

"WHEN FRIENDS FALL OUT!" STIRRING LONG
COMPLETE
ST. JIM'S STORY INSIDE!

The

GEM

2d



*Chums in
Conflict!*

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WHEN FRIENDS FALL



A Powerful Long Complete Story of St. Jim's, Starring
Tom Merry in the unusual Role of Outcast.

CHAPTER 1.

A Chance for Lumley!

TOM MERRY wore a worried look.

There really seemed to be no reason why Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, should wear a worried look that day.

It was a fine, keen winter's afternoon, and the sun was shining into the window of his study in the School House. Outside on the playing fields the voices of crowds of fellows could be heard. It was a Wednesday, a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and most of the "Saints" were turning out for football.

Tom Merry, as a matter of fact, should have been getting ready for the House match that was coming off that afternoon. But instead of that he was standing in his study with his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets, and a gloomy expression of thought upon his face.

"Hang it!" he said at last, breaking the silence of the study. "Blessed if I know what to do!"

From the school clock rang the half-hour—half-past two.

"Bless that chap!" murmured Tom Merry. "The kick-off's at three, and—"

He was interrupted.

A junior of about his own age came into the study. It was not one of Tom Merry's chums, Manners or Lowther. He was a youth with a somewhat weedy, and yet wiry, form, and a hard, keen face, and a pair of eyes of uncertain colour that seemed as hard and bright and sharp as steel.

"You're here, Merry."

Tom Merry swung round to face the newcomer.

"I'm waiting for you, Lumley."

Jerrold Lumley—or Lumley-Lumley, as he called himself for preference—sneered slightly as he looked at the captain of the Shell. He saw the signs of uneasy thought plainly enough in Tom Merry's face.

Lumley-Lumley, the son of Lascelles Lumley-Lumley, the millionaire, was a peculiar youth, and had peculiar ways, and his ways had not endeared him to the juniors of St. Jim's, and, above all, not to Tom Merry & Co. Even

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unlimited pocket-money could not condone for his utter want of principle, his habitual caddishness, and his persistence in acting in a way that the blackest sheep at St. Jim's regarded as outside the limit. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had been called the Outsider of St. Jim's, and never did a fellow deserve a nickname more.

He had never seemed to care. He was as hard as nails. From the first day of his coming to St. Jim's he had been on the worst of terms with Tom Merry and his comrades until the time of his illness. And since his recent return, after promising to play the game, he had acted caddishly in a match, and the juniors were no longer inclined to trust him.

"What do you want, Lumley?" said Tom Merry, twisting a fragment of paper in his fingers with an uneasiness unusual to him. "I got your note from Gore in class. You wanted to speak to me?"

"Yes."

"Well, here I am; only buck up! Manners or Lowther may come in any minute to fetch me down to the footer."

"We've got on pretty badly since I've come to this school," said Lumley, in a quiet, even voice, his eyes watching Tom Merry with strange intentness. "You hated me from the first, and I—"

"That's not correct," said Tom Merry sharply. "We were all willing to give you a chance. But you were such—"

"Such an Outsider," said Lumley coolly. "Exactly! I had been brought up in a poor quarter in New York—I was half foreign to your ways here—and my ideas weren't anything like your ideas, I guess. It wasn't a surprising thing that we didn't pull together. You've nicknamed me the Outsider, and you all treat me as one. Well, I want to alter that. What about giving me another chance? Suppose we let bygones be bygones? Take me as you find me, and start fresh."

Tom Merry looked at Lumley in silence.

The Outsider had always been so hard and unfeeling that the hero of the Shell had never expected an appeal of this sort.

"Well?" said Lumley, after a pause.

"What do you want me to do?" asked Tom Merry

OUT!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

"I want you to stop treating me like an outsider. Give me a chance to be an insider, to put it like that," said Lumley, with a slight grin. "You won't find me a bad sort. I am a bad enemy, but a good friend. I'm willing to take up sports. I've been practising hard at footer. That's a change, and shows I'm in earnest."

"Yes; I've had an eye on that."
"Then give me another chance. I want to become anything but the Outsider you call me. Look here! Herries is not playing in the match this afternoon. His dog's sick, and he's sticking out in the kennels with him. You haven't decided whom to play in Herries' place, have you?"

Tom Merry shook his head.
"No; I've only just had word from Herries. I can easily find somebody, I suppose."

"Play me."
Tom Merry started.
"You!"
"Yes," said Lumley coolly. "You'll admit that I'm as good a player as Herries, and I can take his place, too—right-half. You played me before. Play me again."

"But—"
"It will show the whole school that we're on a new footing," urged Lumley-Lumley. "That's what I mean."

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.
"I hope you're in earnest, Lumley," he said slowly.
"I'll give you a chance. But mind, if you are fooling me this time, you'll never get another word from me."

"I guess that's all right."
"Then I'll play you."

CHAPTER 2.

Blake & Co. Resign!

"HERE he is!"
"Where have you been?"

"I was just coming to look for you, Tommy."

"Well, here I am," said Tom Merry cheerfully, "as large as life, and twice as natural. It's still ten minutes to kick-off."

"You know Herries is not playing?" said Monty Lowther.
Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes. Towser's sick; or Herries thinks he is, and he's nursing him."

"I suppose you'll play Dane in Herries' place?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Not Dane," said Lowther. "Glyn, then, I suppose?"

"No, not a Shell fellow."

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Manners. "There are only four of the Shell in the team—us three and Kangaroo. There are seven of the Fourth—Blake, Herries, Digby, D'Arcy, Reilly, Jones, Kerruish. Better shove a Shell fellow in."

"No; I've decided whom to play, as a matter of fact."

"Who's the chap?"

"Lumley."

"What?"

Monty Lowther and Manners stared blankly at their chum. If Tom Merry had said that he had decided to play Toby, the boot-boy, or Mrs. Mimms, the House dame, he could not have astonished them more.

"I suppose you're joking?" said Manners.

"Not in the least."

"Then you're off your rocker!" said Lowther, with friendly frankness. "You know what happened last time you played him. And, besides, he's no good."

"Oh, he plays fairly well at half!"

"But he's such a rank rotter! He's certain to come some trickery—foul play of some sort—like the last time he played," said Manners.

"Look here," said Tom Merry abruptly, "he's asked me to give him another chance—"

"Stuff!"

"I've promised to."

"Piffle! He's fooling you!"

"Pulling your leg!"

Tom Merry coloured.

"It's possible," he admitted. "I can't say I trust him. Still, we've all been down on him pretty heavily for being such a rank outsider, and it's only fair to lend him a helping hand if he wishes to reform."

"He doesn't!"

"But he says he does," said Tom Merry; "and I think he really means to try."

"Blessed if I know what the other fellows will say to playing him!" said Manners. "You know the terms he's on with all of them."

"Oh rats! I'm football captain, I suppose," said Tom Merry. "I can play whom I like, if it comes to that."

"That's not the way to treat the fellows."

"Oh, blow the fellows!"

"Well," said Manners quietly, "if those are the lines you're captaining the team upon, I can only say that you'll have a rocky time."

Tom Merry made an impatient gesture.

"I've promised him now," he said. "That settles it. I must play him. If he doesn't behave himself I'll never give him another chance. If he does, I take it that the chaps must admit that he means well."

"Oh, all right! I'm done!" said Monty Lowther, with a shrug of the shoulders.

They walked down to the football ground. Tom Merry wore a worried look. He certainly was football captain and could play Lumley in the eleven if he liked, but it was a question how the other fellows would take it. Tom Merry hated trouble with his friends, and it was rather rough on him to have to quarrel with his friends for the sake of one who had been an enemy to him. But this was not the first difficulty that Tom Merry's easy-going nature had led him into.

"We're weady, deah boy," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, as Tom Merry came up. "Where have you been, deah boy?"

"Selecting the new man."

"I twust you are playin' one of the Fourth!" said D'Arcy.

"I am," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Digby.

"Vewy good!" said D'Arcy. "It's all wight. I twust it is a playah that I can approve of, deah boy?"

"I suppose Tom Merry can play whom he likes," said Lowther.

Tom Merry grinned. That was rather different from the language Monty Lowther had been using a few minutes ago, but Lowther was nothing if not loyal to his chum. He took a friend's privilege of ragging Tom

Merry as much as he liked himself, but he would never allow anybody else the right to do so.

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "I considah—"

"Never mind what you consider," said Jack Blake. "Whom have you decided to play, Tom Merry?"

"Lumley-Lumley."

"What?"

"Who?"

"Lumley-Lumley."

"Joking, of course?"

"Nothing of the sort! I'm playing Lumley-Lumley, and he'll be on the ground here in a minute. Look here, I've been jawed by Manners and Lowther about it already, and I don't want you chaps to begin," said Tom Merry somewhat irritably.

"Bai Jove!"

"You're playing Lumley-Lumley again?" said Blake in measured tones. "You're playing the chap who let you down in a match only a few days ago, and has acted like a cad since his return from his illness!"

"The chap," said Digby, breathing hard, "who'd have been expelled from St. Jim's half a dozen times, only his father tricked the Head into signing an agreement to keep him here for three years!"

"Well, that's not our bisney."

"The chap," said Kangaroo of the Shell, taking up the tale—"the chap who never tells the truth if a lie will serve his turn!"

"Well, he won't tell any lies in a footer match."

"Faith!" said Reilly, the boy from Belfast. "Ye're going to play the spalpeen who's the meanest rotter that ever came to St. Jim's!"

"He's going to reform."

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Piffle!"

"I've promised him now," said Tom Merry desperately.

"I'm going to give him a chance. Look here, it's not cricket for you fellows to jump on me like this!"

"I should say not!" said Lowther indignantly. "But what can you expect of a lot of Fourth Form kids?"

"Just what I say!" agreed Manners. "Manners—I mean good manners—are not included in the curriculum of the Fourth."

"Bai Jove!"

"Look here, you rotten Shellfish—"

"Rats! Tom Merry's football captain, I suppose, and he could play the gardener or the boot-boy if he chose," said Lowther heatedly.

"What-ho!" agreed Manners.

"I wouldn't object to either the gardener or the boot-boy if he could play footer," said Jack Blake. "I object to a chap who's not fit to talk to a decent fellow!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm playing him," said Tom Merry quietly.

Jack Blake's eyes flashed.

"Then you're not playing me!" he exclaimed angrily. "I resign!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "I wesign, too!"

"And I!" said Digby.

Tom Merry flushed red.

"You resign on the very point of playing?" he said. "The kick-off's in three minutes—and you resign?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Rather than play with that cad," said Blake steadily. "He'll play some dirty trick again and disgrace the House. It's not fair to Figgins & Co., either. You've gone out of your senses, I think, Tom Merry, to let that cad talk you over like this."

"I'm going to play him!"

"Then we resign!"

Tom Merry's eyes blazed.

"Resign—and be hanged to you!" he exclaimed.

The chums of Study No. 6 did not reply. They drew together and walked away in a body. After a moment's hesitation Reilly walked after them. The Terrible Three were left standing alone.

CHAPTER 3.

Not a Popular Choice!

Figgins of the New House came over to the junior football ground in an overcoat under which Figgins' slim calves could be seen. Figgins was tall and long-limbed, and as strong as a horse, but it could not be said that his limbs were plump. His calves, in fact, formed the subject of a good deal of jesting among the St. Jim's juniors—jesting that was usually kept under, however, in Figgins' presence. For if Figgins had slim calves, he had a mighty fist, and some of the merry jesters who had felt the weight of it did not want to feel it again.

Figgins nodded to Tom Merry. Kerr and Wynn, his inseparable chums, were with him. Kerr, the cool and canny Scotsman, was as fit as a fiddle, as he always was—quiet and keen. Fatty Wynn was beaming with good-humour all over his plump face. Figgins & Co. had arranged for a little feed in the study after the House match, and Fatty Wynn, keen footballer as he was, was looking forward to the finish of the match more than to its beginning.

"Hallo!" said Figgins. "Ready?"

"Eh?"

"Time!" said Kerr. "What's the matter? Anything gone wrong?"

"Yes," growled Tom Merry. "Sorry to have to keep you fellows waiting a bit. I'm in a fix. Four of my men have resigned, and—"

Figgins gave quite a jump.

"Four resigned!"

"Yes."

"Just before the match!" said Figgins, in astonishment.

"What has happened? Who's resigned?"

"Blake, D'Arcy, Digby, and Reilly."

Figgins gave a whistle.

"Four of the best," he said. "Look here! What's wrong? They wouldn't leave you in the lurch, unless—"

Tom Merry forced a laugh.

"Unless I was in the wrong," he said, finishing the sentence for Figgins.

"Well, yes," said Figgins. "You must have put their backs up somehow. What have you done?"

"I suppose I can play whom I like in my own team?" said Tom Merry, turning red.

"Oho! You're playing somebody they object to?"

"That's it."

"Who is it?"

"Lumley-Lumley."

Figgins & Co. stared at Tom Merry blankly.

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"You're playing Lumley-Lumley—after what happened last time?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry peevishly.

"Then I'm not surprised that Blake resigned," said Figgins, with some heat. "I'm blessed if I feel inclined to play myself, if that rotter's in the team against us."

"Same here!" said Kerr. "Oh, here he is!"

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, in football attire, came down to the ground.

The Outsider of St. Jim's had not a good or well-developed figure, but he looked strong and wiry. The glance of his eyes was very keen.

"I'm ready, Tom Merry," he remarked.

"All right!"

"So you're playing?" said Figgins.

The Outsider nodded.

"Yes, I'm playing."

"You talked Tom Merry into this business because he's a good-natured ass!"

"Hang it all, Figgins," broke out Tom Merry. "I suppose you're not going to dictate to me whom I play?"

"You oughtn't to play that fellow, and you know it!"

"Mind your own bisney!"

Figgins flushed.

"For two pins I'd cancel the match!" he said. "That chap's not fit to play against us, and you know that, Tom Merry. You know how he fouled when he played in a House match before."

"You know he tripped Kerr, and pretended it was an accident," said Fatty Wynn. "I saw it and know it was done on purpose."

Tom Merry bit his lip.

"Lumley says that was an accident."

"He'd say anything."

"Look here!" said Jerrold Lumley. "Tom Merry's playing me. I've told him I'm going to play the game. That's enough. Tom Merry can do as he likes in the matter, I suppose? If you're afraid to face us, better say so at once."

"Afraid!" said Figgins fiercely.

"That's the word, I guess."

"By George—"

"Shut up, Lumley!" said Tom Merry. "Don't have a row here. Goodness knows there's been trouble enough already. I don't know what I shall do for a team."

"Ready, lads?" said a deep, cheery voice.

The juniors swung round. It was Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's. The big, handsome Sixth Former nodded cheerily to the juniors. Kildare had consented to referee in the House match. Head of the Sixth and captain of the school, Kildare was not above taking a keen interest in junior football.

"Not ready?" he asked, glancing over the clouded and troubled faces of the juniors. "Anything gone wrong?"

"Ye-es," said Tom Merry. "Four of my chaps have resigned—because they object to my playing a fellow."

Kildare's brow darkened.

"Resigned on the eve of the match? Impossible! It can't be allowed! Where are they? Fetch them at once, some of you!"

The captain's message was quickly taken to Jack Blake and his chums, and they came back to the football ground looking uneasy. They were not quite satisfied themselves with the action they had taken in the heat of the moment. They stood looking very sheepish towards Kildare.

"What does this mean?" asked the captain of the school. "You can't desert your side like this. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, I say, Kildare—"

"I mean what I say! You'll play, do you hear?"

"We'll play, if you say so, of course," said Blake. "But we—"

"That's enough!"

"Weally, Kildare!"

"I say that's enough!"

Lumley-Lumley grinned. The other fellows all looked worried.

But Kildare's sharp words settled the matter. Jack Blake and his comrades went on to the field with Tom Merry & Co., and Lumley-Lumley lined up with the rest.

The Outsider of St. Jim's had had his way. But how was the match to turn out? Tom Merry's mind was very troubled upon that point.

CHAPTER 4.

The House Match!

THE kick-off fell to the School House, and Tom Merry set the ball rolling.

There was very unusual slackness visible in the play at first. Figgins & Co., after their high words with Tom Merry, were out of humour. The Terrible Three

were in a state of annoyance, and Blake & Co., of course, were exasperated and worried. The play was slack, and the only fellow on either side who seemed at all at his ease was Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

The Outsider of St. Jim's was quite himself.

He was by no means sorry to see division and animosity among those who had always been good friends.

His desire to reform and to make a fresh start was doubtless genuine enough, as long as it lasted. But he was no more good-natured than he had ever been.

And he could see that he had a better chance of getting on with Tom Merry if Tom was at variance with his former friends.

For that reason, it is probable that the Outsider of St. Jim's rejoiced in the division he had caused.

But as the game progressed, the clouds vanished from the faces of the juniors, and the old keenness made itself visible.

In the stress of the game they forgot division and disagreement, they forgot even that Lumley-Lumley was playing, and thought only of the play.

Round the ground a number of juniors collected to watch the match and to cheer their own champions, and they expressed their disgust loudly enough at observing the Outsider of St. Jim's in the team.

The general opinion was that it was rotten, and that Tom Merry must have been right off his rocker to allow the Outsider to talk him over.

But even these hard critics could not deny that the Outsider was playing remarkably well.

The Outsider was one of those fellows who can do things if they like. As a rule, he did not like to do anything the other fellows liked doing. But now that he had thrown himself into football, he showed a considerable aptitude for the game. He played half, and both in attack and defence he was of real use to his side. The other fellows had had some idea of "starving" him, but they gave it up.

Lumley was filling his place well, and finding that he could do it, and would do it, they played up to him.

But most of the spectators were of the opinion that he would foul before the game was through. The Outsider could be as cool as ice when he pleased; but his temper, when he let it go, was so savage and spiteful that he stopped at nothing at such times.

The first half wore on without any outbreak, such as the spectators were mostly looking for, on the part of the Outsider.

But even Mellish, Lumley's best friend, could not have denied that he was a selfish player. He knew perfectly well the duties of a half, but he could not restrain himself from attempting to score a goal when he ought to have let a forward have the ball. As it happened, one of his attempts in this way came off, and the crowd gave him a cheer.

The ball had been captured by the Outsider, who dribbled it on, and, disregarding the forwards who were ready to receive it, he kicked straight for goal. The goalie—the best goalie the junior team ever had, Fatty Wynn himself—was unsighted, and before he knew what had happened the ball was in the net.

It was the first blood to the School House, and the Outsider had scored the goal.

Tom Merry's brow contracted; he was not pleased, but to the crowd a goal was a goal, and they cheered.

"Bravo, Lumley!"

The Outsider's eyes glittered.

He cast a triumphant glance at Jack Blake, who gave him a frown in return. As they walked back to the centre of the field, Lumley came up to Tom Merry.

"Glad now you played me, eh?" he said.

"No," said Tom Merry curtly.

Lumley coloured.

"I scored for you, at all events," he said.

"That doesn't matter. You oughtn't to have taken the shot. It was too big a risk, and the goal was a dead



"Rather than play with the Outsider," said Blake steadily, "we will resign from the team!" "I'm going to play him," said Tom Merry. "Then we resign!" retorted Blake. Tom Merry's eyes blazed. "Resign, and be hanged to you!" he exclaimed.

cert if you had passed to Blake, as you ought to have done."

Lumley sneered.

"Blake thinks so, of course."

"I think so," said Tom Merry sharply. "Your play's too selfish all through. It's your place to feed the forwards. Just remember that."

The teams lined up again. The crowd was looking on at Lumley-Lumley with a better humour now, but his comrades were not any more pleased with him. He was not the kind of player to be liked in the team he played for.

After the restart, Lumley-Lumley showed that he was bearing Tom Merry's words in mind. The selfishness that had been so prominent a feature of his play disappeared, and when Tom Merry scored a goal a little later, it was due to Lumley's stopping a rush of the New House forwards, bringing the ball up, and then passing to Tom.

The first half ended, and the teams turned off the field for a brief rest, with the score at two goals for the School House and nil for Figgins & Co.

Figgins told his men to task in the interval. The result of the first half was not pleasing to him.

"We've got to beat them!" he said. "We're as good as the School House any day, and with that rank rotter playing for them we ought to walk over them easily."

"He's playing up very well," French remarked.

"Yes; but he's no good, and we've got to beat them. Play up your hardest."

"What-ho!" said the New House fellows heartily.

And they did play up when the second half commenced. So much so that in the first ten minutes of the second half Figgins put the ball into the net.

Then followed hard and fast play. The ball was constantly changing ends, and both goals had narrow escapes, but the score remained unchanged.

Then came a brilliant stroke by Kerr. Lumley-Lumley had the ball, and just as he was passing to Tom Merry, Kerr hooked the ball away from his foot, and was off with it.

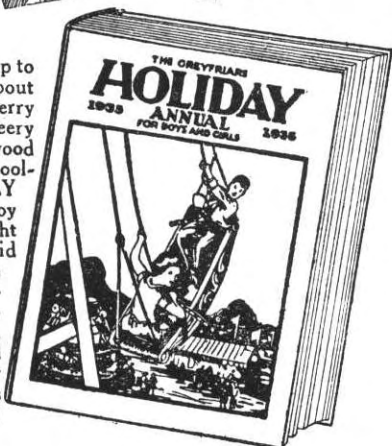
A black, savage look came over Lumley's face as there was a laugh round the field—a laugh that changed into a ringing cheer as Kerr sent the ball to Figgins and the New House leader beat the backs for speed and crashed the ball into the net.

The score was level now, and the game had entered upon



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its last quarter of an hour. All the players were keen enough now. Each side was determined that the match should not end in a draw.

The New House made a fierce attack, but it was repelled. The ball came out to Lumley-Lumley, and the Outsider trapped it ready to pass. But as he was passing to Monty Lowther, Kerr charged him off the ball. It was a perfectly fair charge; but Lumley, unprepared for it, was sent flying, and he came heavily to the ground.

The ball was whisked away by Figgins, and Lumley rose dazedly. Kerr gave him a helping hand.

"Sorry," he said. "Didn't mean to hurt you, you know."

"Hang you!" muttered Lumley-Lumley fiercely. "You did it on purpose!"

Kerr did not stop to listen. He was off again, and in the thick of the play. The New House attack was pressing the School House defence hard, Lumley's failure to get the ball away having given the assailants a new chance. Lumley plunged into the conflict with his eye, not upon the ball, but upon Kerr. The moment predicted by many had come at last. Lumley-Lumley had lost his temper, and he did not care what he did.

Kerr had the ball again when Lumley-Lumley charged him viciously. It was a foul charge in the first place, and as Lumley-Lumley brought his opponent down, he caught him as if by accident, and drove an elbow into his side. Kerr crashed to the ground, and lay there winded and in pain.

Kildare's whistle rang out instantly.

The play stopped.

Tom Merry's face was blazing. Kildare had not seen the elbow business, though he saw that there was a foul; but Tom Merry had seen it all.

Kildare simply intended to order a penalty, as the foul had taken place within the dreaded penalty area.

But Tom Merry was not thinking only of that. He strode towards Lumley-Lumley angrily.

"You cad!" he shouted. "Get off the field!"

CHAPTER 5.

Ordered Off!

TOM MERRY'S voice rang out clear to all.

Lumley-Lumley stood cowed.

On the ground Kerr lay and gasped, his features contracted with pain. Figgins was supporting him. The rest of the players stood round with anxious faces.

Tom Merry's hand was raised, his finger pointed to Lumley-Lumley.

"Get off the field!"

"Hang it!" muttered Jerrold. "I—I—I—"

"What is this?" said Kildare. "It was a foul, Merry. I shall award a penalty kick to the New House. But as for Lumley—"

"He fouled Kerr on purpose, and tried his hardest to hurt him!" said Tom Merry, his voice trembling with rage. "He jammed his elbow in Kerr's ribs! Didn't he, Kerr?"

"Yes," gasped the fallen junior. "The cad! I—I'm afraid I'm done, Figgy! I—I shan't be able to finish the match."

Kildare's brow grew black.

"So that's your style of play, Lumley?" he said. "You'd better get off the field at once, I think."

Lumley-Lumley was white.

"It was an accident!" he muttered. "I—I didn't mean—"

"Liar!" said Tom Merry fiercely. "You did mean it! You meant to do the worst you could, like a cowardly hound!"

"Hang it, Merry, I won't stand those words from you or anybody else!"

"You'll get off the field, or you'll be thrown off!" roared Tom Merry, who was in such a passion as his friends had never seen him in before. "I was a fool to play you! I might have known you'd play some dirty trick!"

"I guess—"

"Don't talk to me! Get off the ground!"

With a scowl of defiance round at the juniors, Lumley strode off the football field. A deep groan and hiss from the crowd greeted him. He held his head high as he walked away, defiance still in his face, but bitterness and dismay in his heart.

Tom Merry knelt beside Kerr.

"I'm awfully sorry for this, Kerr," he said. "I needn't say that that rotter will never play for the School House again so long as I'm captain. But—"

"It's all right," said Kerr, with a faint smile. "I don't blame you. Help me off the ground, some of you."

Kildare lifted the junior in his strong arms, and carried him off the ground as if he had been a baby.

"I shall have to play a man short," said Figgins. "You fellows are in the same boat, so that's all serene!"

Tom Merry nodded. "All Merry's fault for playing that rotter!" said Blake resentfully.

"Yaas, wathah! It is all Tom Mewwy's fault, of course."

"On, don't pile it on!" said Tom Merry. "I shan't be taken in again by that rotter, I promise you that!"

"Yes, shut up, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Tom Merry ought to have known better than to trust him," said Digby. "It wasn't for want of being warned, I know that."

"Wathah not!"

"Oh, cheese it!"

Kildare returned to the field, and the talk ceased. The referee awarded a penalty kick to the New House, and it materialised into a goal, placing the New House team one goal ahead.

Then the play was resumed for the little while that remained, each side playing ten men.

The School House was not very hopeful now. If Tom Merry & Co. equalised in the short time that remained to play, it was all they could be expected to do. A School House victory was out of the question. They made desperate efforts to equalise the score. But the New House, though not now attacking so keenly as they had been, were strong in defence, and every School House attack was stopped.

Time was up at last, and the whistle went, and the score remained at three goals to the New House and two to the School House.

As the whistle rang out there was a roar of cheering from the New House crowd round the ropes.

"Hurrah, New House!"

"New House wins!"

And as Figgins & Co. came off the field they were surrounded by a yelling and whooping crowd of admirers, among whom was Kerr, still looking a little pale, but nearly himself again.

Very different were the looks of the School House fellows from those of the victors. They had been beaten, and that wasn't pleasant; and they had been disgraced, which was worse still. And the fellow who had disgraced their team and lost them the match was Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, whom Tom Merry had persisted in playing against the will of both friends and opponents.

No wonder the popularity of Tom Merry seemed on the wane that afternoon, and that even his chums, Manners and Lowther, loyal as they were, found little to say.

Tom Merry's face was gloomy. He realised that he had made a blunder, and that others had had to pay for it as well as himself.

"Cheer up, Tommy!" said Jack Blake. "After all, I suppose this is the end of this sort of thing."

But Blake's sentiment found no response. Tom Merry would evidently want a lot of cheering, and he continued to walk on in silence. The chums were sorry for him, but they could not forget how obstinate he had been about playing the Outsider.

"Come on, old chap!" said Monty Lowther. He condemned his chum's action, but he had stuck close to his side all the time. "It's just as rotten for us all!"

"Yaas, wathah! I suggest hot baths!"

"Yes, rather. Cheer up, Tom!"

"Oh, let me alone, Blake!"

The juniors stared at Tom Merry. Surely the Outsider's baseness was not going to change their leader's genial nature! It certainly looked like it, for he was walking away from them in the direction of the Shell passage without a word.

"Better let him alone!" said Manners.

And they did.

CHAPTER 6.

A Licking for Lumley!

TOM MERRY, still in his footer clothes, flung himself into a chair when he reached his study in the Shell passage.

"What an ass I was to think of playing that fellow!" he thought. "The cad! Kerr is a good sort. But how can a fellow be expected to forgive a captain who plays a man like Lumley? Blake was right."

Twice the leader of the Shell endeavoured to shake the matter off. But each time he rose from his chair he found that his gloomy thoughts would not be denied. Try as he would, the disgraceful spectacle of the deliberate fouling would loom larger than anything else, and he sat with clenched fists as he saw the Outsider's dastardly play again in his mind.

The leader of the Shell began to pace up and down the

room. It was well for Jerrold Lumley-Lumley that he was not in reach of Tom Merry's hands.

"The dirty cad!" said the Shell captain, stopping in his walk as the vivid picture of his side's disgrace once more flitted across his mind.

Continuing to stride about the room as if he were treading Lumleys underfoot by the dozen, he at length became somewhat calmer.

"Hallo, Merry! Can I come in?"

Tom Merry stopped, speechless with amazement. Surely his ears deceived him. Even Lumley-Lumley could not push matters to this point. But the Outsider, who had not yet changed his footer-togs, set all doubt at rest by walking into the room as Tom Merry did not answer.

"Leave this room!"

"Why, Merry—"

"Leave the room, I say!"

"But why?" said the other, in a tone of surprise. "You don't suppose, along with the rest, that I fouled Kerr on purpose, do you, Merry?"

"Suppose! I saw you do it!"

"It was an accident, as I told you on the field!"

"You are lying! But it doesn't matter now. Get out!"

"Oh, all serene! I've got a lot to say yet."

"Then you'd better get it over quick!" said Tom Merry.

The thought that the Outsider could take the lie so easily from him convinced him more than ever how mistaken he had been to give the fellow a chance at all.

"You're rough on me, Merry," went on Lumley. "You must admit the referee did not see it."

"That makes no difference."

"All serene again, I dare say. But you must admit there's a good deal in what I say."

The leader of the Shell stared at the millionaire's son. His indignation nearly choked him.

"It's not only that you're always been a cad," he said, "but you've abused my confidence. After what you promised unasked—"

"But—"

Tom Merry looked for a moment as if he were going to kick Lumley-Lumley from the study. The cool cheek of the Outsider was amazing.

Tom Merry sat down again.

"Do you mean to say that mine was the only slip on the field to-day?" asked Lumley. There was no answer. "Don't sulk, Merry! Do you?"

"Yes."

"What! You mean to say that when Kerr took the ball from off my toe you didn't know he really meant to trip me—"

"If you dared to make that imputation to Kerr, he'd thrash the life out of you!"

"You're all good at dishing out hidings, aren't you? But suppose you take a sensible view of this affair. I was on your side, and you ought to take my part."

"Get out!"

"Stuff! I tell you Kerr meant it for a trip, and Kildare's a blithering idiot not to have seen it!"

"Are you going?"

"And you're cutting a pretty figure over this, I must say! You know very well that your side was defeated through your sending me off—"

The Outsider stopped short at the angry gleam in Tom Merry's eye.

"Go!" shouted Tom Merry, nearly beside himself with anger.

But the Outsider could not perceive his danger. "You make too much of a trifle—" he began.

Tom Merry leaped to his feet.

"Oh, cheese it!" sneered Lumley. "But if you're thinking of chucking me out, I guess it'll not be so easy!"

(Continued on the next page.)



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And his hand came quickly from behind him with a cricket stump in it.

"You coward!"

"Well, will you hear me out?"

"Never!"

"Then I guess you'll have to!"

But Lumley-Lumley reckoned without his host. If Tom Merry paused when he saw the stump, it was only for a moment. And as the Outsider advanced on him, he sprang forward. The Outsider's arm descended as the Shell leader rushed at him. The blow was dodged, and he gave a snarl of rage.

Next moment Tom Merry dived at Lumley's knees, Rugby fashion, and in a second he was flung heavily to the ground. To put his foot on the wrist of the hand that held the stump was the work of a second to the Shell fellow. In another it was wrenched from the Outsider's grasp. Lumley-Lumley had now to fight it out in fair fight.

"Now," said Tom Merry, flinging the weapon away, "you shall have it!"

Lumley-Lumley regained his feet and charged at Tom Merry. But a powerful body-blow sent him spinning to the opposite wall.

"Put up your hands!" said Tom Merry.

The Outsider was no coward. Seeing that he had to fight, he put up his hands. But he was no match for the captain of the Shell. Wildly striking at his opponent, he endeavoured to rush him, but Tom Merry easily parried all his furious onslaughts. On he came again, and Tom Merry again knocked his blows aside like chaff, and, letting go with his right, Lumley-Lumley measured his length upon the floor.

He was up again in a moment.

"Hang you!" he gasped. "I'll—I'll—"

But he had no time for more words. Tom Merry's right drove home again, and the Outsider of St. Jim's caught it full upon the chin. He staggered back as if a steam hammer had struck him, then, with a crash, he dropped upon the floor. Tom Merry stood over him with blazing eyes.

"Now get out of the study!" he said. "I give you one minute!"

"Hang you!"

"Go!"

Jerrold Lumley staggered up. His nose was streaming red, his face was bruised; but where it was not dark with bruises it was deadly white. He moved slowly to the door. He had had enough of trying conclusions with Tom Merry. But as he backed away his eyes never left Tom Merry's face, and there was a glitter in them of deadly hate.

"I'll go!" he muttered thickly. "I guess I know when I've had enough. But I'll make you sorry for this, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry made a scornful gesture.

"Oh, get out!" he exclaimed.

Jerrold Lumley gritted his teeth.

"Mark what I say—you'll be sorry, I guess! I've offered to be your friend, but you won't have it. I guess I don't make that offer again. I'm your enemy now, Tom Merry! Remember that!"

"I'd rather you were my enemy than my friend!" said Tom Merry, with a curl of the lip. "Your enmity is a compliment to any decent chap, I should think!"

Lumley-Lumley made no reply. He stepped unsteadily out of the study, and went down the passage. Tom Merry remained alone, and the cloud was lighter on his face now. That little tussle with Lumley-Lumley seemed to have lifted a weight from his mind. He had erred in giving the Outsider a chance, but, at all events, he had left the Outsider of St. Jim's with no doubt as to what he thought of him, or the footing they were to be upon in the future.

CHAPTER 7.

Tom Merry is Bumped!

AS a rule there was cheery good-humour in the School House after a football match. Even in the case of a defeat the fellows generally had reason to be pretty well satisfied with what they had done, and it was seldom that they put up a show they had any cause to be ashamed of.

But on this particular evening at St. Jim's there was a lack of cheeriness among the juniors, especially those who had taken part in the football match. The School House juniors had been beaten. That was not all. They had been beaten through the fault of one of their own men.

And the fault in the first place lay upon the junior football captain, Tom Merry. The fellows were dissatisfied with the result, dissatisfied with the skipper, and dissatisfied with themselves.

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There were gloomy faces round the fire in the Common-room.

When Lumley-Lumley came in presently there was a very perceptible hiss from some of the juniors. But the Outsider's face showed very plain traces of his recent handling in Tom Merry's study, and some of the fellows who were inclined to take active measures, dropped the idea, thinking he had had enough.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "The wottah looks as if he's been through it, you know."

"I hear there was a row in Tom Merry's study just after the match," said Blake.

"I twust the boundah had a feahful thwashin', then!"

Jack Blake grinned.

"He looks like it," he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah, so he does. But, of course, it was Tom Mewwy's fault for playin' the wottah in the first place."

"No doubt about that."

"Tom Merry ought to have had more sense!" said Kangaroo. "But, hang it all, let the matter drop now. It's over and done with."

"The footer season isn't over and done with. That licking goes down in our record for the season!" growled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Here's the bounder!"

Tom Merry came in alone. It was very unusual to see the hero of the Shell going about without either Manners or Lowther. The Terrible Three were usually inseparable.

No one spoke as Tom Merry advanced towards the fire.

Digby made room for Tom Merry, but the Shell skipper took the first chair he came to. Silently he sat down somewhat behind the juniors.

Still no one spoke. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy took a survey of the circle through his monocle.

"If the wottah only had the decency to see that he ought to wethah, deah boys!" he murmured.

"Well, I'm not jolly well going to retire, Gussy!"

D'Arcy stared at Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy," he said, "I did not mean you, deah boy."

"Then who the dickens do you mean?" said Tom Merry, who had not seen the Outsider as he came in.

Downcast as they were, the chums could not help but grin. There was a low chuckle at the other end of the room.

Tom Merry turned his head in obedience to a nod from Jack Blake. Then he understood.

"Sorry, Gussy!"

"Pway excuse me, deah boy, for chippin' in. But, aftah this aftahnoon, I'm not sure that we can continue to wegard you as a friend."

Blake & Co. growled. They were plainly for backing up the swell of St. Jim's for once.

"We think your conduct extremewly wepwehensible, Tom Mewwy, in lettin' us down to-day—"

"So do I," said Tom Merry. "You can't blame me more than I do myself."

"Vewy good!" went on Arthur Augustus. "That's all wight fwom the Shell, I suppose. But as the wepwehensible of the Fourth, we wish to know why you persisted in intwoducin' such a wank outsidah into the team?"

"Look here!" said Tom Merry, addressing the chums generally. "I'm about fed-up with this business. I'm captain of the team, Gussy, and I put in who I like!"

"Then I'm afraid we cannot accept that view, deah boy. A captain has no right to play a wottah who is personally objectionable to the west of the team—"

"Oh, yes, he has! When he happens to be Tom Merry, Gussy," broke in Jack Blake sarcastically.

"I agwee with you, Blake. What have you to say, Tom Mewwy?"

"Rats!"

"Oh, hang it, Merry!"

"Pway leave him to me, Digbay, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I wepeat, Tom Mewwy. What have you to say?"

"And I repeat, Gussy—rats!"

"Weally, deah boys, this is not to be endured. Do you weally mean to say, Tom Mewwy, that you are not goin' to make any wewstitution to the Fourth?"

"What do you want?"

"Bai Jove! I hadn't thought of that!"

"And you mean to say that I am to stand you worryin' me like this, when you haven't made up your mind what you want from me! Can't you understand I had quite enough nagging before the match from Manners and Lowther?"

"I wish they had locked you up!" growled Jack Blake.

"Kangawoo, deah boy, will you kindly take on the office of speakah? I find these intewwuptions vewy detwimental to pwogwess."

"Right-ho! On with the motley—I mean the washing!"



As Tom Merry sprang at Lumley-Lumley, the Outsider hit out with the cricket stump. But the leader of the Shell dodged the blow. Next moment he dived at the Outsider's knees and brought him heavily to the floor.

Arthur Augustus seemed to have his doubts about the speaker. But he was prepared to go on.

"We can weadily sympathise with the Shell, as the Shell, of course, Tom Mewwy—"

"I must call you to order, sir!" broke in Kangaroo. "As the Shell is not parliamentary—"

"Thank you, Kangaroo! I apologise. But pway do not intewwupt! I wish to go wight on until I have passed sentence on Tom Mewwy."

"Eh—what's that?" asked Manners, as he and Lowther entered the room. "Who's passing sentence on Tom Merry?"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Shift up a little bit farther, Gussy. You can't have all the fire. And if you can't talk better than that when you get on your hind legs, it's time you sat down."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"No; don't thank me!" "I haven't the least intention, Lowthah. You think, then, Tom Mewwy ought to be let off. You don't blame him?"

"Yes, we do," retorted Manners. "But we're not taking any advice from the Fourth."

"He's jolly well going to be bumped for it, anyhow!" said Jack Blake, jumping up.

"Is he?" said Manners and Lowther. "We'll see about that. Who'll do it?"

"We will!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Monty Lowther, with a sniff. "There's been enough said about the matter. I'm tired of it. Let it drop."

"Wats!"

"Yes, rats!" said Blake. "We'll let it drop, after we've let Tom Merry drop. Bump him!"

There was a shout at once from a crowd of the juniors. The idea of bumping Tom Merry was a relief to their feelings.

"Bump him!"

"Go it, Fourth!"

Tom Merry clenched his fists. He was in no humour for fun of this sort. Blake & Co. rushed straight at him to collar him, and Tom Merry let out.

"Oh!" roared Herries, as he dropped with Tom Merry's right on his chin. "Yow!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stumbled over Herries, and sat on him. Blake and Digby seized Tom Merry and whirled him round.

Instantly Lowther and Manners rushed to the rescue. They might rag their chief as much as they pleased themselves, but no one else was allowed to do so.

But three of the Shell were no match for the angry Fourth Formers. Manners was hurled into a corner, and Lowther dropped upon him heavily. Then three or four pairs of hands grasped Tom Merry.

"Bump him!" cried Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Bump him!"

Bump!

The hero of the Shell came down on the floor in a sitting posture, with a terrific bump.

"Ow!"

Bump!

"Oh!"

"Rescue, Shell!" roared Manners, staggering to his feet.

Bump!

CHAPTER 8.

Friends Divided!

TOM MERRY was struggling in the grasp of the bumpers, but it was in vain. There were too many for him. Bump again, and again. The Fourth Formers were wildly excited, and they were letting themselves go. But a number of the Shell were rushing to the rescue now. Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn, and Kangaroo and Gore piled in, and Tom Merry succeeded in dragging himself away from the bumpers. But they did not allow him to go away in peace.

"Sock it to 'em!" roared Blake.

"Buck up, deah boys!"

"Kick them out!"

The uproar was terrific. The fellows were wildly excited, and many of them had lost their tempers, and were hitting out hard.

In the midst of the din a stalwart form appeared in the doorway, and the stern face of Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, looked into the room.

"Stop this disturbance instantly!"
 "Cave, you asses!"
 The conflict suddenly ceased.
 The juniors, very dusty and dishevelled, stood looking sheepishly at the Housemaster.
 "What does this mean?" demanded Mr. Railton sharply.
 "Merry, you are the head boy present. What does this mean?"

Tom Merry gasped for breath.
 "I—I— Only a little fun, sir!" he panted.
 "Yaas, wathah, sir! We were bumpin' Tom Mewwy."
 "You will take fifty lines each, every boy in the room!" said Mr. Railton curtly. "If I hear any further disturbance you will be punished severely!"
 And the Housemaster rustled away.

"Oh, rotten!" said Kangaroo, mopping his nose with a handkerchief.

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "All Tom Merry's fault!" grunted Blake.
 "How do you make that out?" asked Tom Merry indignantly. "Do you think I wanted you to play the giddy ox, you chump?"

"If you hadn't played Lumley—" "
 "Oh, let that alone, for goodness' sake!"
 Tom Merry walked out of the room. He was very much in need of a wash and brush down.
 Blake snorted.

"Precious set of duffers you are!" he snorted, looking at the Shell fellows. "What did you want to chip in for? If ever a fellow ought to have been bumped hard, that chap was Tom Merry."

"Oh rats!"
 The Shell fellows dispersed. After Mr. Railton's words, it was impossible to renew the combat.

There were sore tempers in the Lower School that evening.

Fifty lines each was a bother, to say the least, and the juniors, as they scribbled away in their studies, growled over the task and laid all the blame on Tom Merry. The once most popular fellow in the School House was at that particular time as unpopular as a fellow could be.

Tom Merry himself was in no good humour.
 The general condemnation found an echo in his own heart; but he felt that the fellows were very hard on him.

He sat alone in his study doing his prep when Monty Lowther and Manners came in. They were looking very glum.

Manners cleared a place on the table, and sat down to his work, without a word. Monty Lowther stirred the fire.
 Tom Merry glanced at them, but they did not speak. A crimson flush came into the cheeks of the captain of the Shell.

"Well, have you turned Quakers?" he asked irritably.

"Eh? What's that?"
 "Can't you talk?"

"Nothing to say," said Manners.

"Nothing that I know of," said Lowther, giving his swollen nose another dab with his handkerchief.

"Why don't you start again about my playing Lumley in the Form match?" said Tom Merry sarcastically. "I haven't heard enough of that yet, you know."

Manners was silent. He saw that Tom Merry was in a worried and touchy mood, and he forbore to provoke him. But Lowther, with his damaged nose still bleeding, and a general feeling as if he had been under a particularly heavy motor-car, was as touchy as Tom Merry.

"Well, if you want my opinion again, it's the same as before," he said tartly. "I think you were a silly ass to play Lumley, and I suppose you'll admit that it's caused enough trouble all round."

"I can't help the fellows making fools of themselves!"
 "One fool makes many, I suppose!"

Tom Merry started to his feet. Manners rose, too.

"Chuck it!" he said. "There's been trouble enough; we don't want any in this study. Stop it, Lowther!"

"Stop what?" said Lowther warmly.

"Well, it's no good ragging Tommy any more."

"Who's ragging him?"
 "You are!"

"Who started it, then?" asked Lowther. "I never said a word when I came in, and you know that, Manners!"

"Well, don't say any more," said Manners pacifically.

"Let him say what he likes," said Tom Merry. "I don't care! I think my own chums might have stood by me, that's all!"

"So we did, against the Fourth!" grunted Lowther. "But among ourselves—"

"Among ourselves you want to jaw me as much as you like. Well, I've had enough of it," said Tom Merry.

"Rats!"
 "Look here, Lowther—"

"Bosh!"

Tom Merry clenched his hands. Manners threw an arm round his shoulder.

"Stop it, Tommy! Don't be an ass! Lowther'll be sorry in ten minutes for what he's saying now."

"I jolly well shan't!" growled Lowther.

And to emphasise his words he stamped out of the study and closed the door behind him with a ringing slam.

Tom Merry sat down to the table again. His face was very hard and set.

CHAPTER 9.

A Bitter Enemy!

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY came into his study in the Fourth Form passage in the School House, with a faint grin upon his face.

Mellish was there, doing his preparation. But Levison, the other member of the study, was absent. He was down with influenza and was in the school sanatorium. Mellish looked up at once as the Outsider entered. Lumley gave him a nod, and flung himself into the armchair by the fire.

"Jolly row in the Common-room!" he remarked.
 Mellish grinned.

"Yes, I hear you've all got fifty lines. I wasn't there, luckily."

Lumley-Lumley sat silent in the chair for a few minutes. Then he rose and locked the door, and sat down again, and lit a cigarette. The rules against the boys smoking at St. Jim's were very strict, and it was safer to lock the door. A prefect might look in, and he would make it warm for the junior discovered smoking.

Lumley-Lumley smoked the cigarette through, and lit another. He had smoked since he was seven or eight years old, which probably accounted for his weedy figure and general state of being out of condition.

Mellish glanced at him curiously several times. He could see that deep thoughts of some sort were working in the brain of Lumley-Lumley, and he wondered what was the subject of the Outsider's meditation.

Lumley broke the silence at last.

"The hound!" he muttered.
 Mellish looked at him quickly.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

"I'm thinking of Tom Merry. He turned me off the field, because—well, I suppose I played the fool a little," admitted Lumley. "But Kerr came very near tripping me, and I only paid him back in kind. We should have won the match easily if Tom Merry had kept his temper."

"Well, there was bound to be a row after a foul like that," said Mellish.

"Tom Merry ought to have stood by me. And when I told him I was sorry afterwards, he wouldn't hear a word."

"Just like him."

"He chucked me out of his study," said Lumley-Lumley, breathing heavily.

"Yes, I heard the fellows talking about it," said Mellish, with some pleasure in dwelling on the circumstances. He was Lumley's chum, but he found a peculiar relish in repaying the Outsider for some of his many insults. "They said you looked a regular guy when Tom Merry had finished with you."

Lumley scowled.

"Oh, did they?" he said. "Well, I'm going to make Tom Merry sorry for it. I've done my best to make him a friend, and he won't have it. From this moment I'm up against him!"

"Good!" said Mellish cordially. "I'm with you in anything against that set of rotters!"

"I shall want you to help me."

"Of course, it's no good having a row," said the cad of the Fourth, in some alarm.

Lumley sneered.

"Don't be afraid. That's not the idea, I guess. I'm going to make St. Jim's too hot to hold Tom Merry; he's going to be expelled from the school!"

Mellish whistled.

"That's a big order!"
 "I guess so!"

"You can't do it. Tom Merry's the most popular chap in the Lower School. Everybody likes him. He's rather under a cloud just now, but that won't last. Why, he's liked by everyone in the school, from fags to the Head. My dear chap, if you try to damage Tom Merry in that way, you might just as well butt your head against a brick wall."

"I guess I'm going to do it, though—and now's the time to strike, while Tom Merry's at loggerheads with the other fellows," said Lumley coolly. "I've got the whip hand. They can't expel me from the school. The Head signed an agreement with my father to keep me here for three

years, and now I'm back again it still holds good. He can't break it. I've nothing to fear. But Tom Merry—suppose Tom Merry did as I have done—suppose we were both found gambling at the Green Man—visiting races, getting mixed up in betting, and so forth—what would be the result?"

"You would be flogged, and Tom Merry sacked from the school," said Mellish. "But—"

"That's the game, I guess."

"But Tom Merry will never get mixed up in anything of the sort," said Mellish, with a stare. "He's the last chap in the world for that sort of thing."

"It may be made to appear that he's mixed up in it."

"Oh!"

"Do you see?" asked Lumley-Lumley, with a curl of the lips. "Tom Merry can beat me when it's a question of fisticuffs—I don't claim to be a big fighting-man. But with brain against brain I guess I shall have him by the short hairs. What?"

"By George! I shouldn't wonder!"

"I guess that's the game, then," said Lumley-Lumley, gritting his teeth. "I'm going to drive Tom Merry from St. Jim's. And you're going to help me."

Mellish opened his lips to speak, but did not. If he had been about to voice an objection, it remained unuttered. The savage spite of the Outsider's face, the malice in the gleaming eyes, almost scared Mellish, and he remained silent. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley threw the stump of a cigarette into the fire.

He did not say another word upon the subject, but Mellish knew that it was in his mind, that the keen, cunning brain was working steadily towards one end—to ruin Tom Merry and drive him from St. Jim's.

The next day the cloud had not passed. Many of the juniors were showing very plain traces of the row in the Common-room, and some of them who had not done their lines had had their impots doubled, and were greatly annoyed thereby. Kerr appeared in his place in the Fourth Form looking the same as usual, quite recovered from the foul on the football field; but Figgins & Co. were not quite their usual selves. Such an incident as the foul by Lumley-Lumley was not easily forgotten. The general condemnation had no perceptible effect upon the Outsider himself. He was as cool and self-possessed as usual, and on the occasions when he came near Tom Merry was quite civil to him.

But Tom Merry had no civility to waste. When the Outsider would have spoken to him, Tom Merry turned his back without ceremony. At which Lumley-Lumley's eyes gleamed and his teeth came together hard.

If there had been any wavering in the determination he had expressed to Mellish the evening before, the snub would have made it firm enough again now.

Tom Merry had made an enemy who would pursue him relentlessly to the bitter end.

The hero of the Shell seemed quite unconscious of any such feeling on Jerrold Lumley's part. He simply wanted to take no notice of the Outsider, and have nothing to do with him.

That was all, and Tom Merry expected Lumley to understand the situation and accept it. If he would not understand, so much the worse for him.

But after that one experience, Lumley was careful to let Tom Merry alone. He did not come up to speak to him again.

There was a coolness still between Tom Merry and Monty Lowther. Manners had been mistaken in thinking that Lowther would be sorry in ten minutes—or, at all events, that he would admit it. Lowther had let the sun go down upon his wrath. And by dint of not speaking to each other for a dozen hours or so, the chums had come to regard each other with some coldness.

Monty Lowther carefully avoided going into the study when Tom Merry was there, and Tom Merry did not linger in the passages if he saw Monty coming. Manners was torn between the two, and did not know which side to take. And, as usual in such cases, he ended by exasperating both, in his endeavour to steer a middle course.

"I suppose you're coming down to the footer, Manners," Tom Merry remarked after lessons that day.

Manners hesitated.

"Is Lowther coming?" he asked.

"I don't know, and don't care."

"I say, Manners, old man, coming out for a spin on your bike?" said Monty Lowther, coming along the passage, and carefully avoiding looking at Tom Merry.

"Tom's just suggested footer practice—"

"Oh, goodness knows we've had enough footer lately,"

(Continued on the next page.)



Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Half-a-crown is awarded to the sender of every joke that appears in this column.

THE CYNICAL CYCLIST.

A dear old lady stopped beside an exasperated cyclist who was repairing his bicycle.

"My dear man," she said, "have you got a puncture?"

"No, madam," came the reply; "I'm only changing the air!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Brownlee, 5, Sunny Bank, Benhar Road, Shotts.

FLATTERING.

Fond Mother: "And will the photograph be like dear little Willie?"

Fed-up Photographer: "Yes, madam, but we can soon alter that!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to V. Marks, Sunrise, Newstead Avenue, Mapperley, Notts.

COLD HOSTILITY.

Figgins: "My nose and handkerchief are deadly enemies."

D'Arcy: "How is that, dear boy?"

Figgins: "Every time they meet they come to blows!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Lobb, 1/98, Moland Street, Aston, Birmingham 4.

TRUTHFUL.

Teacher: "So you are the boy who wrote on the black-board 'Teacher is an ass'?"

Boy: "Yes, sir."

Teacher: "Well at least I am glad you told the truth."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to V. Beresford, 452, Moss Lane East, Rusholme, Manchester.

HANDICAPPED.

Lady: "Why don't you look round for work instead of begging?"

Tramp: "I can't, mum; I've got a stiff neck."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Patien 16, Devonshire Street, Bridgwater, Somerset.

UNIQUE.

Captain: "If you ain't the limit—kicking the ball into yer own goal!"

Goalkeeper: "Anyway, I'm the only player in the team who's scored a goal this season!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Harris, 39, Fernleigh Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex.

A HANDY EXCUSE.

Magistrate (to man accused of begging): "What have you to say?"

Prisoner: "It wasn't my fault, sir. I just held out my hand to see if it was raining, and the gent dropped a penny in it."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Naylor, c/o C. Boyer, Crepstone, near Leicester.

WORDLESS.

Editor: "Well, how's that thrilling article getting on?"

Author (looking up from blank paper): "Too thrilling for words!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Pitt, 84, 2nd Street, Orange Grove, Johannesburg South Africa.

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said Lowther. "We don't score such brilliant successes at it, that we want to stick to it all the time."

Tom Merry flushed red.

"If you're beginning that old subject again—" he said.

"I was speaking to Manners."

"I'm speaking to you. And I say—"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Manners hurriedly. "Don't get your rag out. Will you come down to the footer, Lowther?"

"I'm going out. If you prefer to go with Tom Merry, of course, I've nothing to say. I dare say Kangy will come for a spin if I ask him."

"Well, you see, I don't particularly want to play footer, but—"

"If you want to go out with Lowther, don't let me stop you," said Tom Merry, turning red, and he swung round on his heel and walked away.

Manners looked distressed.

"Oh, hang!" he exclaimed. "Now Tom's gone off in a huff. I really think you might be a little more tactful, Monty. What the dickens do you want to go out for a spin for? Why can't you come to the footer?"

"Because I don't want to," said Lowther. "I don't want you to come with me on the spin, either, for that matter, Manners."

And he walked away in another direction.

Manners was left alone.

CHAPTER 10.

A Startling Discovery!

"DEAR me!" said Skimpole. "I've let myself run out of foolscap. Whatever shall I do to finish this chapter?"

The Determinist of the Shell sat at his table. Everything else was propitious, as he said, that afternoon, Gore having gone out early. So the brainy youth had been "pushing" on with the three-hundred-and-ninetieth chapter of his great work on Determinism as applied to non-existent problems.

The solving of a matter like this was quite easy to a fellow like Skimpole. But how to get a little manuscript seemed to be quite a puzzle.

His head was so full of Determinism that it took him quite a time to bring his giant mind down to paper. Nursing his bumpy cranium, he blinked at the litter of scribbled manuscript on the table.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "I have it! Merry is the chap. Tom Merry can be relied upon for anything. I know he had a lot of foolscap yesterday, too."

In his haste to get to Tom Merry's study, which was next door, he knocked over several things. But a Determinist author could not be expected to pick them up.

"Dear me," he said, as he entered the den of the Terrible Three. "I don't see any paper. How stupid not to leave such an important thing in sight."

And Skimpole began to search in the most unlikely places. First, he tried a box under the window, which was used by the chums to keep their sports gear in.

Then he tried the boot-cupboard in a corner near the fire. It was well for him that the Terrible Three were not there to see him looking for paper.

"No!" he said. "Where ever can they keep it? Ah! The bookcase!"

But the bookcase was as innocent of foolscap as Mother Hubbard's famous piece of furniture. Then, as Skimpole looked round the study his eyes rested on the table in the middle of the room. It was in the table drawer, of course!

"Ah, here we are!" he exclaimed.

But the sheet of foolscap he lifted out of the drawer proved to be an old score-sheet.

"How very annoying!" he murmured. "But there must be some here."

And without much ado Skimpole began a thorough rummaging. But, after putting several things on the table, he suddenly stopped.

In his hand he held a pack of cards.

"Dear me! I had no idea Merry was a fellow like that! I shall certainly speak to him about this!" muttered Skimpole, aghast.

A heavy footstep sounded in the passage.

In his haste to put the cards back again, Skimpole fumbled them. Making another grab at them, he made matters worse, and they fell in a shower all round the table.

Skimpole dropped on his knees in a moment, wildly trying to pick up the cards. The door opened.

"Oh! So Tom Merry is going in for card-sharping, is he?" demanded a mocking voice.

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"Really, Gore, I'm sure I don't know! I came in here for some manuscript."

"Oh, you came in for some manuscript, did you?" said Gore, passing into the study. "You've made rather a discovery, then?"

"You see, Gore—"

"Playing-cards, by George!" said Gore, staring at the painted pasteboards scattered on the floor. "I never should have guessed it myself!"

"You see, Gore, it was most important. I was stopped in the middle of the three-hundred-and-ninetieth chapter of my great book on Determinism by the want of foolscap—"

"Blow the foolscap! These cards were in the table drawer, I suppose?"

"Yes. But—"

"Well, it's a bowl-out for Tom Merry, and no mistake!" said Gore, with a whistle. "This is the chap who preaches to us—who keeps up so jolly good appearances—and holds his head so high when a chap makes a slip!"

"Really, Gore! I understood that you had become quite friendly with Tom Merry. I am surprised to hear you speak about him in this caddish way!"

"Do you want me to bang your head on the wall, Skimmy?" demanded Gore, advancing in a threatening manner.

The Determinist of St. Jim's dodged round the table in alarm.

"Certainly not, Gore. I consider that a ridiculous question. How could I possibly want anything of the sort?"

"Well, you'll get it, whether you want it or not, if you're not jolly careful."

"Yes, but—"

"As for Tom Merry, he's taken us all in. I can see that now. And Manners and Lowther must be in it, too. Tom Merry hasn't the cards here to play patience, I suppose. These three chaps gamble here."

"My dear Gore—"

"And perhaps that's what some of Tom Merry's little parties are for," said Gore. "It's all very well to say they're getting up the issue of 'Tom Merry's Weekly,' and that they lock up the door to prevent interruptions. I know better than to swallow that now."

"Really, Gore—"

"It's all as plain as daylight. Tom Merry has been taking us in. It was always a maxim of mine," said Gore, "never to trust a chap who made out that he was better than other fellows. But Tom Merry does it so well that he took in even me. He won't pull the wool over my eyes any more, I promise you."

"I—I suppose I'd better put the cards back where they were?" said Skimpole. "Tom Merry mightn't like them to be seen!"

Gore laughed scoffingly.

"You can bet he wouldn't like them to be seen!" he exclaimed. "When they're seen, he'll be shown up to the whole school. You'll leave them where they are, Skimmy, and I'll call in some of the fellows."

"Really, Gore, I think I had better replace them, and—"

Gore stepped towards Skimpole as he stooped, and reached out with his foot. Skimpole gave a yell, and rolled over from the toe of his boot.

"Ow! Gore, you are a beast! Although, as a Determinist, it is my duty to return good for evil, I am justified in yielding to the influence of my heredity and environment and punching your nose!"

Skimpole rushed at Gore, brandishing his bony fists. Gore caught a crack on the nose from bony knuckles before he was aware.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Ow! You ass! Why, I—"

"Really, Gore, I am now satisfied, if you are, and—Yow. Yaroo!"

Gore was pommelling away as if Skimpole were a punching-ball. The Determinist of the Shell was no boxer. Gore drove him round the study, trampling over the cards on the floor, punching him at every step.

Skimpole gasped and yelled and roared, but Gore was implacable. His nose was aching, and the concussion had brought the water to his eyes. He did not spare Skimpole.

But a sudden voice was heard in the doorway. Skimpole's yells had brought a senior to the spot. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, strode in.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed. "Gore! Stop that instantly! How dare you use Skimpole in that manner, you young brute?"

(Continued on page 14.)

MORE NOTES AND NEWS FROM—



Let the Editor be your pal! Write to him to-day, addressing your letters :
The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! Continuing our grand St. Jim's series of that amazing character, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, next Wednesday's powerful yarn is one that you will remember for many a day. It is called:

"THE SCHEMER OF THE SCHOOL!"

and shows the darker side of the Outsider's nature at its worst. Having very successfully caused a rift between Tom Merry and his friends, Lumley-Lumley proceeds to scheme further for Tom Merry's expulsion from St. Jim's. Entirely ignorant of the Outsider's plot to ruin him, and with no friends to back him up, it seems that Tom Merry will be an easy victim of Lumley's treacherous scheming! Here's a yarn that will appeal to every boy who likes a first-class school story that is packed with excitement and dramatic interest.

"THE FLAMING PIT!"

Never have I received so many letters and postcards of congratulation for Mr. Brooks as I have done during the last few weeks for his great St. Frank's series, "The Ten Talons of Taz!" It is easily the most popular of all his efforts, and as one reader wrote, "it is wonderful the way he keeps up such a high standard in his great series."

In next week's story, Tommy Watson is the chosen victim of the Tibetan priests, but, like Handforth, he is a little obstinate to deal with—as the priests discover when they try to get him to jump into a pit containing thousands of ravenous rats, to satisfy the Vulture God of Taz of his courage.

A GRAND FREE GIFT.

Have you heard about the grand free gift that the "Magnet," our Companion Paper, is presenting to its readers? It consists of a Secret Code and Cipher Key, and you can have endless fun with it. By means of it you can send secret messages to your pal, and no one else will be able to decipher them—only those who have the secret cipher. See that you get this free gift right away. It's too good to miss. Ask your newsagent for the "Magnet," on sale now, price 2d. Hurry, chums, before all the copies are sold out!

QUEER JOBS.

Some people have queer jobs to do in this world. For instance, how would you like to earn your living just yawning? That's what the champion yawner in Hollywood does for a livelihood, and it brings him in £3 a day! All he has to do is to give an outside yawn when one is required in a film. Another man in filmland is paid for being a "corpse." You see, he can hold his breath for a long time, which is sometimes necessary when a "shot" is being taken of a "dead" man.

But for queer jobs, here's one that must be unique. A man in a village near Colombo, India, was employed to shoot all stray dogs. They became such a nuisance that the authorities agreed

to pay the man 4d. for every dog he shot, and he was to produce the dogs' tails as evidence of duty done. But the stray-dog slayer tried to get rich too quick. There weren't enough stray dogs, so he added tails of monkeys and hares to his collection! He was found out—and now he's "for it."

A SOCCER POSER.

"I heard the other day," writes F. Blane, of Wimbledon, "that a professional footballer once played for both teams in one match. I cannot see how this happened. Is it true?" It is; but there's a little catch in it. The player in question is J. Oakes, the captain and left-back of Charlton Athletic. When Charlton played Port Vale in a Second Division League match, Oakes was in the Port Vale team. The game had to be abandoned owing to fog when the Vale were leading 4-1. Before the fixture was replayed later on in the season, Oakes was transferred to Charlton. He played against his old team in the replay, and was largely responsible for Charlton winning the match.

LIVING WITHOUT MONEY.

Is it possible to live without money? Most of you would answer "No" to this question; yet there is a place in Northern Bohemia where money is no longer necessary to the inhabitants. This is how the system works. You are employed by a builder, say, and on pay day he gives you a voucher for work done. With that voucher you can pay your bills and buy your food. Most of the tradesmen and the local authorities have agreed to accept the vouchers as legal tender for money, so the system works quite well.

185 PRIZES.

If you would like to go in for a grand new Free Competition, write to Kay (Games and Sports), Ltd., Dept. G, Pembroke Works, London, N. 10, and they will send you their catalogue which tells you all about it. The competition is quite simple—all you have to do is to say, in not more than 25 words, why you think Kay Chemistry and Electrical Outfits are best. There is no entrance fee, and 185 prizes are being given, so be sure and send for details to-day.

TAILPIECE.

What would a tailor do if he wanted to make a pair of trousers last? Make the coat and waistcoat first!

THE EDITOR.

PEN PALS COUPON

27-10-34



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal, post your notice, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

Cyril Allan, 11, Minet Drive, Hayes, Middlesex, wants correspondents; age 13 to 15; Italy, India, Africa, America, North and South, Ionian Isles, and Spain.

Harry Clifton Poole, 181, Crinan Street, Invercargill, New Zealand, wants pen pals interested in photography and wireless.

L. Jordan, 336, Selwyn Street, Christchurch, New Zealand, wants a pen pal in France; meccano, aeroplanes; age 13 to 15.

Rowland Lacy, St. Peter's, 50, Nicholas Lane, Laindon, Essex, wants correspondents in U.S.A. and British Empire; railways and stamps.

Miss A. Cunningham, 94, Rathmines Road, Dublin, wants girl correspondents; age 18 to 19; sports.

H. G. J. Kerrison, 195a, Maybank Road, South Woodford, Essex, wants a pen pal; cycling, books.

Miss Mollie Burgess, 116, John Street, Singleton, N.S.W., Australia, wants girl correspondents; age 16 to 19; sports, music, books.

William Forbes, 23, Hyde Road, Woodley, near Stockport, Ches., wants a correspondent in New York or Australasia; age 16.

Charlie Hesketh, 10, Parkdale Road, Nottingham, wants pen pals; age 11 to 13; British Isles, Australia, New Zealand; sports and old copies of GEM.

Miss Esme de Kretser Brenhuis, Peredeniya Road, Kandy, Ceylon, wants girl correspondents in Germany, Italy, China, Japan, England, France, Ireland and Spain; stamps, cigarette pictures, snaps, films, tennis.

John Williams, 1, Pier Street, Sandy Bay, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, wants correspondents; age 13 to 15; England, South Africa, Canada; stamps, cycling, souvenirs, chemistry.

Miss Winnie Deacon, 25, Woodcroft Avenue, Whitehall, Bristol, wants a girl correspondent; England, France, or America.

(Continued on page 26.)

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WHEN FRIENDS FALL OUT!

(Continued from page 12.)

And as Gore did not immediately cease, Kildare caught him by the collar and swung him across the study with a swing that sent him crashing against the wall. Gore stood there, his hands back against the wall to support him, gasping for breath.

"Dear me!" gasped Skimpole. "Thank you very much, Kildare. Gore has caused me considerable pain."

"You young bully!"

"I wasn't bullying him!" snarled Gore. "He punched my nose!"

"Hold your tongue, Gore!" said Kildare, frowning. "I had thought that there were signs of improvement in you lately, Gore, but it seems I was mistaken. You will come to my study. You ought to be ashamed of yourself for striking a fellow weaker than yourself, and one who wears glasses. I shall give you a lesson about this, Gore! I—"

Kildare broke off suddenly as he caught sight of the cards scattered on the floor. He stared at them in astonishment.

"How did these cards come here?" he asked.

Gore sneered.

"Ask Skimpole. You probably wouldn't believe me."

Kildare looked sternly at Skimpole.

"Do you know how these cards came here?"

"They fell from the drawer in the table. You see, I was looking for some manuscript to finish the three-hundred-and-ninetieth chapter of my book on Determinism, and—"

"Do you mean to say that those cards were in Tom Merry's table drawer, Skimpole?"

"Yes, certainly; I was looking for—"

"Pick them up and give them to me!"

"Certainly; I was looking—"

"That will do!"

The cards were picked up and handed to Kildare. He frowned as he slipped them into his pocket. Then he made a sign to Gore.

"Follow me, Gore!"

The bully of the Shell unwillingly obeyed. Skimpole blinked round the study and rubbed his aching bones.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "Gore is certainly a rough brute! But I suppose I must not blame him, as it is really due to the combined influences of his heredity and environment."

And Skimpole, after finding some foolscap, left the study.

Meanwhile, Gore had followed Kildare into his room. The captain of St. Jim's selected a cane and gave Gore two on each hand. And when he left the study he was a sadder if not wiser Gore.

CHAPTER 11.

Marked Cards!

WALLY D'ARCY, the younger brother of the great Arthur Augustus, came along the Sixth Form passage in the School House, with his hands in his pockets, whistling.

Wally was about the only fag at St. Jim's who would have ventured, whistling, in the Sixth Form passage. But Wally was incorrigible. The highest and mightiest grandee of the lofty Sixth

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No. 37. Vol. 1. (New Series.)



JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther
Calling.

Hallo, everybody! Pop goes the easel, as the needy artist remarked, entering the pawnshop. I'm told a new gas has been invented which causes violent sneezing. Bringing things to an "ishoo"! "Aha!" said the villain in the play, "is this a dagger I see on the table?" "No," whispered a stage-hand "off," "it's a putty-knife, but it's the best I could do!" A racing motorist offered a farmer a lift. They were doing eighty m.p.h. when they crashed into a tree. Unhurt, the farmer exclaimed: "That's all right, but what I want to know is how you manage to stop when there's no tree handy?" Clifton Dane claims to know every bus route in England. He should write a handbook for hikers! I hear the Head's decree forbidding football to be played in the quadrangle was taken from the notice-board by a fag. The fag evidently wanted to "lift the ban." The Head "warned" him! Like the man who arrived home with some friends for a house-warming, to find his house on fire. We understand Mr. Ratcliff has written a novel. His account of the interior of a bank, however, is exaggerated. The "account" indeed is "overdrawn." "What is the best training for cross-country running?" inquires Figgins. Football refereeing gets you used to "running for it," Figg! "What do you think of the story I sent you?" asks Gore. Well, it wants a little more "meat" in it—not tripe, of course! Glyn says he has invented a loudspeaker which can be heard twenty miles away. We hope he will keep it "hushed up!" "This fish is not too fresh!" snapped Mr. Selby in a Wayland restaurant. "No, sir," agreed the waiter, "just right!" Overheard in the same cafe: Manager: Have you had any experience? Applicant: Well, I've been a plate-layer for fifteen years! Then there was the counterfeiter who made half-crowns and dated them 1935. He was "forging ahead." Buck Finn says an American boxer often has seven or eight seconds. In England, a heavyweight often has twelve seconds—two in his corner, and ten on his back! Excuse me, here's Skimpole. He says a wasp uses 33 muscles when it stings. We should imagine that Mr. Ratcliff uses about 333 muscles when he administers a licking! Skimmy won't be denied—how can I determine the age of a bird? he demands. Carve it, old chap! We understand a cattle breeder has just produced a tailless cow. We hope he will now produce a stingless bee, a hornless bull—and a caneless Form-master! Ah—there's my car at the door—I can hear it knocking! Toot, toot!

Stop Press

Have you tried Bernard Glyn's new hexagonal-shaped football? This six-sided ball gives "point" to every pass, and is guaranteed to "stun" all opposition!

SAINTS TROUBLED MERRY AND FIGGINS

Wally D'Arcy at the Microphone

Trouble in the St. Jude's camp since the week-end has resulted in the appointment of a new skipper, Lunn, who sent Tom Merry a telegram this morning warning the St. Jim's Eleven to look out for a record licking. Lunn lacks nothing in confidence, and he appears to be undaunted by the rather poor display of St. Jude's have been putting up this season. Evidently Lunn believes that his shining example will be more than enough to turn the tide of defeats.

Here they come—very smart are St. Jude's in gold and green. But it's smartness Figgins play that counts. The big muster of Saints around the ropes let loose a full-throated cheer as Tom Merry, having lost the toss, sets the ball in motion. A rush by St. Jim's finds its visitors very "rocky" in defence. A sizzling shot from Digby all but beats the custodian who just deflects it round the upright. Digby places the corner-kick right in the goal. Kerr mouth, and Blake bobs up to flick the leather and well past the goalkeeper. Goal—not! St. Jude's full-back standing on the goal line "breasts" the ball out, and another player punts it clear. A pretty close shave that!

Figgins is playing at centre-half to-day at St. Jim's, Kangaroo having strained a muscle. Reilly partners Kerr at back. Figgis is a tower of strength at centre-half, and initial attack after attack. St. Jude's are all sea, but only luck keeps their score sheet clean. Lunn breaks away and puts in an electric run down the middle of the field. He veers past Reilly, dribbles past Kerr, steadies himself for a shot. Watch Fatty Wynn—he's leaping to meet Lunn's drive alone before it has left the centre-forward's foot. Wynn's hands close on the ball, and Lunn's great effort is in vain. Fatty Wynn comes for a round of well-deserved applause.

St. Jim's supporters are howling for blood now—and rightly, too. Tom Merry and his men are all over their opponents, but simply cannot score! Hallo—there goes Lowther weaving his way through the defence like a giddy wizard. He passes to Merry at the right moment—Merry makes no mistake. The net quivers, and St. Jim's are one up last! Once having tasted blood, they are irresistible! Figgins sends D'Arcy away with the wing, and Gus—my major, you know—leaves the defenders standing. Gus swings across a perfect centre—watch Merry hit the ball first time. Wham! It's in the net. St. Jim's are two up. Straight from the restart St. Jim's bear down on their opponents' goal. What a forward-line! Lowther makes an opening, but unselfishly passes to Tom Merry as he is tackled. Merry completely beats the goalkeeper, and number three spins in the corner of the rigging. A "hat-trick" for Tom Merry. Great stuff, sir!

Second half now—and there's a change in the St. Jude's team. Lunn, dissatisfied with his goalkeeper, has donned the sweater himself, and stands grimly determined to defend his charge against all comers. Look out though—here's Figgins, shaping for a long

Merry's Weekly



Week Ending October 27th, 1934.

ROUNCE SAINTS

GIGGINS ON THE MARK

dot. Boomph! What a drive! Lunn
aps in vain—it's a goal for Figgins. St.
um's press again—hallo, Lowther's limping.
to avoid having to "ease up" Merry brings
Figgins up to inside-right in Lowther's place,
St. Jim Lowther going to right-half and Manners
g. Lunn taking the centre position. That's great
appears to—Figgins is a fine player in any position.
disple, just watch him now. His long legs easily
is season-outdistance the St. Jude's defence—Figgins
his shining head, and lets fly a shot that a League
goalkeeper couldn't stop, let alone Lunn!
Goal! Lunn tosses the ball out with a wry
face, but it's soon back in his vision again.
St. Jude's defence is unstopable now—and he snaps up a
of Saints centre from D'Arcy to crash home number six
ted cheer for St. Jim's and complete his own "hat
sets the tick."

finds the St. Jude's are well beaten now, but it's the
A sizzling injured Lowther who finally completes their
custodian out. They've left Lowther unmarked
out. Dig! Because of his limp, but a long pass from
the goal. Kerr gives the jester of the Shell a chance,
and Lowther scores with a long drive for the
—no! Seventh and last goal for St. Jim's.
the goal. Tom Merry shakes hands cordially with
another Lunn, whose men put up a game show against
se shave, an admittedly superior team!

FULL RESULTS

ST. JIM'S .. 7	ST. JUDE'S .. 0
Merry (3) Figgins (3)	
Lowther	
ABBOTSFORD 1	ROOKWOOD 4
REDCLIFFE 2	CLAREMONT .. 0
RIVER HOUSE 1	BAGSHOT .. 1
RYLCOMBE G. S. 1	HIGHCLIFFE .. 1

LEAGUE TABLE

	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	A.	Pts.
St. Jim's ..	6	5	1	0	32	10	11
Rylcombe Gram.	6	5	1	0	19	7	11
St. Frank's ..	6	5	0	1	24	10	10
Greyfriars ..	6	4	1	1	26	11	9
Highcliffe ..	7	4	1	2	22	13	9
Rookwood ..	7	4	1	2	23	18	9
River House ..	6	2	2	2	15	12	6
Bagshot ..	7	1	2	4	6	15	4
Redcliffe ..	6	1	2	3	5	24	4
Abbotsford ..	6	1	0	5	7	18	2
St. Jude's ..	7	0	1	6	6	27	1
Claremont ..	6	0	0	6	5	25	0

ST. JIM'S SPOTLIGHT

JUMPING ON A NEW "TOPPER"

in the quadrangle, Gussy was at once
suspected by his chums of having gone off his
dot! Gussy's respect for "toppers" is a bye-
word—yet here he was, dancing with evident
glee on what had been a few seconds before a
brand new top-hat of the shiniest sheen!
Blake, Herries, and Digby seized him hastily
and held him firmly, while Blake pointed to
the flattened-out "topper" in amazed
incredulity. Gussy, however, was quite un-
concerned. He gazed down at the squashed
"topper," and then a smile came to his face
—a smile of beatific satisfaction. In horrible
doubt as to Gussy's sanity, Blake entreated
him to explain his action. Holding the
"topper"—looking more like a concertina
than anything—aloft, he explained. It
appeared that the day previously Gordon Gay
& Co., of Rylcombe Grammar School, had
"ragged" Gussy, doing in his brand new
"topper." Determined on revenge, Gussy
had cycled over to the Grammar School,
and at great personal risk had raided Gay's
study, purloining his Sunday "topper." It
was Gay's "topper" on which Gussy was
dancing with glee—and from a suspected
lunatic Gussy leaped at a bound into the role
of hero!

GIVING GIFTS TO FAGS

with a benign smile on his face, George Gore,
the bully of the Shell, created a sensation.
Tom Merry & Co. stood aghast while Gore
distributed sweets to incredulous fags, patting
them kindly on the head instead of cuffing
them as was his wont. D'Arcy suggested
that Gore had at last turned over a new leaf,
but most fellows scouted that as an im-
possibility. It was Lowther who "spotted"
the approach of an elderly lady in a big car—
and the elderly lady embraced Gore with ef-
fusion as her "dear nephew" before a gasping
crowd! Gore took it like a little gentleman,
and throughout his elderly relative's visit,
he preserved his newly-acquired manners.
The elderly lady left St. Jim's doubtless with
the impression that her nephew was a very
well-behaved boy—but we do not anticipate
that his good manners will last. Hallo, what
was that row? Oh, just Gore cuffing another
fag!

CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER

Some friend of Fatty Wynn's in Australia
sent him a case of apples. "How many
apples are there in that case?" Manners
wanted to know. "Well," replied Fatty,
"if I divide them up amongst 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6
fellows I shall still have an odd one left over.
Work that out!" Ten minutes later Manners
came back with the answer; can you work it
out, too?

Headline from a Wayland paper: "War-
ship Trains Guns on Cliffs." Personally, we
train on softer diet—but then we're not such
"big guns" as all that!

George Herries is extremely careless about
his personal appearance—which worries
D'Arcy intensely. Herries calmly remarks
that Gussy is smart enough for two fellows,
anyway!

Form could not impress the scamp of St.
Jim's in the slightest degree. The Sixth
Form might be the "palladium" of the
school, but to Wally it was only as other
Forms were, and not half so important,
as a matter of fact, as the Third Form.

But D'Arcy minor's cheery whistle
ceased as Kildare looked out of his
study. He nodded with a friendly grin
—at the same time preparing to dodge
down a side passage if the captain of
St. Jim's came towards him.

But Kildare did not do so.

"That you, D'Arcy minor? I thought
I knew the noise!" he said. "Run and
find Tom Merry, and tell him I want
him."

"Right-ho!" said Wally cheerfully.
"If he won't come I'll carry him!" And
he scuttled on.

Wally was always willing to do any-
thing for Kildare.

The school captain stepped to the next
study and looked in. Darrell of the
Sixth was sitting there by the window,
reading.

"Busy, Darrell, old man?"

Darrell shook his head and rose, put-
ting his book aside.

"No," he said. "Do you want me,
Kildare?"

"Will you step into my study for a
minute?"

"Certainly!"

Darrell, looking somewhat surprised,
followed Kildare into his room. There
was an unusual gravity about Kildare's
face that showed something unusual had
happened. The captain of St. Jim's
closed the door.

"Well?" said Darrell inquiringly.

"Look at that!" said Kildare.

He laid a pack of cards on the table
before the prefect. Darrell looked at
them, and then at Kildare again.

"Well?" he said.

"Those cards were found in the drawer
of the table in Tom Merry's study."

Darrell started.

"How's that?" he asked.

Kildare explained quietly. Darrell
listened without a word, and then
quietly turned the cards over in his
hands.

"I don't quite make it out," he said.

"Of course, a lad might have a pack of
cards about him innocently enough;
there's no harm in playing snap or
patience. But it's a strict rule of the
school that boys shall not possess cards,
and Tom Merry knows it as well as any-
one. As head of the Shell it's his duty
to stop anything of the sort. I simply
can't understand this. Merry never im-
pressed me as the kind of boy with a
secret of this sort."

"Exactly how I feel about the matter."

"Better question Merry. Even if he
had the cards there to play a harmless
game it was a serious thing, as he knew
it was against the rules. But—"

Darrell paused as he turned the cards
over in his hands. His brows came
darkly together. The pattern on the
back of the cards was a large arabesque
tracery, and something about it seemed
to have caught Darrell's close attention.

"But what?" asked the St. Jim's
captain.

"These cards were never intended for
a quiet, harmless game."

"Why?"

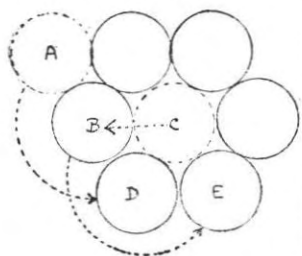
"Because they are marked!"

"What?"

"They are marked cards," said Darrell
quietly. "I've come upon marked cards
before, and I know this very device.
Look here! You see that this scroll in
the corner nearly touches the edge of the
card?"

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olution
of
Last
Week's
Puzzle



"Yes," said Kildare, examining the arabesque with keen interest.

"Now look at the face of the card."

"The ace of spades."

"Exactly! Now look at this card with the scroll on the back nearly touching the edge."

"The ace of hearts."

"Good! All the aces are so marked. Now look at this one with a good space between the scroll and the joint of the curve."

"King of clubs."

"Yes, that is the sign of the king. All the court cards are distinguished in a similar manner. Anybody who had studied the backs of these cards could deal himself an invincible hand and could see what cards were in the hands of his opponents," said Darrell quietly. "This is one of the most cunning kinds of marking."

Kildare was aghast.

"Marked cards!" he exclaimed, as if he could scarcely credit what his ears and eyes told him.

The prefect nodded.

"Yes," he said. "With a little practice anybody could use these cards so as to be quite certain to win whenever he chose. The fellow these cards belong to is in the habit of cheating."

"Good heavens!"

"And they were found in Tom Merry's study?"

"Yes, there's no doubt about that. Skimpole is an ass, but he's truthful, and there is no doubt that he found them."

"Well, marked cards wouldn't be there for a harmless game of patience," said Darrell. "If they belong to Tom Merry, Tom Merry is a gambler and a cheat!"

The prefect laid the cards in a pack again. Kildare, with his hands deep in his pockets, strode about the study in a state of agitation.

"It's impossible!" he said. Seldom had the calm, cool captain of St. Jim's been so disturbed. "I've always had such a high opinion of Tom Merry. He always seemed to me the most decent chap in the Lower School. I can't believe it, Darrell."

"It's hard to believe."

"Yes—it's curious. But I've noticed that fellow Lumley-Lumley—"

"An utter young blackguard, if I am any judge," said Darrell.

"Quite right. He would have been expelled from the

school before now, only his father tricked the Head into signing a contract to keep him here for three years. Well, all the juniors know him as he is; they call him the Outsider. Yet just lately Tom Merry has taken up with him, and, I hear, quarrelled with all his old friends on account of this fellow. It looks as if he was under Lumley-Lumley's influence."

"I should be sorry to hear that. Better question Merry."

"I have sent for him."

And Kildare strode to and fro in his study, a deep shade on his honest face, as he waited for Tom Merry to come.

CHAPTER 12.

Wally's Warning!

"KID, you're wanted!"

No one but Wally would have ventured to address a Shell fellow—and the captain of the Shell at that—as "kid." But D'Arcy minor did it without turning a hair.

Tom Merry was strolling in the quadrangle—alone. Tom Merry had been a great deal alone during the days that had elapsed since the football match in which Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had played.

The breach between the old friends, instead of healing, had grown wider. None would be the first to speak in the old way; and with time, of course, they fell into the new way of not speaking, or of exchanging only distant remarks.

Tom Merry felt that the Fourth Formers had been too hard on him. He had made a mistake, true; but he had admitted it—not so freely as the juniors thought he should do, however. But if they thought he was going to eat humble pie, Tom Merry said to himself, they were mistaken.

So in these days he had little to say to Study No. 6, and they had little to say to him.

With Figgins & Co., relations were not so strained, but they belonged to the rival House, so, of course, Tom Merry was not thrown much in contact with them.

But it was the division in his own study, with his own chums, that cut Tom Merry most deeply, though he never showed it. Tom Merry was not the fellow to wear his heart upon his sleeve. But he felt all the more deeply because of that.

Monty Lowther had taken to frequenting the end study a great deal with Kangaroo and Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn, and he was frequently absent from the once cosy tea-table in Tom Merry's study. It was awkward for fellows to sit in the same small room and not exchange a word, and Monty had settled it by keeping out of the study to a great extent.

Manners, who was always a quiet and peaceable fellow, was much worried between his two friends. He blamed Tom Merry for the football fiasco, but at the same time he was not inclined to back up Lowther in breaking up the study in this way. Between the two he hesitated and paused, and as a natural result, was treated with coldness by both. Manners, never a talkative fellow, had become more silent than ever now.

Tom Merry did not show that he missed his chums, except in one way—he made no others. The football business was blowing over now and the fellows already ceasing to talk about it, and Tom Merry could have had his pick of the School House if he had wanted friends. But he picked no one. And that was the only outward indication he gave that he missed the fellows he had always chummed with. It was not easy for a loyal nature like Tom Merry's to change.

Tom Merry was strolling under the old elms, his hands in his pockets, thinking of things, when Wally came up.

Wally looked at him curiously. In the Third Form Room, of course, the politics of the Lower School were eagerly discussed, and the trouble in the Shell and the Fourth was fully known and commented upon.

Tom Merry was very popular with the Third. He was so kind and good-natured that the fags forgave him for being in the Shell. He was always down on bullying, and more than once had taken on a tough encounter for the sake of some diminutive, inky little rascal who had fallen foul of Gore or some other bullying fellow in the Middle School. Wally was inclined to patronise Tom Merry, and in a vague sort of way the scamp of the Third had determined to "back up" old Merry now that his own friends had turned against him.

Tom Merry gave him a pleasant nod. Wally's cheek only amused him where it would have brought an angry word or a cuff from Gore.

"What's wanted, Wally?" Tom Merry asked.

"You are. Kildare sent me for you."

"Oh, Kildare."

"Yes, and look here," said Wally cautiously. "He was

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looking rather waxy. He called in on Darrell as I came away. Looks to me as if you're in for something. I thought I'd warn you."

Tom Merry laughed. "Thanks, Wally! But I don't think I can be in Kildare's bad books. I think it will be all right."

And Tom Merry walked away towards the School House. He made his way to Kildare's study in the Sixth Form quarters in the School House. In spite of Wally's warning, the hero of the Shell was not alarmed. He could not think of any infraction of the rules of late that could have given Kildare cause of offence, and Kildare was not the kind of fellow to rake up old troubles. Tom Merry thought simply that it was on some point of Form discipline or a football matter that the St. Jim's captain wished to speak to him.

But when he reached Kildare's study he realised that there was something more serious than that in the air.

Kildare bade him come in, and he entered and found Darrell in the room. Darrell was standing by the table, near the pack of cards.

Tom Merry did not for the moment notice the cards. He glanced at the grave face of the captain of the school.

"D'Arcy minor said you wanted me, Kildare," he said. Kildare nodded.

"Yes, I wanted you, Merry."

He paused for a moment before speaking again. Tom Merry looked at him in growing astonishment.

"I hope there's nothing wrong, Kildare," he said.

"There is something wrong—something very wrong!" said the captain of St. Jim's. "Something that will mean trouble unless you can clear it up, Merry."

Tom Merry compressed his lips a little. Troubles seemed to be thickening upon him from all sides of late. It would be another blow if he lost the good opinion of the captain of the school.

"If it is anything against me, Kildare, I suppose I shall be able to explain it," said Tom Merry quietly. "But I haven't the faintest idea what you are driving at."

Kildare pointed to the table.

"Do you see that pack of cards?"

Tom Merry glanced at it.

"Yes."

"Have you seen them before?"

"I don't know."

"Look at them closely, then."

"What does this mean?"

"Do as I tell you!" said Kildare harshly.

A feeling of anger burned for a moment in the junior's heart, but it did not reach his lips. He stepped quietly to the table and turned the cards in his hands, glancing at the faces of some of them and then at the pattern on the backs.

Kildare and Darrell watched him closely the while.

"Well?" said Kildare. "Have you seen that pack of cards before, Merry?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No."

"They do not belong to you?"

"Belong to me?" ejaculated Tom Merry in astonishment.

"Don't prevaricate, Merry! Do they belong to you or not?"

Tom Merry flushed crimson.

"I didn't intend to prevaricate, Kildare. You've never accused me of prevaricating before!" he said.

Kildare's look softened.

"Well, answer my question," he said. "This is a serious matter, and I want direct answers. Do these cards belong to you?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then how came they in your study?"

"In my study?"

"They were found there."

"Found in my study?" repeated Tom Merry in blank amazement.

"Will you call Skimpole, Darrell?"

"Certainly."

The prefect stepped from the study, and returned quickly with Skimpole. The genius of the Shell was looking very uneasy. Determinist as Skimpole was, he was a very good fellow in other respects, and it was dawning upon his mighty brain that he had been the means of getting Tom Merry into trouble. And, although he was sometimes exasperated by the utter indifference Tom Merry showed on the subject of Determinism, he liked the hero of the Shell—as nearly everybody else at St. Jim's did.

He blinked in great distress at Tom Merry.

"I suppose it's about those cards you want to see me, Kildare?" he said.

"Yes," said Kildare.

"I'm very sorry about it, Merry."

"I don't see what Skimpole has to do with it," said the captain of the Shell.

"Tell him, Skimpole," said Kildare briefly.

"You see, Merry, I had reached the three hundred and ninetieth chapter of my great book on Determinism, when I ran out of foolscap," said Skimpole. "I am writing a splendid book on the same subject treated by Professor Balmucy, but, I flatter myself, in a somewhat superior style, for I shall take cognisance of—"

"Cut that out!" said Kildare. "Come to the point—"

"Really, Kildare—"

"Tell Tom Merry how you came to find the cards."

"I was coming to that. I required some more foolscap, and I went to your study to get some, Tom Merry. Some weak-minded persons might imagine that I had no right to do so. That is nonsense."

"Do cut it short!" said Kildare.

"I really am hurrying very much, Kildare. These interruptions, however, throw me into considerable confusion. Requiring some foolscap, I went to your study, Merry, and, after a search of some length, at last discovered what I wanted in the drawer of your table. Unfortunately, I dropped the pack of cards, which I removed from the drawer in my search."

"That is the point," said Kildare. "The pack was there?"

"Of course it was, or I could not have removed it," said Skimpole, in mild surprise. "I am astonished by the question, Kildare. It should be clear even to a low intellect that unless it was there in the first place I could not—"

"That will do. Do you doubt Skimpole's word, Tom Merry?"

"No."

"You do not accuse him of speaking untruly?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I know Skimpole would not lie," he said.

Skimpole beamed on him through his big spectacles.

"You do me only justice, Merry," he said. "It is impossible for a Determinist to lie."

"Shut up!" said Kildare. "You—"

"Really, Kildare, if you knew anything about Determinism you would be aware that a sincere and genuine Determinist seldom or never shuts up."

"You can go, Skimpole."

"Very well. You are sure you have finished? I should not like to be interrupted again, as I am getting to a very interesting part of my book. I am dealing with the vexed question whether the human race originated in a speck of jelly floating in a primeval sea—"

"Get out!"

Darrell took the genius of the Shell by the ear and led him to the passage and closed the door upon him.

(Continued on the next page.)

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Skimpole rubbed his ear and returned to his study and the three hundred and ninetyeth chapter of that great book.

In Kildare's study there was a grim silence for some moments. The captain of St. Jim's broke it.

"What have you to say, Tom Merry?"

"Nothing."

"You deny that the cards belong to you?"

"Utterly."

"You deny having seen them before?"

"Yes."

"But you admit that Skimpole found them in your study?"

"Yes."

"Well, what is your explanation?"

"The only possible explanation is that someone placed them there," said Tom Merry. "And as they must have been placed there to be found, I should say it is a jape—or else they were placed there with the deliberate intention of getting me into trouble."

"You have never played cards in the study?"

"Never!"

"Never had a pack of cards there?"

"Never. Except—"

Tom Merry paused.

Kildare's face set grimly.

"Except when?" he asked at once.

"Except once. It was just after Lumley came to St. Jim's. He showed us some cards tricks there, but he took the cards away with him."

"Oh, Lumley-Lumley—your new friend!"

Tom Merry flushed.

"He is no friend of mine," he said.

"According to what I hear, you have been quarrelling with most of your old friends on his account."

Tom Merry was silent.

Kildare drummed upon the table with his fingers. He evidently did not know what to do. If Tom Merry had had the cards in his study it was a serious matter. But if they had been placed there to injure him by their discovery it was a more serious matter still and needed to be looked into. What was the truth? Kildare did not know. He looked at Darrell, but the prefect had no counsel to give him.

Tom Merry waited.

"Do you know that those are marked cards?" asked Kildare abruptly.

Tom Merry started.

"Marked cards?"

"Yes."

"I did not know it. I had never seen any marked cards that I remember," said the hero of the Shell, looking at Kildare fearlessly. "I don't suppose I should know them."

Kildare compressed his lips.

"You can go, Merry," he said. "I don't know what to think. I must reflect on this. For the present I shall say nothing about it outside the study. You can go."

"Very well. I give you my word of honour, Kildare, that I know nothing about the cards. If you cannot take my word I cannot help it."

Kildare only nodded, and Tom Merry left the study with a heavy heart.

CHAPTER 13.

Wild Rumours!

"BAI Jove, you chaps!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy burst into Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage with that exclamation and an excited look upon his aristocratic face.

The calm repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere was gone for the moment.

Blake, Herries, and Digby were doing their preparation. Blake looked up with a snort as a blot dropped from his pen.

"You ass!" he exclaimed. "Look at that!"

"Bai Jove! That's very clumsy of you, Blake, deah boy."

"You fathead!" howled Blake. "It was your fault!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You startled me, ass!"

"I decline to be called an ass! I—"

"But what's the news?" exclaimed Digby, interrupting the swell of St. Jim's. "I suppose you came to tell us something, as you rushed in barking like that."

"I refuse to have my remarks chawactewised as barkin'—"

"What is it? Get to the bisney."

"You keep on intewwuptin' me, you see. But the fact is I am vewy much surprised. I weally nevah suspected anythin' of the sort, you know."

"Of what sort?" demanded Blake, exasperated.

"About Tom Mewwy, you know."

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"Oh rats! I'm getting fed-up with Tom Merry!" Blake grunted. "We've had enough of him lately—with losing footer matches, and getting lines for rows in the Common-room. Give Tom Merry a rest!"

"But it is weally vewy wemarkable, you know!"

"What is, ass?"

"I decline to be—"

Blake caught up a ruler.

"Come to the point, you fathead! Now then, what it it?"

D'Arcy kept a wary eye on the ruler.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come to the point!" roared Blake.

"Certainly, deah boy. Pway do not get excited. They say that Tom Mewwy has been up to Lumley-Lumley's twicks, you know."

"What?"

"They've discovahed packs of marked cards and severah bottles of whisky in his study and a set of pipes, Mellish says."

Blake sniffed.

"Oh, Mellish!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You know, Mellish. It's all lies, of course!"

"Yaas, but Skimpole found the cards!"

"Skimpole?"

"Yaas, wathah! And Skimmy's an awful ass, you know, but he wouldn't tell a lie."

Jack Blake looked serious. Digby whistled softly.

"Can't be anything in it," said Herries. "Tom Merry's an ass in some things, such as selecting a team for a footer match, but he's decent all through. He's fond of dogs."

"Let's go down," said Blake abruptly. "We can finish the prep presently. This is a thing that ought to be looked into. I don't believe it against Merry for a moment. What does Tom say, Gussy?"

"I weally do not know. I haven't asked him."

"It's curious, though," said Digby. "Of course, there's nothing in it. But it would account for his sticking up for Lumley-Lumley in this way, if it were true."

"Bai Jove!"

Blake did not reply. The chums of the Fourth left the study, and descended to the Common-room.

They found the room in a buzz.

Kildare had said he would say nothing of the matter outside his study, and Tom Merry himself was not likely to speak. Skimpole, buried in deep questions concerning the origin of the human race, probably forgot the whole matter in five minutes. But there was Gore. Gore was not likely to keep silent—and he did not.

Gore was in his element now. Tom Merry had taken him in with his saintly ways, and now that he had found Tom Merry out, he felt it to be his duty to show Tom Merry up. At least, that was how Gore put it, and perhaps he believed it himself. At all events, he certainly lost no time in spreading the story over the School House.

That Tom Merry, who had always been heavily down on gambling and smoking, should have been discovered in the same practices himself, was amazing to the juniors. They simply refused to believe it at first. But it is an old saying that if mud is thrown often enough and hard enough, some of it is sure to stick.

There were not wanting fellows to welcome the story, and to repeat it with every kind of cunning exaggeration. Mellish was well to the front in this. The discovery that Tom Merry was no better than himself afforded indescribable joy to the cad of the Fourth. Lumley-Lumley was another. There were two or three more of the same kidney—not many, but enough to keep the ball rolling.

The story spread and grew!

The pack of cards had really been found, and Gore's statement, doubted at first, was backed up by Skimpole when he was questioned.

Skimpole told the simple truth, and he was well known to be truthful, although not particularly bright intellectually. Skimpole's word carried weight, where Gore's word would have been disregarded.

The pack of cards had been found, and so the rumour, originating no one knows where—unless Mellish could have told—that smokes and whisky had been discovered, too, gained ground and credence.

A bottle of whisky, half a dozen bottles of brandy, a magnum of champagne, a bundle of cheroots, a box of cigars, all, or some of these, had been discovered hidden in Tom Merry's study—in the table drawer, in a nook in the chimney, under the coals in the locker. Everything, in fact, had been found anywhere. Details could be filled in to please individual tastes.

The Junior Common-room was in a buzz with the talk.

Tom Merry had been called over the coals by Kildare, and was to be flogged, was to be expelled, had already been asked to leave the school. One fellow knew for a fact that

a wire had been sent to Miss Priscilla Fawcett, announcing Tom Merry's impending return; another knew for a fact, with equal certainty, that it was only owing to Miss Fawcett's illness, which rendered it impossible to communicate with her, that Tom Merry was not sent away at once.

And all these stories, contradictory and self-contradictory as they were, found some believers, or half-believers.

The juniors had to agree that things looked black against Tom Merry.

Even Blake & Co., who, whatever might be their differences with the hero of the Shell, firmly believed him to be a clean and honourable fellow, were staggered.

The great question, of course, was: What would Tom Merry himself have to say about it? That was the question, and the fellows were most anxious to put it to Tom Merry. But Tom was not to be found. He had gone out on his bicycle alone, and some of the scandal-lovers hinted that he had run away from school.

the doorway of the Common-room. A sturdy figure had appeared there.

It was Tom Merry.

A dead silence fell in the room.

CHAPTER 14.

The Storm Bursts!

TOM MERRY looked into the room in wonder.

He had not caught Mellish's words, and he knew nothing of the ferment the Lower School was in on his account. He had gone out on his bicycle after the interview with Kildare, and had only just returned. He had noticed that several fellows looked at him in a peculiar way as he came in, but had attached no great importance to it.

Many things had been uncomfortable at St. Jim's for the last few days, and Tom Merry was getting accustomed to



"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Gore, for striking a fellow weaker than yourself," said Kildare. "I shall give you a lesson——" The school captain suddenly broke off as he saw the cards scattered over the floor. "How did these cards come here?" he asked.

"Of course, he's run away!" said Mellish, with a grin, in the Common-room. "That's just what he would do. He's afraid to face it out!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy promptly. "Tom Mewwy isn't afraid of anybody. You're a slandewin' wottah, Mellish!"

"You can stand up for him, if you like!" sneered Mellish. "Why isn't he here to stand up for himself?"

"It's all rot!" said Jack Blake. "He can't have run away!"

"Bosh!" said Bernard Glyn.

"Piffle!" said Digby. "And I don't believe there's anything in it. If the cards were found in his study——"

"There seems to be no doubt about that," said Kangaroo, with a worried look. "The question is, how they came there."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Tom Merry's taken us all in," said Mellish. "He's a rotten blackguard——"

"Here he is!"

Mellish turned quite white, and his eyes went wildly to

having things a little out of the usual groove. But the sudden dead silence that greeted his appearance in the Junior Common-room struck him with astonishment.

The juniors looked at him, and said nothing. He walked into the room. Under other circumstances he would have spoken to Blake or one of his chums, but since the football match with the New House he had little to say to them. He turned his eyes upon Kerruish of the Fourth.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

The Manx junior shifted uneasily.

"The matter?" he repeated.

Tom Merry stared at him.

"Yes, what's the matter? What are you all struck dumb for, the moment I come in? You were making buzz enough a minute ago. I heard you at the end of the passage."

Kerruish coloured awkwardly.

Tom Merry's eyes left his face, and travelled round the faces that crowded there, all of them peculiar in their expression. He was more and more astonished.

"What does this mean?" he asked. "Is it a jape?"

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"Wathah not, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, taking it upon himself to reply.

"Then what do you mean?"

"Nothin', deah boy!"

"You were talking when I came in, Mellish," said Tom Merry. "I'm not sure, but I think I caught my name, too."

Mellish turned red, but did not speak.

"What were you saying?" asked Tom Merry.

"N-nothing!" muttered Mellish.

"You fellows were all very much interested in something just now—only a minute ago. What was it?"

There was no reply.

Tom Merry's lips curled scornfully.

"Well, if you were talking about a fellow behind his back, and can't repeat what you've been saying to his face, I don't think much of you, that's all."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"It's not a question of that," said Jack Blake, flushing. "I'll tell you what it is, if you like."

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders.

"Seems to me you could have done that at once, without all this rot."

"I wufuse to have our conversation chawactewised as wot, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Rats! We were talking, Tom Merry, about the things the fellows are saying."

"You are intewwuptin' me, Blake—"

"Yes, I know; dry up! I'm talking to Tom Merry."

Arthur Augustus gasped. Words would have been no use in any case. Tom Merry and Jack Blake were too intent on one another to have listened to him.

"Things the fellows are saying?" said Tom Merry angrily.

"What do you mean?"

Then the truth dawned on him. The story of the cards had got abroad. They had been discussing him—discussing the discovery Skimpole had made in his study.

"Yes," said Blake; "but we were not talking behind your back."

"That sounds well, after the dead silence as I came in, anyway."

Jack Blake coloured.

"And you'd rather not say any more!" suggested Tom Merry scornfully.

Jack Blake started as if he had been stung. Tom Merry looked round the circle of faces.

No one seemed to care to meet his eyes for the moment.

"I'll say just as much as I jolly well like!" said Blake, coming a step nearer.

"Wathah! It's a bit wotten about those beastly cards, Tom Mewwy. You must admit that, deah boy."

"Oh!" said the hero of the Shell. "So that's it, is it?"

"Yaas, wathah! It's wotten bad form, deah boy, to go in for whiskay—"

"What!" almost shrieked Tom Merry.

"Weally, deah boy!"

"Oh, shut up! Let Blake speak—if he cares to speak now I'm here!"

The tone of Tom Merry's voice was gall to Blake. He had been making great efforts to keep his temper. But this was too much for him.

"Yes," he burst out; "yes, I will speak! This isn't the way to make us believe you are innocent, Tom Merry."

Tom Merry's eyes blazed. His temper was tried. He could bear no more, even from fellows who had been his chums. He could and would not hear any more. He took a step to meet Blake's advance.

Blake's eyes blazed at Tom Merry. The hero of the Shell looked him steadily in the face.

"Keep back, Blake! Don't tempt me to hurt you!"

"Rats!"

Tom Merry's fists were clenched hard.

"Oh, keep that for the Amateur Dramatic Society!" said Blake angrily. "You wouldn't find it so easy to hurt me!"

Tom Merry's hands went up as Blake advanced on him, his fists clenched.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, entertaining hopes of being a peacemaker, rushed in where angels feared to tread.

"Ow!" he yelled. He received two terrific blows as Tom Merry and Blake hit out at each other. "You uttah wottals!"

But though D'Arcy's ears would certainly correspond to the description of "thick" for a day or two, his action gave the juniors their cue.

The idea of letting Tom Merry and Jack Blake fight like this was not to be thought of. Neither clearly knew what it was about.

The juniors closed in on them, and, struggle as they would, they were separated. But they took some holding, as one or

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two of them found, to their cost. Even then Tom Merry broke loose.

"Now, Blake," he said, "you can get away from them if you choose. Come on!"

Digby and Herries ran at Tom Merry to restrain him. But with two straight drives he sent them flying.

Then Blake came on again. With a great effort he got away from D'Arcy and Kangaroo, the Cornstalk having his mouth knocked on one side in the process.

Straight at Tom Merry he went. But he came with his hands too far down, and Tom Merry, taking the chance, hooked him with a flashing upper-cut. Blake went down on his back quicker than a comedian on the films.

The juniors did not interfere again. Something was due to Blake. The Fourth Form champion was up again in a flash. Almost any of the others would have been "laid out" by that upper-cut. But not Jack Blake. On he came again. Feinting with his left, he almost got home with a tremendous right counter. Quick as he was in dodging, Tom Merry did not get his head quite clear. The blow sogged like a mallet on his left cheek, and he staggered back a pace or two.

"Bai Jove!"

A dead silence had settled on the room, then D'Arcy's remark brought them once more to a sense of what was toward. Tom Merry and Jack Blake were facing one another like two champions of the ring.

The Shell fellow returned to the charge readily. Anyone could see that Blake's dash would ultimately break itself against Tom Merry's steadfast defence. In rushed the Fourth Form junior again. But the Shell captain was using every inch of his length.

Leading off with his favourite hit, Blake made a counter with his left. Like lightning Tom Merry's arms slipped past his neck.

The Fourth Former saw what was impending, and made a valiant effort to get his head back. But the Shell fellow was too quick for him. His right hand was behind Blake's head, and with one terrific swoop he brought the Fourth Form champion's head down, and he was in "chancery."

But this was too much for the Fourth, and they fell on them in a body before Tom Merry could do any execution.

"Stop them!"

"Hold the duffers back!"

"Chuck it, Tom Merry!"

"No chancery!"

Tom Merry, in the wild excitement of the moment, would probably have given Blake some very severe punishment. Jack Blake was quite at his mercy now.

But strong hands fell upon them from all sides, and the two combatants were wrenched apart.

Tom Merry was swung away and back by the juniors, while Herries and Digby and D'Arcy forced Blake to retreat. Blake struggled fiercely in the grasp of the chums of Study No. 6.

"Let me go!" he roared. "Let me get at him!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Let go, you duffers!"

"I wufuse to be called a duffer. I think—"

"Chuck it!"

"Oh, stop it, Blake!" said Herries. "Blessed if you're not as much trouble as Towser when he gets after young Wally's mongrel. Stop it, I say!"

"Bai Jove! He's loose."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyeglass had fallen out, and he had caught it to replace it. Blake had taken advantage of the relaxation of the hold upon him.

He wrenched himself away from Herries and Digby, and sprang towards Tom Merry.

"Now, then!" he shouted. "Come on!"

CHAPTER 15.

A Fight to a Finish!

TOM MERRY would willingly have come on. But Kangaroo and Clifton Dane and three or four more were holding him back. His eyes blazed at Blake. "So you want to go on?" he asked fiercely.

"Yes, I do!"

"Then shove yourself in the position you were in when they separated us," said Tom Merry. "Fair play's a jewel!"

Jack Blake hesitated. His head had been in chancery at that moment, and naturally enough, he did not want to put it there again. But Tom Merry's suggestion was reasonable enough. If the fight was to go on, Blake had no right to benefit by the interference.

Tom Merry laughed, not the cheery laugh the juniors knew as Tom Merry's, but a hard and taunting laugh, very strange from his lips.

"You don't care to?" he exclaimed.

Blake gritted his teeth.

"Yes, I do; we'll go right on. Let him alone, you fellows."

"Rats!" said Kangaroo coolly.

"Look here, Kangaroo, what are you interfering in this for?" demanded Blake fiercely.

"Because you're a pair of silly asses!" said the Cornstalk in his cool way. "You ought to have more sense."

"Mind your own business!"

Kangaroo grinned.

"You can't rag me into going for you, Blake. Look here, this has got to stop."

"Rats!"

"What are you fighting about? Stop it, I say, before you get the prefects here."

"Hang the prefects!"

"Yaas, wathah! I twust no gentleman pwesent would think of allowin' a pwefect to intahfere in an affaih of bonah. At the same time, Blake, I weally think that this affaih should cease, you know."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort—"

"Ring off, Gussy! Now, Tom Merry, you've chosen to take this thing in this way, and it's got to go on now!"

"I'm ready! I'm ready to meet any fellow that slanders me behind my back!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Blake flushed crimson.

"Do you say that I've slandered you?"

"What else do you call it?"

"Well, if a fellow gambles and drinks in secret, he must expect the matter to be discussed when it comes out."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"So that is what I'm accused of?" asked Tom Merry steadily.

"Bai Jove! The cards were found in your study, deah boy; and somebody said they were marked cards. Then there was a bottle of whiskey hidden in the coal-lockah—"

"Who said so?"

"I weally don't know. Somebody said so—"

"Somebody was a liar, then!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"As for the cards found in my study, I don't know how they got there, excepting that they must have been put there to get me into trouble—perhaps by one of the fellows who are making so much noise about it now."

"That's for me, of course," said Blake, between his teeth.

"You lie, Tom Merry, and you know it."

Tom Merry made a big effort to wrench himself free.

"Let me go!" he said hoarsely.

"Not this time," said Bernard Glyn.

"Hang you! Let me go!"

"Look here, this has got to be fought out," said Jack Blake. "Tom Merry, I'll meet you in five minutes behind the chapel."

"Good!"

And Blake swung out of the room. His chums followed him. The Shell fellows released Tom Merry, who also walked away.

Five minutes later Jack Blake, in singlet, shorts, and rubber shoes, was on the ground, and a crowd of juniors gathered round him there. It was easy to see that Blake had all the sympathy on his side. Whether Tom Merry was guilty or not of the charge brought against him, the way he had taken it had put up the back of the School House fellows. They did not make sufficient allowance for the excited and troubled state of his mind, and the natural indignation he felt at being accused of a disgraceful act. As Tom Merry, also in singlet, shorts, and rubber shoes, came on the scene alone, without even a second, no one looked at him. Blake was the popular hero, and if Tom Merry defeated him he would be the popular hero still.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley followed behind Tom Merry. His eyes were gleaming under his thick brows. But he said little on the matter. The tide had set against Tom Merry, and he was content to leave matters to take their course without appearing openly himself.

"I am ready!" said Tom Merry.

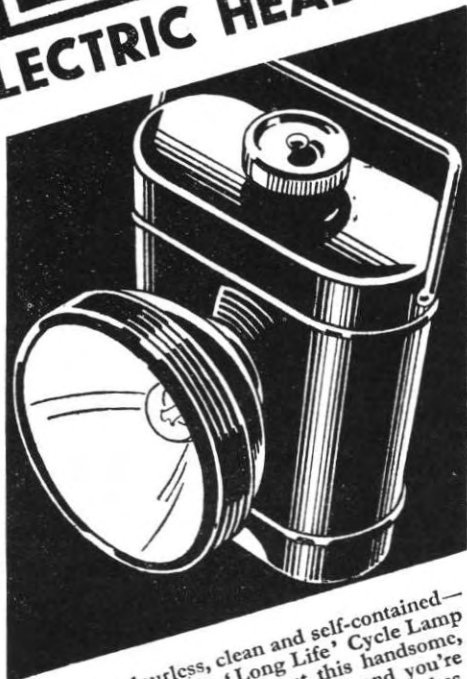
Boxing gloves were produced, and both combatants donned them. Digby was acting as Blake's second, and Herries was there to help. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had appointed himself referee and timekeeper, and had produced his famous twenty-five guinea watch to keep time with. With the gold watch in his hand, and his monocle jammed tightly into his eye, Arthur Augustus considered that he looked very businesslike. Chum of Blake's as he was, nobody dreamed for a moment that he was likely to favour the Fourth Form champion in any way. D'Arcy might have some peculiar manners and customs, but he was the soul of honour and fair play.

He nodded to Tom Merry in a rather distant way.

"Who's your second, deah boy?" he asked.

(Continued on the next page.)

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"I have none," said Tom Merry shortly.

"Bai Jove!"

"You must have a second," said Digby. "Can't you find anybody to back you up?"

Tom Merry flushed.

"I don't want anybody!"

"If you like—" began Kangaroo.

"I've said that I don't want anybody," said Tom Merry distinctly.

The Cornstalk bit his lip.

"Oh, all right," he said, stepping back.

"Weady, deah boys?"

"I'm ready!"

"So am I!" said Blake.

Tom Merry faced Blake with a grim face.

"Time!"

"My only Aunt Jane!" exclaimed a voice, as D'Arcy minor came on the scene. "What's this? Naughty boys!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gussy!" said Wally cheerfully.

"You young wascal!"

"Get off the place, you Third Form fags!" exclaimed Gore. "None of you wanted here!"

Wally sniffed.

"Have you bought up the blessed place, Gore? Go and eat coke, or smoke cigarettes!"

Gore made a rush at the fag, who promptly dodged among the crowd. There was a shout of protest.

"Stop that!"

"We want to watch!"

"Chuck it, Gore!"

And Gore, breathing vengeance, deferred the punishment of Wally till a more favourable opportunity.

The first round had fairly commenced now. The two combatants were hard at it. The fight was hard and fast from the start. The juniors, in an ever thickening circle, watched eagerly. Fellows were coming from all quarters to see the contest. The news that Tom Merry was fighting Blake was exciting enough. It had spread to the New House, and Figgins & Co. and Pratt and French were on the scene to watch.

Fatty Wynn was munching chocolate as he watched, but the rest were wholly intent on the tussle. That it was to be a hard one was evident from the first round. When D'Arcy called "Time," both the juniors had received some punishment. Both had paid more attention to attack than to defence. Blake's nose was red and swollen and Tom Merry's lip was cut. Tom Merry retired to a corner of the ring, and stood alone. Wally tapped him on the shoulder.

Tom Merry turned round angrily. The once best-tempered fellow in the school seemed quick to anger now. But he nodded as he saw Wally. There was no mistaking Wally's eager expression.

"Haven't you got a second, Tom Merry?"

"No; I don't want one!"

"Stuff! I'm going to be your second, then!"

"Oh, it's all right!"

"Can't allow you to fight without a second," said D'Arcy minor, as if he had been a Sixth Former, at least. "I'm the man! Get a sponge and towel, Curly!"

"Right-ho!" said Curly Gibson.

"I'll get some water," said Wally. "Your face wants a damping. Where the dickens is there a basin? Somebody lend me a hat!"

Nobody volunteered to lend a hat.

"Time!"

The opponents toed the line again. D'Arcy stood, watch in hand. Wally grinned, and as the second round commenced he stepped up to his major and jerked the silk hat off his head.

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy turned round. Wally was dashing off with the topper, and D'Arcy yelled after him wrathfully:

"Wally, you young wascal! Bwing that hat back!"

Wally did not even turn his head.

"Wally! I—"

"Now then, ref," roared the juniors, "watch the fight!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Look at the fight!"

D'Arcy almost snorted with exasperation. As referee and timekeeper he could not quit the scene. He trembled for his topper, but there was no help for it.

The pair were getting excited, and once the referee had to order them to break away. He forgot the topper for a moment.

Wally came speeding back before the round finished. He had Gussy's topper in his hands, full of water. He had filled it at the fountain. Curly Gibson had brought the sponge and towel.

"Time!"

The round was over, and the combatants retired for the one-minute rest. D'Arcy insisted upon the rules being rigidly observed.

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"Bai Jove!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's, as he saw Wally squeezing the sponge in his silk topper. "You awful young sweep!"

"Here you are, Tom Merry!"

"Give me my toppah, I say, Wally—"

"You look after the clocking, and cheese it!"

And before Tom Merry could stop him Wally was sponging his face. Tom Merry had no need of such attention, but the coolness of the dripping sponge was very pleasant.

"I shall thwash you, Wally, when my pwesent duties are ovah!"

"Rats! Conducting a scrap without a towel, to say nothin' of a bucket of water!" said Wally, with a sniff. "Like this sponge? Dig, catch!"

And everyone laughed as Digby received the wet sponge on his chin. Blake's nose was very sore, and the sponge was a relief.

"Time!"

The combatants stepped forward keenly enough.

"Give the cad a good hiding, Blake!" cried Mellish.

"You uttah cad, Mellish! I vote we make him stand up to the winnah, deah boys!"

"Rather!" cried the juniors, turning round; but Mellish was not to be seen.

"Eyes front!" cried Wally. "Rats to Mellish, or whoever it was! Keep an eye on business, Gussy! Eyes front, old son!"

"Weally, Wally—"

But the thud of gloves brought Arthur Augustus to the busines in hand. Tom Merry and Jack Blake had not waited. A little more prudence in his tactics and Blake would have been a very stiff opponent indeed for Tom Merry. But the Shell leader, now calm, was as steady as a wall. Left and right the counters came and went like rain, but only once did the Fourth Form fellow get in. Even then his glove only grazed the side of Tom Merry's face. And Tom Merry was back upon him in a second.

Blake staggered under the return body-blow, but his guard was ready as Tom Merry led off at his head. Then he attempted a rash movement. In-fighting should not be indulged in by the lighter man. Blake forgot this—to his cost. Tom Merry, seeing what was coming, stepped to the right, and the Fourth Form champion reeled into the arms of Digby with a crashing left-hander under the chin.

D'Arcy looked anxiously at his watch. There was another minute to finish the round. But Digby, who had retained the sponge, swished it over Blake's face, and he came up to scratch.

A murmur rang round the ring. Sympathy was undoubtedly with Blake. Straight to business he went again, and with good results. The last blow had taught him a little prudence. And his hands were now held as high as Tom Merry's. He led off again. Feinting like lightning with his left, he successfully drew Tom Merry's right. Like a flash he ducked, and Tom Merry staggered into the corner. Blake had got right through his guard. He had found the angle of his opponent's jaw with a right-hander.

"Time! Mind my toppah, Tom Mewwy!"

But Tom Merry did not fall on D'Arcy's hat. The blow that finished the round was as heavy a one as he had received in a fight. A determined light shone in his eyes as Wally splashed the water over his face.

"Couldn't you get a bucket, or something, Wally?" asked Arthur Augustus, looking forlornly at his topper.

"And miss the fight? Off your rocker, Gussy?"

D'Arcy gave the matter up, and in a few seconds he called time again. Both men were somewhat spent; Blake a little more, if anything, on account of his rushing tactics. But he came on hotly. Quick as thought Tom Merry saw his chance. Blake could not resist leading off with his left at the last moment, and before his arm was fully extended Tom Merry had ducked and got right home with his right.

It was a terrific blow. A hit six inches above the mark is no light matter, and Blake crumpled up like an empty sack. He just managed to come up to scratch. For the first time he wavered. He knew only too well that Tom Merry was lasting better than he was, but he was real grit. Take it and give it he would while he could stand. All his determination, however, could not keep his hands from drooping. The spirit was as keen as ever, but the flesh was weak. He managed to stop some blows, and even got in one or two in return; but the light of victory already shone in Tom Merry's eyes.

For two minutes the fight was close and punishing, then Tom Merry drove in a heavy blow just on the mark. Blake gasped, and his arms flew up. Down came his hands to the guard again, however; then Tom Merry's left glove came up in an uppercut, and the Fourth Former took it full on the point of the chin. He went down like a log. Tom Merry stood back, panting. Blake did not move. There was a sound of deep-drawn breath in the crowd.

Wally's face was glowing, but no other. All feeling was

(Continued on page 28.)

ANOTHER SMASHING STORY IN OUR SUPER ST. FRANK'S SERIES.

The TEN TALONS OF TAAZ!



BY EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Sir Montie Disappears!

"SHOOT, Montie—shoot!"

But Sir Lancelot Montgomery Tregellis-West, who had the ball at his feet and an open goal in front of him, deliberately turned his back and walked off the field!

Like a panther, one of the Fourth Form backs leapt forward, reached the ball, and kicked it beyond midfield before any of the other Remove attackers could get near it.

"Oh!" went up a groan.

Sir Montie, a usually cool, reliable player, had thrown away the best opportunity of the game! And he was walking off the field quite steadily, without even a slight injury to warrant his extraordinary desertion. He ignored the frantic shouts from his fellow footballers.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Handforth, his jaw dropping.

The mighty Edward Oswald was, of course, keeping goal for the Remove Eleven. And the Fourth Formers, seizing their opportunity, swept down the field, and Bob Christine, snapping up the ball from Yorke, sent in a low, hard shot which Handforth did not even see.

"Goal!"

"Hey! What the—?"

Handforth jumped, and stared in horror at the leather.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In spite of the disastrous nature of his lapse, Handforth stared again at the retreating figure of Sir Montie. Nipper, the Remove captain, and Travers were staring, too.

It was a friendly evening game—Remove versus Fourth. The light was already falling, and overhead the clouds were gathering. A gusty wind was blowing in from the sea.

"There's only one explanation, dear old fellow," murmured Vivian Travers to Nipper.

"The call of Taaaz," said Nipper, with set lips.

Nipper remembered then that impressive scene aboard the wrecked steamer Transon, when he and nine other Removites had attempted to rescue the mysterious priests of the Taaaz Temple. Raa-ok, the high priest, had warned the boys that "at any moment of the day or night Taaaz will call—and one must obey." For the schoolboys had broken the sacred rules of the mysterious Tibetan sect by gazing upon the face of Raa-ok. But each one was to have a chance of life—if he obeyed, without question, the orders of Taaaz. So far, four members of the "marked ten"—Travers, Pitt, Handforth, and Archie Glenthorne—had been through the ordeal, and they had emerged scatheless. And not one of

them had dared to tell of his experiences. For to tell meant death.

Now it was the turn of Sir Montie Tregellis-West.

Nipper and the others knew, as they watched Montie walking away, that his will-power was completely controlled by the priests of Taaaz. For those dread mystery men, in some secret way of their own, could, by concentrating their wills, command absolute obedience from their chosen victim.

Only a few of the young footballers knew what had happened; the rest were puzzled, but they thought little of the incident. For some minutes prior to his unaccountable desertion, Montie had played in a listless, mechanical fashion. Perhaps he wasn't feeling well. It was only a friendly, anyhow. Thus the matter was dismissed, and the game went on.

But Church and McClure, of Study D, who were not playing, and who were standing near the ropes, noticed a significant sign by Nipper. They understood at once, and hurried after Montie.

Tregellis-West himself, with a distant, dreamy look in his eyes, had reached the Triangle. He went straight into the Ancient House. Lounging in the doorway were Bernard Forrest and his cronies, Gulliver and Bell, of Study A.

"Who won?" asked Forrest, thinking that the game was over.

Montie did not answer; he did not even turn his head; he walked straight into the lobby.

"Deaf?" sneered Forrest.

Apparently, Sir Montie was, for still he did not answer. The three elegant juniors watched him as he disappeared upstairs.

"That's queer," said Gulliver. "He's not usually so morose. Must have had a row with somebody."

Church and McClure came hurrying up the steps.

"Did Tregellis-West just come in?" asked Church quickly.

"He did," said Forrest.

"Thanks."

Church and McClure were relieved. The other victims, receiving the call of Taaaz, had always gone away from the school. Apparently, Montie had gone in to change into ordinary clothes before venturing forth. There was time, then, to catch up with him.

"Did he go upstairs?" asked McClure.

"Yes; and he ignored us when we asked him a civil question," replied Forrest sourly. "What's the matter with the fellow? Did he have a row with somebody on the field?"

"He's all right," said Church hastily.

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THE FIFTH VICTIM!

They pushed past, unwilling to face any further questioning. They went straight upstairs to the dormitory which Sir Montie shared with Nipper and Tommy Watson. He wasn't there.

They looked into the bath-rooms. They were empty. They went into all the dormitories, and even up to the box-rooms on the top floor. But there was no sign of Montie.

When they went downstairs again, they found Forrest & Co. still lounging in the open doorway.

"Did you see Tregellis-West come down again?" asked Church.

"He didn't come down again," said Forrest. "We've been here all the time. What's up? Have you lost him?" His eyes narrowed. "What the deuce is the matter with you chaps? Why are you looking so scared?"

"Rats!" said McClure.

They hurried into the study passage. Montie was not in Study A; neither, for that matter, was he anywhere else in that passage.

"Something funny about this," muttered Church, frowning. "He must have gone straight upstairs; then, for some reason, went down the back stairs."

In the rear lobby they found Willy Handforth & Co. of the Third indulging in vigorous horseplay.

"Did Tregellis-West come out this way?" asked Church.

"Not during the last twenty minutes," replied Willy, who was sitting on Chubby Heath's chest. "We've been here about that time, and nobody's been here at all."

Church and McClure exchanged glances. One of them went up the rear staircase, and the other retraced his steps through the house, and went up the front staircase. They met in the dormitory passage. Again they searched the upper floors. Again they were unsuccessful.

"Well, this is one of the rummiest things I've ever heard of," said Church, scratching his head. "We know that Montie came upstairs, and he must be upstairs still. Those chaps in the lobby swear he didn't come down again; and young Willy is certain he didn't go out by the back way. Then where is he?"

They looked at one another in a scared sort of way. Neither of them had yet had his "call." But they knew that the priests of Taz possessed mysterious powers. In their present state of tension they were almost prepared to believe that the men from Tibet had rendered their latest victim invisible. In some uncanny way they had spirited Montie away.

There was nothing uncanny, however, in Montie's disappearance, although the nature of his movements, after going upstairs, was certainly singular.

Having reached the upper floor he went away from the schoolboys' recognised quarters, and penetrated the front wing of the House, which led him to the West Tower—that noble pile, centrally situated, which joined the Ancient House with the West House. There was a heavy solid oak door here, which opened upon a stone stairway—the stairway itself leading to the tower's summit. This great door was always kept locked. But when Montie gripped the massive handle, it turned with ease. The door opened. He passed through into the narrow, stone stairway, and mechanically he mounted.

Somewhere in his rear, and below, the heavy oak door closed, and the great key turned in the lock. But Montie apparently did not hear; he went straight up.

Presently he emerged upon the picturesque balcony of the West Tower, with its four quaint turrets. The evening wind blew into his face; but he did not stand exposed, for he next did an extraordinary thing. On the stone floor of the balcony there was a heavy blanket. Sir Montie lay down upon the blanket, and, rolling himself in it snugly, he went off into a deep sleep.

It seemed that on this occasion the priests of Taz were determined to operate within the very walls of the school itself. But the time was not yet ripe, so Montie was sleeping. Rolled in his rug, he lay at the top of the West Tower as the shadows of the wintry evening fell, and night came down.

The Man Who Floated!

"WELL, it's a mystery," said Nipper, in a hard, strained voice.

He was standing in Study C, and his eight companions were the other members of the "marked ten."

Nobody else in the Remove knew that Sir Montie had "disappeared." The fellows, for the most part, had their own affairs to attend to. Moreover, they knew nothing of the significance of Montie's strange movements.

"Does it really matter, dear old fellows?" asked Travers, in his philosophical way. "It's Montie's turn, that's all."

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Some of us have been through it; some of us haven't. If Montie remains true blue, as he's certain to, he'll come out all right."

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne, nodding. "I mean to say, these frightful priests are dashed mysterious, and all that sort of thing, but they didn't scare me. Absolutely not!"

"Montie's case is different from the others," said Handforth stubbornly. "He's received the call, yet we know for a fact that he hasn't gone out anywhere. He hasn't left the school. And he's not in the school. Then where is he?"

"There's no answer to that riddle, old man," said Travers. "Montie's either in the school, or out of it. Granted, the priests of Taz possess strange powers, but you'll not get me to believe that they can make a chap vanish into thin air."

"Montie and I were reading something a few days ago about the Yogis of the East," said Tommy Watson, with a shiver. "I believe these Taz men are Yogi mystics. The Yogis have supernatural powers."

"Rats!" grunted Handforth. "I don't believe in all that claptrap!"

"It's likely enough that these Tibetan priests are allied to the Yogis," said Nipper slowly. "But the Yogis worship the God of Siva. Our own precious yellow friends worship the Vulture God of Taz. A different sect, but very similar in rites and practices. There's no doubt they're a queer lot, and we can't pretend to understand how they produce their effects. We know they're capable of a kind of hypnotism. Anyhow, the fact remains that Montie came indoors, and did not go out again. Yet he's nowhere to be found."

The boys had good cause for uneasiness. By now they had searched every nook and cranny of the Ancient House. True, two of them, on reaching the oaken door which led into the tower, had tried the handle; but they had found the door firmly locked, and had thought no more. The key of that door was kept by the Housemaster, and it was inconceivable that Mr. Wilkes had had a hand in the affair. So the tower where Montie actually was was ruled out.

"Well, we've done everything we can," said Nipper, with a shrug. "It's practically bed-time. All we can do now is wait."

"There goes the bell," said Church.

They went to bed with the rest of the Remove. Prefects asked them if they knew anything of Tregellis-West, but they could only shake their heads.

"Well, I can tell you this much," said Biggleswade of the Sixth. "The young ass didn't answer his name at roll-call, and now he's locked out. Old Wilkey is mad about it. When Tregellis-West does show up he'll be lucky if he escapes a caning."

It was impossible to explain to Biggy that Sir Montie had been called by the priests of Taz. Biggy would have considered them mad. It was their own grim secret, and they were obliged to keep it to themselves. Life was difficult these days at St. Frank's. The grim shadow of the Vulture God of Taz, with its ten dread talons, was for ever hanging over the old school—or, at least, hanging over those ten anxious Removites.

They went to bed, but not to sleep. Lights were extinguished in the junior dormitories; one by one other lights went out; the school settled itself to sleep. Outside the night was windy and cold, with ragged clouds obscuring the stars, and the darkness was intense.

Sir Montie stirred, stretched himself, and yawned. He was warm and snug, but somehow he felt stiff. He moved slightly, and he was struck by the fact that the bed seemed to be without springs. A cold draught was blowing across his face, too; and the dormitory was not usually draughty. Strangely enough, he appeared to be sleeping between the blankets. There was no soft sheet, and no downy pillow.

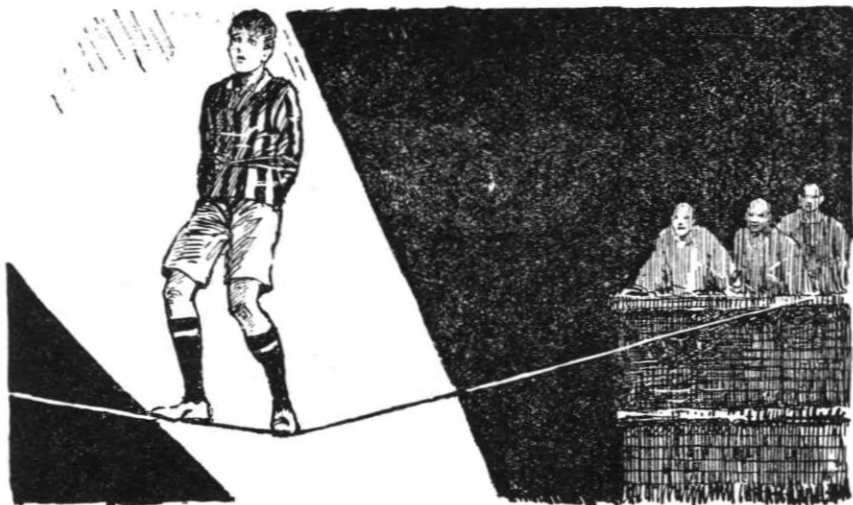
"Begad!" ejaculated Tregellis-West, suddenly sitting up. He was wide awake. He blinked in sheer stupefaction. For he saw now that he was not in bed at all. He could see a parapet close to him, black against the night sky.

"This is most frightfully rummy—it is, really!" muttered Sir Montie, now struggling to his feet. "I seem to be outside, somewhere."

He rested his hands on a cold stone balcony, and stared across into the gloomy void. Right opposite he saw a tower-top level with him. In spite of the darkness he recognised it. He stared about him in fresh amazement. For now he knew where he was. At the very summit of the West Tower!

"Begad!" he said, agast.

Recognising the familiar surroundings—knowing himself to be at St. Frank's—it never occurred to him that the priests of Taz were responsible. He tried to think, but his mind was in a whirl. He knew, of course, that he had been playing in a football match—he was still wearing jersey and



shorts—but he knew nothing of what had happened since then.

Then what could it mean? How in the world had he got up here? There was a little door in the central part of the tower-top, and, opening this, he descended the steep stone stairs. But when he reached the solid oaken door which communicated with the Ancient House, he found it immovable.

"Begad!" he muttered again.

So he was a prisoner! He knew quite well that shouting would be a waste of breath. Scarcely a sound would penetrate that thick door. Pummelling on it would be even more futile, for nobody slept within earshot. In some strange, unaccountable way, he had been carried up into the tower, and then his captors had gone off, locking the door on him. Montie never dreamed that he had walked into the tower unescorted.

He mounted the steps again, now waxing indignant. The only thing to do, he decided, was to lean over that topmost parapet, and yell. Somebody might hear him.

He reached the upper door, and went out upon the balcony. Then, as he walked across to the stone parapet, he noticed something. His feet did not encounter the rug which he had left lying on the cold stonework. He bent down, and felt with his hands.

The rug had gone!

"I say, really—"

He broke off abruptly, the words dying in his throat. For he had seen something shadowy and vague in midair, and on a direct level with him—midway, in fact, between the West Tower and the East Tower.

His heart seemed to pause, as he stood rooted, staring; then it fairly raced, and he felt hot all over, and a creepy sensation ran down his spine.

For it seemed to his startled, horrified gaze that a monstrous apparition was flying, or, rather, floating, across to him from the East Tower. In the dim, uncertain light he recognised the head and shoulders and general shape of a man; yet this fearsome creature had outstretched wings, like a vulture. He saw the face, yellow, impassive.

Then, with a gasp, he remembered.

The men of Taaz!

Much was revealed to him in that flash. He knew how the other fellows had been "willed" into obeying. The call, then, must have come while he was playing football. That accounted for his presence at the top of the West Tower.

But to think clearly at such a moment was difficult. His gaze was fixed on the dreadful figure which was now rapidly approaching. To Montie's fevered gaze it seemed that the creature was half-man, half-bird. Yes, it seemed to possess the wings of a vulture. His thoughts ran riot. Perhaps it was the Vulture God itself. But the wings were not flapping as a bird's wings flap. They were outstretched, like those of a gull when it glides on the wind.

"You are awake, my son," said a soft, refined voice. "It is well."

The figure had reached the stone parapet now, and lightly it dropped to Montie's side. He stared in fresh bewilderment. For he saw that his companion was no monstrosity, but one of the priests of Taaz attired in his flowing Eastern robes. Yet he could have sworn that he had seen, a minute earlier, the outstretched vulture-like wings. Besides, how could this man have crossed the empty void, a hundred feet from the ground, from the East Tower?

"Begad! You gave me quite a shock," said Montie, striving to speak calmly. "Have I been seeing things, or did you really float through the air from the East Tower?"

"The time has come, unbeliever, for you to answer to Taaz," said the other, ignoring Montie's question. "I am Yeza, chief attendant priest of Raa-ok. You have sinned against the omnipotent Taaz, and you shall prove yourself worthy of continuing your earthly existence—or die!"

"Yes," said Montie quietly. He was relieved by the humanness of the man who faced him. But how had he flown across from the opposite tower? Montie was baffled.

"We of the Temple of Taaz, my son, bear you no ill-will," continued Yeza solemnly. "Do as you are ordered, and the mighty Taaz, in his generosity, will permit you to live. Command all your courage, good youth, for the moment has arrived when you will need it."

"That's fair enough," said Montie steadily. "I'm ready. But what can I do up here, at the top of this tower? Begad! If it comes to that, how did you manage to get into the school without somebody spotting you? It was pretty dashed risky, you know."

He looked at the priest and mentally sized him up. Almost as though Yeza read his thoughts, the priest waved a hand.

"Seek not to act rashly, my son," he said warningly. "I am not alone."

Montie stared round. On the balcony, behind him, were two other priests! Yet he was willing to swear that they had not been there a moment earlier. It did not occur to Montie, at the time, that those two men could easily have been concealed on the other side of the tower-top, for Montie had not explored in that direction.

"We are ready to deal drastically with you if you seek to make resistance," said Yeza softly. "Remember this, my son; your only hope of life, your only chance of life, is to obey without hesitation and without question. The moment of your ordeal has come—and Taaz is watching."

The Walk of Death!

HANDFORTH got up from his bed, fully dressed. He had been lying restless for over an hour.

"I can't stand this any longer," he muttered.

"Why can't we be doing something?"

Church and McClure, who were also fully dressed, rose from their own beds.

"Why can't you be sensible, Handy?" asked Church. "There's nothing we can do. The other chaps have gone to bed. Why shouldn't we?"

"It's all very well to talk like that; but how can we sleep, knowing that Montie is—is—"

He didn't finish the sentence, but crossed over to the window and stared moodily out into the night. It was almost twelve, and St. Frank's was dark and quiet. The dormitory window looked out upon the West Square, and there, on Handforth's left, was the tower, rearing itself up far above the red roof of the front wing of the Ancient House.

As the powerful beam from Handforth's electric torch cut through the darkness, it revealed, high above the Triangle, the figure of Sir Montie Tregellis-West walking a tight-rope, with his hands tied behind his back! Nipper & Co. watched in awestruck silence as Sir Montie moved slowly along that walk of death.



"I think we ought to make another search," went on Handforth stubbornly. "We've proved that Montie couldn't have left the House, and— By George! Here, I say—quick, you chaps! Look out here!"

His tone was so charged with excitement that his chums leapt to his side. They stared out of the window.

"Can't see anything," muttered McClure.

"No, no—up there—at the top of the tower!" panted Handforth. "I saw something move just now! Ye gods and little fishes! It must have been Montie!" he went on breathlessly. "Don't you understand? Somehow, he must have got into the tower, and that's why we can't find him."

"Rats! It was your imagination," said Church. "There's nothing up there— Wait a minute, though," he added abruptly. "Great Scott! I did see something move just then."

"What did I tell you?" exclaimed Handforth. "Quick! Let's go and tell Nipper and the others."

They went dashing out.

Sir Montie Tregellis-West was as courageous as the average boy of his age; but in face of the unknown ordeal which lay ahead of him, he felt his heart pounding like a hammer.

"I'm ready," he said, striving to speak quietly.

"It is well," said Yeza. "Mount, then, to the stonework of this parapet."

Montie obeyed, notwithstanding the fact that he was now perched on the very edge of a death-drop. Sheer below him were the paving-stones in front of West Arch.

He noticed, with some surprise, that he was not wearing his football boots. They must have been changed whilst he slept. His feet were encased in new plimsols. Strange that he hadn't noticed it before.

"The moment is at hand," said Yeza. "Resist not, unbeliever."

As he stood there, Montie felt his hands suddenly seized. A cord was placed round him, and his hands were tied to his back.

"What's this for?" he asked. "Begad! What do you expect me to do now?"

"Walk, my son—walk straight outwards—from this tower to the opposite tower yonder."

"Walk!" gasped Tregellis-West. "I don't understand—I don't, really! How can I walk on thin air?"

"Foolish youth! Can you not see the wire?" murmured Yeza.

Montie started so violently that he almost overbalanced. Staring down he could now just see, in the feeble light, a tiny ribbon of wire stretching across into the darkness to the East Tower.

A tight-rope!

Now, in a flash, he understood; that earlier mystery, apparently so unfathomable, was explained. And the explanation was simple. The priest of Taaz had not flown or floated through the air—but had walked along that wire! Naturally, in order to help him to balance, he had had his hands outstretched, and thus his robe had taken on the semblance, in the gloom, to wings.

Then Montie's thoughts came back to a sense of his own danger. He was being told to walk across that wire—and he had never walked a slack wire in his life. The thing was impossible. It would be death to make the attempt.

PEN PALS

(Continued from page 13.)

S. Brons, 29, Rushmere Road, London, E.5, wants pen pals; South America, Ireland, Scotland; age 14 to 15.

Hugh Wilmot, 55, Somerset Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

Roy Sharp, 18, Minet Drive, Hayes, Middlesex, wants pen pals in Roumania, Egypt, Spain, and North America; films and sport; age 12 to 15.

C. McIver, 226, Scott Ellis Gardens, London, N.W.8, wants pen friends interested in pets and all animals and books.

Albert Woodgate, 38, Donald Road, Upton Park, London, E.13, wants a pen pal in Scotland; age 13 to 14; football and sports generally.

Frank Belk, 58, Malton Street, Pitsmoor, Sheffield 4, wants pen pals; age 14 to 16; stamp collecting, cycling, aviation.

Stephen J. Stewart, 2, Halsway, Hayes, Middlesex, wants correspondents overseas; stamps, autographs, sports.

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"You have seen," said Yeza softly. "Go, then, my son, upon your journey. Ahead of you lies the pathway to life."

"To death, you mean," panted Montie, turning angrily.

"Death will be certain if you refuse."

"And just as certain, begad, if I obey," said Montie. "I can't do it. I should lose my balance after the first two steps—and with my hands bound behind me like this, I couldn't possibly save myself from falling. No, dash you, I won't do it! Kill me if you like, but I'm not going to commit suicide!"

In a moment he was dragged from the parapet. He felt himself in the strong arms of two of the priests; they held him over the stone work, so that he was poised over the void.

"You lack the necessary courage, then?" asked Yeza, his voice becoming malevolent. "Then you shall drop to certain death—and when you are found, none will know how you died."

Sir Montie took a deep breath.

"I can see that you mean it," he said. "All right. If I must walk, I walk. But, at least, let me have my hands free, so that they'll help me to balance."

"Your refusal was not occasioned by fear—therefore Taaz is not angered," said Yeza. "You shall have your chance of life. Walk, then, to yonder tower. If you have sufficient confidence and courage, you will succeed."

"But my arms," protested Montie. "Won't you release them?"

"You must walk just as you are," said the priest impassively. "Now, my son—set your first foot upon the wire."

Montie, with one foot on the firm stone balustrade, gingerly placed the other foot outwards, feeling the wire. He knew that he would not last three feet, but it was preferable to go this way. Better than being cast down, branded a coward.

"Walk!" came Yeza's voice, throbbing strangely.

And Sir Montie Tregellis-West walked out boldly, confidently. In that same second a numbness seemed to creep over him; he no longer knew what he was doing; his movements became entirely mechanical.

In a word, having satisfied the priests as to his courage by commencing that walk of death, the priests had now come to his rescue; their extraordinary will-power was concentrated upon him—as it had been earlier—and now he was unconsciously obeying their dictates. He was walking that wire from the West Tower to the East Tower, and never once did he falter.

"Locked!" said Nipper tensely.

He and the others had been aroused by Handforth & Co. Now they were at the heavy door which gave on to the tower stairs.

"You must have been mistaken, Handy, old man," said Travers softly. "I don't see how on earth Montie could have got through here. We can't do a thing, anyway."

"Can't we force the door?" asked Handforth, flashing a powerful electric torch.

That torch was a new investment of his; a miniature searchlight, and it cast a dazzling, powerful beam.

"Might as well try to break down one of the solid walls," said Nipper. "And if we start thumping, somebody might hear us. We'd better go down. Let's get out into the Triangle. We can see the tower better from there. And for goodness' sake, keep quiet."

They hurried down, and they made their exit by means of the window in Study C. Crossing the West Square diagonally, they stole through West Arch, and thus emerged into the dark, empty Triangle. As they did so, they instinctively stared upwards, craning their heads to the summit of the tower.

"Look!" gasped Tommy Watson.

They all saw something—a dim, vague figure in midair, apparently hovering, unsupported. It was right over the centre of the Triangle, halfway between the two great towers.

"Crumbs!" muttered Church, shivering. "What—what is it?"

"For Heaven's sake don't make a sound," urged Nipper, his voice throbbing with anxiety.

"But—but—"

"I don't pretend to understand, but it's Montie up there—Montie himself!" went on Nipper. "He must be in the hands of the priests of Taaz—and if they know that we're interfering they might kill him."

"But it's rot—it's madness," said Handforth. "Great Scott! It is a human being—and he's walking in midair! Walking on nothing."

Their eyes were accustomed to the gloom now. They



Mr. E. S. Brooks welcomes letters from readers. Write to him c/o The Editor, The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

I CAN assure you, Clive W. Simpson (Knaresborough), that I am not dead. Neither am I a myth. The reason why the "Nelson Lee Library" was incorporated with the GEM is that the necessary support for it was lacking. There are still large numbers of enthusiasts, such as yourself, who demand St. Frank's stories, and for the time being these must be satisfied with the stories I write for the GEM and for the "Boys' Friend Library." I am putting my very best work into these, and I want all my old friends to rally round and support me. In other words, to buy the GEM themselves—and tell their pals to do the same!

* * *

Glad to hear that you are enjoying the new series so thoroughly, T. Chapman (Watford). The "marked ten," I can assure you, are booked to experience all manner of hair-raising ordeals before they have finished with the mysterious priests of Taz. The dog, Wolf, I am glad to tell you is in very good health and eagerly awaiting another opportunity to track down a crook or two. With regard to the stamp portraits being reprinted, this is a matter for the Editor. In any case, I don't think it would be possible to have them printed in such a way that

could see that figure far above, and it was still walking, slowly, deliberately.

Snap! It was Handforth's electric torch. In his excitement he ignored Nipper's warning. The powerful beam of light flashed out, and Handforth sent it swinging upwards. It was just like a miniature searchlight out in the open. And in the full light of the beam they saw Sir Montie—and something else.

"Look! He's walking a wire!" ejaculated Handforth with relief. "Oh, thank goodness! There's nothing uncanny about it—Montie's walking a tight-rope."

"Put that light out, Handy, you idiot!" urged Nipper. "You'll dazzle him! And you've told the priests that we're here, watching—"

"Oh!" went up a cry. For at that moment the figure far above had swayed. Handforth was in the act of switching off the torch when he changed his mind. It was almost as though he was rooted to the spot; that his fingers and limbs had become paralysed. For what was happening far above was utterly horrifying.

It could be seen that the unfortunate Montie had his hands bound behind his back. None of the juniors could understand how he had accomplished the walk thus far, for it was a balancing feat of incredible skill.

A voice came floating down. "Taaz is satisfied," it said. "The boy shall live in peace."

And at that identical moment the priests ceased to exert their remarkable will-power on Sir Montie. The consequence, of course, was utterly disastrous.

The unfortunate Tregellis-West came to himself, as it were, midway on his dread journey. All in a moment his wits returned, he knew where he was. He stared down into a white point of light. The wire quivered and shook under his feet, and the sudden realisation of his position sent his heart almost into his mouth.

"Oh! Begad!" gasped Sir Montie. He knew that his mind must have been blank for some minutes. Frantically, he tried to keep his balance. It was impossible. He suddenly tipped, and then, helpless, he dropped.

A cry of horror went up from below. Nipper and Travers and Watson dashed forward, thinking that they might be able, in some way, to break their chum's fall. They did not realise that his falling body might kill one or two of them, too.

Like a stone Montie dropped at first, then, as though some mysterious force was checking him, his descent became slower, even sluggish.

Down—down—

when they are cut out they fail to spoil the story on the other side of the page. Little illustrations of that kind have to be tucked in where convenient.

* * *

Names List No. 15. Ancient House, Fifth Form: William Napoleon Browne, Horace Stevens, Bertram Love, Walter Hitchen. West House: Walter Bryant, George Hodder, Cuthbert Chambers, Arthur Phillips. Modern House: Howard Rowe, Stephen Perry, Reginald Swinton, Stanley Hulbert. East House: Harold Faryson, Frederick Shaw, Percival Drake, William Simms. The above are the prominent Fifth Formers who have appeared, from time to time, in the St. Frank's stories.

* * *

What about the letter you promised me, Joan P. (New Malden)? I expect you have been so busy moving that you haven't had time to write letters to me. However, your last letter contained so many questions that I was unable to reply to them all, so this gives me an opportunity of dealing with the ones I neglected. The only girl at the Moor View School who bears your name—at least, the only girl of that name who has been mentioned in the stories—is Joan Tarrant. And I'm rather afraid that the Moor View Joan has always been described by me as a "spiteful little cat"! That's hard luck on you, isn't it? However, what's in a name? I'm glad to know that you are keen on William Napoleon Browne; for, to tell you the truth, he is one of my favourite characters, too. The reason why Browne doesn't appear more is that he does not always "fit in," and I hate dragging him into a story for the mere sake of enjoying myself. When an author does that sort of thing he is apt to amuse himself and bore his readers. Sorry to hear that your hands suffer so badly from chilblains in the winter, but it's no good asking me for a remedy. I'm not a doctor. However, I hope you'll soon get rid of them.

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

Now he was practically within their grip, but like a rocket he soared back into the sky! But only for a moment. Down he came again, and Nipper gave a strangled cry of understanding; for in the torchlight he had seen the explanation.

There was a cord attached to Montie's middle—and the other end of it, in a loop, was over the wire far above! There must have been some elastic in the cord, too, to cause Montie to "bounce" as he had done.

Montie himself, as white as a sheet, knew that the priests must have cunningly fixed that cord whilst they were tying his hands. He had never been in any real danger of death—for if he had slipped he would have been safe. But he had proved his courage at the moment when he had set out on that terrible walk. The fact that he had been safe made no difference; for he had not known of it.

Suddenly the wire was slackened and, in consequence, Montie dropped lower and lower. Willing hands seized him; a penknife cut through the cord and through the bonds which fastened his wrists.

"Thanks, old boys," said Montie huskily. "Begad! It was all most frightfully exciting."

"These priests of Taz are as tricky as a zoo full of monkeys," said Nipper grimly. "They must be up in that tower still—and I'd like to have a word with them. Montie's safe now. Who's coming with me?"

Watson and Handforth & Co. eagerly volunteered; the others stopped with Montie.

Dashing into the house, Nipper and his companions raced upstairs—but not before Nipper had paid a visit to the Housemaster's study. Nipper knew where the key of the heavy oaken door was kept. He had no compunction, now, in borrowing it. For he felt that he was justified.

Up the stone steps they went, and at length they arrived at the summit.

They were alone. There was no sign of any priest. Even the wire itself, which they had clearly seen, had vanished. In some extraordinary way, the mystery men of the East had vanished. But Nipper, knowing them, was certain that they had no supernatural powers. Obviously they had a duplicate key—how they could have obtained it was a puzzle—and while the boys were wasting precious minutes in going to Mr. Wilkes' study, the priests had got out of the tower. Other priests on the East Tower had, no doubt, drawn the wire in.

To search the school was impossible; and by now, too, it was likely enough that the priests had made their exit and were stealing away. Taaz, their god, had been satisfied.

Next Wednesday: "THE FLAMING PIT!"

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WHEN FRIENDS FALL OUT!

(Continued from page 22.)

with the fallen champion. Tom Merry stood alone. Arthur Augustus fixed his eyes upon the watch to count the seconds. There was a breathless hush in the crowd as D'Arcy counted. Blake lay, gasping, where he had fallen. Would he rise in time?

"One, two, three, four—"

Jack Blake made no motion to rise.

"Five, six, seven, eight—"

The hero of the Fourth made an effort. But his senses were swimming, and he sank back, with a low moan.

"Nine!"

Another effort, but weaker than the first. It was clear to all that Blake was done. He had fought a gallant fight, but he had fought it out. The end had come.

There was a tense silence.

"Out!"

Blake did not rise. Then came the voice of the referee, with a slight falter in it. For the fallen man was D'Arcy's best chum, and it went right to D'Arcy's heart to see him beaten.

"Tom Mewwy wins!"

The fight was over, and Jack Blake was licked. Herries and Digby raised him in their arms. They did not look at Tom Merry.

The victor in the fight looked round at the silent, grim crowd with an almost haggard face. He had won, but it was an empty victory. Not a voice was raised to congratulate

him. Every face condemned him; every glance of sympathy was for Blake.

Tom Merry choked back something in his throat as he threw off the boxing gloves. But as he turned away a sound was heard. It was a hiss as he left the ground. Tom Merry did not turn his head.

"It's all ovah," said D'Arcy in a faltering voice. "Blake, deah boy, how do you feel?"

"Rotten!" said Blake, his voice a weak whisper. "Get me out of this!"

They helped him away, and the crowd moved off, silent and grim. On the scene of the combat remained an inverted silk hat, still half full of water. Arthur Augustus had forgotten it, which was a silent proof of how deeply the swell of St. Jim's was moved.

But if Tom Merry had lost his friends in his own Form and in the Fourth, there was one, at least, who was true to him. It was Wally.

Wally was burning with indignation at the treatment of the one who had always been his hero, though he had "cheeked" him as often as anybody else. And Jameson and Gibson stood by Wally in the matter.

"It's a shame!" said Wally earnestly. "It's a shame—a rotten shame! They've all turned on him, you chaps. But he's got one fellow left to stand by him, and that's me! The Third Form are going to back him up!"

And Wally's chums in the Third heartily concurred. Though what form exactly their backing-up would take, and what use it would be to Tom Merry, was a question.

THE END.

(Next Week: "THE SCHEMER OF THE SCHOOL!" telling of the Outsider's cunning plot to disgrace Tom Merry.)

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