll have a look at it as soon as I'm alone."

"Tom—Tom!" shouted a score of voices as he vaulted in through the window. "Has thee found them, lad? Where be they? Tell us—tell us, an' we'll kill them!"

"Ay, kill the villains that ha' wrecked the mill!" raged the hands, mad with fury at the ruin of the gear and the loss of their work. "Has tha found nowt, lad? Tell us where they are!"

And a woman's voice, shrill above the rest, called aloud for the blood of those who had robbed her of the work that must feed her children.

It was at a time like this that Tom's cool head and quick wits stood him in good stead.

"Steady, lads—steady!" he cried. "It's no use raging till we know what's hurt us. Let me through. I must see Barton."

He forced his way out and down the stairs: A quick search led him to John Barton, sitting in the deserted mule-room, staring before him with ashen-grey face, and vacant, unseeing eyes.

"Mr. Barton," cried Tom, coming quickly towards him, "I've seen them! I've got a clue!"

The mill-owner turned a white, strained face to him.

"Ruined—ruined—ruined!" he said, in a dull, toneless voice, like a child repeating a lesson. And then a look of fury



Tom Compton scanned the work of destruction. Then, fierce rage welling up within him, he sprang straight at the throat of the man wearing the blue goggles. "You villain!" he cried. "I've got you now!"

passed over his face. "Get out of the room, boy! Go!"

Tom stopped for a moment. The mill-owner turned abruptly on his heel, strode into the little office at the end of the room, and shut the door.

The grating of the key in the lock sent a sudden danger-signal to Tom's brain. He stepped forward and grasped the knob.

"Let me in, Mr. Barton!" he cried. There was no answer; and, without a second's hesitation, Tom put his powerful shoulder to the door and burst it open. By the office desk John Barton was standing, the wild, vacant look still in his eyes, and he was raising a heavy service revolver to his head.

With a cry, Tom sprang forward and gripped the weapon.

A sudden blaze of fury seemed to seize the mill-owner, and he struggled for a second to throw the boy off. But Tom clung to him like a limpet, and suddenly John Barton collapsed, as if his strength had gone, and sank into a chair as Tom took the pistol from him.

"Not that, sir!" exclaimed Tom; "anything but that! There's hope yet. I've got a clue to the miscreants who did this work. I can see they've got money—they are wealthy; and, beside punishing them, the law will give you your own back when they're caught. We'll save you yet, sir. Leave it to me!"

The mill-owner's eyes brightened, and he clutched at the idea as a drowning man at a straw.

"Can you do it, lad? Can you save the hands and me from ruin? By George, I'll try you! What's that?"

A furious uproar broke out upon the stairs, and the mill-hands, driven to frenzy by the cruel treachery that had robbed them of their bread, were rushing down from above with cries for revenge.

"The furriners—the furriners have

done this!" roared a host of voices. "They are drivin' Dunchester to ruin! Kill them!"

Tom ran quickly out of the office among the crowd that were swarming into the mule-room. He knew the danger that threatened when once the cool, level-headed North-countrymen were thoroughly roused by wrong, and their fighting-devil came to the fore.

"Stop, lads!" he cried eagerly. "We can crush the enemy, if we're given time; but let's have no rioting. For Heaven's sake stop! It means prison and trouble, and will only hinder our cause."

At most times the hands would have listened to Tom, who was a prime favourite with them; but they were too incensed at the treachery of the hidden enemy, and the words of one or two in the crowd had urged them to madness.

"Kill!" cried the leaders. "Out into the streets, lads, an' kill every furriner thee sees!"

There was a wild, fierce rush, and before Tom knew what was happening, he was swept out of the open gates by the crowd, as though caught in an avalanche. The infuriated hands rushed through the yard into the streets, calling for vengeance, and Tom was carried with them.

They had barely cleared the yard when there was a roar behind them, a rending explosion, a sheet of flame, and then the crash of falling masonry.

Barton's mill collapsed like a pack of cards, tearing down the half of each of its neighbour houses in its fall, and the warning of the strange letter had come true.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed one of the leaders of the rioters, as the crowd paused, aghast. "Blown up by blast



Barely had the infuriated hands left the millyard when there came the roar of a terrific explosion, followed by a crash of falling masonry. Barton's Mill collapsed like a pack of cards, tearing down half of each of its neighbouring houses in its fall.

powder wi' time-fuses, same as Joe Corbith's!"

"John Barton!" cried Tom, in an agony of anxiety, rushing back to the wrecked house. "He was in the office! Bear a hand and search for him!"

The crowd, sobered by the awful catastrophe, lent a willing hand, and risked their lives among the crumbling ruins. But all hope was gone, and soon they found the body of the kindly mill-owner, who had been their friend and employer. John Barton's troubles were at an end.

The horror of the thing, the swift, deadly blow dealt by the enemy, seized everybody. In a few moments the hands, quieted for the moment by the presence of death, would have been in more dangerous mood than before. But the explosion had brought a cure for this. A large force of police and firemen appeared instantly, and the crowd of hands was skilfully and quietly split up. The danger of a riot died down for the moment.

Tom Compton knelt by the dead mill-owner, a mist before his eyes and a lump in his throat, till the poor, damaged body was lifted gently on to an ambulance and taken from the scene, leaving the boy alone.

"It isn't ended," muttered Tom to himself, between set teeth—"it isn't ended! From this moment I'll enter the lists against this hidden foe, and either I'll win or they shall kill me!"

Half an hour later the last of John Barton's mill-hands were in the street, and the door of the mill was closed upon the ruin within.

Tom Compton stood upon the pavement, turning over a few shillings in his pocket—all he had in the world. Left

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 796.

an orphan two years ago, he had no ties, nothing to bind him. It did not matter where he went or what he did. His tiny room in the house of a spinner, who took him in cheaply, was all the home he had, and it was always a struggle to keep himself in food and clothes.

"Work," he said; "I must get work first. If I could only get it where I should have a chance of striking a blow at this hidden power that's ruining us all, that's all I want!"

He walked away through the deserted mill streets—for during working hours few are abroad in Dunchester—and as soon as he found a spot where he was entirely alone he pulled out the pocket-book he had picked up and looked through it.

It was full of what seemed to be notes and memoranda, scribbled with a fountain pen. But not a word of it could he make head or tail of. At first he thought the writing was shorthand. It was a jumble of figures and strange marks and letters.

"Written in cipher!" he muttered. "That means it contains secrets. What secrets, I wonder? There's no key to it, but I believe I know who could help me solve it. It may hold the answer to the whole mystery, and I bet they're mad at losing it!"

He stowed the notebook carefully in his inner breast-pocket, and even as he did so he caught sight of a dark face watching him round the corner of the street.

The face vanished, and Tom, with a sudden feeling that some danger threatened, darted to the spot. But nobody was in sight.

He searched carefully, and then, buttoning his jacket, walked on smartly, wondering. He called at a mill in search of work. There was none. At four

other places he found no better success, and as the afternoon began to close in and nothing but repulses met him, Tom turned into a cheap coffee-house in a hungry and rather despondent mood.

"I've little chance of joining in the fight if I'm out of work and starving," he muttered to himself. "Work's uncommon scarce just now, too."

He picked up a discarded evening paper that lay on the bench, and glanced through it as he munched his herring and bread.

"The same tale," he muttered, as he read. "Durrant & Co.'s mills closed. Boiler explosion at Grants; four killed. 'Half-time' boy crushed by a mule-carriage at Bourne's mill. Hallo! What on earth's this?"

The top paragraph in the private advertisement column caught his eye, and very curious it was:

"To Left-handed Boys.—An intelligent lad wanted, able to use his left hand as dexterously as his right, to learn use of new machine. Lad used to piecing work in mill preferred. £1 10s. per week. Apply in person.—Messrs. Mole, 21, Harkett Street."

"That's the queerest thing I've come across yet," said Tom. "Left-handed, eh? And thirty bob a week. By George, I'll be there at once!"

He rose hurriedly, paid for his meal, and went out, leaving it half-finished, his hopes rising high. He hardly understood what the advertisement could mean, but it was too good a chance to risk losing. If there was ever a left-handed boy, it was Tom.

He did all his work with his left hand foremost, though he was nearly as dexterous with his right. Anybody who came to blows with the young piecer, too, found immediately what a very capable weapon that left of his was. He hastened to the address given, and found a rather dingy-looking house—half-mill, half-office.

"This place was empty last week," he thought, entering. "I wonder who Messrs. Mole are?"

A fat, pasty-faced youth, who seemed to be a sort of clerk, heard Tom's errand, and showed him into a room where five other boys were waiting.

"Hallo, Tom!" said one of them, a "piecer" whom our hero knew well—also a left-handed boy.

"Hallo, Fred!" replied Tom. "Are you after this job, too?"

"Ay," said Fred. "We're all left-handers here. Happen none of us'll get it, for they're main hard to please. Seven o' us ha' already gone up, an' got the push."

Tom sat down wondering what his chance was, and what sort of machinery it could be that needed the left hand to be more able than the right. The five boys went up before him, and he saw them all pass the door again, looking despondent, on their way out.

"Next," said the pasty-faced clerk, putting his head in at the door.

"I'm the last one," thought Tom, as he followed the clerk. "I suppose I shall be refused, too."

He was shown into a rather dingy office, where a square-faced, well-dressed man, with small red eyes that looked over puffy cheeks, sat at a roll-top desk. At a smaller desk sat another man, wiry-looking and with a beaked nose.

"Come in—come in!" said the puffy-faced man, in a voice that showed a slight foreign accent. "Time presses, my lad! I hope you are better dan de oders."

Tom advanced, cap in hand, and stood before the speaker's desk. The puffy

face man looked at him, and his cunning little eyes suddenly flashed with a curious, triumphant expression.

He turned to his companion, and the pair exchanged a meaning glance. The beak-nosed man rose, and, passing behind Tom, locked the door.

The Advertisement Explains Itself!

"ARE you handy mit der left hand?" said the puffy-faced man to Tom.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy.

"See, dere is a liddle model of a spinning-mule, worked by a crank-handle. Let me see you turn it."

Tom put out his left hand, and set the little machine going.

"That is goot. How old are you? Seventeen? So! Well, we shall take you. Name? Tom Compton—eh? Very goot!"

"Good business!" thought Tom, a great relief settling on him. "I've got the place!"

"There is one rule we make when we engage a new boy," said the fat-faced man, fixing Tom with his small, red eyes. "He must turn out his pockets before us."

"Indeed, sir?" said Tom, astonished. "What for?"

"It is our rule!" said the man sternly. "Turn your pockets out, my lad, or we dismiss you. It is only for once."

Tom flushed. He did not like the order; and, though smart and obedient at his work, he had an obstinate pride that revolted against any private interference. "I am sorry, sir," he said firmly, "but I do not like such a condition as that."

"It must be done," said the man angrily, "or you go!"

Tom felt the blood rush to his cheeks. He was a fool, he thought—an idiot, no doubt—to refuse. But he would not turn out his pockets as though he were a suspected thief, and his anger increased.

"Very good, sir," he said, swinging on his cap aggressively. "I will wish you good-evening."

The fat man glared at him for a moment, and there was a pause. Then he made a sign to his assistant.

"So!" said the fat man, more amiably. "I was but trying you, my lad. I like a boy mit spirit. We will not press ze matter. Come into the inner office, and you shall sign the book and take our service. Ha, ha! I am pleased mit you, young fellow. Come along!"

Relieved that he was not to lose a well-paid place after all through his own obstinacy, Tom followed into a little match-boarded inner room, with a window overlooking a yard. It was already dark, for the examination of all the boys had taken some time. Tom gave one glance round the room and took everything in.

Suddenly a pair of wiry arms were flung round him from behind and he was forced backwards across a desk. A cry burst from his lips, and he struck out wildly as the puffy-faced man rushed at him from the front.

"Quick!" cried the beak-nosed man, who had seized Tom from behind. "I can't hold him. His breast-pocket, Johann—it's there!"

"Ach! Schweinhund!" shrieked the fat man as his incautious rush at Tom resulted in a crushing blow in the eye from the boy's disengaged fist.

"You jelly-faced thief!" cried Tom, struggling wildly. "You wanted to know if I was left-handed. Take that!"

The fat German—for such he was—yelped again as Tom's fist struck him under the chin, and, swearing gutturally

at the other man for not holding the boy's arms, he closed again, and tore Tom's jacket open in an attempt to get at his breast-pocket.

Tom, of course, had already realised that he had fallen into the hands of the unknown enemy. Plainly, these men were leagued with the rascals he had found in Barton's. Knowing he had the lost pocket-book, they meant to recover it at any cost.

The humiliation of being caught in such a trap maddened the young picer, and he put all his muscle into the struggle.

Just as the fat German was about to snatch the notebook, Tom gave a heave with all his strength. The desk across which they had pulled him gave way with a crash, and they all rolled on the floor together.

Tearing himself free in the confusion, Tom leaped to his feet and snatched up a chair. The beak-nosed man rushed at him, and was at once felled to the ground. Then, swinging the chair round at the other rascal, and upsetting him, Tom beat out the big window-frame with a few crashing blows, and leaped out just as the man with the beak nose came at him again.

Tom knew he was on the first floor, and at but a small height from the ground. He landed in an asphalt-paved yard, with walls all round, and he sprang forward and clambered up the nearest, while a tremendous chorus of oaths went up from the wrecked window.

"He has it still!" shrieked the beak-nosed man. "Shoot, Johann, shoot! We shall never dare face the chief without it!"

There was a flash and a bang. A bullet thudded into the wall close to Tom's head, filling his eyes with brick-dust. He hurled himself over to the

other side, and dropped pell-mell into the street as another bullet whistled overhead.

"He will get away, curse it!" cried the same voice from the office. "Whistle for the boys, Johann! Call them up to give chase, or we shall lose him and the book, too!"

A clear, rippling, silvery whistle rang through the night as Tom picked himself up and ran. Almost at once the sound of fast-moving feet began to sound from several quarters, and as he raced off down the street the boy heard a hoarse order in German from the office window before he was out of ear-shot.

How it happened Tom could not tell, but the empty streets suddenly seemed to cast up pursuers from every alley.

A dark figure sprang from a doorway and struck heavily at the boy with a life-preserver, which Tom dodged as he ran. and in another minute there were several men chasing him as though their lives depended on catching him, while strange, hoarse oaths and cries rang through the night.

Tom ran like the wind, dodging through court and alley desperately. He clapped his hand over his breast-pocket. The pocket-book, which he knew was the cause of all the commotion, was still there.

"They sha'n't have it!" he panted fiercely. "If they kill me for it, not one of them shall touch it. I'll fling it down a drain-trap first! Ah, here they come!"

Three or four of the pursuers swept round the corner just ahead of Tom, having cut him off, and he nearly ran into their arms—heavy, savage-looking scoundrels, armed with bludgeons.

"Down him!" they cried, rushing at the boy. "Roll the cub over!"

But Tom doubled like a hare, and, making a bold dash for it, gained the



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next street. The enemy were close behind, and he was nearly pumped. Was there no one in those empty streets who could help him against his foe?

He was almost in despair, when, as he raced down the street, he saw the house in which a friend lived close ahead. There was a light in the window.

"Dick—Dick Stearns!" he cried as he scudded past.

He had gained a few score yards on his pursuers, and as he uttered the words he darted into a doorway a few houses further on, and flattened himself in it. The men with bludgeons, who had not seen the move, rushed past so close to him that he could have touched them, and Tom heard the front door of the house where his friend lived open quietly.

He darted from his hiding-place and dashed back. The enemy were at fault. They had halted, and were looking round savagely to see where their prey had gone. Would they see him before he regained the place of safety?

With a last effort, Tom rushed for the open door, and sank down in the little dark hall. The door was closed quickly and quietly, and the boy was safe inside.

"Lock the door! Bolt it! Bar 'em out!" gasped Tom, fighting for breath, for he was utterly exhausted. "It's you, Dick, isn't it? I'll tell you about it in a minute!"

"I think I understand already," said a cool, quiet voice. "They did not see where you went, though, and you are safe. Come in here."

Tom's rescuer led him into a well-lit room, cosy, and comfortably furnished. Tom sank into a wide easy-chair and looked at his friend gratefully.

Dick Stearns seated himself, and looked critically at Tom. He was a clean-shaven, good-looking young fellow, with kindly, but rather tired-looking eyes, and though he was but twenty-four, a good many lines showed in his face.

"So," said Stearns, after looking well at Tom, "you've entangled yourself in the web of the Spider, and he has nearly made an end of you. You are lucky to have escaped."

"What do you mean, Dick?" said Tom, staring.

"I'll tell you when I've heard your story. Do you want anything to eat, old boy, before you start?"

"No, thanks," said Tom. "I want to get this thing off my mind, and as you

seem to know most things about Dunchester, Dick, you may be able to throw some light on it."

And, starting with the cowardly offer he had received on his way to work in the morning, Tom told his friend all that had happened during that eventful day.

When he had finished Dick Stearns sat staring into the fire for some time before he spoke.

The Story of the Spider!

"YOU are lucky to get off with a whole skin," said Dick at last. "It isn't often the Spider's agents miss their prey when they get him as tight as they did you."

"You're talking in riddles, Dick," said Tom. "What's the Spider?"

"If I could tell you," said Stearns, with a grim smile, "I might sell the information for a good bit of money. Nobody knows exactly who the Spider is. But I'll tell you what I know."

"It is he who is wrecking British trade, ruining owners, and maiming workmen. He is thought to be a German, who trades under the name of Schneider, and has big offices in the same block as the 'Clarion' newspaper buildings. You know where they are. He has money, he wants more. He has power, and wants more. Any human being who stands in his light, from the wealthiest mill-owner to the poorest working-boy, disappears out of his path by some strange means, never to be seen again."

"You've heard of the American cotton-gambling, Tom, that's said to have spoilt our trade? It isn't that that's done the harm. That's over now, and we are pulling together with America. But it's Germany that's got her knife into British commerce, and one of the ugliest shadows she has ever thrown across England is this man Schneider."

"He sits in a room in that big building and throws out a web that spreads far and wide, wrecking firms that his own may take their place, entangling men's lives and goods, and he sits there brooding, his telephones and his secret agents ready to his hand, and his great brain working silently. That web is beginning to cover all Lancashire and Yorkshire. Soon, if not checked, it will cover all Britain. That is why they call him the Spider of the North!"

"But he could be stamped out!" cried Tom. "What is he like? Does no one know?"

"He is, if you must know, a stooping, heavily-built man, and little of his face can be seen, for he wears a soft-felt hat and blue goggles."

"By George!" exclaimed Tom. "Then that's the man that—"

"Yes. You found the Spider himself at work in Barton's Mill—he amuses himself so sometimes—and that's why he's paying you special attention. There are not many who have met him face to face."

"Now, you think you've had a narrow escape from him. It's nothing to the other escape, that you don't know of."

Tom rose, his eyes flashing.

"Dick," he said, "you may be right, or wrong, but before he crushes me under foot I'll drive a blow home into this ogre that'll save the country from him! If he kills me, we'll go down together!"

"Well said, young Jack the Giant-Killer!" replied Stearns, leaning back and surveying the hard, determined-looking boy with weary, kindly eyes. "I wish you luck! I fear the struggle won't last long; it's too uneven. Few

dare to tackle the Spider openly." He sighed a little. "I give him trouble myself sometimes; but it has to be done carefully. I'm past my knight-errant days, Tom. I begin to value my life."

"Why, what are you, Dick?" exclaimed Tom. "You've never talked to me of your affairs, but I thought you were an accountant."

Dick smiled grimly.

"So the world says," he replied. "And, outwardly, it's true. But I'm something more. I'm fighting on the other side, Tom. You know of Morton Kane, the great newspaper-owner, philanthropist, and millionaire?"

"The owner of the 'Clarion' paper?" said Tom. "Rather! I've heard of him, of course. Gives away thousands to hospitals, and all that?"

"The same, Tom. He has nearly as big a brain as this terror, the Spider. Sometimes I think he's a greater man; but I'm not sure. He's fighting this terrible curse that hangs over us, and he's the only man, so far, the Spider hasn't quite been able to crush. I serve Morton Kane—one of scores of his men—and my office, where I do accountant's work, is in the 'Clarion' building, the other half of which is occupied by the Spider and his employees. Think of it, Tom—these two great powers, one trying to defeat the other, who moves every stone to ruin and murder him, work with only a double wall between them!"

"Good heavens!" said Tom.

Dick Stearns turned quickly to him.

"Will you join in the fight?" he said eagerly. "You can strike for yourself as well. I can get you a place with Morton Kane. He has heard of you already as a smart lad, just as the Spider has."

"Won't I?" exclaimed Tom, his eyes sparkling. "Dick, are you really—"

"Come to the 'Clarion' office to-morrow at ten sharp," said Stearns, "and I promise you shall see him. More than that I can't do. Within thirty seconds of seeing him you will be taken or rejected."

"Dick, you're a friend, if ever there was one!" said Tom. "I'll never forget this. There's one important thing, though, before we turn in. This pocket-book I found. If you can solve it, it may help us to—"

"No!" said Dick hurriedly, as Tom opened his jacket. "Keep it, Tom. Show it to no one—not even me. Say nothing of it to Kane. And, above all, don't carry it about on your. Hide it somewhere."

As Dick said this, a youngster of about twelve looked in at the door.

"Good-night, Dick!" he said, and was retiring when Stearns called him back.

"Come here a minute, Dennis," he said; and, turning to Tom, added: "This is a little piece who worked in Corbith's Mill. He is an orphan, and Joe Corbith was very kind to him. When Corbith's Mill was blown up, and its owner committed suicide, I took this boy in. His name is Dennis Gale, and he would make a valuable assistant to you."

"What do you say, Dennis?" said Tom. "Will you help me to fight the Spider?"

"Oh, yes!" cried the boy, with blazing eyes. "I'd give my life to be revenged on the brute who ruined Joe Corbith!"

"Right, then!" said Tom, grasping the little piece's hand. "My name's Compton. Shall we work together?"

"Yes!" replied the boy, with the light of hero-worship shining in his eyes. And so the bargain was struck.

(Does Tom Compton realise the task he has set himself? There are some startling situations in next week's thrilling instalment of this powerful story. Make sure of reading it by ordering your GEM well in advance.)

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CHAPTER 1.

A Voice from the Past!

"**G**REAT Scott! What the merry thunder! Ah-ti-shoo!" Jerrold Lumley Lumley of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's gave vent to those startled words, and finished up with a sneeze, as he opened the door of Study No. 1 in the Fourth Form passage and entered.

The air was full of tobacco smoke. It hung like a blue haze in the room, and filled his nostrils and got down his throat.

"Groooogh!" gasped Lumley Lumley.

A boyish figure in Etons rose from the armchair and came towards him.

"What the dickens do you mean by this, you silly idiot?" demanded the Outsider angrily, and then, seeing the other's face, he drew back with a cry of amazement.

"Ralph!" he cried.

"Yes, it's me—Ralph!" said his cousin, grinning and hurling the remnant of his cigarette into the grate. "Rather surprised to see me after so long, what? How are you, Jerrold?"

Lumley Lumley took the outstretched hand of his cousin mechanically, and let it drop the next instant.

"What—what are you doing here, Ralph?" he muttered.

Ralph Jeffrey shrugged his shoulders.

"I know you don't want to see me, Jerrold," he said. "But I'm in trouble and need help. I've come to tell you a very sad story about myself, which I know will please you, because you predicted it. Have a fag?"

"No, thanks!" said Lumley Lumley curtly, as his cousin proffered his cigarette case. "And I'll thank you not to light any more cigarettes in here, either, Ralph. You've made the place smell like a tap-room now. Suppose any of the masters came in, you fool! Put that cigarette away!"

Ralph shrugged his shoulders and complied.

Jerrold Lumley Lumley opened the window at the top, and then turned and faced his cousin.

His face did not express pleasure at Ralph's visit. On the contrary, the Fourth-Former was not a little dismayed at seeing his cousin. He regarded him with glittering eyes, his lips compressed, and his fists clenched tightly.

He had not expected Ralph Jeffrey to turn up again.

Many months had elapsed since Lumley Lumley and his cousin had last met. Lumley recalled the occasion with a bitter smile. They had had a row, and he had given his cousin a licking. That was just before Lumley Lumley's reformation.

In those days Jerrold Lumley had been called the Outsider of St. Jim's, and the name had suited him. He had been one of the wildest juniors at St. Jim's, and his ways compared with those of such black sheep as Aubrey Racke, Gerald Crooke, Clampe, and others of the rotters' brigade.

He and Ralph had been "pals" then, and together had led a reckless life. Ralph had been the less lucky of the two. The Outsider's uncanny luck had given him several very narrow escapes from being expelled from St. Jim's.

Those days were gone, and Jerrold Lumley Lumley was a far different fellow now from the reckless Outsider of the past. He had successfully lived down his old stained record.

They still called him Outsider at St. Jim's, but the name had lost its sting. Tom Merry & Co. were his fast friends, and Lumley Lumley was one of the best-liked fellows at the school.

It was Wednesday afternoon, and a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and Lumley Lumley had intended fetching his bathing costume in order to go for a swim in the sunshine of the River Rhyl.

It came as a great shock to him to find his cousin awaiting him in his study.

Ralph was watching him closely through his narrow eyes. "Well," he said. "You don't seem very pleased to see me, Jerrold."

"I'm not!" returned the Outsider flatly. "Why have you come here? What scrape have you got yourself into now?"

The other looked uneasy.

"I've just been expelled from St. Aubyn's, Jerrold! Head tumbled to my little habits of breakin' bounds and gamblin' and so forth, and I got the right noble order of the boot!"

"You silly chump!"

Ralph shrugged his thin shoulders.

"It's easy for you to call me a silly chump, Jerrold. I haven't had the infernal luck that you had. Now I'm in a hole, and I want help badly. Of course, I wish I'd taken the advice you gave me when last we met, and set about reformin' my wicked ways, and so forth. But that's not the point. While you've been doin' the Good Little Georgie stunt here, I've been gradually driftin' down to the bow-wows, and here I am, without a penny or a relation in the world, barring your father—right down an' out. I've been kicked out of school, all the chaps I know have turned their backs on me, and I don't know which way to turn. I'm getting desperate. I thought I'd look you up, in the hope that you might spring me a few quid, for old times' sake."

Jerrold Lumley Lumley compressed his lips hard, and looked his cousin up and down.

The sallow lines on his face, the dull, sunken eyes, the pasty complexion, and the twitching, nervous fingers all told their tale of Ralph Jeffrey's life of dissipation. The Outsider shuddered as he realised what he might have sunk to himself had he not seen his folly in time.

"Finished inspectin' me?" asked Ralph insolently, his eyes narrowing. "Have I altered much? You have, by gad! Do you remember the old days, when we used to gad about—breakin' bounds, and pub hauntin', and generally actin' the parts of merry blades and goers? Those nights we met after dark at the Green Man—"

"Hold your tongue; hang you!" exclaimed the St. Jim's junior angrily. "I don't want all the past raked up. I was a fool—a mad fool—then. I've found out, by going straight, that the old game wasn't worth the candle. And if you'd turned over a new leaf, as I wanted you to, with me, you wouldn't have landed yourself like this."

Ralph sneered.

"That's it, Jerrold—pile on the agony!" he said. "You're as safe as houses—one of the prim and proper sort now—and I'm disgraced and ruined. But we're both as bad as each other. After all, it was your fault from the beginning—"

"What?"

"You led me into it. Remember, you are the older of the two. I used to follow you in everything."

"It's not true, you cad!" flashed Lumley Lumley, clenching his fists. "You were a shady little rotter, well seasoned in smoking and gambling, before ever you chummed with me. If you dare say that again—"

"I—I'm not going to rub it in, Jerrold," said Ralph hastily. "What I want to know is, what are you going to do to help me? I'm right down on my beam ends now, and must have assistance of some sort. Let me have a few quid, so that I can get a job somewhere. Better to become a billiards-marker, or a racing tout, than starve. But the point is, I must have money now. You've got to help me, Jerrold!"

The Fourth-Former bit his lip.

"Why should I help you?" he asked bitterly. "You were always sponging on me in the old days. When you got into trouble, it was I who had to pay out. When I finished playing the ox, and you went away to St. Aubyn's, I squared up all your debts at the Green Man. That ran me into a pretty penny. You've brought yourself to this by your own pigheadedness, and it serves you jolly well right!"

Ralph's beady eyes glittered.

"Then you refuse to help me?" he said. "You—you're going to turn me down like the others?"

"What would be the use of helping you?" asked Lumley Lumley. "You're not steady. With money, you'd make a fool of yourself again; if I gave you money it would go in gambling to-night, or on horses to-morrow. Not good enough, Ralph. I'm sorry for you. I don't mind helping a chap who deserves it, but you—you're hopeless!"

"Very well!" said Ralph between his clenched teeth. "If I go down I'll drag you with me, Jerrold. I'll go to your pater and tell him the whole sordid story; and I shall let him know the part you played in it, too."

"You cad!" exclaimed Lumley Lumley, starting.

"Why shouldn't I? This reformation rot of yours cuts no ice with me, and it wouldn't with your pater, either. He's a man of the world, and he's roughed it in many places, but makin' his pile has left him without a heart. He's a proud man now, and hard as iron. He'd come down on you like a hundred of bricks, Jerrold; you know that."

The Outsider was silent. He knew that what his cousin said was true. Lumley Lumley had managed to conceal his past from the Head and from his father. Tom Merry & Co. had helped him to live it down, and with their friendship he had succeeded. But to have it all raked up to his father—it would mean disaster. With the Head it didn't matter so much. Dr. Holmes had noted the change in him, and was kindly and forgiving.

With his father it was different.

Ralph was watching him with a sneer on his sallow face.

"Well?" he said, breaking the silence. "What are you going to do?"

The Outsider knitted his brows.

"For two pins, Ralph, I'd lay hold of you and pitch you out of here on your neck," he said in measured tones.

"Really? I'll get the two pins, to oblige you. But, reckless as you are, Jerrold, I don't fancy you'll have the nerve to do that. Look here! There's no need for us to quarrel. Give me a helping hand, and I'll keep everything secret. You carry on with the reformation business, and I'll clear off—"

"And come back when you want more money!" said the Outsider bitterly. "I see the game, Ralph. You mean to blackmail me, because of the past. You miserable cad! Isn't there a spark of decency left in you?"

"Hardship makes a fellow callous," sneered Ralph. "Call it blackmail, or what you like, Jerrold. I'm used to harsh words by now. But what about the money?"

"I haven't got any."

Ralph's face hardened.

"You'll have to get some pretty quickly, then. Look here! I've been staying at the Green Man, and this is my last night. Banks has given me notice to quit unless I pay up by to-night. If I don't give him some money to-day, I'll be turned out. Mark you, Jerrold, I'm desperate, and if I'm turned out I shan't sleep in the open, or in a barn, like the outcasts of the stories; I'm goin' straight to my uncle, and make a clean breast of everything."

The Outsider scornfully looked his cousin up and down.

"You would go to my father! I—I can hardly keep my hands off you, Ralph. You've got the whip hand of me, and you know it. If you hadn't, you wouldn't dare stop in this room another minute. I'll get some money, and let you have it by to-night. I've paid dearly for my past folly already, but I must regard this as part of the debt, I suppose."

Ralph's eyes gleamed.

"Meet me to-night, with the money, at the Green Man, at the same time—"

"To-night!" echoed the Outsider. "I—I daren't—"

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"Bosh! You broke bounds regularly twice a week in the old days, and you can do it again to-night. I shall wait for you till twelve o'clock at the Green Man, Jerrold. If you don't turn up trumps, I'll make an all-night tramp to your home and see your father. He's my only relative. He won't welcome me, I know, but he'll listen to my story."

Jerrold Lumley Lumley set his teeth and pointed to the door.

"Get out!" he said thickly. "Get out before I kick you out. Do you hear, Ralph?"

Ralph hastily took up his hat and went to the door. He turned round in the doorway and sneered at his cousin, who was still standing with an arm upraised.

"Au revoir, Jerrold," he said. "See you at the Green Man before midnight."

With that the young rascal turned on his heels and went. As the door closed behind him, the Outsider dropped into the armchair and buried his face in his hands.

Outside, from the playing fields, the happy shouts of his schoolfellows at cricket came to his ears and mocked him.

His reformation had cost Lumley Lumley dearly; in going straight there had been many difficulties for him to surmount, but it seemed to the unhappy junior that the dilemma which now confronted him was the most difficult of them all.

CHAPTER 2.

Knox's Little Mistake!

GERALD KNOX of the Sixth, the most unpopular prefect at St. Jim's, strode down the Fourth Form passage, looking grim and sullen. Knox was always of a sour temperament, and he usually went about with a look on his features reminiscent of a bear with a sore head. But this afternoon Knox was looking particularly disgruntled. He had just had words with Kildare, on the subject of a place in the First Eleven.

Knox was not noted for his athletic prowess—quite the reverse; in fact, smoking and breaking bounds at night, pursuits which Gerald Knox was in the habit of indulging in, were not conducive to physical fitness. Kildare knew of Knox's shady little ways, and knew also that he could not be depended upon. So he had barred Knox from the cricket team.

The rascally prefect of the Sixth felt this rebuff very keenly.

He was in a royal rage.

Joe Frayne of the Third had just got in his way on the stairs, and Knox had boxed the fag's ears cruelly. And he had just cuffed Baggy Trimble for whistling in the corridor.

He was now on his way to Lumley Lumley's study, to demand an impot which he had given the Outsider the previous day.

He thrust open the door of Study No. 1 without ceremony and strode in.

Then he started, and sniffed.

Jerrold Lumley Lumley was still sitting in the arm-chair, feeling unhappy and dejected. He looked up dully at the prefect.

"Come about that impot, Knox?" he asked wearily. "I haven't had a chance to do it. Lathom detained me after morning lessons. To-night will do, won't it?"

Knox scowled.

"You young sweep!" he exclaimed. "So I've bowled you out this time! You've been smoking!"

The Outsider started.

"Don't talk rot, Knox!" he said. "I haven't been smoking."

"The air is full of tobacco smoke. I smelt it as soon as I came in here," rapped Knox. "And how do you account for these?"

Knox stooped down and picked up two cigarette ends which reposed in the fender. He held them up dramatically.

Lumley Lumley grinned faintly.

"Oh! So you've nosed those out!" he said. "I didn't smoke 'em. You've made a mistake, Knox."

"Made a mistake, have I?" asked Knox, with a sneer. "Well, we shall see what the Head has got to say about that. I'm not blind. And I know tobacco smoke when I smell it."

"You ought to, certainly, Knox," said the Outsider sarcastically.

Knox's eyes glittered, and he took a step forward.

"None of your cheek, Lumley Lumley!" he snarled. "I know very well you aren't the goody-goody you have been making yourself out to be. This is where I've found you out. Come with me!"

"Rats!" said Lumley Lumley, without attempting to get up from the chair.

He could not help grinning. Knox, of course, knew nothing of Ralph's visit. In his maliciousness and eagerness to get Lumley into trouble, Knox thought and acted hastily.



"If you don't give me some money," said Ralph, "I will go straight to your father and tell him of your past folly, and how you have dragged me down with you. He'll listen to my story." Jerrold Lumley Lumley set his teeth and pointed to the door. "Get out!" he said thickly. "Get out before I kick you out. Do you hear, Ralph?" (See page 10.)

Lumley Lumley had been on quite friendly terms with the rascally prefect of the Sixth in the early days. Many had been the quiet little card parties in the secrecy of Knox's room to which the Outsider had been invited.

Knox had taken Lumley Lumley's reformation in a very bad spirit, and ever since he had had his knife in the Outsider. His malice showed itself at every opportunity, although Lumley Lumley never cared a jot for Knox and his resentment.

Knox's eyes gleamed as he regarded the cigarette-ends he had picked up from the grate.

"I'll take these as evidence!" he grated. "Now, you little hypocrite, come along with me to Dr. Holmes at once!"

As Lumley Lumley made no attempt to rise, Knox laid a heavy hand upon him and whirled him from the chair. Next minute, however, the Outsider's fist shot out, and there was a resounding thump as it struck the prefect on the point of the jaw.

Bill!
"Yarooooogh!" howled Knox, staggering back and hugging his chin. "You little demon— Yowp! You dare lay hands on me!"

"I guess you'd better keep your paws off me, then, Knox!" retorted Lumley Lumley calmly. "You've no right to start mauling me about. I guess I don't stand that. I told you I haven't been smoking, and I expect my word to be taken. You— Here, whatever you doing? Oooop! Hands off!"

Knox, unable to contain his fury any longer, flung himself upon the Fourth-Former, and gave him a terrific drive in the chest that sent him staggering. Then Knox followed up with a heavy slog on the Outsider's nose.

Jerrold Lumley Lumley was not the fellow to take that treatment lying down.

He pushed back his cuffs, and closed with Knox as the prefect made another blud rush at him.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Locked in each other's arms, the prefect and the junior sailed round the study, thumping energetically at one another.

"Yarooooop! Yah! Oh crumbs!" howled Knox, as Lumley's fist crashed on his nose, causing his eyes to stream with water. "You little beast— Ow-wow-wow!"

"Take that—and that—and that!" panted the Outsider, who was a handy man with his fists, especially when his anger was roused as it was then. "I'll show you! Take that— Grooooooh!"

The pair looked like wrecking each other's good looks and clothing, but a timely interruption came in the form of Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House.

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Railton stood stock still in the doorway of the study and gazed for a moment in amazement at the combatants.

"Knox—Lumley Lumley! Good heavens! What is the meaning of this?"

Knox and Lumley Lumley let go of each other as though they had suddenly become red-hot, at the sound of the master's voice, and wheeled round towards Mr. Railton, gasping.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Housemaster sharply. "Can it be possible, Knox, that you, a prefect, should lower yourself to engage in a scuffle with a junior?"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Knox, completely taken aback.

"Surely such conduct is hardly conducive to the dignity of a prefect of the Sixth Form?" went on Mr. Railton.

"The young rascal set about me first, sir," hissed the prefect. "I had to—"

"Don't tell lies, Knox!" put in the Outsider calmly. "It was you who first laid hands on me."

"I was using force to bring Lumley Lumley to the Head, sir," panted Knox. "I caught him smoking—"

"Good heavens!"

"Lie number two, sir!" said Lumley Lumley cheerfully. "Knox was quite in error when he said that he caught me smoking. To be correct, he came into this room like a bull, without even having the decency to knock, and he smelt tobacco in the air, and discovered a couple of cigarette-ends in the fender."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Railton. "That is a very serious admission, Lumley Lumley!"

By this time quite a crowd of juniors had gathered in the Fourth Form passage. Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co. had finished cricket practice, and stopped on their way to Study No. 6, where Gussy was standing tea, to see the excitement.

Knox pulled the cigarette-ends from his pocket and held them out for inspection.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "They are real cigarette-ends! Lumley looks like bein' in for it now, deah boys!"

But Jerrold Lumley Lumley's face wore a cool smile.

Mr. Railton fixed a stern look upon him.

"You admit, then, that these cigarette-ends were found in your study grate, Lumley Lumley?" he asked.

"Certainly, sir!"

"That's proof enough!" said Knox harshly. "The air was full of smoke. You can smell it now!"

Mr. Railton sniffed.

"Yes, there is certainly a trace of tobacco-smoke in the air," he said sternly. "Lumley Lumley, have you been smoking?"

"No, sir," replied the Outsider.

"He's telling lies, sir!" hooted Knox. "He——"

"Pray be silent, Knox!" interrupted Mr. Railton. "How came these fragments of cigarettes to be in your study, Lumley Lumley?"

"They were thrown down there by the person who smoked them, sir," replied Jerrold Lumley Lumley. "I admit there's been smoking going on in my study, but I'm not the culprit. You see, I've had a visitor this afternoon—a cousin."

"Oh!"

Knox's face underwent a startling change, and he had to grip the doorway for support.

"My cousin had been smoking in here before I came in," went on Lumley Lumley calmly. "Of course, when I pointed out to him that smoking wasn't allowed in here, and that there were silly fattedheads about who might jump to hasty conclusions and blame me for it, he stopped smoking!"

Mr. Railton's face cleared, and there were several subdued chuckles from the fellows in the passage.

Knox's face was a study. It went from red to pink and then to a sickly white.

"Don't believe him, sir!" he snarled. "He's telling lies! Both he and his cousin have been smoking——"

"Knox," rapped Mr. Railton severely, "you have no foundation whatever for that allegation against Lumley Lumley. Have I your word of honour upon what you have just told me, Lumley Lumley?"

"Certainly, sir," replied the Outsider. "Honour bright, I have not been smoking."

"Then that is all right, Lumley Lumley," Mr. Railton turned to Knox, who quailed visibly before his blazing look. "Knox, you appear to have acted with great rashness—ahem! Pray go to my study!"

Grinding his teeth, and almost choking with wrath, Gerald Knox went.

He slunk off down the passage without a word, and as he passed, the juniors grinned at him and openly chuckled. Mr. Railton could not very well "tick him off" before them; but Knox was going to get it, all the same.

The prefect could not trust himself to speak just then, but his thoughts were homicidal. Had he been able he would have flung himself upon Jerrold Lumley Lumley and slaughtered him.

"Good old Lumley!" said Jack Blake heartily, when Mr. Railton had gone. "You took the wind out of old Knox's sails properly that time! You deserve well of your country, old chap. We'll invite Lumley to tea, shall us, Gussy?"

"Yas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We shall esteem it a great favah if you will have tea with us, Lumley, deah boy. I had a fivah frowm my patah this mornin', and there's a good spewad!"

"Thanks awfully!" grinned the Outsider. "I'll come!"

It was a merry tea-party that ensued in Study No. 6. Tom Merry & Co. were the guests of the chums of the Fourth, and cricket topics were discussed. Lumley Lumley laughed and joked with the others, but they could not help noticing how his brow clouded now and again, as though troubled thoughts were arising.

As a matter of fact, Jerrold Lumley Lumley was wondering how to raise some money to give Ralph that night.

It went against his grain to have to borrow, but in this case there was no help for it.

So when tea and prep were over he caught Gussy alone in the corridor, and the noble swell of St. Jim's readily lent Lumley Lumley three pounds.

He already had a pound, and two more pounds were easily forthcoming from his chums. Lumley Lumley was trusted

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and respected, and nobody had any qualms about lending him the money.

So, with six pounds in his pocket, the Outsider felt more at his ease.

That would satisfy his avaricious cousin for the time being, at any rate. Afterwards—well, he must deal with that later. For the present, he must stay Ralph's tongue at all costs.

CHAPTER 3.

The Hand of Fate!

JERROLD LUMLEY LUMLEY sat up in bed in the Fourth Form dormitory that night long after Kildare had seen lights out. All was dark and still and silent as the grave, except for the untuneful snore of Baggy Trimble, which rang stridently through the gloom at regular intervals.

"Anybody awake?" asked the Outsider cautiously.

There was no answer. All the fellows were sound asleep. Assured on that point, Lumley Lumley climbed out of bed and proceeded to hastily don his clothes.

With his boots slung over his shoulders he crept silently from the dormitory.

He could not help a shiver as he traversed the dark and deserted corridors. All St. Jim's had retired for the night, and he was the only one astir in the whole building.

Many months had passed since Jerrold Lumley Lumley had last ventured forth after dark from the dormitory, and the experience came somewhat strange to him now. But he had lost none of his characteristic coolness and nerve.

Proceeding with infinite caution, lest he should wake any of the masters or prefects, he traversed the dark, lonely corridors and made his way to the lower box-room. He clambered through the window on to an outhouse roof, and thence dropped lightly into the quadrangle. There in the moonlight he paused a little while to put on his boots.

Another shiver. It was cold and eerie out there in the dead of night, with the moon casting its mystic rays down on the ivy-clad old school. Not a light glimmered from any of the windows.

Keeping well within the shadows, Lumley Lumley crossed the quadrangle to the tree which was used by the juniors for breaking bounds.

From the branches of this tree he gained the top of the school wall, and within five minutes from leaving the Fourth Form dormitory he was in the Rylcombe Lane.

With eyes and ears on the alert the Fourth-Former walked down the Rylcombe Lane in the direction of the village, then he turned into Rylcombe Wood and hastened on towards the Green Man.

There was a light shining through the latticed window of the bar parlour.

The Outsider smiled grimly to himself as he approached it. He knew the Green Man public-house well, having been a frequent visitor there in the old days. Mr. Banks and the rest of the genial company would be surprised to see him again, after so long.

Opening the wicket gate he walked boldly up the garden-path to the window, and rapped three times on it with his knuckles. He could hear voices within and sounds of men playing billiards. There was a shuffling of feet, and the door was opened cautiously, to reveal the coarse features of Mr. Banks, the landlord.

He peered at the Outsider, who stood in the shadow, without recognising him.

"Who are you?" he asked gruffly.

"Don't you know me, Banks?" said the Outsider, with a half-laugh. "It's Lumley Lumley, of St. Jim's."

Mr. Banks gave vent to a gasp of surprise.

"Master Lumley Lumley! Why, so it is! Snakes alive, I didn't know yer! Come right in, Master Lumley Lumley. Out for a little flutter again—wot? Come back to the fold wot you forsook?"

"No, I haven't!" returned the Outsider, entering the bar parlour porch. "I've come to see my cousin, Ralph Jeffrey, who is staying here. He made an appointment with me. Is he here now?"

The landlord leered evilly at the St. Jim's junior.

"Yes, Master Lumley Lumley, he's 'ere—upstairs in 'is room," he said. "But 'e ain't in no fit state to be seen now. It might shock you, since you turned so good. Matter of fact, Mr. Jeffrey took a drop too much spirits this evenin'—not paid for, neither—an' 'e's sleepin' it off in 'is room."

"Good Heavens!"

"Shocks you now, Master Lumley—wot?" grinned Banks, and then the expression changed to a dark scowl. "Look 'ere, I'm givin' you no favours, young bantam, since you chucked over your old pals. I've given your cousin notice to quit, too. 'E goes this very night!"

"Let me see him," muttered the Fourth-Former hoarsely. "I've come to see him. Show me where his room is."

He forced his way past the landlord into the bar parlour

the air of which was blue with the haze of tobacco smoke, and reeking of spirit fumes. Then, as the junior stood in the threshold, he fell back and gave a cry of mingled amazement and dismay. For standing at the billiards-table, facing him, were two St. Jim's seniors—his old enemy, Gerald Knox, and Cutts of the Fifth.

At Lumley Lumley's cry the seniors looked up, and they, too, fell back at seeing the junior in the doorway of Banks' bar parlour.

The hubbub of conversation in the room died down suddenly, and there was silence for a while.

CHAPTER 4.

Two Against One!

"LUMLEY LUMLEY!" ejaculated Knox, breaking the silence at last.

"Lumley Lumley, by hokey!" muttered Cutts under his breath.

The Outsider did not reply. He could not.

Knox's look of surprise resolved into a sneer of triumph.

"Lumley Lumley, you young rascal!" he exclaimed. "So I've caught you—here!"

Lumley Lumley licked his dry lips; his thoughts were in a tumult. Was this a trap? Had Knox somehow got to hear of his appointment at this shady inn, and had brought Cutts, his crony, down here with him to help in his plan?

But the fact that both the rascally prefects were smoking, and had apparently been playing billiards for some little while, dispelled the possibility of a trap. Knox and Cutts had been as amazed to see the Fourth-Former as Lumley had been to see them.

The Outsider pulled himself together and tightened his lips. The two seniors were breaking bounds themselves, as they were often in the habit of doing. They had left St. Jim's before him and had arrived at the Green Man first, to indulge in a "night out" on their own, little dreaming that anyone else from the school would follow.

Gerald Knox was surveying Lumley with eyes that glinted with maliciousness and spite.

"Well, Lumley Lumley? Haven't you got anything to say for yourself?" he demanded curtly. "What are you doing here, in this place, when you ought to be in bed?"

"I guess I've come to keep an appointment—an important one!" said the Outsider calmly. "No, you needn't start like that, Knox. It's quite a harmless appointment. As a matter of fact, it's with my cousin."

"What! That weedy young cad who went upstairs a little while ago!" exclaimed Knox. "My word! So it runs in the family, Lumley Lumley?"

The Outsider's face hardened, and he bit his lip hard.

He controlled himself with an effort, however.

"Look here, Knox, I don't want to bandy words with you!" he said. "Carry on with your merry pastime. I shan't interrupt, and you need have no fear of me giving away information at St. Jim's. I guess I'll wait and see my cousin."

Knox and Cutts exchanged meaning glances.

Both came over quickly to where the Fourth-Former was standing.

"You'll do nothing of the sort, you young hound!" said Knox between his teeth. "You're coming back to St. Jim's with us—at once! Take one of his arms, Cutts."

The two seniors laid heavy hands on Lumley Lumley and swung him round. The Outsider's eyes blazed, and he commenced to struggle.

"Hands off!" he muttered fiercely. "Let me go, do you hear? I'm going up to see my cousin—Yarooogh! Let me go!"

He hit out furiously, and nearly doubled up Cutts with a heavy blow in the chest. But Knox hung on to him firmly, and Cutts soon returned to the attack. The Outsider fought wildly in the grasp of the burly seniors, but against the two of them he was no match.

"Help! Ralph! Ralph!" he shouted desperately; but one of the public-house hands came up and clapped a heavy hand over the junior's mouth.

"Make 'im 'old 'is row!" snarled Banks. "We don't want the police 'ere, or else—"

"Outside with him!" panted Knox, who was almost crippled with pain from Lumley Lumley's fierce assaults.

The Outsider was desperate now, and kicked furiously at his assailants.

Knox and Cutts were gasping with pain by the time they had dragged Lumley Lumley out into the open air.

"Keep 'is mouth shut!" snarled Banks anxiously.

"Ow—ow! We'll manage him!" gasped Knox. "Tis that muffer of yours round his mouth, Jukes, while we hold his arms. That's right!"

Lumley Lumley, choking behind the muffer that gagged him, fought desperately, like a tiger. It was as much as Knox and Cutts could do to manage him.

They dragged him out of the Green Man garden in the moonlight, with Banks & Co. watching anxiously from the door.

"Mind, his beastly cousin mustn't know he's been here!" panted Knox, turning round. "Turn him out—"

"Wot-ho!" said Mr. Banks emphatically. "That 'ere young sponger goes to-night! I'll see that 'e's not told that Master Lumley Lumley came 'ere. Can you manage 'im?"

"Yes. If there are any inquiries made from the school to-morrow, Banks, for heaven's sake don't give us away! Say that Lumley Lumley got here first and we came in and trapped him—see?"

"Wery well, Master Knox!" chuckled the rascally landlord. "I'll remember that!"

Lumley Lumley fought like a tiger to get free, but the two seniors dragged the unhappy junior away from the Green Man and along the path that led to St. Jim's.

The Outsider did manage at last to get the gag free from his mouth.

"You cads—you rotten cads!" he flashed, in a choking voice. "Let me go back—for a few minutes! I must see my cousin, I tell you! For pity's sake let me go back and see him!"

"You're coming back to St. Jim's with us—to the Head!" said Knox grimly. "Yank him along, Cutts! The little demon's taken all the skin off my ankles! It's no use struggling, Lumley Lumley—you've got to come with us. We've bowled you out this time! We've caught you pub-haunting after lights out. What a nice story for the rest of the school to-morrow!"

"You unspeakable cads!"

Lumley Lumley flung the words out passionately, but Knox and Cutts only laughed derisively.

They had the whip-hand of the Fourth-Former now. They could make things look as black as night against him, and they would! Lumley Lumley knew that he could expect no mercy from Knox. That afternoon's affair had embittered the prefect more deeply against Lumley, and he would carry out his vengeance even to the extent of getting the unhappy junior disgraced and expelled.

What could Lumley do—or say? Knox would tell the Head a trumped-up story, which Cutts would corroborate, and which the Head would believe. Lumley Lumley's word would be nowhere against the seniors. They would condemn him. He knew that that was their intention.

Knox laughed in the junior's face.

"You've come to the end of your tether now, Lumley Lumley!" he said, with malicious exultation. "You won't be able to smooth the Head over like you did Mr. Rafton this afternoon. This will mean expulsion for you!"

"Let me go, you cads!"

"Not much! Come on!"

The burly seniors hustled Lumley Lumley onward, and the Outsider, with a groan, submitted to their will, knowing that it was the inevitable.

Reaching St. Jim's eventually, Knox opened the side gate with his key.

Lumley Lumley was marched across the quadrangle, and bundled in through the box-room window.

"I—I say, Knox, are you going to rouse the Head now?" said Cutts nervously. "There'll be a row, and—"

"Certainly there'll be a row—for this little rascal!" grated Knox. "We've got to strike the iron while it's hot!"

The Outsider was hustled along to the Head's room by his captors. Knox rang the bell, and they waited.

Five minutes of tense silence passed. Jerrold Lumley stood by the desk, his lips compressed into a hard line, cool and calm now.

Cutts was obviously nervous, and Knox trembled with excitement.

A door leading from the study opened, and Dr. Holmes appeared, clad in dressing-gown and slippers, and holding a lamp in hand.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, when he saw the trio before him. "Knox—Cutts—Lumley Lumley! What is the have been out!"

"Yes, sir; we have all been out!" said Knox grimly. "I'm sorry to disturb you, sir, but I thought it best to bring this matter before you at once. I have caught Lumley Lumley meaning of this? Good heavens! You are dressed! You breaking bounds, and visiting a disreputable public-house at Rylcombe!"

"Knox! Impossible!"

Dr. Holmes set down the lamp, switched on the light, and looked from one to the other of his three midnight visitors. His gaze finally rested on Jerrold Lumley Lumley.

"You heard what Knox said, Lumley Lumley? Is it true?"

"Yes, sir," answered Lumley Lumley calmly. "I took the liberty of breaking bounds to-night, to keep an appointment with my cousin at the Green Man public-house, at Rylcombe."

"Good heavens!"

"I followed him there, sir," said Knox, without blushing.

"Cutts was also aroused, and accompanied me. Lumley

Lumley went to the Green Man, and we caught him in the bar parlour there, smoking and drinking—

"You lie—you lie, you cad!" shouted the Outsider passionately. "Do not believe him, sir! I was not followed from St. Jim's. Knox and Cutts were already at the place, where they were smoking and playing billiards. It was me who surprised them!"

Knox gave a scoffing laugh, which Cutts imitated weakly. Dr. Holmes' stern gaze was fixed on Lumley Lumley, and the Outsider saw his face harden. He realised, with a pang of fear, that his story would not hold water against Knox's plausible yarn. The seniors held the trump card. Everything was against him.

"Lumley Lumley!" The Head's voice was harsh and grave. "This is a very serious matter. Can you substantiate the charges you make against these seniors?"

"No, sir," replied the Outsider miserably.

"You accuse them of wicked falsehood and deceit, besides the blackguardism of breaking bounds and frequenting a low public-house for base motives. Do you expect me to give credit to your story, Lumley Lumley?"

"No, sir, I don't; but it's true!" cried Lumley Lumley desperately. "I did not go to the Green Man for any purpose other than to meet my cousin, who is staying there. He is in trouble—I wanted to help him—"

Here the Outsider began to unburden the whole sorry story to Dr. Holmes.

He told the Head of his shady past, of how he had reformed and determined to go straight. Then he told of Ralph's visit, of his cousin's dilemma, and his threat.

Knox and Cutts listened with sneers on their faces. Dr. Holmes looked hard at the Outsider as the junior told his story, in clear, unflinching tones.

"That's the truth, sir—honour bright!" finished up Lumley Lumley, with a tired gesture. "D'Arcy and many of the others will bear out my statement. Here is the money which I took with me to give my cousin."

Knox's expression changed to one of anxiety. He watched the Head's face in apprehension.

Dr. Holmes gave back the notes to Lumley Lumley. His face was hard and set, its expression inscrutable.

"It is too late now to go into the sordid details of this affair," he said quietly. "Knox, you did right in bringing the matter to my notice at once. You may all return to your beds. I will see you again to-morrow."

Knox and Cutts went first.

Lumley Lumley followed them from the Head's room.

The seniors were waiting for him at the end of the passage. Knox leered at him.

"You can tell a fine story, Lumley Lumley, but it won't wash!" he said malevolently. "The Head will take our word before yours. You've been bowled out at last, you young cad! This will be the last night you'll sleep at St. Jim's!"

Lumley Lumley clenched his fists hard, and turned as though to strike his tormentor. But he restrained himself. He bit his lip, and, turning abruptly, strode away towards the dormitory.

The sneers of Knox and Cutts followed him.

Jerrold Lumley Lumley found the Fourth Form dormitory still peaceful and undisturbed when he returned. He undressed slowly and got back into bed.

But not to sleep.

He lay awake, thinking of what was to transpire from that night's adventure.

Ralph had left the Green Man by now, without money, embittered against him.

He was on his way to his uncle, Lumley Lumley's father, to tell his story and drag the Outsider into the mire with him.

Lumley Lumley could not go to sleep with those disturbing thoughts torturing his brain.

The first grey streaks of dawn were creeping in at the dormitory windows before uneasy slumber at last claimed the unhappy junior.

CHAPTER 5.

Appearances Against Him!

"THERE'S a row on!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It looks vewy much as though Lumley's in twouble. He's just been called to the Head's room."

Next morning, after lessons, the chums of the School House gathered in the quadrangle for a "jaw." There was one topic of conversation for them. Jerrold Lumley Lumley had been called to the Head's room.

"Nothing much in that, of course," said Tom Merry.

"But—but Lumley has been looking pretty blue this morning, as though he'd got a load of trouble on his shoulders. I—I hope there's nothing wrong."

"Rather!"

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They all liked Lumley Lumley, and nobody had been better pleased at the Outsider's reform, or more willing to give him a helping hand, than Tom Merry.

Baggy Trimble rolled up to them, a fat smile on his podgy face.

"I say, you chaps, have you heard the news?" he said. "Lumley Lumley has been hauled before the Head for bounds-breaking last night—"

"Whia-a-at!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Gammon!" said Jack Blake incredulously.

"Yaas, wathah! Wats!" said Gussy.

Baggy Trimble glowered.

"It's a fact, I tell you!" he exclaimed warmly. "I—I've just heard Cutts telling St. Leger of the Fifth—quite by accident, you know! Cutts was out with Knox last night; they followed Lumley Lumley out of the school and down to the Green Man. Cutts said they caught Lumley Lumley smoking and gambling and drinking! Nice show-up for him—what? He, he, he! The Head's got him for it this morning!"

The chums of the Fourth exchanged glances.

"I—I say, Blake, no wonder Lumley overslept himself this morning, and was half asleep over the breakfast-table," said Herries awkwardly. "He looked as though he'd been out half the night."

"Oh, rats!" growled Blake. "I don't believe such rotten things of old Lumley Lumley. He's as straight as a die!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, jamming his monocle into his eye and looking round upon his chums. "I wefuse to believe that Lumley has gone back to his old wotten ways! There's a howwible mistake somewhere. Lumley's all wight!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, we all believe in old Lumley," he said. "If he went out to the Green Man last night, he didn't go for the sake of acting the rotter. Perhaps the visit of his cousin yesterday had something to do with it."

"By Jove! That's it, Tommy!" said Jack Blake. "Lumley's mixed up in some business with his cousin somewhere."

Very soon all St. Jim's was ringing with the news.

Instantly it was thought that Jerrold Lumley Lumley had returned to his old reckless escapades.

And it would mean but one thing to the Outsider—expulsion!

Tom Merry & Co. were standing by the gates, their usually sunny faces clouded, when the station cab drew up and a large, square-jawed man stepped out.

He was dressed well, but not ostentatiously. His demeanour was more that of a man who has seen the rougher sides of life, rather than the cultured gentleman.

Tom Merry & Co. gasped with amazement as they recognised the newcomer.

They had seen him before at St. Jim's. He had paid the old school a visit last Founder's Day.

It was Jerrold Lumley Lumley's father!

As Mr. Lumley Lumley entered the school gates the juniors raised their caps respectfully.

The other gave them a curt nod and strode quickly into the Close.

Tom Merry & Co. could see the stern, set look on the man's face, his knitted brows and eyes that glittered between the half-closed lids.

"My hat! He's in a tearing rage!" muttered Monty Lowther, as they watched the tall man make his way across to the School House. "Must be jolly serious for Lumley's pater to come down. I—I wonder what's up?"

"Lumley looks like being in for rather a rotten time," said Tom Merry, frowning. "Blessed if I can understand it at all! Surely Lumley wouldn't be such an ass as to do anything serious! But, by the look of things, there's going to be a jolly big row!"

"Oh, it's wotten!" said D'Arcy, looking greatly disturbed. "Weally, deah boys, if Lumley's in twouble, he ought to have someone to stick up for him. I wathah think I had bettah go in and have a word with the Head. As a fellow of tact and judgment—"

"You keep off the grass, Gussy!" said Blake. "Besides, we don't know yet what all the row is about."

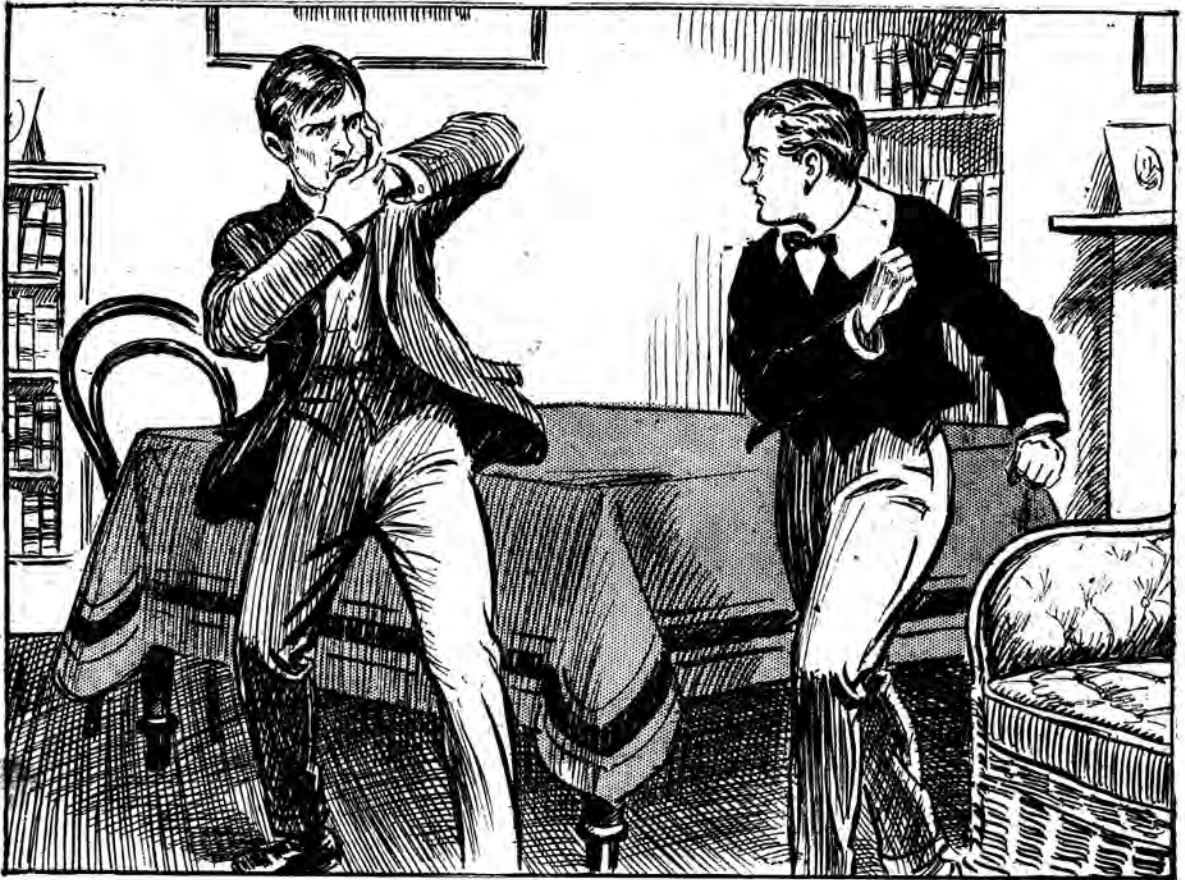
The chums of the School House relapsed into an oppressed silence.

Meanwhile, Jerrold Lumley Lumley of the Fourth was standing before the Head in his room, undergoing a very close questioning.

Dr. Holmes' usually kind, old face wore a serious look, but he was not being hard on the Outsider.

Lumley Lumley had told his story so frankly that the Head was inclined to believe him.

Gerald Knox stood near, looking on with a scowling face. He had re-told his story of the night before, and had made things look as black as possible against the junior.



"Come along with me to Dr. Holmes, you little hypocrite!" said Knox. "You've been smoking." As Lumley Lumley made no attempt to rise, Knox laid a heavy hand upon him and whirled him from the chair. Next minute, however, the Outsider's fist shot out, and there was a resounding thump as it struck the prefect on the point of the jaw. "Yaroooooh!" howled Knox (See page 11.)

There came a tap at the door, and Toby the page poked his tousled head into the room.

"Mr. Lumley Lumley to see you, sir," he announced.

The Fourth-Former gave a start, and his face went suddenly white. Dr. Holmes could not suppress a look of surprise. Knox grinned.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the Head. "Show him in, Toby!"

Mr. Lumley Lumley strode into the room, greeting Dr. Holmes gruffly.

He gave a start when he saw the junior.

"Jerrold!" he exclaimed. "You here! What have you been doing now?"

"Nothing, father," replied the Outsider quietly, "except trying to help Ralph. I suppose he has been to you with his tale."

"Ralph came this morning in a terrible condition!" rasped his father. "He made certain disclosures to me, Jerrold, which make me ashamed that I should have had a son to bring such disgrace and shame upon me."

"My dear Mr. Lumley Lumley—" interposed the Head quietly; but the other waved his arm imperiously.

"I have come to tell you, Dr. Holmes, that, after to-day, I shall not be responsible for this boy. He has brought disgrace upon me and ruin on his cousin. He has dragged another boy down—a boy younger than he, and who took an example from him—and has left him to face the world alone, whilst he, masquerading under a cloak of reform, remains safe! I will not tolerate it, sir, not even in a son of mine! The young rascal is not worthy of a good father! I am finished with him!"

"Father!" The cry came in agonised tones from the Fourth-Former's lips. He took a step forward, but his father waved him back.

"Not a word from you, Jerrold! Do not call me father. You are no longer a son of mine!"

Dr. Holmes rose to his feet and faced the angry man.

"Mr. Lumley Lumley, pray compose yourself, I entreat you!" he said in an agitated voice. "Surely—surely you

have come to this decision hastily. If you would consider—"

"Do not try to dissuade me, Dr. Holmes!" said the angry man between his teeth. "I have lavished everything on Jerrold, have stunted him of nothing, and have boasted to other men of my son. It has come as a great blow to me to discover what sort of a boy that son really is—"

"I assure you, sir, that you are under a misapprehension—whatever the boy was, he is different now. To that I can testify—"

"What is he doing here now, sir—hey? More trouble, I suppose?"

Dully, the unhappy junior told his father of his escapade last night.

Mr. Lumley Lumley turned to Knox.

"You are the senior who caught Jerrold at this low public-house last night," he said. "Is he telling the truth, or not?"

"He's telling a parcel of lies, sir!" replied Knox viciously. "I followed him, and caught him at his old game. He is friendly with all the bad characters at the Green Man. An inquiry down there will soon convince you of that."

Lumley Lumley clenched his fists, and made a stride over to Knox. His blood was boiling, and he would have struck the rascally senior had not his father flung him back.

"No hooliganism here, Jerrold!" he rapped, trembling with rage. "Here is a pretty fine state of affairs for me to be in! To discover that my son is a young blackguard, mixing with low companions at a public-house—"

"Knox is lying, father! I swear I gave up the old life long ago!" cried Lumley Lumley. "He is against me—Ralph is against me! They're all trying to down me now, because I turned my back on them and went straight. If you cannot believe me—"

"No man in his right senses would believe you, Jerrold!" retorted his father. "I am ashamed of you! You admit having been a blackguard—"

"Does it count for nothing that I have been going

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straight all this time?" asked the Outsider miserably. "Dr. Holmes can tell you—"

"Yes, Lumley Lumley, I have had no cause to complain of your conduct; indeed, I have come to regard you as one of the steadiest and most honourable juniors of the school," said the Head kindly. "As for last night's escapade, I am inclined to think that Knox made a mistake, and—ahem!—has been actuated by feelings of malice towards you in his accusation—"

"Bah! You are too trusting and easy, sir!" rasped Mr. Lumley Lumley, "Ralph, my nephew, whom this miserable boy has dragged to the dust, has opened my eyes to the true state of affairs."

"You believe Ralph, then? You take his word against mine—your son's?" cried Lumley Lumley.

"I do believe him. He has furnished proof. I have just come from the Green Man public-house, where I have interviewed the landlord and some of his rascally associates. They know you there, and have borne out Knox's story."

Lumley Lumley passed a hand dazedly across his forehead and reeled a little.

Dr. Holmes cast a compassionate glance at him. For a moment the junior looked at Knox, and saw the senior's eyes glinting with malicious triumph.

He could expect no mercy from Knox. He was in the swim with Banks & Co. of the Green Man to ruin him.

It seemed as if the whole world was tumbling about Lumley Lumley now, and that he was crushed.

His father's harsh voice broke the silence.

"I am determined to have nothing to do with this young miscreant who has disgraced himself and his name!" The words rang dully in the stricken boy's ears. "As I have already intimated, Dr. Holmes, I now cease to regard him as a son of mine. It is a painful business to me, as you can well imagine. But I am a proud man, and have always held implicit faith in my son, until now. My eyes have been opened, and I am finished with him. You may keep him at St. Jim's until the end of the term, as you choose. The school fees are paid until the end of this term, but I will not pay another penny piece on the young rascal's behalf!"

"You are acting hastily—rashly, sir!" exclaimed the Head, with a troubled look. "If you will only consider—"

"I have done all the considering necessary, on the way from the Green Man to here, sir!"

Dr. Holmes turned to Jerrold Lumley Lumley, who was standing by the desk, his face drawn and set, his hands clenched tightly.

"Leave the room, Lumley Lumley," he said gently. "I wish to have a word in private with your father, and it would be better for you—ahem!—to be absent. You may remain, Knox."

Lumley Lumley went, his head was in a whirl.

A crowd of juniors and seniors were waiting for him there.

All could see, by the junior's stricken face, that there was something terribly amiss.

"Lumley!" exclaimed Tom Merry, coming forward and taking the Outsider's arm. "What's up, old chap?"

"Let me get into the fresh air—I feel stifled," said Lumley Lumley in a husky voice.

Tom Merry & Co., looking alarmed and grave, accompanied the Fourth-Former down into the quadrangle.

Lumley Lumley stood there, surrounded by his school-fellows, and was silent for a while.

"What's the matter, Lumley?" asked Blake. "You— you haven't been sacked?"

"No," he said dully. "I—I don't know what is the matter, yet. The Head believes in me, but my father is against me."

And then, feeling more like his old self with his chums about him, Jerrold Lumley Lumley told them the whole story, in calm, even tones.

Cries of astonishment and dismay arose from the others.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Tom Merry, looking aghast at him. "So your cousin went to your father and downed you, and your father believed him! Knox and—the others have poisoned him against you, too. The cads! If Knox and Cutts hadn't been at the Green Man last night—"

"Yes; those two cads have brought this upon me!" said Lumley Lumley fiercely. "Had I only been able to see my cousin and give him that money, I could have stayed his hand, until—I thought of something else. Ralph thought I had left him in the lurch, and the rotter took his revenge, as he threatened. I'm down now. My father is angry, and unreasonable. I don't think the Head will be able to bring him round."

"Oh, it's wotten!" said D'Arcy, agitatedly polishing his monocle.

Gerald Cutts came up with his cronies, St. Leger and Gilmore, and instantly all eyes were focussed upon the rascally black sheep of the Fifth.

Cutts went red and slunk away.

Several minutes elapsed, during which time Tom Merry & Co. spoke encouragingly to Lumley Lumley and resolved to stand by him.

Then Mellish of the Fourth gave a snigger.

"Here comes your pater, Lumley Lumley!"

The juniors wheeled round as the big, burly form of Mr. Lumley Lumley came down the School House steps.

Jerrold Lumley Lumley detached himself from his chums and walked slowly towards his father as he came down into the quadrangle.

"Father!" he said simply.

He was met by a hard, cold look.

"Do not call me that!" Mr. Lumley Lumley looked round at the St. Jim's fellows who were standing round with scared, serious looks on their faces. "Dr. Holmes has not altered my mind. You are no longer a son of mine!"

Jerrold Lumley Lumley started back, his face aflame. He looked his father full in the face, and for the minute the junior trembled with passion.

"So, father, you—you have disowned me!" His voice was cold and incisive. "You won't take my word? Very well! I am going to see if I cannot make you. I'll humble myself, sir, to humble your pride!"

Mr. Lumley Lumley clenched his huge fists.

"What do you mean, boy?" he rapped harshly.

"You'll see!" said Lumley Lumley, between his teeth.

"You'll be sorry for this, father. It's your pride that is dictating to you now. If it wasn't for that, you'd see that I don't deserve this."

The angry man turned away, his face white with passion, and without a word he strode away to the gates.

Jerrold Lumley Lumley made no attempt to follow.

He stood there, the cynosure of all eyes, and watched his father's receding form until it disappeared through the gates of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 6.

The Exile from School!

"LUMLEY old chap!"

Tom Merry came forward to where the Fourth-Former was standing.

His voice was full of grave concern.

"What are you going to do, Lumley?" asked Blake.

Jerrold Lumley Lumley turned round and gave a grim smile.

He felt his old self again now, and more at his ease.

The old coolness and recklessness in his nature welled up after those tense moments of anxiety and strain. He felt supremely calm.

"What am I going to do?" He laughed again, a little harshly, and his eyes took on a glitter. "I'm not staying at St. Jim's any longer, for one thing!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Lumley, you mustn't leave!" cried Blake desperately.

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The door leading from the study opened, and Dr. Holmes, clad in a dressing-gown and slippers, appeared. "Bless my soul!" he exclaimed as his gaze fell upon the trio before him. "Knox—Cutts—Lumley Lumley. What is the meaning of this?" "I'm sorry to disturb you, sir," said Knox, "but I've brought Lumley Lumley here to you for breaking bounds and visiting a disreputable haunt in Rylcombe." (See page 13.)

"The Head hasn't expelled you, and the school fees are paid till the end of the term."

"That may be, but I guess I'm not stayin' here to be laughed at," replied the Outsider. "Besides, I'm not a hanger-on. I'm obliged to you chaps, but you'll agree that my father, by disowning me, has placed me in a very awkward position, and—and it would be impossible for me to remain here."

There was silence.

"No. I'll go away," said Lumley Lumley coolly. "Knox will have the satisfaction of knowing that he has managed to get me out of St. Jim's—for the time being. I shall not go far. I have a little money, and some things I can sell over at Wayland. I'm going to work for my living."

"Great pip!"

The Outsider laughed.

"Sounds strange for a public school boy having to go out so soon, to earn his living—what?" he said. "But I guess I don't mind what I do, so long as it's an honest livin'. My idea is to attract attention, let my father see what I am doing, and humble him. I'll find a way. You chaps will be surprised."

Toby, the page, came out and approached Lumley Lumley.

"Which the 'Ead wants to see you in his study, Master Lumley Lumley," he said.

The Outsider gave his chums a nod, and walked indoors.

Tom Merry & Co. marvelled at his supreme courage and coolness. Lumley Lumley was now the Outsider of old—at least, in doggedness. The same thought seemed to strike the juniors all at once.

"I—I say, you don't think Lumley will go on the loose again, do you, Tommy?" asked Blake.

"I hope not," said Tom Merry frowning. "He'll be an ass if he does! No, I don't think the Outsider would be such a chump. He's got another wheeze in his head."

They went indoors, and waited for Lumley Lumley at the end of the corridor, where the Head's study was situated.

After a short wait the Outsider came out. There was the same stern, calm look on his face, and the glitter of determination in his eyes. He walked with an easy grace.

"Yes, I'm leaving at once," he said. "I shall have dinner, but in private. The Head's a brick! He believes in me, and has offered to find me a job in London—a decent clerkship in a merchant's office; but I guess I'm not out for anything like that. What I want is something temporary, for I shall be coming back to St. Jim's before long, I hope."

"Bai Jove, we hope so, too, deah boy!" said D'Arcy.

"Hear, hear!" cried the others heartily.

The Outsider walked away.

"I'm going up to pack my things," he said. "There'll be time before dinner."

"We—we'll come and help you, old chap," said Tom Merry.

"Right-ho! Thanks!"

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. helped Lumley Lumley in the task of packing some necessities in a trunk. He repaid the money he had borrowed the day previously, although the fellows to whom he owed the money at first refused to take it back.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in particular, wouldn't hear of having the three pounds repaid him.

"Take it, D'Arcy," said the Outsider quietly. "I'd much rather start with a clean sheet—without being in debt. I guess I can manage for a time, and I'll be taking a few things with me which I can sell. I sha'n't feel at rest unless you take the money!"

So Arthur Augustus reluctantly complied.

Tom Merry & Co. saw the Outsider off at the gates.

With his trunk gripped in one hand, he shook hands all round with the other.

"Good-bye, old chap, and the best of luck!" said Tom Merry, a little huskily.

"Thanks!" The Outsider's smile was cheerful now. "Don't you chaps worry about me. I shall be all right. And I guess

you'll be seeing something of me within the next couple of days. I'm finding lodgings in Rylcombe, you see. Cheerio!"

"Good-bye, Lumley!"

The St. Jim's juniors watched the exiled figure of Lumley Lumley walk slowly out of sight down the Rylcombe Lane, and then, as the dinner-bell rang, they turned indoors.

Curiously enough, the Outsider's cheerful, confident spirit had instilled itself into the others also.

"Weally, deah boys, I wegard Lumley Lumley as a bwick!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as they hastened across the quadrangle. "I weckon he'll turn up twumps in the end!"

And his chums replied as with one voice:

"Yes, rather!"

CHAPTER 7.

The Outsider's Resource!

JERROLD LUMLEY LUMLEY smiled bitterly as he traversed Rylcombe High Street the next afternoon. He had just come from his lodgings—two tiny furnished rooms over a bootshop in the High Street, for which he had agreed to pay fifteen shillings a week.

The rooms were sparsely furnished and uncomfortable, but the Outsider did not mind. He had roughed it before. His dominant spirit kept him cheerful. He was prepared to "rough it" still more in the process of humbling his arrogant father.

He had a bundle of evening newspapers under his arm. Lumley Lumley, still dressed in his Etons, with the St. Jim's cap on his head, looked rather incongruous with those newspapers under his arm.

Perhaps that was why the Outsider smiled so bitterly to himself.

He had taken first to selling newspapers for a living. The job had suggested itself to him as an excellent means of attracting publicity.

Publicity! That was what he wanted. If only he could focus attention upon himself and get the matter to his father's notice he felt sure that the old man would bend.

Lumley chuckled when he thought of what his father would say if he knew that his son had stooped to selling newspapers in the street.

He must do something desperate like that in order to make his father unbend.

Lumley took up his stand outside Rylcombe Station, and affixed a glaring placard to his waistcoat so that it hung in front of him like an apron.

"Paper!" yelled the Outsider cheerfully. "Evening News! Latest cricket results! Paper!"

In less than a minute there was a sensation in the High Street!

Villagers and urchins stopped to stare at the strange sight of a St. Jim's schoolboy selling newspapers in the street.

They gasped.

Lumley Lumley began to sell the papers steadily as people came out of the station.

"Paper!" he yelled. "All the latest! Paper!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" chortled the villagers, thinking that there was a rag on.

But Lumley Lumley was in deadly earnest.

He bawled out his message at the top of his voice, and did his utmost to outdo a raucous-voiced newsboy, with a mop of sandy hair, whose pitch was on the opposite corner, outside the bank.

"Paper!" bawled the sandy-haired rival. "'Star' an' 'Standard'! All the results! 'Orrible murder at the seaside! Paper!"

Quite a small crowd gathered round the station to watch Lumley Lumley.

The Outsider chuckled. He was quite unabashed. It was his intention to attract attention, and he was doing it with a vengeance.

"Say, young feller!" A brisk man, with inky fingers and a camera, came along the High Street, and accosted the Outsider, looking him up and down with a grin. "What's the idea? Is this a joke, or—"

"Paper, sir?" asked the Outsider briskly. "One penny, sir. Thanks! Oh, no, this isn't a joke for me! I guess I'm in real earnest!"

The other opened his eyes wide. He pulled a notebook and pencil from his pocket.

"Look here, I'm a reporter, and I'd like to hear all about this," he said. "You don't mind if I photograph you and bother you for a few details?"

"Not at all!" grinned Lumley Lumley cheerfully. "I guess you can take as many photos of me as you like—take a cinema film, if you'd rather! I'm a public school boy—just come from St. Jim's. Had a misunderstanding with my pa, who is rather a tyrant in his old age, you know, and he's disowned me. He's thrust me on the cruel world without any means of support, so, in despair, I've had to

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take to selling newspapers for a living. Boo-hoo! Cruel, isn't it?"

The other chuckled as he made rapid notes in his book.

"You don't look very unhappy about it, Master—ar—"

"Lumley Lumley!" said the junior obligingly. "Jerrold Lumley Lumley. Father's the well-known millionaire, you know."

"Whew!"

Lumley Lumley then posed for his photograph, and he and the newspaper reporter parted on quite good terms.

"Paper!" chanted the Outsider cheerfully. "Result of Twinkleham murder trial! 'Evening News'! Paper!"

"Yah!" hooted the angry newsboy opposite. "Go 'ome! Wot's the likes o' you doin', takin' the bread out of an 'onest kid's mouf! Piper! 'Star' an' 'Standard'! Noos an' results! Piper!"

A party of schoolboys came strolling down Rylcombe High Street.

They stopped short when they saw that amazing apparition of one of their own clan standing outside the railway-station with a bundle of newspapers under his arm and a placard affixed to his chest.

"Mum-my only Sunday topper!" gurgled Jack Blake, shading his eyes and gazing, like one in a dream, at the strange sight. "Is—is that—can it be—Lumley Lumley?"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy furtively polished his monocle on a spotless cambric handkerchief, jammed it into his eye, and blinked. "Bai Jove! I—I weally believe it is old Lumley, deah boys! Great Scott! But—but it's impos!"

"It is Lumley Lumley!" said Tom Merry faintly.

"He—he's selling newspapers!" gasped Monty Lowther dazedly.

The Outsider's voice came clearly to them as he bawled from across the street.

"Evening News, paper! Latest cricket scores! Paper!"

Tom Merry & Co. stood there in the High Street, quite overcome with amazement for the moment.

They could hardly believe their eyes.

Then, like boys in a dream, they crossed the road and surrounded the ex-Fourth-Former. They blinked at him.

"Lumley!" gasped Tom Merry in a faint voice.

"Paper, sir?" inquired the Outsider politely, extending a copy. "One penny, sir. 'Evening News,' late extra!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I—I say, Lumley, deah boy! What the mewwy dickens—"

"What the snakes does this mean, you burbling idiot?" bawled Blake desperately.

Jerrold Lumley Lumley chuckled.

"I guess you chaps can see with your own eyes!" he replied suavely. "I'm selling papers for a living. Must do something, you know! Buy a paper!"

"But—but you can't! It's preposterous! You must be off your onion, Lumley!" gasped Tom Merry bewilderedly.

"Surely you don't expect—"

"It's a good game when once you try it!" grinned the Outsider, rattling the coppers in his trousers-pocket. "I'm doing a fine trade—much better than that sandy image over there. Paper! 'Evening News'! Coming, sir!"

Lumley had just spotted an old gentleman who was signalling for a paper from the middle of the road, by the horse trough, and, with paper extended, he dashed off in the old gentleman's direction.

Sandy across the way also saw the likely customer, and, with one of his papers held out eagerly, he made a simultaneous rush towards the horse trough.

It was a dead heat between the two newsboys. So eager were they to reach the customer first that they charged right into him and sent him sprawling.

"Yaroooogh!" roared the luckless man, falling backwards into a puddle of water that had been upset from the trough. "Yow-wow-woooogh!" howled the sandy boy, sprawling on top of him.

"Groooogh! Yah! Ow!" gasped Lumley Lumley, losing his balance and falling on both Sandy and the luckless gentleman underneath.

The three were soon engaged in a wild struggle in the road.

Crowds gathered and howled at the strange scene.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co., running up to render assistance to the Outsider.

They dragged him to his feet and then assisted the old gentleman to an upright position.

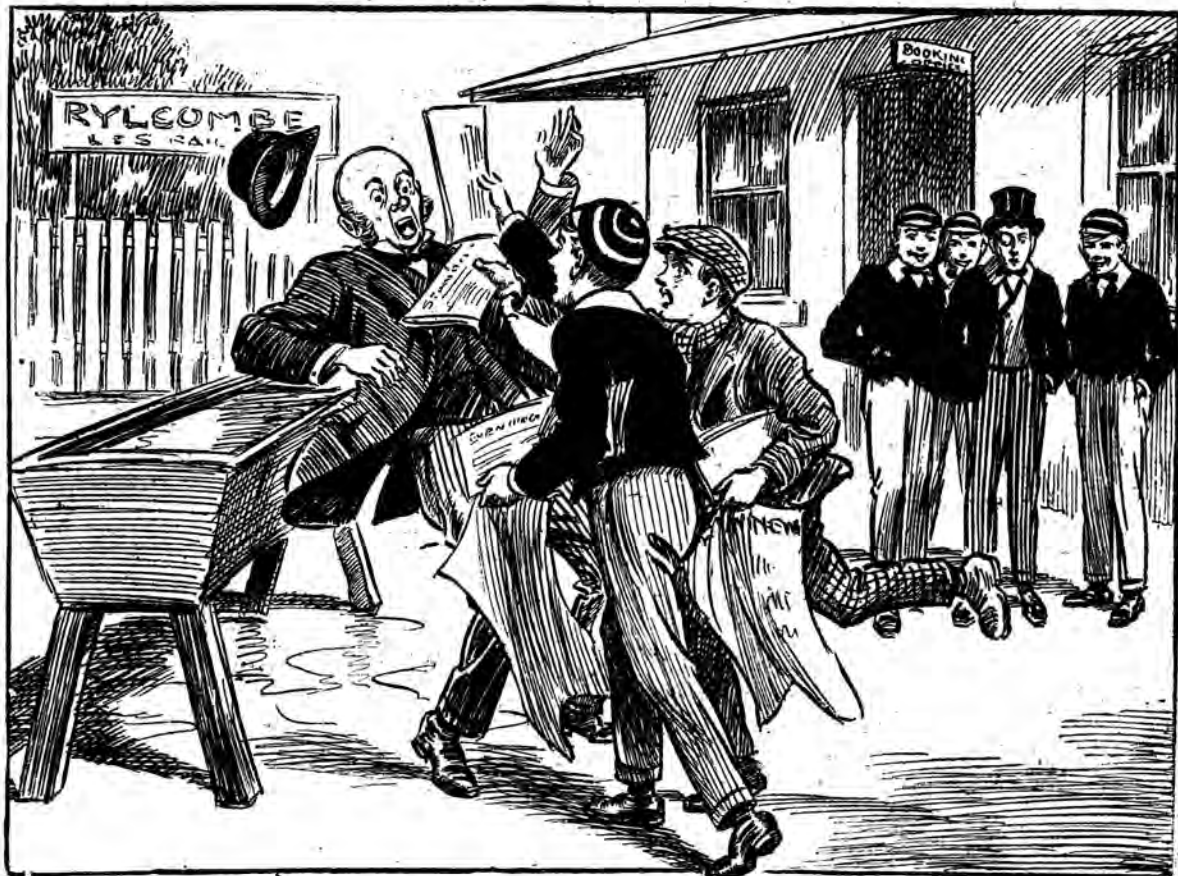
He grasped the horse trough for support. His top-hat was sadly battered, and he was smothered with water and dust.

"Haw, haw, haw!" guffawed the villagers.

"Bai Jove! Ha, ha, ha!" gasped D'Arcy. "I wegard that as distinctly funny, deah boys! Ha, ha, ha!"

Everybody seemed to see the funny side of the affair except the old gentleman and the two newsboys who had been involved in the catastrophe.

"You—you burbling little chump!" hooted Lumley Lumley,



Both Lumley Lumley and Sandy noticed the old man signalling for a paper. So eager were they to reach the customer first that they charged right into the old man and sent him sprawling. "Yaroooooh!" he roared, falling backwards into a puddle of water which had been upset from the trough. (See page 18.)

glaring homicidally at the sandy one. "Why didn't you look where you were going? Look at my papers, you—you—"

"Look at mine, hidjit!" snorted his rival. "Look where you was a-goin' yerself! Besides which, 'e was my customer. I saw 'im first! Paper, sir?"

"Bah! Take it away, you clumsy rascal! For two pins I'd have you both locked up!" snorted the enraged old gentleman, groping for his battered hat, and jamming it on his head. "Don't you dare offer me papers, either of you, or I'll give you in charge! Brr-r-r-r!"

And the roughly-treated old gentleman limped away, muttering under his breath.

Lumley Lumley turned to his chums and grinned.

"Rotten luck, what?" he said. "That's the worst of having competitors in business—they so often get in the way!"

"Ha, ha! Rather!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Your papers are in a bit of a mess, too, Lumley. But, I say, old chap, you surely aren't seriously thinking of taking up newspaper selling for a living? It—it's impossible!"

"Why shouldn't I do anything, so long as it's honest?" said the Outsider cheerfully. "It's a jolly healthy game—open air work, and all that, you know. Besides, look at the excitement. Paper! 'Evening News'! Late edition! Paper!"

"Weally, Lumlay, deah boy, I considah it too infwa dig, you know, an'—"

"Oh, that cuts no ice with me, Gussy!" grinned Lumley Lumley. "You see, I'm out to humble my pater. You watch the papers to-morrow. There'll be a full illustrated report in the 'Daily Leader.' I'm out for publicity, and I guess I'm getting it. Paper! Late extra News! Paper!"

By this time quite a crowd of St. Jim's fellows had gathered round.

Questions were showered on the Outsider, but he answered them all cheerfully, and sold his papers at the same time.

He would not be daunted, even when Kildare, Darrell, and Monteith came along and argued with him.

The seniors went away feeling amazed at the Outsider's pluck.

And that evening it was all over St. Jim's. Lumley Lumley of the Fourth was selling newspapers in Rylcombe! The school buzzed with it, and everybody agreed that Lumley Lumley had heaps of grit in him to do a thing like that.

Two days passed, and each day Lumley was to be found at his pitch in Rylcombe High Street, shouting the latest editions of the newspapers at the top of his voice.

Then Monty Lowther fetched into the Common-room at St. Jim's a copy of the "Daily Leader." On the front page was a full-length photo of Jerrold Lumley Lumley, standing outside Rylcombe Station, with his newspapers under his arm and the contents bill on his chest. And around the photo was an article, headed in glaring type:

"PUBLIC SCHOOLBOY SELLS PAPERS IN STREETS. SON OF WELL-KNOWN MILLIONAIRE."

The article was read out loud in the Common-room and devoured eagerly by all the juniors. Baggy Trimble spread the news, and Kildare & Co. of the Sixth, and a number of Fifth-Formers came in to see the newspaper report.

Even Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton borrowed the paper and read, with great astonishment, of Lumley Lumley's exploits.

"My word!" said Blake, as he and his chums and Tom Merry & Co. discussed the matter that evening. "Old Lumley was out to attract notice, and he's done it. His pater is sure to see the notice. I wonder what he will say when he spots the article?"

"I reckon he'll tear his hair!" said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "After all, chaps, I think Lumley's right. He's bound to humble his pater in the end, the way he's going."

"If he doesn't, I'll eat my Sunday tile!" grinned Jack Blake.

And the heroes of the School House agreed that the time was not far distant when Jerrold Lumley Lumley would return to St. Jim's and assume his old place in the Fourth Form.

CHAPTER 8.

Lumley Going Strong!

"COMING down to see Lumley?" Jack Blake asked that question, poking his head in at Study No. 10 in the Shell passage a day later. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby followed behind their leader.

Tom Merry was busy correcting proofs for the "News," Monty Lowther was perusing some old copies of "Chuckles," in order to glean material for his Comic Column, and Manners was pasting photographs into an album.

They jumped up at once at Blake's words.

"Rather!" said Tom Merry. "I was just wondering how the poor chap was getting on."

"We want you to contribute to the fund, deah boys," said Gussy graciously.

"The—the fund for what?"

"For pwovidin' Lumlay with some tuck—undah the t'rose, you know!" said Gussy. "It was my ideah."

"Good old Gussy!"

"Yaas. The poor chap must feel f'wightfully down, although he shows a cheerful f'wont!" said the noble swell of St. Jim's. "I don't suppose he makes suffish at selling papahs to keep himself in luxuwy. So I thought it would be wathah a good ideah to waise a fund for pwovidin' Lumlay with a huge supply of tuck. He's out sellin' his papahs now, I expect. We'll buy the tuck and leave it at Lumlay's diggin's. We know where they are."

"First rate notion, Gussy!" said Tom Merry enthusiastically. "We'll contribute, of course. Here's ten bob."

"Five's all I can stand," said Monty Lowther ruefully.

"I've got seven-and-six," said Manners.

"Good egg!"

The chums of the School House sallied forth cheerfully, and made a raid on Mrs. Mimbles' tuckshop. They had a huge hamper filled with all manner of good things, and they bore the hamper victoriously out of St. Jim's and made their way down to the village.

They called in at Lumley's diggings, and, as they had expected, found that he was out. So they left the hamper, and set out in search of their plucky schoolfellow.

They made their way along to the station, but no sign of Lumley Lumley could be seen.

"Great pip!" said Tom Merry, looking round in surprise. "Where on earth has Lumley got to?"

"Here's young Sandy!" remarked Jack Blake, espying the Outsider's rival of the other evening. "We'll ask him!"

They went up to the sandy-headed newsboy, and Blake swung him round.

"Where's Lumley—the other chap who sells papers, young Sandy?" he asked.

"Who d'you mean? 'The swell bloke?" said Sandy, and then he grinned. "'E's given up, young gents. Can't get no papers. They've stopped 'is supply. See that crowd up there by the railway bridge? You'll find 'im there! Haw, haw, haw!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked at the chuckling youth in surprise. They quite failed to understand the cause of his merriment. They walked past the station a little way, to where a small crowd was collected on the bridge.

And then they discovered why Sandy laughed.

Jerrold Lumley Lumley was seated on a small stool against the wall of the bridge, and around him, on the pavement, were a number of chalked pictures.

The Outsider had his hat in his hand.

A board was leaning against the wall beside him, and on it was written in glaring characters these words:

**"DRIVEN FROM HOME
BY A CRUEL FATHER!
PITY A DESTITUTE BOY!
ALL MY OWN WORK!
THANK YOU!"**

Tom Merry & Co. almost fell down.

They were struck dumb and motionless with amazement. They could only stand and stare bewilderedly, hardly able to believe the evidence of their own eyes.

"Mum-my hat!" gurgled Tom Merry at last in a far-away voice. "Wh-what the merry dickens—"

"Lumley! He—he's turned a pavement artist!" howled Blake.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the crowd.

Jerrold Lumley Lumley grinned at his thunderstruck chums.

"Hallo, you chaps!" he said. "Come to see my exhibition of original drawings? Sorry I couldn't hire a gallery for a more high-class display. I've had to make do with the humble pavement, you see! Spare a copper for the poor pavement artist!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Blake. "Of all the nerve! Lumley Lumley a pavement artist! Who—who'd have thought it?"

"What's the giddy game, Lumley?" demanded Tom Merry.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 796.

"We thought that starting up as a newsboy was bad enough. What made you give that up?"

"My pater!" grinned the schoolboy pavement artist. "He saw that article about me in the paper, and came down here in a tearing rage. Created quite a scene in the High Street here yesterday, in fact. Of course, as I am no longer his son he has no power to order me about, so I calmly told him to go and eat coke!"

"You—you told your pater to go and eat coke!" gurgled Monty Lowther faintly.

"He isn't my father—yet!" grinned the Outsider. "I can say what I like to him till he consents to be my pater again. He ordered me to give up the paper purveying business, but I refused. But the old bird checkmated me. He's been down to the newsagent's, and bribed him to refuse to supply me with any more newspapers. I guess he boycotted me. So, having nothing else to do, and being pretty handy at drawing, I thought I'd become a pavement artist. It's not half a bad game, either. Spare a copper, ladies and gentlemen! All my own work!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

Lumley's hat contained quite a large number of coppers, and no small amount of silver coins, either. Evidently the good people of Rylcombe had opened their hearts and their pockets to the schoolboy pavement artist.

"Well, carry me home to die, somebody!" gasped Jack Blake. "What ever next will you get up to?"

The St. Jim's juniors blinked at the Outsider and at his pictures.

Lumley Lumley's daring quite took their breath away.

There was no doubt that his drawings were clever. The Outsider was top of the art class at St. Jim's. He was particularly well-known for his caricatures and humorous sketches.

Little had anybody at the old school dreamed that Lumley Lumley would ever put his artistic abilities to such a use!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced down the High Street, as if he expected to see Lumley Lumley senior come tearing upon the scene. He gave a start as he looked. There was no sign of Mr. Lumley Lumley, but there was someone else approaching.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated the noble swell of St. Jim's. "I say, deah boys, heah comes Mr. Watcliff!"

"Whew!"

The St. Jim's boys swung round in consternation, and gasps arose as they discerned the tall, lean figure of Mr. Horace Ratcliff, the unpopular Housemaster of the New House at St. Jim's, making his way towards them along the High Street.

"Ratty, by Jove!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Oh, Jemmy! That's done it!"

The Outsider's eyes twinkled, and he got up from his stool and reached for his chalks.

"Just a lightning caricature of the gentleman in the top-hat who is now coming along the road, ladies and gentlemen!" he said. "Watch me closely."

And, to the amazement and delight of all beholders, Lumley Lumley proceeded to chalk on the pavement a very ludicrous but extremely lifelike picture of Mr. Horace Ratcliff.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at the finished picture and yelled. They couldn't help it. It was a very funny picture indeed of Mr. Horace Ratcliff.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my sides!" gurgled Blake. "What a giddy picture! If Ratty ambles up and spots it—"

"He'll have a series of blue fits!" chorled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Outsider sat meekly on his stool and held out his hat.

Mr. Ratcliff approached, and, seeing the crowd of St. Jim's fellows standing there, he crossed the road and came up to them.

"Boys! What are you doing here?" exclaimed the Housemaster in his usual acid and testy tones. "I will not have you loitering in the street, and—Gug-good heavens!"

Mr. Ratcliff broke off and his eyes almost started from his head as he saw Jerrold Lumley Lumley sitting there beside his pavement pictures.

The astounded Housemaster's gaze wandered from the junior to his placard and then he blinked at the pictures.

Tom Merry & Co. and the crowd waited on tenterhooks of expectancy.

They knew by a queer gurgling noise in Mr. Ratcliff's throat and the wild dilation of his eyes that he had spotted the caricature of himself on the pavement.

"Gug-good heavens!" muttered Mr. Ratcliff faintly. "What—what! Bless my soul! Lumley Lumley, I—I—"

"Spare a copper, sir!" said the Outsider meekly, extending his hat. "All done by my own hand, sir! Everything absolutely fresh and original!"

Mr. Ratcliff's face went red and white and pink by turns. The crowd were shrieking with merriment. Tom Merry & Co. laughed as loud as the rest. Mr. Ratcliff's face in the flesh was as comical as his face in the picture!

The Housemaster seemed to choke.

"Lumley Lumley! How dare you! How dare you, sir!" he raved, finding his voice at last. "You—you have the amazing impertinence to caricature me, and—in public! How dare you, boy!"

"Don't you like it, sir?" inquired Lumley Lumley innocently. "I think it's very like you, if I may make so bold as to say so. What do you chaps think?"

The chaps thus appealed to were incapable at that moment of saying what they thought. They were yelling with uncontrollable mirth.

The laughter of the crowd was to Mr. Ratcliff's temper as a red flag is to a bull. He fairly danced with rage.

"You impertinent young scoundrel! I'll teach you to make me look ridiculous in public!" screeched the infuriated Housemaster. "I will destroy those pictures! I will wipe away that scurrilous drawing with my boot! I—I—"

"Here, hands off—I mean feet off!" roared Lumley Lumley, jumping up in alarm as Mr. Ratcliff proceeded to execute his threat and stamp on the pavement drawings. "Keep away from my pictures, you idiot!"

Stamp, stamp, stamp!

Mr. Ratcliff was wiping his feet in real earnest over the schoolboy pavement artist's pictures. Lumley Lumley's temper rose. He wasn't going to stand that. He grasped Mr. Ratcliff by the waist and dragged that excited gentleman off the pictures.

"Yaroooooh!" howled Mr. Ratcliff. "You dare lay hands on me, boy! Let me go—Yah! Oooooop!"

Mr. Ratcliff lost his balance and sat down violently on the pavement with a thud that shook every bone in his body.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Tom Merry & Co.

At this juncture P.-c. Crump, the village arm of the law, strode upon the scene.

"Ho!" he said majestically. "Wot's this 'ere'?"

Mr. Ratcliff rose to his feet, fuming.

"Take that boy away, constable!" he raved. "Remove those drawings from the pavement at once! I will not allow—"

"Really, Mr. Ratcliff, you seem to forget yourself," said the Outsider calmly. "Remember I do not now belong to St. Jim's. I have left, and am earning my living. P.-c. Crump has no authority to move me away."

Tom Merry was seen to whisper something to P.-c. Crump, and a certain coin of the realm passed from his hand into the horny palm of the village constable.

P.-c. Crump glared quite wrathfully at Mr. Ratcliff, and his portly bosom swelled.

"Which I must request you to kindly move hon, sir, and not cause no more disturbance," he said.

Mr. Ratcliff almost fell down.

"What—what—" he stuttered.

"Now then, move off there, or I'll run you in for obstruction and disturbin' the public peace!" said Mr. Crump pompously. "Disgraceful, tryin' to prevent a young feller earnin' a livin'! A man of your age oughter know better."

Mr. Ratcliff made no rejoinder. He was quite incapable of speech after that. He stood there, trembling with rage, for several minutes. Then he picked up his umbrella, and set his topper on his head, and walked unsteadily away.

The chuckles of the St. Jim's juniors followed him.

Mr. Ratcliff could not look back. His feelings were too deep for words.

He disappeared round a side turning in the High Street, and Tom Merry & Co. sent up a shout of laughter.

"Well, that's got rid of Ratty!" grinned the Outsider. "Thank goodness he hasn't spoiled my pictures! I—Oh, great pip! Here's my pater!"

CHAPTER 9.

The Outsider's Triumph!

MR. LUMLEY LUMLEY came striding up at a great pace.

His face was red and infuriated.

He halted by the bridge, and planted himself in front of the Outsider and his pictures. He gazed at the pictures and the placards in amazement. The laughter of the crowd died down. All seemed to realise that this was a dramatic development in the affair.

"Jerrold!" Mr. Lumley Lumley's voice was like the rumble of thunder. "Good heavens! You—you dare to make this exhibition of yourself in public! First selling papers, and now—this! Have you no shame, boy?"

Lumley Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"Why should I have?" he asked coolly. "You disowned me, threw me off, the same as you would discard a dog or a cat. You no longer call me your son, so why should it matter to you what I do? You wouldn't care if I committed a felony and got put into prison!"

Mr. Lumley Lumley clenched his fists. He seemed about to reply, but could not.

Jerrold Lumley Lumley looked round on the crowd, and then at Tom Merry & Co. They took the hint, and gently but firmly pushed the crowd back out of earshot. Tom Merry hastily explained to those near him that they were not wanted.

"The chaps saw my father disown me," said Lumley Lumley quietly. "He believed me a rotter and a cad, and, not stopping to think, to make sure what I was, he turned his back on me and ceased to call me his son."

The Outsider, his face stern and set, went on in his calm, measured tones:

"Father, if I had been such a rotter as you thought me to be, if I was really wrong to the core, your action would have sent me further wrong, would have brought out all the bad there might have been in me. You called me a hypocrite—told me I was pretending to be decent, like the others. If that were so, I should now have no reason to be a hypocrite—there would be no need for pretence. I should have gone properly wrong. I don't think you thought much about anything at the time. You certainly did not think of what the consequences of your action might have been for me, and for—you."

Still the millionaire did not reply.

"I might have gone out into the world, and become a real rotter, and have justified your evil thoughts of me." The Outsider's voice was hard now, accusing instead of appealing. The man seemed to wince under its sting. "Don't you realise that you might have turned me to crime—to disgrace? The shame would have been yours, as well as mine. When I left St. Jim's I did not mean to shame you, I meant to humble you. This"—Jerrold Lumley Lumley indicated the drawings on the pavement with a sweep of his hand—"this is no shame. It might be, perhaps, a joke, though Heaven knows there are scores of ex-Tommies with wives and kiddies who are forced to humble themselves to this—and worse—in order to make a living. But it hurts your pride, I can see that. Why shouldn't it? You have disowned your son, yet are ashamed to have it advertised."

There was silence. Nobody spoke. Curious eyes had looked at the working of Mr. Lumley Lumley's face. They could see that he was making difficult efforts to control his varying emotions.

Jerrold Lumley Lumley stood there, his arms folded, looking fixedly and calmly at his father. Tom Merry & Co. thought that the Outsider looked magnificent just then.

The eyes of father and son met.

Then Mr. Lumley Lumley, on an impulse, held out his hand, and next minute their hands were clasped in a friendly grip.

"I give in to you, Jerrold," said the father huskily. "You—you've made me see where I was wrong. I acted hastily. I took Ralph's words too seriously. I believe you, Jerrold, and am sorry. We'll let the matter pass."

"I guess we will!" said the Outsider, his eyes shining. "To tell you the truth, I shall be real glad to get back to St. Jim's. I—Id rather be in the Form-room, amongst my pals, than selling newspapers or giving a pavement art show in the streets. Heaps rather!" He beckoned to Tom Merry & Co., and they hurried forward. "It's all over, chaps!"

"Oh, ripping!" muttered Tom Merry, with a sigh of relief.

Mr. Lumley Lumley turned away.

"I'm going right along to see Dr. Holmes, Jerrold," he said. "You'll be coming along with your friends?"

"Directly I've settled with my landlord, pater!" chuckled the Outsider.

They left the drawings on the pavement for the footprints of pedestrians to erase, and Tom Merry & Co. and Lumley Lumley made their way along to the bootshop.

"Here's the tuck we left for you, Lumley," said Tom Merry, when they were there. "We didn't expect you back to the fold so soon. I've got an idea. We'll have a fine tea-party when we get back to St. Jim's, in honour of Lumley Lumley's return. What do you say, chaps?"

The reply came as with one voice:

"What ho!"

St. Jim's received the news of the Outsider's triumph with great satisfaction. There were a few fellows of the Knox and Cutts kidney who were disappointed, but they, of course, did not matter.

Dr. Holmes, although he might have thought a lot, said very little to Knox. But what he did say made Knox sit up and take notice.

The happiest fellow at St. Jim's that night, beyond a doubt, was Jerrold Lumley Lumley of the Fourth, who had won through with his own pluck and resource, after being Disowned by His Father.

THE END.

(Next week's grand long complete story of St. Jim's is one long scream from beginning to end. Make a note of the title: "TAMING A TARTAR!" By Martin Clifford.)

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Ordered Off!

by CAPTAIN MALCOLM ARNOLD.

A Splendid Story dealing with the Adventures of the Ever Popular Characters—Tu Sin and Ginger Dan.

CHAPTER 1. Shifted by Force!

ON a stretch of wet ground just beyond the wide promenade of Ralsgate, a popular watering-place on the coast, a battered caravan had halted, and its two occupants were busily engaged on lighting their fire and preparing their midday meal, when a man on a bicycle came pedalling along the road, and, leaping from his machine, crossed to where the caravan stood.

"Hi, you!" he said, in a gruff voice. "You've got to clear out of this in quick time. Do you hear?"

Ginger Dan had just set the kettle to boil, and he turned now, looking at the speaker.

It was not the first time that Dan had been ordered off a camping pitch, but he felt pretty sure of his ground now, for once or twice before he had been at Ralsgate.

"Why, what's wrong?" he asked.

"I'll tell you what's wrong," the man returned. "My name's Jack Bendall, and to-morrow morning my men are coming along here to fix up a booth."

He pointed a little way to the right.

"Can't you see where I've marked out the ground?" he went on.

It was only then that Dan saw a number of pegs of wood which had been hammered into the hard ground. They were some thirty or forty yards away from where the caravan stood, and Dan turned to the speaker again.

"We won't be in your way, mister," he said slowly.

The beetle brows of the stranger drew together in a frown.

"I'm not goin' to argue the point with you!" he returned. "I've told you to clear out, and if you ain't gone by to-morrow morning, you'll be sorry for it!"

Now it is more than likely that if Mr. Bendall had asked Dan civilly to shift on, the youngster might have fallen in with the suggestion; but to be ordered off in this high-handed fashion was calculated to arouse Ginger Dan's ire, and his freckled face hardened.

"I'm not going to shift for you, mister," Ginger Dan said quietly. "This is a public place, and I've as much right to stay here as you have! Before I can be shifted, you'll have to get the police to do it, don't forget!"

With a quick movement Jack Bendall laid his bicycle down on the rough

ground, and came across to where Dan stood beside the fire.

"You saucy young hound!" Bendall broke out. "For two pins I'd give you a thumping good licking, you hear!"

His thick neck was swelling with rage, and his beefy face was twisted into a scowl as he glared down at the shabby youngster.

"You mightn't find that such an easy job, mister," Dan said slowly.

Bendall came to a halt, eyeing the sturdy youngster. Dan's sleeves were rolled up to the elbows, revealing the brown, muscular forearms. His shirt was open at the neck, and it was a very powerful throat and neck that was revealed under the dingy garment.

Young though he was, Ginger Dan looked a rather tough handful for anyone to tackle, and Mr. Jack Bendall thought better of it.

"Show fight, will you?" he said. "Very well, you young skunk, I've someone who will settle your hash in quick time."

He raised his arm and pointed at Dan. "I'll have you out of this before the day's over!" he grated. "You look out for yourself!"

With that he went back to the bike, and, wheeling it on to the road again, he mounted and pedalled off towards the town.

A chuckle from the van made Dan turn his head. The long, lean face of Tu Sin was poked out from the doorway.

"You're a nice sort of beggar, you are!" Dan remarked. "Why didn't you come out, and toe the line along o' me?"

Tu Sin had a chunk of bread and a tea tin in his hand as he descended the little flight of stairs.

"The honourable gentleman seemed to be highly annoyed," Tu Sin said, "and I thought it best for this humble personage to keep out of his presence."

Ginger Dan nodded.

"Fat lot I care whether he's annoyed or not!" he retorted hotly. "He'd no right to come here and order me off as if he owned the place. I might have shifted if he'd been decent about it, but now I'm hanged if I'm going to."

Bill, the huge sheepdog, came lumbering out of the caravan. He had been forced to keep silent by Tu Sin, and Tu Sin turned, nodding towards the shaggy animal.

"You hear that, Bill?" he said. "We not going to shift out of here, no matter what happens!"

They had their meal, then, about three

o'clock in the afternoon, Ginger Dan went off into the town. They wanted a fresh supply of food, and, after one or two rather exasperating experiences, Ginger Dan had appointed himself as full buyer for the firm.

"Sure you don't want me to come with you, Dan?" Tu Sin asked.

"No; you'd better not. I want you to hang about here and keep an eye on the caravan. I shouldn't be at all surprised if that chap, Bendall, didn't mean something."

The broad-shouldered, red-headed lad went off to the town, and Tu Sin, after a perfunctory cleaning up, strolled off along the beach with Bill at his heels.

Presently Tu Sin found a cluster of boulders with a warm, hollow space between them, and here he stretched out his lanky body, tilted his ragged cap over his head, and lay quietly staring up at the blue sky, until he found himself in a half-dose.

It was the excited barking of Bill that brought Tu Sin back to earth again, and, rising to his feet, the lean Chink looked around for his shaggy, four-footed friend.

"Where are you, Bill? Where are you?" he called.

Again the yelping broke out, and Tu Sin, clambering over the rocks, saw Bill standing on the top of one great, flat boulder, barking for all he was worth.

Tu Sin hurried to where the dog stood, and, as he climbed on to the rock, he saw what it was that had attracted Bill's attention.

The huge stone was standing above a pool, and half-way across the water was an upturned boat to which a figure was clinging. As Tu Sin arose above the level of the rock, the wet shape moved, and, raising one hand, beckoned to him.

"Help! Help! I can't swim—I can't swim!"

It was a good fifty yards out to the capsized boat, and Tu Sin could see that the current was carrying it farther and farther from the rocky beach.

"All right, my friend!" Tu Sin said. "I come along!"

Tu Sin could never say when he had learned to swim. He had taken to it as a duck takes to water.

Slipping out of his ragged shirt, he placed it in front of Bill.

"You look after that, Bill," he said. "Don't let anyone pinch it!"

Bill whined as he saw the lean shape commence to scramble down the rocks. Next moment Tu Sin had taken a

header into the water, and, rising to the surface, began to swim hand over hand across the channel.

He reached the boat, and, treading water, moved round until he was able to grip at the pallid-faced youngster. He made a grab at Tu Sin, clutching him round the neck, and, taken by surprise, the Chinaman went under the surface for a moment, with the lad clawing at him.

There was only one way to tackle that sort of situation. Tu Sin grabbed at the youth's chin, at the same time thrusting one long, scraggy leg hard into his stomach, driving him clear; then, as they arose to the surface again, Tu Sin had a firm hold on the lad's collar.

"I come here to save you, not to drown with you, fathead!" Tu Sin spluttered. "Keep still now, or I give you bang on head!"

Perhaps it was the extra supply of water that the half-drowned lad had swallowed that made him peaceful then; but, in any case, he struggled no more, and Tu Sin, turning on his back, began to swim shorewards, supporting his companion under the arms.

He found it a tougher task than he had imagined, and it took him the best part of half an hour before he managed to reach the strip of sand under the clump of boulders.

Bill, the sheepdog, came bounding and yelping down the strip, to lean over Tu Sin and try to lick the long, yellow face

as the Chink lay panting on his side for a moment.

When Tu Sin sat up, he found the other youth making an effort to rise. He grinned.

"Why did you get yourself in that mess—eh?" he asked.

"Caught a blinking crab," came the reply. "Next thing I knew was that the skiff had turned right over on me."

Tu Sin saw now that the rescued youth was wearing a pair of white tennis trousers and a jersey. The wet garments clung to his body and revealed his muscular proportions. It was a bullet head, with the hair cut close, and a strong, rather battered countenance that was turned to Tu Sin now.

"I ain't no good in the water, and never have been," the stranger went on. He held out his hand to Tu Sin. "But, by jinks, you can swim like a fish, and that's a fact! My name is Jelks—Matt Jelks, and if there's anything I can do for you, name it!"

Tu Sin's grin widened across his yellow face.

"Please to meet you, Mr. Jelks," he said. "Solly I had to give you kick in stomach just now, but that couldn't be helped."

Matt nodded his head.

"Forget it!" he returned. "I was askin' for that. We'll say no more about it, mate!"

They went off then, recovering Tu Sin's shirt, and presently they reached the caravan, where Tu Sin insisted on Matt stripping himself and donning a spare suit of Ginger Dan's, while the other garments were hung up to dry.

Tu Sin made some tea, and he and Jelks had an impromptu meal. Then, when the garments were dried, Jelks dressed himself again.

"What about coming into the town and 'aving a bit of a beano?" he suggested.

Tu Sin shook his head.

"No thanks, Jelks," he returned placidly. "Towns no agree with me. Some folks no like Chinks."

Matt set his hard jowl, which was the chief characteristic of his face.

"Don't you make any mistake, sonny," he said. "There ain't many people would try and take a rise out of you while I'm with you!"

He clenched his fist and held it out. "You've never heard of me, but there's a lot has," he went on. "I'm no good with an oar on the sea; but you put me in a ring, and I'll prove that I ain't altogether a mutt!"

He chuckled; then, coming up to Tu Sin, he clapped his powerful hand on the Chink's shoulder.

"I owe you something for what 'appened just now," he went on, "and I always likes to pay my debts. I'll meet you again, mate, I guess, but I'll have



"Tie him up, Sam!" cried Jack Bendall, standing in the doorway. "We've got the horse, and can shift this 'ere caravan in no time." Tu Sin, who had been felled by a blow from one of the rough-looking men, was tied hand and foot and thrown back into the corner.

to go back to Ralsgate and explain to that blinkin' boatman—that his rotten skiff has gone over to France, I suppose!"

They shook hands, and Matt strode off across the waste ground, to vanish down the road, a burly, virile figure in the setting sun.

"I think that honourable stranger was a box-fight man, Bill," said Tu Sin, addressing the old sheepdog. "He certainly no good swimmer."

And with that Tu Sin quietly dismissed Matt Jelks from his mind.

The evening drew down, and dusk crept across the beach. Tu Sin lighted the little lantern inside the caravan, and prepared the sleeping-quarters; but as the long hours dragged past, and there was no sign of Ginger Dan, Tu Sin began to wax anxious.

Somewhere about ten o'clock Tu Sin, lying in his bunk, heard Bill growl; a moment later a gruff voice barked out an order, and Tu Sin heard the quick rush of feet.

Before he could rise from the bunk the door of the caravan was thrust open, and a couple of rough-looking men came bursting into the lighted interior.

Bill made a rush at one of them, and the man gripped the dog by the throat, dragging it bodily out of the van.

Tu Sin's lanky body drew itself out of the bunk, and he made a leap at the second man. His knuckly fist caught the fellow on the throat, but next moment Tu Sin's assailant raised his arm, and a sandbag came down on the Chink's temple, a vicious, murderous blow, which saw Tu Sin crumple on to the floor of the caravan.

A burly figure came into the doorway, revealing itself to be that of Mr. Jack Bendall.

"Tie him up, Sam. We've got the blinkin' horse. We'll shift this in quick time now!"

Tu Sin was tied hand and foot and thrown back into the bunk, where a piece of cloth was wrapped over his lips; then poor old Bill, swathed in a huge length of sacking, was dropped into the caravan, and, after extinguishing the light, the door was closed.

A stocky figure appeared, leading the old nag, and it was backed into the shafts and harnessed. There were four or five men at work, and at a word from Bendall one of them took charge of the horse, and led it across the waste ground, the caravan bumping and swaying behind it, while Bendall and the rest of his gang walked back to the roadway.

They stood there, watching the caravan until it dipped over the edge of the waste ground and they heard its wheels scrunch on the sandy beach; then it vanished under the low cliffs, and Bendall turned to the group around him.

"I've told Jem to leave that caravan up at Alders Cove—that's a good two miles from here," he said, with a half-laugh. "Queer my blinkin' pitch, would 'e. He didn't know who he was up against, I can tell you!"

He nodded to his listeners.

"Remember, you've got to keep your mouths shut," he said. "This is just a little bit of business between ourselves, and anyhow, who cares what happens to a dirty gipsy in an old van?"

The whole party began to walk back to Ralsgate, and presently the man who had attacked Tu Sin halted.

"I thought you said the youngster was ginger-headed, Mr. Bendall?" he said.

"So he was, the impudent young hound!"

Sam was silent for a moment, then he shrugged his shoulders as he paced along beside Bendall.

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"Well, then my blinkin' eyes must have gone wrong, for I could 'ave sworn that the chap I tackled in there was a Chink—a yellow-skinned Chink!"

The light in the caravan had not been very strong, and Mr. Bendall's glance inside had been a casual one.

"A Chink—eh? Well, that's good, that is!"

The rest of the party went off into a roar of laughter, and Tu Sin's attacker came in for a hurricane of chaff.

"All right, 'ave it your way, mates!" he said at last. "But if that there gipsy wasn't a Chink, I'll eat my 'at!"

And with that he lapsed into a surly silence.

It might have been better for Mr. Jack Bendall if he had questioned his subordinate a little more closely, for it would have spared him the rude awakening that was awaiting him.

CHAPTER 2.

Ginger Dan Is Suspicious!

ON his way to Ralsgate, Ginger Dan had picked up a job. The railway-station stood on the outside of the town, and as Dan was passing it he saw a burly man in a sweater come through the station exit, carrying a couple of heavy valises.

Dan leaped at that chance of making a little extra money.

"Carry your bag, sir?" he said, hurrying up to the man.

"Right you are, young 'un! I'll be blinkin' glad of a hand!"

It was a very heavy leather valise that was hoisted on to Dan's shoulder, then he was led through the town and up a narrow lane into the back of a cottage, where his guide opened the door of a small pavilion, beckoning Dan to enter.

One glance into the interior sent a thrill through Dan. It was a tiny gymnasium, and as the stout man deposited his valise on the floor, another individual entered from a door at the back of the shed.

"Where's Matt?" Dan's employer asked.

"Gone out for a row," the other man returned. "I told him it was a silly game to get up to, but you know what he is!"

The stout man made a gesture of despair.

"What the dickens does he mean going out to tire himself like that?" he demanded. "And the fight comin' off to-morrow afternoon, too. I must go and find him."

He turned to Dan.

"Are you busy, young 'un?" he demanded.

"Not very, mister," Dan returned.

"All right, then. You stay here and help my mate, Ben, to put things shipshape, and I'll make it worth your while."

He hurried away, and Dan, at Ben's request, unpacked the two valises. They contained boxing-kit, dressing-gown and towels, together with a brand-new set of gloves, light four-ounce gloves that Dan's fingers fairly itched to don.

The way that he handled the articles made Ben look at him and grin.

"Know anything about the game?" he demanded.

"Yes, a little," Dan returned.

"Then you'd better hang on until Matt and the boss comes back, for after his blinkin' rowing, Matt might want a loosening-up, and you're about his size and weight."

That invitation was quite enough for Ginger Dan, and wild horses would not have dragged him out of the gym. And so at dusk, when the stout man and Matt Jelks entered the lighted shed, Dan and Ben were waiting for them.

"What do you think of it, Ben? What do you think of it?" the stout man, whose name was Parks, broke out. "Not content with going out in a blinkin' skiff, he's done his best to drown 'imself!"

"Aw, cut it out!" Matt returned with a grin. "I'm all right; I reckon I could beat Sid Holden if I was dead!"

"That's what you say," Parks returned; "but just step off and let's 'ave a look at you!"

There were certainly no outward and visible signs of Matt's experience on his muscular frame as he stepped under the light in the little gym.

Ben dived into a locker and drew out a pair of heavy gloves.

"This youngster reckons he knows a bit about the game," he said. "Just put 'em on with him for five minutes, Matt. It'll wake you up after your swimming."

"That's a good idea!" the stout man returned. "Go along, get to it, you two."

It was merely with the idea of counter-acting any effects of that immersion that Mr. Parks arranged that little bout; but half-way through the first round Ginger Dan, in his grim, boring way, chanced to land a rather heavy blow on Matt's jaw, a quick, clean hook that smashed through the other boxer's guard and took him completely by surprise.

He staggered back a few paces under the power of the punch, and Ben guffawed.

"Good on yer, ginger nob!" he said to Dan. "How about it, Matt—didn't like that one, did yer?"

Matt Jelks was rattled, and he came at Dan again, and a fierce melee developed, but the hard-sinewed, virgy vagabond of the road could stand up to punishment, and, although he received a terrific battering, Matt did not go altogether scot-free.

Finally, in the middle of one quick exchange of blows, Boss Parks butted in between the two boxers, separating them.

"Ere, that's quite enough of that!" he said, holding Dan at arm's length. "The real fight takes place to-morrow afternoon, Matt, so you'd better quit this stuff!"

Matt Jelks dropped his hand at once, and a grin crossed his face as he held out his gloved fist to Dan.

"You can mix it all right," he said. "Pity you weren't here a week ago; I could have done with a few quiet rounds like this."

They shook hands, and the gloves were removed by Ben.

"You're going to fight to-morrow afternoon, are you, Matt?" Dan asked. "I think I'll have to try to see this show. Where does it take place?"

"It's part of a boxing entertainment arranged by Bendall," Matt Jelks explained. "He's rigging up a whacking great tent on the waste ground beyond the promenade."

Dan's eyes suddenly lighted up. "I've met Mr. Jack Bendall," he returned slowly.

Matt looked at him for a moment, then laughed.

"Apparently you don't like him much, eh?" the boxer said. "Well, I can't blame you. He's not the best sort of

ANSWERS
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As Mr. Bendall swung his fist forward, Tu Sin dropped on one knee, then lowering his head, he thrust it full into the pit of the boxing-promoter's stomach. It was a hefty charge, and Mr. Bendall rolled over and over in the road howling with pain.

man to run up against, but he's got the pull over things here, and there's a nice £50 purse to be picked up to-morrow afternoon. I'm billed to fight for ten rounds with his man, Sid Holden. If you want to see the fight, I'll fix it for you. I can do with an extra second."

He turned to the stout man.

"What about it, Parks?" he said. "Couldn't we manage to wangle this young fellow in?"

"Right you are, Matt; anything you say. He'll be handy with a bucket and sponge, anyhow."

They insisted on Dan having supper with them, and he had to hurry off then to make his belated purchases.

But already the youngster had determined on a plan of action.

"I'm going to shift the blinking caravan," he decided. "If Mr. Bendall had only explained to me in the first place, I'd have moved it at once."

That a caravan should interfere with a real boxing match was out of the question, and Dan, hurrying back along the dark road, was quite prepared to shift it.

He reached the lonely space of waste land, and peered across it; then a low whistle broke from his lips. There was no sign of the caravan.

A search revealed the cold embers of the fire and the marks of the wheels where the caravan had stood.

Dan called and whistled, expecting to

hear a reply, but the murmur of the sea, breaking over the stones, was the only sound that came to his ears. Tu Sin and Bill, and the patched old vehicle had vanished into thin air.

"What the dickens can have happened to them?" Dan asked himself, staring blankly across the dark space.

He set off at a quick run, covering the best part of a mile, and halting now and again to search. But he gave it up at last, and footsore and weary, turned to trudge back to the town.

It was midnight before he found a quiet lodging-house, and hired a bed for the night. Next morning Dan overslept himself, and it was getting on towards ten o'clock before he left the dingy dwelling to walk down to the promenade.

To the left he could see the waste ground, and already the huge tent was in the process of erection, with a swarm of men hard at work on it.

Ben, pacing along the promenade, sighted Dan and gave him a shout.

"Come along, young 'un," he said; "Matt wants you. He reckons you're goin' to bring him luck this afternoon, and 'e sent me out to try and find yer."

He took Dan by the arm, and they went back together to the town, finally entering the little villa, where Matt and Parks greeted the youngster.

"That round with you did me a heap of good," Matt declared. "It knocked

the stiffness out of me, and I'm going to 'ave you in my corner this afternoon—as a mascot!"

He nodded to the freckled youngster.

"If I win there's a five-pound note for you," Matt Jelks added. "So it'll be worth your while to come along!"

Shortly after the lunch-hour Matt and the others left the cottage. The boxer was speedily recognised, and, as he made his way through the thronged roads, he was greeted warmly by little groups of eager spectators hurrying to the huge marquee.

Mr. Bendall had carried out a very careful advertising campaign, and it seemed as though all Ralsgate were turning out to patronise his show.

When Dan reached the waste ground he saw that there were one or two smaller tents erected beside the huge one, and it was into one of these tiny structures that Matt and his party turned. The tent had been laid out as a dressing-room, with comfortable chairs, etc.; and presently an attendant came in and spoke to Matt.

"Looks as though ye're goin' to 'ave a packed 'ouse," the man said. "You'll be ready about three o'clock, I 'ope."

"Right you are," Matt returned.

Twenty minutes later the first cheer sounding from the packed marquee indicated that the boxing had started, and

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Matt began to undress slowly, slipping into his fighting-kit.

A storm of applause heralded the end of the first bout, and at last, a few minutes before three o'clock, the attendant appeared again.

"All ready for you now," he called.

Matt slipped into his dressing-gown, and Ben followed at his heels, with Dan, carrying a towel over his arm, bringing up the rear. They entered the side door of the huge tent, and paced down between the lines of seated figures.

There must have been the best part of four hundred people tucked away in that marquee, and they gave Matt Jelks a royal welcome when his broad face came into view.

The ring was erected on a stage in the centre of the marquee, and around it were a number of chairs.

Dan, following Ben, reached the line of chairs, and suddenly saw Mr. Jack Bendall. The promoter was leaning forward, staring at the red-headed, freckled youth, and, as Dan made to pass him, he reached out and grabbed him by the arm.

"Here, you, what are you doing here?"

He forced Dan back a pace, and signalled to one of the attendants.

"Chuck this skunk out!" he harshed.

"Here, what's that?"

Matt Jelks, in the act of climbing on to the stage, swung round and caught sight of Mr. Bendall's red, wrathful face. Matt dropped back and came towards the promoter.

"What's the big idea, Mr. Bendall?" he asked. "Do you object to this youngster being my second?"

"Your second; what do you mean?"

Mr. Bendall's hand closed on Dan's arm, and he stared open-mouthed at the boxer.

"Your—your second?" Mr. Bendall gasped. "But how did he—how did he get out of the caravan?"

He checked himself hurriedly, and Dan saw the furtive look that leaped into his eyes. Mr. Bendall's hand fell to his side, and he resumed his seat.

"He don't seem to like you, young 'un," Matt whispered as he turned away. "But I shouldn't worry about that!"

The incident had passed almost unobserved, and as Matt took his seat in the corner, Dan and Ben began to adjust the gloves over his bandaged hands.

That remark which Mr. Jack Bendall had let drop remained in Dan's mind, and now and again he looked down at the grim face of the promoter. Once he caught Mr. Bendall's eyes on him, and, although they were turned away at once, there was something behind that scowling stare.

CHAPTER 3.

Paying the Penalty!

THE fight began, Dan and Ben slipping through the ropes and dropping to the usual place beside the platform.

Dan, watching the first quick passes of the fight, caught a whispering voice to his left, and glanced over his shoulder.

Mr. Bendall was talking earnestly to a hang-dog-looking fellow who had halted beside his chair.

Straining his ears, Dan heard the gruff voice.

"I told yer it wasn't the ginger-headed youngster. The chap I laid out was a Chink!"

Dan caught his breath sharply, and a

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feeling of dull rage began to rise in him. Something had happened to Tu Sin, and the scowling-faced Bendall was responsible.

The sound of the gong bringing the first round to an end, brought Dan into the corner again, and he set to work with the towel and sponge. He was feverishly anxious now to get the fight over, and find out what had happened to Tu Sin.

And so in the second round, while watching Matt and his antagonist, Dan had a sudden inspiration. Matt's rival, a two-fisted fighter, had a trick of changing his feet when about to deliver a body blow, a mere slipping of the right foot forward in time with his efforts. Again and again Sid Holden carried out that manoeuvre, and each time Matt was tricked by it.

Once that hard, jarring right slammed home on Matt's ribs, driving him to the ropes, and he had to fight swiftly to get away.

He came back to his corner looking distinctly groggy, and the bruises under his ribs indicated that Sid Holden had been punishing him heavily.

"Got to steady him, Matt," Ben whispered. "He's piling them up against you."

Dan, at work with his sponge, leaned forward and nodded to Matt.

"You can get him next time if you try, Matt," he said. "Wait for that right, and watch his feet. He shifts them. Get him when they're on the move, and he'll go down like a ninepin."

Matt looked up at the freckled-faced youngster above him, and his eyes cleared.

"Say, kid, that's an idea, and I think you're about right."

The gong started the third round, and Matt Jelks slipped out to meet his man. They shifted to and fro for a moment, then Matt carried out a hurricane attack, driving Sid Holden back for a few paces. Then once again Sid Holden began his usual tactics. A feint with the left, followed up by that fierce right-hand jab.

Dan, watching intently, saw Matt's eyes lower themselves as his burly antagonist came in. Round came that right foot, throwing the body temporarily out of its balance.

As it shifted, Matt Jelks, timing his movement perfectly, drove in a fierce left on to Sid's jaw. Sid had no chance of stopping that punch. It lashed at him with full strength, and the bunched glove landed full on the point.

Sid Holden's body crumpled half-way through his lunge, and Matt, stepping sharply aside, saw his rival sprawl helplessly on his hands and knees to roll over on to his back.

Ben reached out and grabbed Dan, by the arm.

"It's all over, young 'un—it's all over, bar the shoutin'," he whispered.

And all over it was.

Ten seconds later Matt Jelks dropped back into his corner, and the packed marquee rang again and again to the shouts of the delighted spectators.

Presently Matt arose and went across to shake hands with his still dazed antagonist, then, returning to his own side of the ring, he slipped out of the ropes and walked quietly back through the packed rows of seats.

Mr. Bendall, scowling angrily, gave him a curt nod.

"Bit of a lucky punch that time, Jelks," he remarked.

Matt grinned.

"Not so lucky for you, Mr. Bendall," he returned. "It's cost you fifty! I'll

be waiting in your tent for the cash presently. Pay on the mark's my motto, you know!"

Dan heard that last remark, and he smiled grimly to himself as he followed his principal out of the huge marquee and across to the little dressing-tent.

Ben helped Matt to slip out of his kit, and Dan, standing in the door of the dressing-tent, saw the stout figure of Mr. Bendall appear, followed by the ugly-faced attendant. The two crossed towards another tent on the left, and vanished into it.

A few moments later the attendant reappeared, and, turning, headed off across the waste ground towards the beach.

Dan waited until the fellow was well ahead, then he slipped from the dressing-tent and began to follow him. He kept to the high ground and caught sight of the other man striding swiftly along through the rocks on the beach.

For the best part of half an hour Dan kept the man in sight till at last he saw him vanish around a spur. Quickening his pace, Dan reached the edge of the low cliffs and looked over.

Below it was a sandy cove into which the sea was surging, and wheel-deep in the water was the caravan.

To the left, under the cliffs, Dan saw the old nag munching contentedly at the short grass, but there was no sign of Tu Sin or Bill.

Dan's quarry emerged from the cluster of rocks, and, keeping to the edge of the sand, finally halted opposite the caravan. After hesitating for a moment, he stooped and removed his boots, then commenced to wade into the sea.

He was knee-deep in a few paces, and, moving on slowly, he finally made a grab at the submerged step, drawing himself on to it. Dan saw him open the door and step into the interior; then, with a quick movement, the youngster flung himself over the edge of the cliffs and dropped down the shelving side on to the boulders.

A sharp run saw Dan across the sands, and he waded forward towards the caravan. As he reached the steps, the door swung outward again, and he saw the scowling rascal bending over the limp, bound figure of Tu Sin.

A quick rush saw Dan up the steps, and next moment he had flung himself headlong upon the ruffian.

The man turned with an oath as Dan appeared, and aimed a blow at him. Next moment they had closed together, and were down on the wet floor of the vehicle fighting like wild cats.

They rolled against a shapeless bundle in the corner which suddenly began to move and twist and writhe, then out through a loosened fold of the sack came the shaggy form of Bill.

Another wriggle saw the powerful dog free itself, and Dan, lying on his back with the sinewy fingers of his rival on his throat, heard that angry wouff! and saw Bill make his leap. The powerful teeth closed on Sam's shoulder, and next moment the ruffian went sprawling on his back with Bill a shaggy fury, tearing at him.

Reaching out, Dan drew the dog aside, and arose to his feet.

Sam, huddled in the corner, watched him with panic-stricken eyes.

"You'd better keep quiet," Dan said. "As long as you don't move you're safe. Watch him, Bill!"

Bill dropped on his haunches, his great head forward, his golden eyes fixed on the sweating, frightened face of his enemy; while Dan turned towards the

bunk and set to work to free the lanky captive.

Tu Sin sat up, his slant eyes red with rage.

"That highly dishonourable personage tried to clown this humble individual, Dan," he said. "We go back talk to him quick!"

The fight was over, the contented spectators had retired, and Mr. Jack Bendall had finished counting his takings—a very satisfactory proceeding.

To the left of the road his car was standing, with Jem in command, and as Mr. Bendall came out of his tent and turned towards the road he saw something that took his breath away.

Lumbering quietly down the road was an old caravan, drawn by a slumberous nag. It passed the car, and halted, and out of the doorway there came a long, lean, lanky shape.

With a muffled oath, Mr. Bendall tore across the road and signalled to Jem.

"Quick!" he yelled. "Get out of the car and get it started!"

Jem climbed out from behind the steering-wheel, and hurried round to the front of the vehicle, while Mr. Bendall halted in the roadway.

Tu Sin came forward slowly until he was within two or three yards of where the boxing-promoter stood.

"The honourable gentleman owes this humble personage much money—money for two pots, three kettles, one pail, two nosebags which was washed away by sea. The honourable gentleman will pay Tu Sin now!"

He held out a lean, bony hand, and Mr. Bendall, drawing back a pace, guffawed harshly.

"Pay you, you almond-eyed skunk?" he snarled. "I'll see you far enough!"

"The honourable gentleman will pay, or Tu Sin fight him!"

Jem, at the bonnet, ceased his cranking operations, and came round to the side of it.

"Fight you, eh?" the boxing-promoter snarled. "I'll skin yer!"

He raised his fists as though to make a rush at Tu Sin. But that was as far as he got.

Instantly that long, flexible body doubled up, and Tu Sin, head foremost, charged his enemy. His bullet-head landed full on the stout body with terrific force, and the next moment Mr. Bendall was rolling over and over in the road, his hands clasped on his stomach, howling with pain, while Tu Sin danced around him, waving his flail-like arms and waiting for his rival to come up to scratch again.

Jem, leaning over the front of the car, reached for one of his spanners; but as he swung round to make a rush at Tu Sin a quiet voice called out something from behind him, and, turning, Jem saw Matt Jelks and his party hurrying across from the dressing-tent.

"Steady on there, mate!" the boxer said. "I've got an interest in this!"

Jem fell back, and Matt, pacing into the road, caught Tu Sin by the arm, bringing him to a halt.

"Hallo, Chink!" Matt said. "What's the big idea now?"

From the caravan two other figures emerged—Ginger Dan, with the ugly-jowled Sam in front of him.

"That highly dishonourable person tly to clown this obscure individual," Tu Sin began.

"Drown you, eh? Well, he'd a fat chance of doing that!" said Matt Jelks.

Mr. Bendall had scrambled unsteadily

to his feet now, and Ginger Dan, stepping forward, nodded to Matt.

"Sorry I had to leave you, Matt," he said, "but I had urgent business—and I was only just in the nick of time!"

Then, in a few quiet words, the red-headed vagrant told his story; and at the end of it Matt looked across at the scowling boxing-promoter.

"Tu Sin has figured it out that you owe him ten pounds—to include hire of camping site and wear and tear of caravan, Mr. Bendall. Are you going to pay?"

The cornered man looked from face to face of the little circle that was surrounding him, then, with a muttered oath, he slipped his hand into his pocket and drew out two crinkling notes, which he threw on the ground at Tu Sin's feet.

"Take 'em, you darned Chink!" he snarled, as he strode towards the car.

Tu Sin stooped and picked up the crumpled notes, folding them carefully and tucking them away in one of the mysterious folds of his garments.

"Ralsgate velly fine place for camping in, Dan," he remarked, with a nod towards his chum. "I think we better stay here another few days. Mebbe someone else come 'long want box match!"

Matt Jelks laughed.

"If they do, I think they'd be wise to settle with you chaps at the start," he commented grimly. "It wouldn't cost 'em nearly so much!"

"We humble personages are always ready to stlike bargains with honourable and wealthy clients!" murmured Tu Sin.

THE END.

(Look out for a splendid story of the chums of Thunder Creek next week entitled: "SPORTSMEN'S LUCK!" You will vote it a rattling fine yarn.

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