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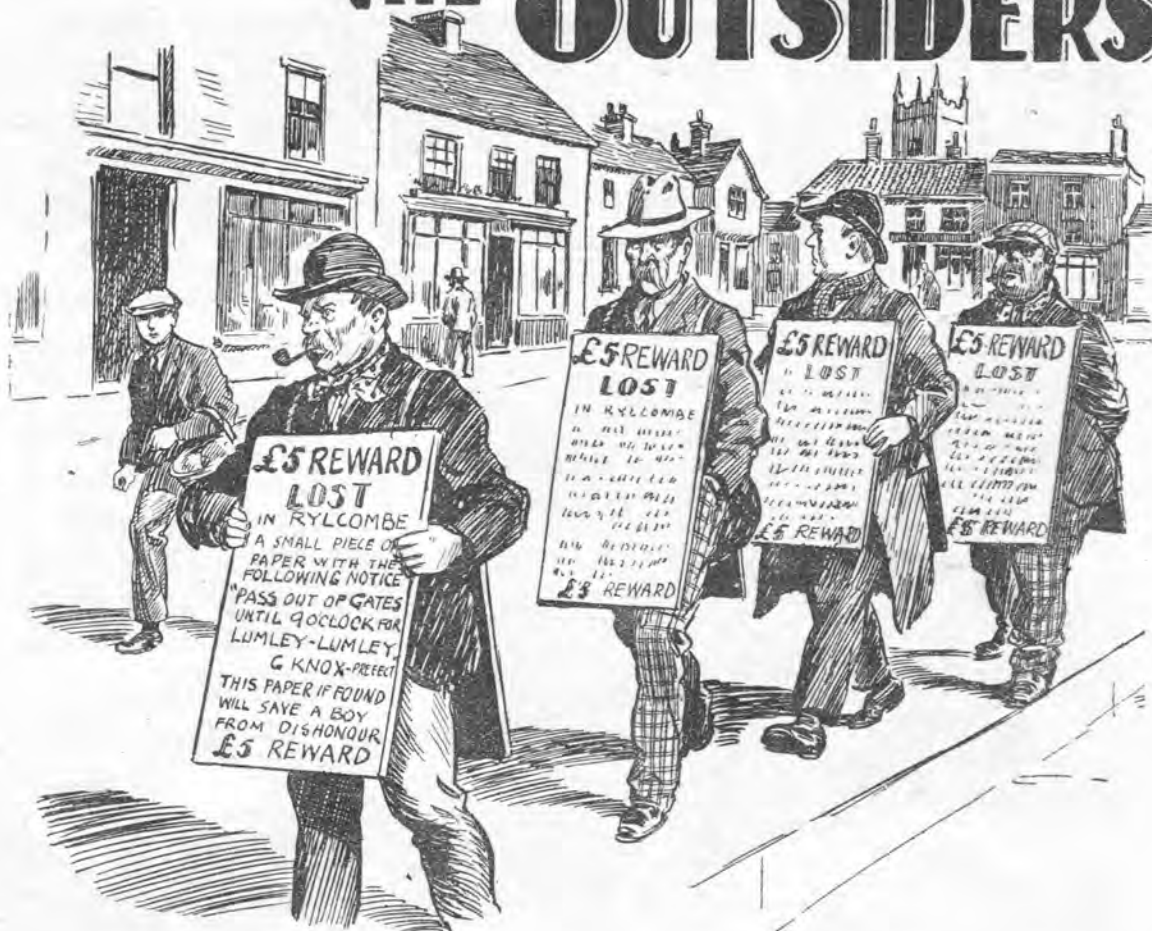
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*Inside —
And More to
Come!*



THE SCHOOLBOY WHO HAD ALL ST. JIM'S AGAINST HIM!—

THE OUTSIDERS



CHAPTER 1.

All Together!

"ALL here?" asked Tom Merry, looking round the study.
"I think so," said Blake.
"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry of the Shell at St. Jim's looked over the crowd of fellows in his study.

Tom Merry's study was one of the largest in the Shell passage in the School House at St. Jim's. But there was barely standing room in it now.

More than a dozen fellows were gathered there—some of them grinning, and some of them looking very serious.

Lowther and Manners, Tom Merry's chums in the Shell, were there, of course.

Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy of the Fourth, Kangaroo and Bernard Glyn of the Shell, and Figgins & Co. of the New House were among the rest. In fact, nearly all the fellows in the Lower School at St. Jim's who were on intimate terms with Tom Merry, had gathered in his study.

Evidently it was a most important occasion.

"There's enough of us, I think," remarked Monty Lowther, with a grin.
"There isn't much more room in the study, anyway."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a nod.

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"Quite enough of us to impress upon Lumley-Lumley the error of his ways," remarked Manners. "Let's march!"
"Right-ho! Follow your leader!"

Tom Merry marched out of the study, and the crowd of juniors marched after him. In two they marched down the passage into the Fourth Form passage, looking very solemn.

Whatever their business was, it was evidently something very serious and out of the ordinary run.

The procession stopped at the door

The victim of a secret plot, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the one-time Outsider of St. Jim's, is baffled by the overwhelming evidence which brings him into the shadow of expulsion. . . . And with all St. Jim's against him the Outsider realises that he can rely on no one but himself to save his honour!

of a study in the Fourth Form passage, and Tom Merry knocked.

"Come in!" sang out a voice within.

Tom Merry threw the door open.

The juniors marched in.

There were three fellows in the study, sitting round the table and doing their preparation. They were Lumley-Lumley, Levison, and Mellish of the Fourth. All three of them rose to their feet, and stared blankly at the crowd that poured into the study.

Levison and Mellish, who were on the worst of terms with Tom Merry & Co., backed away in alarm. They anticipated a ragging. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley stood by the table and looked at the invaders with a cool grin.

"How many are there of you?" he inquired politely. "All are welcome; but the study wasn't built for a lecture hall. I guess it's a case of standing room only!"

"We've come to see you, Lumley."

Lumley-Lumley nodded cheerfully.

"Well, I'm here, I guess," he said, "as large as life, and twice as natural. Take a good look, and then run away and let me get my prep done."

"Weally, Lumley—"

"You see, old man—"

"No; I'm dashed if I see!" he said. "Is anything the matter?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

Tom Merry glanced towards Levison and Mellish.

"You two chaps can clear," he said.

"It's not your bisney. Buzz off!"

"We're doing our prep," said Levison.

—GREAT YARN OF LUMLEY-LUMLEY'S FIGHT TO SAVE HIS HONOUR.

DARK HOUR!

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.



"You know very well," said Tom Merry, his eyes beginning to gleam a little. "You know that when you were first at St. Jim's you were called the Outsider—and you know why. You know you came jolly near being expelled for carrying on rotten games outside the school. You know we've all stood by you like true chums ever since you turned over a new leaf. Well, now you're taking to the wrong road again, we've jawed it over, and considered it the proper caper to come to you and talk to you plainly. We want you to chuck it. If you don't, we shall have to chuck you. But we want to give you a chance first. That's only fair!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Lumley-Lumley looked at the juniors, all of them now very serious and grim, and his face went crimson.

The flush died slowly out of his cheeks, leaving him very pale. There was silence in the study—a silence that was long and painful.

CHAPTER 2.

Called Over the Coals!

LUMLEY-LUMLEY did not speak. It was a long time since Tom Merry & Co. had taken this tone with him.

The time had been when Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had been known as the Outsider of St. Jim's, and had fully deserved the name.

But that time was past.

Lumley-Lumley had come very near being expelled from the school. Since then he had turned over a new leaf, and Tom Merry stood by him and helped him. When he had been the "Outsider" he had followed the path of reckless wrong-doing with cool determination; when he had reformed he had shown the same determination in refusing to allow his old associates, Levison & Co., to drag him back into the ways of the past.

Lumley-Lumley clenched his hands as he regarded the crowd of juniors of the Fourth and Shell.

Tom Merry broke the silence at last.

"Well," he said, "what have you got to say?"

"Nothing."

"I mean, what is your answer?"

"I guess there isn't any."

The juniors exchanged glances.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"If you keep up what you've started again you'll break with us," said Tom Merry, his eyes fixed upon Lumley-Lumley. "We've all been friendly to you, and you can't say that we haven't stood by you. But we don't want to have anything to say to a fellow who turns himself into a pub-haunter!"

"No fear!"

"Wathah not!"

Lumley-Lumley's eyes glinted.

"I guess I haven't anything to say, only—"

"Only what?"

"That before you jump on a fellow it would be a good idea to make sure that there's some reason for jumping on him, and to give him that reason."

The juniors started.

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"We're jolly well not going to be turned out of our own study!" said Mellish.

The two cads of the Fourth were very keen, as a matter of fact, to know what unusual business Tom Merry & Co. had with Lumley-Lumley. But their curiosity was not destined to be gratified.

"Sorry to interrupt the prep," said Tom Merry politely. "Sorry to have to turn a chap out of his own study. But I must request you to retire for five minutes."

"Rats!"

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, turning to his followers, who were partly in the study, and partly in the doorway, "if these two bounders don't get out, kindly chuck them into the passage!"

"Right-ho!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here—" began Levison savagely.

"Are you going?" asked Tom Merry politely.

The Co. made a forward movement.

Levison and Mellish promptly squeezed their way out of the study. Then the remainder of the Co. crowded in, and the door was shut.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was alone with the numerous invaders of his study. He did not look alarmed. Unlike his study-mates, he was on the best of terms with Tom Merry and his comrades. He only looked puzzled.

"Now to bisney!" said Glyn of the Shell.

"I guess it's about time," said Lumley-Lumley. "What the dickens does all

this mean? Have I been getting your backs up without knowing it?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, deah boy!"

"The fact is—" said Jack Blake.

"It's like this—" said Figgins.

"You see—" began Kangaroo.

Lumley-Lumley grinned.

"I guess I should get it clearer if you talked one at a time," he remarked.

"Look here, Lumley," began Tom Merry, "we're all your friends here. We all wish you well. That's so, isn't it, chaps?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Therefore, we've jawed it over together, and decided to come and tell you plainly that it won't do!" said Tom Merry. "You understand?"

Lumley-Lumley chuckled.

"Blessed if I do!" he said. "If this is a joke, I'm willing to laugh, though I don't see where the fun comes in. If it isn't a joke, and you mean bisney, would you mind explaining what you are talking about? I should be really glad to know."

"It's got to stop!"

"What's got to stop?" demanded Lumley-Lumley.

IN THIS NUMBER:

3 Superb Picture Cards—Free!

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"You know very well," said Monty Lowther.

"I guess I don't."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You weally ought to leave the talkin' to me, Tom Mewwy, deah boy! You have left out the important bisney. Pway allow me to explain—"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy!"

"I wufuse to wing off—"

"Let him run on," said Lumley-Lumley. "He seems to have more sense than the rest of you put together. He's going to let me know what's up, anyway."

"Look here—"

"Lumley-Lumley is quite wight," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It may simply be that cires are against our friend Lumley. Lumley-Lumley, old man, is it true that you have been takin' to your old ways?"

"No," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Have you been hangin' wound pubs?"

"No."

"Have you put any money on waces?"

"No."

"Have you been chummin' up with Cwooke of the Shell, and playin' cards with him in his study?"

"No."

"Bai Jove! He denies the whole stow, deah boys."

Tom Merry & Co. looked very uncomfortable. There was silence in the study again, during which Jerrold Lumley-Lumley looked from one to another of the juniors with his keen, searching eyes.

"Well?" he said. "Now have I satisfied you?"

Silence.

"Somebody seems to have been piling on yarns about me," said Lumley-Lumley. "I don't know who it is, but somebody has."

Still silence.

"And you fellows, who called yourselves my friends, have believed it," said the Outsider, with a curl of the lip.

"Bai Jove!"

"And without giving me a chance to know what you've got against me, or to explain, you come here in a body and jump on me like this."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Who's been running me down to you?" demanded Lumley-Lumley.

"Nobody," said Tom Merry. "I suppose you don't think that we would listen to any cad telling us tales about a fellow behind his back, do you?"

"Then what have you got against me?"

"It's pretty well the talk of the House," said Tom Merry sharply. "If it's all a mistake, it's a jolly queer one, that's all!"

"Jolly queeah, deah boy!"

Lumley-Lumley's eyes gleamed.

"I've told you," he said, "that it's a mistake. I've done nothing to give you any reason for piling on me like this. If you've got anything against me, tell me what it is, and I guess I'll explain it away."

"Bai Jove, that sounds all wight!"

"Very well," said Tom Merry crisply. "If we've taken too much for granted we'll say we're sorry, and we'll be jolly glad to know that it was a mistake. But it will want a lot of explaining, I think."

"A jolly lot!" remarked Figgins.

"Oh, pile in!" said Lumley-Lumley carelessly. "I think you might have had a bit more faith in me. But I suppose you can't forget what's happened a long time back. You have good memories for a fellow's faults."

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"In the first place, what are you doing with a pack of cards, if you don't use them?"

"That's soon answered. Nothing! I haven't any cards."

Tom Merry knitted his brows.

"Do you remember that you lent Blake your coat yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Tell him what you found in the pocket, Blake."

"Pack of cards!" said Blake. "I didn't find them; they were there when I put my hand in a pocket."

"Must have put them there yourself, in your sleep, I should think," said Lumley-Lumley. "I certainly know nothing about them. There's the coat, hanging on a nail on the door. Look in the pockets now—"

"No good, they won't be there now, I expect!" said Blake.

"Do you say that the cards didn't belong to you?" asked Tom Merry.

"I guess so."

"Then somebody else shoved them there?"

"I guess so."

"Who, then?" asked Blake.

Lumley-Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"How should I know? You all know that there's more than one fellow in the School House annoyed at my chucking the way I used to go on. Croke, Mellish, and Levison have tried lots of times to chip me into going with them again. Two of the rotters share my study with me; they could put anything they liked in my pockets."

"Yaas, wathah! That's quite true!"

"Anything else on the list?" asked the Outsider coolly.

"Yes. Two cigarettes were picked up under your desk in the Fourth Form Room yesterday, and Mr. Lathom was very ratty about it."

"I guess I heard of that; but they weren't mine."

"You didn't drop them there?"

"No."

"Next item!" said Digby.

"Next item," said Tom Merry; "a sporting paper was found in the library last night, and taken to the Head. We all know that you were reading in the library last evening, Lumley. We don't know what you were reading."

"I was reading 'Treasure Island,'" said the Outsider.

"It wasn't your sporting paper, then?"

"I guess not."

"Next item," said Tom Merry; "a St. Jim's junior was seen leaving the Green Man in Rylcombe by the back entrance. Darrell of the Sixth saw him; he knew the St. Jim's cap, but couldn't spot the chap who was wearing it. You were late for calling-over, and came in with your boots muddy, as if you'd come along the towing-path—where the back way from the Green Man leads to. Was it you?"

"It wasn't."

"Where were you, then?"

"I had a ramble up the river, and got in late. It's happened before, and to other chaps as well as me."

The juniors looked at one another. The Outsider was explaining every item in the count against him as fast as it was brought forward. He was perfectly cool and collected, and seemed to be telling the truth. But they could not help remembering the old Lumley-Lumley, and the wonderful facility with which he had been able to roll out falsehoods that looked like truth.

If he had taken up his old ways again, he had probably taken up the habits of lying, along with the rest.

"Last item," said Tom Merry quietly. Lumley-Lumley grinned.

"Heaviest of the lot, I suppose," he said, "as you've saved it till the last?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"Well, get it off your chest!"

"You left a note for Croke in his study this morning, making an appointment for to-night to break bounds."

Lumley-Lumley shook his head.

"Do you deny it?" asked Tom Merry.

"I guess I wouldn't take the trouble, only as you seem to have put me on my defence, I may as well. I didn't do it."

"Be careful!" said Tom Merry.

"What do you mean?"

"We've got the note."

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"I guess I don't see how you can have the note, when I never wrote it," he said. "And if there was a note for Croke, how did you come to get hold of it?"

"Glyn happened to go into Croke's study with him, to see Croke's camera, and it was lying on the table, where you had left it. I suppose it never occurred to you that any decent chap would go into Croke's study? Glyn couldn't help seeing that it was in your fist, as he knows your fist."

"Just so," said the Liverpool lad. "I couldn't help it. I wasn't going to read it, of course, but Croke showed it to me."

"Oh, Croke showed it to you, did he?" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Yes, he did," said Glyn.

"What did he show it to you for?"

"To show me that you had been taking us in," said Bernard Glyn. "He said he wasn't going to have you running with the hare, and hunting with the hounds; and that's only reasonable, as I take it."

"Yaas, wathah! You ought to choose one or the othah, Lumley, deah boy."

"You'll have to!" said Manners bluntly.

Lumley-Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I guess I can only repeat that I didn't leave any note in Croke's study for him," he said. "He was pulling your leg."

"Weally, Lumley—"

"We've got the note," said Tom Merry quietly.

"Let's see it."

Tom Merry made a sign to Glyn, and the Liverpool junior drew a crumpled paper from his pocket, and threw it upon the table.

"When Glyn told us, we made Croke give it up," explained Tom Merry. "There it is."

Lumley-Lumley picked up the note. His face changed in expression as he read it. It was brief, and ran:

"To-night at the slanting oak at half-past ten.—J.L.L."

"My hat!" ejaculated Lumley-Lumley.

"Is that your writing?"

"Yes, I guess so."

"Did you write it?"

"I must have."

"Then you were lying only a minute ago," said Tom Merry sternly.

Lumley-Lumley smiled.

"I guess not. I wrote that; it's my writing right enough. Croke must have kept it. It's a whole term since I wrote that note, and as it isn't dated, he was able to palm it off on you for a note written to-day. You can see the paper's pretty old."

The juniors stared hard at Lumley-Lumley.



In a moment Lumley-Lumley's arm slipped round Crooke's neck, and the cad's head was in chancery. "I guess you get your gruel now!" panted the Outsider. Crooke struggled desperately, but it was of no avail. He roared as Lumley hammered him.

"My word! He's got a giddy answer to everything!" said Digby.

"If that note had been dated—" began Lowther.

"It would have had a date last term, or the term before."

"Ahem!"

"You don't believe me?"

Tom Merry hesitated.

"I'm blessed if I know what to believe," he said frankly. "You certainly seem to have an answer ready for everything, Lumley. But if everything's as you say, there have been a jolly lot of coincidences."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Lumley-Lumley's eyes glittered.

"I suppose you're going to remain in doubt?" he remarked. "And you're going to condescend to give me the benefit of the doubt, you fellows? You're going to keep your eyes and ears open for proof?"

"I don't see what else we can do."

"I guess I do."

"What is it?"

"You can keep to yourselves, and let me alone," said Lumley-Lumley coolly. "I don't want any friends who are on the look-out to hear things against me. I don't want any lofty condescending. I don't want to have anything to do with you unless you trust me. Unless you believe every word I've said to you, I'll ask you not to speak to me again—not until you think you can believe me, and without reservation."

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, what do you say?" demanded Lumley-Lumley.

"I hardly know what to say," said Tom Merry slowly. "I can't quite believe everything you say, though I'd like to. You can't blame me—"

"I should take your word," said Lumley-Lumley.

"But you've never known me to lie,"

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"And you've known me to lie, many a time and oft," he said. "Well, I guess perhaps I don't blame you. But I mean bisney; no half-confidence for me. Either you take me whole, or leave me alone. Every chap here who doesn't believe me, full and fair, can get up on his hind legs and say so, and I won't trouble him any more for his friendship."

"Weally, Lumley—"

"So speak out, and get done!" said the Outsider.

"I wegard that as a most unweasonable attitude for you to take up, Lumley, deah boy, and I do not approve of it."

"Go hon!"

"I wegard you—"

"I can only repeat what I've said," said Tom Merry steadily. "I hope you're innocent, Lumley, and that Crooke wasn't telling the truth. But there isn't any proof."

"And my word isn't good enough?"

"No," said Tom Merry at last. "I don't like to say so; but it isn't if you put it to me directly like that."

"Very well, good-evening!"

"But—"

"I guess the matter's finished."

"Weally, Lumley—"

The juniors, looking very angry, trooped out of the study. Lumley-Lumley had taken up an attitude in the matter that surprised and annoyed them, and there were few of them who were not inclined to take him at his word and leave him severely alone.

Indeed, without being unduly suspicious, they might surmise that he wanted to be let alone to follow his old ways, and that he wished to put the blame of the break upon them.

The door closed after the juniors, and the Outsider was left alone in his study.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley stood by the table, his hand resting upon it, his gaze

fixed upon the door that had closed after the chums of St. Jim's.

He was the Outsider again now!

The word came into his ears. The cool defiance in his face faded when Tom Merry & Co. had gone; a heavy, troubled look came into its place, and he sighed. In pride and recklessness he had broken with his friends; they had taken him at his word and left him. And now?

Now he was the Outsider!

CHAPTER 3.

The Coward's Blow!

CROOKE of the Shell was in his study.

Crooke was sitting in his arm-chair, with a cigarette between his lips. A curl of blue smoke rose from the cigarette and floated in the atmosphere of the study.

Crooke was alone, and when he was alone he was accustomed to these little indulgences.

But he hid the cigarette quickly enough at the sound of a footstep pausing outside the door. It was most likely only some Shell fellow; but there was always the possibility that it was a prefect, or even a master, and Crooke did not want to get an imposition or a caning.

There was a knock at the door, and it opened, and Tom Merry came in.

The captain of the Shell sniffed, and frowned angrily.

"Smoking!" he exclaimed.

Crooke shrugged his shoulders.

"I have seen Lumley," said Tom Merry, laying the crumpled note on the table. "There's your note, Crooke."

"Thanks."

"Lumley says that note was written more than a term ago."

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Crooke laughed.

"I suppose he left it undated so that he could say that," he remarked. "He may have been nervous about it being seen by somebody. He ought to have had more sense than to write, really; but he was always reckless."

"You were a cad to show it to us, new or old," said Tom Merry.

Crooke yawned.

"Have you come here to tell me that?" he asked.

"Yes—and something else. That note's about breaking bounds to-night. You're not going to do it."

"Who's going to stop me?"

"I am, if necessary. There's going to be no breaking bounds at night in the Shell dormitory, so long as I am captain of the Shell," said Tom Merry determinedly.

The cad of the Shell grinned.

"If I had meant to go, you would have seen nothing of this note," he said.

"No; I suppose not."

"I thought it was time Lumley came out in his true colours," said Crooke.

"If he wants to keep in with your set, let him break out of mine. If he wants to belong to us, he can break with you and your gang. It's only fair; I don't see why he should run with the hare and hunt with the hounds."

"He has broken with us," said Tom Merry.

Crooke started.

"My hat! He's taken the plunge, then?"

"Yes. He says it's because he won't have friends who don't trust him—not because he wants to have anything to do with your set," said Tom Merry.

"Good old Lumley! He always has a ripping lie ready," said Crooke admiringly.

Tom Merry turned on his heels and strode from the study. He despised Crooke for having given his associate away; and yet he could not be surprised at it.

Crooke relighted the cigarette when he was alone. But he did not remain alone long. He had just finished the cigarette, and thrown the stump into the grate, when the door was kicked open, and the Outsider of St. Jim's came in.

Lumley-Lumley closed the door behind him. Crooke started to his feet, changing colour a little. Crooke was a big, heavy fellow, much bigger than the Outsider of St. Jim's. But he was not of the stuff of which heroes are made; and the reckless courage of the Outsider was well known.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had his faults—indeed, their name was legion—but he did not seem to know the meaning of the word fear.

"Hallo!" said Crooke, with somewhat lame affability. "Have a smoke?"

"I guess not."

"Might as well now that you don't belong to the goody-goody brigade," said Crooke, with a grin.

Lumley-Lumley looked steadily at him. "Oh! So you've heard about that?" he asked.

"Tom Merry's just been here."

"You know what you've done for me, Crooke," said Lumley-Lumley. "Ever since I chucked you and the old gang, you've been trying to get me back, or else to make me suffer for having left it. You and Levison and Mellish—you've all had a hand in it. You haven't succeeded in getting me round your way; but you've made me quarrel with Tom Merry & Co. at last."

"Better stick to the old firm," suggested Crooke. "Look here, Lumley, I

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was always a good pal to you. We had some good times together. I'm willing to be your pal again, and say nothing about the past."

"I guess you're the only one that's willing."

Crooke showed his teeth in an unpleasant grin.

"Well, if you won't have me as a pal, you can have me for an enemy! You've seen already what I can do. You're off with the Good Little Erics already."

"Yes, owing to you finding an old letter. I was fool enough to write them terms ago," said the Outsider of St. Jim's, between his teeth.

"You don't expect me to admit that?" said Crooke.

"I don't see why not, as we're alone," said Lumley-Lumley. "You will keep up your version to Tom Merry, I suppose?"

"And he will believe it!" grinned Crooke. "They're giving you the cold shoulder now, Lumley. The game is up for you in that quarter. Better come back to the flock."

"I'm not coming back to the flock!" said the Outsider. "I'm going to make you pay for telling lies about me to my friends!"

"Your friends!" sneered Crooke. "They're not your friends now. Tom Merry told me himself that you've broken with the whole crowd."

"That's so."

"Then you'll be on your lonesome if you don't come back to your old pals," said Crooke. "Do the sensible thing, Lumley! You'll have to do it in the long run. I'd rather be your pal than your enemy."

"I'd rather have you for an enemy than a pal, thanks!" said Lumley-Lumley.

Crooke gritted his teeth.

"Well, if you mean that, I'll make you sorry for it!" he said. "You're off with the Good Little Erics. And I'll make it impossible for you to crawl up to them again, too."

"I guess I'm not crawling up to anybody, Crooke!" said the Outsider independently. "I was always able to look after myself—I've hoed my own row, and never asked for help—in New York and Paris; in places you'd be like a lost sheep in, Crooke, my boy. I haven't come here to make terms with you!"

"Then what do you want?" growled Crooke.

"I want you to own up to Tom Merry that you lied about that letter."

Crooke laughed.

"Will you?"

"No fear!"

"If you don't," said the Outsider, with cool determination, "I'm going to thrash you!"

Crooke drew a quick, hard breath.

"Don't be a fool, Lumley-Lumley!" he muttered, his voice coming thickly. "I don't want any trouble with you."

"Are you going to tell Tom Merry the truth?"

"I've told him the truth," said Crooke.

"You're going to stick to the yarn you've told him?"

"Yes."

"Then I'm going to make you squirm!" said the Outsider, pushing back his cuffs. "You're bigger than I am, but I'll chance that! Put up your dukes!"

"I—I—I—"

Lumley-Lumley moved round the table, and Crooke backed and sidled away, still keeping the table between him and the Outsider.

Lumley-Lumley grinned.

"Chase me!" he exclaimed. "You may as well stand up to it, Crooke; you've got to have it!"

"I—I'll fight you in the gym to-morrow!"

"To-morrow never comes!" said Lumley-Lumley. "You're going to own up to Tom Merry, or else take your hiding to-night!"

Crooke made a spring towards the door. But Lumley-Lumley was watching him, and he sprang forward and caught the cad of the Shell by the shoulder.

With a swing of his arm, he flung Crooke back into the study.

Crooke staggered across the room and brought up against the window, panting. His face was flushed now with rage, and his breath came thick and fast.

"Hang you!" he muttered. "I—"

Lumley-Lumley advanced towards him.

"Keep back! I—"

"You're in a blue funk!" grinned Lumley-Lumley. "You've still got the chance of owning up to Tom Merry, if you choose!"

"Hang you! I won't!"

"Then come on! There's your coward's blow, as you seem to want something to liven you up!"

Smack!

Crooke, with a hoarse cry of rage, hurled himself forward at the Outsider. His rush and the heavy weight of the Shell fellow bore the Fourth Former backwards, and it looked for a moment as if he would be swept across the study.

But Lumley-Lumley rallied, and hit out vigorously. Crooke rained savage blows upon him; but Lumley-Lumley, if lighter, was quicker, and for every blow he received, he returned two.

Crooke hurled himself desperately upon the Outsider, and grappled with him.

Lumley-Lumley's arm slid round his neck, and Crooke's head was in chancery.

"I guess you get the gruel now!" panted Lumley-Lumley.

Crooke roared and struggled desperately. He was punching away at Lumley-Lumley's ribs; but the Outsider of St. Jim's was hammering his face, and hammering it hard, and Crooke was getting decidedly the worst of it.

Panting and gasping, trampling and struggling, the two combatants reeled to and fro, with a din and uproar that could be heard the whole length of the Shell passage.

CHAPTER 4.

In Doubt!

KILDARE, the captain of St. Jim's, came striding down the Shell passage, with a frown upon his brow and a cane in his hand.

He stopped at the door of Crooke's study, threw it open, and strode in.

A dozen fellows were gathering outside, attracted by the terrific din in Crooke's quarters. As Kildare entered the two struggling juniors crashed into the table, and it went flying. Books and papers and an inkstand shot into the grate.

"Stop that at once!" shouted Kildare. "Biff, biff, biff!"

"Yow-ow!"

The captain of St. Jim's lashed out with his cane. The first lash fell across Crooke's bent back, and he roared. The second caught Lumley-Lumley across the legs, and he yelled.

The two juniors separated at last. Lumley-Lumley dodged round the table just in time to escape another cut. Crooke staggered against the wall, with one hand to his nose and the other to his eye, gasping and spluttering.

"Groogh!"

"Now then, what does this mean?" asked Kildare angrily.

"I'm licking Crooke," explained Lumley-Lumley coolly.

"Yow-ow!" groaned Crooke.

"Do you know you were making a row that could be heard all over the House?" demanded Kildare.

"I guess I'm sorry. But I was bound to lick that cad," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Ow, ow!"

"You seem to have got some of the licking yourself," said Kildare, with a glance at the Outsider's bruised face.

"Yes, I guess so; but that doesn't matter. I think I've made Crooke sorry for himself."

"Ow!" said Crooke. "He came here and started on me because I showed his letter to Tom Merry. He wanted me to break bounds to-night—ow!—and I wouldn't!"

"Wh-what's that?" asked Kildare sharply.

"It's a whopper!" said Lumley-Lumley.

There was a chuckle in the passage.

"There's the letter!" yelled Crooke.

Kildare looked at the note.

"Did you write this, Lumley-Lumley?"

"Yes; a term or two ago."

"Oh! It's an old letter, then?"

"Yes. Crooke showed it to Tom Merry, and pretended that it was written to-day."

"It was written to-day!" howled Crooke. "I found it on my table when I came in. Glyn was with me; he saw it."

"Yes; you'd put it there ready for him," said Lumley-Lumley.

Kildare frowned in a puzzled way. It was difficult to know which to believe of two such conflicting statements.

He glanced at the juniors in the passage. The Terrible Three had come along from their study, and Kildare signed to Tom Merry to come in.

"You've seen that letter, Merry?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"Do you think it's an old letter?"

"I don't know. Crooke says one thing, and Lumley-Lumley the opposite. I'd rather believe Lumley-Lumley of the two—only I don't know what to believe."

Kildare tossed the letter into the fire.

"If there is any breaking bounds, you will hear from me, Lumley," he said.

"I haven't forgotten your old tricks. I can't settle this matter; but there's not to be any more of this rowing. Do you hear?"

"I guess so."

"Keep out of Crooke's study. Buzz off!"

"Right-ho!"

Lumley-Lumley left the study.

Kildare followed him out, without another word to Crooke.

The cad of the Shell closed his door, and sat down to dab his nose with his handkerchief.

Crooke had suffered pretty seriously in his struggle with the Outsider of St. Jim's. But he was not feeling wholly dissatisfied.

He felt that he had finished Lumley-Lumley, so far as Tom Merry & Co. were concerned, and it looked as if he was right there.

The chums of St. Jim's did not speak to the Outsider as he walked away down the passage.

Lumley-Lumley did not seem to mind.

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He went back to his study, and continued his preparation as if nothing had happened. Levison and Mellish were in the study, and they looked at the Outsider very curiously, but he did not speak to them.

"It's a wotten bisney altogethah," Arthur Augustus remarked to Tom Merry & Co. "I wondah which of those wottals was tellin' us the facts?"

"It's a giddy mystery," said Blake.

Tom Merry frowned.

"Anyway, Lumley-Lumley chose to break with us," he said. "We've got nothing to reproach ourselves for."

"Yaas, that's quite wight."

"I say—" began Bernard Glyn, who was looking rather worried.

"Hallo! What do you think about it?"

"Oh, I'm not thinking about that!" said the Liverpool junior. "I've lost my fountain-pen!"

"Oh, blow your fountain-pen!" said Blake crossly.

"But it's the fountain-pen with the invisible ink in it," said Glyn—"the one I invented myself, you know; the one Gussy wrote his round-robin with!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus frowned majestically. He had not forgotten that peculiar jape, when he had drawn up a round robin in invisible ink, addressed to Kildare, and had presented the captain of St. Jim's with a sheet of perfectly blank paper.

"Weally, Glyn," he said, "if that wotten pen and that wotten ink have been lost, I wegard it as a vevy good thing!"

"Oh rats!" said Bernard Glyn. "I want it. I'm sure I left it on my study table, and some silly ass has borrowed it, I suppose."

Bernard Glyn went away to look for his famous fountain-pen; but he did not find it.

Kangaroo and Clifton Dane, his study-mates, had not seen it. Kangaroo suggested that he should make another, and Clifton Dane remarked that it would probably turn up in the course of time; and Bernard Glyn snorted and let the matter drop.

The Terrible Three returned to their study to finish their preparation.

Tom Merry was wearing a worried look.

He was not satisfied in his mind about Lumley-Lumley. The evidence against the Outsider had satisfied the juniors, and they had gone to Lumley-Lumley to remonstrate with him. The Outsider had explained everything in a plausible way, and yet—

"No good bothering over it," said Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry nodded.

"No," he said. "But—"

"Well, chuck it off your mind!"

"Blessed if I can chuck it off my mind," said Tom Merry. "It looks as if Lumley-Lumley has been playing the giddy ox again, and was simply pulling our leg all the time. But we know, too, that Crooke & Co. have been feeling very savage about his turning back on them; and this may be a scheme of theirs to get him back into bad odour with us."

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"It may," said Manners doubtfully. "If it isn't, it's hard on Lumley-Lumley."

"I don't see it," said Lowther. "He's no right to throw us over as he's done, simply because we don't take his word for the frozen truth. He used to be a giddy fabricator, and he might have had a relapse."

"A very likely thing, too," said Manners.

"Yes; but—"

"Oh, never mind butting!" said Lowther. "Shove it off your chest, and get your prep done, or you won't be done before bed-time."

And Tom Merry settled down to work; but the worried wrinkle still remained in his brow.

At bed-time, Crooke looked very much damaged when he came into the Shell dormitory. One of his eyes was closed, and his nose looked nearly twice its usual size.

In the Fourth Form dormitory Lumley-Lumley also showed signs of damage, but by no means so serious. He did not speak to Blake & Co., but when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy said, "Good-night, Lumley, deah boy!" the Outsider responded cheerfully: "Good-night!"

He did not seem at all sulky.

Indeed, what he thought about the occurrences of the evening it was difficult to tell; his face wore its usual expression of careless unconcern, and the impression he gave was that he was not thinking about the matter at all.

CHAPTER 5.

No Exit!

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY had the same air of unconcern on the following day.

The break with Tom Merry & Co. did not seem to trouble him in the least.

Other fellows, who were in the habit of following Tom Merry's lead, showed a disposition to fight shy of the Outsider and so far from trying them in any way the Outsider met them half-way in the matter.

It was very evident that he was not in a humour to ask favours of anyone.

After school that day Lumley-Lumley met Kildare in the Sixth Form passage, as the captain of St. Jim's was going to his study, and stopped to speak to him.

Kildare gave him a rather severe look. The signs of the previous evening's combat had not yet left the Outsider's face.

"Well, what do you want, Lumley?" asked Kildare abruptly.

"Pass out of gates," said the Outsider cheerfully.

Kildare looked at him sharply.

"Where are you going?"

"To Rylcombe."

"What for?"

"To see a friend."

Kildare pursed his lips.

"Look here, Lumley-Lumley! This isn't the time to ask me for a pass out of gates, especially in the evening," he said. "There has been a lot of unpleasant talk about you in the House lately. You can't expect me to forget that you were once nearly expelled from the school for bad conduct."

Lumley-Lumley grunted.

"I guess that's going to haunt me for the rest of my days," he remarked.

"Very likely; a thing like that takes a long time to live down!" said Kildare sharply. "You can't expect otherwise. The fact is, Lumley, you are under suspicion."

"Oh!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"And so you'd better not ask for a pass out in the evening for some time to come," said Kildare. "If it were something specially important, and you could give me the details, it would make a difference."

"I guess it's important."

"What do you want to do?"

"I want to see a friend."

"Who is this friend at Rylcombe?"

"It's nobody at a pub," grinned Lumley-Lumley. "It's Grimes."

"Grimes?" repeated Kildare. "Who is he? I think I've heard the name."

"I think you have," agreed Lumley-Lumley. "Grimes is the kid who brings the grocery home from Mr. Sands, the grocer."

"The village grocer's boy!" exclaimed Kildare, staring.

"Yes. He's a friend of mine."

"Look here, Lumley-Lumley—"

"He stood by me when I was in trouble with my pater," said Lumley-Lumley. "He's one of the best!"

Kildare laughed.

"There is no harm in your being pally with Grimes," he said. "I dare say he's all right. But you can't have a pass out this evening, and that settles it. Your friendship with Grimes can stand over for the next half-holiday."

"But, I say, I'm getting fed-up here, you know. I want somebody to jaw to," said Lumley-Lumley. "The fellows have all got their ears up, and I want to see Grimey."

"Oh, nonsense!"

Kildare went into his study and closed the door. Lumley-Lumley remained in the passage, looking dismayed and exasperated. He could see that Kildare did not trust him, and that the St. Jim's captain was more than half-inclined to think that the story of wishing to see Grimes was an excuse to cover some other intention.

"I guess this is getting too thick!" growled Lumley-Lumley. "Still, Kildare isn't the only pebble on the beach; there are others."

He knocked at Darrell's door. The deep voice of Darrell of the Sixth came from within the study.

"Come in!"

Lumley-Lumley entered the prefect's study.

Langton and Rushden, two other prefects of the Sixth, were also there.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Darrell abruptly.

"Can I have a pass out this evening?" asked Lumley-Lumley meekly.

"Ask Kildare."

"Ahem!"

"Buzz off! Kildare's in his study," said Langton.

"Ahem!"

"What are you waiting for?" demanded Darrell.

"I—I guess I'd rather have a pass from you, Darrell if you don't mind," said Lumley-Lumley. "I don't want to bother Kildare."

Darrell looked at him sharply.

"Does that mean that you have asked Kildare already, and have been refused?" he demanded.

"Ahem!"

"You cheeky young rascal!" exclaimed Darrell indignantly. "Do you mean to say that you've been refused by Kildare, and you've come to ask me over his head?"

"Ahem!"

Darrell rose to his feet, and caught up a cane.

Lumley-Lumley promptly retired from the study, shutting the door after him.

"My hat!" he murmured. "The Sixth won't hand out any passes. I wonder whether I could stick old Lathom for one?"

The Outsider walked away to Mr. Lathom's study. The master of the Fourth Form was there, and he blinked at Lumley-Lumley in his benevolent way over his spectacles.

"Ah, you have brought your lines, Lumley-Lumley?" he asked.

The Outsider was dismayed. He had forgotten the fact that he had received a Latin imposition from Mr. Lathom that day.

"No, sir, not—not exactly," he said. "I came to ask you for a pass out of gates, sir."

"H'm!" said Mr. Lathom. "Have you done your lines?"



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"Not yet, sir."
"If you go out you will not have time to do them this evening, Lumley-Lumley."

"I guess I'll make time, sir."
"What do you want to go out for this evening?" asked Mr. Lathom.

"I want to see a friend at Rylcombe, sir."

"Indeed! Whom?"

"Grimes, sir."

"One of the Grammar School boys?" asked Mr. Lathom.

Lumley-Lumley smiled.

"No, sir; the grocer's boy."

The master of the Fourth started.

"Nonsense, Lumley!" he said, with some asperity. "Go and do your lines."

"If you please, sir—"

"You may go!"

Lumley-Lumley left the study. His brows were contracted as he walked away. He paused at the end of the passage to think it out. When Jerrold Lumley-Lumley once had an idea in his head, it was very seldom that he gave it up.

He wanted to go down to Rylcombe to see Grimes, and he was determined to do so. The only question was—the means.

"Hallo!" A hand fell upon Lumley-Lumley's shoulder, and startled him out of his reverie. "What's the trouble?"

The Outsider looked round; it was Cutts of the Fifth. The Fifth Former was regarding him with a peculiar grin. Lumley-Lumley frowned a little. He thought he understood the cause of Cutts' sudden cordiality.

Cutts of the Fifth was a fellow very like what Lumley-Lumley had been when he first came to St. Jim's. More than once he had made overtures of friendship towards the Outsider, but Lumley-Lumley had held aloof. Now it was evident that Cutts had heard the talk about him, and his manner very plainly indicated that he looked upon himself and Lumley-Lumley as birds of a feather.

"Oh, nothing in particular!" said Lumley-Lumley shortly, in reply to the Fifth Former's question.

Cutts grinned.

"It seems that the Good Little Erics are all down on you," he remarked. "You've broken with that lot at last. It was a sensible thing to do."

"Do you think so?" said Lumley-Lumley grimly.

"Yes, rather!" said Cutts. "Look here, now you've finished with them you may as well drop spoofing altogether. What do you say to a run down town?"

"No, thanks!" said the Outsider. "I'm done with that kind of thing."

Cutts stared at him.

"Tom Merry & Co. don't think so," he remarked.

"They're mistaken."

"Oh, rats!" said Cutts, with a sniff of contempt. "You can spoof them, but you can't spoof me. How long are you going to keep this up?"

"Quite a long time, I guess," said Lumley-Lumley. "All my life, in fact. So long!"

He walked away, leaving Cutts of the Fifth staring after him angrily.

CHAPTER 6.

The Pass!

TOM MERRY passed Lumley-Lumley on the stairs, and he paused a moment.

There were doubts in Tom Merry's mind as to whether justice had been done to the Outsider, and he

wanted to be fair. But although the captain of the Shell paused, Lumley-Lumley did not. He went directly on, and Tom Merry, flushing red, continued on his way.

If Tom Merry did not wish to speak, the Outsider would not.

Lumley-Lumley went into his study.

Levison and Mellish were there, and they greeted the Outsider with ironical smiles.

Levison and Mellish always knew everything that was going on; they both had a wonderful gift for finding things out. Lumley-Lumley could see that they knew about his fruitless quest for a pass out of gates.

"Got the pass?" asked Levison.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Outsider threw himself into a chair.

"Oh, shut up cackling!" he exclaimed. "I know you two fellows are pleased to see me in a rotten hole. You two are hand-and-glove with Crooke in fixing a lie to me to make me quarrel with the fellows."

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I would be a great pal—at least, if you would let me," he said.

"Well, I won't!"

"We used to be good friends enough," said Mellish.

"Br-r-r-r!"

"What do you want a pass out for?" asked Levison, after a pause.

"See a chap."

"Is it important?"

"I guess I want to see him if I can," said Lumley-Lumley. "I'm fed-up with sulky faces. Grimes is a good pal."

Levison's lip curled.

"You want to go and see the grocer's boy?" he asked.

"I guess so."

"Pretty friend for a St. Jim's chap!" sneered Mellish.

"Better than some I could find here," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Look here, I could get you a pass, if you like," said Levison.

Lumley-Lumley started.

"You? How could you get one?"

"Well, I'd try. There's Knox, you know; he can give a pass out as well as Kildare can, and I'm on good terms with Knox. I do him little services. I believe he would hand out a pass if I asked him."

Lumley-Lumley hesitated.

"Well, I guess I should like one," he said. "Knox wouldn't give me one. He's had his knife into me since I refused to get cigarettes into the school for him. He wouldn't give you the pass for me, Levison."

"He would as a favour to me."

"And what would you want for getting it?"

"Nothing."

"What's the little game, then?"

Levison laughed.

"There's no little game," he said. "I'm willing to do it out of friendship."

Lumley-Lumley looked at him suspiciously.

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

"Well, I guess I'll believe you when I see the pass," said Lumley-Lumley.

"I'll try."

Levison rose and left the study.

Lumley-Lumley cast a puzzled glance at Mellish. He did not understand at all. Levison was not in the habit of making himself useful to anybody, even to a friend; and to perform a service for a fellow who refused his friendship was very curious on his part.

(Continued on the next page.)



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John: "I hear McAndrew has given up his intentions of becoming a doctor."

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John: "He doesn't like the idea of 'treating' his patients!"
Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Woods, Ward 13, General Infirmary, Leeds.

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Jane: "Yes, ma'am—what kind of names?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to S. Young, 34, Springhill Gardens, Shawlands, Glasgow, S.I.

FUSSY.

"Waiter," said the diner, "I want some oysters. But they mustn't be too large or too small, or too old or too tough, and they mustn't be too salty. I want them ice-cold, and I want them at once."

"Yes, sir," bowed the waiter. "With or without pearls?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Palmer, 123, Sharia Shoubra, Shoubra. Cairo, Egypt.

CHEERFUL PROSPECT.

Terrified passenger (in runaway taxi): "Will we hit anything?"

Driver: "I hope so, sir. This road goes over a cliff half a mile farther on!"
Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Pappadopoulos, Yama moto dori, 2, chome No. 45, Kobe, Japan.

JUST LIKE GUSSY.

Blake (reading from a thriller): "It was a dark night, and suddenly two sinister forms detached themselves from the shadow of a wall. The clock struck one—"

D'Arcy: "Which one, deah boy?"
Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Burrell, Villa Julia, Domaine de Rothschild, Grasse, France.

ALF'S ANSWER.

"Now, boys," said the schoolteacher, "I want you to bear in mind that the word 'stan,' used as a suffix, means 'the place of.' Thus we have Afghanistan—the place of the Afghans; also Hindustan—the place of the Hindus. Can any boy give me another example?"

"Yes, sir," said Alf Snaggs proudly. "Umbrellastan—the place for umbrellas!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Ackermann, 71, Chamberlain Street, Woodstock, Cape Town, South Africa.

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Lumley-Lumley could not believe that he would receive the pass, and yet Levison's manner was quite earnest as he left the study.

"Is this a jape, Mellish?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

Mellish shook his head.

"No; it's fair and square," he said. "Levison does a lot of things for Knox, the prefect, and Knox will give him the pass for you if he asks for it."

"But why should he do it for me?"

"Well, you used to be his pal," said Mellish.

Lumley-Lumley sniffed.

"Oh, rot! I suppose, as a matter of fact, Levison is pulling my leg. He won't come back to the study at all."

"I'll go and look for him," said Mellish.

Mellish left the study.

Lumley-Lumley yawned.

He was quite sur by this time that Levison was simply "pulling his leg" and wasting his time, and he was annoyed with himself for having paid any attention to the cad of the Fourth at all.

But if Levison failed him—as Lumley-Lumley was now sure he would—how was he to get the pass out of gates for the evening?

Should he break bounds?

He shook his head at the thought. When he was missed at calling-over he would be searched for; the prefects might even come down to the village and bring him back by force. They would never believe that he had gone out with innocent intentions; and to break bounds immediately after being refused permission to go out would be a very serious offence. It would probably mean a flogging; indeed, it was quite on the cards that he might be expelled for thus setting authority at defiance.

But it was very hard. That evening, as he knew, Grimes left his work early, and he would have the evening free. The two lads might have spent a pleasant evening together, and no harm would have been done. Lumley-Lumley, though he prided himself upon being sufficient unto himself, was sociable, and liked company. He did not want to spend the evening "mooching" about the school, with nobody to speak to.

He was thinking the matter over glumly enough when Levison came back into the study. Lumley-Lumley looked at him sourly.

"It's all right," said Levison.

"What's all right?"

"About the pass out of gates."

Lumley-Lumley started.

"You don't mean to say you've got it?"

"Yes, I have."

"Let's see it."

Levison threw the paper on the table. Lumley-Lumley picked it up and looked at it. It was quite in order—permission to stay out of gates till nine o'clock, written in the small, cramped hand of Knox of the Sixth, and signed "G. Knox, Prefect." And Lumley-Lumley's name was written upon it.

"My hat!" said Lumley-Lumley.

Levison grinned.

"Well, do you believe me now?" he asked.

"I guess so."

Lumley-Lumley looked at the pass again. Even yet he had a lingering doubt. The writing was in some peculiar shade of ink, and he remarked upon it.

"Knox used his fountain-pen," said Levison carelessly.

"Well, I guess it's all right."

In the old days, when Lumley-Lumley

was a member of the "fast set" in the school, he had been on the best of terms with Knox, and the prefect had given him passes often enough. He knew every detail of Knox's writing. He put the paper in his pocket.

"Well, I'm much obliged to you, Levison," he said.

"Don't mench," said Levison airily.

"Always willing to do anything to oblige you, old man. And I don't want you to do anything for me in return, so you needn't worry."

The Outsider flushed a little.

"Well, I specially wanted a pass out this evening," he said. "I'm really grateful, Levison. I guess you're not such a bad sort."

"Thanks!"

"If you're hard up—"

"Thanks! I'm not."

"Oh, all serene!"

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley took his cap and left the study. Levison stepped to the window and watched the Outsider cross the quadrangle. A sarcastic smile was on the thin lips of the cad of the Fourth.

There was a step in the doorway, and Crooke came in.

Crooke's face was keen and eager, and he was breathing very quickly. He glanced round at the study and saw that Levison was alone.

"Well?" he asked.

"It's all serene."

"He's gone?"

"Yes. You can see him from here."

Crooke joined Levison at the window. He caught sight of the Outsider disappearing out of the gates.

"Then he's bitten?" he said.

"Looks like it."

Crooke gritted his teeth.

"I fancy he will be sorry he hampered me last night."

Levison chuckled.

"He will have to come into the old gang, or stand alone for the rest of the time he's at St. Jim's," said Crooke, with a grin. "He'll know that it's not safe to quarrel with us. And if he gets a flogging—"

"It'll pay him for the cheek we've stood from him for the last term," said Levison.

"Exactly!"

"Mum's the word, you know; not a whisper!"

"What ho!"

And the two black sheep of St. Jim's chuckled softly.

Levison's face, however, became serious again, and he wrinkled his brows a little.

"It's safe enough," he said in a low voice. "After all, it can't come out. I don't suppose even Lumley will suspect how it was done."

Crooke shook his head.

"No. Does he know about your little gift of imitating anybody's fist—"

"Hush!"

"It's all right; nobody can hear us. But—"

"He knows about that," said Levison.

"I suppose the whole school does. You remember the trouble there was the time I wrote a letter in Brooke's hand?"

"And nearly got sacked for it!" said Crooke, grinning.

Levison frowned.

"Well, yes. But this is safe enough. When Lumley has to produce the pass, it won't be forthcoming, and that will see me clear."

"Of course it will! It's as safe as houses! I—"

"Hush!"

Levison caught Crooke's arm, and the

Shell fellow swung round. Bernard Glyn had just looked into the study. He glanced curiously at the two juniors standing by the window.

"What do you want?" demanded Levison.

"Nothing," said Glyn cheerfully—"only to tell you that I've found my fountain-pen. I was beginning to think that it had been pinched for good, and as you had been in my study just before I missed it, Crooke—"

Crooke smiled unpleasantly.

"Yes; you asked me whether I had taken it," he said. "You fancied that I had stolen your rotten fountain-pen."

"Well, I thought you might have borrowed it, or hidden it for a jape," said Glyn; "so I thought I'd tell you I found it—that's all."

"Where did you find it?"

"It was lying in the passage. Kangaroo found it, as a matter of fact, and picked it up. I'm blessed if I know how it got there. Somebody must have taken it out of the study. But it's all right; it's not damaged."

And Glyn nodded and walked away. Crooke and Levison exchanged a grin.

"All serene," murmured Crooke.

"Yes; all serene," said Levison.

CHAPTER 7. Not Present!

"LEVISON!"
"Adsum!"
"Lumley-Lumley!"
No reply.

Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, who was taking call-over in the Big Hall, paused, and repeated the name:

"Lumley-Lumley!"

There was no answer.

All the boys had answered to their names so far, but when it came to the turn of the Outsider of St. Jim's there was no voice to reply "Adsum!"

Lumley-Lumley was absent.

"Lumley-Lumley!" repeated Mr. Railton for the third time.

Silence.

Mr. Railton marked Lumley-Lumley down as absent, and went on with the roll-call.

The fellows of the Fourth looked at one another. Lumley-Lumley was certainly not in his place with them.

Tom Merry glanced over from his place in the ranks of the Shell.

The Outsider was missing call-over. The chums of St. Jim's wondered where he was. It was not likely that he had a pass out. If he had had one, one of the prefects would have told Mr. Railton as much.

Kildare was frowning darkly. It was only too clear to the captain of St. Jim's that Lumley-Lumley had defied his authority, and absented himself in spite of expressed orders to remain within gates.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The silly ass has gone out without permish, you know! He is a weckless ass!"

Blake grunted.

"He's chosen a bad time to play the giddy goat," he remarked. "There will be trouble for him when he comes in."

"Serve him right!" growled Herries.

The roll-call finished.

The boys trooped out of the hall, most of the juniors discussing the absence of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. Mr. Railton spoke to the prefects before they went.

"Lumley-Lumley is absent," he said. "I suppose he has not had permission to stay out?"

"He asked me for a pass to go down

to Rylcombe, sir," said Kildare. "I refused him."

"He asked me," said Darrell, "and I refused also."

"He asked me, too," said Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth. "I refused, as he had lines to do. Can he have had the effrontery to go out after that?"

Mr. Railton frowned.

"Apparently he has done so," he said.

"None of you gave him a pass, then?"

"I certainly did not," said Knox, and the other prefects shook their heads.

"Very well. Will you see that he is sent into my study when he returns, Kildare?"

"Yes, sir."

Kildare kept his eyes open for Lumley-Lumley. But the missing junior seemed in no hurry to return. Most of the fellows had finished their preparation, and gathered in the Common-room before the Outsider put in an appearance. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were playing chess when Lumley-Lumley came in. Tom Merry was playing Manners, as a matter of fact, and Lowther was giving impartial advice to both sides, with an exasperating effect upon both players.

"Move the rook, old man," said Lowther judiciously, as Manners paused to think. "Move the rook to king's fourth."

"And leave the king in check!" snapped Manners.

"Ahem! I should have said the bishop. Move the bish."

"And leave Tommy's bishop on my queen!" growled Manners.

"Ahem! I should say—"

"Oh, dry up!" said Manners. "You can't play chess for toffee!"

"Why, you ass—"

"Move the knight—king's knight to

bishop's fourth," said a quiet voice. "That will be mate in two."

The Terrible Three looked up. Lumley-Lumley had come in, and was standing beside the chess table, looking on at the game.

Manners sniffed.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" he said. "You can't teach me how to play chess."

Lumley-Lumley smiled.

"Look at the board!" he said.

Manners frowned at the board. Lumley-Lumley's statement was quite correct. The move he recommended placed Tom Merry in mate in two. Manners grunted and moved the knight. "That settles you!" he remarked.

Tom Merry nodded.

Manners did not seem very grateful for the Outsider's good advice. Manners was a keen chess player, and a game of chess was the only thing that ever disturbed the serenity of his temper.

"You're going to get into a row," he remarked. "Kildare is looking for you."

"Oh, those blessed lines!" said Lumley-Lumley. "I forgot all about them. I suppose Lathom will double them now."

"Lines!" said Tom Merry. "It's not a question of lines! You missed roll-call."

"I guess that's all right; I had a pass out," said Lumley-Lumley easily.

"Oh!" said Tom Merry, in surprise.

"Have you seen your excellent friend, Grimes?" asked Crooke sarcastically.

Lumley-Lumley shook his head.

"No," he said. "He had gone out for the evening when I called on him. I've been round the town on my own. Much pleasanter than sticking here and seeing your chivvy, Crooke, old man."

Crooke's eyes glittered.

"You'll have to pay the piper now," he remarked. "If you had a pass out, it's jolly queer one of the prefects didn't say so when you were marked down absent. Who gave it to you?"

"Knox."

"Hallo! Here's Kildare!"

The captain of St. Jim's looked into the room and beckoned to Lumley-Lumley.

"You're wanted!" he said abruptly.

"What's the trouble, Kildare?"

"You missed calling-over."

"I had a pass."

"Nonsense!" said Kildare. "I refused to give you one, and so did the other prefects, and your Form-master as well."

"I had a pass from Knox."

"You can go and tell that to Mr. Railton," said Kildare grimly.

"But, I say—"

"You're to go to Mr. Railton's study at once!"

"Oh, all serene!"

Lumley-Lumley followed the captain of St. Jim's. Kildare did not speak a word on the way to the Housemaster's study. He knocked at Mr. Railton's door and opened it, and Lumley-Lumley preceded him into the study.

Mr. Railton fixed his eyes upon the Outsider with a frown.

"Ah! You have returned?" he said.

"Yes, sir," said Lumley-Lumley respectfully.

"You have absented yourself from the school until nine o'clock after being expressly ordered to remain within bounds," said Mr. Railton.

"I had a pass out of gates, sir."

"What!"

"I guess I shouldn't have gone out without one, sir."

"I understood, Kildare, that Lumley-



"Oh, help!" panted Levison as he sprawled on the floor, with Lumley-Lumley upon him. "Now tell the truth, you villain!" yelled the Outsider. "Tell the truth or I'll choke it out of you!"

"I understand, Kildare, that Lumley-Lumley had been refused a pass?" said the Housemaster.

"Quite so, sir."

"Who gave you the pass, then?" asked Mr. Railton. "Did you have the effrontery to ask the Head for one, after you had been refused by the prefects?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Then who—?"

"It was Knox, sir."

"Knox! Knox explicitly stated that he had not given you a pass," said Mr. Railton sharply. "How dare you make such a statement, Lumley-Lumley?"

The junior looked bewildered.

"But he did give me one, sir," he said. "That is to say, he sent it to me by another fellow. I've got it now."

"I cannot understand this, Lumley-Lumley. Do you state that you received a pass out of gates from Knox, and that you have it about you?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"The matter is easily decided, then. Show me the pass."

"Very well, sir."

Lumley-Lumley felt in his pockets. Mr. Railton and Kildare looked amazed. Lumley-Lumley's manner certainly indicated that he was speaking the truth, and it seemed very extraordinary that he should tell a falsehood which must be exposed in a few minutes at the furthest.

The Housemaster and the prefect waited in puzzled silence.

Lumley-Lumley turned various papers out of his pockets, and glanced at each of them in turn.

Among the other papers was one that was entirely blank; but that, of course, the Outsider did not specially notice. He looked over the papers, and then went through his pockets again.

"You cannot find it?" said the Housemaster grimly.

"I—I— It must be here," stammered Lumley-Lumley. "I put it into this pocket, among these old letters, and I can't have lost it. I couldn't lose one paper out of the pocket without losing the others, I guess."

He searched his pocket again, feeling the lining very carefully. But the lining was intact. He was looking bewildered and somewhat alarmed now. There was angry impatience in the faces of the Housemaster, and the St. Jim's captain now.

Lumley-Lumley's action seemed to them simply a comedy, and they did not believe for a moment that he would succeed in finding the paper.

"Well?" asked Mr. Railton, in an ominous voice.

"I—I can't find it, sir."

"I did not expect you to find it, Lumley-Lumley. I think you may as well admit now that you had no pass. I cannot see your object in telling me this falsehood."

Lumley-Lumley flushed crimson.

"It was not a falsehood, sir!" he exclaimed indignantly. "I had a pass from Knox, and I can't imagine what has become of it. But it's all right. You can ask Knox, and he will remember sending it to me."

"Lumley-Lumley, this impudent effrontery—"

"Ask Knox, sir."

"I asked Knox, and he said he had not given you a pass."

Lumley-Lumley staggered.

"He—he said he hadn't given me one, sir?"

"Yes."

"I—I can't understand that. He must have forgotten. Send for him, sir, and ask him before me," said Lumley-Lumley eagerly.

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"I think it is quite useless," said Mr. Railton coldly. "However, I will send for him. Kildare, will you have the kindness to ask Knox to step here?"

"Certainly, sir!"

Kildare left the study. The Housemaster, without another glance at Lumley-Lumley, turned to his table and resumed writing. Lumley-Lumley stood silent, his face pale and disturbed for once. This unexpected happening had shaken the cool self-possession even of the Outsider of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 8.

Levison's Lie!

THERE was silence in the study, broken only by the faint scratching of the Housemaster's pen.

It was only a few minutes, but it seemed an age to Jerrold Lumley-Lumley before the footsteps of Kildare were heard returning.

Knox followed Kildare into the study. There was an expression of surprise upon Knox's hard face. The Housemaster laid down his pen.

"Knox," he said, plunging into the subject at once, "Lumley-Lumley states

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that you gave him a pass out of gates for this evening. Is that statement correct?"

"No, sir," said Knox.

"You are sure?"

"Quite sure, sir."

Mr. Railton fixed a frowning glance upon the Outsider.

"Have you anything more to say?"

Lumley-Lumley almost staggered.

"I—I have, sir. Knox must have forgotten."

The prefect stared at the junior.

"Have you the nerve to say that I gave you a pass?" he asked. "Why, you did not even ask me for one!"

"I—I— You sent me the pass," said Lumley-Lumley. "I did not say that you gave it to me with your own hands. You sent it by another fellow."

"I did not."

"Come," said Mr. Railton, "it is surely useless to persist any longer in this absurd tissue of falsehoods, Lumley-Lumley."

"But Levison will bear me out, sir," said the Outsider. "Levison asked Knox for the pass for me, and brought it to me in my study. I think Knox must have gone dotty if he does not remember it. Levison will tell you that I am speaking the truth, sir."

"I should not take Levison's word against that of Knox, Lumley-Lumley. Levison is known not to be a truthful boy. However, I will send for Levison and question him. May I trouble you once more, Kildare?"

"Certainly, sir!"

Kildare quitted the study again. Knox remained. The prefect was looking at Lumley-Lumley with undisguised contempt. Knox was not a very scrupulous fellow himself, and he was not surprised that a fellow should lie himself out of a scrape; but he was

amazed that a lie so useless should have come from the usually keen and clever Lumley. If this was the best the Outsider could do it would be wisest for him to stick to the path of truth, Knox considered. He had never heard such a lame story in his life.

Kildare returned with Levison of the Fourth.

"Here is Levison, sir," he said.

"Come in, Levison!"

The junior advanced to the Housemaster's table. Mr. Railton fixed his eyes upon him. Levison bore the scrutiny well.

"Lumley-Lumley states that you brought him a pass signed by Knox of the Sixth," said Mr. Railton.

"When, sir?"

"This afternoon."

"He is mistaken, sir. I certainly did not," said Levison, with perfect coolness.

"Levison did not ask me for a pass for Lumley-Lumley," said Knox. "I should not have given it to him if he had."

"Well, Lumley-Lumley?"

Lumley-Lumley stood petrified.

The prefect's denial he could not understand, but he had still believed that when Levison came into the Housemaster's study the matter would be cleared up.

When he heard Levison utter his cool denial the Outsider of St. Jim's could scarcely believe his ears.

He stared at Levison as if the latter had been a ghost.

"You—you must be mad!" Lumley-Lumley exclaimed huskily. "Don't you remember? You told me you'd asked Knox for a pass, and you brought it to me in the study."

"I don't remember anything of the sort. It's not a thing I should be likely to forget, either," said Levison.

"But you—you—"

"I don't think I ever heard such a clumsy falsehood," said Mr. Railton. "Surely, you could not expect Levison to back up an untruthful statement, Lumley-Lumley?"

The Outsider gave a hoarse gasp.

"It—it's true!" he exclaimed.

"Nonsense!"

"Levison! You're mad—or you're lying! I don't you remember—"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"No, I don't!" he said.

"You cad!" shouted Lumley-Lumley, his dismay turning to sudden rage. "You rotten cad! This is a plot of yours—along with Crooke and Melish."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

Lumley-Lumley panted.

"It's all fixed up to ruin me!" he said.

"I remember now—you can imitate anybody's handwriting. Mr. Railton! You remember what Levison did before—he imitated Brooke's hand, and nearly got Brooke expelled from the school."

"That has nothing to do with this matter, Lumley-Lumley."

"I guess it has, sir. I know now that Levison didn't bring me the pass from Knox. He was lying when he said he would ask Knox for it!" the Outsider exclaimed excitedly. "He can imitate anybody's writing. He wrote the pass himself in Knox's hand."

"What?"

Levison changed colour a little. "I hope you won't believe anything of the sort," he said. "It was only a joke, what I did in the case of Brooke, though it turned out seriously. This is a very different matter. If Lumley-Lumley has a pass that I wrote, let him show it!"

"Yes, show it!" said Knox. "That will prove it, one way or the other."

"I—I've lost it!"

"Lost it?" said Levison.
 "Well, I can't find it."
 Levison laughed.
 "I think you have said enough, Lumley-Lumley," said Mr. Railton quietly. "I do not believe the slightest tittle of the tissue of falsehoods you have told."

"Mr. Railton, I—"
 "You declare that Levison brought you a pass from Knox. Knox denies sending you one, so you declare that Levison forged the pass. You ask me to believe in its existence, though you cannot produce it. You ask me to believe that Levison has committed a crime for which he would be expelled from the school, and you offer not the slightest evidence. I am amazed at your impudence!"

"I did not take him a pass from Knox, sir," said Levison.

"I am sure of that, Levison. You may go!"

"Yes, sir!"
 Levison turned to the door. Lumley-Lumley's eyes blazed. He made a sudden spring at Levison and grasped him by the throat.

Levison reeled back in the desperate clutch of the Outsider of St. Jim's.

"Oh, help!"

Levison was on the floor, with Lumley-Lumley upon him.
 "Now tell the truth, you villain!" yelled Lumley-Lumley. "Tell the truth, or I'll choke it out of you!"

"Oh, help!"

The prefects and the Housemaster had been taken by surprise so much that for a moment not a hand was raised to aid Levison. But it was only for a moment. Then the three of them sprang forward at once, and Lumley-Lumley was seized and dragged from the junior.

Levison lay panting on the floor.

"Oh!" he groaned. "The murderous villain! Oh!"

"Secure that boy!" said Mr. Railton.
 "Got him, sir!" said Knox.

Kildare and Knox were grasping Lumley-Lumley by either arm. The Outsider, his fit of fury past, stood panting, with heaving chest.

Mr. Railton helped Levison to his feet. Levison was fumbling at his throat, where the desperate fingers of the Outsider had left black marks.

"You may go, Levison," said Mr. Railton.

The cad of the Fourth went unsteadily from the study. Mr. Railton fixed his eyes upon Lumley-Lumley, with a gleam in them that boded no good to the junior.

"Lumley-Lumley," he said, "you have acted like a criminal. You have broken the rules of the school and defied authority. You have lied, and taken advantage of an old story against Levison in order to discredit him. You have attacked him in a savage manner in my presence. It is only too clear to me now that your pretended reform was a pretence—a lie, from beginning to end—and that it would have been a good thing for the school if you had been expelled when Dr. Holmes spared you. I trust the error will be made good now. I am going to the Head; you will go to the punishment-room to await sentence. Take him away!"

"Sir! I—I—"

"Not a word! Go!"

"I—I guess I'm sorry I broke out like that, sir," stammered Lumley-Lumley.

"But—but to hear that cad lying about me—"

"I could understand your anger if you were innocent, Lumley-Lumley. But you are not innocent—you are guilty."

"Oh, sir! I—"

"Go!"

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther
Calling



Hallo, everybody! Do you know what a ghost is? It's an invisible object usually seen at night. I hear Wayland have signed the biggest all-round footballer playing. He is seventy-four inches round. As the nervous householder said when he caught a burglar hanging to the window-sill: "Come on, no funny business now—hands up!" Like the new "boots," when the visitor complained that he had put his shoes outside his door, but they hadn't been touched. "Of course they haven't, sir," retorted the "boots"—"we're honest in this hotel!" How's this: "I want some geraniums," said Wally D'Arcy. "I'm afraid we're out

Kildare and Knox marched the condemned junior out of the study.

CHAPTER 9. The Prisoner!

ALL St. Jim's knew what had happened in ten minutes.

There was an excited crowd in the junior Common-room when Levison came in.

Levison was not popular as a rule, but he was surrounded by an eager crowd now, eager for information. Levison told as much as he chose.

"So he's in the punishment-room?" said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

"And he'll be expelled!" said Crooke, with a grin. "Well, he has been asking for it for a long time, and now he's got it!"

"Oh, shut up, Crooke!"

"He was bound to come to it, sooner or later!" said Mellish.

"And the sooner he's gone, the better," said Levison.

"Bai Jove! I suppose there's no doubt about it now," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked thoughtfully. "I thought it was wathah steep when he said he had a pass out."

Tom Merry nodded.

"But I can't help thinking—" he said.

"What?"

"That there might be some mistake." There was a general shaking of heads.

"If Lumley-Lumley has told the truth," said Monty Lowther. "Knox and Levison are lying. That wouldn't be surprising—"

"Nothing surprising at all in that," said Kangaroo.

"They've both done it before, many a time," Bernard Glyn remarked.

Levison scowled.

"Only, if Knox really sent the note, or if Levison really forged it, where is it?" said Monty Lowther. "If Lumley-Lumley could produce a paper in Knox's hand, or an imitation of Knox's hand, it would be all right—we should believe him then. But he can't!"

"He says he's lost it."

"Well, if he's had it and lost it, he's jolly unlucky," said Blake. "But he can't expect anybody to believe it. Fellows don't lose their passes!"

"Of course they don't!"

of geraniums," said the Wayland florist. "Might I suggest some—" "No; they must be geraniums," insisted Wally. "They're to replace those our football smashed in the Head's hothouse." Mr. Selby was drawing on the blackboard. "That's Iceland," he announced. "It's roughly about the same size as Siam." Young Gibson wrote in his essay: "Iceland is about as large as Mr. Selby." Here's a "teaser": If Moses is the son of Pharaoh's daughter, how can he also be the daughter of Pharaoh's son? Got it? He is, of course, the daughter-of-Pharaoh's son! It's nice to think you can buy more for a pound nowadays. If you happen to have a pound. Then there was the fellow who became rich at a single stroke. His rich uncle had the stroke. "This is an old Tudor house," explained the agent. "But I don't care for the Tudor style," objected the prospective buyer. "Soon alter that, sir," said the agent. "Alf, just bring a pail of water and wash out those oak beams!" Useful note: A man cannot rise to the heights by treading on other people's toes. Well, chaps, as the Afghan said: Abyssinia! (I'll be seeing you!)

"Wathah not!"

"He said it was in a pocket with a lot of other papers," said Levison. "The other papers were there all right, only the pass was gone. Kildare saw him turn them out and sort them. How could he lose one paper out of a pocket without losing the rest?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He's not a careless ass, always losing things, like Gussy, for instance, either," Digby remarked.

"Weally, Dig—"

"It's too steep!" said Manners. "Too steep altogether. If he had the pass, he didn't lose it. He can't expect such a yarn to be swallowed."

"I suppose not!"

"It's only a proof of what we've been expecting for some time," Bernard Glyn remarked. "We all went to him yesterday to tell him what we know. This only bears it out. He says he went to see Grimes, and Grimes was out. He can't even produce a witness from Rylcombe to prove that he spent his time decently."

"Well, if Grimes had been in. I don't know that his evidence would have weighed much with the Head," said Tom Merry. "The Head doesn't know anything about the village kids. But it's unlucky all the same."

"The chances are that he had a razzle in his old style," said Blake. "I don't want to be hard on a fellow who's down, but that's what it looks like to me."

"Yaas, wathah!"

It was bedtime now, and a prefect came in to see the juniors off to their dormitory.

Tom Merry paused as he went upstairs, and made his way to the door of the punishment-room—Nobody's Study—as it was called. He tapped at the door.

"Hallo!" came the voice of Lumley-Lumley, from within.

"You there, Lumley?"

"I guess so. Is that Tom Merry?"

"Yes."

"What do you want?"

"Only to speak to you," said Tom Merry.

"The door's locked."

"Yes, and the key's gone. I can speak through the door."

"I guess we're not on speaking terms, when I come to think of it, Tom Merry."

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"That doesn't matter now that you're in trouble, old man."

There was a pause.

"You're a good sort, Tom Merry," came back Lumley-Lumley's voice, after some moments. "I wasn't going to say a word to you fellows, but I guess I will now. It's all lies against me. I had a pass out, just as I told you."

"Where is it now, Lumley?"

"Lost!"

"That's very unfortunate."

The Outsider laughed.

"I guess so. I can tell by your voice that you don't believe me, Tom Merry. But I guess I don't blame you; it's very steep. I don't know that I should believe such a yarn if I heard it from anybody else."

"Is there anything I can do for you, Lumley?"

"Do you want to do anything?"

"Yes, if I can."

"Well, you could do me a favour—only—"

"What is it?"

"It's asking too much."

"I'll do it if I can."

"I should like to send a message to my pal, Grimes, in Rylcombe."

"Oh!" said Tom Merry.

Lumley-Lumley laughed again.

"I know it's too much to ask," he said. "Never mind. Good-night!"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry. "How would it help you to send a message to Grimes?"

"I guess it would, but it doesn't matter. You'd better buzz off to your dormitory, before a giddy prefect finds you talking through the door of the punishment-room."

Tom Merry hesitated.

What the Outsider wanted was indeed a serious thing; if Tom Merry did what was wanted, it meant leaving the dormitory after lights out, and breaking bounds.

"How would it help you, Lumley-Lumley?" he asked, after a pause.

"I guess you can leave that to me."

"Does Grimes know anything that would help to clear you?"

"I guess not."

"Can he prove how you spent your evening?"

"I never even saw him."

"Then how can he help you?"

"That's my bisney!"

Tom Merry was silent. The voices of Manners and Lowther were calling to him from the dormitory passage, but he did not heed.

"Still there?" called out Lumley-Lumley.

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"Good-night!"

"I'd like to help you if I could, Lumley-Lumley," said Tom Merry. "But breaking bounds at night is a serious bisney, as you know—especially after what happened to-day."

"I guess so. Look here, I could get Toby, the page, to go; I'd tip him two bob," said Lumley-Lumley. "Tell him to come round under my window, and I'll pitch him a note."

Still Tom Merry hesitated.

"Well?" said the Outsider, through the keyhole.

"It's against all the rules, Lumley."

Lumley-Lumley grunted.

"Well, don't do it, then! I guess I don't want to get anybody into trouble, and I don't want to beg for favours, anyway! Go and eat coke—I mean, good-night!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"I'll do it, Lumley," he said. "I'll tell Toby to come round, and he can please himself. He can go out if he likes, anyway, without breaking bounds."

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and if he chooses to take the message, I don't see any harm in it."

"Right-ho!"

"Good-night!"

"Good-night, and thanks!" said Lumley-Lumley.

Tom Merry went upstairs. He did not stop at the Shell dormitory, but went on to Toby's room. He found the page there.

Toby was sitting on his bed, reading a volume entitled: "Deadwood Dave's Deadly Danger; or, the Dusty Demon of the Dreary Desert!"—a thrilling volume imported from America.

Several interesting volumes of that kind had been left in the room by Binks, the former page, and Toby frequently gave himself nightmares by reading them before going to bed.

Toby started as Tom Merry came into the room. He had been too deeply absorbed to hear the Shell fellow's knock on the door.

"Oh, Master Merry!" he exclaimed. "You startled me! I—"

"Did you think I was the Dusty Demon?" asked Tom Merry, with a glance at the book. "Or did you take me for Double-Barrelled Dave?"

"It isn't Double-Barrelled Dave, Master Tom; it's Deadwood Dave."

"My mistake!" said Tom Merry blandly. "I suppose you know that Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth is in the punishment-room—Nobody's Study, you know?"

"Yes, Master Merry," said Toby, laying the book on the bed. "I'm sorry, sir Master Lumley-Lumley've been very generous to me."

"He wants a note taken to Rylcombe," said Tom Merry. "If you like to go round under the window of the punishment-room, he'll chuck it out to you. It's to be taken to Grimes, the grocer's boy. You know him?"

"Yes, I know Grimes, Master Tom."

"It will mean a good tip, Toby, if you like to do it."

"I'll do it without a tip, Master Tom," said Toby.

"Good for you!" said Tom Merry.

"I'll go at once, Master Tom."

And Tom Merry said good-night to Toby, and went to the Shell dormitory.

He found all the Shell in bed and Kildare frowning. He was very late.

"What do you mean by keeping me waiting?" exclaimed Kildare.

"Sorry!" said Tom Merry.

"I suppose you have been talking to Lumley-Lumley through the keyhole?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry, wondering whether it meant a caning or fines. It turned out to be neither.

"Well, go to bed!" said Kildare gruffly.

And Tom Merry went to bed.

Kildare extinguished the lights and left the dormitory. There was a buzz of voices in the room the moment the prefect was gone. The Shell fellows discussed the case of

Lumley-Lumley; there was no other topic in all the School House—or the New House, either, for that matter.

"Is Lumley-Lumley going to sleep in the punishment-room?" Bernard Glyn asked. "Anybody know?"

"Yes," said Manners. "Taggles and Toby put a bed in there, Mellish says. He saw them."

"He seems to have gone for Levison in Raiton's study," said Monty Lowther. "If he slept with the Fourth, as usual, he might go for him again, or—"

"Or what?"

"He might bolt!"

"Phew! Run away from school, do you mean?"

"Yes. He's quite equal to it. And he



Lumley-Lumley climbed out of the window of Nobody's quadrangle, where Grimes was waiting. The Outsider was that! To escape and clear his o

will be sacked to-morrow, almost a cert."

"I suppose he will," said Tom Merry; "or flogged, at least. I wish I felt certain about him."

"Well, it's about as certain as anything can be," said Monty Lowther. "Railton doesn't feel sure about him, and that's why he's locked him up in Nobody's Study."

"It's rotten to have to sleep there!" said Glyn. "It's the haunted room, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha! Lumley-Lumley isn't the kind of chap to be afraid of ghosts. He's too hard-headed for that. I fancy."

"Still, it's a bit rotten. The Head's forgotten the ghost story, I expect, but—"

"Oh, the ghost won't hurt Lumley! Besides, it's not time for the ghost to walk yet; the ghost of St. Jim's never appears till the snow's on the ground," said Lowther, with a chuckle, "and we haven't had any snow yet."

"I wonder—" said Tom Merry.

Lowther yawned.

"Still wondering whether Lumley was telling the truth or not?"

"Yes."

"Well, you'll have to go on wondering, then, unless the paper turns up, and that's not likely if he lost it in Rylcombe. Go to sleep!"

CHAPTER 10.

Sentenced by the Head!

LUMLEY-LUMLEY was alone in Nobody's Study.

It was a cheerless apartment.

The room opened off a narrow entry into the Fourth Form passage, and it was in one of the oldest parts of St. Jim's. The walls and the floors were of great blocks of stone, and the single window looked out upon a narrow passage between two great blocks of buildings.

A bed had been put into the room, and Lumley-Lumley was to pass the night there. The fact that the punishment-room was the "haunted room" of St. Jim's did not trouble Lumley-Lumley. He was too hard-headed, as

Lowther had observed in the Shell dormitory, to trouble himself about ghost stories. He did not mind sleeping in the punishment-room; indeed, he preferred it to mingling with his own Form after what had happened. In all the Fourth there was no fellow who believed in him, and, in the circumstances, it was more comfortable to keep away from the juniors.

But Lumley-Lumley had no intention whatever of remaining in the punishment-room and going up before the Head in the morning to receive his sentence.

The evidence against him was too conclusive to admit of doubt, and it only remained for punishment to be administered—and that punishment would take the form either of a flogging or a sentence of expulsion. Probably the Head was leaving the decision until the morning, in order to think the matter over and weigh it well before the decided.

A light was burning in the punishment-room.

Lumley-Lumley turned it out, and the room was plunged into darkness. He crossed to the window and opened it.

Below, all was dark.

Huge buildings shut in the narrow entry without, and shut off the light of the stars that glimmered in the sky.

Lumley-Lumley gazed downwards and waited.

He wondered whether Toby would come. He was soon put out of doubt. In the silence of the quadrangle he heard a step, and the fat figure of the School House page came dimly through the shadows.

Toby stopped under the window of the punishment-room and looked up.

Lumley-Lumley whistled softly.

"Ho! You there, Master Lumley?" called up Toby in a low voice.

"Yes, Toby. Catch!"

"Right!"

Lumley-Lumley dropped a little packet from the window. Toby did not catch it, and it fell at his feet. He picked it up, and found it was Lumley-Lumley's handkerchief, with some articles wrapped in it.

Toby untied the handkerchief. Within was a folded paper and three half-crowns.

"Got it, Toby?"

"Yes, Master Lumley."

"Half-a-crown is for you. Take the note and the other money to Grimes, in the village."

"Yes, Master Lumley."

"Buzz off—before you're spotted."

Lumley-Lumley closed the window.

Toby put the money into his pocket and cut away across the quadrangle.

Lumley-Lumley turned on the light in Nobody's Study. His face wore a grin of satisfaction now. He knew that Toby would get the note to its destination. He had written it in pencil upon a blank sheet of paper from his pocket, and it was an appeal that he knew Grimes would not disregard.

Grimes would probably be gone to bed by the time Toby reached his lodgings. Grimes had to be an early riser; but Lumley-Lumley knew that the grocer's boy would leave his bed to come to his aid.

Lumley-Lumley walked to and fro in the room while he

waited. He was too excited to think of sleep.

Suddenly he started. Footsteps had come along the passage outside and turned into the recess outside the door of Nobody's Study. A hand fumbled with the lock.

"Hallo! Who's there?" called out Lumley-Lumley.

The door opened, and Kildare looked in. He gave the Outsider a grim look.

"The Head wants you," he said curtly.

"Oh, to-night! I reckoned it was being left over till the morning," said Lumley-Lumley.

"You're to come to Dr. Holmes now."

"All serene."

Kildare led the way from the punishment-room without another word. The Outsider followed him quietly.

Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton were in the Head's study together. Kildare showed in Lumley-Lumley, and retired, closing the door. Lumley-Lumley was left alone with the Head and the Housemaster.

He was quite cool now. Dr. Holmes looked at him with a very stern expression. He evidently had received a full account of what had happened from Mr. Railton.

"You know why I have sent for you, Lumley-Lumley?" said the Head.

"I guess so, sir."

"You have been guilty of disobedience and of wicked falsehood!"

"Excuse me, sir," said Lumley-Lumley, quietly and respectfully, but very firmly, "I guess I haven't been guilty of anything of the sort."

"Do you still adhere to the story you told me?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir."

"You declare, then, that Levison of the Fourth brought you a pass out of gates, signed by Knox?" asked the Head.

"Yes, sir."

"Both Knox and Levison deny it."

"I think Knox is telling the truth, sir. I think now that Levison wrote out the pass himself for the sake of getting me into trouble."

"We will go into this," said the Head. "You cannot produce the paper in question?"

"No, sir."

"What has become of it?"

"I must have lost it, sir."

"You had it in your pocket?"

"Yes, sir."

"Had you anything else in the same pocket—other papers?"

"Yes, sir—some old letters."

"Did you lose any of them?"

"No, sir."

"Then you lost one paper out of several in the same pocket?"

"I know it sounds queer, sir."

"Further than that," said the Head, "you accuse Levison of having forged Knox's hand in writing out this pass that you declare you received from him?"

"I guess that's the only explanation, sir."

"If you could produce the pass it would be a clear proof that either Levison or Knox, or both, have spoken falsely."

"I guess so, sir."

"Then Levison's plot against you, as you call it, would have recoiled upon himself if you had not lost the paper?"

"Yes, sir," said Lumley-Lumley slowly.

He understood now whether the Head's questions were tending.

"Take care what you say, Lumley-Lumley."

Had Levison any reason to



y, gripped the two ropes firmly, and descended to the
be expelled from St. Jim's, but he was not waiting for
ame was his intention.

suppose that you would lose the paper? Can you say that?"

"No, sir."

"He could not possibly have known that you would lose it?"

"I guess he couldn't, sir."

"Then he must have been depending upon the chance of your losing it, as, in case it was produced, it would be known to be a forgery by his hand?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"And you have the effrontery, Lumley-Lumley, to tell me that Levison plotted against you, and risked being expelled from the school, trusting to your losing the paper before you came back to St. Jim's this evening?"

Lumley-Lumley was silent.

Put that way, he could see that he had no case. It was only too clear that Levison had not trusted to his losing the paper. Levison could have had no reason to suppose that he would lose it.

But if he had produced it, Levison would have been condemned. Either the pass was written by Knox, or it was a wonderfully skilful forgery; and there was only one person at St. Jim's who could forge writing so cleverly, and that was Ernest Levison.

What did it mean? Had Levison plotted against him, blind to the practical certainty of exposure, depending upon the merest chance that Lumley-Lumley might lose the paper, for his safety?

It was impossible!

Yet what was the explanation? If that explanation failed, what other was there?

The Head and Mr. Railton watched the changing expressions in the Outsider's face during several minutes of silence.

"Well?" said the Head at last.

"I—I don't know what to say, sir," stammered Lumley-Lumley. "I only know that Levison did give me the pass, just as I said."

Dr. Holmes frowned darkly.

"Do you persist in that statement, Lumley-Lumley?"

"Yes, sir. It's true."

"Then," said the Head emphatically, "I regard you as utterly incorrigible, Lumley-Lumley. The appearances you have kept up during the past term I regard as a lie and a pretence. I regard you as a worse boy than I ever dreamed you before."

"Oh, sir—"

"Listen to me! You have disobeyed orders in the most flagrant way, and for that fault I shall order you a flogging. You have lied to Mr. Railton and to me, and you have endeavoured to turn against Levison an old fault of his, for which he was punished, and of which I hope he has repented. In spite of the plainest evidence of the fact, you still persist in repeating your falsehoods. Listen to me! You will be flogged before all St. Jim's to-morrow."

"I guess—"

"After you have been flogged, you will be given a chance of confessing the truth," said the Head. "If you confess, you will be let off with the flogging. If you persist in this story, you will be sent away instantly from the school."

"Then I shall be sent away, sir."

"You mean that you will not confess?"

"I have nothing to confess."

"Enough!" exclaimed the Head. "Mr. Railton, will you take that wretched boy back to the punishment-room? He must pass the night there. After his savage attack upon Levison, I cannot trust him among the other boys."

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Lumley-Lumley, I trust you fully understand your position. You will be flogged in any case, and unless you confess, you will be expelled from St. Jim's instead. Now go, and may the night bring you repentance."

And the Housemaster dropped his hand upon Lumley-Lumley's shoulder, and conducted him out of the Head's study, and back to the punishment-room.

Mr. Railton did not speak a word as he went. Lumley-Lumley was taken into the punishment-room, and the Housemaster retired, locking the door after him.

Lumley-Lumley sat on the edge of the bed and breathed hard.

"Phew! I wonder what it all means—I wonder how they worked it? I guess I can't get to the bottom of it at all. It's a plot of Crooke, Mellish and Levison's. I know that. But how did Levison know I shouldn't be able to show up the paper? That beats me!"

And Lumley-Lumley racked his brain in vain for a solution to that mystery.

CHAPTER 11.

The Outsider's Pal!

ONE by one the lights went out in the windows of the School House.

The dormitories were all dark; and the studies, one after another, were plunged into darkness, too.

Eleven o'clock had rung out from the clock-tower.

Lumley-Lumley had extinguished the light in Nobody's Study, and he was leaning on the sill of the open window. He was watching the narrow opening between the high buildings, where a glimpse was to be had of the starlit quadrangle.

Lumley-Lumley was waiting for his old pal—his only one now.

Half-past eleven.

From the darkness below there came a low whistle. Lumley-Lumley knew it; it was his signal with Grimes. On one occasion, never forgotten by the Outsider, his father had taken him away from the school, and he had had to earn his bread, and Grimes, the grocer's boy had been a good friend to him. In those days, the two had formed a friendship which, in spite of the difference in station and prospects, was never likely to be broken. Lumley-Lumley's face lighted up as he heard the whistle below.

He leaned farther out of the window. "That you, Grimes?" he called out cautiously.

"Yes, Master Lumley-Lumley."

"Good for you, Master Grimes."

Grimes chuckled softly in the darkness below.

"So you got the note from Toby, eh?" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Yes, I was in bed," said Grimes.

"I was gorn to bed early, Master Lumley. Toby woke me up. You could 'ave knocked me down with an iron girder when I read your note."

"I guess it was a surprise to you."

"Wot to!"

"Got the things?"

"Yes, Master Lumley."

"Good egg!"

"Ow are you goin' to get the rope, sir?"

"I've tied strips of my necktie into a string," said Lumley-Lumley. "I'll let it down, and you can tie the rope on the end of it."

"You always was a clever chap, Master Lumley."

"Thank you, Master Grimes."

Lumley-Lumley lowered the improvised cord from the window. Grimes

uncoiled the rope from under his jacket, and fastened the end to the string.

"Ready, Master Lumley?" he said.

"Right-ho, Master Grimes!"

Lumley-Lumley pulled up the cord. He had given Grimes particulars in his note of what he wanted, and Grimes had obeyed his instructions faithfully. Lumley-Lumley passed the end of the rope over the top bar of the firegrate, and pulled it round the bar, and then lowered it from the window again.

Grimes caught it, and now held both ends of the rope. It was long enough to reach up into the room from the ground, and back again.

"Got it, Grimey?"

"Yes, Master Lumley."

"Knot it."

"Yes."

"Good! Now wait for me."

Lumley-Lumley climbed out on the window-sill. What he intended to do was dangerous to any fellow less cool-headed than the Outsider of St. Jim's. He grasped the two ropes together in his hands and held them together firmly as he climbed down. If he had allowed one of them to slip from his grasp, the rope would have passed round the bars of the grate in a flash, and he would have shot downwards to the ground.

But he did not. With a firm grip he kept the two ropes together, and descended.

Grimes watched him anxiously from below.

Lumley-Lumley's feet touched the ground.

"Here we are again!" he said cheerfully.

"Oh, Master Lumley!"

"What's the matter, Master Grimes?"

"You took a big risk!" said Grimes.

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"That was nothing," he said.

"But why couldn't you tie the end of the rope, Master Lumley?" asked Grimes. "It would have been safer than looping it and sliding down two ropes. They might 'ave slipped."

Lumley-Lumley shook his head.

"No fear of that; I guess I was too careful," he said. "You see, I can pull the rope down now I'm on the ground."

"Yes; but—"

"It will puzzle 'em in the morning, I guess," said the Outsider, with a chuckle. "They'll think I've got wings and flown away."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lumley-Lumley untied the knot Grimes had made in the two ends of the rope. Then it was easy to pull the rope down. He pulled on one end of it, and the rope flashed round the bar of the grate, and the end came whirling down from the window. It fell at Lumley-Lumley's feet, and he picked up the rope and coiled it.

"You're outer that, Master Lumley," said Grimes. "That's the fust thing."

"Thanks to you, Grimes," said Lumley-Lumley, grasping Grimes by the hand.

"Jolly glad to come round and help, Master Lumley," said Grimes. "But what are you going to do now?"

"Bunk!"

Grimes drew a quick breath.

"Run away from school?" he asked.

"No; only beat a retreat," said Lumley-Lumley. "No need to run away; they're going to kick me out to-morrow morning."

"Master Lumley!"

"I guess it's the fact, Grimey. I'm to be flogged, and then if I don't confess, I'm to be sacked."

"Oh, my 'at! What 'ave you been doin', Master Lumley?"

"That's the best of it, or the worse,"

(Continued on page 18.)



**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! You now have our second free gift in your hands, and, as you will readily agree with me, a great issue it is. There are three more ripping picture cards for you to add to your collection, besides an unbeatable story programme. Yes, it's a grand number, and there'll be another equally as good, if not better, next Wednesday. You will find another three picture cards, dealing with flying and motoring subjects, in the pages of the old paper, and these three, together with the others you have received, will complete the set. Then there is a super St. Jim's story, entitled:

"THE MYSTERY MAN AT ST. JIM'S!"

Who is "X"? That is the question you will all be asking yourselves next week when you read this school story thriller. "X," let me tell you, is a will-o'-the-wisp crackman who has long eluded the police. But his identity is as great a mystery as the manner in which he carries out his crimes. He is a daring and audacious criminal, and actually warns his victims beforehand of the exact time he intends to pay them a visit to relieve them of their valuables.

So it is that there is a big stir at St. Jim's when "X" phones Dr. Holmes to tell him that he is coming at twelve o'clock on a certain night to steal his valuable Rembrandt oil-painting! Here is a thrilling situation—the mystery man pitting his skill and daring against St. Jim's. All kinds of precautions are taken, and a hot reception awaits him. Will "X" come?

Martin Clifford has easily surpassed his previous best with this smashing, extra-long yarn, and it will go down as one of the finest thrillers you have ever read!

"THE BLACK HAND AT ST. FRANK'S!"

More big thrills also await you in the next gripping chapters of E. S. Brooks' wonderful new serial. What will happen to Nipper, trapped as he is in the house of mystery, Gallows

Mere? Fortunately for the junior skipper of St. Frank's, his chums are on the watch outside. But in Dr. Zangari, the mysterious No. 1, the juniors are up against a man who will stop at nothing to remove enemies from his path, and the boys of St. Frank's are made to realise this only too clearly when an attempt is made to drown Nipper!

Readers' prize-winning jokes, and a laugh or two from Monty Lowther, will complete our next super number. Don't forget to order early, chums.

THE KICK-OFF!

Footer is here again! On Saturday thousands of players all over the country will be getting into their stride for another eight months of Soccer. It has been said that the football season is too long. But the tremendous enthusiasm with which the arrival of every new season is greeted, the keen interest maintained until the last kick, is the answer to that. Football is the king of English sports, not only because it is a game best suited to our climate but because of its glorious uncertainty and the number of unexpected thrills that can be crowded into an hour and a half's play.

Here's to another thrilling and eventful season, and a successful one to those of my readers who play the game!

In the camps of the big League clubs optimism prevails. Every team is convinced that it is to be their season for lifting a League championship or the F.A. Cup. But, as I have said, Soccer is so uncertain that the big favourites for honours might find themselves fighting to avoid relegation when the first Saturday in May, 1936, comes round.

For instance, at the start of last season, who would have been so bold as to say that the Spurs would be one of the relegated teams when the season had run its course? On the contrary, it was thought that they

would be challenging the Arsenal for the championship! Again, when the 1932-33 season was due to commence, Charlton Athletic, such was the strength of the team they had built, were expected to be fighting out the championship of the Second Division when the following May came round. Instead of which they finished up at the bottom of the table! You never can tell with footer, which is why it is such a popular pastime.

SAILING ROUND THE WORLD!

About ten weeks ago Colin Sullivan, a youthful Englishman, set sail by himself on a thrilling adventure on which many boys would have given a lot to accompany him—a four-year trip round the world in a small motor-boat. All went well for Colin until he arrived at Frankfurt, on the River Main, but there his adventure received a sudden check. He had camped by the river for the night, and went into Frankfurt for some provisions. On his return, however, he made the unpleasant discovery that someone had cleared off with his motor-boat. Colin was, therefore, stranded until the police could recover it for him. Let's hope they have done so by now, and that the youthful adventurer is once more on his way.

ACROSS THE ATLANTIC!

Another thrilling voyage is to be attempted by an Ilfracombe man; in fact, he may have started by the time you read this. He proposes to cross the Atlantic in a lifeboat of his own invention. It is said that the vessel will stand up to any sea or weather; in short, it is unsinkable. The inventor is confident that his lifeboat will carry him and a crew of three across the Atlantic, and the success of the voyage should prove what is claimed of the lifeboat. It will not be the first time by a long way, however, that a boat so small has done the journey. For who will forget the daring voyage of Alain Gerbault, the French War-time ace and crack tennis-player? In the Firecrest, a British-built racing cutter, he sailed from Gibraltar to New York. The voyage took 101 days—and he was on his own!

A CLOSE SHAVE!

Lightning plays some odd tricks at times, but it has never played one so odd as it did to an Italian just recently. The man had the closest shave of his life, in more senses than one! He was leaning out of the window of his house when there was a sudden flash of lightning almost in his eyes. The next thing he knew he was lying on the floor, where he had been flung by the force of the shock. He sat up and felt his face, and, to his amazement, where there had been a beard and moustache, the skin was now smooth. The lightning had shaved him!

THE EDITOR.

PEN PALS COUPON

31-8-35



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.

Neville Halse, 4, Saving Bank, Bondi Beach, N.S.W., Australia; age 12-14; swimming, cricket.

James K. Veal, Willowdene, Strawberry Bank, Dundee, Scotland; stamps; age 13-14.

R. A. Oliver, Victoria Inn, Three Mile Stone, near Truro, Cornwall; old copies of "Nelson Lee."

Peter Mills, South View, 36, Ivy Street, Ipswich, Suffolk; British Empire; stamps, films.

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Norman Nemerofsky, 4136, St. Urbain Street, Montreal, Canada; age 14-16; overseas.

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Stanley Nicholls, Craiglands, 2, Strathmore Avenue, Beverley High Road, Hull; science, astronomy, geology; England, Canada, U.S.A.

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said Lumley-Lumley, with a chuckle. "I haven't been doing anything. Last term I did a good many things to be sacked for, and they never came to light. Now I'm going to be sacked for nothing."

"What is it all about, Master Lumley?"

"I came to see you this evening, Grimey."

"Yes; I was gorn over to Wayland," said Grimes. "They told me when I got back that you 'ad called, Master Lumley."

"You see, I've got on rotten terms with all the fellows here," Lumley-Lumley explained. "It's me against the school, or the school against me, whichever way you like to put it. I was coming down to you for a jaw, to get some sympathy, and you were out."

"I'm sorry I was."

"Oh, that's all right! Only, when I got back, I came into a fearful row. Levison had given me a pass he said was from Knox; but I don't know now whether Knox wrote it, and denied it, or whether Levison forged it—that's a peculiar gift of Levison's, imitating other fellows' handwriting; he's got into trouble for it before. Only, when I got back, I found I had lost the pass, and both Knox and Levison denied knowing anything about it."

"Oh, Master Lumley!"

"One of them was lying—perhaps both. I don't know."

"You—you really had the pass?"

hesitated Grimes.

The Outsider laughed.

"So you doubt me, too, Grimey?"

"No, no, Master Lumley!" Grimes exclaimed earnestly. "Not a bit of it. But it's very queer. S'pose you hadn't lost the pass, you'd have showed it when you came in, and then they would 'ave 'ad to eat their words?"

Lumley-Lumley nodded.

"Yes; that's the most awkward part of the whole story," he agreed. "The Head seized on that, of course. It looks as if the liar, whichever one was lying, plumped out his lie, while all the time I might have had the pass in my pocket to show him up."

"It do look queer, Master Lumley."

"It do!" grinned Lumley-Lumley.

"But the queerest thing about it is, that it is true. That cad Levison must have had some reason to suppose that I shouldn't bring back the pass; though why he should be able to guess in advance, I don't know. I happen to have told the truth, but all the evidence is against me, and I'm sacked."

"It's 'orrid 'ard, Master Lumley."

"I should guess it is, Master Grimes. But I'm not beaten yet," said the Outsider coolly. "They are going to find that there's a good bit of bite left in me. I'm going to find that giddy pass, somehow, and show them up."

"Find it?" repeated Grimes doubtfully.

"That's the programme," replied Lumley-Lumley cheerfully. "I guess I remember everywhere I went this evening, and I'm going over the ground again to find it. Somebody may have picked it up, and in that case he'd keep it most likely, and send it to me, as my name was written on it. Any chap who found it would know that the owner might get into trouble through losing it, and would send it to the chap whose name was on it, I guess. Don't you think so, Grimey?"

"I—I shouldn't wonder," said Grimes, rather dubiously.

"And if it hasn't been picked up, I guess it's most likely where I dropped it," said Lumley-Lumley. "I remember—"

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ber taking some toffee out of that same pocket while I was resting on the stile, on my way back to the school. I might have jerked it out without noticing it. Of course, it wasn't likely; but, you see, the rotten thing is gone, so I must have lost it somehow. You brought the torch?"

"Yes, Master Lumley," Grimes fumbled in his pocket. "I got your note 'ere, and I got all the things you wanted." He scratched a match and looked at the pencilled paper. "Long rope, torch, matches, sandwiches. I've got them all."

"You're a good sort, Grimey. Don't drop that note about here; your name's on it, and I don't want them to know you helped me out. It might get you into trouble."

"Right you are, Master Lumley!"

"How did you get into the grounds, Grimey?"

"Over the wall from the road, Master Lumley."

"We'll get out the same way. Come on!"

The two lads crossed the dark quadrangle. In a couple of minutes they were over the wall and standing in the road.

Grimes extracted the torch from his pocket, and Lumley-Lumley took it and switched it on.

"Going to search the road?" he asked.

"Every step of the way to Rylcombe," said Lumley-Lumley.

"My 'at! It will take a time!"

"I guess I've got plenty."

"You'll come 'ome with me to sleep?"

"If you'll have me, Grimey."

"I'll 'ave you, and glad, Master Lumley. But I ain't going in till you come. I'm goin' to 'elp you search for that blessed paper!"

Lumley-Lumley shook his head decidedly.

"I guess that won't do, Grimey. You've got to work to-morrow."

"That's all right."

"I'm not going to keep you up. Buzz off to bed!"

"Rats!" said Grimes.

"Look here, Grimey—"

"Look 'ere, Master Lumley—"

"You're an obstinate ass, Grimey!"

"Yes; that's all right," said Grimes.

"Let's begin the search."

Lumley-Lumley laughed, and they started. The beam of the torch disappeared down the long, dark road.

Two hours later, two tired youths finished a sandwich each and regarded one another dubiously in the starlight. The torch battery had burnt out.

"No luck, Master Lumley!" said Grimes.

"I guess we're done!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"I'll keep on, if you want to, Master Lumley."

"I don't want to, Master Grimes. I'm tired as a dog. Let's get in. I'm done!"

And in ten minutes Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the Fourth Former of St. Jim's, and Grimes, the grocer's boy, of Rylcombe, were sleeping side by side in Grimes' garret.

CHAPTER 12.

Vanished!

CLANG, clang!

Tom Merry jumped out of bed in the Shell dormitory in the School House at St. Jim's.

As a rule Tom Merry rose with the

"shining morning face" of which the poet sings. But on this particular morning his brow was overcast.

"I wonder how Lumley's got on?" he asked.

"Oh, blow Lumley!" yawned Lowther. "He won't have to get up at rising-bell, anyway! He can stay in bed another hour if he likes!"

"I don't suppose he'll feel like sleeping, considering what he's got before him," remarked Bernard Glyn.

"I'm going to see him," said Tom Merry; "or to speak to him, at any rate."

And as soon as he was dressed, Tom Merry hurried down to the Fourth Form passage and turned into the recess which led to the door of Nobody's Study.

Early as he was, he was not the earliest there. An elegant junior was tapping at the door of the punishment-room. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Pway ansawah me, Lumley, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, through the keyhole. "Are you asleep, deah boy?"

Tom Merry clapped the swell of St. Jim's upon the shoulder.

Arthur Augustus started and swung round. He drew a breath of relief as he saw it was Tom Merry behind him.

"Bai Jove! You thwew me into quite a fluttah," he exclaimed. "I was afraid it was a wotten pwefect. Lumley-Lumley seems to be still asleep."

"Pity to wake him, perhaps," said Tom Merry, "considering what he's got to go through this morning, Gussy."

"Yaas, pewwaps you are wight," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "But if he isn't let out of the punishment-woom, deah boy, how is he goin' to have his mornin' bath?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Probably he won't have it at all," he said.

"Bai Jove, that's howwid!"

"Well, there are worse things than even that," said Tom Merry. "I wish something would turn up to clear up the doubt about him. It would be fearfully rotten if it turned out that this was really a plot of Crooke and Levison's, as Lumley declares."

"I don't see how it could be, deah boy. They couldn't possibly know that he was goin' to lose the papah; and if he had produced the papah, it would have settled them."

"Yes, that's so."

There was a step in the passage, and Kildare turned into the recess. He gave the two juniors rather a grim look.

"So you're here?" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy meekly. "I was only sayin' this moment that some wotten pwefect would come along and catch us—"

"Some what?"

"Ahem! I mean some pwefect," said D'Arcy. "Are you going to wake Lumley up?"

"Yes; Toby is going to bring his breakfast."

Kildare unlocked the door.

"I suppose we can say good-morning to him?" said Tom Merry.

"I suppose so, if you like."

The captain of St. Jim's threw the door open and walked into the room.

"Lumley—" he began.

Then he broke off and stared about the room in blank astonishment.

"Great Scott!"

Kildare's startled exclamation was enough to tell Tom Merry and D'Arcy that something was wrong. They ran into the room. They stared about them

blankly. The room was empty. The bed had not been slept in, the window was open, and Lumley-Lumley was gone!

"Gweat Scott!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry, in a hushed voice. "Kildare, is it possible that—"

Kildare rushed to the window with a white face. The terrible thought had come into his mind, as into Tom Merry's, that the Outsider had done something desperate. They both knew well that it was impossible to climb down from the window. Below was a bare wall.

Kildare leaned out of the window and regarded the ground below with searching eyes.

"Can you see anything?" muttered Tom Merry.

"No," said Kildare, with a deep breath.

"Bai Jove, he might have bwooken his neck!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "But how on earth could he get out of the window without bweakin' his neck, deah boy?"

"I—I can't quite understand it," said Kildare. "He's gone, that's a cert. He must have had some assistance—a ladder, or something." And Kildare left the punishment-room to report to Mr. Railton that Lumley-Lumley was gone.

In five minutes the news was buzzing all over the school.

Fellows came to look into the punishment-room, which was left unlocked now. Figgins & Co. came over from the New House to look in as soon as the rumour reached them of the flight of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

The School House was in a flutter of excitement over it. There were many surmises as to how Lumley-Lumley had succeeded in making his escape.

Tom Merry thought he could guess. He understood now why the Outsider had wished to send the message to Grimes.

Tom Merry looked round the House for Toby. He found him cleaning knives below stairs, and tapped him on the shoulder.

Toby paused over the knife-machine. "Did you see Grimes last night, Toby?" Tom Merry asked.

"Yes, Master Tom."

"Did you give him a note from Lumley?"

"Yes, sir."

"And Grimes came round here, I suppose?"

"I dunno, Master Tom. I didn't know what was in the note, 'cept that there was some money folded up in it, so I s'pose it was to buy somethin'."

"A rope, for instance?" said Tom Merry.

Toby grinned. "I shouldn't wonder, Master Tom!" he said.

"Better say nothing about it, Toby; there may be trouble."

"Right-ho, Master Tom!"

Tom Merry went upstairs again, and Toby continued cleaning knives. He grinned to himself as he worked. Toby and Tom Merry could have told how the Outsider of St. Jim's had escaped from Nobody's Study; but to the rest of the school it was a mystery.

CHAPTER 13. No Surrender!

"A HEM!" Dr. Holmes made that remark as he opened a letter at the breakfast table in the morning, and recognised the hand-

writing of Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth.

The Head had been very much surprised, and very much annoyed by the report that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had escaped from the punishment-room.

Lumley-Lumley had been shut up there for the night, in case he should escape from the school if left in his usual place in the dormitory. He had escaped all the same.

True, he had to leave St. Jim's, anyway, that morning. But the Head had intended to expel him, and to send him home in charge of a prefect. To have the boy wandering at random over the countryside was not what he intended at all. He was responsible for the junior until he was safely delivered at the home of Mr. Lascelles Lumley-Lumley, his father.

"The impertinence!" murmured the Head, as he recognised Lumley-Lumley's handwriting on the envelope. "He has had the impertinence to write to me!"

Mrs. Holmes glanced at her husband. "A letter from Lumley-Lumley, my dear," said the Head. "That is all."

He read the letter. The contents of it made him contract his brows. It ran:

"Dear Sir,—I have left St. Jim's for the present. I shall return when I have found the missing pass, which will prove to you that I told you the truth, and that there is a plot against me. If I do not succeed in finding the lost paper, I shall remain in Rylcombe until I have hit upon some other way of clearing myself. I don't intend to give in. I'm coming to St. Jim's when I am cleared."

"Yours very respectfully,
"J. LUMLEY-LUMLEY."

"Goodness gracious!" said the Head. "If the facts did not speak so plainly, one would really imagine that the boy was telling the truth."

He passed the letter to Mrs. Holmes.

"What do you think of that?" he asked.

Mrs. Holmes read the letter.

"I think it is the letter of an innocent boy," she said. "If he were guilty, what object could he have in remaining near the school as he is doing?"

"Impudence, I fear."

Dr. Holmes showed the letter to Mr. Railton when he met him a little later.

The Housemaster of the School House knitted his brows over it.

"What are you going to do about it, sir?"

"Well," said the Head, pursing his lips, "he cannot be flogged now—that is certain. I do not know that I am sorry to be relieved of an unpleasant task. As for expelling him he is gone already. He cannot be left to wander in the country; he must return to his home."

"In that case—"

"Someone must go to the village to take him back."

"Do you know where he is, sir? There is no address on the letter. He has evidently anticipated something of the sort."

The Head frowned.

"But he must be found, Mr. Railton. He cannot be left at liberty in this way. His father has a right to expect that he is safely sent home."

"True. I understand that he has a friend in the village whom, he claims, he went to see on the occasion he was absent without leave. It is very probable that he has taken refuge with this boy, Grimes."

"Quite likely," said the Head. "The boy lives in Rylcombe, I suppose?"

"Yes. He is employed by Mr. Sands, the grocer, and, in fact, delivers goods here," said Mr. Railton. "He will

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probably be at the tradesmen's entrance here this very morning. It would probably be useless to question him, however. Perhaps I had better call on Mr. Sands, ascertain Grimes' address, and call there for Lumley-Lumley."

"Very good, Mr. Railton! But if he is not at home—"

"True; but if he is living with Grimes, he will doubtless be home to dinner, and in that case I shall find him if I call at midday. I will go after morning lessons here."

"Thank you, Mr. Railton! That will be excellent!"

Morning lessons at St. Jim's that day did not proceed so sedately as usual.

The Lower School, at all events, were very excited, and even the high and mighty seniors were keenly interested in the case of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

That he had written to the Head was soon known, and that he still declared his innocence, and his intention of returning to St. Jim's when he was cleared. The Head had shown the letter to most of the masters, and it had leaked out, from master to prefects, from prefects to the rest of the school.

Crooke, Levison, and Mellish grinned at the idea; but Mellish, at least, grinned in a very uneasy way. And even Levison, hard and determined as he was, felt a slight inward dismay.

The Outsider was so cool, so keen, so resolute, that he was a dangerous enemy at any time, and when he was down he was not in the least likely to remain down. It seemed impossible that he could escape from the net that had been drawn so cunningly round him.

And yet the plotters felt a tremor. After morning lessons the juniors gathered in groups in the passages and the quadrangle, discussing the matter with unabated interest.

"He won't be allowed to remain in Rylcombe," Piggins of the Fourth averred. "It stands to reason the Head won't have that. He will be taken up by the prefects."

"Perhaps he will refuse," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy reflected thoughtfully.

"He is bound to be sent home," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head.

"It's a free country," remarked Bernard Glyn. "He can stay in Rylcombe if he wants to; and he can't be stopped."

"If his pater lets him," said Monty Lowther. "I shouldn't wonder if we have a visit from Lumley-Lumley major, to give the Head his opinion about the matter."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Railton came out of the School House with his hat and coat on, and crossed towards the gates.

"He's going for Lumley!" remarked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I fancy he'll catch a tartar," said Tom Merry. "Lumley-Lumley won't come back here to be sacked, and I don't believe he will leave Rylcombe. There will be trouble."

Most of the fellows agreed with Tom Merry's opinion. And they waited with great curiosity for the return of Mr. Railton.

CHAPTER 14.

The Missing Pass!

"**W**OT luck?" Grimes asked the question. Lumley-Lumley shook his head. He was seated in the kitchen of the house where Grimes lodged and where Grimes took his meals.

Grimes had come in for dinner. He lived only a few minutes from the grocer's shop, and always came home to his meals.

Lumley-Lumley had waited for him, sitting by the kitchen fire. The change from the handsome old oak-panelled dining-room at St. Jim's to the bare walls of the kitchen of the little house in River Lane did not seem to worry Lumley-Lumley in any way. Indeed, he had more important matters than that to think about.

He was dirty, and he looked tired. He had spent the whole of the morning in going over his footsteps of the previous evening, in the hope of finding the missing paper. He had not succeeded.

The longer he searched the more hopeless he felt the search to be; but he had not given up hope. He had inserted a notice in the local paper, describing the lost pass, and offering a reward of five pounds to anyone who should find it. He had enlisted a dozen village lads in the search, giving them half-a-crown each for their day's labour and the promise of the reward if they found the paper.

Half the urchins in Rylcombe were buzzing with excitement over the search. He had even sent out four men with the notice on sandwich-boards.

But it had all come to nothing so far. And, indeed, Lumley-Lumley had to admit that it was very like searching for a needle in a haystack.

Chance might bring the missing paper to light, but it certainly depended upon chance.

"No luck!" said the Outsider.

"I'm sorry," said Grimes. "It's rotten, old man. I kep' my eyes open while I was takin' out the goods this mornin', but it wasn't no use."

"It may turn up," said Lumley-Lumley. "No good worrying about it. If it doesn't, I shall have to think of some dodge for making Levison own up."

Grimes looked very doubtful.

"You ain't givin' in, then?" he asked. "No fear!"

"What'll your father say, Master Lumley?"

"I guess he'll stand by me, Grimey. I hope so, at any rate. But it's a bit thick, to ask him to believe the story I've got to tell," said Lumley-Lumley frankly. "Nobody at St. Jim's believes in me. Blessed if I know why you do."

Grimes grinned.

"I knows you, Master Lumley," he said.

"You're an ass, Master Grimes," said Lumley-Lumley. "You're believing in me against all the evidence."

"That don't make no difference to me."

The two boys sat down to the table to dinner. Grimes looked apologetically across to Lumley-Lumley.

"This is rather rough for you, Master Lumley," he said.

"Don't be an ass, Master Grimes," said Lumley cheerfully. "I guess I'm jolly lucky to have a pal to stand by me as you're doing. How ripping that stew smells! And I'm frightfully hungry."

"You ain't lost your appetite over the business, Master Lumley-Lumley," said Grimes, with great admiration.

"I guess it would take more than that to make me lose my appetite, Master Grimey," said Lumley-Lumley.

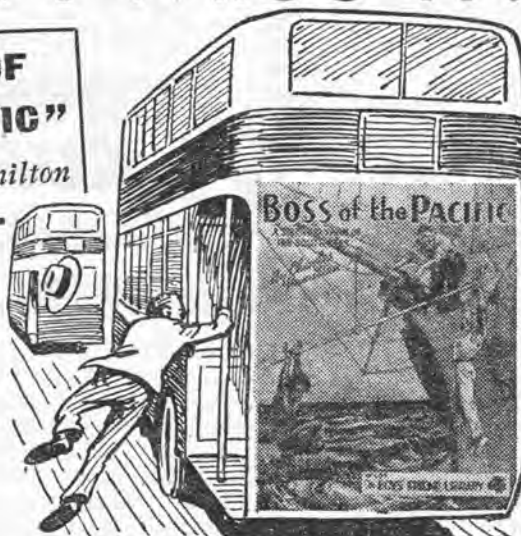
And he attacked his dinner with a very keen appetite. Grimes, indeed, seemed more troubled in mind about the matter than Lumley-Lumley himself.

"You've given a description of the paper in the advertisement, like you

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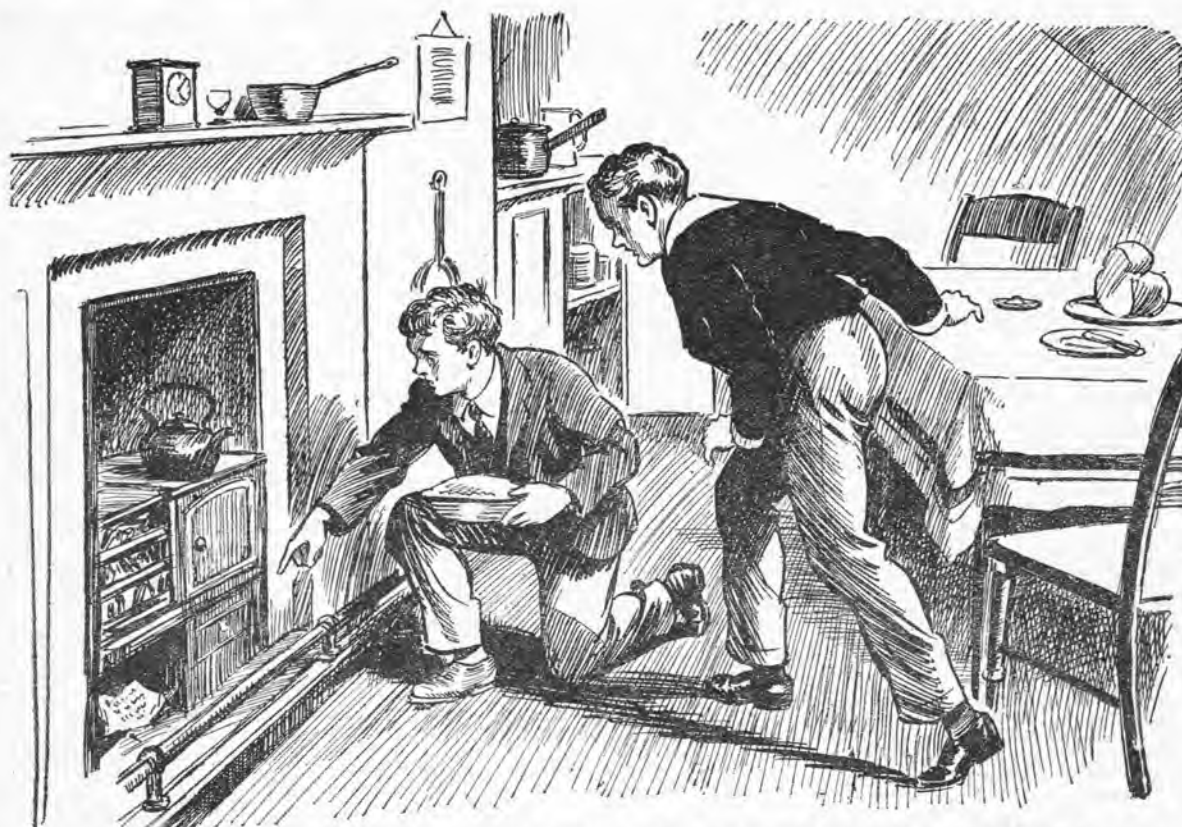
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"Look, Master Lumley!" exclaimed Grimes, pointing to the piece of paper which had been thrown into the firegrate. Through the faint scrawl of pencil, writing in ink was now clearly visible. Lumley-Lumley understood. It was the missing pass, which had been written in invisible ink, and was now revealed by the heat of the fire!

said, Master Lumley?" asked Grimes, after a pause.

Lumley-Lumley nodded.

"Yes. It was a half sheet of impot paper—like that I sent you the note on last night, Grimey—just about the same size. It's a queer thing," said Lumley-Lumley. "I haven't the slightest recollection of putting that blank sheet in my pocket, and I clearly remember putting Knox's pass there. But when I turned out my pocket I found the blank sheet, and the pass was missing."

"You might have left it in your study and put the blank sheet in your pocket by mistake," suggested Grimes.

"I guess not. I folded it and put it in my pocket immediately Levison gave it to me."

"Crumbs!" exclaimed Grimes, feeling in his pocket. "If it was written in pencil, it mighta got rubbed out, Master Lumley, and it might be the same sheet of paper."

"But it was written in ink, Grimey—not the ink that's usually used, but ink right enough."

Grimes had taken the note from his pocket and glanced at it.

Lumley-Lumley's pencilled scrawl was still legible upon it, with the list of things he had asked Grimes to bring to St. Jim's the previous night.

Grimes sighed, and threw the paper into the grate.

"Well, it ain't that!" he said.

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"No!" he said. "Pass the dish, old son—I'm hungry."

Lumley-Lumley helped himself again to the stew. Then Grimes turned to the grate to take up the pudding which was to follow, and which his landlady had placed by the bars to keep warm.

He uttered a stifled exclamation as he stooped over the fender, and Lumley-Lumley glanced at him.

"Burnt your fingers?" he asked.

"No! Oh crumbs!"

"What's the matter?"

"My heye!"

"What on earth—"

"Look, Master Lumley!"

Grimes caught Lumley's arm with one hand in an almost convulsive grip, and with the other pointed into the grate.

Lumley-Lumley looked there, very much puzzled by Grimes' queer action, and then he suddenly became pale with excitement.

"Gee-whiz!" he exclaimed.

The paper Grimes had tossed into the grate had fallen upon the ashes underneath the fire. It was not burnt, but it was crumpled up with the heat above. And as it took on a brown tinge from the heat, a strange thing had happened. Instead of Lumley-Lumley's pencilled scrawl, lines of writing in clear black had strangely appeared.

The two boys gazed at the paper dumbfounded.

It was as if black magic had suddenly entered into their experience. The paper, when thrown into the grate, had been blank, save for the pencil lines. Now, through the faint scrawl of pencil, writing in ink was clearly visible.

Lumley-Lumley understood!

"My hat!" he said, with a deep breath. "There was writing on that paper in invisible ink, Grimey, and the heat has made it show up!"

"But—but look wot's written!" gasped Grimes.

"G. Knox!" read Lumley-Lumley. "Oh, my hat!"

He sprang to the grate and rescued the paper from the ashes.

With a firm hand he held it to the bars at a safe distance, so that the heat was evenly spread over the whole surface of the paper. Then the rest of the writing came into clear prominence.

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Grimes, almost overcome.

Lumley-Lumley set his teeth.

"The pass!" he said.

It was the missing pass.

There was his name upon it—"J. Lumley-Lumley"—and there was Knox's signature, clear to be seen and read. He knew Knox's handwriting again at once.

He understood.

"The villain!" said Lumley-Lumley. "The awful schemer! I remember now that Glyn's fountain-pen with the invisible ink in it was missing from Glyn's study. Levison wrote the pass in Knox's hand—in invisible ink—and it faded out of sight; and when I looked for the pass in my pocket, I found only a blank sheet of paper."

"Oh, Master Lumley!"

"What is that?"

It was a deep voice at the open kitchen door.

Lumley-Lumley swung round with the paper in his hand.

Mr. Railton strode in.

The School House master had arrived. "Mr. Railton!" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley.

"I came to fetch you away from here, Lumley," said the Housemaster quietly. "I heard what you said as I came in. What is that paper?"

"Look at it, sir!"

Lumley-Lumley passed the paper to Mr. Railton. The School House master

took it in his hand, and glanced at it keenly.

"This is a pass written by Knox, giving you permission to stay out until nine o'clock, Lumley-Lumley, and dated," said Mr. Railton. "Is this the pass that you declared to me was given to you yesterday?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you not give it to me then?"

"Don't you see, sir?" said Lumley-Lumley excitedly. "You remember my turning out my pockets in your study, sir. Among the old letters I turned out there was a blank sheet of paper."

"I remember that," said Mr. Railton, with a nod.

"That's the sheet, sir."

"This!"

"Yes, sir!" Lumley-Lumley was quite cool again now. He understood all that this discovery meant to him, and his heart was very light. "Levison brought me the pass, which Knox had given him, or which he had written in Knox's handwriting; but it was written in invisible ink."

"Lumley!"

"Glyn will tell you, sir, that he missed his fountain-pen that day—the pen he had invisible ink in. Levison or Crooke must have taken it and used it for this. I remember remarking to Levison, when he gave me the pass, that Knox hadn't used the school ink, and he said Knox used his fountain-pen. That invisible ink is one of Bernard Glyn's inventions, sir—it looks like ordinary ink for about an hour or so, and then fades quite out of sight—and it comes up again as soon as you warm the paper. I never dreamed of such a trick. Levison knew that before the paper had been in my pocket an hour, the writing would have faded away, and when I went to look for it, I should find only a blank sheet."

"Great Scott!" said Mr. Railton. "But there is other writing upon this paper, Lumley-Lumley—in pencil."

"Yes, sir; I used the sheet, thinking it was a blank one, to send a note to Grimes last night, to ask him to come and help me get away. Grimes just chucked it away, and the heat of the fire brought up some of the writing; then I guessed."

"I understand," said Mr. Railton. "Lumley-Lumley, I came here to take you back to your father. Instead of that, I shall take you back to St. Jim's, to reinstate you there and proclaim your innocence to all the school. I think nothing more will be said about your escape, considering the circumstances. Come!"

"Oh crikey!" said Grimes.

Lumley-Lumley grasped his pal's hand.

"Grimey, old man, I owe this to you!" he said. "I guess I shan't forget it. Good-bye, Grimey, old son!"

"Good-bye, Master Lumley! I'm jolly glad!"

"So am I, Master Grimes."

And Lumley-Lumley's face was very glad as he walked back to St. Jim's with Mr. Railton.

CHAPTER 15.

An Outsider's Triumph!

TOM MERRY & CO. were at the school gates when Mr. Railton came in, with the Outsider walking at his side.

There was a murmur as they came in.

"Here he is!"

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"Yes, here I am, I guess," said Lumley-Lumley cheerfully. "I've come back—turned up like a bad penny, you know. And I've come back to stay."

"What?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Boys," said Mr. Railton, in a deep voice, "a mistake has been made! Lumley-Lumley was quite innocent; the pass has been found."

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Levison wrote it in invisible ink," said Mr. Railton. "Glyn, I should advise you to take more care with those peculiar inventions of yours."

The Liverpool lad jumped.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "Oh, great Scott! So that was what Crooke took my fountain-pen for?"

"It was a plot," said Mr. Railton—"a most cowardly, cunning, and dastardly plot! Crooke, Levison, Mellish, you will follow me to the Head's study."

"I—I—," stammered Crooke.

"Oh!" gasped Levison. "I—I—he must have written it himself, sir."

"Do not add to your wickedness, Levison, by repeating falsehoods," said Mr. Railton. "Follow me at once!"

"I—I had nothing whatever to do with it, sir!" said Mellish feverishly. "I—I simply heard Crooke and Levison talking it over, sir. I—I was against it all the time. I—I—I told them it wasn't fair on Lumley, and—"

"You lying cad!" muttered Levison bitterly. "You were in it the same as we were, and you've given us away now!"

"There was no giving away needed: the whole thing was quite clear," said Mr. Railton. "All three of you follow me!"

With downcast faces and drooping heads, the three plotters followed Mr. Railton and Lumley-Lumley to the Head's study.

They left the crowd in a buzz.

"Lumley's innocent!" exclaimed Tom Merry almost dazedly. "Look here, we've been in the wrong, and all we can do now is to beg Lumley's pardon, and give him a rousing reception when the Head's done with him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

And Tom Merry & Co. crowded into the passage outside the Head's study to wait for the Outsider to come out.

Meanwhile, Mr. Railton had taken the four juniors into the presence of the Head—Lumley-Lumley cool and cheerful; Levison, Mellish, and Crooke so terror-stricken that they seemed hardly to know what they were doing or where they were going.

Mr. Railton had laid the scorched paper upon the Head's desk.

Dr. Holmes looked at it, and listened in dazed amazement at the House-master's explanation.

When Mr. Railton had finished the Head turned a terrible glance upon the three plotters.

"Well," he said, in a deep voice, "what have you to say?"

Crooke tried to speak, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

Levison stammered unintelligibly; Mellish panted.

"You may go and pack your boxes," said the Head. "All three of you will leave the school this morning. Lumley-Lumley, you have been very much wronged. I cannot say how glad I am that the truth has come to light. I am sorry, my boy, and if I can do anything to compensate you in any way for the undeserved suffering you have undergone, you have only to ask."

"Thank you, sir!" said Lumley-Lumley.

He glanced at Crooke, Levison, and Mellish. The three terrified and dismayed juniors seemed rooted to the carpet. There was a contemptuous compassion in the glance of the Outsider of St. Jim's.

"I guess I should like to ask you a favour, sir," he said.

"Name it," said Dr. Holmes. "If it is anything in my power, and consistent with my duty, you have only to speak."

"Very well, sir. If you will be so kind—"

Lumley-Lumley hesitated.

"Yes, Lumley?"

"Let these three chaps off, sir."

"What?"

Crooke & Co. looked at Lumley-Lumley, scarcely able to believe their ears.

Mr. Railton and the Head were almost as much astonished. It was the last thing in the world they had expected Jerrold Lumley-Lumley to ask.

"Are you serious, Lumley-Lumley?" asked the Head, after quite a long pause.

"I guess so, sir. They've acted like awful cads, but I don't want three chaps to be sacked on my account. I fancy their people would give them an awful time, too. And they must have been feeling pretty bad the last quarter of an hour."

The Head smiled slightly.

"I have no doubt that that is correct," he said. "Lumley-Lumley, you are acting very generously towards these wretched boys. They have wronged you deeply."

"That's all right. I guess you were telling us in your sermon last Sunday, sir, to return good for evil," said Lumley-Lumley calmly. "That's what I want to do. I guess it will be a lesson to them, too."

"Yes, I think so." The Head paused. "Lumley-Lumley, if you ask this seriously, I will reconsider my decision and will not expel them. They must be punished, but they shall be flogged instead."

"Thank you very much, sir."

"You hear?" said the Head sternly, turning to Crooke & Co. "You owe it to this boy, whom you have cruelly wronged, that you are not expelled in disgrace from the school. I hope you will remember it. Lumley-Lumley, you may go, and the school will learn that you are innocent—that you are a boy worthy of the noblest traditions of St. Jim's."

And the Head shook hands with the Outsider.

"The school knows it already, sir," said Mr. Railton. "I think there is a reception preparing for Lumley-Lumley outside."

Mr. Railton was right. The moment Lumley-Lumley stepped from the Head's study he was surrounded by a crowd of juniors. They seized him and bore him away shoulder-high. From the Head's study sounds of anguish were heard—the cads of the School House were paying the penalty.

But no one listened; no one was thinking of Crooke & Co. at that moment.

Lumley-Lumley, surrounded by a cheering crowd, yelling and waving their caps, was carried round the old quadrangle in triumph. The Outsider's dark hour was over.

(In next Wednesday's Free Gift Number: **THE MYSTERY MAN AT ST. JIM'S!**—a wonderful school-story thriller that you will vote the best you have ever read!)

MORE THRILL-PACKED CHAPTERS FROM OUR SUPER NEW ST. FRANK'S STORY!

The BLACK HAND at ST. FRANK'S!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

The Mystery Spectator!

EIGHT boys of St. Frank's are returning to school one night when they see an aeroplane crash in Bellton Wood. They race to the scene of the disaster, and discover that the pilot has been shot in the back! With his last words the airman, an Italian, bids the St. Frank's boys to take a package to "No. 1," at Gallows Mere. He pledges them to strict secrecy, and then falls back dead. No sooner does this happen than a black man appears from the trees, and threatening the schoolboys with a revolver, demands the package. But Edward Oswald Handforth saves the situation, and the black man takes to his heels.

The juniors go on to St. Frank's, and on the way they find a parachute and flying suit. It is obvious to them that the black man shot the pilot in midair in attempting to get the package, and then jumped by parachute.

Later, Nelson Lee, the schoolmaster-detective, investigates, and it is revealed that there are no identification marks on the pilot or the plane. The police spread a wide net for the assassin, but he eludes capture.

The next day Handforth and his chums are motoring to a football match when, passing along a lonely road, something drops on to the wing of the motor-car. Handforth stops and recovers it—to see it is a black withered hand! The juniors drive on for a short distance, and then Handforth suddenly halts the car again. Opposite them is a deserted-looking old house, and in faded lettering on the gates is "Gallows Mere!"

Handforth blinked. Then, as the full realisation of the discovery came home to him, his eyes blazed with excitement.

Gallows Mere!

This lonely old house, so sinister-looking, was the place where the mysterious "No. 1" was to be found. Here,

the sealed letter entrusted to the schoolboys by the dying pilot was to be delivered!

"My only sainted aunt!" ejaculated Handforth, when he could find his voice. "It's the house, you chaps! Gallows Mere! We've found it!" He turned round and stared incredulously at his startled chums. "What did I tell you? You laughed at me when I came along these by-roads—"

"Don't fool yourself, Handy," interrupted McClure, with disconcerting directness. "You never really expected to find Gallows Mere, and you know it. This is just a coincidence. What a dreary-looking place! Better drive on."

"Drive on?"

"Of course!"

"But, you silly ass, we've got to deliver that giddy package," said Handforth, stopping the engine. "Rummy we never knew the name of this house before! Yet it must have been called Gallows Mere for donkey's years. Look how old and faded the lettering is on the gate."

"There's nothing rummy about it at all," said Mac, who was getting impatient. "We don't come this way once in a blue moon; and any St. Frank's chaps who have passed the house haven't had any interest in it, so they've never given it a second glance. Besides, it's probably been standing empty for years." He changed the subject. "Isn't there a football match on at Helmsford this afternoon?" he asked pointedly. "I rather think Nipper is expecting us to show up."

"Blow the football!" snorted Handforth. "What the dickens does football matter at a time like this? Can't you fatheads understand that we've found Gallows Mere? You chaps wait here. I'm going up to the house—"

"What's the good of going up to the house?"

"By George! I'd forgotten!" said Handforth, with a start. "Nipper's got that sealed package, hasn't he? The silly ass! He ought to have let me carry it."

"No good going up to the house empty-handed," said Church, with relief. "Better drive straight on, Handy."

"Hold on! There's somebody coming along the road on a bike," said Handforth quickly. "It's a postman. He'll be able to give us some information! I say! Whoa! Half a minute!"

The rural postman—an elderly man—dismounted.

"Can you tell us who lives at Gallows Mere?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"Lives where?"

"Gallows Mere."

"Never heard of it," said the postman, shaking his head.

"Never heard of it!" ejaculated Handforth. "But this is Gallows Mere. The name's painted on the gate!"

"First time I knew it," said the postman, in surprise, giving the gate a sceptical glance. "Everybody in these parts knows the place as Whitaker's. It's been called Whitaker's for as long as I can remember. Old Ned Whitaker lived here all his life. Died twenty years ago. I can't see any name on the gate," he added. "There's some faded lettering, but—"

"Well, never mind," interrupted Handforth. "Don't you ever deliver letters here? Who lives in the place now?"

"Ah! It's a queer thing, but all the time Dr. Zangari has been here—and he come to live here nearly a year ago—he hasn't had a single letter," said the postman. "I've never had reason to pass the gate."

"Dr. who?" asked Handforth breathlessly.

"Dr. Zangari. Foreign gent," explained the postman unnecessarily. "You can't see nothing from here, but they say he's built some queer out-houses at the back. I've never seen him, but they say he's one of the nicest gents you could wish to meet."

"Oh!" said Handforth, disappointed.

The postman nodded, remounted, and rode away.

"Dr. Zangari!" muttered Handforth. "Why, the very name is—suspicious!"

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"Rats! Don't try to make a mystery out of nothing," said the hard-headed McClure. "I believe he's an astronomer."

"How the dickens do you know?"

"Why, as long ago as last term I heard somebody talking about Dr. Zangari and the observatory he had built at Whitaker's, Edgmore. No wonder we had never heard of Gallows Mere! The house hasn't been called by its right name for so many years that people have forgotten it."

"Astronomer, eh?" said Handforth, his face flushed. "Astronomer, my foot! That's only a blind, my sons. He's the head of a criminal organisation, and—"

"Well, let's be getting on to Helmsford," interrupted Church. "We shall be late, as it is. The game can't start without you, Handy. Have a heart!"

"Oh, all right!" growled Handforth, giving the strange old house a last look. "It's a pity to go off without doing anything, all the same."

When, in due course, they reached Helmsford College, they found Nipper and the rest of the team impatiently waiting. It was within a minute or two of kick-off, and the spectators round the junior playing field were beginning to get restive.

"About time, too!" said Nipper. "Did you have engine trouble, or a puncture, or what? Better dash into the pavilion, and change."

Handforth dragged Nipper aside.

"We've found it!" he said tensely.

"Found what?"

"Gallows Mere."

"Now, look here, Handy—"

"I tell you we have!" insisted Handforth. "It's that old house a mile or two beyond Edgmore, called Whitaker's. I had a sort of suspicion. Anyhow, I stopped opposite the gate, and there was the name, 'Gallows Mere,' in faded lettering. You could have knocked me down with a feather."

"What kind of feather?" asked Nipper wonderingly.

"Don't rot! This is serious!" urged Handforth. "The house is occupied by a mysterious, sinister man named Dr. Garnazzi, or something—"

"Dr. Zangari," nodded Nipper. "I've heard of him. An astronomer. Spoken of highly in Edgmore. All the same, you surprise me, Handy. So that old house, Whitaker's, is really Gallows Mere. That's why we'd never heard of it."

"There's something else," said Handforth grimly. "Look at this!"

"Can't you save it? The Helmsford chaps are rather expecting us to start this game—"

"Blow the game! I've got to show you something!"

Handforth went to his car, and Nipper advised Church and McClure to go and change. He also intimated to one of two of the Helmsford fellows, who were standing about, that Handforth would be only half a jiffy. Thus, the two St. Frank's Removites were left alone with the Morris Eight. Handforth opened the tool-locker, took out the duster, and, after a cautious glance round, opened it.

"Look at that, my son!" he said breathlessly.

Nipper looked, and started. He had expected something trivial.

"Where the dickens did you get this from?" he asked, becoming serious.

Handforth described the mysterious happening near Gallows Mere.

"H'm! Rummy, as you say!" commented Nipper thoughtfully. "Better put this back in your locker. I'll show it to the guv'nor when we get home. It's

undoubtedly the mummified hand of a black man. Nothing particularly gruesome about it, of course. It's probably thousands of years old, like the mummies in the Egyptian tombs. Where were you exactly when the thing was thrown at the car?"

Handforth described the spot.

"So you were near Gallows Mere?" said Nipper tensely. "By Jove, Handy, that theory of ours is probably right. The murderer—the Abyssinian—has found refuge at Gallows Mere. He must have been skulking in the grounds. Watching the road, he saw your car coming, and recognised you as the chap who jumped on him last night. He must have thrown the hand on impulse, hoping that you would stop. Then he meant to attack you and get the package."

"But I hadn't got the package."

"He didn't know that."

"Besides, the blighter didn't attack us."

"I expect he meant to," said Nipper. "Something must have happened to make him change his mind. Did somebody come along just then?"

"Not a soul. We seemed to have the whole countryside to ourselves."

"H'm! I don't understand it," said Nipper slowly. "Are you sure? Think carefully, Handy."

"Well, a postman came along some minutes later—By George—"

Handforth broke off, and there was a light of understanding in his eyes. "I remember now! While we were standing there, looking at the mummified hand, we didn't see anybody, but I fancied I heard a bicycle-bell."

"That was it," said Nipper. "Must have been the postman, some distance away—probably down a side lane. The man who threw the hand, intending to attack you, changed his mind. He didn't want to be spotted. It's an extraordinary business, all the same. We'll talk about that later, after the match."

"We'll go to Gallows Mere—eh?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"Of course. The sooner we can deliver that sealed package the better. I want to get rid of the beastly thing!"

Handforth was not himself after he had hastily changed into football togs. He found the field waiting for him. Derisive cheers went up from the school-boy spectators as he took his place in goal. The game had started, in fact, before Handforth quite realised it. He was so excited, his mind was in such a whirl, that this football match irritated him.

Within the first minute the Helmsford forwards broke through, and only a startled yell from Church brought Handforth to his senses in time to make a desperate save. After that narrow escape he tried to keep his mind on the game, and for about ten minutes succeeded.

Fortunately for him, Nipper and his forwards became aggressive, and for a time the play was confined to the other half of the field, and Handforth, in consequence, had nothing to do but idle in the goalmouth, look at the spectators, and think of Gallows Mere, instead of the game.

Nipper scored a great goal during this period, and after the restart the Helmsford fellows played with redoubled vigour, going all out to equalise.

The home forwards, by clever combination, inaugurated a slashing attack. Clean through they went. Church, at left-back, was beaten for once, and left standing. Turning too late to do anything, he saw that everything depended upon Handforth—and Handforth, instead of looking at the game, was

staring fixedly at the spectators near one of the corner flags!

"Handy!" yelled Church despairingly. "Thud!"

The Helmsford forward made no mistake about that kick; Handforth did not even see it. What he did see was a swarthy-looking foreigner staring at him over the heads of the schoolboys who were crowding the touch-line.

"Goal!"

The ball had hurtled past Handforth into the net, and he had not even attempted to check it.

"Handy!" gasped Church, running in. "What's up with you? Are you asleep? You could have saved that goal!"

"Goal?" said Handforth, with a jump. "What goal?"

"Oh, my hat! What goal!" groaned Church.

"By George! Has somebody got a goal?" asked Edward Oswald, looking round. "I don't remember! Well I'm jiggered! How did that ball get past me?"

He still seemed dazed. He recovered the ball, kicked it to midfield, and looked towards the spectators where he had seen the sinister-looking, swarthy-faced foreigner. At least, Handforth was definitely of the opinion that the fellow had been sinister-looking. But now the only faces on view were the grinning, cheerful faces of the Helmsford College schoolboys.

Encouraged by the equaliser, the Helmsford attack became more aggressive, and within five minutes there was another break through, just as dangerous as the previous one. This time it developed on the other wing. McClure made a desperate effort to clear, but miskicked; the ball, swerving, went to the home centre-forward, and without hesitation, this player ran on, and there was only Handforth to beat. Yells of encouragement went up from the spectators, and yells of surprise, too. For Edward Oswald Handforth, once again, was ignorant of the approaching danger. He had seen the mysterious foreigner again! The man's eyes, dark and piercing, were staring full at the fascinated St. Frank's goalie. It seemed that there was something hypnotic in that fixed, staring gaze.

"Handy!"

This time it was a concerted, bellowing yell from every St. Frank's player on the field. With a jump, Handforth dragged his attention back to the game; he was just in time to see the leather hurtling straight at him, low down. He dived wildly, sprawled in the black, sticky mud in the goalmouth, but was a fraction of a second too late to get at the ball. It plunged into the netting.

"Goal!"

"Wake up, St. Frank's!"

"What's the matter with your goalie?"

Nipper, his face grim, his lips compressed, was running towards Handforth. But the latter, struggling to his feet, had forgotten the game again. A sudden inspiration had come to him. His right hand, fresh from the mud, could not have been blacker if it had been tarred. A black hand! Handforth leapt out of the goalmouth, and saw that the foreigner was still staring at him over the heads of the Helmsford juniors. Edward Oswald held his hand aloft, fingers splayed. Instantly, the foreigner shrank back, a peculiarly alarmed expression in his eyes. He ran.

"I knew it!" roared Handforth triumphantly.

"Nobody understood what he meant. Nipper, attempting to grasp him, failed, for Handforth was running off the field of play like a hare, and in his excitement he did not even know that he had recovered the ball, and was holding it under his arm. Leaping the ropes, he scattered the startled spectators.

"What's up with the chap?"

"He's mad!"

"Hi, Handy, stop!"

"Come back, you idiot!"

But Handforth took no notice of the yells. The foreigner, a bent, shabby figure, was running desperately, glancing now and again over his shoulder at his pursuer. Handforth ran on, gaining rapidly. He had forgotten the game, he had forgotten the ball under his arm—he had forgotten everything except the one fact that the

knew that he could never outrun a speeding cyclist.

"By George!" he gurgled. He suddenly discovered the football under his arm. A light of hope leapt into his eyes. He checked, steadied himself, and kicked the football with all his strength. It was either an uncannily accurate kick, or a pure fluke. Probably the latter. At any rate, the leather, whizzing from Handforth's foot, unerringly found its mark. It struck the cyclist's head, and the man, taken completely by surprise, half stunned by that unexpected blow, swerved wildly, skidded and crashed.

The Black Man's Fate!

"GOT you!" shouted Handforth triumphantly.

He hurled himself bodily on his quarry. The man, in the act of struggling to his feet, was

He's a crook! I spotted him during the game. Can't explain now, but—"

"Then you'd better explain, Handforth," interrupted Jevons, the junior skipper, an angry light in his eyes. "What on earth do you think you're doing, assaulting this poor chap, and scaring him out of his wits?"

"Poor chap be blowed! He's a crook!"

"He calla me da crook!" wailed the man. "Me, Tony, he try to kill! I come to see da foota ball game—"

"That's all right, Tony," said Jevons. "We won't let him hurt you. He must have had a brainstorm, or something. Better pull yourself together, Handforth. What made you attack Tony like that? He's as harmless as a kitten."

Handforth jumped.

"You—you mean you know him?" he asked.



The football, whizzing from Handforth's boot, unerringly found its mark. It struck the cyclist's head, and the man, dazed by the sudden blow, swerved wildly, skidded, and crashed.

swarthy man was an Italian, and that he had bolted at the sight of—the black hand!

The Helmsford boys, players and spectators alike, were amazed. And of the St. Frank's players, only Nipper half guessed the reason for Handforth's extraordinary behaviour.

"Stop him!"

"He's gone off his rocker!"

But there was nobody to stop him; he was many yards ahead of the trailing crowd. And he was confident that he would quickly overtake his quarry. Only a matter of seconds now. Then a yell of consternation escaped Edward Oswald's lips. For the fugitive had unexpectedly grabbed a bicycle which somebody had propped against a tree. Leaping into the saddle, the man wobbled wildly for a moment, found the pedals, and sped off.

And even Handforth, the optimist,

knocked flat, face downwards. Both Handforth's knees were in the small of his back and the burly Remove's muddy fingers were on the back of his neck, pressing his face into the ground.

"Stop! You killa me!" screamed the man. "Help! Save me!"

"I haven't hurt you," panted Handforth. "But, by George, I've got you!"

Next moment a dozen yelling Helmsford fellows were on the scene; they grabbed Handforth and dragged him back. Others assisted the foreigner to his feet.

"Hi! Mind what you're doing!" yelled Handforth, struggling. "Don't let that crook escape."

"He calla me da crook!" gasped the man. "He go crazy! Him, I don't know. He giva me a look, and I run."

"Don't let him go!" exclaimed Handforth urgently. "Hold him tight!"

"Of course we know him!" shouted half a dozen Helmsford juniors. "Everybody here knows Tony!"

"Wha-at!"

"Known him for years," said Jevons. "He's a travelling knife-grinder—goes about the country with his barrow."

"Da barrow, she is outside in da road," said Tony, pointing energetically. "I hear shouts, and come to watcha da footaball—"

"What made you run?" asked Nipper, pushing forward.

"Da boy, he make ugly faces," said Tony, gesticulating, and pointing at Handforth. "He giva me da look; he run at me, and I think he goes mad. So I run."

"My only hat! I—I thought he was a wrong 'un!" faltered Handforth, dumbfounded.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Tony!"

"Let's get back to the game!" said Nipper briskly. "Any of you chaps got any money?" he added, looking round at some of the Helmford juniors. "Make a whip round, and give Tony ten bob, will you? I'll pay you back later; I don't carry money in these togs. Is that all right, Tony? Will ten bob square things?"

"I taka da money," replied Tony without hesitation. "Grazie! Everything, she is alla right. But da foota-ball, it is da mad game!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What made you think that man was a crook, Handy?" asked Jevons, in astonishment.

"I—I don't know—I thought he was, somehow," replied Handforth lamely—for he was unable to give any real explanation.

"Mustn't take too much notice of Handy," said Nipper, coming to the rescue. "He fancies himself a bit as a detective, and his imagination does the rest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

So the incident passed off. Nipper gave Handforth a hard look, and Handforth, who had been brought to his senses with a jolt, understood.

But there was a grim light in his eyes, and his aggressive jaw was squarely set as he took his place once more in goal. The Helmford fellows might be fooled—yes, and the St. Frank's juniors, too. But Handy wasn't fooled. He knew! Tony, the knife-grinder, may be widely known in the district—but, all the same, he was connected with the mysterious people at Gallows Mere. He was a spy! For the rest of the game Handforth fought manfully to concentrate on his task of goalkeeping. But with his mind so full of the strange Gallows Mere affair, it simply couldn't be done. True, he gave his attention to the football, but he was only a shadow of his ordinary self. He played listlessly, without any real enthusiasm. Normally he was quick in anticipation, but this afternoon he was a fraction late in his decisions and slow in action.

St. Frank's inevitably lost the game, for, with Helmford already leading, the home team attacked again and again. Twice Handforth saved with something like his old form; and then Nipper equalised for St. Frank's. But there came another Helmford attack, and Handforth was lacking in speed at the vital moment. Once again the leather hurtled past him, and after that the home team never looked back.

"Thank goodness it's over!" said Handforth, when the final whistle blew.

"Feeling pleased with yourself, aren't you?" asked McClure tartly. "I suppose you know you've let the side down with a crash?"

"It's only a game!" retorted Handforth with a shrug. "Now we can get down to some real work!"

"Only a game!" echoed Church, agabst. "Why, you idiot, if you had played in your ordinary form we should have won the match on our heads! You ought to be boiled!"

Handy ignored them. In the dressing-room he managed to have a private word with Nipper, and the latter passed casually round to the other fellows who were in the secret. All the eight were present, with the exception of William Napoleon Browne—who, of course, had had no reason to attend a junior match.

When they left Helmford for the homeward journey, Nipper took Tommy Watson on the pillow of his motorcycle, and Handforth squeezed Archie Glenithorne and Montie Tregellis-West

in his car, in addition to Church and McClure. Midway between Helmford and Bannington they left the main highway and took to a quiet lane. And in a secluded spot Nipper called a halt.

"Now," he said, "we can talk freely for the first time. Let's have that yarn again, Handy."

"What yarn?" asked Watson, staring.

"What's happened?"

"Nothing much," said Handforth.

"I've found Gallows Mere, that's all."

"What?"

"Begad!"

"Ods shocks and staggerers!"

Handforth was pleased to notice the flushed and excited faces of Tommy Watson, Archie Glenithorne, and Sir Montie.

"So that's why you behaved like an inmate of Colney Hatch during the game!" ejaculated Tommy.

"Rats! Those Helmford chaps can think what they like about Tony, the knife-grinder—but I know jolly well he's a spy!" said Handforth darkly. "If he didn't know something about this Gallows Mere business, why did he stare at me so fixedly? Why did he bolt like a rabbit when I showed him my hand? My hand was muddy—and as black as a nigger's. Why should an innocent knife-grinder run at the sight of it?"

"He said he ran because your face scared him, dear old boy," murmured Sir Montie.

But Handforth was not in the mood for argument. He displayed that mummified hand, and the juniors who had not yet seen it stared in fascination and horror. They were startled in the extreme when they heard what had happened to Handforth & Co. on the outward journey.

"Well, it may be a disappointment to you, Handy, but I see no reason why we should be mixed up in this rummy business," said Nipper grimly. "I'm tremendously glad you located Gallows Mere, because we're going there at once. I'm going to deliver up that oiled silk package, and after that—"

He hesitated.

"After that?" prompted Handforth.

"Well, I'm thinking we'd better steer clear of Gallows Mere and everything connected with it," said Nipper slowly. "That's the sensible thing to do. But I can't help admitting that I'm tempted to do some investigation work, and that would be rash. We don't know who these people are; we don't know anything, in fact I've heard that Dr. Zangari is an astronomer, and he must have been at Gallows Mere now for almost a year."

"If he's an astronomer, I'm an astrologer!" snorted Handforth. "He must be No. 1 himself—the head of a big gang of crooks."

"Well, it's foolish to jump to conclusions," said Nipper, "but I can't help thinking of the evil face of that dead pilot. He was flying an unlawful machine, and his destination was obviously Gallows Mere. That does seem to stamp Dr. Zangari as—as well, as something more than a harmless astronomer."

"We'll keep this to ourselves," said Handforth looking round at the others. "Don't you go telling Mr. Lee anything, Nipper," he added warningly. "We don't want him to butt in and steal all the glory. This is our case."

"Don't worry," said Nipper. "I shan't tell the guv'nor anything—neither will anybody else. Don't forget, we're all pledged to secrecy. Well, let's be getting on. The sky looks black, and it might rain."

As they started off they felt that the

very sky was in league with the elements of mystery which had hemmed them in since the previous night. Great masses of black clouds were rolling up from the west, bringing with them a premature dusk. The wind moaned through the trees, bringing the autumn leaves down in showers. It was not a cold wind, but it struck chill, all the same. The rural countryside, usually so delightfully charming and peaceful, was made to look ugly and forbidding. But this was not because of Gallows Mere, for they were still more than ten miles away from that strange old house.

A mile had scarcely been covered, however, and Nipper was cautiously descending a steep, tortuous dip, where the lane was narrow and rutty, when something of an unusual nature caught Tommy Watson's eye.

"What's wrong with that chap?" he asked, pointing. "Better pull up, hadn't you?"

Nipper gave a quick glance, and then applied the brakes. Handforth, some little way behind, did the same. It was a lonely tract of country—even more lonely than the vicinity of Gallows Mere, for here there was no village or hamlet within three or four miles. There were woods and rugged stretches of gorseland, dips filled with ferns, spinneys, and rocky hills. The rutty, ill-kept lane was one of the loneliest of which the boys had ever travelled.

The cause of the stoppage was a figure running across a gorse-grown stretch of ground from a dense spinney which grew thickly on a hilltop away to the left of the road. The man was running so hard, so desperately, that Watson was justified in calling a halt. The stranger appeared to be a young gamekeeper by his dress, and as he ran he stumbled and faltered, and every now and again he took a quick, terrified glance over his shoulder.

"Hey!" shouted Nipper, as he saw that the man was aiming to strike the road farther along. "Is anything the matter?"

The man half turned at the sound of Nipper's voice. Until that moment, apparently, he had not known that any other human beings were near him. He changed his direction and approached. By this time Handforth and the others had tumbled out of the car, and had joined Nipper and Watson.

"What's going on?" asked Handforth breathlessly.

"Now, don't jump to any melodramatic conclusions, Handy," warned Nipper. "There seems to be something the matter with this gamekeeper chap, that's all. He looks scared. By Jove, he's more than scared!" he added suddenly. "He's livid with stark terror."

It was no exaggeration. The young countryman, now fairly close, was running harder than ever. The boys could hear his heavy, laboured breathing; they could see the unspeakable fear in his eyes, the drawn lines of his face. With one accord the boys ran forward to meet him.

He stumbled and would have fallen, but eager hands reached out and grasped him. The boys could feel the quivering of the man's limbs. He appeared to be affected with ague.

"Are you ill?" asked Nipper gently.

The unfortunate man's face worked spasmodically; his eyes fairly rolled, and he managed to raise a hand and point.

"The spinney!" he croaked, and his voice was so strained and unnatural that the juniors shivered. "The—the thing—in the spinney!"

The man's head rolled limply from side to side, a choking gurgle sounded

from his throat, and his knees gave way. He slumped to the ground in an untidy heap, lying there motionless at the feet of the boys. They were startled beyond measure. The collapse had been so dramatic and unexpected.

Nipper quickly knelt down. "Fainted!" he said tensely. "He'll be all right soon. Ye gods and little fishes! It must have been something pretty awful to cause a husky countryman like this to collapse in a faint from sheer terror!"

"The thing in the spinney," said Handforth, looking towards the thicket on the hilltop. "We'd better go and have a look, you chaps."

"Why?" asked Church. "Hadn't we better rush this chap to a doctor?"

"A doctor couldn't do him much good," said Nipper, rising. "A painfull of cold water would help him, but there's no water handy. He'll come round soon." The junior skipper looked up at the spinney, with its background of lowering clouds. "We shall have to go, you chaps. We've got to get to the bottom of this little mystery."

"Absolutely," said Archie Glenhorne, firmly jamming his monocle into his eye. "Kindly allow me to lead the way, old scouts. When it comes to a spot of danger, the Glenhorne always go first—what?"

The others did not hesitate. They approached the spinney in a body, their hearts thudding against their ribs. They knew not what to expect.

Nipper, in spite of Archie's words, took the lead. The others instinctively kept close together. Once or twice they glanced back; the gamekeeper was lying just where he had fallen. Nipper had satisfied himself that the man had suffered no injury.

"Listen, you fellows!" said Nipper suddenly. "There's evidently something pretty awful hidden in these trees. Now I don't want to brag, but you all know that I've had some pretty gruesome experiences with the guv'nor, and— Well, to put it in a nutshell, my nerves are stronger than yours."

"Meaning?" asked Handforth grimly.

"Meaning that I want you to let me go ahead—alone," replied Nipper. "Of course, there may be nothing in it at all. We don't know who that chap is. He may be half-witted, in spite of his husky looks. These country chaps are as superstitious as their forefathers. He may have been scared by a mere shadow, and—"

"Are you kidding yourself, or are you trying to kid us?" broke in Handforth impatiently. "You know jolly well that that gamekeeper chap must have seen something about as bad as Frankenstein's monster. In any case, it's too late to talk about going ahead by yourself. We're in the spinney already."

It was true. They had passed within the shadow of the gaunt trees. They looked about them searchingly, but saw nothing out of the ordinary. The trees did not grow very close together, and the ground was rocky, and only covered with thin grass in patches. They advanced deeper, until they were in the very centre of the spinney. From here they could see in all directions in amongst the tree-trunks. And there was nothing at all. A wave of intense relief swept over the schoolboy searchers.

"Well, I was right," said Nipper, at length. "It must have been a case of nerves. The poor beggar imagined he saw something—"

"Look!" gasped Tregellis-West suddenly. "Begad! There's somethin' frightful—"

He broke off as the others ran to his

side. He was pointing at the rocky ground. There was a dark, moist patch on the ground. With bated breath the boys stared, and in that tense silence there was a sudden ominous splash.

"Good heavens!" muttered Nipper.

In a flash he understood, and he stared up, far into the upper branches of the tree. The others did the same; and even though they had had an inkling, they were scarcely prepared for the sight which met their gaze.

Hanging in the trees, mercifully half-hidden from them, was the body of a black man—the Abyssinian who had attacked them last night.

And his left hand was missing!

The House of Mystery!

"O H!"

"Great Scott!"

"No wonder the chap was scared out of his wits!"

Nipper pushed Handforth and Watson; and he was so violent that they looked at him in surprise.

"Get out of here—all of you!" commanded Nipper. "Don't argue, Handy! Do as I say!"

There was something so authoritative about Nipper's attitude that even Handforth was unable to resist.

"Get outside this spinney, and wait for me," added Nipper. "I shan't be long."

They did not argue. Glancing back, Handforth caught a glimpse of Nipper shinning up that sinister tree. A few minutes later, in the open, the junior

TO IRISH FREE STATE READERS

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captain joined them. Their eyes were full of questions.

"Yes, he's dead," replied Nipper.

"It's the same man—the murderer! Somebody has saved the police authorities a lot of money, and our official hangman has been done out of a job."

"It couldn't have been—suicide?" asked Watson.

"Not a chance," replied Nipper. "He's hanging in such a way that he could not have done it himself. At least two men, I should say, performed the execution."

"And the hand?" asked Handforth soberly.

"That's the extraordinary feature of the case," said Nipper, compressing his lips. "The fellow's hand has been roughly severed. That's where that blood— He hasn't been dead more than a couple of hours—probably less. By Jove, what significance can there be in this sign of a black hand? Perhaps there's none. Perhaps the man's hand was cut off because it had a scar, or something, which would betray his identity. Anyhow, it's a pretty devilish business, and the sooner we can get to a phone the better."

"You're going to tell the police?" asked Handforth.

"We can't keep a thing like this to ourselves," said Nipper. "I'm going to phone the guv'nor, so that he can have a chance of being on the scene first. I'll leave him to tell the police."

They were all very much affected, although Nipper was the only one who had actually seen the body. The others

had only glimpsed it. Handforth, eager as he was for full-blooded adventure, felt just a little shaky at this taste of the real thing.

"I can't understand it," he muttered. "Who killed him—and why?"

"There's one thing we'd better make up our minds to—and I want you fellows to let this sink in," said Nipper gravely. "We've been mixed up in a few exciting adventures from time to time, but we've never been up against anything quite like this before. It's grim, it's ugly, it's dangerous. The pilot of that mysterious plane was murdered last night—murdered by his Abyssinian passenger. Now the murderer himself has been murdered! By whom? That's a fairly easy one, isn't it?"

"Is it?" asked Archie. "I mean to say, what?"

"Who these people are we don't know, but it's significant that the dead pilot was an Italian," continued Nipper. "This Dr. Zangari, by his name, seems to be an Italian, too."

"Don't forget that chap, Tony, at Helmsford," put in Handforth. "You're not going to tell me that his presence at the football match was a coincidence! Not likely!"

"I'm beginning to think you're right, Handy, but it would be a waste of time to find Tony and question him," said Nipper. "There's no evidence that he is anything more than an itinerant knife-grinder. Well, to go back to what I was saying, the Abyssinian, while pretending to be friendly, was actually a spy. He shot the airman with the intention of getting hold of that sealed package. We dished him. Our information to the police established him as the murderer, and he had to go into hiding. The odds are he found refuge at Gallows Mere, and it was while he was there that he spotted you in the car, Handy, and hit on a wheeze to stop you. But he daren't show himself, because he knew that the postman, on the bike, was near by."

"But who killed him?" asked McClure. "Think of it! He was murdered while we were playing football!"

"I don't think there's any doubt that he was killed by the people at Gallows Mere," said Nipper grimly. "He hadn't realised that they would hear details of the aeroplane crash. They heard that the pilot had been shot in the back, and they knew then that the Abyssinian was the only one who could have done it. So they brought him all these miles away and strung him up, the main motive being vengeance. But there was another motive. They wanted to make themselves safe. They didn't want the police nosing about Gallows Mere. As things are now, there's absolutely nothing to connect that old house with the aeroplane crash—or the thing which is hanging in the spinney."

"But we know!" said Handforth eagerly.

"Yes, and we can't say a word," replied Nipper nodding. "We gave our oath to that dying man, and our lips are sealed. We swore to him that we would not tell a living soul that we had promised to deliver the package at Gallows Mere. Don't you understand, you chaps? If we say one thing we shall have to say another. We'll deliver that package, and get rid of it. After that— Well, let's deal with one thing at a time."

They went back to the gamekeeper and found him still unconscious. While Nipper hurried away to the nearest telephone on his motor-cycle, the others secured water from a neighbouring stream, and at last the man began to

revive. But he was still in a bad way when Nipper returned, and it seemed only a few minutes later that Nelson Lee arrived in his powerful sports car. "My hat, guv'nor, you must have burned up the road!" said Nipper. "Have you told the police?"

"Yes; and they'll be here soon. Where's the body?" asked the detective abruptly. "You haven't touched it?"

The young gamekeeper half sat up, giving a hoarse cry.

"The body!" he muttered wildly. "It's there—in the spinney! I saw it! I was passing under the trees and something fell on my hand—blood! And when I looked up—"

He shuddered, and covered his face with his hands.

"Must have had a bad shock, guv'nor," murmured Nipper. "You see, he wasn't prepared, and we were."

"The bravest of men can sometimes act like hysterical women," replied Lee. "See after him, boys."

He strode off into the spinney, and he was still there, engaged on his investigation, when another car arrived in that narrow lane. It contained not only Inspector Jameson, of Bannington, and two constables, but Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard.

"I'm glad you're the man they sent down from headquarters, Mr. Lennard," said Nipper. "Rummy business altogether, isn't it?"

"The rummiest thing of all is that you boys, after finding that dead man last night, should be the first to find the second dead man," retorted the inspector significantly. "I'd just like to know what you were doing in this lonely part of the country?"

"We were coming home—from a football match at Helmsford."

"Oh, yeah?" said Lennard, looking at Nipper hard. "Do you usually come this way? Isn't the main road quicker—and more comfortable?"

"Honestly, Mr. Lennard, we hadn't the faintest idea of—of this," said Nipper, with a nod of his head towards the spinney. "Anyhow, you won't have to search any farther for the murderer."

"No; but we shall have to start looking for the murderer's murderer," growled Lennard.

He walked off towards the spinney, and Nipper seized the opportunity to get away. He motioned to the others, and they all retreated to the road.

"No need for us to stop," said the junior captain. "Better for us not to be questioned by Mr. Lennard or the guv'nor—yet. Here's our chance to get to Gallows Mere and deliver that confounded letter."

"Do you really think we ought to go, old boys?" asked Sir Montie dubiously. "After all, we know that the place must be harbouring some frightful assassins."

That's the sort of place to steer clear of—it is, really."

"No harm can come to us—and the sooner we can rid ourselves of the package, the better," said Nipper. "Come on! Let's get it over."

They were subdued and quiet as they continued the ride. Even Handforth, eager and enthusiastic as he had been before, was unusually silent. But he made up for this soon afterwards, when Nipper called a halt about half a mile from their objective. It was nearly dark now, and the sky looked more threatening than ever. The wind was sighing and moaning through the trees.

"I'm going on this job alone," said Nipper shortly.

"Don't be a howling ass!" ejaculated Handforth. "We're all going. Pity Browne isn't here, if it comes to that."

"There's no sense in a crowd of us going to the house," said Nipper impatiently. "Supposing there are dangerous people there?"

"All the more reason for the crowd," replied Handforth promptly. "Seven of us could put up a good fight. By George! That's a good idea! Why not raid the place, anyhow? Grab everybody in the house, lock 'em up, and then fetch the police—"

"Handy, this isn't a game; it's grim reality," interrupted Nipper. "Since last night two men have been killed—both of them murdered. We're up against something—deadly. My idea is this. I'll go to the house, and I expect I shall be able to deliver the package without any trouble. But if I'm not back after five minutes, then four of you had better come and ask for me. The other two can watch from the gate. And if anything happens to the four—well, the last two can dash off on my motor-bike for the police."

"Begad! That sounds frightfully sensible, old boy," said Montie.

So it was arranged in spite of Handforth's protests. Nipper, alone, went forward. The oiled-silk package, through which two men had lost their lives, was in his pocket. His nerves were strong, and he had any amount of courage; but he could not prevent his heart racing as he walked up that weedy, desolate drive.

He fancied, as he skirted the stagnant, slime-covered mere, that he heard strange gurglings. It may have been a trick of the wind on the scummy surface. The house, low and straggling, was only just visible in the gloom. It looked like a house of the dead. Not a light was to be seen; and the chimneys, which jutted out starkly against the night sky, were innocent of smoke.

Nipper reached the crumbling front steps and mounted them. He found a knocker, and as he raised it, it creaked with disuse. He gave three resounding bangs. Then he waited. It gave him comfort to realise that he had staunch friends close at hand.

Rather to his surprise, the door was opened after a very short delay. There was nothing furtive about its opening; it was flung wide. Nipper, who had been expecting to catch a glimpse of a black and gloomy hall, was further surprised. The hall was big and spacious; its furniture was modern, and the lighting was excellent. The man who had opened the door was foreign-looking, but he was very obviously a trained upper servant.

"Yes?" he said questioningly.

"I have a message—for Dr. Zangari," replied Nipper.

"I will take it," said the servant, extending a hand.

"No; I must give it to Dr. Zangari personally."

"I am sorry; my master is not able to see strangers."

"I think he will see me," insisted Nipper. "Go to your master and tell him that I have brought a package—which was given in to my care by the pilot of the aeroplane which crashed at Beilston last night."

In spite of the man's self-control, Nipper saw him start; he saw a sudden sharp look come into the man's eyes.

"I will tell my master," he said quietly. "Follow me, please."

Nipper entered that strange house. The door closed quietly. He followed the servant across the hall, and was ushered into a comfortably furnished room, where a table lamp was shedding warm light.

"You will wait," said the servant softly.

He went out, leaving the door ajar. Nipper looked about him, and he was aware that his heart was beating more normally. After all, there was nothing very mysterious about this house. He had expected something different.

All was silent out in the hall. Nipper moved towards the door in order to peep out. But when he was within a foot of the threshold, the door, without being touched, swung noiselessly to. There was a soft thud and a click.

"Great Scott!" muttered Nipper, startled.

He grasped the handle; the door felt like a solid part of the wall. He thumped on the panels, and in a flash he knew that the door, beneath the wood, was made of steel!

He turned, his heart racing again. There was one small window, heavily curtained. He walked to it, but just before he reached it he heard a soft slithering noise and a metallic clang. He swept the curtains aside.

There was no window to be seen—only shutters of solid steel!

(Trapped in Gallows Mere! What is going to happen to Nipper now? More big thrills from this great serial next week.)



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