

"THE OUTSIDER'S ENEMY!" POWERFUL LONG COMPLETE ST. JIM'S YARN— INSIDE.

The GEM

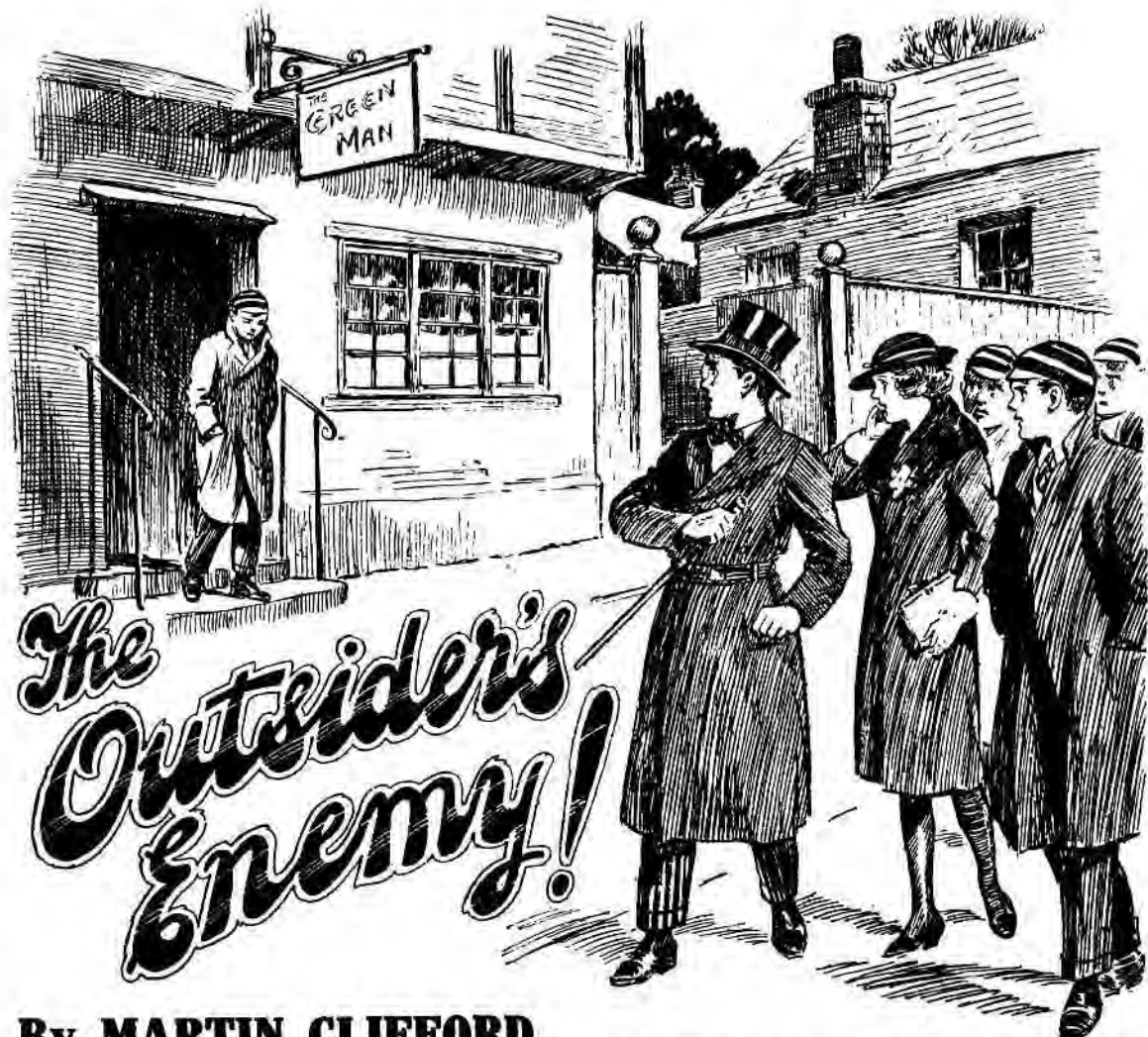
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See the Great
St. Frank's Story—

*"Handforth the
Ghost-Hunter!"*
— INSIDE



THE BOY WHO WAS TRUE BLUE BUT WAS JUDGED A ROTTER!



By MARTIN CLIFFORD

CHAPTER 1.

Warned Off!

"TAKE a pair of sparklin' eyes——"

"Whose?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Well, I only asked a question," said Blake innocently. "I haven't the slightest objection to taking a pair of sparkling eyes, but, of course, I want to know whose!"

"Of course," said Tom Merry seriously. "Or Blake could take one, and I could take the other. I——"

"You uttah ass!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's groped for his eyeglass. He found it, and jammed it into his eye, and surveyed the other fellows in the room with indignant scorn. They were all looking very grave and serious. Whether they really misunderstood him, or whether they were only "rotting," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not quite know.

There were half a dozen fellows in the box-room in the School House at St. Jim's. They were sitting on empty boxes, or standing round D'Arcy with their hands in their pockets. D'Arcy had burst quite suddenly into song. D'Arcy's tenor voice was a very serious matter from his own point of view, and a standing joke among the rest of the juniors of the School House.

"Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes," was one of the amateur tenor's favourite songs. Just now he had been practising for half an hour by himself, and when he had asked Tom

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"Great Scott!" exclaimed Levison. "Look over there!" The juniors and Cousin Ethel followed his glance and saw a downcast junior, his eyes on the ground, leaving the Green Man. It was Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

Merry & Co. to come in and give him their opinion, they had come in with the gravity of judges.

"I wegard you as an uttah ass, Tom Mewwy," said D'Arcy. "I wegard you as anoother uttah ass, Blake. I——"

"Oh, get on with the washing!" said Monty Lowther of the Shell. "You were telling us to take a pair of sparkling eyes——"

"I wasn't, you ass——"

"I appeal to the other fellows," said Lowther. "I distinctly heard you tell us to take a pair of sparkling eyes——"

"Yes, rather!"

"I guess that's correct," said Lumley-Lumley.

"You uttah duffahs!" shrieked D'Arcy. "I believe you are only wottin'. That is a song, you feahful chumps—a song frowm a Sullivan opewah."

"Oh, I see!" said Jack Blake, with a thoughtful nod. "It's a song!"

"Yaas, wathah, and you know it as well as I do, you uttah ass! I was beginnin' to sing a tenah solo——"

"Oh!" said Tom Merry, in great astonishment. "You were singing?"

"Yaas, you duffeh!"

"Why didn't you tell us before you started?" demanded Tom Merry warmly. "How are we to know?"

There was a chuckle in the box-room. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the juniors in turn.

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A STIRRING STORY OF FUN, ADVENTURE, AND DRAMA AT ST. JIM'S.

"I wegard you as a set of wottahs!" he exclaimed. "Howevah, as you are here, pway listen, and give your opinion. I am pwactisin' my tenah solos, because we're goin' to give a musical entahtainment when Cousin Ethel comes."

"Cousin Ethel!"

"Is she coming?"

"Yaas," said D'Arcy. "I had a lettah this mornin'. Cousin Ethel has been stayin' at the seaside—she has been wathah seeday—and now she's comin' to stay for a few days with Mrs. Holmes. I suppose it will be our duty to entahtain her a little."

"Yes, rather!"

"I was thinkin' of a concert," said D'Arcy. "And, of course, I am goin' to sing several solos——"

"Rats!"

"You're not!"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle, and surveyed the juniors indignantly.

"Look here, deah boys——" he began.

Tom Merry pointed his hand magisterially at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Now, let's have this understood," he said, with mock severity. "Cousin Ethel hasn't been well, and she can't possibly be strong enough yet to stand your tenor solos. It's as much as we can do to stand them, and we're pretty thick!"

"Hear, hear!" said Blake.

"If you break out into song, Gussy, we shall bump you. It's a fellow's duty to protect a lady in distress."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not a note!" said Tom Merry. "Not a chirp. You understand?"

"You uttah ass——"

"Cluck it!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

And the juniors, after shaking their fingers solemnly in warning at the swell of St. Jim's, filed out of the box-room, without waiting to hear Arthur Augustus sing.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "I wegard them as a set of beastly wottahs. They don't know a good voice when they hear it. I'm jolly well goin' to pwactise all the same."

And Tom Merry & Co., as they went down the box-room stairs, heard a voice from above, trilling forth more or less tunelessly.

"Oh, buck up!" said Blake. "I can stand Gussy's waistcoats and his ties, and his silk hats, and his eyeglass—but I draw the line at his tenor solos!"

CHAPTER 2.

A Welcome Guest!

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY wore a very thoughtful expression.

The fellow who had always been called the Outsider of St. Jim's was seldom called by that name now.

The blackguard of the Fourth Form—the rank outsider—had made more than one effort in a better direction, but always he had slipped back somehow into his old ways—until now. Now, it really appeared that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was in real earnest. For a long time he had been all that could be desired. Not a sign had he shown of reverting to his old bad habits. He had never been near the Green Man—he had cut off his connection with Mr. Joliffe, and the set of betting rascals who haunted that ill-favoured place—and he was very friendly with Tom Merry & Co.

More and more of the better qualities of his nature had come to light, and the Outsider of St. Jim's was becoming popular. It seemed that he had completely turned his back upon his old associations.

And it was not for want of temptations, either.

His old associates of the Green Man had made more than one attempt to get him back, and Levison and Mellish of the Fourth had never tired of striving to undermine his good resolutions.

But they had not succeeded.

To Levison and his friends the reform of the Outsider was a heavy blow, for Lumley-Lumley was the son of a millionaire, and had unlimited pocket-money. And Levison, at least, nourished a bitter hatred towards the fellow whom he could not drag back into evil ways. But the one-time Outsider did not care for Levison's likes or dislikes.

He went on his way serenely, taking no notice of the sneers and taunts of the cad of the Fourth.

It was partly by the influence of Cousin Ethel that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had succeeded in making good that great change. But how Ethel regarded him he did not know. He knew that in the old days on more than one

occasion he had bitterly offended Ethel, and now she was coming to St. Jim's again. Lumley-Lumley wondered how she would speak to him, and whether she would speak to him at all.

The Outsider of St. Jim's started suddenly out of his deep reverie as he received a sounding slap on the shoulder.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry cheerfully. "Wherefore that worried brow? Been getting lines from Lathom?"

Lumley-Lumley shook his head, but he did not smile.

"I guess not!" he said.

The habit of "guessing" still clung to Jerrold Lumley-Lumley from the time he had spent in America, when the Lumley-Lumleys, father and son, had been poor enough, and had picked up a living in New York, long before the millions came, and the firm of Lumley-Lumley, Ltd., was heard of.

"Not in trouble?" asked Tom Merry.

"Not exactly."

"Come and punt a footer round, then."

"All serene!"

Lumley-Lumley walked out into the quad with Tom Merry. The hero of the Shell had a footer under his arm. There was ten minutes to spare before dinner, and Tom Merry thought that it could not be better occupied than in punting a ball round the quadrangle. But the shade did not leave Lumley-Lumley's brow.

"Look here, Merry——" he said suddenly.

"Yes?" said Tom, kindly enough. He could see that there was a weight of some kind on Jerrold Lumley-Lumley's mind.

"It's about Cousin Ethel."

"Nothing about Cousin Ethel to worry you, is there?" asked Tom.

"Oh, no! But—Look here! I suppose you remember that I was caddish towards her once?"

Tom Merry's brow clouded a little.

"No need to talk of that!" he said shortly.

"No. But things are different now," said Lumley-Lumley. "I see things in a different light. I—I used to have cheek enough, goodness knows, but now—well, I don't feel as if I have cheek enough to face her when she arrives. That's all. Will she speak to me, do you think?"

Tom Merry comprehended.

"Oh!" he said. "Is that it?"

Lumley-Lumley coloured.

"Yes, that's it, I guess! I—I think, perhaps, she must have a grudge against me, you know, and—and I want to stand in her good opinion."

Tom Merry smiled.

"Depend upon it, Cousin Ethel wouldn't bear malice," he said. "And, besides, she knows you're all right now. Don't say anything about it, and she won't, and it will be all right."

Lumley-Lumley nodded.

"And now let's have a punt about," said Tom Merry.

He kicked the ball, but he did not watch where it flew, for as the footer rolled he caught sight of a slim, girlish figure entering the gateway of St. Jim's.

"Cousin Ethel!" he exclaimed.

The girl came in, bright and charming, as always, with a bag and umbrella in her hand. Tom Merry ran to meet her, and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley followed him more slowly. It was curious to see how the Outsider of St. Jim's, who was famous for his nerve, shrank from facing the quiet blue eyes of Ethel Cleveland.

"My hat! It's Ethel!"

That exclamation came from George Figgins of the Fourth. The long-legged New House junior came sprinting across the quad as if he were on the cinder-path. He reached Cousin Ethel as soon as Tom Merry did, though he had twice the distance to cover. Cousin Ethel greeted the juniors with her cheery smile.

"Ethel! So jolly glad to see you!" exclaimed Figgins, taking Cousin Ethel's bag.

Cousin Ethel was smiling brightly.

"It's such a pleasure to see St. Jim's again!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, it's ripping to see you here!" said Figgins. "Are you quite well now?"

"Perfectly, thank you!"

Lumley-Lumley came up slowly. Cousin Ethel turned to him with a smile, and took the hand he timidly held out. Lumley-Lumley coloured.

Having shaken hands with Ethel, he ventured to take her umbrella, which the girl relinquished to him with a smile.

The three juniors marched the girl off towards the School House.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was on the steps of the School House. "Bai Jove! It's Ethel! How do you do, deah boy—I mean, deah gal?"

Clang, clang!

It was the dinner bell.

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins. "I don't want any dinner! I—"

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"I'm going to see Mrs. Holmes now," she said. "I shall see you all after school, I suppose? Good-bye, now!"

And the girl went into the Head's house. She left the juniors looking very well satisfied with themselves and things generally.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, voicing the general sentiment. "It's wippin' to have Cousin Ethel here again, you know—simply wippin'!"

"What-ho!" said Figgins, with unconscious emphasis.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass rather coldly upon Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins, I don't see why you should be so enthusiastic about my cousin comin' here," he remarked. Figgins blushed.

A fat Fourth Former came springing across the quad, and he caught Figgins by the arm, and jerked at him, gasping for breath. It was Fatty Wynn of the New House.

"Dinner!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, hang dinner!" said Figgins peevishly.

Fatty Wynn stared at him.

"Great Scott! Are you ill, Figgy?" he exclaimed anxiously. Fatty Wynn could not understand any fellow being indifferent to his dinner unless he was ill.

Figgins snorted.

"No! Rats!"

"Come in to dinner, then," said Fatty Wynn, dragging him away. "There's boiled beef and carrots and dumplings—jolly good dumplings—you know what they're like. There's a plum pie to follow—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

And Figgins shook off Fatty Wynn's hand, and walked to the New House by himself, followed by the fat Fourth Former, in great astonishment. Kerr was waiting for them at the door of the New House.

"Buck up!" said Kerr. "Ratty will be down on you if you're late!"

"Oh, rats!"

Kerr stared.

"Cousin Ethel's come!" he said.

"What's that got to do with me?"

"Oh, nothing, of course!"

Kerr chuckled as he went into the dining-room. Figgins sat down at the table, with a very absent expression upon his face. But the chief of the New House juniors had a healthy boyish appetite, and he did full justice to the boiled beef and carrots, and to the plum pie afterwards—much to the relief of Fatty Wynn.

CHAPTER 3.

Tit for Tat!

AFTER dinner, Jerrild Lumley-Lumley came out on the School House steps. He looked out into the sunny quad. He could see in the distance several juniors chatting to Cousin Ethel at the gate of the Head's garden.

Lumley-Lumley would gladly have joined them, but a new diffidence was coming over the Outsider of St. Jim's. He stood on the steps, looking towards them for some time, and then turned into the House and went up to his study.

Lumley-Lumley's study in the Fourth Form passage was shared by Levison and Mellish. There was very little harmony in the study. Levison and Mellish were the black sheep of the Fourth, and when Lumley-Lumley had been of the same sort they had got on together very well indeed. Now they did not get on at all.

The two cads of the Fourth did all they could to make the study uncomfortable for the Outsider, and Lumley-Lumley often did his work in other fellows' studies in order to get away from his unpleasant neighbours. He was more often seen at work in Tom Merry's or Kangaroo's room, in the Shell passage, than in his own study.

Lumley-Lumley pushed open the study door and entered. A peculiar smell greeted him as he stepped into the study. He had expected to find the room empty, but Levison was there. Levison was standing at the table busily at work. There was a candle burning on the table, and Levison was melting sealing-wax in the flame. That, and the smell of charred paper, had made the scent that Lumley-Lumley noticed as he entered.

The cad of the Fourth was so occupied that he did not notice the entrance of the Outsider of St. Jim's.

Lumley-Lumley stood looking at him for a moment in astonishment.

Levison had several books on the table before him, and he was calmly and methodically sticking the leaves together with sealing-wax.

A dark frown knitted the Outsider's brow.

He recognised his own school books—books that he would need for use that day. The cad of the Fourth was playing one of the ill-natured tricks that he was never tired of inventing for the discomfiture of his enemies.

"You cad!" burst out Lumley-Lumley.

Levison started so suddenly that he let a chunk of melted wax fall upon his finger instead of upon the page he was sticking, and he uttered a yell of pain.

"Oh!"

He scratched the wax off quickly, and put his finger in his mouth, sucking it frantically.

Lumley-Lumley strode towards him with flashing eyes.

"You rotten cad!" he shouted. "What are you doing with my books?"

"Oh!"

"My hat! You've spoiled them all!" ejaculated the Outsider. "You miserable cad! I—"

Levison backed round the table. He did not like the Outsider's looks. He had not expected Lumley-Lumley to come into the study, and he was taken completely by surprise.

"I—I—" he began.

"You hound!" roared Lumley-Lumley. "You've stuck all the leaves together. If I hadn't come in and caught you, I suppose you would have worked it somehow to make it look as if somebody else had done it! You cad!"

"Look here—" began Levison.

"Put up your hands!"

Levison dashed round the table, and ran for the door. Lumley-Lumley caught him by the shoulder and swung him back. The cad of the Fourth crashed against the table, and it fell sideways.

There was a loud crash as the table shot over into the fender, and the books and the candlestick fell into the hearth in a shower.

Levison rolled on the floor of the study.

Lumley-Lumley was upon him in a moment.

"Let go!" gasped Levison. "I—I—"

"Keep still, you cad!"

Levison had no choice about keeping still. He was upon his back on the hearthrug, and Lumley-Lumley's knee was upon his chest, pinning him down.

The Outsider reached out for the candle, and lighted it.

Levison watched him uneasily, writhing under the heavy knee. Lumley-Lumley held the stick of sealing-wax to the flame.

"Wh-what are you going to do?" panted Levison.

"I'm going to serve you the same as you've served my books," said the Outsider.

"What! I—"

"If you don't keep still you'll get some of this on your face," said the Outsider. "You will be hurt!"

"Lumley—"

"Shut up!"

Lumley-Lumley dropped chunks of the melted sealing-wax on Levison's hair, sticking it together in locks.

The cad of the Fourth writhed wildly.

"You mad fool!" he yelled. "I shall never get that out! Let me go!"

"You'll get hurt if you struggle!"

"I—I—"

"Keep still! I guess you'd better!"

Levison thought he had better, too. He remained quiet under the knee of the Outsider, while Lumley-Lumley stuck his hair together with the sealing-wax.

It did not take the Outsider long. He was very liberal with the sealing-wax, extending it freely in sticking Levison's hair together in chunks.

The aspect of the cad of the Fourth was very peculiar when Lumley-Lumley had finished. His hair was in little tufts and bunches on his head.

Lumley-Lumley threw the remainder of the sealing-wax into the grate, and allowed the cad of the Fourth to rise.

Levison looked at himself in the glass, and gave a yell.

"Oh, you hound!"

Lumley-Lumley grinned.

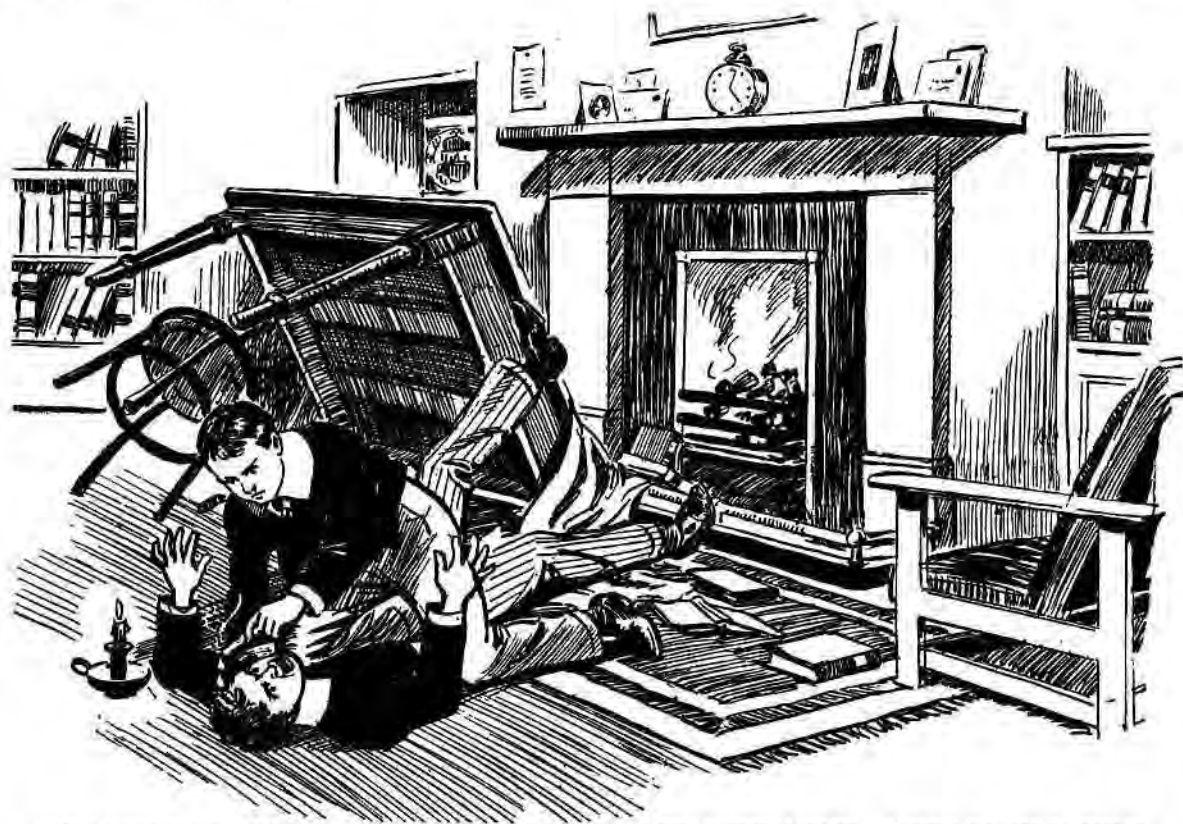
"Perhaps you'll be a bit more careful next time how you spread sealing-wax over a chap's books," he remarked.

"Now get out of this study!"

"I won't! I—"

"Won't you?"

Lumley-Lumley advanced upon him. Levison tore the



"I'm going to serve you the same as you served my books!" said Lumley-Lumley. Levison writhed as chunks of sealing-wax dropped on his hair, sticking it together in locks. "You mad fool!" he yelled. "I shall never get that out! Let me go!"

door open, and dashed out into the passage. There was a yell from some fellows who caught sight of him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get your hair cut!"

"What have you been doing to your hair, Levison?"

Levison pushed through the juniors angrily, and rushed away to a bath-room, where he turned on the hot water tap, and began to scrub at his hair.

The cad of the Fourth wrestled long with the sealing-wax. He scrubbed and scrubbed his hair, and he combed it and brushed it. But after all his efforts his hair was still stuck together in places, and when he came into the Form-room in the afternoon he presented a most peculiar appearance. Little Mr. Latham looked at him rather queerly, but made no remark. Lumley-Lumley looked at him, with a grin.

Levison ground his teeth as he caught the Outsider's eye.

"Wait a bit, that's all!" he muttered. "I know where to hit you now, and I can hit you hard! Just wait a little, that's all!"

But Levison didn't say that loud enough for the Outsider to hear.

CHAPTER 4.

Friends!

COUSIN ETHEL was walking in the Head's garden, some hours later, when the gate clicked, and she looked up, expecting to see her cousin, Arthur Augustus.

But it was not the swell of St. Jim's who entered. It was Levison of the Fourth.

Levison had his cap on now, concealing his extremely tuffy hair. He raised his cap about half an inch to Cousin Ethel.

Ethel gave him a cold nod.

She did not like Levison; she had never liked him. The hard, suspicious nature of the cad of the Fourth was not likely to appeal to her. But Levison had his most agreeable smile on now.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Cleveland!" he exclaimed.

"Good-afternoon!" said Ethel quietly.

Levison paused. It was perfectly clear that the girl did not want to speak to him, but Levison was insensible to

rebuffs. Besides that, he had a plan to carry out, and Cousin Ethel was necessary to it.

"Excuse me, Miss Cleveland!" he said slowly. "Will you allow me to speak to you for a few minutes? I have something rather important to say—important to me, I mean."

Ethel looked at him in surprise.

"Certainly!" she said. "Go on!"

"It's—it's about myself," said Levison diffidently.

"Yes?"

"I—I—I'm trying to make a bit of a change in some things," Levison stammered. "I know you don't like me, Miss Cleveland."

Ethel was silent.

"And—and I know it's my own fault," said Levison, biting his lips. "I haven't been all that I ought to have been. But—but I'm going to try to turn over a new leaf. Lumley-Lumley used to be much the same, but he's changed a lot—you must have noticed it."

"Yes," said Ethel.

"I think I could get into a better way, if—if I had someone to help me and back me up," said Levison. "Do you think so, Miss Cleveland?"

"Certainly!" said Ethel.

"Will you help me?"

"You have my best wishes," said the girl. "I don't see how I can help you."

"If Lumley-Lumley would back me up, it would be all right," said Levison. "He's in my study, and—and I like him, you know. We were always friends, but we've been on rotten bad terms lately; we had a row only this afternoon. I admit I was in the wrong and deserved all I got."

Ethel looked more kindly upon the cad of the Fourth.

"That is very frank of you, at all events," she said.

"You've got a lot of influence over Lumley," went on Levison. "If you'd speak a word or two to him, I believe we could become friends again, and he would back me up. A chap feels that he must have someone to back him up, and—and Mellish will drop me at once when he hears that I'm turning over a new leaf."

Cousin Ethel knew Mellish well enough to know that that was very probable.

It was not easy to believe that Levison was sincere. But Ethel remembered the ease of Lumley-Lumley. He had been more reckless and unscrupulous than Levison had ever been, and his reform was sincere enough. She resolved to give the cad of the Fourth the benefit of the doubt.

"If you'd speak to Lumley," said Levison hesitatingly, "I know he'd do anything that you suggested, Miss Cleveland."

"You mean what you say, Levison?"

"Honour bright!"

"Very well," said Ethel. "I will speak to Lumley-Lumley if you wish."

"Oh, thank you!" said Levison.

The cad of the Fourth raised his cap—half an inch—and quitted the garden.

Ethel remained in a very thoughtful mood. She was a simple, kind-hearted girl, and it was not difficult for a cunning fellow like Levison to deceive her. She felt very glad that Levison had seen the error of his ways, and that he was resolved to follow Lumley-Lumley's example, and turn over a new leaf. That was all.

"Ethel, deah gal!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's was dressed with more than usual care. Nothing could have exceeded the shine on his boots, excepting the glossiness of his silk hat.

He bowed gracefully to Ethel, and he raised the handsome topper. Lumley-Lumley had come into the garden with him, and he raised his hat, colouring as he met Ethel's gaze. Although the girl had forgiven him, the Outsider did not feel at ease in her presence. He longed for some opportunity of showing Ethel that he was different now, of proving to her that he was reformed, that he was different from his old self. But it did not seem likely that an opportunity would arise, and words weighed little.

"We're gettin' up a nice little tea in Tom Mewwy's study," D'Arcy said. "I've come to fetch you, Ethel. Figgins was coming, but I explained to him that it was not at all necessary, as I was bringin' Lumley with me."

"Yes, Arthur."

"Are you ready, deah gal?"

"Yes, quite."

"Pway allow us to escort you to the School House, then, deah gal. By the way, did I see that wottah Levison comin' out of the garden?"

"He has just been here," said Ethel.

"Bai Jove! The uttah wottah! I trust he has not ventuared to speak to you, deah gal?"

"Yes."

"The boundah! I'll give him a fearful thrashin'!"

"Don't you think you are, perhaps, rather hard on Levison, Arthur?" Cousin Ethel suggested gently.

D'Arcy shook his head.

"He is an uttah wottah, deah gal."

Cousin Ethel turned her eyes upon Lumley-Lumley as they walked out of the Head's garden into the quadrangle.

"Do you think so?" she said.

Lumley-Lumley coloured.

"I don't know," he said hesitantly.

"I wanted to speak to you about him," said Cousin Ethel in a low voice. "Arthur, will you go on and tell them I am coming?"

"Certainly, deah gal!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked on ahead. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley drew a quick breath. What did Ethel want to say to him? Before the girl could speak, the Outsider spoke himself, in a low, hurried tone.

"Miss Cleveland! I—I don't know whether I should speak about it, but—once I was very rude to you. Have you forgiven me?"

"Yes, yes," said Ethel.

"I ought to have been kicked," said Lumley-Lumley. "As a matter of fact, I was licked. I don't know how I could ever have been such a cad—and you were so good to me. But—but you believe that I am a different sort of chap now, don't you?"

"Yes," said Ethel.

"I hope to be able to prove it, sometime," said Lumley-Lumley. "I know that words aren't worth much."

"I believe you," said Ethel. "But perhaps you may have a chance of proving that you want to do good."

Lumley-Lumley gave her an eager look.

"What do you mean, Miss Cleveland? What can I do?"

"Levison has been speaking to me."

"Levison?" repeated Lumley-Lumley, puzzled.

"Yes. Levison is sorry for—for some things he has done, and he wants to be different. He thinks it would be easy for him if he had a friend to back him up," said Cousin Ethel quietly. "He wants you to help him."

"My hat!"

"Will you do it, Lumley-Lumley? I told him I would ask you."

"But does he mean it?" asked the Outsider incredulously.

"I think so."

The Outsider paused. He did not believe in Levison. His knocking about the world had given him an insight into character that Cousin Ethel was not likely to possess. But he was willing to give Levison a chance, and he was more than willing to do anything that Cousin Ethel might wish.

"If you want me to back him up, Miss Cleveland, I'll stick to him," he said. "We have been friends, though that's all been off lately. I'll help him, if I can."

"Thank you so much!"

They entered the School House and ascended the stairs to the Fourth Form passage. They had to pass Lumley-Lumley's study on the way to Tom Merry's room.

The door was open, and Levison was there. He stood in the doorway looking out, as Cousin Ethel came by with Lumley-Lumley. He gave the girl an inquiring look, and Cousin Ethel nodded brightly.

Levison stopped back into the study as the Outsider paused with Cousin Ethel. Ethel entered the study. She did not appear to notice the peculiar state of Levison's hair, though he was very conscious of it himself.

He had reduced it to something like order, but it was likely to be some time before it fully recovered from the effects of the sealing-wax. Lumley-Lumley followed Ethel into the study. He gave the cad of the Fourth a keen look, but Levison met his eyes calmly enough.

"I have told Lumley-Lumley what you said to me, Levison," said Cousin Ethel. "He is willing to be friends, if you are. You will shake hands with him?" she added, turning to the Outsider.

Lumley-Lumley paused for a moment.

Then he held out his hand to the cad of the Fourth.

"There's my fist, if you mean it, Levison," he said.

Levison took his hand.

"I mean it," he said.

"Good, then!"

And they shook hands.

"I'm so glad!" murmured Cousin Ethel, as she walked on to Tom Merry's study with the Outsider. "I am sure that Levison means what he says, and it will be a chance for him to prove that he is in earnest."

"I'm only too glad to have a chance of doing anything that you ask me," said Lumley-Lumley.

Ethel smiled, and they entered Tom Merry's study.

CHAPTER 5.

Tea In Tom Merry's Study!

TOM MERRY turned round a ruddy face from the fire as they entered.

It was a cold afternoon, and the early evening was creeping in, but the study of the Terrible Threes was very bright and cosy. Chairs borrowed from other studies formed an imposing array round the table, which had been increased in size by a large box being placed at the end of it, the tablecloth being spread over both the table and the box.

The table groaned, as a novelist would say, under the tempting viands.

There were a good many juniors in the study—a good many more than the junior studies were planned to hold. But the juniors had a marvellous way of stowing themselves away into a small space when they wanted to.

Figgins & Co. were there, and they had brought a substantial addition to the feed, specially selected at the school shop by Fatty Wynn, who was a connoisseur in that line.

When Tom Merry had invited Figgins to tea that evening the New House junior had given him a slap on the shoulder that almost dislocated it. It was Figgy's way of showing his appreciation. Figgins was beaming all over now, his face resembling a full moon, with satisfaction. Fatty Wynn was beaming, too. But it must in truth be confessed that Fatty Wynn was thinking more of the pork pies than Cousin Ethel.

Kerr was very cheerful because his chums were cheerful, and because he had been asked to bring his violin to give a tune after tea.

Kerr could play the violin: he could do almost everything, but he was splendid on the violin. He could not only play classical music, to which his chums sometimes listened in dutiful patience, but he could play all the latest dance tunes, which the juniors considered decidedly more clever.

Figgins and Wynn would sometimes listen to a musical masterpiece for a quarter of an hour, on condition that Kerr played them something jolly afterwards.

Tom Merry was making toast, and he had a complexion at the moment greatly resembling that of a freshly boiled

beetroot. Cousin Ethel smiled as she looked at him, and the hero of the Shell laughed.

"Jolly glad to see you!" he said. "It's good of you to come! How jolly to be having tea in the study again, isn't it, after such a long time?"

"Jolly, indeed!" said Cousin Ethel brightly.

"This is your chair."

Tom Merry placed Cousin Ethel in a chair between his own and Figgins'. Figgins had been opening a tin of sardines, but he immediately sat down, in case anybody else should take his chair by mistake. Such a mistake was very likely indeed to occur.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy raised his monocle to his eye and surveyed the table.

"That's all vewy well, Tom Mewwy," he remarked, "but where do I come in?"

"You came in at the door," Monty Lowther remarked, "and you'll go out by the window if you don't keep quiet!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Here's the toast," said Tom Merry cheerfully, "all finished and all ready. Pour out the tea, somebody."

"I'll pour it out, if Figgy will hand up the teapot," said Blake.

"Can't—without getting up," said Figgins affably.

"Get up, then, you slacker!"

"No fear!"

"Bai Jove! I will hand up the teapot with pleasual, Blake," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy innocently.

He stooped and caught hold of the teapot. Manners had made the tea, and left it in the grate near the fire to draw. Unfortunately, he had left the handle of the teapot towards the fire. D'Arcy raised the teapot quickly, but he let it go more quickly still.

"Ow!"

Crash!

The teapot crashed into many pieces on the hearth, and the swell of St. Jim's sucked his fingers. There was a sizzle from the fire as the tea splashed into it.

"You ass!" roared Tom Merry, forgetting that there was a lady present.

"You've wasted the tea!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy! Ow!" groaned D'Arcy. "The handle was hot. Some silly ass turned the teapot with the handle towards the fire! I've burnt my fingahs! Ow!"

"Oh, blow your fingers!" said Tom Merry.

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all right; there's another teapot," said Manners.

"I'll have fresh tea made in a jiffy. Keep fussy away from the teapot."

"Weally, Mannahs—"

Manners made fresh tea. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat down, looking very injured. Cousin Ethel gave him a sympathetic look.

"Are you much hurt, Arthur?" she said.

"Not at all, deah gal."

"You are looking very serious."

"I have stained my shirtcuffs," D'Arcy exclaimed. "It's howhid! I have novah, undah any cires, sat down to tea with soiled shirtcuffs before."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause whatevah for laughtah, Blake. Pway pass me some of the sardines, Digby."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy began his tea with great dignity.

It was some time since Cousin Ethel had had tea in the study at St. Jim's, and she enjoyed it, and Tom Merry & Co. enjoyed it too. Figgins enjoyed it probably more than anybody else. He seemed to eat hardly anything, his time being chiefly occupied in passing things to Cousin Ethel. If Ethel had eaten a quarter of the good things Figgins passed to her, she would certainly have rivalled the gastronomic performances of Sir John Falstaff or Fatty Wynn.

The whole party were in high good-humour. The juniors talked football and other things, Lumley-Lumley told a story of an adventure in the Bowery in New York, and Fatty Wynn explained at full length how Mrs. Taggles' pork-pies at St. Jim's excelled all other pork-pies in the world, not even excepting those of his native Wales.

Tea was over at last, everybody but Fatty being satisfied.

"Now that tea is ovah, I suggest a little music, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and there was an air of unusual determination about the swell of St. Jim's as he made the suggestion.

CHAPTER 6.

A Little Music!

TOM MERRY & CO. looked at one another. They had intended to have a "little music," certainly. But they did not intend to have any of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's tenor solos if they could help it. And that was undoubtedly what Arthur Augustus D'Arcy meant by "a little music."

"Good egg!" said Figgins heartily. "Let Kerr give us something on the fiddle. You'd like that, wouldn't you, Cousin Ethel?"

"Yes, indeed!" said Ethel. Ethel had a musical ear, and was a good pianist herself. She had sometimes had the pleasure of playing accompaniments for her cousin—or, rather, D'Arcy had had the pleasure. For on such an occasion that pleasure was all on his side.

"Play something jolly!" said Figgins, a little apprehensively. "None of your blessed classical stuff, you know. I know it's jolly clever, but what I like is a tune. Don't you agree with me, Cousin Ethel?"

Cousin Ethel laughed.

Kerr smiled as he opened his violin-case. Kerr was a clever fellow, but his cleverness was not tainted by "swank." He never even dreamed of scoring over fellows who knew less than he did.

"Right-ho!" he said.

Kerr drew the bow over the strings.

Young as he was, the Scottish junior seemed to have a complete mastery of that difficult instrument. Music flowed from the gliding bow.

Cousin Ethel listened to the piece he played from memory. That Cousin Ethel was enjoying it was clear, and that was the only reason that Figgins stayed awake. But Kerr compensated the juniors for that piece by bursting into a fantasy upon the music of "Carmen," and that bright and vivid music made the study ring with melody, and brought fellows from other studies along the passage to listen. The juniors were all disappointed when it ceased.

"Oh, ripping!" said Figgins, clapping his hands. "That's what I call music!"

"Splendid!"

"What is it from?" asked Figgins innocently.

"It's 'Carmen.'"

"Oh! Is that an opera?"

"Is it? Yes, it is, duffer!"

"Oh, all right!" said Figgins. "Keep your wool on! I like it immensely. I remember now, I know some of the tunes. Is it good music?"

"Of course it is—first rate."

"Oh, good! I thought good music always sent a chap to sleep, but that's lively enough," said the innocent Figgins.

"The composer of that music must have been a hard-working chap," said Monty Lowther, with the twinkle in his eye which hinted that one of his humorous efforts were coming.

"Why?" asked Kerr, looking at him.

"Because he was Bizet all his life."

"Buz? How do you know he was buz?" asked Blake.

"B-i-z-e-t!" spelled out Lowther. "Bizet! See?"

"No, I don't see."

"Bizet—buz! It's a pun, you ass!"

"Is it? Where does the pun come in?" demanded Blake obstinately.

"Yaas, wathah! Let Lowthah explain that."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Let's have some more," he said.

Kerr shook his head.

"I'm not going to fill up the whole programme," he said, "especially as Gussy is simply bursting to give us a tenor solo."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy turned pink.

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Blake. "Gussy isn't going to sing!"

"I am going to give you one of my solos, Blake."

"I didn't say you weren't. I only said you weren't going to sing."

"Weally, Blake—"

"There isn't a piano here," said Manners.

"And some chaps can't sing without an accompaniment," remarked Kangaroo.

"Some chaps can't sing at all," Digby remarked.

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But D'Arcy was already unfolding his music. He had not practised "Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes" for nothing. "Pewwaps Kerr will oblige with a violin accompaniment," he said.

Kerr murmured something under his breath. He had had some experience of playing accompaniments for D'Arcy. D'Arcy had as much idea of time as a clock that had stopped. He would begin and leave off exactly where the humour seized him, and if the music came in incorrectly he would look volumes of indignation at his unhappy accompanist.

"Oh, certainly!" said Kerr.
"Go it, then!" said Blake, in a resigned tone. "Make it prestissimo."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Order!" said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus cleared his throat. It did not need clearing, but D'Arcy always gave that peculiar little bark before he sang.

"Take a pair of sparkling eyes—"

"Hold on!" said Figgins. "Give Kerr a show!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"It's all right," said Kerr; "I'll come in when I get a chance."

"If it's a race," said Blake, "I think Kerr ought to have a couple of minutes' start."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take a pair of sparkling eyes,

Hidden ovah and anon

In a merciful eclipse."

Kerr manfully laboured to keep time. D'Arcy was going very quickly; but suddenly he slackened down, and the accompaniment went racing on past the voice. Kerr stopped.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye and gave the violinist a very severe look.

"Weally, Kerr, I wish you would be more careful!"

"My hat!" said Kerr.

"Pewwaps I could sing beftah without an accompaniment," said Arthur Augustus, with great severity. "I think I will twy."

"You can't sing worse, that's jolly certain!" murmured Lowther.

"What did you say, Lowthah?"

"Only that I'm enjoying it," said Lowther blandly. "Go ahead! This is what I like. It plunges a chap into dreamy ecstasies and things."

"Take a pair of sparkling eyes—"

There was a loud rap on the wall of the study from the other side. Then the door opened, and Gore of the Shield looked in.

"Is D'Arcy being murdered?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No," said Monty Lowther. "He ought to be, but he isn't!"

"Then, what's the matter with him?"

"Weally, Gore—"

"Oh, all right!" said Gore. "I thought Gussy was being hurt; that's why I looked in. I didn't know he was singing."

And Gore retired.

The juniors chuckled. Arthur Augustus frowned majestically. He was not beaten yet. As he had often explained to the juniors, a D'Arcy was never beaten. With the grimmest determination he sang that tenor solo through from beginning to end.

The study rang with applause when the amateur tenor had finished.

Arthur Augustus beamed upon his audience. He was under the impression that they were applauding him for the tenor solo, and it was quite a long time afterwards that it dawned upon him that they were pleased he had left off.

CHAPTER 7.

AFTER DARK!

LUMLEY-LUMLEY came into his study with a very cheerful look after the feed in Tom Merry's study.

Cousin Ethel had been very kind to him, and the Outsider knew that he had made his peace in that quarter. He felt kindly disposed even towards Levison and Mellish, and in that conciliatory temper he was more ready than usual to believe in Levison's desire to lead a new life.

Levison was in the study, sitting before the fire, with his hands plunged into his pockets, in an attitude of dejection. He did not look up as the Outsider came in.

Lumley-Lumley glanced at him, and crossed over and tapped him on the shoulder. Then Levison looked up.

"Anything the matter?" the Outsider asked, with unusual kindness in voice and look.

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Levison nodded.

"I hope it's not that row we had," said Lumley-Lumley. "I was wild at your sticking up my books in that way. I hope you've got your topknot clean."

Levison's eyes glinted. He was not likely to forgive or forget what he had suffered at the hands of the Outsider, though he had deserved it all. But he kept his face away from Lumley's face as he replied:

"Oh, that's all right!"

"I guess I'm sorry about it," said Lumley-Lumley.

"It's all right!"

"Something else the matter?"

"Yes."

"Well, can I help you in any way?"

Levison rose to his feet, and stood looking at the Outsider, his brows knitted, his hands in his pockets.

"I dare say you could help me if you liked," he said. "I don't know whether you would."

"I'll help you if I can," said the Outsider quietly.

"Cousin Ethel says you want to chum up with me again, and I'm quite willing, if you're in earnest about going straight. No more smoking, or breaking bounds, or going down to the Green Man—that's all I stipulate. It's a mug's game, anyway."

"I want to go straight, if they'll let me," said Levison.

"They! Who?"

"Did you find it easy to get away from Joliffe and his set?" demanded Levison abruptly. "Weren't they after you for a long time afterwards?"

Lumley-Lumley nodded.

"And it was easier for you, Lumley—you're rich, and you owed nothing!"

"Oh, I see! You owe Joliffe money?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

"I don't know exactly. He's got the papers I signed for it, and—and I was excited, playing like a fool!" said Levison. "He imagines I can get the money from my people. And so I could if I had time; but—but if I don't go to the Green Man again, they'll come down on me heavy!"

"I see," said the Outsider slowly.

"I'm going thro' to-night," said Levison.

"I guess you'd better not."

"Not to play—that's all over—but to try to make some arrangement with Joliffe. If I don't go, he will cut up rusty."

Lumley-Lumley looked searchingly at the end of the Fourth. He wondered how much of the truth Levison was telling. He had little doubt that Levison owed money among his rascally associates. Those sporting gentlemen did not make the acquaintance of a junior schoolboy for the pleasure of conversation with him. They made a good thing out of Levison, or they would have left him alone.

There was silence in the study for a few minutes. Lumley-Lumley was thinking it out, and Levison was watching him furtively from the corner of his eyes.

"I guess there's something in what you say, Levison," said the Outsider at last. "But I'd advise you not to go, all the same."

"I must go! But—"

"But what?"

"Will you come with me?"

Lumley-Lumley hesitated.

"I made up my mind never to go to that place again," he said.

"But it's not on your own account—it's on mine!" urged Levison. "You can talk to Joliffe and make him see reason. You know you could always handle him. He couldn't scare you as he does Mellish and me. You were always cool, and he was always a bit afraid of you. If you come with me, it will be all right; if I go alone, he'll take a high hand."

"I guess that's very likely."

"Will you come, then?"

"If I come and get it settled for you, Levison, will you promise to drop Joliffe, and never go to the place again?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"Yes."

"Honour bright?"

"Yes."

"Then I guess I'll do it. It's settled!"

"Thanks!" said Levison. "You won't be sorry for it, Lumley-Lumley."

Lumley-Lumley nodded.

Levison left the study, and Lumley-Lumley proceeded to do his preparation. But he could not wholly fix his mind upon his work.

The promise he had made to Levison weighed upon his mind.

After promising Cousin Ethel to help the end of the Fourth, after making friends with Levison, as he had done, he could hardly refuse to stand by him in this difficulty. But to go to the Green Man—

There seemed to be no other way out of it; but Lumley-

Lumley shrank from the prospect of meeting his old rascally associates again.

The disgust he felt at the idea was a proof of how much he had changed since those bad old days—not so long past, but which seemed a very long time ago to the Outsider.

Was there no other way of helping Levison?

Lumley-Lumley's thoughts ran more upon that subject than upon his work, and he was feeling very tired and worried when he finished.

He looked thoughtful and troubled as he went up to bed with the Fourth Form, and some of the juniors remarked upon it. Jack Blake tapped him on the shoulder in the Fourth Form dormitory.

"Still feeling the effect of Gussy's solo?" he asked sympathetically.

"Weally, Blake—"

"No," said Lumley-Lumley, laughing. "I'm all right."

"Wherefore that worried look, then?" asked Digby.

"Oh, it's nothing."

And Lumley-Lumley went to bed. But he did not sleep.

After lights had been turned out in the dormitory, Lumley-Lumley lay awake, listening to the clock striking the hours. One by one the juniors dropped off to sleep; but there were two in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House who did not close their eyes.

They were Levison and the Outsider of St. Jim's.

As eleven boomed out from the clock tower, Ernest Levison sat up in bed and called softly to the Outsider.

"Are you asleep, Lumley?"

The Outsider sat up.

"I'm awake," he said. "Is it time to go?"

"Yes."

"All serene!"

Lumley-Lumley stepped out of bed and dressed himself. Levison was dressing, and when they were finished they stole quietly to the door of the dormitory. Lumley-Lumley paused to put his coat on. It was a cold night. Outside, in the dormitory passage, they listened. A dim light glimmered up the staircase, but they did not go in that direction. They made their way to a back window overlooking an outhouse. It was a way out of the School House which the juniors sometimes used.

They reached the ground and stole round the School

House, and ran quickly across the quadrangle towards the school wall on the road. The moon was rising over the clock tower, and soft, silvery light glimmered upon the old quad of St. Jim's.

All was shadowy and silent in the quadrangle. Lumley-Lumley's pace slackened, and he looked about him. In his old reckless days his nerve had never failed him. His coolness had been equal to anything. But now it seemed to him that searching eyes looked from every shadow, and every moan of the wind seemed a footstep.

It was a relief to him when the moonlit quad was crossed and they climbed the school wall and dropped into the road.

"All serene now!" whispered Levison.

Lumley-Lumley did not reply.

With silent, set lips he tramped down the lane towards Rylcombe, and Levison followed him. And the moonlight showed a cold sneer upon the face of the ead of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 8.

A Startling Discovery!

"TAKE a pair of sparkling eyes—"

"My hat!" murmured Jack Blake sleepily.

Save for the glimmer of moonlight in at the high windows, the Fourth Form dormitory was in darkness.

Jack Blake sat up and looked round in the direction of Arthur Augustus' bed. In the unmistakable tones of the swell of St. Jim's came the words:

"Take a pair of sparkling eyes, hidden ever and anon—"

Blake could not help grinning. He had been startled at first; Arthur Augustus was mumbling over that famous tenor solo in his sleep.

"Gussy, you ass!"

"Take a pair—"

"Well, of all the giddy chumps!" said Blake, in disgust. "Blessed tenor solos in bed!"

He extracted his pillow from his bed and swept it through the air, with a really good aim considering that he could hardly see D'Arcy's bed in the gloom. It descended upon



As Lumley-Lumley's foot slipped on the wet plank it became dislodged from the stumps on which it was resting. The Outsider made a frantic leap to reach the bank, but it was in vain, and next moment he was plunging into the water.

the swell of St. Jim's with a loud squash, and there was a startled yell from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Owl! Yawooh!"

The swell of St. Jim's leaped up in bed. He was dazed by the sudden attack.

"Help!" he gasped. "Owl! Bai Jove! Yow!"

"Gussy—"

"Bai Jove! Is that you, Blake?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Owl! Somethin' stuvck me suddenly!" gasped D'Arcy. "I wathah think it fell fwom above! Do you think the woof is fallin' in, Blake?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Herries, sitting up in bed.

Two or three other fellows had been awakened also, and they wanted to know what was up.

"The ceiling's fallen on Gussy," said Blake. "He was singing a tenor solo in his sleep, and he's brought down the house at last!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Jump out of the window, Gussy, quick—before the clock tower falls on you!" suggested Digby.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! Upon second thoughts, I think it is pwoably not the woof that is fallin'. Howevah, I shall certainly see what it was."

And the swell of St. Jim's jumped out of bed and struck a match and lighted a candle. He held it up and surveyed his bed, and found Blake's pillow resting thereon. He stared at it in amazement.

"Bai Jove!"

"When you've done staring at my pillow you might return it to me," said Blake blandly. "It was a loan, not a gift."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake, did you hurl that pillow at me?"

"No; I clucked it!"

"I wegard you as an uttah ass! I—I was thwown into quite a fluttah—"

"You shouldn't bark tenor solos in your sleep, then!" said Blake. "I don't want to take a pair of sparkling eyes at midnight. Why can't you go to sleep quietly—just as if you were in your right senses?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Howly smoke!" exclaimed Reilly suddenly.

"Hallo! What's the matter with you, Reilly?"

"Look!"

The Irish junior pointed to two beds next to one another. They were empty. In the dim candlelight the juniors had not noticed the fact before. They stared at the beds.

"Lumley-Lumley's gone!"

"And Levison!"

"Bai Jove!"

"My only hat!" said Blake.

There was a silence of astonishment. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had picked up Blake's pillow to hurl it back, but now he tossed it back gently. It was no time for a row. The unexpected discovery of the absence of Lumley-Lumley and his chum turned the juniors' thoughts into quite a new channel.

"My hat!" exclaimed Herries. "The old game!"

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"Same old game!" said Hancock. "And I'm blessed if I didn't believe in Lumley-Lumley this time!"

Blake stared at the empty bed. He could hardly believe his eyes. He had fully believed in the reformation of Jerrold Lumley. He would have given his word to anyone that the one-time Outsider was as decent a fellow as any at St. Jim's. But now—

Where was he gone?

If he had been gone alone there might have been some chance that he was gone on some expedition that was innocent enough. But Levison had evidently gone with him. And the companionship of the cad of the Fourth proved that Lumley-Lumley's present exhibition was one that would not bear the light.

"The Green Man, of course!" said Digby.

Blake nodded.

"Is Mellish here?" asked Herries.

Mellish was awake and sitting up in bed. There was a very disagreeable sneer upon Mellish's face.

"Yes, I'm here," he said.

"Do you know where they've gone?" asked Blake.

"No, I don't!"

"I suppose you can guess?"

"I suppose you all can," said Mellish, with a sneer. "They have gone to the Green Man, of course, but they've left me out."

D'Arcy put the candle out and returned to bed. But it was a long time before the juniors slept. This new out-

break of the Outsider took them all by surprise. There were few who had doubted Lumley-Lumley's sincerity; but they had to doubt it now.

Blake was the only one who remained awake. He was determined not to sleep till the two black sheep of the Fourth came in. He meant to have a word with Lumley-Lumley before he went to sleep. He wanted to hear what the Outsider of St. Jim's had to say for himself.

Midnight tolled out from the clock tower.

Still the juniors had not returned.

It was half-past twelve when the door of the Fourth Form dormitory opened cautiously, and Blake heard faint footfalls in the darkness. He heard the door close, and the footfalls approach the row of beds.

He sat up, peering through the gloom.

"Is that you, Lumley-Lumley?" he asked clearly.

He heard a gasp of surprise.

It was some moments before the reply came. The Outsider of St. Jim's seemed to find it difficult to speak.

"I guess so!" came the answer, at last.

"And Levison?"

"Yes," came Levison's voice.

"Where have you been?"

"Mind your own business!" said Levison coolly.

Blake gritted his teeth.

"Will you tell me where you have been, Lumley-Lumley?"

"Yes, if you like," said the Outsider quietly. "I've been to the Green Man, Blake."

"Very well, that's enough!"

Blake lay down in bed again. Lumley-Lumley took a quick step towards him.

"Blake! It's not as you think. I—"

"You've said quite enough!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had awakened at the sound of voices. "I wegard you as a feahful blackguard, Lumley-Lumley!"

The Outsider set his teeth.

He did not speak another word, but went to bed. In the darkness a sneering smile played over Levison's pale face.

CHAPTER 9.

Under Suspicion!

TOM MERRY, Manners, and Lowther came downstairs arm in arm, while the rising bell was still clanging out in the clear, cold morning.

The Terrible Three were up early, intending to punt a ball about before breakfast, to get the cold out of their limbs—which was a better method than crouching over a fire. In the Lower Hall they came upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy polishing his eyeglass. They walked on, apparently oblivious of the fact that D'Arcy was just in front of them, and the swell of St. Jim's was pushed against the wall.

"Weally—" he ejaculated.

He jammed the monocle into his eye and surveyed the Terrible Three indignantly.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry, apparently in great surprise. "Is that you, Gussy? I thought I felt something in the way."

"So did I," remarked Manners. "Didn't you, Monty?"

"Yes," said Monty Lowther. "I thought it was an insect of some sort."

"I wegard you as asses! Undah the circs—"

"Where's Blake?" asked Tom Merry.

"He's not down yet."

"Not down yet?" exclaimed Tom Merry, shocked. "We can't allow these lazy habits to grow up in the Fourth Form, can we, you chaps?"

"Decidedly not!" said Lowther.

"Impossible!" said Manners.

"Let's go and have Blake out."

"Weally, you fellows—"

But the Terrible Three did not reply to D'Arcy. They returned upstairs again and marched into the Fourth Form dormitory. Most of the Fourth were up, and the rising bell had ceased to clang, but Blake and Levison were still in bed. They were tired after having lost so much sleep the previous night. But Lumley-Lumley was up; upon the face of the Outsider fatigue appeared to leave no mark.

The Terrible Three walked up to Blake's bed, and Tom Merry shook an admonitory finger at him. Manners and Lowther followed his example.

"Lazy!" said Tom Merry.

Blake blinked at him.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" he replied.

"You get up!"

"Buzz off, you Shellfish! What are you doing in a respectable dormitory, anyway?"

"We've come to wake you up!"

"Well, I'm awake, so— Yow! Yawooh!"

Blake and his bedclothes rolled out in a tangled heap on the floor, in the grasp of the Shell fellows.

"You clumps!" roared Blake, struggling up. "I'll—"

"Now, Levison!" said Lowther.
But Levison had jumped out of bed in time. Tom Merry looked severely at Blake.
"What do you mean by getting into these lazy habits?" he asked.

Blake rubbed his eyes.
"Oh, don't be an ass!" he said. "I'm not slacking. I was awake last night. Lumley-Lumley and Levison broke bounds, and I stayed up till they came in!"

Tom Merry started. He became grave at once as he turned to the Outsider of St. Jim's. The news was a shock to him, as it had been to Blake the previous night.

The Outsider of St. Jim's was very pale and quiet.
"I suppose you'll explain, Lumley-Lumley?" said Tom Merry. "I don't mean that it's any business of mine to question you, but I don't want to think that you've been taking us in all this time."

Lumley-Lumley coloured.
"I've not been taking you in," he said.
"Where did you go?"
"He's admitted going to the Green Man," said Blake.

"Oh!"
"Don't say a word, Lumley," said Levison. "It's no business of theirs. They have no right to question you." The Outsider of St. Jim's did not look at Levison.

"I did go to the Green Man," he said awkwardly. "We both went. But—but it was not the old game, as you think."

"What was it, then?"
"Can I tell them, Levison?"
Levison shrugged his shoulders.
"Tell them what you like," he said. "It's nothing to do with them."

"I went to speak to Joliffe about Levison," said Lumley-Lumley slowly. "Levison wants to break off with that gang, and I went to help him do it!"

Levison smiled a cynical smile. The juniors looked at him and they could only draw the conclusion from Levison's look that the Outsider was not speaking the truth. Lumley-Lumley was looking very red and confused. It was cruelly unfortunate that his expedition to the Green Man should have come to light in this way. He felt that he could not expect to be implicitly believed. In the old days he had shown unscrupulous disregard for the truth that could not soon be forgotten. And this was only too much like one of his old lies.

Tom Merry was silent.
"Don't you believe me?" asked Lumley-Lumley in a low voice.

The hero of the Shell did not answer. Manners turned to Levison.

"Do you bear out what Lumley-Lumley says?" he asked.

"Certainly!" said Levison carelessly.
"What's the good of asking Levison?" said Digby. "We all know that he can't tell the truth even if he tries, and he never does."

"I have told the truth," said Lumley-Lumley.
"I hope you have," said Tom Merry slowly.
"You don't believe me?"

"I'm blessed if I know what to believe. You can't blame me if I don't take your bare word," said Tom Merry.
"You know you've taken me in more than once."
Lumley-Lumley's head dropped a little.

"I know that!" he said.

The Terrible Three left the dormitory. There was a troubled expression on Tom Merry's face.

"What do you think, Tom?" Lowther asked at last.

Tom Merry shook his head.
"I don't know what to think," he said.
And that was the opinion of all the fellows who took any interest in the matter. They did not know what to think.

CHAPTER 10.

The Benefit of the Doubt!

LUMLEY-LUMLEY'S face was clouded in the Form-room that morning.

The Outsider of St. Jim's had received a heavy blow. It seemed that all he had been working for had slipped through his fingers, that the esteem he had built up with so much trouble and self-denial was gone in a moment. After his early record of recklessness and blackguardism and falsehood, a single breath of suspicion was sufficient to undo all that he had done—to cut away all that he had gained. For one slip made it only too probable that his supposed reformation was merely one of his deep schemes, and he had deceived Tom Merry & Co. so often, that they had no means of telling whether he had deceived them again, or whether he was in earnest, and the victim of circumstances.

(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.

TOO BAD.

Sergeant: "I understand you have a complaint to make about the eggs you had for breakfast?"

Private Binks: "Yes, sergeant."

Sergeant: "What was wrong with them?"

Private Binks: "They'd have made gorgonzola smell like eau-de-Cologne!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Bonner, Shaftesbury House, Bisley School, near Woking, Surrey.

A READY RETORT.

American: "I'll have you know that I belong to Chicago."

Englishman: "Oh! From the way you spoke I thought Chicago belonged to you!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to P. Mackinnon, 1, Palmer Street, Watson's Bay, Sydney, Australia.

THE RIGHT NUMBER!

"I say, Jim, think of a number."

"Right, Tom!"

"Double it and add twenty."

"Yes."

"Now halve it and take away the number you first thought of."

"Yes, I've done that."

"And the answer's ten."

"No, it isn't."

"What number did you first think of?"

"This week's number of the Gem! It's jolly fine; you ought to read it!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to K. Tipton, 14, Jackson Street, Broad Road, Sale, Manchester.

THE WRONG TIME.

The local pawnbroker was roused at 4 a.m. by a telephone call.

"What time is it?" asked a voice.

"What do you mean by ringing me up at this unearthly hour to ask the time?" snorted the pawnbroker.

"Well, you've got my watch!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss C. Smith, Ward 5, Pavilion 3, Mearnskirck Hospital, Renfrewshire.

TAKING A TRAMP.

Mrs. Jones: "Good-morning, Mrs. Brown! I see you are taking a tramp into the country."

Mrs. Brown: "Indeed! I'll have you know this is my husband!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Whitfield, Earsdon Grange, Earsdon, Northumberland.

SURE PROOF.

Gent (looking over house for sale): "Why is this window broken?"

Estate Agent: "Well, I have to prove that the house is within a stone's throw of the station!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Wilson, 57, Malde Hill Gardens, New Malden, Surrey.

WINGED WEALTH.

"Riches take unto themselves wings and fly away," quoted the teacher. "Now, what kind of riches do I mean?"

"Ostriches, sir!" responded a boy.

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Ray, Suite 6, Hugo Apartments, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

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It was the irony of fate that he should forfeit the general esteem through trying to do a good action.

The Outsider was not one to complain. He was under suspicion that was undeserved now; but he remembered his many misdeeds, and he realised that he was being punished for them. That was what it amounted to. Punishment had come after repentance. He had not expected that, but it had happened.

After morning school, Lumley-Lumley did not join the chums of the School House, as he usually did. He went out into the quad with a gloomy brow. Levison joined him there.

The Outsider glanced at him with distaste.

He did not, and could not, like Levison, though he did not suspect the cad of the Fourth of having planned his discomfiture. Lumley-Lumley was keen and suspicious enough, but he could not suspect even Levison of so much baseness.

"I'm sorry for this, Lumley-Lumley," said Levison.

The Outsider nodded.

"I suppose you couldn't help it?" he said.

"Of course I couldn't! But—I suppose you don't feel inclined to help me any further now?"

"I shall keep my word."

"Good!"

And Levison nodded and left him.

Lumley-Lumley walked under the old elms, with a gloomy brow.

The happenings of the previous evening had not been wholly satisfactory to Levison, either.

Levison had expected that when Lumley-Lumley found himself in his old haunts and saw the glimmer of money on the table, and the dealing of the cards, that he would join in the old game as if he had never deserted it.

But the Outsider had been firm.

He had gone to the Green Man to talk business with Mr. Joliffe, and he would do nothing else. The innkeeper had stated that he had not the papers at hand, but he would look them out. Lumley-Lumley was to call on the following afternoon to settle the matter. Mr. Joliffe's jolly evening could not be interrupted by matters of that sort.

There was no help for it. Lumley-Lumley had to agree or else abandon Levison's cause; and he had promised Levison to see him through.

As the afternoon was a half-holiday it would be easy for Lumley-Lumley to slip into the Green Man for a few minutes, or half an hour, and settle the matter. And that being agreed to, the Outsider had left with Levison.

But his promise weighed upon his mind now.

All the Outsider's old nerve seemed to be gone. What if the other fellows should learn that he was going to the inn that afternoon? What would they think?

But he could not break faith with Levison.

After all, it was not likely to come out. And it would be for the last time.

Tom Merry passed Lumley-Lumley as he was walking to and fro aimlessly under the elms.

The Shell fellow paused.

Lumley-Lumley's gloomy look did not escape him.

Whether Lumley-Lumley was despondent at being found out, or at being misjudged, Tom Merry did not know; but surely the Outsider was entitled to the benefit of the doubt.

Tom Merry came up to him frankly.

"Lumley-Lumley!"

The Outsider looked up.

"Well?" he said.

"Was that a straight yarn you told us this morning?"

"I guess so."

"I'll take it as one, then," said Tom Merry. "After all, you have a right to be believed, and I have no right to doubt you. Let us forget all about it."

The Outsider's face brightened up.

"You mean that?" he exclaimed.

"Yes. Let's forget all about it."

And Tom Merry, with a cheery nod, passed on—towards the Head's garden, where he was to see Cousin Ethel, to arrange something for the afternoon.

He left the Outsider with a much brighter face.

Levison looked curiously at Lumley-Lumley as the latter came into the School House. He could see that something had happened to cheer the Outsider.

"Was that Tom Merry speaking to you under the elms?" he asked.

"Yes," said Lumley-Lumley. "I wish I hadn't to go to the rotten place this afternoon, Levison! I was a fool to promise."

"You can leave me in the lurch if you like."

"You know I shan't do that, I guess," said Lumley-

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Lumley quietly. "I'll see Joliffe this afternoon, and fix up matters."

"Suppose he doesn't come to business?"

The Outsider's brow darkened.

"I can't go there again, Levison. If he won't come to business this afternoon, it will be only a trick to get me to go to the place again, and I won't go! We shall have to find some other way to settle with him."

"You're to be there at four, I think?" said Levison, changing the subject.

"That's right!"

"Very well. I'll meet you afterwards, and you can tell me how it has gone."

"All serene!"

And they parted.

CHAPTER 11.

Eye-Witnesses!

COUSIN ETHEL came through the gate of the Head's garden looking very bright and charming. The juniors were waiting for her in the quad.

There was quite a party of them. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had a firm conviction that it was impossible for Cousin Ethel to go anywhere without his guidance, had come out arrayed in his most gorgeous raiment. Figgins was there, of course, and so was Fatty Wynn. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther and Blake made up the rest of the party.

Cousin Ethel had mentioned that she was going to do a little shopping in Rylcombe, and the juniors had done the rest. They seemed to be bent upon making an expedition of it.

The girl nodded cheerily to the juniors.

"Quite weady, Ethel?" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I suppose we are goin' to walk to Wylcombe?"

"A walk will be very nice in the cold weather," said Ethel.

Tom Merry glanced round for Lumley-Lumley, but he did not see him.

"Lumley's gone out," Manners remarked.

"Oh, I was going to ask him to come with us!"

"Ye-es," said Blake hesitatingly. "However, he's gone out! Come on!"

Levison was standing in the gateway. He raised his cap to Cousin Ethel.

"Have you seen Lumley?" he asked.

"Gone down to the village, I think," said Manners.

"I think I'll stroll down and look for him," said Levison.

"Very well!" said Tom Merry shortly.

As they were all going down to the village at the same time, it was impossible to raise any objection to the cad of the Fourth joining the party.

Levison walked with them, apparently quite unconscious of the fact that his company was not regarded as desirable.

Figgins and D'Arcy were walking on either side of Cousin Ethel, and Levison came behind Tom Merry. Tom Merry was talking football with Lowther, but Levison was not easily rebuffed.

"Have you any idea where Lumley-Lumley has gone?" he asked.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I am anxious about him. I suppose you know that we're friends again now?" said Levison. "Only—" He paused.

"Yes?" said Tom Merry indifferently.

"Well, I don't quite know what to make of Lumley-Lumley," said Levison. "Cousin Ethel made it up between us; she knew that I wanted to do what Lumley's supposed to have done—to turn over a new leaf."

"Well?"

"And the first thing Lumley did was to take me down to the Green Man again," said Levison. "Of course, I'm telling you this in confidence."

"I don't want your confidence!" said Tom Merry abruptly. "Do you mean to say that Lumley was not telling the truth when he said that he was going there on your account?"

"I don't want to say anything against Lumley, as we're friends now—"

"Was he telling the truth or not?"

"I'm bound to back him up, of course!"

"That means that he wasn't," said Lowther.

Levison looked uneasy.

"I'm anxious about him," he said. "Of course, I imagined that he was in earnest about his reforming. If I had known that he was humbugging, I shouldn't have made it up with him. I'm sick of that set at the Green Man, and I want to get clear of them. I've told Lumley-Lumley so as plain as I can. I can't help suspecting that he's gone there this

(Continued on page 14.)

YOUR EDITOR AWAITS YOU WITH MORE 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! Once again I wish you all the very best for a jolly Christmas. I hope it will be the brightest Yuletide you have ever had.

Readers will be pleased to know that the next number of the GEM will be on sale in time for the holidays. Make a note of the date to remind you—it appears on Monday, December 24th. So you can all enjoy your GEM over Christmas.

"D'ARCY'S DOUBLE!"

This is another ripping St. Jim's yarn, featuring Tom Merry & Co., and Gordon Gay & Co., of the Grammar School. Naturally, when these old rivals get to grips, the fun is fast and furious. The St. Jim's chums set the ball rolling by ragging three of the Grammarians, but Gordon Gay, a clever impersonator, hits back in no gentle fashion. Yet Gay's amazing jape on St. Jim's is to have unfortunate consequences for poor old Gussy, who proves once again that beneath his dandified exterior beats a heart of gold. This grand story will hold your interest throughout.

"HANDFORTH THE GHOST-HUNTER!"

In the next chapters of our popular Christmas serial the chums of St. Frank's have a great time at the masked ball on Boxing Day at Handforth Towers. Handy, of course, is well in the limelight, and causes no end of fun. All the guests keep their fancy dresses a secret, but Handforth boasts that he will soon pick out Irene Manners from the other girls; so a little surprise is prepared for him, with highly amusing results.

Another tip-top number of "Tom Merry's Weekly," the GEM Jester's

prize laughs of the week, and our other usual features, complete another grand issue of the Old Paper. Watch out for it, chums, next Monday.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

Any of you fellows got "Christmas present headache" yet? It's caused by puzzling over what answers to give to the friends and relations who ask what you'd like for Christmas! The trouble is, you can't have all the things you want, and you can't make up your mind just what you can best do without. Is this your difficulty, too? Then why not ask for a copy of "EVERY BOY'S HOBBY ANNUAL," the book which tells you how you can make all those things you want—model railways, model planes, electric motors, boats, and so on? Besides, it's half the fun of model-owning to know that you made the model yourself!

NEGLECT OF DUTY!

The golfer's first duty is to replace any turf chipped out of the fairway in taking a shot. This is a rule that all golfers are familiar with, and if an American named Michaels had remembered it, he probably would not be where he is to-day. He went to a public course at Long Beach, California, for a round of golf. He fixed up a game with a stranger, and during the course of it, he scooped out a large piece of turf in taking a masbie shot. But, instead of replacing it, Michaels carried

on with his game. The stranger eyed him keenly, but said nothing. Thoughts were working in his mind, however, and after the game, Michaels was followed home, where he was arrested on a charge of holding up a railway station. His late opponent happened to be a police detective, whose suspicions of Michaels had first been aroused by the crook's negligence in not replacing the piece of turf!

"SANTA CLAUS" CHIMNEYED.

It will be a long time before Martin Sloane, a nine-year-old Melbourne boy, plays at "Santa Claus" again with his friends. Martin was Father Christmas, and, of course, he had to perform the duties of the legendary character in the approved style—by coming down the chimney to leave his gifts. But unfortunately for Martin, he underestimated his own girth, and the chimney would not take him. He got wedged! Help was called, but he could not be freed. At last, as the only means of releasing Martin, part of the chimney had to be dismantled, and it was a sadder, wiser and much-begrimed "Santa Claus" who eventually came out of the chimney.

PITY THE POOR PRO.

For most of us Christmas means plum pudding, turkey, and other good things to eat, but to the poor professional footballer these luxuries are barred. He's got to keep fitter than usual over Christmas, for nearly all League clubs have heavy programmes to meet. This Yuletide, four strenuous games have to be played in a week, and that means long train journeys for most teams when we are enjoying our Christmas dinner. For instance, Brentford are one of the unlucky teams this season in regard to the geographical position of their fixtures. They are in Sheffield to meet the United on the Saturday before Christmas. Christmas Day they are at home to Plymouth, while on Boxing Day they are right down in Devon for the return fixture with the Argyle. Then on the following Saturday they are due at Norwich. In all, the Brentford team will travel a thousand miles in the week! Pity the poor pro at Christmas.

TAILPIECE.

Christmas Visitor: "I hear, Tommy, that your father gave you the money to buy him and your mother Christmas presents. What did you buy them?"

Tommy: "I bought them the presents they refused to buy me—a trumpet, drum and cymbals, and a whistle!"

THE EDITOR.

PEN PALS COUPON

22-12-34



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.

Miss Peggie Cunningham, 150a, Leinster Road, Rathmines, Dublin, wants girl correspondents; age 18-20; stamps, etc.
James Allen, Shaftesbury House, Bisley School, near Woking, Surrey, wants a pen pal in Africa, Australia, or India; age 12-14; swimming, cricket, stamps.

Billie Lloyd, Albemarle Hotel, Marino Parade, Brighton, wants correspondents; age 13-15; South Africa, New Zealand, Leicester, London, Manchester, etc.

Miss F. Cant, 45, Rogers Road, Dagenham, Essex, wants girl correspondents outside of England; stamps, newspaper

cuttings; also wants to hear from those who have made a hobby of old GEMS and "Nelson Lees."

Miss Nancy Fitzgerald, 23, McCurtain Street, Cork, Ireland, wants girl correspondents; age 12-14; Africa, America, China, Japan.

II. Hughes, 35, Ridge Hill Lane, Stalybridge, Cheshire, wants correspondents; age 16-10.

Tom Smith, 1980, Morris Avenue, Bronx, New York, U.S.A., wants to hear from stamp collectors; especially Dominions; age 15-20.

Roy Findlay, 42, Avoca Street, Bondi, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents interested in cricket and photos of cricket; age 13-15.

Miss B. Wilson, 22, Netherby Street, Longtown, Cumberland, wants girl correspondents; age 15-19.

Miss J. Randall, Bush Hotel, Longtown, Cumberland, wants girl correspondents interested in botany and football; age 18-19.

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The Outsider's Enemy!

(Continued from page 12.)

afternoon. If he has I shall have nothing more to do with him!"

"Nor I," said Tom Merry quietly.

"Same here!" said Blake emphatically.

"I don't know what to think," said Levison. "He went out quietly, without telling me he was going. I don't see what he's in the village for at all, if it's not for that. I wish I knew the facts!"

Tom Merry was silent.

The village clock chimed out the hour of four over the trees. It was a quarter-past when the juniors entered the village.

They passed the Green Man, and all the juniors glanced towards it. They could not help wondering whether Lumley-Lumley was at that moment within its walls. Cousin Ethel noticed the dark shade upon Tom Merry's face, and she paused.

"Is anything the matter?" she asked.

"Not exactly," stammered Tom.

"Only—"

"Yes?"

"I don't see why you shouldn't know," said Tom Merry slowly. "Levison thinks that Lumley-Lumley is in the inn yonder, and he says that he is anxious about it."

Ethel's fair face clouded.

"Surely it is impossible!" she said.

"Lumley-Lumley gave up that kind of thing a long time ago."

Levison nodded.

"I'm anxious about him," he said.

"Look here!" said Figgins. "If the fellow's there he ought to be yanked out! I'll go in and see, if you like, if you'll wait for me."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry hesitated.

"I don't know—" he began.

Levison uttered an exclamation.

"Great Scott! Look!"

He pointed to a figure that was leaving the public-house. There was no mistaking it. It was Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

The Outsider was coming away from the place with a downcast expression on his face, his eyes on the ground.

Cousin Ethel turned pale.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy.

Tom Merry's face was gloomy. It was a shock to him, as well as to Cousin Ethel.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley passed on.

He was tramping off gloomily in the direction of the school. For a moment Levison's eyes blazed. Then he was quite indifferent again.

"What do you think now?" he muttered.

"I am very, very sorry for him," said Cousin Ethel softly.

But the juniors did not share her feelings in that respect.

They did not feel sorry for Lumley-Lumley. They felt angered at having been deceived by the Outsider of St. Jim's.

"Oh, come on!" said Tom Merry at last.

They walked on into the village.

But the pleasure of the afternoon was spoiled. Cousin Ethel was very silent. The juniors tried to think of something else, but the treachery of the Outsider was in their minds all the time.

Levison quitted the party, and that was some relief.

But there were still clouded faces.

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No. 45. Vol. 1. (New Series.)

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther
Calling



Hallo, everybody! As the fag remarked, gazing at the array of medicine bottles at his bedside: "It was a ripping Christmas!" A performing goose was a big success in the Wayland pantomime. Some people couldn't say "Boo!" to a goose! Mr. Railton recounts how a party in the Alps got lost through not obeying their guide's instructions. They didn't quite "follow" him! The path got "glacier" and "glacier," until they simply had to let everything "slide"! Crooks will tip a confederate the wink by sneezing, I hear. A "code in the nose"! Do you know how to make a Swiss roll? Just push him down a hill! Skimpole says he has just had a letter from a correspondent in Athens—but it's Greek to him! Wally D'Arcy says he dislikes French beans. They "Gaul" him! Spanish onions, too, bring tears. Spaghetti, he also asserts, "ties him up in knots." "How do you like your food at Christmas?" I asked Fatty Wynn. "In large quantities!" answered Fatty. Did you hear about the Scot who wanted to get his wife a present, so he bought a gramophone, a gramophone needle—and a sharpener! A Rylcombe centenarian says eating honey ensures longevity. The "sweets" of life! Have you heard this one? "How will you find the way to Spain, captain?" asked the old lady on a cruise. "By compass, ma'am—the needle always points to the north." "Yes, I know that," said the old lady, "but I thought Spain lay to the south!" The Wayland Grocers' Band played through a whole concert without collecting a sou. Band—but no "brass"! Talking money, an actor acquaintance of mine has been left £10,000. A good "roll" at last! "What do you think of these mushroom houses that keep springing up?" asks a reader. Not "mush room" in them, old chap! A resident in a Wayland suburb complains that his house is damp. Too much "dew" on it, perhaps! Heard this one: "It's a long journey," said the Englishman, feeling bored. "And so it ought to be, considering the railway fare!" snapped the Scotsman. Closing down: "See here," said the park-keeper to the tramp on the seat, "we're closing the gates now!" "All right," nodded the tramp, "don't slam them!" Cheerio, chaps!

CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER

Can you read this puzzle sentence?

EEE and xxx UR XXI.
XXX and eee.

Solution:

Great ease and little crosses before you are
twenty-one. Great crosses and little ease

SURPRISE DEFEAT OF SAINTS

By Jerrold Lumley-Lumley

Fulfilling an Eastwood League engagement against Redclyffe, St. Jim's lacked the services of Harry Noble at centre-half. Gley deputised. Saints led off in brilliant fashion, putting on two goals before the interval through Merry and Blake. On the resumption, however, Redclyffe employed long passing tactics, and Saints were for a period overrun. Judd netted twice in quick succession, and Beauvais headed a lucky goal. Then a slip by Wynn caused Kerr to leap into the goalmouth in a desperate effort to boot the ball clear—but to his chagrin he booted it straight into his own goal! Returning to the attack St. Jim's looked likely to level the scores, D'Arcy and Blake going very close. Lowther netted, but other marksmen were particularly unfortunate. The final result in Redclyffe's favour was not a true reflex of the play—but Tom Merry was the first to congratulate Judd on an enterprising display.

TOO MANY SHOTS IN BAGSHOT

By Clarence Fellowe (the Rhyming Reporter)

'Gainst Bagshot School, by Pankley led St. Frank's felt sure when all was said 'twould be an easy victory—by one goal, two, or even three. A smart surprise, though, was their lot, for Bagshot gave it to them! A goal by Pankley brought on fast a bit of collapse—we stood aghast! The lofty Pankley, for the nonce, had found his form—St. Frank's response came late, for though a brace of goals were garnered, St. Frank's gallant souls laboured in vain to turn the tide. A sporting game—let's not deride!

FULL RESULTS.

ST. JIM'S ..	3	REDCLYFFE
Merry, Blake, Lowther		Judd (2), Beauvais, Kerr (through own goal)
ST. FRANK'S ..	2	BAGSHOT ..
Nipper, Watson		Pankley (3), Putter, Poole
HIGHCLIFFE ..	7	ST. JUDE'S ..
ROOKWOOD ..	1	GREYFRIARS ..
RYLCOMBE G.S. ..	4	CLAREMONT ..

LEAGUE TABLE.

	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	A.	Pts.
Greyfriars ..	12	8	3	1	53	18	19
St. Jim's ..	12	8	2	2	61	26	18
St. Frank's ..	12	8	2	2	48	27	18
Rylcombe G. S. ..	12	7	3	2	39	29	17
Highcliffe ..	12	7	2	3	38	18	16
Rookwood ..	12	6	3	3	38	27	15
River House ..	11	4	4	3	28	21	15
Abbotsford ..	11	4	0	7	15	30	8
Bagshot ..	12	2	3	7	14	28	7
Redclyffe ..	12	2	2	8	17	53	4
Claremont ..	12	1	1	10	16	61	1
St. Jude's ..	12	0	3	9	9	42	1

Tom Merry's Weekly



Week Ending December 22nd, 1934.

THE SECRET OF THE RED ROOM

Tom Merry & Co. Find—What?

"Of course, it is only a legend," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "but it is a remarkable fact that nobody has ever entered the mysterious Red Room on Christmas Eve!"

"And the legend says that if they did, they would see the ghost of Sir Brodrick de Brimstone D'Arcy?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Sir Brodrick D'Arcy was a pretty villainous old scout," said Gussy quietly, "and he came to a bad end over a quarrel with another feudal lord. Sir Brodrick was supposed to have been killed in the Red Room on Christmas Eve—and from what we hear it was no more than he deserved. Even we have had a few black sheep, you know!"

"Come on—it's Christmas Eve to-night!" said Tom Merry eagerly. "Let's put the matter to the test once and for all. Who's ready to lay the jolly old ghost?"

Nobody before the warm log fire in the hall of Eastwood House answered. Outside, the wind howled dismally around the old building, while the distant crack of a breaking tree branch made them all start. Snow was falling rapidly in the darkness. Though none of the juniors really believed in ghosts, the legend of Sir Brodrick D'Arcy, scoundrel as he undoubtedly had been, had thrilled them. What was the uncanny secret of the Red Room, which D'Arcys for generations had failed to solve?

"Well," reiterated Tom Merry coolly, "who's with me?"

"All right!" said Lowther. "Who's afraid of a big bad ghost, anyway?"

"Not me," snapped Blake. "If I see him, I'll give him a Yorkshire clout on the ear!"

"Bai Jove," put in D'Arcy, "you'll have a job to do that, Blake—the legend says Sir Brodrick carried his head in his hand!"

"Goo—shut up!" grunted Herries. "I'll bring old Towser, my bulldog!"

It was a subdued little party which ascended the wide staircase to the mysterious Red Room, situated in the west wing. Herries' bulldog Towser accompanied them, but even Towser did not seem too keen on the trip. For once, he held behind.

Before the big oak door of the Red Room D'Arcy stopped.

"This is the Red Room!" he said, amid a hush.

With a firm hand, D'Arcy unlocked the door. He pushed, but it remained fast. Several of the party put their shoulders to it.

"Did you hear that?" ejaculated Digby suddenly. "A scuffling noise!"

The juniors stopped, listening, their hearts beating faster.

"Put your shoulders to it!" rapped Tom Merry. "We'll get to the bottom of this!"

Seven juniors heaved with all their strength. The door quivered, groaned—and gave way suddenly. With an echoing crash it struck the wall as it flew open. Seven juniors gazed wide-eyed into the musty darkness. Their eyes dilated as there was a scurry and fluttering. They almost expected to see the ghost

FIRST HOUSE SHIELD MATCH

The Best (Snow) Men Win

By Fatty Wynn

Every year we play three special House matches to decide who is to hold the House Shield, and the first match of the series was played at Eastwood House during the holidays. We had all been hoping for a big fall of snow, but we didn't bargain for it on the very morning of this footer match! It began snowing before dawn, and continued unabated all the morning. By twelve o'clock the football field resembled the snowy wastes of Northern Alaska more than a pitch. Tom Merry offered to postpone the game, but Figgins suggested setting to work to clear the snow away from the lines so that the game could be played. This was agreed to, and by the time for the kick-off the pitch was ready.

Winning the toss, Merry elected to kick with the wind. Accurate football with over a foot of snow to stumble and slither in was an impossibility, but both teams played up desperately to win the first of the House Shield games, despite the snow. Figgins got away early, ploughing his way valiantly through the snow till he reached the School House penalty area. Figgy neatly side-stepped a defender, who sprawled face downwards in the snow—and let drive. Herries touched the ball, but no more. It was the first goal—for the New House!

Tom Merry & Co. made great efforts to equalise, and in goal I soon experienced a busy time. Figgins has unlimited confidence in my abilities between the sticks, but I was hard put to it to fulfil his confidence in me. I hardly saw a shot from Gussy which whizzed in from the wing and nearly beat me. I just tipped it round the post—thank goodness! When Digby took the corner kick, I had no idea where the ball was until it hit me amidships, hot from Tom Merry's foot! Though nearly winded, I succeeded in throwing it clear, and Figgins himself led a New House attack which relieved me.

In the second half Tom Merry levelled the scores with a really fine shot, but Figgy went through and gave us the lead again. The end came with the School House forwards besieging my citadel like ravening wolves. But we held out and won 2-1, and we of the New House are more than satisfied!

of Sir Brodrick D'Arcy towering before them, head in hand. Next second, two gleaming eyes swooped at them, glowing and fierce—to the accompaniment of a blood-curdling screech. Something whizzed just over their heads—whereat Tom Merry gave a yell.

"An owl!"

"Bai Jove, yaas—an owl!"

It was with considerable relief that the juniors realised that the only occupant of the Red Room was an old owl, which probably had its nest in the chimney. Of the fabled ghost of Sir Brodrick de Brimstone D'Arcy they saw nothing—but nobody was really sorry about that!

among Tom Merry & Co. when they returned to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 12.

On Trial!

"WHO'S going to make the toast?"

"Gussy had better do that," said Blake, as he stretched his limbs in the comfortable armchair in Tom Merry's study, an hour or so after the return from Rylecombe. "Gussy makes toast splendidly."

Arthur Augustus looked pleased.

"Do you weally think so, Blake, dear boy?" he asked.

"Yes, rather," said Blake blandly. "I never knew a chap make toast as you do. Tommy can cut the bread, and you can make the 'toast, and Lowther can butter it."

"Bai Jove! And what are you going to do?"

"I can eat some afterwards."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "Here's Figgins & Co.!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn came in. Fatty Wynn had a beaming smile upon his face, and a big parcel in his hand.

"Some of Mrs. Taggles' steak-and-kidney pies," he said confidentially.

"They're ripping, you know. I'm sure Cousin Ethel would like some."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Oh, good!"

"All of us here?" asked Kerr. "No; where's Lunley-Lunley?"

Tom Merry's face clouded over.

"He's coming, isn't he?" asked Kangaroo.

"Well, I asked him yesterday, when it was arranged that Cousin Ethel was to have tea with us again," said Tom Merry slowly.

"Then he'll come?"

"I—I suppose so."

"Anything wrong with Lunley-Lunley?" he asked. "I understood that you were going to give him the benefit of the doubt about his little trip with Levison last night?"

"There's something since then."

"Oh, I see!"

"He was at the Green Man this afternoon," said Tom Merry. "We saw him coming out—and Cousin Ethel saw him, too. She knows—as well as us."

The Cornstalk gave a low whistle.

"That's rotten!" he said.

"Yes. I—I hope he'll have the decency to keep away," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, looking up with a glowing face from making toast. "If he has the cheek to intrude himself upon my cousin I shall speak to him vewy plainly."

"Hush!"

"Weally, Tom Merry—"

Cousin Ethel looked in at the door. Lunley-Lunley was with her. They had met in the passage, and had come along together. Cousin Ethel was greeted warmly; but no one spoke a word to Lunley-Lunley.

"Hallo! Gussy being industrious, for once!" said the Outsider cheerfully. He was feeling very cheerful.

He had finished with Mr. Jolliffe. He had paid over hard cash for the papers signed by Levison, and had burned them in the grate in Mr. Jolliffe's own room. Levison was clear of debt to the inn-keeper. Lunley-Lunley's enforced connection with the rascally place was ended. No wonder the Outsider felt in great spirits.

But there was a chilling atmosphere in the study which could not escape him.

He looked from one to another of the juniors. No one met his eyes.

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(Continued at the foot of next column.)

Cousin Ethel looked pained. She did not want to speak to Lumley-Lumley—his supposed treachery revolted her—but she could feel for him in his present position.

"What's the matter?" said the Outsider abruptly.

There was no reply.

"What has happened?" asked Lumley-Lumley, his face flushing. "Can't you speak? Is it what happened last night? I've explained that, and Tom Merry himself said that it was to be forgotten—that he would take my word. Are you raking it up again, after that?"

"No!" said Tom Merry.

"Then what is it?"

The captain of the Shell looked him squarely in the face. "You know what it is," he said. "You've been taking us in! You've deceived us and deceived Cousin Ethel! You've lied all the time!"

"How? What do you mean?" asked Lumley-Lumley hoarsely.

"Have you been to the Green Man since last night?"

"The—the Green Man?"

"Oh, I won't catch you!" said Tom Merry scornfully. "I don't want you to lie. We saw you there this afternoon!"

Lumley-Lumley staggered. He caught at the edge of the table. It was as if he had received a knockdown blow. Angry and contemptuous as they were, some of the juniors could not help feeling a twinge of pity for him at that moment.

"You saw me?" muttered the Outsider.

"Yes—half a dozen of us—and Cousin Ethel. It's impossible to take us in again, Lumley. You'd better go!"

Lumley-Lumley looked at Cousin Ethel.

The girl stood with averted eyes.

"I—I—" The Outsider stammered thickly. All his nerve seemed to be gone now. His voice was broken and hoarse. "Tom Merry! Cousin Ethel! I can explain!"

"Oh, you could always explain things!" said Jack Blake. "I remember you were never at a loss for that!"

"But—I can explain!" stammered the Outsider. "I didn't mean to tell you—I was afraid you would misjudge me. But—but I went to the Green Man for a good reason."

"Oh, stuff!"

"Don't tell any more yarns, Lumley! Can't you see you're bowled out?" said Tom Merry impatiently.

"Let him explain, if he can," said Cousin Ethel softly.

Cousin Ethel's word was law in Tom Merry's study.

"Very well; go ahead, Lumley."

"Yaas, wathah! Well out the whoppahs!" said Arthur Augustus sarcastically.

Lumley-Lumley breathed hard and quickly. He realised how much was at stake now.

"I went there," he said huskily. "It's true—I was there—I went there to see Joliffe. It was about some papers he had of Levison's."

"The same yarn as last night," said Blake, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Yes; last night Joliffe wouldn't come to business. Don't you see—he wanted me to come again, the rotter. But this afternoon I told him it was for all—I—I settled the claim he had on Levison and he handed over the papers!"

"To you?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes."

"Then you can show them to prove what you say,"

The Outsider groaned.

"No; I burned them in the grate there—it was agreed between Levison and me that they should be destroyed at once."

Unbelief was written on every face.

"It's too thin," said Kangaroo.

"Levison will bear me out!" said the Outsider hoarsely. "We're friends again, and it was because of that that I tried to get him out of Joliffe's clutches. He'll tell you that what I've said is true. He owed Joliffe fifteen pounds, and I've settled it."

"And Levison knew you were going there for that purpose?"

"Yes; it was all arranged."

Tom Merry looked at him in wondering scorn.

"Well, Levison tells a different story, that's all," he said. "Levison came down to the village with us this afternoon, and he told us he was anxious about you, because he was afraid you were going to see Joliffe."

"But—I don't understand," muttered the Outsider thickly. "I—I can't believe that Levison said anything of the sort. I'm sure he won't say so before me. I'll fetch him—"

"And arrange a little comedy with him," said Digby.

"You fetch him, then—I'll stay here. Look here, give me fair play!" shouted the Outsider. "Let Levison say that before me and I'll give in! But he won't!"

"Very well!" said Tom Merry at once. "Some of you fellows go to find Levison, and bring him here."

Two or three of the juniors left the study. Lumley-Lumley

remained standing by the table, grasping the edge of it with his hand. There was a grim silence in the study as the juniors waited for the coming of Levison.

CHAPTER 13.

Condemned!

LEVISON entered the study.

Blake and Kangaroo had found him, and brought him there. Levison came willingly enough. The juniors had not explained what he was wanted for; but perhaps he guessed. He glanced at the white, fixed face of the Outsider, and his eyes glinted. Then he fastened his gaze upon Tom Merry.

"You want to see me?" he asked.

"Yes, Lumley-Lumley says—"

"Hold on!" said Kerr. "Let's hear what Levison has to say before he knows what Lumley-Lumley has said. We're more likely to get the truth."

"Yaas, wathah! That's vevy twue."

"Very well," said Tom Merry. "Do you know that Lumley-Lumley was going to the Green Man this afternoon, Levison?"

"I've already told you that I didn't," said Levison, with perfect calmness. "I was afraid so, that was all."

"He didn't go on your account?"

"Why should he go on my account?" said Levison.

"Answer my question—yes, or no?"

"No!"

"He did not go to settle your debts to Mr. Joliffe?"

Levison laughed.

"He would not be likely to do that!" he said.

"Did he do it?"

"Not so far as I know."

"Did you owe Joliffe money?"

"I dare say I owe him a pound or two."

"Not fifteen pounds?"

"What rot! Of course not!"

"I think that's enough," said Tom Merry, looking round at the others.

"Quite enough," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Lumley-Lumley made a movement.

"It's all false," he muttered thickly. "I—I can see now that he's taken me in. This is a plot. The hound is lying!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"You cur!" said Lumley-Lumley. "Didn't you ask me to see Joliffe—to pay what you owed him—to get the papers—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Levison. "You can hardly expect anybody to take in a fairy-tale like that."

Lumley-Lumley sprang towards the cad of the Fourth, his eyes blazing, his hands outstretched. It would have gone hard with the junior if Lumley-Lumley's grasp had fastened upon him at that moment.

But Tom Merry and Figgins grasped him, and whirled him back.

"None of that!" said Figgins roughly. "There's a lady present, you cad!"

Lumley-Lumley looked at Cousin Ethel with laggard eyes.

"I—I'm sorry," he muttered. "I forgot. I—I told the truth. Levison is lying! I tell you he's planned all this!"

"Do you want me any more?" asked Levison.

"No," said Tom Merry curtly.

"Then I'll get out."

Levison walked out of the study, and whistled as he went down the passage. If he wanted revenge upon Lumley-Lumley he had it now. The blow he had dealt by black treachery had completely beaten the Outsider of St. Jim's.

Lumley-Lumley stood unsteadily facing the juniors with a hunted look.

"You don't believe me?" he asked.

"No."

"Wathah not!"

"We're not children," said Blake. "How can you expect to take us in again?"

"I've only told the truth."

"Nonsense!"

"Miss Cleveland, do you believe me?" muttered the Outsider.

Cousin Ethel was silent.

"You think I'm lying?"

"I don't want to say anything to wound you," said Ethel.

"Tell me what you think," said the Outsider huskily. "If you don't believe me, say so. If you do, I don't care for the others."

"Bai Jove!"

"Tell me, Miss Cleveland!"

"I cannot believe you," said Ethel, with an effort.

"Very well," said Lumley-Lumley, in a low voice. "I'm finished here!"

He turned to the door. He paused with his hand on it, and looked back. His face was white and set.

"I'm sorry you don't believe me," he said; "but I've told the truth. That's all. Good-bye, Miss Cleveland!"

"Good-bye!" said Cousin Ethel.

The Outsider left the study.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"That's over," he said.

"Bai Jove! He seemed awfully cut up!" said Arthur Augustus. "But what a wascal! I suppose it's wathah wotten to be a wascal, and to be found out."

"The toast is burning," said Fatty Wynn.

Fatty Wynn's remark broke the tension.

The juniors sat down to tea.

But it was in vain that they tried to be cheerful—in vain that they chatted, and tried to make the tea-party as bright and jolly as the one of the previous evening.

The scene they had gone through weighed upon their minds, and upon Cousin Ethel's mind. The white, wretched face of the Outsider seemed to be still before their eyes.

When Cousin Ethel went Figgins escorted her to the door of the Head's house, and the juniors went down, all of them with clouded faces.

Lumley-Lumley was not in the Common-room.

They were glad not to see him.

Yet they could not help thinking of him. There was no doubt in their minds of his guilt. But if he was guilty, he had been heavily punished.

CHAPTER 14.

Lumley-Lumley's Farewell!

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY looked up wearily as his study door opened.

For hours he had sat in the room alone.

He did not want company.

The cool, steady Outsider seemed to be overwhelmed by his misfortune. He felt that all was over for him at St. Jim's. Nothing that he could do would clear him.

He could not hold up his head again, unless it was among Levison and his set. And that was impossible to Lumley-Lumley now. Come what would, he would not go back to the old ways.

Levison opened the door. His eyes glinted at the Outsider.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley fastened his gaze upon him. He did not look angry. He was too utterly downhearted to feel even anger.

Levison did not enter. He remained standing at the door, with his hand upon it, evidently ready to get out in an instant if Lumley-Lumley showed any inclination to violence. But the Outsider made no movement.

"Well?" said Levison.

Lumley-Lumley did not speak.

"I've finished you," said Levison. And now the hatred, no longer disguised, vibrated in his voice and gleamed in his eyes. "You deserted me—you deserted all your old pals—you gave me the cold shoulder. You've done me many an ill turn—and you did me the last yesterday. I said I would be even with you!"

Lumley-Lumley did not speak.

His eyes remained fixed upon the mean, triumphant face before him, but his lips did not move. He seemed hardly to hear Levison.

"I've settled you," said Levison. "They will never believe you again—they, or Cousin Ethel. I've had my revenge. Do you understand?"

There was no answer.

"I've fooled you all along," went on Levison, a slow grin creeping over his face. "I've fooled and japed you, as you used to fool them. I suppose you realise it."

"Yes," said Lumley-Lumley.

His tone was subdued.

Levison looked puzzled. He had expected violence and rage, and he was ready to run. But the strange, unnatural calmness of the Outsider perplexed him.

"What are you going to do?" he asked. "Mind, if you go for me, I'll have the whole story out before a prefect or the Housemaster and get you expelled."

Lumley-Lumley made a weary gesture.

"You're not worth touching," he said. "And nothing will ever set me right again now. You've ruined me. I'm finished here."

"There are still your old friends," Levison suggested.

"Your old pals will take you back—and the rest."

"You rotten cad!"

"Look here—"

"I'm done here," said Lumley-Lumley. "I could give

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you the hiding you deserve—but I won't touch you before I go."

"Before you go?" said Levison.

Lumley-Lumley nodded.

"You're going to leave St. Jim's?"

"Yes!"

"My hat!"

"Now get out of the study!" said Lumley-Lumley. "This is my last night here, and I want to be alone."

Levison drew a deep breath.

"You're not going to run away?" he asked.

"I'm going to join my father. I dare say I was a fool to come here at all," said Lumley-Lumley. "I'm not suited to the place. My father will be glad to have me with him, anyway. I'm done with St. Jim's!"

Levison looked quickly and nervously at the white set face of the Outsider.

"Look here!" he said. "What are you going to do, Lumley-Lumley?"

"Mind your own business!"

The cad of the Fourth breathed hard. Had he gone too far? Had he hit his enemy too hard? There were deeps in Lumley-Lumley's nature that the cad of the Fourth was far from understanding, but he knew that the Outsider was capable of strange actions. Was there some desperate idea in Lumley-Lumley's mind?

"Look here, Lumley—" began Levison.

"Will you leave me alone?"

The Outsider rose to his feet, and Levison left the study quickly enough. Outside in the passage, he walked away slowly. There was a frown upon his mean face. Had he gone too far? What did Lumley-Lumley intend to do?

Levison turned towards Tom Merry's study, and then paused. After all, he had only what Lumley-Lumley had said. What was the use of repeating it? If Lumley-Lumley had any reckless intention, he could not be stopped. Better to avoid being mixed up in the matter at all—that was Levison's reflection. And he held his peace.

Lumley-Lumley remained alone in the study.

He stood at the window and looked out. The old quad was dark, with a glimmer in it from the lighted windows of the School House.

The Outsider felt lonely and desolate.

In all St. Jim's there was no one who cared. He had no friend in the school.

It was all over—all over.

He returned to the table and took pen and ink. He wrote quickly and feverishly, and enclosed what he had written in an envelope and sealed it and addressed it to Cousin Ethel.

Then he took his cap and left the study.

There was a sound of music from the Head's house. On the blinds of the drawing-room windows shadows could be seen. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley paused in the dark quadrangle, and looked and listened.

The strains of the piano, well played, came out into the dusky evening, and the full sound of a girlish voice. Cousin Ethel was singing in the Head's drawing-room. The Outsider, in the gloom of the quadrangle, smiled bitterly. He was truly the Outsider now; more the Outsider than he had ever been—neglected, forgotten, despised!

He climbed the school wall, and dropped into the road. There, for a moment, he paused. He was going to join his father, but he was leaving St. Jim's without permission. To the Head it would merely be that he was running away from school, and he would be searched for and brought back.

He gritted his teeth at the thought. He felt that he would die rather than enter the walls of St. Jim's again.

It was useless to go to the local station. He would be recognised there, and the telephone would easily outtrace him to London. At Wayland Junction he had a chance of losing himself in the crowd, and it was market day at Wayland, and he would find the station thronged. A tramp across the fields, through the woods, and by the plank bridge, and he would be safe.

He turned from the lane by the stile, and tramped on in the darkness. There was a glimmer of the moon, but it was half hidden by the clouds. The Outsider caught a glimmer of water ahead of him under the shadowy trees, and knew where he was. A tributary of the Rhyl flowed through the wood in a deep glade, where the Boy Scouts of St. Jim's had often camped.

There was a plank bridge across the stream, but the stream, swollen by recent rain, was lapping over the plank. The Outsider stepped on the plank and strode recklessly across.

The plank was slippery and wet, and suddenly his foot slipped. The plank tilted sideways, and next moment it

became dislodged from the stumps on which it was resting. The Outsider made a frantic leap to reach the bank, but it was too late.

He plunged into the river and the water closed over his head. He struck out wildly to save himself as he came up again, gasping, struggling; but the water was deep and swift. The current swept him on. Once he reached the shore and tore away a bunch of rushes, and then he was swept on again—out into the wider waters of the Rhyl; out into the deep river and the darkness. And the silent woods echoed the despairing cry of the Outsider of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 15.

The Letter!

KILDARE, the captain of St. Jim's, had the duty of seeing lights out for the Fourth Form that night.

When he looked into the dormitory, he glanced, as usual, along the row of white beds, and then drew back his hand from the switch of the electric light. For there was one bed that was unoccupied.

"What does this mean?" asked the prefect angrily.

"Blake, who is out of bed?"

"Lumley-Lumley," said Blake reluctantly.

"Where is he?"

"I don't know."

"Have you seen him this evening?"

"No!"

"Did not some of you look for him to tell him it was bed-time?" demanded Kildare.

"No!"

"Why not?"

"We're not on good terms."

"Oh, nonsense! Levison, you share Lumley-Lumley's study, I think. Do you know where he is?"

"No," said Levison. "I saw him in the study about half-past eight. I haven't seen him since."

"Very well. I will look for him."

And Kildare left the dormitory with a very grim expression upon his face. A junior who gave the head prefect the trouble of looking for him at bed-time was likely to have a very unpleasant experience when discovered.

"Where on earth can the chap be?" asked Jack Blake.

"I don't see why he couldn't come to bed. It's queer!"

"Perhaps he's run away from school," suggested Levison nervously.

"Oh, rats!"

The juniors waited rather anxiously for Kildare to return. In five minutes the captain of St. Jim's re-entered the dormitory with a very puzzled expression on his face, and a letter in his hand.

"Lumley-Lumley is not in his study," he said. "There was this letter lying on his table addressed to Miss Cleveland. Does anybody know what it means?"

No one replied.

"I cannot understand all this," said Kildare. "No one appears to know anything of Lumley-Lumley. He must be outside the House. Some of you get up and look for him—Blake, Herries, Digby, Hancock, Reilly, Levison."

The juniors named obeyed. Arthur Augustus joined them without being bidden. The swell of St. Jim's felt that he was necessary.

The Shell were just going to bed. Instead of going into their dormitory, they joined in the search for Lumley-Lumley.

The House was searched, and a party of juniors went round the quadrangle, calling to Lumley-Lumley. But no voice answered them. The Outsider was not within the sound of their voices.

"You can go to bed, you youngsters," said Kildare. "I will take this letter to Miss Cleveland; it may throw some light on the matter."

And the juniors, discussing the strange affair in hushed voices, returned to their dormitories, but not to sleep. It was pretty clear now that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had left St. Jim's.

Kildare presented himself at the Head's house, and asked to see Miss Cleveland. He came into Dr. Holmes' drawing-room, where Cousin Ethel was just saying good-night to Dr. Holmes and his wife. Kildare's serious look startled them.

"Nothing wrong, I hope, Kildare?" said the Head.

"I don't know, sir. Lumley-Lumley—"

Cousin Ethel caught her breath.

"Surely he is not in trouble again," said the Head. "His conduct has been quite exemplary lately."

"He cannot be found, sir!"

"Dear me!"

"He did not go up to bed with the rest of the Fourth, and he cannot be found in the House or in the quad, sir."

He was in his study at half-past eight, according to Levi-son, but since then he has not been seen. He must have gone out for some reason. I think that perhaps Miss Cleveland may be able to throw some light on the matter. I found this letter in Lumley-Lumley's room, addressed to Miss Cleveland in his handwriting. I thought I had better bring it at once."

"Addressed to me!" exclaimed Ethel, in wonder.

"Yes."

Kildare handed Ethel the letter. She opened it, and unfolded the sheet within. It was written very irregularly—a contrast to the usual firm hand of the Outsider.

"Dear Miss Cleveland,—I am leaving St. Jim's in disgrace. You will never see me again, but I can't go without telling you once more that I was innocent. I know I can't prove it, and I know my record is too bad for anyone to take my word. But now I'm going, and you won't see me again, I think you might believe me. You'll

And Kildare departed. A few minutes later, all the School House knew that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had run away from school, and that the House prefects were searching for him. There was little sleep in the dormitories that night. For the missing junior was not found; and when dawn came stealing in at the windows, there was no one in the School House who knew what had become of the Outsider of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 16.

Under the Shadow!

TOM MERRY & CO. had anxious faces in the morning. They had not changed their opinion of Lumley-Lumley.

The letter to Ethel had been shown to them, but if it shook their opinion, it did not change it. They simply could not believe in the Outsider again.

"Look!" exclaimed Levison. "Look!" Tom Merry glanced towards the gates, and then uttered a cry of astonishment. "Lumley-Lumley!" he cried. It was the Outsider, in different clothes and looking pale and worn—but it was the junior who was thought to be drowned!



understand I have no motive now for lying. I went to the Green Man to help another fellow who pretended to be my chum, and that is the truth. I hated to go there, but I went to help him, because I believe he wanted to be decent, and you had asked me to help him. If you'll believe this, it's all you can do for me. I shall never come back to St. Jim's.

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY."

The letter swam before Cousin Ethel's eyes.

She handed it to the Head without a word. Dr. Holmes adjusted his spectacles, and read the letter, with growing amazement in his face.

"Dear me!" he said. "Can you explain this, Ethel?"

The girl nodded.

"Yes, Dr. Holmes. Lumley-Lumley was seen at the Green Man to-day, and the boys all believe he had gone there for—for what he used to go there for. You know all about that; it all came out once. I believed it, too, and we could not believe his explanation, because—because the boy he said he went to help denied it. And—and Lumley-Lumley was not truthful. But now—"

"But now you believe him?"

"I—I don't know."

"He must be searched for at once," said the Head quietly. "He has run away from school, and that is what it amounts to. He must be searched for and brought back at once. Kildare, I leave it to you and the prefects to do your best. If he is not found to-night, I must ask the aid of the police to-morrow morning."

"Very well, sir."

But they were anxious about him. He had left the school without permission, and that certainly meant a severe punishment for him. There was little doubt that he would be found and brought back. And much as they despised the Outsider, Tom Merry & Co. did not like to think of his being flogged. He had been punished enough.

Curiously enough, Levison looked more anxious than the chums of the School House. No one had ever suspected Levison of devoted friendship, or of caring for anyone but himself. But his face was so pale in the morning that the whole Form noticed it, and commented upon it. Some of them began to think better of Levison. His anxiety was evidently great, and his face grew more and more haggard as the day passed on, and no news came of Lumley-Lumley.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy tapped him on the arm in a friendly way when the Fourth Form came out of their classroom.

"Feelin' wathah cut up, Levison?" he asked.

Levison nodded without speaking.

"It's all wight," said D'Arcy. "The pwefects say that he hasn't been heard of at the waylay station or at Wayland. He has cut acwoss countwy somewhere, and my opinion is that he won't be found."

"I hope he will be found."

"Indeed! I thought you were wowwyin' at the ideah of his bein' bwrought back and flogged for wunnin' away," said D'Arcy, in astonishment.

"No, no!"

"Then what's the twouble? I suppose he's goin' to join his fathah, and he won't come to any harm."

Levison's lips quivered.

"Suppose something's happened?"

"Bai Jove! What could happen?"

"Oh, I don't know!"

Levison strode away, leaving the swell of St. Jim's in a state of great astonishment. Levison felt that it would not do to speak too freely. Yet the weight upon his mind was so great that he felt that he must speak, or else shriek aloud in sheer horror.

Where was Lumley-Lumley? What had become of him?

The other fellows imagined that he had fled because he was guilty, and dared not face them; but Levison knew different. He knew that the Outsider had gone because he was wronged—because he was wounded to the heart by bitter and unjust suspicion. And Levison knew the Outsider's erratic nature. What was he capable of in that mood of bitterness and despair?

Why did not news come of the missing boy?

If only word would come!

But it did not.

The telegraph and telephone were at work. If anyone answering to the description of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had

been seen at the Rylcombe Station, or at Wayland Junction, or any station on the line, news of it would have reached St. Jim's.

But there was no news.

The junior had vanished as completely as if the earth—or the waters—had swallowed him up.

Upon the Head's brow a troubled frown grew darker as the day wore on. Had the boy fled at all, or was he in hiding somewhere near the school, waiting for the hue and cry to abate before he ventured to take flight?

It was impossible to tell.

It was late in the afternoon when the miller of Rylcombe came up to the school with an unusually curious expression upon his jolly face.

The fellows had come out from afternoon lessons, and at the sight of the miller they guessed at once that he had brought news, and flocked round him.

But the miller did not say a word.

He went straight to the Head's house, and was admitted, and stayed there for some time in talk with Dr. Holmes. Then he left the school.

Excitement was at fever heat now. It was certain that the miller had brought some news, but what it was was a mystery. The next visitor to the Head was Inspector Skeats, of Rylcombe.

He also departed, looking very serious.

It came out at last, and it struck the boys with a chill of horror.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley's cap had been picked up by the mill-wheel in the Rhyl.

The miller had heard of the hue-and-ery after the missing junior—there were few remote cottages on the countryside that had not heard of it by that time—and, on finding a St. Jim's cap in the water, he had immediately examined it.

The name of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was written inside.

That Lumley-Lumley had fallen into the water the previous night was now certain, and the miller brought the cap to Dr. Holmes with the story of how he had found it.

Faces were pale in the school now.

Once before Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had had a terribly narrow escape from death. But this time there appeared to be no doubt.

The juniors felt that they would never see the Outsider again.

"I suppose there's no doubt now?" Monty Lowther said, as the Terrible Three entered their study.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"His cap couldn't be in the river unless he was there," he said. "There was no wind last night; it couldn't have blown off. And he's disappeared, or something would have been heard of him by this time."

"I suppose so."

"It's horrible!"

"I'm jolly sorry," said Manners; "but I don't see that we've got anything to blame ourselves for. What he did was rotten, and we were right to be down on him."

"That's true enough."

"And this must have been an accident," said Lowther. "He can't have done this on purpose, Tom Merry."

"Heaven knows! He was a queer beggar."

There was silence in the study. It was broken by a tap at the door.

"Come in!" said Tom Merry.

Cousin Ethel opened the door. She was very pale. Her questioning glance dwelt on the Terrible Three. Arthur Augustus followed her into the study.

"Is it true?" murmured Ethel.

"Weally, deah gal—"

"It's not certain, by any means," said Tom Merry. "It looks bad, that's all."

"Yaas, wathah! That's just what I've told Ethel," said Arthur Augustus, though his own pale face told that he fully believed that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was dead. "You might find a chap's cap anywhere, you know."

"It is terrible!" said Ethel, sinking into a chair. "Poor Lumley!"

"Yes, poor Lumley! We're all terribly sorry, Ethel."

"Yaas, it's wotten all wound!"

There was a step in the passage, and a ghastly face looked in at the half-open door. It was Ernest Levison's.

He gazed at Tom Merry, his eyes almost starting from his head.

"Have you heard?" he muttered, his voice thick, and almost inarticulate.

"Yes."

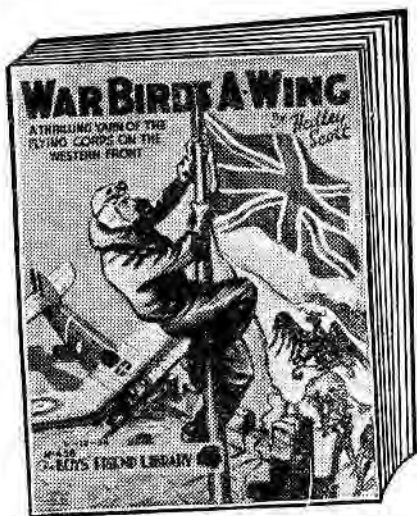
"He's dead?"

"I hope not."

Levison gave a deep groan, and threw himself into a chair, his face sinking into his hands on the table. The juniors gazed at him in astonishment. Cousin Ethel's face softened as she looked at the cad of the Fourth.

"Were you so fond of him?" she said kindly.

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Levison made a movement.

"Oh, I can't bear this—I can't! I—I never dreamed he would do this! I—I felt afraid about it when I saw him last night, but—but I never thought he would do it! The fool! What did he want to do it for? I only meant to get even with him, that was all. I never imagined that he would be cut up like that about it. And then to go and drown himself—"

"Hush!"

"That's what he's done! I never foresaw anything of the kind."

"What have you to do with it, Levison?" asked Tom Merry sternly. The remorse of the cad of the Fourth had awakened suspicion in his mind at last.

Levison groaned.

"I never meant it to come to this! I never dreamed that he would be such a madman! I only wanted to show him up, that was all!"

"Good heavens!" said Ethel. "Is it possible—"

Tom Merry grasped the cad of the Fourth by the shoulder and dragged him to his feet. His eyes were blazing. Levison stood before him, white and trembling. But it was not Tom Merry he was afraid of. It was the haunting thought of Lumley-Lumley, floating with face upturned on the moonlit river, driven to death by his treachery—that was what terrified Levison.

"Levison, tell the truth. Were you lying about Lumley-Lumley?"

"Yes."

"Did he go to the Green Man on your business to save you from that man?"

"He thought so," muttered Levison. "It was a little game between Joliffe and me; we were only fooling him."

"But he believed it?"

"Yes."

"And he paid your debts to Joliffe, or what he supposed to be your debts?"

"And the papers Joliffe gave him—"

"They were faked, ready for him."

"And—and all that he told us was true, then?"

"Yes," groaned Levison.

"Good heavens!"

"You treacherous hound!" shouted Tom Merry, and he flung Levison from him.

The end of the Fourth reeled against the wall.

"Let me alone!" he muttered thickly. "Don't you think I've got enough now? If he's dead through what I did I shall go mad! Do you understand?"

Tom Merry set his lips.

"I'm sorry I touched you," he said. "You're not fit to touch, you horrible cad! Get out of my study. The sight of you makes me sick."

Levison went unsteadily from the study. His confession had relieved his mind, but he was still haunted by the terrible thought of the body floating in the river.

He went out into the quadrangle, white as death, and paced under the elms in the growing shadows of the night.

In those terrible hours the junior who had been a false chum, who had betrayed the fellow who trusted him, suffered far more than his victim had suffered. Levison's treachery had been black, and he fully deserved his punishment.

CHAPTER 17.

Back from the Shadows!

A NOTHER day, and no news!

Nothing was heard of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

His father was abroad, in South America, and could not be communicated with. It was supposed that the junior might have made for some port to take ship to join him, and search was made for him at Southampton and other ports, but nothing was discovered.

Either the Outsider was in hiding or he had perished in the mill-stream. And the finding of the cap in the water made the latter supposition only too terribly probable.

The river was searched; the waters were dragged. But the Rhyl had many a deep pool and hidden hollow where a body might lie hidden. The draggings revealed nothing, but all felt that the swift, sunny water hid a terrible secret.

Faces were very grave at St. Jim's.

With the shadow of Lumley-Lumley's death, or, at least, the terrible probability of it, hanging over the school the juniors were sad and despondent.

Tom Merry & Co. felt it most keenly

For they had wronged the missing junior. They knew it now. Now that Levison had spoken they could understand the mood of bitterness and despair in which Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had left St. Jim's, feeling that the whole school was against him, although he had tried his hardest to do right.

The chums of St. Jim's felt their hearts very *lumpy*. They had wronged the Outsider, though they had never intended to do so. They could not believe what he had told them, and yet it had been true.

They knew that now—too late!

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy said. "It's simply wotten, you know! If we'd only known this before—"

"We shouldn't have known it at all if he hadn't been drowned," said Manners. "Levison wouldn't have confessed."

"No; that's quite true."

"I don't know whether we ought to let the Head know what Levison says," said Blake uneasily. "It's a shame to let the stigma stick to Lumley-Lumley."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The Head will have to know," said Tom Merry; "but I think we can leave it to Levison to tell him. I think that if Lumley-Lumley does not come back Levison will leave. He looks cut up, and he seems to get worse instead of better."

"Serve the cad right!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Another day elapsed, and still there came no word of Lumley-Lumley. The school had now given up the hope of seeing him alive again. On the fifth morning Tom Merry came out into the quad after morning lessons. Levison joined him there. Tom Merry made a movement to get away, but Levison caught his sleeve.

"I want to speak to you," he said.

"I don't want to speak to you," said Tom Merry; "I can't bear the sight of you! Get away from me, for goodness' sake!"

"I'm going to leave St. Jim's."

"Oh!"

"That's all," said Levison bitterly. "You'll be glad to see the last of me, of course?"

"You can't wonder at that," said Tom Merry.

"I know I can't," Levison's head dropped. "I'm going to confess the whole thing to the Head before I go. I'm going to him this afternoon."

"It's the best thing you can do."

Levison turned away, and then suddenly he stood transfixed. He gave a low, inarticulate cry, and his face was white as chalk. His eyes started from their sockets. Tom Merry looked at him in startled amazement.

"What's the matter?" he cried.

"Look!" exclaimed Levison. "Look!"

Tom Merry followed his glance towards the gates. Then he, too, uttered a cry of amazement, for someone was coming in at the gates—someone he knew.

(Continued on the next page.)

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"Lumley-Lumley!" shouted Tom Merry. There were shouts from different parts of the quad. Other fellows had seen the Outsider of St. Jim's.

It was Lumley-Lumley!
Lumley-Lumley in the flesh!
Lumley-Lumley, in different clothes, and very pale and worn, as if he had been ill; but it was Lumley-Lumley—alive!

"Lumley!" shouted Tom Merry in astonishment and joy.

"Lumley, old chap—"
And he fairly hugged the Outsider.
"Hold on!" said Lumley-Lumley coolly. "What's the row?"

"Where have you been?" yelled Blake. "Your cap was found in the river, and we thought you were drowned, you ass!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
The Outsider shrugged his shoulders.
"I've been ill, and jolly ill, too," he said. "I fell off the plank bridge that night, and was swept out into the Rhyl. Goodness knows how I managed to keep afloat, for I was feeling rotten at the time; but I got ashore at last, in the woods. And I should have lain there for goodness knows how long, only I was helped."

"Who helped you?"
"Black Sam, the poacher," said Lumley-Lumley. "He found me, and took me to his cottage, and he's nursed me there ever since. It was only this morning that he told me he'd heard that I was supposed to be drowned, and I made up my mind to come back and show that I was alive."

"But you are going to stay?" asked Tom Merry.
"Don't you understand?" said Figgins. "It's all come out now; Levison's confessed."

Lumley-Lumley started.

"Levison's confessed?" he ejaculated.

"Yaas, deah boy."

"But why?"

"He thought you were dead."

"I guess he'll be feeling sold now," said Lumley-Lumley coolly. "So all you fellows know now that you were off-side?"

"Yes; and we're sorry."

"Jolly sorry!"



Let's Talk it Over!
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.

IT is getting a bit difficult for me to answer all the letters I get from you readers, because nine out of every ten of you bring up the same subject! Why not increase the length of the St. Frank's section—or why not revive the old "Nelson Lee" Library? Well, it's all very well to answer one or two letters of this kind, now and again, but when most of you raise the same subject individual answers would become rather monotonous. All I can say in reply to you is that the Editor himself is the man to write to. Meantime, get as many new readers of the GEM as you can.

It would be rather difficult, Reg Morgan, Melbourne, to tell you how St. Frank's is laid out. Of course, having written about the old school for so long, I have every nook and cranny of the place in my mind's eye—the exact number of steps one needs to take when walking from the fountain, in the middle of the Triangle, to the Ancient House, and so on; just how far it is from Big Arch to the Head's house; how many corners to turn going from Handforth's study, in the Remove passage, to William Napoleon Browne's study in the Fifth Form passage. But if I were to attempt to describe all this, it would fill five or six pages of the GEM. Among the best cricketers in the Junior School are Nipper, Jerry Dodd, Harry Gresham, and Vivian Travers. The best junior boxer, without question, is Ernest Lawrence; but Nipper is jolly handy with his fists, too.

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"And we apologise, as one gentleman to another, deah boy—I mean, as half a dozen gentlemen to another."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
A dark look was on Lumley's face. He had come back to St. Jim's to relieve the school of its anxiety concerning his fate. He had not dreamed that his name would be cleared. It was good news to him, but for the moment he could not feel kindly towards those who had driven him forth.

But among the crowd of juniors a sweet, girlish face appeared, and a little white hand was held out to Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

"I'm sorry—so sorry!" said Cousin Ethel.

Lumley-Lumley's face cleared.

"It's all right," he said. "So long as you know the truth, it's all right. I don't care for anything else."

Kildare came through the crowd of juniors, and dropped his hand upon Lumley-Lumley's shoulder.

"The Head wants to see you," he said grimly.

And the Outsider of St. Jim's was taken to the Head. But Dr. Holmes was not angry. He was too much relieved to find the Outsider alive and well to think of being angry. He listened very patiently to the Outsider's explanation, and he pardoned him. He did not even ask the name of the junior whose treachery had driven Lumley-Lumley to run away.

"That boy, I should think, is sufficiently punished," he said. "If he has any conscience, he must have suffered terribly during the last few days. And you say that he confessed his wickedness voluntarily? You did wrong in leaving the school without permission, Lumley-Lumley, but I shall overlook it, in the circumstances. I am only too glad to have this clear proof that you are very much changed from what you were once. You may go."

And Jerrold Lumley-Lumley went.

He found Tom Merry & Co. and Cousin Ethel waiting for him and the greeting they gave him made the Outsider feel very glad that he was once more within the old walls of St. Jim's.

THE END.

(Next Wednesday: Grand yarn of ragging and rivalry between Tom Merry & Co. and the Grammarians. Watch out for "D'ARCY'S DOUBLE!"—and don't forget the GEM will be on sale MONDAY, December 24th.)

Many thanks for your nice letter, Gordon W. Thomas, Portsmouth. Hope you'll have some success with your short stories. Naturally, they will stand more chance if they are typewritten; but unless a story is just what an editor requires, it doesn't stand much chance of being accepted, typewritten or otherwise. You are sensible enough to realise the difficulties, but I have sometimes had letters from readers who apparently think that story-writing is one of the easiest games under the sun—a kind of "lazy man's life." But story-writing, like everything else, has to be learned, even by those who have it "in" them. Experience is the great teacher, as in most other walks of life. The other day I came across one or two of my very first efforts, and, needless to say, they were in manuscript form, for they were so awful that they never got into print. Yet, when I wrote them, I thought they were remarkably fine! One of the illusions of youth! It takes some years of experience, and a number of hard knocks, to make one realise that nothing worth while in this life is easy.

Glad you liked the "Taaz" stories so much, "Removite," Greenock. Hope you are enjoying the present "Christmas" serial as much. From my own point of view, I think this serial is a lot better than the "Taaz" series; anyhow, I enjoyed the writing a great deal more. Ulysses Spencer Adams, the American boy, is as much in evidence as ever in St. Frank's, but he doesn't do quite so much bragging as when he first came. A good deal of that sort of thing has been knocked out of him. Both Stanley Waldo and Tony Cresswell were missed out of the "Names List" because they are no longer at St. Frank's.

As you have now found out for yourself, Richard Rowe, Skegness, there is a special Christmas serial in these pages. No, I'm afraid you won't find a St. Frank's Christmas story in the "Boys' Friend Library."

I want to acknowledge the cheery and enthusiastic and welcome letters from the following: Wilfred B. Thomson, Fife; Stanley Jonson, Port Elizabeth; "A Reader," London; Teddy Pearce, Hatfield; C. Gould, Harrow; William Davies, Auckland; R. Fyfe, Greenock; R. M. Jenkins, Havant; Jack Pulver, London, E.; John Wilma-hurst, Manor Park; G. S. Hunnabell, Mistley; Bill Upton, Ashburton.

HANDFORTH GOES SEARCHING FOR MISSING GUESTS AND FINDS—A SKELETON!



BY EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Edward Oswald Handforth, at the invitation of his uncle, takes a party of St. Frank's juniors and Moor View School girls to Handforth Towers, in Norfolk, for the Christmas holidays. After a tiring journey the party arrive, and, to their astonishment, Handforth Towers is a bleak, deserted, and creepy old mansion! They are welcomed by Rodd, the wizened old butler, and his witch-like wife, for they learn that Handforth's uncle is away. After a hearty supper the girls go to bed, but the boys remain chatting in the dim old dining-room. As the midnight hour strikes a weird wail is suddenly heard. The juniors learn from Rodd that it's the Lady of the Tower, a ghost. They retire to bed, all feeling nervous, and after several uncanny happenings, a frantic appeal for help rings out. The juniors rush out on to a landing, to see the whitish, transparent figure of a medieval lady bending over Willy Handforth, who is lying unconscious! The figure then suddenly vanishes before their eyes! When Willy has recovered from his fright, Handforth declares that he is going to see if anything's happened to the girls.

Another Startling Mystery!

NIPPER nodded. "Yes, we'll all find out if the girls are safe," he agreed. "Hang it, we couldn't possibly go to bed without making some inquiries. Do you chaps realise that we haven't heard a sound of the girls since they left us at a quarter to twelve in the dining-room?"

"By jingo, that's true enough!"

"But—but do you think that something's happened?" asked Willy breathlessly.

"Whatever you think, you've got to stay in bed," replied his major. "You've had your dose for to-night, my lad, and you mustn't step out of this room again. I'm worried about the girls—I've got an idea that they've been drugged, or something. It's the only way to account for their silence!"

"If they've been drugged, this ghost is a pretty material one, then," said Nipper grimly. "But you mustn't get those fantastic ideas. Handy. Although it seems so impossible, there's just a chance that they are really asleep. They were tired, you know, and they went up before any of these startling things happened. Let's go and make sure, anyhow."

"Wouldn't it be better to let them sleep?" asked Watson. "Yes, and then we don't know whether they're safe!" protested Handforth. "No, we've got to hammer on their doors and ask if they're all right. I couldn't sleep a wink if I didn't know."

"We can easily invent some slight excuse after we've awakened them," said Nipper. "Come on—let's go and get it over."

They all crowded out, leaving Willy in bed. And they went out on to the landing again, and then penetrated the north wing. This was the haunt of that ghost—an added puzzle. It was indeed strange that the girls should have seen nothing and heard nothing.

This time the juniors had plenty of lights, for there were three or four candles among them. And the place did not seem so eerie now. This corridor was much smaller than the one in the east wing, and comparatively short. It was very draughty, and one of the candles blew out, and the others flickered dangerously.

"Easy!" said Handforth. "We don't want to be left in the dark here. Yes, old Rodd was right—there are only two doors, so we can't make any mistake. Now, you chaps, keep quiet. I'll tap on this door, and when the girls answer, I'll ask for Bna. If she's in this room, I'll just say 'Good-night,' and wish her happy dreams. How's that?"

"Good!" said Nipper. "But supposing she isn't in this room?"

"It won't matter: the other girls will tell me so, and I'll wish them good-night," replied Handforth. "We shall have gained our object, anyhow. We only want to hear that they're all right."

Handforth doubled his fist, and rapped upon the door fairly lightly.

All the juniors held their breath and waited, but no reply came. The only sounds they heard were caused by the buffeting of the wind outside, and the whistling of it down the corridor.

"Better knock again," whispered McClure.

Thump, thump, thump!

This time Handforth knocked vigorously. The knocks were sufficient to have awakened Rip Van Winkle, but still there was no reply.

"I knew it!" said Handforth tensely. "There's something wrong in this bed-room! What the dickens can we do?"

Before anybody could answer, the problem solved itself—and in a strange, unexpected way. For no apparent cause, the door slowly swung open of its own accord.

"Great Scott!" muttered somebody.

A fierce draught of air swept out, and every candle was extinguished in a flash. But there was a window immediately opposite, in the bed-room, and the startled juniors could see the door still opening—against the force of the draught!

"Out of the way, Handy!" rapped out Nipper curtly. "There's something thundering wrong here!"

As he spoke, he flashed on his electric torch, and the beam of light cut through the darkness of the bed-room—one of those sleeping chambers which had been set apart for Irene & Co. Nipper took four strides into the room, and then he pulled up short, his face expressive of blank, utter amazement.

And through the doorway crowded the other juniors. For Nipper's electric torch revealed a staggering fact. This room was empty—not merely empty of human presence, but empty of furniture! The windows were broken and ruined, and in one corner half the upper part of the wall was completely missing. The full fury of the storm was pouring into the apartment.

"What—what does it mean?" asked Nipper dazedly.

"But—but they couldn't have been in here at all!" shouted Handforth, staring round. "Nobody would put a dog in here to sleep! It's not a room at all—it's a ruin! Then where are the girls?"

"Goodness only knows!" said Nipper.

"Let's—let's look in the other room," put in Reggie Pott. "By jingo! That's it, of course! Old Rodd must have made a mistake. Instead of being divided into two parties, they're all together, in the other room—I expect there are two beds in it!"

"We'll soon see!" said Handforth desperately.

They ran out of that strange room, and Handforth did not wait to conform to the proprieties again. Instead of knocking, he turned the handle of the second door and burst into the bed-room.

One glance was sufficient.

This apartment was as bare as the other, and even more ruinous. The snow was driving in relentlessly, and there were drifts of it even against Handforth's feet as he stood there.

The House of Surprises!

HANDFORTH TOWERS had provided a few shocks on this eventful night, but this latest one was the most startling of all.

The six girl guests had vanished!

Where were they? What had become of them? No wonder the fellows had heard no sound of their girl chums since they had been escorted up to bed by the witch-like Mrs. Rodd. That thought hit Handforth like a blow.

"Where's that old hag?" he shouted. "Where did she take the girls to? What has she done with them? I'll search this house from roof to cellar—"

"Look! There's a light!" shouted somebody.

The juniors turned, and beheld a light on the landing. And a moment later old Rodd appeared, dressed in a quaint old dressing-gown and carpet slippers. A woollen nightcap was perched on the top of his head.

"My, but ye gave me a start, young sirs!" he said as he came up. "I thought 'twas burglars!"

Handforth rushed up to him.

"Where's my sister?" he demanded. "Where are the other girls? Answer me, you old sinner—"

"Master Edward—Master Edward!" protested the aged butler. "What's the matter with ye? There's no call to talk like that—"

"Where's my sister?" insisted Handforth.

The old man frowned.

"Missy Ena is safe enough!" he said testily. "What are you looking in these rooms for? Why aren't ye all abed? Gallyvanting about at this time o' night—"

"You told us the girls were here, didn't you?" asked Handforth.

"Ay, an' can't an old man make a mistake without you getting panicky?" asked the butler, more impatiently than ever. "My memory ain't what it used to be. My wife took the girls somewhere else, an' ye can be sure that they're asleep and perfectly safe."

"We want to know where they are—"

"Then ye won't!" said the old man angrily. "I'll have ye know, Master Edward, that I'm in charge of Handforth Towers, an' I won't have ye ordering me about! Mrs. Rodd took the girls safely to bed, an' there they'll stay without being disturbed until the morning!"

He stamped off, and Nipper couldn't help smiling.

"After all, I suppose we are a crowd of asses!" he said. "The old fellow must have meant the south wing when he told us about the girls. We've been getting all sorts of funny ideas, and they're asleep all the time in another part of the house, where they couldn't hear our noise."

"That's about the size of it," agreed Reggie.

"Let's get back to bed," said Tommy Watson practically. But Handforth refused.

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"It's all very well to accept that old beggar's word," he said stubbornly. "I don't believe him! There's something about this house which is all wrong! And I want to know where the girls are before I have a wink of sleep!"

"But you can't," insisted Nipper, taking Edward Oswald's arm. "The old boy thinks we ought to be in bed and asleep, and he's probably right. So many things have happened that we don't quite know what to believe. But we needn't jump to fantastic conclusions."

And so, although Handforth was very upset, he agreed to go back to bed. And all the rest went, too. There seemed nothing else to do. But there was scarcely a fellow who did not feel vaguely uneasy. They could not forget that extraordinary spectre—the Lady of the Tower.

"Well, I've got rid of them!" said Handforth, as he stood inside his own bed-room with Church and McClure. "I'll give them just five minutes to settle down, and then I'll make a move."

His chums were staggered.

"Why, what are you going to do?" asked McClure quickly.

"Do!" said Edward Oswald. "I'm going to investigate."

"But, you ass, you mustn't go out alone!" protested Church. "You might get yourself into a mess, or something! Go to bed, Handy!"

"Do you think I can go to bed, leaving everything in this state of uncertainty?" demanded Handforth. "Ever since we came into this house there's been mystery! First, the unexpected absence of Uncle Gregory, the absence of servants, and everything in general; then that wailing cry in the night, and old Mrs. Rodd coming down the stairs, looking scared out of her wits. That thing which gripped my ankle! My hat! It makes me shiver to think of it!"

"Then don't think of it," said Church gruffly.

"Everything's wrong!" continued Handforth. "We go to bed, and we hear rappings, and then poor old Willy has the fright of his life. Rummy things happen in other bed-rooms, too! That ghost appears—the Lady of the Tower! Did you ever see anything like it?"

"Never!" breathed McClure uneasily.

"It's been nothing else but worry and trouble ever since we got here," said Handforth. "Now there's Ena. It's all very well for Nipper and the others to tell us to go to sleep, but I'm not having any. Where's my sister? And Irene?"

"I was wondering why you hadn't mentioned Irene," said Church.

"But I've been thinking about her!" snapped Edward Oswald. "Fast asleep in one of the other wings, eh? Perfectly safe, are they? How do we know?" He glared at his chums in the candlelight.

"Well, don't look at us so accusingly," said Mac. "We haven't spirited the fair damsels away!"

"Spirited away!" muttered Handforth, his eyes filled with alarm. "By George! I—I wonder— Oh, but what's the good of standing here and guessing? I'm going out to investigate."

"Look here, Handy—"

But Handforth waved his hand and strode to the door. Before his chums could stop him, he had gone out, taking the candle with him. This was all very well for him, but Church and McClure were left in the dark. They crouched in bed, and listened to the moaning of the wind as it sighed round the mysterious old house.

"Oh, corks!" said McClure. "What—what shall we do?"

"Jiggered if I know!" said Church. "I'm not going after him, if that's what you're hinting at. He can go on his investigations alone!"

Meanwhile, Handforth was out on that big landing, candle in hand, peering into the dense shadows. There was the north wing and the east wing, but he couldn't quite see where any other quarters of the house lay.

"Anyhow, I'm going to find out!" he muttered grimly.

There was nothing of the recklessness which usually characterised Handforth's activities. He was genuinely worried about the girls—about Irene, but about his sister most of all. When it came to a real emergency, Handforth gave first thoughts to Ena.

He turned, meaning to penetrate a narrow passage which opened out from that part of the landing which had not yet been explored. And as he turned, something moved and came into the radius of his flickering light.

Handy Comes a Cropper!

HANDFORTH started back, and he nearly dropped the precious candle.

"It's only me, Ted!" whispered Willy, as he stepped into the circle of light.

"You—you young bouncer!" said his major, pulling

himself together. "What do you suppose I thought it was? Of course it's you! And what are you doing out of your bed, after what I told you?"

"I'm better now, old man—"

"That's no answer!" said Handforth severely. "You had a terrible scare, Willy—I never saw you so pale in all my life! You're looking better now, but I warned you to keep in bed, and—"

"Rats!" interrupted the Third Former. "I heard you prowling about; and, besides, I've been making some investigations on my own. I heard about those empty rooms, and it seemed rummy at first. But there's nothing to worry about. The girls are all safe and fast asleep."

His major looked at him eagerly.

"How—how do you know?" he asked. "Who told you?"

"Well, I know—I've made a few inquiries," replied Willy, with an exasperating return of his normal coolness. "You needn't look at me like that, Ted. Ena and the others are O.K., and the best thing we can do is to get back to bed."

He glanced at his watch.

"Yes, it's nearly time," he added.

"Eh?" said Handforth. "Nearly time for what?"

"Ah, now we're on a different subject," said Willy, shaking his head. "I've given you my word that the girls are O.K., Ted, and you'll have to be satisfied. Or, if you like, you can be unsatisfied. I don't care which."

"You—you secretive little bounder!" exclaimed Handforth, growing red. "You've just discovered something, and you won't let me into the know!"

"You've hit it!" agreed Willy, nodding.

"I'll force you—"

"Rats!" said his minor, and he walked off, bidding his major good-night over his shoulder.

Handforth stood there, fairly boiling over. He marvelled, too, at the rapidity with which his young brother had recovered. Just like Willy! Although he had gone through that harrowing experience, he was himself again in next to no time.

"By George!" breathed the Removite. "He knows something, and he won't tell me!"

He looked round into that narrow passage again and started. His eyes gleamed. Of course, Willy must have come out of that passage—and that was where he had discovered the truth about Irene & Co.

"It won't take me five minutes to find out the truth,"



Crash! With a yell, Handforth tried to recover himself as the ancient and rotted floorboards gave way under his weight, but it was too late. He crashed through the hole and plunged downwards into darkness.

"Old Rodd was saying something about that ghost," replied Willy. "It seems that she appears at certain hours. It's better not to be out in these corridors, Ted. Let's get into our bed-rooms."

Handforth looked at him in a very straight way.

"You know something about this house!"

"I don't know whether you take me for a magician, or what," said Willy patiently. "How should I know more than you? I came in at the same time, and I haven't had any more chances of investigation than you have. Of course, I may have used my brains a bit more—"

"If you're going to stand here arguing, I'll finish with you!" interrupted Handforth exasperatedly. "If you know anything more than I do, it's your duty to tell me."

"Of course, we may have different ideas of duty—"

"Are you going to tell me, or not?" hissed Handforth.

"But, my dear, poor old chump, what can I tell you?" asked Willy patiently. "There's one thing I know for certain—and you can take my word for it. The girls are perfectly safe, they're unharmed, and they're snugly in bed. Honest Injun! That's absolutely official and cast-iron."

"Then where are they?"

murmured Handforth. "If Willy can do it, so can I! I'm jolly glad he didn't tell me now. He can't crow over me that he whacked me on a matter of investigation. I'll snap my fingers in his giddy face, the grinning young monkey! The nerve!"

Handforth ventured into the passage, already making up his mind what he would discover. In fact, everything was now obvious. The east wing was inhabitable, and the north wing was a ruin! The other part of the house, into which he was now penetrating, was also habitable—and he would probably find Irene & Co.'s shoes outside their doors.

It seemed very plausible, but, unfortunately, Handforth couldn't find any shoes to substantiate this theory. In fact, he was so intent upon finding out where the passage led to, that he had no time to look for shoes. To be quite exact, he lost himself. And that, of course, was exactly what Handforth would do.

The passage wasn't such a simple affair as he had imagined. It proved to be quite short, but it led into another corridor, which apparently ran down one side of the old mansion. For there were windows all along, through which the moonlight streamed. Glancing out,

Handforth could see a vista of snowy wastes, with trees standing out of the white wilderness. Snow was still coming down in flurries, rattling against the window-panes like the pattering of fingers.

Then he turned a corner and went into another passage. But this seemed so dirty and it smelt so musty that he came to the conclusion that it was a disused section. The windows were half covered with cobwebs, and there was thick dust and grime on the floor. Even old Rodd wouldn't have allowed the young lady guests to inhabit this part of the Towers.

So Handforth turned back.

And now he found that he wasn't quite sure of his bearings. To add to his worries, he was passing a cracked window when a gust of wind came in and blew out the candle. He was plunged into complete darkness, for the moon had gone behind a black cloud.

"Rats!" muttered Handforth irritably.

He felt for his matches, and then he came to the conclusion that he hadn't got any. He was only wearing his pyjamas and his dressing-gown, and his pockets were empty.

"Well, it doesn't matter," he told himself, although he knew very well that it did. "The moon'll be out again in a tick. What an ass I was not to borrow Nipper's torch! After this I'll never move a yard without having an electric torch on me!"

He groped his way to the end of the corridor, and then turned to the left. There were two passages that he could select—one to the left, and one to the right. He knew that his route lay to the left. At least, he was certain in his own mind.

And now he found himself in a perfect maze of old lobbies and passages and rooms. But Handforth was an optimist, and he was firmly convinced that he knew the way back to his own bed-room. And it must be confessed that he had now lost a great deal of his interest in the girls. He was still anxious about them, but he was far more anxious to get back on familiar ground.

The moon came out again, and he could see all sorts of queer shadows ahead. Once he paused, his heart leaping into his mouth. There was an alcove just in front of him, and something was moving in the deep recesses of it. But there wasn't the slightest sound—and the mysterious movement continued.

A black shape, restlessly rocking to and fro! It was some moments before Handforth could pluck up enough courage to creep nearer—and then he found that it was only the shadow of a fir-tree branch, which happened to be in a direct line with the moonlight, and which was waving to and fro in the wind.

"Thank goodness!" he muttered shakily.

He walked on, his heart still thumping. And he suddenly discovered that he had walked into a passage that had no outlet. No opening, that is. In front of him there was a door, and it was closed. He knew he hadn't come this way, and he was on the point of turning back.

"No," he decided. "I'll go through here—it'll probably lead me straight on to the landing. I expect I've been going round in circles."

He opened the door cautiously. It creaked protestingly, as though it had not been disturbed for years. And a dank, earthy, mouldy odour assailed his nostrils. Everything was pitchy black beyond—utterly, absolutely dark.

"Only a cupboard!" he muttered in disgust.

He took one or two steps forward, feeling cautiously in front of him with his hands. Next moment he felt his feet sinking into the solid floor; the boards were sagging! Crash!

With a yell, Handforth tried to get back, but it was too late. The floor-boards, ancient and rotted, gave way under his weight, and he found himself plunging downwards into an abyss!

The Secret of the Crypt!

HANDFORTH thought that his last moment had come.

As he fell, he gave vent to a wild, despairing cry. It wasn't one of his usual shouts, which the St. Frank's fellows knew so well. It was a real appeal for help, uttered quite involuntarily. For in that dreadful moment the unfortunate Removite felt that he was plunging to his death.

And then, before he knew it, he landed with a hard thud on a solid stone floor. The shock was heavy, but, fortunately, he fell on his feet, and rolled over sideways. And there he floundered for a moment or two. Dead silence reigned. And here the earthy smell was greatly increased.

"Oh, corks!" said Handforth painfully.

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He sat up, trembling in every limb. But, to his infinite relief, he found that his limbs were whole. He had escaped with only a few bruises, and he sat there, trying to think what had happened. He had no idea where he was, or what was the nature of this place into which he had dropped. He was afraid to move far, in case he plunged down into another chasm.

But his present predicament was easily explained. He had stepped into a chamber which had been locked up for years, in all probability—a place where the damp rot had eaten away the boards. And his weight had caused the ancient timbers to collapse. It was a perfectly natural accident. Edward Oswald had got himself into this mess entirely by his own blundering methods.

And then came a change.

As Handforth sat there he heard mysterious footsteps—soft, padding footfalls from somewhere overhead. Now and again there was a slight creak, and he suddenly saw, too, that light was coming through the hole in the floor into his prison. He started up, alarmed.

"Ted!" came an anxious voice. "Ted!"

"Oh!" breathed Handforth. "Willy!"

It was the last person in the world he had expected! His startled wits had jumped to all sorts of fantastic conclusions, but now he knew that Willy was near by he felt his panic subside. Any human presence, indeed, was welcome—but his minor's most of all. For he could pledge Willy to secrecy over this unhappy business.

"Here!" he shouted quickly. "Hi, Willy! Down here! I fell through the floor—"

"You would!" came Willy's voice scornfully.

The bright light of an electric torch blazed down through the gap in the flooring.

"Hurt?" asked the Third Former.

"No, thank goodness!" said Handforth, looking up and shading his eyes. "I'm jolly glad you came, Willy, I can tell you! Lend us a hand out of this fearful place, for goodness' sake!"

"Just a minute," said Willy. "You seem to have accidentally dropped into a secret crypt, or something. If you can't discover anything by design, Ted, you generally discover it by accident! Rummy chap!"

Willy was quite cool, and he gingerly stepped to the edge of the hole, and then lowered himself. He dropped lightly on to the rotten fragments of flooring beside his major.

"How—how did you find me?" asked Handforth, in wonder.

"I didn't find you; I was after you all the time," explained Willy.

"What?"

"Did you think I was going to let you wander through these disused wings with only a candle?" asked the fag tartly. "I was expecting that candle to blow out long before it did, and I was ready to bet my shirt that you hadn't any matches. So I thought it just as well to keep my eye on you, Ted. It's not safe to let you wander about alone!"

Handforth was so relieved at seeing the torchlight, and to have the comfort of his minor's presence, that he did not fire up at this remark.

"Well, it was like your nerve to follow me!" was all he said. "I went into that rotten cupboard, and the floor gave way—"

"I know something gave way," said Willy, nodding. "I was right at the end of the passage, waiting for you to turn the corner before I came round. But I see there wasn't a corner, only the door. I saw you open it, and then I heard a crash. My hat! I thought I should find you in bits!"

Handforth looked up, and was surprised to find the rough edges of the broken flooring almost within reach. He had fancied that he had fallen twenty or thirty feet, whereas, in reality, the depth was not more than six.

"It's not a cupboard up there," went on Willy, following his major's gaze. "It's a little lobby, with some narrow stone stairs going up. One of the sentinel towers, I suppose. We're right at the base of the tower now," he added, flashing his torch down and stamping on the stone floor. "Seems to be a sort of crypt, or something. A hidden chamber, perhaps."

Handforth was looking at him queerly.

"The tower!" he muttered. "I say, that ghost—"

"You needn't worry, this is the other tower, at the other end of the house," interrupted Willy, with a little shiver. "I don't suppose she'll disturb us. Hope not, anyhow. I've had enough of that lady!"

"Yes, rather!" agreed his major. "Come on, let's get out and go back to our bed-rooms. But I want you to tell me what you've discovered—"

"Oh, give it a rest, Ted!" interrupted Willy. "And let's

have a look at this place before we go back. H'm! Nothing to write home about. No secrets to discover."

The light of the torch revealed the fact that the place was bare. There were stone walls, and the old oaken woodwork overhead. The floor was of stone, and there was nothing there except the fragments of flooring that Handforth had shattered. Willy pushed them aside with his foot.

"Yes, we might as well go," he admitted. "We'll have another talk to-morrow—Half a tick, though! What's this? Ah! A discovery, or my name isn't Captain Kidd!"

He was focusing his light upon one of the flagstones at his feet.

"Ye ring in ye floor!" he said impressively. "Look, Ted! Ten to one there's a subterranean passage under this. We're on the verge of discoveries!"

Although he spoke lightly, he was genuinely excited. Now that the debris was pushed away, they could see a rusted iron ring in that particular flagstone. And an iron ring meant that the flagstone was raisable.

"Let's get it up!" said Handforth tensely.

"You bet!" agreed Willy. "Come on! Heave-ho!"

He set the torch on the floor, and they both gripped the iron ring, and exerted all their strength. The flagstone resisted, having been untouched, probably, for years.

"It shifted!" panted Handforth. "Come on—again!"

They were both thrilled now, and they perspired as they tugged with every ounce of strength that possessed them. And at last the flagstone came up from its bedding.

"Got it!" said Willy triumphantly.

They laid the heavy stone right back, and there was now a gaping square hole in the floor, with blackness beneath. An earthy smell rose. But they were too excited to care about that.

"The torch!" said Handforth tensely.

He was prepared to jump right down, but Willy grabbed the torch and pushed him back.

"You ass!" he gasped. "You might kill yourself! Before we go down there, we've got to be certain that it's safe."

He went on his hands and knees and flashed the light into the black hole. Handforth joined him, and they stared down. For a moment they said nothing—they just looked.

The crypt was small and quite square. Immediately below was a stone floor, but there was something else—something right underneath the hole. A heavy-looking sea-chest, of the type that one associated with Spanish galleons. And, lying across it, was a skeleton, with tattered fragments of rotted clothing clinging to it!

"Oh, my goodness!" murmured Handforth, with a catch in his voice.

A Narrow Escape!

THIS was a discovery indeed.

Even Willy, usually so cool and collected, was fairly agog with genuine excitement. His face was flushed, and his eyes were gleaming. Neither he nor his major were frightened by the sight of that gruesome relic below. The whole adventure was too fascinating to allow of fright.

"Let's go down," breathed Handforth.

"Hold on before you drop into this place, Ted!" said Willy. "It hasn't been disturbed for hundreds of years, by the look of it."

"What does that matter—it's got a stone floor?" said Handforth. "There's no fear of falling through. Besides, it's only eight or nine feet down—"

"What about gas?" said Willy grimly. "Carbon monoxide, or whatever it is. Before we drop into this place we've got to test the purity of the air. I'm not taking any chances—especially as nobody else knows we've come here."

This was a very wise decision and characteristic of the shrewd Third Former. He pulled a piece of string from his pocket and quickly tied Handforth's candle to it. Then he lit the candle and prepared to lower it.

"Hold on!" gasped Handforth. "If there's gas down there you'll blow us to bits!"

"You—you chump!" snorted Willy. "It's not that sort of gas! If it's unsafe to go down the candle will peter out. If it burns brightly it proves that the air's breathable."

Handforth, abashed, said no more, and Willy lowered the candle. It burned brightly, even when it was on the floor of the crypt. And a moment later the pair were down there, taking a closer look at the curious relics. Very gingerly Willy touched the skeleton, and a portion of it collapsed.

"Thought so," he muttered. "You see, the slightest touch is enough. We can't know anything for certain, but we can make a guess. Hundreds of years ago this poor beggar must have been shoved down here by some of his enemies, and he died by starvation. Either that, or there's something in this chest that he treasured, and he came down here of his own accord and died over it."

Handforth was struck by one of Willy's words. "Treasure!" he gasped. "Great jumping corks! You've hit it, Willy! I mean, I've hit it! This chest is full of treasure! Doubloons, by George!"

"Pieces of eight!" said Willy sarcastically. "Don't be an ass, Ted! Just because we find an old sea-chest it doesn't mean that we've found a treasure. It's probably full of old papers or clothes—"

"Let's have a look, anyhow," said Handforth breathlessly. "Not now, old man," urged Willy. "We'll wait until to-morrow—until it's daylight. Even though the daylight won't come down here we shall feel safer. There's something comforting in the knowledge that there's sunshine outside. Let's get back to bed now."

"Just one peep—"

"My dear chap, it's no good!" said Willy impatiently. "Look at the fastenings! We can't do anything without tools. Can't you see? We shall need a crowbar to open this chest. Leave it until the morning."

Handforth was convinced at last, and he glanced upwards in readiness to jump up and get a hold on the edge of the square gap. And then he stared with sudden horror. His limbs stiffened. He could see right up—through the first opening and up to the other cavity, through which he had tumbled, the pair being in line. And he caught a glimpse of a pale, ghostly face—with wild, staring eyes that seemed unearthly.

"Look!" he gasped chokingly.

Willy looked up, startled by that shout, and just caught the merest glimpse of the horror. But even that glimpse was enough to fix the thing on his mind. His face was as pale as Edward Oswald's as he snatched the torch and flashed it into the opening.

But the light revealed nothing.

"Quick!" panted Willy. "We'll look into this!"

In a few moments he reached the other cellar, and Handforth came scrambling after him. But it was not such an easy matter to go farther, for when they attempted to haul themselves out the rotten woodwork crumbled in their fingers.

"It's no good," said Willy. "It's gone, whatever it was. We can't hope to get it now. Let's cool down. Phew! That thing gave me a start, I can tell you! What was it, Ted? Did you see it clearly?"

"A face!" said Handforth. "It wasn't a human face, Willy, it was something horrible—a sort of spectral—"

"It couldn't have been one of the chaps?"

"Good heavens, no!" interrupted Handforth. "It was grey; and didn't you see the eyes? The eyes were like—"

He broke off and shivered.

"It's high time we got back to bed," said Willy gruffly.

They lowered the flagstone into position again and

(Continued on the next page.)

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stamped it down. Then they hoisted themselves up, Willy going first, and Handforth helping him. This time they managed to get a firm hold, and they were soon out in the draughty passage. Handforth was curious to see the nature of that cavity.

As Willy had said, it was not a cupboard, but a kind of lobby, with stairs leading up into the tower. They closed the door, and, at Willy's suggestion, they took a piece of the broken wood and jammed it hard under the door as they closed the latter.

"We can't lock it, but we can make it secure," said Willy. "If any of the chaps come along here, exploring, they'll try this door, think it locked, and go away. We don't want anybody else falling through that flooring."

Handforth nodded.

"We don't want anybody else making discoveries, either," he said. "Remember, Willy, not a word. This is our secret, and we're going to carry out these investigations on our own. Why, it might be a Handforth family skeleton!"

"It's a skeleton, anyway."

"For all we know, those remains downstairs may be the bones of one of our ancestors," continued Edward Oswald. "So we'd better keep it to ourselves, and breathe nothing to a soul until we've opened the chest—not even to Uncle Gregory."

They went off, deciding that it was high time to get some sleep, although, in reality, the hour was not particularly late. They thought that dawn would soon be upon them, but so much had happened in a short time that they miscalculated. It was only just about two o'clock, in point of fact.

Willy led the way down the passages and corridors. "This is the best of having a good memory," he said. "We've only got to turn another corner, and we shall be on the big landing. Then we can be in bed in two minutes, and have plenty of sleep before nine."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth. "I thought it was nearly breakfast-time."

They were just going to turn an angle when another disturbance came, and this time from an unexpected quarter. Somewhere in their rear came a low, fiendish chuckle. They both paused and looked round.

"What—what was that?" asked Willy, startled.

He need not have asked. Down the long passage at the far end the moonlight was streaming in. And there, fully in the beam, was a figure. Not the Lady of the Tower, however, not one of the St. Frank's juniors. This figure was a mere shape. Willy went pale with sudden apprehension.

"Look!" he breathed. "There's—there's something—"

"Oh, the whole house is full of ghosts!" said Handforth between his teeth. "By George!" he roared. "We'll chase it!"

His exasperation overcame his nervousness, and he ran madly down the corridor.

Willy, after a moment of hesitation, followed. And as he started running he heard the great hall clock striking the hour of two.

"Goodness!" he whispered to himself.

Handforth found himself engaged in a chase—for the spectre was in full flight. It seemed to glide down an adjoining passage, and then, in front of Handforth's eyes, it

grew dim and seemed to disappear. He found a doorway in front of him—a wide-open doorway.

But even as he rushed up the door slammed with a crash which shook the whole corridor. Willy rushed up at the same moment.

"It went through here!" roared Handforth.

He tore the door open, and went to rush through. Then, in the nick of time, he checked himself, clutching at the doorpost. There was no corridor beyond here—but the open air, with a black void beneath his scrambling feet!

Exactly what lay below Handforth did not know. He could only see that this door was set in the outside wall, a good distance from the ground. The snow was beating into his face as he struggled back.

"Oh, Ted," gasped Willy, "why do you do these things? I—I thought you were going that time!"

"But that thing went through here!" muttered Handforth, amazed. "It went through, and slammed the door behind it. And, look! There's nothing down there but undisturbed snow! There's not even a scrap of ivy on the wall! Where did it go to? I've never believed in ghosts before, but—"

"You're sure the figure came through here?"

"Certain!" Didn't I nearly blunder after it?" asked Handforth.

They stood there, puzzled by this fresh mystery. Willy, indeed, was looking far more worried and startled than he had looked throughout the whole adventure. The moon came out, and they could see the snow-covered ground some distance below. And it was obvious that nothing human or material could have passed that way.

"It beats me!" muttered Willy anxiously. "Ted, it fairly beats me!"

They turned aside, and Willy closed the door. He was about to examine the immediate surroundings, when he started.

"Listen!" he said softly.

In the distance, and apparently from downstairs, they could hear heavy footfalls, and then voices. Presently there was another voice—one that rose loudly above the others.

"Uncle Gregory!" yelled Willy.

"What?" gasped his major.

"Come on, Ted!" said the Third Former. "Good egg!"

He raced back towards the landing and fairly flew to the head of the staircase. Handforth was hot at his heels, and at the same moment Nipper and Reggie Pitt and several others came running out.

Downstairs the hall was blazing with light—powerful lamps of the petrol-vapour type were being held aloft by several men. They were all wearing heavy overcoats, and two or three of them were obviously chauffeurs or grooms.

"Hey, boys!" bellowed a voice which sounded like the blast from a megaphone. "Now then, Edward! Come along, Willy! Where are you, my lads? Ah!" he added, with another blast, as he looked upstairs. "So there you are, eh?"

(Read all about the surprising development in next week's grand chapters. Ask for the GEM on Monday, December 24th.)



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