

This Week's FINE School Story is—"ONE O' THE BEST!"—Inside.



ROUGH ON A ROTTER! A Lively Incident from the Great St. Jim's Yarn Within.

One o'the Best!



There was a rush of juniors when the game ended, and Grimes was lifted shoulder-high and carried off the field, cheered by the excited juniors. "Good old Grimes! He's one of the best!"

CHAPTER 1. Chucked Out!

"GET out!"
"Master Levison—"
"Get out, I tell you!"
Tom Merry paused as he came down the passage in the School House at St. Jim's. He was hurrying down from his study, with a footer under his arm, and Lowther and Manners were waiting for him at the foot of the stairs.

But he paused as he heard the sharp, unpleasant voice of Levison of the Fourth.

He was just passing the open doorway of Study No. 9 in the Fourth Form passage.

Grimes of the Fourth stood in the doorway, looking very red and uncomfortable. Grimes, the erstwhile grocer's boy of Rylcombe, and now in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, shared that study with his chum Lumley-Lumley, and with Levison and Mellish of the Fourth.

Levison and Mellish were in the study now, and the former was speaking.

"Get out! I've told you before that grocer's cads aren't wanted in this study. If you come in, you'll go out on your neck!"

"But it's my study, Master Levison," said Grimes.

Levison sniffed.

"Your study or not, you're not coming in here! You oughtn't to be at St. Jim's at all—and you know it! My hat! Only last week you were bringing the groceries round to the back door."

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Now you're in the Fourth! Blessed if I know what St. Jim's is coming to!"

"Rotten!" said Mellish. "The Head ought to know better, really! I don't think Lumley's pater ought to be allowed to pay fees for all kinds of rotten outsiders to come here. Anyway, they oughtn't to be stuck in our study. That's too thick!"

"I don't know that I'm doing any 'arm here," said Grimes.

"Well, you're slaughtering the King's English, for one thing," said Levison, with a sneer. "And you're a rotten outsider, for another! Buzz off!"

"I ain't buzzing off," said Grimes sturdily. "This 'ere is my study, and I'm comin' in. I'm goin' to do some work."

"Your proper work's sweeping out the grocery-shop at Rylcombe and cleaning the windows," said Mellish.

"And taking round the groceries," said Levison. "If you want to swot, Grimes, you can go into the boot-room. I dare say Toby will be pleased with your company. We're not."

"Not a bit!" said Mellish.

Grimes was very red, but he did not retreat. Most of the St. Jim's juniors had been very decent to Grimes, but the two cads of the Fourth had never been known to be decent to anybody. But Grimes, though he was very patient, and had, perhaps, too keen a sense of his shortcomings as a St. Jim's boy, was not to be bullied.

He stepped into the study with his jaw looking very square and a gleam in his eyes.

Levison jumped up.

"Are you going out?" he asked.

"No, I ain't!" said Grimes. "If Master Lumley-Lumley was 'ere you wouldn't carry on like this 'ere, Master Levison. And you'd better remember that I've licked you once, and can do it again if you cut up too rusty."

"I'm not going to fight with a shop-boy," said Levison loftily. "There are two of us here, and if you don't get out we shall throw you out."

"Yes, rather!" said Mellish. "Are you going?"

"No!" said Grimes emphatically. "I ain't!"

"Then here goes!"

Levison and Mellish rushed at Grimes together.

Grimes dropped his books and put up his hands at once.

Biff!

Mellish tagged back with a yell, but Levison fastened upon the grocer's boy and closed with him, and yelled to Mellish for help.

In a moment Grimes was struggling with the two of them.

Two voices came bawling up the staircase—the voices of Manners and Monty Lowther of the Shell.

"Tom—Tom Merry! How long are you going to be with that footer?"

"Wait a tick!" shouted back Tom Merry.

"Rats! Buck up!" yelled Lowther.

"Can't come!"

Tom Merry dropped the footer in the passage and stepped into Study No. 9.

Grimes was putting up a gallant fight,

—POWERFUL LONG YARN OF FOOTER, FUN AND EXCITEMENT.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

but the two cads of the Fourth had him down on the carpet, and Levison was kneeling on his chest.

Neither of them saw Tom Merry. Had they tackled Grimes one at a time, Tom Merry would not have thought of interfering. But two to one was not fair play, and the Shell junior thought that it was time for somebody to "chip in."

"I've got him!" panted Levison. "Now get a cricket stump, Mellish, and we'll lather him. We shan't have a chance like this again!"

"You won't have a chance now, you rotters!" exclaimed Tom Merry, grasping Levison by the back of the collar and wrenching him off Grimes. "Gerroff!"

"Ow!" Levison reeled across the study with Tom Merry's grip on his collar. Grimes grappled with Mellish and threw him off, and Mellish rolled on the hearthrug. Grimes staggered breathless to his feet.

"Thank you, Master Merry!" he gasped.

Tom Merry laughed. "Two to one's not cricket," he said. "Now, Grimes, I heard what was going on, and I advise you to prove to these two rotters that you can come into your own study whenever you like. I'll look after Levison while you prove it to Mellish."

Grimes chuckled. Mellish was still on the rug. Now that the odds were no longer on his side he did not seem inclined to get up.

There was a sound of footsteps in the passage, and Monty Lowther and Manners stared into the study wrathfully.

"Tom Merry, you ass—" "What are you wasting time in study rows for when we're waiting for the footer?"

"Look here, you fathead—"

"All serene," said Tom Merry. "The footer can wait five minutes. Levison and Mellish think that Grimes mustn't come into his own study. Grimes is going to prove to them that he can, and I'm going to see fair play."

Monty Lowther grinned. "Oh, that alters the case!" he said. "This is as good as footer. Go it, Grimes!"

"Pile in!" said Manners. "I'll hold your jacket!" "Let me go!" yelled Levison, struggling in Tom Merry's grasp.

"Not just yet," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Grimes has a little argument to go through with Mellish."

"I—I—I was only joking," mumbled Mellish. "I haven't any objection to Grimes coming into the study, really, you know. In fact, I—I want him here. I—I—"

"Get up!" "You see, I—I—" "I won't lick 'im, Master Merry," said Grimes. "I don't want to 'it a chap who don't want to back up 'is own words."

"That's where you make a mistake," said Tom Merry calmly. "Mellish wants to have the rights of the matter demonstrated to him."

"I—I don't!" stammered Mellish. "Yes, you do! Get up!" "I—I won't!"

"Take the cricket stump to him, Grimes."

"I don't want to 'urt 'im, Master Merry."

"Obey orders, my son!" said Monty Lowther, with a chuckle. "If you don't, we'll bump you! Now then Mellish, will you have the cricket stump or Grimes's fist?"

Mellish apparently decided that Grimes's fists would be the less painful of the two.

He scrambled to his feet. "Now lick him!" commanded Tom Merry.

"Oh, orlright!" said Grimes.

And Grimes advanced upon Mellish. Mellish put up his hands, but he fell down as soon as Grimes gave him a light tap. He lay groaning on the carpet.

"Get up, you awful funk!" yelled Monty Lowther, stirring the cad of the Fourth with his boot.

"Ow!" groaned Mellish. "I—I'm hurt! I've sprained my ankle, I think! Ow!"

"Well, of all the funks, I think that rotter takes the cake!" said Manners, in disgust. "Kick him out, Grimes!"

"Right-ho!" said Grimes. "They was going to chuck me out. One good turn deserves another."

"Hear, hear!"

And Grimes laid his strong hands upon Mellish, and Mellish went whirling through the study doorway. He bumped upon the floor outside with a terrific yell. In spite of his sprain, however, he seemed able to rise now,

When Levison's fate depends upon the junior he has tried to disgrace, it's lucky for the black sheep of the Fourth Form that his would-be victim is honest, kind-hearted Grimes—one of the best, as all St. Jim's agrees!

for he jumped up, and disappeared down the passage at top speed.

Tom Merry released his grip upon the scowling Levison.

"Here you are, Grimes!" he said. "Now talk it over with Levison."

"I won't fight that grocer cad!" roared Levison.

"You can please yourself about that; but you're going to be licked! Go it, Grimes!"

"I'd rather not, Master Merry," said the good-natured Grimes. "I don't mind 'im callin' me a grocer. I ain't ashamed of bein' a grocer. I'd rather be ashamed of bein' down on a poor chap wot ain't 'ad any chances."

"Grimes, my son," said Monty Lowther solemnly, "your sentiments do you honour. They remind me of a book I read once called 'Little by Little, or Bit by Bit,' or something of the sort. But they won't do for St. Jim's. We're not good enough for that, and we can't live up to it. Therefore, pile in and give that cad a licking."

"Oh, Master Lowther—"

"Or else we'll pile in and give you the bumping of your life!" said Monty Lowther.

"Put up your 'ands, Master Levison!" said Grimes, advancing upon the cad of the Fourth.

Levison put his hands into his pockets. He had the best of reasons for not wanting to fight Grimes. He had tried it once already, and he still had the

marks of it upon his face. He did not want a second experience of the same sort.

"I won't fight you, you cad!" he snarled. "I fight with my equals."

"You won't fight with anybody, if you can help it, Levison, old man," said Monty Lowther. "If he won't put up his paws, Grimes, chuck him out!"

And Grimes laid hands upon Levison. Levison took his hands out of his pockets, and closed with the new boy, gritting his teeth savagely. They whirled round the study, seeming all arms and legs for a few moments, and then there was a wrench, a gasp, and Levison went flying through the doorway.

Bump! He landed in the passage outside with a terrific concussion.

"Bravo!" said Tom Merry. "Are you satisfied, Levison?"

"Ow—ow!"

"I suppose that means yes," said Tom Merry. "We're leaving you in possession, Grimes."

"Thank you, Master Merry!"

"Not at all," said Tom Merry politely. "Pleased! Come on, you chaps! Let's get down to footer practice."

And the Terrible Three of the Shell left Study No. 9.

Tom Merry paused in the passage to speak a word to Levison, who was sitting up and gasping.

"You'll let Grimes alone now, Levison," he said. "If you want to tackle him, tackle him one at a time, and nobody will chip in. But if there's any more ragging by two to one, you'll be made an example of! Understand?"

"Ow!" groaned Levison. "I'll make you sorry for this, Tom Merry! I'll make that grocer cad sorry, too! Ow!"

And Levison staggered away, still groaning.

The Terrible Three smiled, and went out to footer practice. And Grimes remained in undisturbed possession of Study No. 9.

CHAPTER 2.

In Doubt!

LUMLEY-LUMLEY of the Fourth came into the School House a little later, and ascended to his study.

Lumley-Lumley, the fellow who had once been known as the Outsider of St. Jim's, but who was never called the Outsider now, wore a thoughtful expression. It was Lumley-Lumley who had brought Grimes to the school—Grimes had stood his friend at a time when he was down on his luck—and the Outsider never forgot a benefit or an injury.

He had persuaded his father, the millionaire head of Lumleys, Ltd., to pay Grimes' fees at the school, and the millionaire had induced Dr. Holmes to give Grimes a chance there.

It was the chance of a lifetime for the one-time grocer's lad, and Grimes certainly was very grateful, and was trying his best to do Lumley-Lumley credit. And yet a doubt crossed the Outsider's mind at times as to whether he had done wisely. He had meant well by Grimes, but he wondered.

St. Jim's had received Grimes very well, with a few exceptions like Levison and Mellish and Crooke. But Grimes was out of his element, and Lumley-Lumley wondered sometimes whether he was satisfied with his new lot.

If he were not satisfied, he might not say so, for fear of seeming ungrateful.

Lumley-Lumley wondered.
Jerold Lumley-Lumley had knocked about the world a great deal before he came to St. Jim's. He had not always been rich; it was not so very long ago since he had stood on the Pont Neuf, in Paris, with a ten-centime piece only between himself and hunger. They were the days before Lancelles Lumley-Lumley had made his pile. His pile was made now, and it was a tremendous one. But Lumley-Lumley, in his heart, often contrasted the peaceful life of plenty and comfort with the old adventurous existence, when he did not know where his next meal was coming from, but was free—as free and irresponsible as the birds of the air.

Lumley-Lumley's peculiar experience had given him a knowledge of life unusual in a boy of his years. He knew that wealth and station do not make happiness. He knew that every rank in society has probably about as much happiness as every other, that the difference in the lot of a duke or a dustman consists chiefly in words. Each has his own set of troubles, very different sets certainly, but just as troublesome to the possessor.

Lumley-Lumley knew the different chances in life of a St. Jim's fellow and a grocer's lad. But he knew, too, that a grocer's lad was quite as likely to be happy as a St. Jim's fellow, and what did the rest matter? He had begun to doubt his wisdom in taking Grimes away from the employment where he had been cheerful and jolly, and placing him in a new life, where the work was new to him and more trouble than any of his labours at Mr. Sands' shop had been. And he knew that Grimes' ideas, too, were not just those of St. Jim's.

Grimes was accustomed to hard work and to look upon hard work as the one unmistakable sign of manhood. No doubt he was quite right, but certainly hard work was not the order of the day at St. Jim's.

And it had struck Lumley-Lumley, strangely enough, that Grimes was a little shocked at some of the things he saw at the school. The St. Jim's fellows would have stared if they had guessed that they fell short of the standard of the grocer's shop!

Lumley-Lumley himself grinned at the idea, but he felt that something of the sort was working in Grimes' slow, steady mind.

Lumley-Lumley paused in the doorway of his study, and watched Grimes at work. The one-time grocer-boy was seated at the table, painfully conning over the first easy steps to Parnassus. Grimes did not take kindly to the classics. His private opinion was that the Latins were duffers to talk to one another in such a very extraordinary lingo.

He did not see how they could have got on without a definite article, and the case-endings worried him and made him wrinkle his young brow.

He was murmuring to himself over his work as the Outsider looked in.

Lumley-Lumley grinned as he caught his mutterings. Grimes was tackling our old friend "Hic, haec, hoc," and it troubled him more than it troubled the "babes" in the First Form.

"Hic," murmured Grimes. "Lemme see, that means hoc. Nunno! It means this 'ere. That's right. Hic—this 'ere. Is—that means that there. I'm getting on! Hic—haec—hoc—that's the nooter. Sounds like a drink, it does! I—Hallo, Master Lumley!"

He caught sight of his friend in the doorway. Lumley-Lumley grinned and came into the study.

"Swotting away, Grimey?" he asked. Grimes sighed.

"Yes, Master Lumley," he said. "Mr. Lathom 'ave been so kind as to set me this 'ere exercise! Them Latins useter speak same as we do in some ways. For instance, where we say 'this 'ere—'"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lumley-Lumley.

"Wot's the joke, Master Lumley?" he asked.

"I guess we don't say 'this 'ere' in English—not in real English," said Lumley-Lumley. "Never mind. How are you getting on with the giddy pronouns?"

"It's 'ard," said Grimes. "But it's coming easier?"

"Yes, I s'pose so," said Grimes dubiously.

Lumley-Lumley looked at him keenly. "Are you glad you came to St. Jim's, Grimey?" he asked.

Grimes hesitated and coloured.

"Get it off your chest, old fellow," said Lumley-Lumley. "I'm tough, you know; I like the facts!"

"It was very kind of you, Master Lumley, to bring me 'ere, and very kind of your father—I mean, your pater—to pay the fees."

"I didn't ask you that, Grimey. I asked you whether you were glad you had come to St. Jim's, I guess."

"It's a great chance for me, Master Lumley."

"I didn't ask you that, either. Are you glad you came to St. Jim's?"

Grimes' colour deepened.

"I'd be ungrateful to say I wasn't," he replied at last. "I 'ope I shan't never forget 'ow kind you've been to me, Master Lumley."

"Don't talk rot, Master Grimes!" said Lumley-Lumley. "Well, never mind now. Grimey, old man, chuck those giddy pronouns in the fire, and come out to the footer practice."

Grimes rose with alacrity.

"Right-ho, Master Lumley!"

Lumley-Lumley slipped his arm through that of Grimes as they walked down the Fourth Form passage. His doubts as to his wisdom of changing Grimes' sphere of activity had deepened.

"I saw your old pal Pilcher in the village this afternoon, Grimey," he said.

Grimes brightened up.

"Pilcher," he said. "I ain't seen 'im since I kin to this 'ere school, Master Lumley."

"He sent you his kind regards."

"Good old Pilcher!" said Grimes, with satisfaction. "There ain't a better butcher's boy than Pilcher in Sussex, Master Lumley."

"'Ave you seen Craggs, too—'im wot takes out the medicines for Mr. Twist, the chemist?"

"No, I guess I haven't seen Craggs," said Lumley-Lumley.

It occurred to the Outsider for the first time that, in coming to St. Jim's, Grimes had necessarily broken with his oldest pals, the fellows he had known from childhood.

"Craggs is orlright!" said Grimes, with enthusiasm. "Did you ever 'ear 'ow 'e fought with Master Gay, of the Grammar School. I think that was afore your time 'ere, p'raps. Fifteen rounds they 'ad, all fair and square, till both of 'em was droppin', and neither was licked. And shook 'ands after it, like real sportsmen, they did. Good sort, Master Gay, of the Grammar School—one of them colonials. You should see Craggs shooting for goal, too,

when he plays for the Rylcombe Wanderers. I play centre-forward for them—that is, I used to," said Grimes, stopping short. "Course, I shan't play for them no more."

"You'll miss them," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Yes," said Grimes, suppressing a sigh. "They was good sorts, all of them. 'Ard-workin' fellows all the week, and playin' 'ard on Saturday arternoons; that's my sort!"

"We don't work hard enough for you, here, Grimey, I guess?" said Lumley-Lumley good-humouredly.

"Well," said Grimes slowly, "it do seem a bit like wastin' a chap's life, don't it, Master Lumley?"

The St. Jim's junior stared.

"Wasting a chap's life?" he said.

"Somethin' like that," said Grimes. "Fellows in my class take things more serious. 'Course it makes a difference if you're born rich, I suppose; but it always seems to me that at fifteen a fellow ought to be thinkin' of settin' to work, and thinkin' of making 'is way in the world."

"Perhaps he ought," said Master Lumley thoughtfully. "Well, here we are. You fellows finished?"

Tom Merry & Co. were coming off the footer ground.

"Yes, we want some tea," said Tom Merry. "Never mind, we'll give you a kick at goal, if you like, Grimey?"

"Thank you, Master Merry!"

"You'll have to stick to practice, you know," added the junior captain of the School House. "We're playing you against the Grammar School on Saturday."

Levison, who was standing by the ropes, burst into a scoffing laugh.

"Playing that grocer against the Grammar School!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

Levison sneered.

"If I were in the Grammar School eleven, I'd refuse to play," he said.

"My dear chap, you'd never be in any eleven!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"If you did get into one, there'd be ten resignations, I guess."

"Shut up, Levison," said Jack Blake of the Fourth. "or we'll bump you! By Jove!" he added, as an afterthought.

"We'll bump you, anyway! Collar him!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Collah the cad, deah boys!"

But Levison had vanished.

Manners went back into goal, and Tom Merry tossed the ball to Grimes.

Manners put in all he knew to keep the leather out, but he had no chance. Grimes beat him every time, and Manners was a good goalkeeper, too.

Quite a crowd gathered round to watch the performance of the grocer's boy.

Tom Merry clapped Grimes on the shoulder with enthusiasm.

"You'll be a rod in pickle for the Grammarians," he said. "Blessed if you're not a giddy Dixie Deau! Next week we're playing Rylcombe Wanderers, and you'll show the giddy villagers what you are made of!"

"They know already!" chuckled Grimes. "I was skipper of the Wanderers, Master Merry!"

"Oh, if you don't want to play against your old club, of course, we'll let you off," said Tom Merry. "But you are going to give the Grammarians beans! Come in to tea now."

And Grimes was carried off to Tom Merry's study to tea, with Lumley-Lumley and all the famous "Co." of the School House.

And if clouds had been gathering on Grimes' brows, they were chased away now. It was impossible for anybody not to be jolly in Tom Merry's study with the chums of the School House to tea.

CHAPTER 3.

Grimes to the Rescue!

TOM MERRY looked round the study, and then into the cupboard, as the crowd of juniors, fresh and hungry from the footer field, swarmed in.

Besides the Terrible Three, there were Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy of the Fourth, and Reilly, Kerruish, and Kangaroo of the Shell. It was a good-sized party for tea, and the contents of

"Rats!" said Monty Lowther politely. "It's a signal, my son. When I whistle, you see Trotter trot."

Phoop!

Trotter, the page, came along the passage, grinning. Toby, the House page, was away on his holiday, and the new page was equally obliging. As a matter of fact, he had reaped a little harvest of tips from Tom Merry & Co., and he was only too ready to answer Monty Lowther's whistle.

"Ere I am, Master Lowther," he said.

"Tuckshop," said Lowther. "Are you off duty?"

Trotter chuckled.

"I've come off," he explained. "I'd leave anythin' to oblige you young gentlemen."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Shell out!"

"I was goin' to ask Tom Mewwy to accept a slight loan——"

"No need to ask!" said Tom Merry briskly. "I'm ready. Hand it out!"

"Buck up, Gussy!"

"Cut the cackle and come to the cash!"

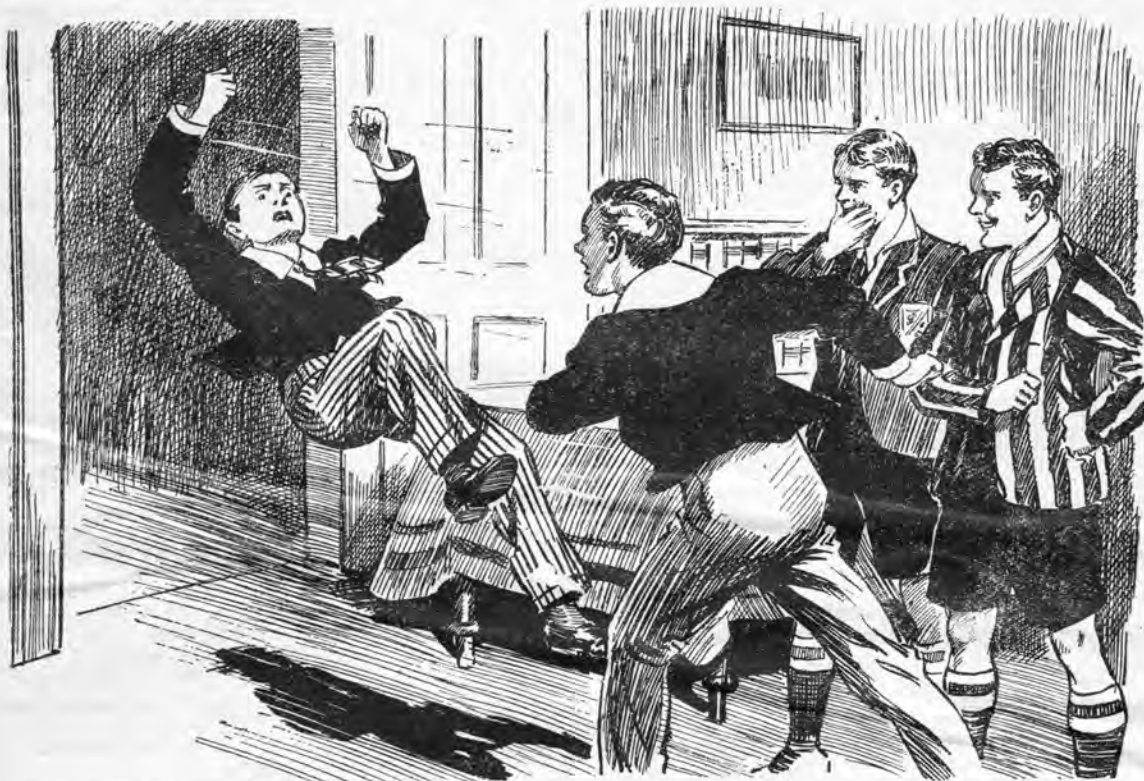
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows——"

"Look here! Are you going to lend me half a quid, or are you not going to lend me half-a-quid?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Nothing to be sorry about, that I can see. Chuck it over!"

"I am sowwy, but I'm quite stonay," said Arthur Augustus. "My governah



As Grimes and Levison struggled, suddenly there was a wrench—a gasp—and Levison went flying through the doorway, to land with a bump in the passage outside.

the study cupboard comprised half a loaf, half a tin of sardines, and three lumps of sugar.

"Gentlemen——" said Tom Merry.

"Heah, heah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cordially.

"Gentlemen——"

"Bravo!" said Herries. "Where's the feed?"

"Gentlemen, you will have to wait a bit while we get something from the tuckshop. You can wire in and lay the table, and make the toast, and boil the kettle, while I send Toby down to the tuckshop for the grub."

"You won't send Toby," said Monty Lowther, with a grin. "Toby's away on his holiday, fathead! That fellow Trotter's here, instead of Toby; but he's just as good. I'll whistle him up."

Monty Lowther stepped into the passage, and put his fingers to his lips, and blew a shrill blast.

Gore of the Shell put his head out of the next study.

"Stop that row!" he yelled.

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther. "I don't know whether cooky and the House dame would feel much obliged if they heard you. Got the list, Tommy?"

"Here it is," said Tom Merry.

"Want half a quid, too."

Monty Lowther laughed.

"I've got a tanner," he said.

"Manners, old man——"

"Sorry," said Manners. "I've busted my last three bob in a new roll of films to-day."

"Well, of all the asses!" said Tom Merry wrathfully. "To blow the last of the study funds in filthy films when we've got a tea-party on!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I should ask you to allow me to lend you ten shillings, deah boy——"

"Hand it over, then," said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Merry——"

"Hand it over!" said Blake. "Can't you see we're famishing, Gussy?"

has failed to send me a wemittance, and I am quite stonay!"

Tom Merry glared at the swell of St. Jim's.

"You—you jabberwock!" he ejaculated.

"If you're stony, what on earth did you offer to lend me ten bob for?"

"I didn't, deah boy. I was goin' to say, when I was intewwupted wudely, that I should ask you to allow me to lend you ten shillings, if I had it!"

"You—you ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy!"

"You burbling duffer!" said Blake sulphurously.

"I wefuse to be called a burblin' duffah!"

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "monecy wanted! Any small loans now advanced to this study will be repaid without fail on Saturday. I am quite aware that it is not the usual thing to ask guests to lend the tin to provide their tea, but necessity knows no law,

and one silly chump has wasted all the available cash in disgusting films. Play up! Smaller contributions thankfully received—larger ones in proportion!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Perhaps you'd let me lend you 'arf-a-quid, Master Merry," said Grimes bashfully. "If you wouldn't mind takin' a loan from me, seeing as—"

"Grimes, old man, you're as lovely as you're beautiful!" said Tom Merry affectionately. "I've said all along that it was a ripping wheeze of Lumley's to bring you to St. Jim's. I said you'd do the school credit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cash as well as credit," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "Grimes, we're proud of you! Come to my arms, and let me kiss you on your baby brow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hand over the half-quid, Grimey!" Grimes grinned sheepishly and fumbled in his pockets. He turned a ten-shilling note out of one and a pound note out of another. He held up the latter and looked at it, and stared as if surprised.

"My hat! Why, he's rolling in filthy lucre!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "A quid and a half—"

"My 'at!" said Grimes.

"Hand over, Grimey," said Tom Merry. "What are you staring at that quid for? Isn't it a good one?"

"It's a good one, right enough," said Grimes; "but it ain't mine."

"What?"

"It ain't mine," said Grimes, with a shake of the head. "If one of you young gentlemen put it in my pocket for a little joke, jest own up and take it back."

"Bai Jove! I should not wogard that as a joke in good taste," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"What rot!" said Manners. "If the quid's in your pocket, Grimey, it's yours. How could you possibly have another fellow's quid in your pocket?"

"I s'pose it's a joke," said Grimes. "I ain't more'n twelve bob—two bob of my own, and a 'arf-quid that Mr. Lumley-Lumley sent me to begin my allowance. You know, Mr. Lumley-Lumley is makin' me an allowance as well as payin' my fees 'ere. Well, that's the 'arf-quid. But this 'ere thick 'un, that ain't mine. Somebody shoved it into my pocket for a joke."

"That's a jolly queer thing!" said Tom Merry. "I don't understand it. Sure you didn't have a pound of your own?"

"Quite sure, Master Merry."

"Well, hand over the half-quid, and you can think over the quid. Blessed if I know how it got into your pocket if it isn't yours!"

Grimes tossed the ten-shilling note to Tom Merry, who caught it, and turned to Trotter, who was grinning in at the doorway.

"There's the list, and there's the cash," said Tom Merry. "The list comes to nine bob, and the other boblet is yours, Trotty. Buzz off!"

"Yes, Master Merry."

And Trotter "buzzed off."

CHAPTER 4.

No Thanks!

LEIVISON and Mellish were in the school tuckshop when Trotter came in with the list, the ten-shilling note and the basket.

Dame Taggles was serving the two cads of the Fourth Form, and Levison was paying.

They looked round at Trotter, who saluted them respectfully.

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Trotter knew Levison of old, and Levison knew Trotter—and was not glad to see him at St. Jim's.

Before coming to St. Jim's, Levison had been at Greyfriars, and he had to leave that school in circumstances that did not resound to his credit. He had tried at first to keep the matter a secret at St. Jim's, but the attempt had failed, for he had been recognised by a Greyfriars fellow who had visited Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. But Levison liked as little as possible to be said about his previous career at Greyfriars. And when Greyfriars fellows came to St. Jim's for footer matches, he carefully avoided them.

And he had bit his lips with anger when Trotter first appeared in the School House in the place of Toby, the House page. For Trotter, like Toby, was having his annual holiday, and when in his place he was page at Greyfriars School.

Trotter was having what might be called a "busman's" holiday. He was a relation of Toby, and he was acting as Toby's substitute while that young fellow was away. Toby had recognised the old Greyfriars boy at once; but Levison's expression when he saw him warned the Greyfriars page to keep his distance.

Trotter laid the list on the counter, and Dame Taggles began to hand out the goods, and Trotter stacked them into the basket.

Levison and Mellish watched him.

"Who's that little lot for?" asked Levison.

"It's for Master Merry," said Trotter.

Levison sniffed.

"Master Merry, is it?" he said.

"Are they having a feed?"

"Yes, sir," said Trotter.

"Is that cad Grimes in Tom Merry's study?"

"Master Grimes is there, sir," said Trotter.

"Master Grimes!" sneered Levison. "Master Grimes is a grocer's boy—same class as you are, Trotter."

"Thank you, Master Levison," said Trotter calmly.

"You are not called upon to call him Master Grimes," said Mellish. "Call him Grimes."

"I 'ope I know my place, Master Mellish," said Trotter, "and I'm taking my cousin Toby's place 'ere, and I don't want to give no trouble."

"You like waiting on upstarts out of your own class, I suppose?" suggested Levison.

"I never liked waiting on you at Greyfriars, Master Levison," said Trotter.

Levison turned red.

"Why, what do you mean, you cad?" he shouted.

Mellish chuckled, and then suddenly became quite grave, as Levison glared at him.

"I mean what I says, Master Levison," said Trotter. "You ain't no right to try and make me disrespectful to Master Grimes. He's given me a bob, anyway, and you never gave me a bob all the time you was at Greyfriars afore you was sacked!"

Mellish chuckled again.

"You—you low cad!" said Levison, clenching his fist. "Have you been round telling the fellows here that I was sacked from Greyfriars? It's a lie."

"It ain't a lie, Master Levison," said Trotter stolidly. "But I ain't told nobody. It ain't my business. You let me alone, that's all. If I was to be sent to a school like this, I should

expect the page to call me Master Trotter. It's only a manner of speakin', and it's all right. Anyway, I ain't goin' to get myself in trouble because you don't like Master Grimes. It ain't good enough. Another jar of jam, Mrs. Taggles."

"Yes, Trotter!"

Levison looked at the page with gleaming eyes. He was strongly inclined to punch him, but he could guess that if he attacked Trotter he would have to reckon with Tom Merry & Co. afterwards.

"You're a rotten worm, Trotter!" he said.

"Yes, Master Levison."

"And a low cad!"

"Yes, Master Levison!"

"And a dirty rascal!"

"Thank you, Master Levison," said Trotter imperturbably. "If I wasn't a servant 'ere, Master Levison, I'd say the same to you."

"You—you below-stairs thief!" said Levison.

"I ain't a thief," said Trotter, "and you know it. And I ain't never bin sacked in my life. You was sacked from Greyfriars, with your lies and your conjuring tricks, and your gettin' fellows into troubles with your little games!"

"You young rotter, I've a jolly good mind to wipe up the floor with you!" yelled Levison.

"You'd better let me alone," said Trotter. "I ain't done nothin' to you, I ain't said a word about your getting pushed out of Greyfriars, yet. I can't 'it you back, 'cause I'm a servant 'ere, but I'll complain to the 'ousemaster if you touch me, and tell 'im that you was a-settin' of me agin Master Grimes—so there!"

Mellish drew Levison away by his sleeve.

"Better let him alone," he whispered. "Come away. I've got an idea."

The two cads of the School House left the tuckshop, leaving Trotter still adding to his purchases.

Levison's brow was black with rage. It was too humiliating to be worsted in an encounter with a mere page and boot-boy, but he had brought it upon himself.

He gritted his teeth as they went out into the dusk of the quadrangle.

"What's the idea?" he growled.

Mellish chuckled.

"Figgins," he said.

Levison stared.

Figgins of the Fourth was the leader of the juniors in the New House at St. Jim's, the deadly rivals of Tom Merry & Co. of the School House.

"What about Figgins?" snapped Levison. "Blow Figgins!"

"Blow him as much as you like," grinned Mellish; "but if the New House chaps knew that Tom Merry was laying in a feed, what do you think they'd do?"

"Raid it, I suppose," said Levison.

"Exactly. Let's tell them."

Levison hesitated.

The warfare between the juniors of the two Houses at St. Jim's was never-ending. It was quite in order for Figgins & Co. to raid a feed of the rival juniors; but for a fellow to join with a rival House against his own was unheard-of.

Levison did not object to treachery on his own account, but he knew what the result was likely to be if Tom Merry & Co. discovered how the information had been carried to Figgins.

"Make Figgy promise he won't tell," suggested Mellish. "You cut over to the New House and see him, and—"

(Continued on page 8.)

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"Good egg!" said Levison. "You cut over to the New House and see him while I watch for Trotter."

"No fear," said Mellish.

"Why can't you do it as well as I?" demanded Levison angrily.

"Because I don't choose to," said Mellish coolly. "If you want to muck up the feed for Tom Merry and Grimes, there's your chance; but I'm not taking any."

And Mellish settled the matter by walking away. He disappeared in the dusk under the elms, leaving Levison hesitating and doubtful.

But the cad of the Fourth speedily made up his mind. From where he stood he could see the lighted window of Tom Merry's study, and he caught a glimpse of Grimes near the window. The sight of Grimes determined him. He started at a run in the direction of the New House, and came to a sudden halt as he ran into three juniors in the shadows.

Three pairs of hands seized him, and he was swept off his feet.

"It's a School House cad!" cried the voice of Figgins of the Fourth. "Bump him to show him that he mustn't run about on the respectable side of the quadrangle!"

"Hear, hear!" said Kerr.

"Buck up, then!" said Fatty Wynn. "Or rather, you can bump him while I get on to the tuckshop."

"Hold on!" gasped Levison.

"We're holding on!" chuckled Figgins. "Now then—one, two, three!"

Bump!

Levison descended upon the ground with a sudden concussion.

"Ow!"

"One more," said Figgins. "It's only Levison. Now then—"

"Stop it!" gasped Levison, writhing in the grasp of the New House trio. "I was looking for you chaps!"

"Well, you've found us," said Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pax!" exclaimed Levison. "I've got something to tell you. It's important. Leggo!"

"What is it?" asked Figgins suspiciously.

"You want to raid a feed from Tom Merry?" asked Levison eagerly.

"What-ho!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn immediately.

"You've got a chance," said Levison hurriedly. "They've sent Trotter down to get in a supply of tuck—a big supply. He's just going to leave the shop with it, and if you buck up, you'll nab him."

"Well, you rotter!" said Figgins, in disgust. "Fancy a chap giving his own House away. Bump him for being a traitor!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Yarrah!"

And, having administered justice to the informer, Figgins & Co. hurried in the direction of the tuckshop.

Levison remained gasping on the ground. He sat up and gasped and panted. His only consolation was that Figgins & Co. were on the track of the feed. They had administered justice, but they were not likely to let the booty escape them, and that was a consolation to Levison.

CHAPTER 5.

The Raiders!

"STAND and deliver!"

"Oh!"

Trotter had finished packing the good things in the basket, and had left the tuckshop.

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He was crossing towards the School House, and as he passed under the shadows of the old elms, three figures loomed up in the dusk.

The challenge rang out in Figgins' voice, and Trotter halted in astonishment.

"Stand and deliver!"

"Your basket or your giddy life!"

"Hands up!"

And then there was a chuckle.

"Oh, it's Master Figgins!" said Trotter.

"Not this time," said Figgins sternly. "I am Dick Turpin the Second. This chap is Jack Sheppard jun., and this fat boulder is Claude Duval minor. Shell out the loot before we imbrue our hands in your gore and shed your blood and your buttons!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We want the grub," explained Fatty Wynn. "This is a House raid. Hand over the basket, or we'll slaughter you!"

"But the grub belongs to Master Merry," said Trotter in dismay.

"That's a mistake," said Figgins blandly. "It belongs to us. Hand it over!"

"But, Master Figgins—"

"Seize the traitorous caitiff!" said Figgins, in a deep voice. "Blow his roof off! Strew the hungry churchyard with his bones!"

Three pairs of hands seized Trotter.

"Ere you are, Master Figgins!" gasped Trotter. "I s'pose I can tell Master Merry that you've took the grub?"

"Yes, Trotty, you can tell him we have took it," chuckled Figgins. "Tell him we'll be pleased if he'll come over to tea in our study, as we've had an unexpected windfall."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co.

"Master Merry will be wild," said Trotter. "He borrowed 'alf-a-quid of Master Grimes for this 'ere grub, Master Figgins."

"Good! Tell Grimes he can come to tea, too, especially if he's got any more half-quids," said Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Figgins & Co. disappeared in the direction of the New House with the well-laden basket.

"Well, my heye," said Trotter, who was not so accustomed as his predecessor to the peculiar little ways of the juniors of St. Jim's. "My only heye!"

And Trotter returned to the School House rather disconsolately, and made his way to Tom Merry's study.

He found the juniors ready for tea, and in a state of great expectancy.

All eyes were turned upon the page as he appeared in the study doorway.

"Here he is at last!" said Monty Lowther, who was making toast. "You've been a jolly long time, Trotter. Toby would have been back in half the time."

"I'm sorry, Master Lowther—"

"Where's the grub?" asked Tom Merry.

"I'm sorry—"

"You ass!" exclaimed Manners.

"Haven't you got it?"

"Master Figgins—"

"What?"

"Master Figgins and Kerr and Wynn—they've took it!" said Trotter.

There was a roar.

"Figgins!"

"Raided our grub!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You ass, Trotter!"

"You chump!"

"Toby would have dodged them!" roared Monty Lowther. "You unreliable ass! You jabberwock! Collar him and bump him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

But Trotter had fled.

His hurried footsteps died away down the passage.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another in dismay.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wogad this as wotten!"

"Beastly!" groaned Blake. "I'm hungry."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Famished," said Kangaroo. "And there's nothing in our study. We're hard up."

"Same here."

"I guess I'm in the same boat," said Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. "I shan't have any cash till Saturday, I guess."

"Bai Jove! I almost wish now I had put off that new topper for a day or two," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sadly. "I am expectin' a fivah from my govannah to-morrow mornin'—"

"Then we'll have tea this evenin' to-morrow morning out of Gussy's fiver," said Monty Lowther, with heavy sarcasm.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

The juniors were exasperated. Lowther's proposition to bump Trotter had caused that youth to flee without delivering Figgins' kind invitation.

Tom Merry & Co. were not likely to bear malice for a raid, and they would have accepted the invitation without hesitating. But they had not received it. What was to be done?

"Let's raid the New House and get it back," suggested Blake desperately.

"Faith, and I'm ready," said Reilly.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"We should find the whole giddy passage ready for us, to say nothing of Ratty," he said. "We can't raid Figg's study quite so openly as that. And they've got the stuff in their study before this time. We've been done!"

"Foiled, diddled, and dished!" groaned Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "in the painful circumstances of the case, I fear there is nothing to be done but to call upon Grimes once more. Grimey, old son, we are all expecting large consignments of coin of the realm on Saturday. Saturday is settling day. Shell out!"

"Yaas, wathah! Shell out, Gwimey!"

Grimes grinned.

"But I ain't nothin' 'ceptin' two bob and this pound that don't belong to me, what I found in my pocket."

"Findings keepings," suggested Monty Lowther. "Of course, it's according to whose pocket you found it in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry took the pound and turned it over in his hand. It was certainly a good one.

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "we find ourselves faced by a most peculiar and mysterious circumstance—"

"Oh!"

"At a time when the funds are low, and the store of cash is depleted, and credit is in a somewhat exhausted state—"

"Cut it short—"

"At a time, to be brief, when we are stony broke and hard up for a feed, our respected friend Grimes discovers a pound note in his pocket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, when a fellow finds a quid in his pocket, the natural conclusion to come to is that it's his own—"

"Pound, deah boy—"

"Quid!" said Tom Merry firmly. "I don't want to asperse Grimey's memory."

in any way, but I must state it as my opinion that this quid must be his, and that he has forgotten how he came by it. Quids don't travel into fellow's pockets of their own accord. I think this quid must be the profit on some grocery deal that Grimes has forgotten. Very likely he made a spanking profit out of jam or marmalade, or something, and forgot all about it in the worry of mugging up Latin since he's been here."

"No, Master Merry!"

"At all events, if the note isn't Grimey's, it must have been shoved into Grimey's pocket by some giddy practical joker for a lark. I don't quite see where the lark comes in myself. I shouldn't risk my quids in that way. A fellow finding a quid in his pocket might naturally conclude that it was his own, and might spend it, and decline to see the joke afterwards and refund it. However, if some silly ass has played this joke on Grimes, he can wait until Saturday for his quid, when he claims it. That's only a just punishment for having played such an idiotic joke."

"Hear, hear!"

"Therefore, as we are prepared to refund the quidlet out of our numerous remittances that arrive on Saturday, I think we are justified in expending this quid now, in sustaining our strength after our arduous labours on the footer field."

"Bravo!"

"So, if Grimey hasn't any objection, I'll take the responsibility and the quid."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we'll blow it in style—the whole of it! And this time we'll go down to the tuckshop in a body, and if we meet any New House members we'll squash 'em!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I ain't no objection, Master Merry," said Grimes at once. "That there quid belongs to somebody else, and I desay he'll own up to puttin' it in my pocket, and then he can wait till Saturday afore he gets it back—and serves 'im right!"

"Good egg! Come on, all of you!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry & Co. marched out of the study in a body. If Figgins & Co. should attempt any further raiding, there were enough of them to deal with any number of New House juniors. But Figgins & Co. were not to be seen in the quadrangle. They were enjoying their booty in their study in the New House, with a select party of New House juniors to keep them company.

Tom Merry & Co. arrived at the tuckshop, and Dame Taggles was all smiles as she landed out good things to the value of twenty shillings.

The unexpected pound was expended to the last sixpence, and Tom Merry & Co. returned to their study in the School House laden with provisions as if for a siege.

And then there was a feed. The feed was a little late, but it was very plentiful, and the juniors enjoyed it all the more for having had to wait for it.

There were good things and to spare, and when the hungry juniors had finished, the table was by no means cleared. Tom Merry filled a glass with lemonade and rose to his feet.

"Gentlemen a toast—"

"The toast's finished," said Monty Lowther. "Try the cake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ass!" said Tom Merry. "Gentlemen, a toast! Here's to Grimey, the founder of the feast, and may he

always find a pound in his pocket when his pals are hard up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the toast was drunk with enthusiasm.

CHAPTER 6.

Levison's Loss!

"I'M wathah lookin' forward to to-morrow!" Arthur Augustus remarked in Study No. 6. It was the evening following the feed in Tom Merry's study.

"Looking forward to being left out of the eleven playing the Gram-marians?" asked Blake sweetly.

D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye and gave his chum a withering look.

"I should uttably wefuse to be left out of the eleven, Blake."

"Can't be helped. Somebody will have to be left out, if Grimes is going in; and I distinctly heard Tom Merry say that the worst man would be left out."

Herries and Digby chuckled.

"You uttah ass, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Well, I can only say what I've heard," said Blake. "I thought I'd let you know so that you can go and buy new toppers to-morrow, as footer will be off."

"I wegard you as an ass, Blake. I am lookin' forward to to-morrow, because I expect I shall get a fivah in the mornin'."

"Oh, good!" said Blake heartily. "Now you're talking. What shall we do with it, you chaps?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Mine's a new footer," said Digby.

"Mine's a new collar for Towser," said Herries.

"And mine's a new pair of footer boots," said Blake. "I hope your governor won't disappoint you this time, Gussy. He might go round to the House of Lords and forget to post the fiver."

"Pway don't talk out of the back of your neck, deah boy!" remonstrated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I want that fivah vewy particulah in the mornin'. My tailah has asked me for his bill. I wegard that as wathah wotten of him, because I only owe him four pounds, and that has only been owin' a few weeks, you know. Of course, I am not alludin' to my Bond Street tailah, but Mr. Wigg, in Wylcombe. I considah—"

"And if the fiver doesn't come, he'll very likely put in an execution, and seize your silk hats and neckties," said Blake solemnly. "Oh, Gussy!"

"You uttah ass—"

There was a knock at the door of the study, and Levison put his head in.

The chums of Study No. 6 looked at him grimly. Visits from the cad of the Fourth were not welcome.

"You fellows seen a pound note?" asked Levison.

"Yes," said Blake.

"Where?"

"In Dame Taggles' till."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be funny," said Levison testily. "I've lost a quid, and I want to know if you fellows have seen one lying about anywhere. Somebody might have picked it up."

"If anybody has picked it up, Levison, he'll have handed it to the Housemaster, and you know that jolly

(Continued on the next page.)



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A HOT ANSWER.

School Inspector (pointing to map on wall): "Now, Tommy, which is the warmest side of Scotland?"

Tommy: "The east side, sir."

Inspector: "Why?"

Tommy: "Because that side of the map is nearest the fire!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Chipperfield, 19, Cotswold Gardens, Newbury Park, Ilford, Essex.

MODEST.

Foreman (to new hand): "Great Scott, man, is that all the work you can do in an hour?"

New Hand: "Oh, I expect I could do more, but I was never one for showing off!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Watson, 570, King's Road, Fulham, London, S.W.

IT WOULDN'T BURN.

Coal Merchant: "Quick, quick! My coalyard is on fire!"

Fireman: "Well, if it's the same coal as you sold me yesterday, there's no hurry!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Booth, Muirton Farm, Whitecains, by Aberdeen.

WAT-ER CURE.

Binks: "What's the cure for water on the brain?"

Jinks: "A tap on the head!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Wells, 11, Charleote Road, Wood Lane, Dagenham, Essex.

TOO SLOW.

Teacher: "Why are you so late for school, Billy?"

Billy: "I've got a new pair of boots on, and mother forgot to cut the string joining them!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Reader, 19, Hedge Lane, Palmers Green, London, N.13.

SOME FEAT.

"What is a primeval forest?" asked Smith.

"A place where the hand of man has never set foot!" replied Jones.

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Brown, 82, Bishopton Road, Middlesbrough.

CARELESS.

Doctor: "How did you break your leg?"

Patient: "I threw my cigarette into a manhole and stamped on it!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Twohy, 9, Arboretum Place, Derby. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,442.

Monty Lowther waved his hand.
"Patience, my children! It's a jape—a jape on Levison. We'll play him at his own game, and make him look sick. Listen, and I will a tale unfold!"

And Monty Lowther unfolded his tale, and Tom Merry & Co., as they listened, chuckled, too.

CHAPTER 7.

Plot and Counter-plot!

DAME TAGGLES was about to close her little shop when Tom Merry hurried in from the dusk of the quadrangle.

Dame Taggles gave him a cheery smile. Tom Merry was one of her best customers.

"The tarts are all put away, Master Merry," she said, "but I will get them out for you."

Tom Merry laughed.

"It isn't the tarts this time, Mrs. Taggles," he said. "I paid a pound over the counter here last evening—you remember?"

"Indeed, I do, Master Merry."

"Have you still got it? I want it."

Dame Taggles hesitated.

Tom Merry smiled.

"Not as a loan!" he explained. "I've got a quid's worth of silver, and I want that pound note back, that's all."

He emptied his pockets on the counter, and turned out a heap of shillings, sixpences and florins. The chums of the Shell had borrowed coins right and left in the School House to make up the required sum, and they had succeeded, though not without some difficulty.

"Yes, I think I still have it, Master Merry," said Dame Taggles. "But I don't know how you will tell it, as I have two others as well. I suppose any of them would do, if it's a pound you want?"

"No; I want that one specially," said Tom Merry. "It's marked—there's a number written on the back."

"I'll look for it, Master Merry."

Dame Taggles unlocked her till and searched for the pound note. As she had only three in her possession it did not take her long to discover the marked note. She passed it over the counter to Tom Merry and gathered up the heap of silver.

"Is that it?" she asked.

"That's it, Mrs. Taggles," said Tom Merry, examining the note. "Thank you! Look here, if anybody should ask you questions about this, you won't mention that I've come to get it back, will you?"

"No, Master Merry," said Dame Taggles in wonder.

"It's a jape," exclaimed Tom Merry. "I'm turning the joke against the other fellow, that's all, and I don't want him to get on to it."

"I won't say a word, Master Merry."

"Right-ho!"

And Tom Merry slipped the note into his pocket and quitted the tuck-shop.

Manners and Lowther were waiting for him in the quadrangle.

"Got it?" asked Lowther.

"Yes; here it is."

"Good!" said Manners with a chuckle. "Now to work up a little surprise for Levison."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Shell hurried into the School House. Blake & Co. and Lumley-Lumley were waiting for them there. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had been taken into the secret, and so had Grimes. Grimes was looking very sheepish about it. It was startling to him to discover the lengths to which Levison's spiteful nature was carrying him.

"We've got it!" said Tom Merry.

"I guess that's all right, then," said Lumley-Lumley. "Levison's in the

Common-room. One of you buzz off with it while we keep our peepers open here."

"Right-ho!" said Lowther.

The juniors strolled into the Common-room. There were a good many fellows there, and Ernest Levison was among them.

Mellish and Crooke were with Levison, and they were discussing the matter of the missing pound in tones loud enough for the whole room to hear.

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged a grin. "Found your quid, Levison?" asked Blake.

Levison scowled.

"No!" he snapped.

"Bless if I think it ever will be found," said Crooke of the Shell, with a sneer. "There are some chaps in the school who aren't above suspicion—in Levison's study, too."

"That's rough on you, Mellish," said Blake sympathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't mean Mellish," growled Crooke, as Mellish turned very red. "You know I don't. I'm alluding to tradesmen's boys who come to the school nowadays."

"Meaning me?" said Grimes, turning crimson.

"Yes," said Crooke defiantly. "If I had you in my study, I should keep my cash under lock and key, I can tell you."

Grimes clenched his fists.

"Hold on!" said Levison. "I'm not accusing Grimes. I only say that it's queer that the quid has disappeared. If I'd dropped it, why hasn't it been seen and picked up by someone? Besides, I know I didn't drop it."

"Perhaps you've still got it in your pocket somewhere," suggested Blake.

"Rot! I had it in my pocket when I had that tussle with Grimes yesterday, and it was immediately after that that I missed it."



"Stand and deliver!" The challenge rang out in Figgins' voice, and Trotter, with the basket of tuck in his arms, halted in astonishment. "Your basket or your giddy life!" demanded Figgins.

well, unless he knew the owner," said Blake.

"Well, it hasn't been handed to Mr. Railton; I've asked him."

"Then it hasn't been picked up."

"I'm not accusing you of stealing it," said Levison, with an unpleasant grin.

"I suppose it's about the house somewhere."

"Go and look for it, then!" yawned Blake.

"Shut the door after you," said Herries.

Levison scowled.

"It's jolly queer about my quid disappearing," he said. "I know I had it in my pocket yesterday. I know I've never lost money out of that pocket before."

"Perhaps it's time you started, then."

"Weally, Levison, your wemarks would imply that you suspect that somebody has picked your wotten pockets!" said D'Arcy severely.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I shouldn't be surprised at that," he said. "All sorts of rank outsiders seem to be admitted to the school these days."

"Yes; even chaps who have been expelled from other schools, it seems," said Blake caustically.

Slam!

The door closed violently after Levison as he retired.

The chums of the Fourth chuckled. They did not like Levison, and they were at no pains to conceal it.

"I wonder if he's really lost a pound note, or if it's only gas?" said Digby, with a yawn.

"Gas!" said Herries. "Can't trust a word he says. You know how Towser can't stand him."

The door reopened, and Levison looked in again. He regarded the chums of Study No. 6 with a sneer.

"Talking about me, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes," said Herries, in his direct way.

"I was just saying that you are a rotter, and that one can't believe a word you say."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Thank you!" said Levison. "It's honest Infun about the quid. The fact is, I can't afford to lose it. My pater doesn't send me fivers like D'Arcy's pater, and I want that quid. I was going to mention to you that it was marked, that's all, so you'll know it if you happen to see it."

"Marked!" said Blake, in surprise.

"Yes; I noticed that there was a number in blue pencil written on the back—number fifteen. I noticed it when I had it. You see, I don't have so many pound notes as D'Arcy, and I look at all mine."

"You take pwopah care of them, deah boy."

"Well, you'll know that quid if you see it," said Levison. "If it doesn't turn up to-night, I'm going to put a notice on the board to-morrow morning and offer a reward."

"Twopence?" asked Blake.

"Oh, rats!"

And Levison went out with another slam.

Blake, Herries, and Digby were chuckling; but the aristocratic face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was very grave.

"Wherefore that solemn brow, Gustavus?" Jack Blake inquired.

"My name is not Gustavus, you ass!"

"My mistake; I mean Adolphus."

"Weally, Blake—"

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"What are you scowling about?" demanded Blake.

"I wasn't scowlin'. Pewwaps I was lookin' thoughtful," said D'Arcy. "I was thinkin'!"

"Go hon!"

"I was thinkin' of that pound note Levison says he lost. You wemembah that yesterday Gwimes found a pound?"

Blake started.

"My hat, so he did! But Grimes said that he found that quid in his pocket, and never knew how it came there."

"I know. It's vewy odd. Suppose it should be Levison's pound?"

Blake looked very uneasy.

"Oh rats!" he said. "How could it be? Levison must have dropped that pound somewhere, and we know that Grimes wouldn't pick it up and keep it. If he was going to do that, he wouldn't mention it to us that it wasn't his. We shouldn't know he found a pound at all if he hadn't told us."

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"Quite so, deah boy. And I think it wathah lucky for Gwimes that he did mention it."

"Why?"

"Because it's pwetty certain that that pound note and Levison's pound note are the same. How it got into Grimes' pocket I don't know, unless he picked it up in a moment of absent-mindedness."

"Tosh!"

"Well, it's the same pound. We supposed it might be a pwactical jokah who put that note in Gwimes' pocket, but if so he hasn't owned up."

"My only hat!" said Blake, with a low whistle. "Is this another of Levison's little games, I wonder? He's very bitter against Grimes, I know."

"I don't see how he could get the quid into Grimes' pocket," said Herries, with a thoughtful look.

"Well, somebody's put it there!"

"Yes, that's true!"

"And if Tom Merry hadn't been hard up last night, and asked Grimes for a loan, Grimey mightn't have found it there," said Blake excitedly; "and then if it was found on him after Levison complained of losing a quid—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Marked, too!" said Herries. "That's what the rotter marked it for. He pretends that it was marked when it came into his hands, but it wasn't. He marked it himself, and planted it on Grimes somehow, and was going to accuse him of stealing it. Of course, he doesn't know what's happened in Tom Merry's study last evening, and that Grimes told us all that there was a quid in his pocket that didn't belong to him, and that he was ready to return it to the owner if he claimed it."

"Gweat Scott!"

The chums of Study No. 6 looked at one another. There was no doubt in any of their minds that this was another of Levison's tortuous schemes—a scheme to brand the junior he hated with disgrace. But for the accident of the chums of the Shell being "stony," and Grimes offering a loan, Grimes might not have found the pound note in his pocket in time to clear himself of suspicion.

What had happened in Tom Merry's study was a clear proof that Grimes had not stolen the note, but it was quite by chance that Grimes had produced it before so many fellows, and made his statement about it.

That chance the plotting cad of the Fourth had not reckoned with.

"My hat!" said Blake, at last, with a deep breath. "The awful cad! It seems too thick to believe that he'd plant a thing like that on Grimey, but—"

"But it's quite clear," said Herries, with a snort. "You know Towser wanted to bite him the other day."

"It seems quite cleah, deah boys. Let's go and wag him!"

Blake shook his head.

"Hold on!" he said. "It's pretty clear to us; but we've not got proof yet. If we give him rope enough he'll hang himself. We all know the facts in advance. If he's plotting against Grimes, let him rip, and let's see what kind of an ass he'll make of himself, and then we'll show him up before all the Form!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, go and see Tom Merry about it," said Blake, rising. "He may have noticed whether the note was marked. I remember he examined it pretty closely. If it was a marked pound note Grimey found in his pocket it makes it all clear."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The chums of the Fourth hurried along to Tom Merry's study. The Terrible Three were doing their preparation when Blake & Co. came in.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther stared in astonishment at the Fourth Formers as they come in, and Blake closed the door.

"Hallo! Wherefore this thushness?" asked Tom Merry. "Is Knox of the Sixth after you with a cane?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"No, my son," said Blake. "You remember that quidlet Grimey lent you yesterday, Tommy—the one he found in his pocket without knowing where it came from?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry, in wonder. "What about it? Has the giddy practical joker turned up and asked for it back? He'll have to wait till to-morrow."

"Was it marked?"

"Marked?" repeated Tom Merry.

"Yes. Was there a number written on the back?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry, more and more surprised. "There was number fifteen written in blue pencil. I remember noticing it at the time."

"Bai Jove!"

"That settles it!" said Blake.

"Settles what?" demanded the Terrible Three all together. "What on earth are you driving at, Blake?"

Blake hurriedly explained. The chums of the Shell listened with surprise that grew into anger and indignation.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath when Blake had finished.

"The awful cad!" he exclaimed.

"Is it possible that he means to accuse Grimes of stealing his quid?"

"What else can he intend?" said Blake.

"The awful cad!"

"The rotter!"

"The rotten outsider!"

"We'll show him up to the whole school!" exclaimed Manners. "We can all prove that Grimes showed us the pound note and said it wasn't his. Chaps who steal quids don't tell a dozen fellows they're not theirs, and keep them to be returned to the owner."

"Wathah not! Gwimey stands quite cleah!"

Monty Lowther burst into a sudden chuckle. The juniors turned upon him and glared.

"Weally, Lowthah, this is not a time for laughin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Lowther—"

"You ass—"

"Oh!" said Crooke significantly. "Immediately after Grimes had his hands on you."

"Yes; ten minutes after at the most."

"Looks pretty clear to me," said Crooke. "My opinion is— Yaroooh!"

Biff!

Crooke sat down upon the floor of the Common-room, and his hand went up to his nose, and he glared blankly at Grimes.

The grocer boy was standing over him with clenched fists and blazing eyes.

"Now get up and 'ave some more!" roared Grimes. "You'll call me a thief, will you? Get up and 'ave some more!"

"I'll smash you!" yelled Crooke, scrambling up.

Crooke was a much bigger fellow than Grimes. He was not a fighting man, but he was so much bigger and heavier than the new junior that Grimes did not look like having much chance against him. But the Fourth Former was not left to face his enemy unaided.

Tom Merry stepped between as Crooke rushed to the attack, and swept up the Shell fellow's fist, and Crooke, rushing on, found himself looking into

Tom Merry's face, his nose only an inch from Tom Merry's.

The hero of the Shell smiled into his face pleasantly.

"Easy does it, Crooke," he remarked.

"You're not going to pile on a kid. Tackle me, if you're spoiling for a rumpus!"

"I ain't afraid of him, Master Merry!"

"I know you ain't, Master Grimes, but you're not going to tackle a chap twice your weight, all the same."

"Wathah not! If Tom Mewwy did not intahfere, Gwimey, I should feel bound to give Cwooke a feahful thwash-in' myself."

Crooke dropped his hands, with a fierce scowl.

"You saw what he did!" he yelled.

"Yes; and I heard what you said," said Tom Merry. "And if Grimes hadn't knocked you down, I'd have done!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, rats!" snarled Crooke; and he swung angrily out of the Common-room.

There was some discussion in the Common-room about the missing note. If it had been Tom Merry, or Blake who had lost the money, the matter would have been taken more seriously. But

Levison was so full of tricks that no one knew how to take any statement that he made. It was known that he was untruthful, and his statement that he had missed a pound did not prove to the fellows that he really had missed one.

As Kangaroo remarked, Levison's word on any subject left that subject exactly where it was.

It would be exactly in keeping with what was known of Levison's character for him to pretend that he had missed a pound, in order to insinuate that Grimes had taken it; and unless the marked note was produced, nobody was likely to take his assertion very seriously.

Of the discovery Blake & Co. had made of Levison's half-executed plot not a word was said. "Give a rogue rope enough, and he will hang himself," is an old saying, and the chums of the School House had determined to give Levison plenty of rope.

And there was no doubt that the cad of the Fourth, over-reaching himself with his usual cunning would proceed, metaphorically, of course—to hang himself.

CHAPTER 8.

Odd Man Out!

THE next morning the juniors of St. Jim's chafed in the Form-room.

It was a fine day—just the day for footer, and in the afternoon was a footer match with the Rylcombe Grammar School.

The members of the Junior Eleven were looking forward to it; some of them with a little uneasiness. For it had been resolved to give Grimes a place in the team, and Tom Merry had explained that he could not play twelve men without the trouble of applying to the Football Association to alter the rules on the subject; and very likely they would refuse to do it, Tom Merry had added with heavy sarcasm.

Somebody would have to stand out to make room for Grimes, and there wasn't a fellow in the team who couldn't have named, at least two or three others more suitable to be left out than himself. The decision rested with Tom Merry, and he was much exercised in his mind about it. He thought more of the matter during morning lessons than of the valuable instructions Mr. Linton was bestowing upon the Shell.

The forward line of the Junior Eleven, as at present composed, consisted of Blake, Lowther, Tom Merry, Kerr and Figgins.

Grimes was a good forward, so Tom Merry had only four to choose from in leaving out a player to make room for him. He decided finally upon putting it as gently as he could to Blake.

The change was not to be permanent, and Blake naturally couldn't expect to play in every junior match when there were equally good players waiting to take their turn. Only Tom Merry rubbed his nose a little hard as he thought of explaining matters to Blake.

He had left his own chum Manners out of the eleven, because there were better men to be had; football was not friendship. But Blake—

"Merry!" rapped out Mr. Linton. Tom Merry started out of a brown study.

"Ye-e-es, sir," he stuttered.

"I asked you how many?"

"Ye-e-es, sir. Eleven, sir."

"What!"

"I—I—I mean, sir—"

"What!" repeated Mr. Linton blankly. "I asked you how many soldiers there were in a Roman cohort, and you say eleven."

"I—I was thinking of something else, sir. I—I'm sorry," Tom Merry stammered, turning very red.

Mr. Linton smiled grimly.

"I am glad to see that you are frank, at all events," he said. "You will take fifty lines for inattention, Merry."

"Yes, sir."

"And you will kindly turn your attention to the lesson now."

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

And Tom Merry did.

Mr. Linton's sharp eye was upon him, and he did not venture to think out the problem of the footer eleven any more during morning lessons.

The Shell were glad enough when lessons ended, and they were free to stream out into the bright quadrangle.

The Fourth were dismissed at the same time, and Blake & Co. joined the Terrible Three in the quad.

"Still going to play Grimey?" said Blake cheerfully.

Tom Merry nodded.

"You'll have to leave out one of the chaps," said Blake thoughtfully. "One of the eleven as played in the last match, I mean."

"Yes; I can't play a dozen."

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"Who's the giddy victim?" asked Blake. "Is it Lowther? After all, Lowther isn't very much good, considering—"

Monty Lowther glared.

"You ass!" he said.

"Well, this is the time for plain talk—regular heart-to-heart talks, you know, when you're selecting a footer team," said Blake. "If I were skipper, and I was going to leave Tom Merry out, for instance, I should simply say 'Buzz.'"

"Is that all?" asked Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"That's all," said Blake.

"That's a tip," Tom Merry remarked.

"Buzz!"

"Eh?"

"Buzz!"

Jack Blake stared.

"What on earth are you driving at?" he demanded crossly. "Are you understudying a giddy bee, or have you gone off your silly dot?"

"Neither," said Tom Merry blandly.

"Buzz!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners and Lowther.

"Look here!" began Blake warmly.

"My dear chap, I'm taking your tip. I'm doing exactly the thing you would do if you were football captain," Tom Merry explained. "Buzz!"

"You—your fathead!"

"I've got to ask you to stand down, you see. So I'm asking you on your own system. Buzz!"

"Stand down!" roared Blake.

"Me?"

"Must be somebody."

"Somebody else—yes. Why, of all the cheek!" said Blake warmly. "Why, I was going to suggest that I captained the team this time, to make sure of beating Gordon Gay. As for standing down, that's impossible!"

Tom Merry looked worried.

"Somebody must stand down, if I'm going to play Grimes. Gussy's standing out this time, and—and I thought you might like to keep him company."

"I'm not so fond of his company as all that," said Blake. "You could leave Redfern out. He's only a New House chap."

"Redfern's playing centre-half. I've got to leave out one of the front line."

"Well, there's Lowther."

"Eh?" said Lowther.

"Or Figgins, or Kerr!" said Blake warmly. "Both New House chaps. New House chaps naturally ought to be the first to go."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"The New House chaps are howling now because they don't have half the team," he said. "Blake, old chap, stand out as a personal favour to me, and don't grouse."

Blake snorted.

"If Lumley-Lumley brings any more giddy grocers to this school I'll take him into a quiet corner and suffocate him!" he said indignantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake was looking decidedly "wrathy" when he met Grimes with Lumley-Lumley in the quad a little later. He gave the new junior a very grim look.

"Anything the matter, Master Blake?" asked Grimes.

Blake grunted.

"Only you've got my place in the team, you bouncer!"

Grimes looked dismayed.

"Master Merry leaving you out?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Oh, I'm sorry!" said Grimes. "I didn't know. Look 'ere, Master Blake!"

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther Calling!



Hallo, everybody! A reader says he has some of our earliest issues. Rare GEMS? "Director Fined for Driving Car," says a headline. Wrongly "directing" it? A conjurer is going to produce films. Out of the hat? Skimpole says he always thought the saying was "Laugh and grow fat." Is that why he is so skinny? A reader asks: "What sort of grease is best for polishing steel?" Elbow-grease! We hear Tibetan sheep run as fast as racehorses. But black sheep still go "to the dogs." "The Romans planned their building carefully," says Mr. Lathom. Rome wasn't built in a day. They say Skimpole is so absent-minded he thought he had forgotten his watch, and took it out to see if he had time to go back for it! As "Curly" Gibson wrote: "Thermometers are glass tubes used by doctors in detesting fevers and influenza." Reminds me of when Gibson was entertained to tea by the Head's wife, who asked if he could eat another cake. "I think so, ma'am, if I stood up," replied Gibson. Blake asks: "What is the best way to prevent milk going sour?" Drink it! As the annoyed diner said, after a long wait: "An hour ago I ordered soup. Have you forgotten it, have I had it, or

I'll tell Tom Merry that I won't play, and you can keep the place."

Blake stared at him.

"You want to play, don't you?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, rather!" said Grimes. "But—"

Blake burst into a laugh.

"It's all right," he said. "You'll play. I don't really mind, though, of course, Tom Merry ought to leave out one of the New House bounders, really."

"I'll speak to Master Merry, if you like."

"Oh, rats! Master Merry will very likely dot you on the nose, Master Grimes, if you tell him you're not going to play when he's put you in the team. It's all right."

Grimes' offer had a soothing effect upon Blake, and he contrived to take his exclusion from the Junior Eleven philosophically.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy expressed sympathy when he heard of his chum's misfortune.

"It's wathah hard, old chap," said D'Arcy, "but somebody had to be left out to make woom for Gwimes, I suppose. And Tom Mewwy might have done worse!"

"Might have done worse, you ass!" said Blake wrathfully. "How could he have done worse?"

"Why, he might have left me out, you know," said Arthur Augustus innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his famous eyeglass, and stared at his hilarious chum.

"I fail to see any cause for laughtah

didn't I order it?" The old gentleman looked into the office. "May I see a boy working here—John Brown?" he asked. "You're just too late, sir!" replied the clerk. "He's gone to your funeral!" "Referees are criticised," says Skimpole, "but on what grounds?" On every ground in the country! The school medico urges you to kill every fly directly you see it. That swat's wanted! Looking over an old house, Blake said he thought the oak-beamed ceiling was too low. That's how it struck him. "Fire in Music Shop," reads a headline. More "hot numbers"! "Gibson, you are very backward in geography!" snapped Mr. Selby. "It doesn't matter, sir," responded Gibson. "I don't care for travelling!" Good advice: Instead of trying to make something for yourself, try to make something of yourself. Then there was the beggar who pleaded he was not a beggar; he said he was a professional coin-collector. As the valet said to his lordship when they were stranded on the desert island: "My lord, your coconut is served!" "Nother story: "What made you give up singing in the choir, Frayne?" asked D'Arcy minor. "I was absent one Sunday," answered Frayne, "and somebody asked if the organ was mended." What must you do before getting out of bed? Get in. You heard of the sheep-stealer who pleaded he was only "wool-gathering" at the time? "Tattoo Producer Controls 2,000 Men by Touching a Switch." All of them "live wires"! What works the longest hours? The clock. "Well, Smith," said the magistrate to the old offender, "what are you here for now?" "Well, zur, if you don't know, I bain't a-goin' to tell 'ee!" replied the old-timer. Good luck, boys!

in that remark, Blake," he said, in a stately way.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You see, you're out already!" roared Blake. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Imposs!"

"Have you looked at the list, duffer?"

"I refuse to be called a duffah, and I have not looked at the list, as I took it for granted, of course, that I should play. I hear that Gordon Gay's team is very hot stuff, so, of course, all the best men will be wanted on our side."

"Perhaps that's why Tom Merry has left you out," Blake suggested.

"Weally, you ass—"

"Well, you're out; but you shall come and see the match with me, and I'll tell you when to cheer," said Blake generously.

"I wogard you as an ass, Blake. I am goin' to speak to Tom Mewwy. I shall speak to him vewy plainly indeed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Arthur Augustus departed to seek the captain of the Junior Eleven.

Blake did not see him again till they were going in to dinner, and then he tapped the swell of St. Jim's on the shoulder in the doorway of the dining-room.

"Seen Tom Merry?" he asked.

"Yaas!"

"Has he put you in?"

"No. I wogard him as an ass! I twied to point out to him that he was winning a vewy sewious wisk of a cwushin' defeat; but, somehow, he didn't see it. I have always wogarded Tom Mewwy as a wathah good footah skipph, but I am beginnin' to have my doubts about it now, Blake, deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
And Arthur Augustus looked very serious all through dinner, as he thought of Tom Merry's shortcomings as a footer skipper.

CHAPTER 9.

Mellish Cheers!

"HALLO! Look here!"

"My hat!"

"It's true, then?"

Quite a little crowd were gathering before the notice-board in the Hall after dinner.

The Terrible Three came along and joined them, and they looked at a paper pinned up, in the handwriting of Ernest Levison, with a great deal of interest. The notice written by Levison ran:

"NOTICE.—Lost, stolen, or strayed, somewhere in the School House, a pound note. Same can be identified by a number fifteen written in blue pencil on the back. Anyone finding same is requested to return it to the owner, E. Levison, Study No. 9, Fourth Form."

"So you've really lost a quid, Levison?" asked Kangaroo, turning to the cad of the Fourth, who was in the crowd.

"Didn't you believe me?" sneered Levison.

"Of course not!" said the Cornstalk junior, with an air of surprise. "Does anybody ever believe you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison knitted his brows.

"Well, I've lost that quid, or it's been taken," he said. "I'm going to have it back, or make a row about it. I never lost any money before grocer cads were admitted into the Fourth Form here."

"Rats!"

"I guess you'll have to prove that you've lost this," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's only one more of Levison's tricks," said Gore of the Shell. "What's the good of taking any notice of it?"

"Quite wight, Gore, deah boy."

Levison compressed his lips.

His reputation in the House was telling very much against him just now.

"Well, this notice is to give the chap who's got my pound note a last chance to get it back to me," he said. "If it isn't returned to me by five o'clock, I'm going to complain to the prefect. It's Kildare's business to look into the matter."

"Better send for a detective and have the House searched," Blake suggested.

"And while he's here, he may be able to discover whether you ever had a pound note or not."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison swung away scowling. But the juniors had little time to think about Levison and his lost pound note. It was getting near time for the footballers of the Grammar School to arrive, and Tom Merry & Co. were thinking of the match.

They were on the junior football ground, all ready, when the Grammarians came.

Gordon Gay & Co., from Rylcombe Grammar School, looked very fit and fresh when they arrived. Gordon Gay shook hands cordially with Tom Merry.

"Ready for a licking?" he asked cheerfully.

"Yes," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I am vewy much afraid, Gay, that you will beat us this time, deah boy."

"Go hon!" said Gay.

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"Yaas, I am standin' out."

Gordon Gay looked very serious.

"You're not playing, Gussy?"

"No, deah boy."

"Oh, we shall have to play up, you chaps," said Gay to his comrades; "it will be a bit harder this time."

"Why, you ass—" said D'Arcy wrathfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, is that Grimey?" asked Gordon Gay, catching sight of Grimes among the St. Jim's footballers. "New recruit, eh?"

"Grimes belongs to St. Jim's now," Tom Merry explained.

"My hat!"

"I'm in the Fourth Form, Master Gay," said Grimes sheepishly. "I'm a St. Jim's chap now. I 'ope you don't mind me bein' in the team."

"Yes, I jolly well do," said Gordon Gay. "I'd rather Gussy were in it; it would make it easier for us!"

"Weally, Gay—"

"Refuse to play, Gay," called out Levison. "I wouldn't play a team with a cad in it, if I were you!"

Gordon Gay looked round at Levison. "Did you speak to me?" he asked.

"Yes, I did."

"Well, don't do it again," said Gordon Gay. "I'm rather particular about the kind of person that speaks to me. If I weren't a visitor here I'd mop up the ground with you. Scat!"

"Bai Jove! I'm not a visitah here, so I will mop up the ground with the wottah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

And he slid his eyeglass into his waistcoat pocket, laid his silk hat in a safe place, and pushed back his cuffs. By the time he had finished these preparations, Levison was on the other side of the field, and the swell of St. Jim's looked round for him in vain.

"Bai Jove! He's gone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lefevre of the Fifth, who had kindly consented to referee the junior match, arrived on the ground, and the teams went into the field.

Tom Merry won the toss, and left the Grammarians to kick off against the wind.

Grimes was outside-right in the St. Jim's team.

"Go it, Grimey!" Lumley-Lumley called out.

Grimes glanced towards his chum, who was posted behind the goal to watch.

"Right-ho, Master Lumley!" he said.

"Go it, grocer!" jeered Mellish.

Grimes did not reply to that.

"Play up, grocer—Yow!" ejaculated Mellish, as a grip of iron was laid upon his collar from behind, and he was jerked over on the ground.

"Ow, ow!"

Jack Blake looked down on him with a grin.

"What did you say, Mellish?" he asked pleasantly.

"Oow, ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I didn't mean that. What did you say to Grimes?"

"I said 'Go it, grocer!'" yelled Mellish.

"Lemme alone!"

"Not good enough," said Blake, with a shake of the head. "Gussy, old man, will you lend me a hand with this cad?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy."

"Take his other arm," said Blake. "He's going to cheer Grimes; and every time he doesn't, we're going to bump him."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy."

Mellish was jerked to his feet, with Blake gripping one arm and D'Arcy the other.

The sneak of the School House gritted his teeth with rage.

"Leggo, you beasts!" he gasped.

"You've got to cheer Grimes," said Blake. "Shout out 'Go it, Grimes!'"

"Go it, old fellow!"

"I won't!" yelled Mellish.

"Bump!"

"Yarooop!"

"Will you now?" asked Blake cheerfully.

"Ow! No! Ow!"

"Bump!"

"Now?" asked Blake, with undiminished good humour. "You needn't be afraid of tiring me, you know. I could go on doing this all the afternoon."

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" groaned Mellish. "Go it, Grimes! Go it, old fellow!"

"Louder!" said Blake.

"Go it, Grimes!" shrieked Mellish.

"Go it, old fellow!"

"That will do," said Blake, with a nod. "You can keep that up. Whenever I pinch your arm you're to cheer



A lithe figure leaped up as the ball rebounded from the goal into the Grammarian net. Then there was a roar.

Grimes. I'll pinch hard, so there can't be any mistake about it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I won't!" yelled Mellish.

Bump!

"Yow!"

"Will you now?"

"Ow! Yes, if you like!"

"That's right. You'll learn manners in time."

"I'm not going to stay here!" howled Mellish. "I'm not going to watch a rotten footer match. I don't like footer."

Blake grinned.

"You may get to like it in time," he suggested. "Anyway, you're going to watch this match, and cheer Grimes every time I pinch you. I shall pinch you like that—"

"Ow!"

"Do you think you understand? Or shall I show you again?"

"I understand!" gasped the unhappy Mellish. "Ow!"

"That's right," said Blake, linking his arm quite affectionately in Mellish's. "You stand by your Uncle Blake, and he'll tell you when to cheer."

"You—you rotter—"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly. "There goes Gwimey with the ball!"

There was a ringing shout round the field.

"Go it, Grimey!"

"On the ball!"

"Hurrah!"

"Yow!" gasped Mellish, as Blake pinched his arm. "Ow! Leave off, you beast!"

"You're not cheering," said Blake.

"Ow! Hurrah!" gasped Mellish in anguish.

"Say 'Go it, Grimey, old pal!'"

"Grooh! 'Go it, Grimey, old pal!'"

stuttered Mellish.

"Louder!"

"Go it, Grimey, old pal!" screamed Mellish.

"That's right," said Blake. "My only hat! He's got a goal! Goal!"

The field roared.

"Bravo, Grimey! Goal!"

Blake let go Mellish to clap his hands, and Arthur Augustus to wave his silk hat high in the air.

Mellish did not lose his chance. He darted away and vanished round the pavilion.

Blake looked round for him the next moment, but he had gone.

And he did not come back to see the rest of the Grammarian match. Mellish had had enough.

CHAPTER 10.

A Win for St. Jim's!

"GOAL!"

"Bravo, Grimes!"

"Hurrah!"

Grimes coloured with pleasure as he walked back to the centre of the field, with the cheers of the St. Jim's fellows ringing in his ears.

Tom Merry patted him on the back.

"Good old Grimey!" he said. "You are worth your weight in best fresh butter or Indian and Ceylon tea! Bravo!"

Grimes grinned.

The sides lined up again, and when they restarted Gordon Gay & Co. kept their eyes on Grimes. They recognised him as a dangerous opponent.

Grimes was in his best form.

He had played regularly for the Rylcombe Wanderers on Saturday afternoon, and on other occasions when he could get time. And the village team played very good football.

Grimes had been the Wanderers' great man, and he had often led them to victory. And the heroes of the Grammar School found him a hard nut to crack, now that he was playing for St. Jim's.

There was only one goal kicked in the first half, and that was Grimes' goal.

When Lefevre blew the whistle for half-time, both the teams looked a little "gruelled."

"Grimey, my darling, it's a jewel ye are!" said Reilly. "Sure, it was a lucky day that Lumley-Lumley brought ye here. Gordon Gay and young Wootton are playing up most illigantly, but ye're the bboy to bate them!"

"I 'ope Master Merry is quite satisfied," said Grimes.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Master Merry is quite satisfied, Master Grimes,"

he said. "Play like that in the second half, and we'll swipe the ground with the Grammarians."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, who had strolled round to talk to the players. "Upon the whole, Tom Mewwy, I shouldn't be surprised if you beat them, in spite of your wecklessness in choosin' the team. Gwimey is a wegular coughdwoop!"

"Thank you, Master D'Arcy!" said Grimes.

"Not at all, deah boy," said the swell of St. Jim's graciously. "The whole coll wecognises that fact."

"Even Mellish seems to," grinned Monty Lowther. "I heard him cheering and calling Grimey old pal."

"Blake was pinching his arm," D'Arcy explained.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, time!" said Tom Merry.

And the eleven went on again.

The Grammarians were looking very grim indeed as they lined up for the second half. Gordon Gay and Wootton major and minor, and Frank Monk, Lane, and Carboy were all good players, but they had all their work cut out to keep their end up against Tom Merry's team. Even when they succeeded in penetrating the defence, there was always Fatty Wynn in goal, and Fatty Wynn was a marvellous goal-keeper.

Juniors of the New House often related proudly how Fatty Wynn had kept goal for the First Eleven, junior as he was. Some of the fellows said that the ball had no room to pass between him and the posts. Certainly, whenever the ball came in, it found some part of Fatty's ample person in the way, and out it came again. It was in vain that Gordon Gay tried to beat him—Fatty Wynn put "paid" to all their shots; and the bland, good-natured smile never changed on his plump face.

"Play up, you beggars!" murmured Gordon Gay, as they waited for a throw-in. "Only twenty minutes more, and they're one up!"

"That's got to be altered," said Wootton major determinedly.

"It will be altered," grinned Monty Lowther, who heard the remarks. "We're going to make it two up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay had no time to reply; there was a rush on the ball, and the play went surging towards the St. Jim's goal. Right through the defence went the Grammarian forward line, and shots rained in upon Fatty Wynn.

But out they came again every time, until Fatty Wynn got the ball clear to Herries at back, and Herries passed it to Redfern, the centre-half. Redfern trapped it, and kept it till the enemy were right upon him, and then, with a cheerful smile, booted it out to Figgins at outside-left. Then the St. Jim's forwards swept away, and Figgins passed to Kerr, and Kerr centred to Tom Merry, and he shot.

The ball hit the crossbar and rebounded into play, and as it came out, a lithe figure leaped up, the leather was met by a hard head, and shot into the goal like a pip from an orange before the Grammarian goalie knew what had happened. And then there was a roar!

"Goal!"

"Good old Grimes!"

"A header, by Jove! Good man!"

"Yaas, wathah! Huwvah!"

"Bravo!" roared Jack Blake, waving his cap frantically. "Yell, you bouncers, yell! Levison, you cad, you're not yelling!"



r; the leather was met by a hard head, and it shot
n St. Jim's. "Goal! Good old Grimes!"

"I'm not going to yell, either," said Levison, with a shrug of the shoulders. "Your mistake," said Blake; "you are!"

"Yow!" roared Levison, as Blake grasped his ear. "Leggo!"

"Yell, then!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Levison yelled in good earnest. There was a roar of laughter.

"Bump the cad for not cheewin'! Bai Jove, he's gone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo, Grimes!" yelled Lumley-Lumley. "Didn't I say that he was a coughdrop? Didn't I say he was a giddy Dixie Dean in disguise?"

"Yaas, wathah! Bravo!"

Grimes bore his blushing honours thick upon him with becoming modesty. His face was flushed with pleasure and exertion as he lined up with the St. Jim's juniors again.

"Ten minutes more," groaned Gordon Gay, "and two to make up for a giddy draw! Play up like thunder!"

The Grammarians played up hard, and by dint of desperate play, they scored at last. Fatty Wynn failed for once to save, and the leather was in the net.

But it was the only goal that rewarded the efforts of the Grammarians. And just on the point of time, St. Jim's scored another; this time from the foot of Tom Merry. Then Lefevre blew the whistle, and the match ended with St. Jim's the winners by three to one.

Gordon Gay looked a little rueful as they walked off.

"Better luck next time," said Tom Merry, tapping Gay on the shoulder.

Gordon Gay laughed.

"That's right," he said. "I say, that fellow Grimes is hot stuff. He's one of the best!"

"One of the best in every way!" said Tom Merry. "Good old Grimes!"

There was a rush of juniors, and Grimes was lifted shoulder high and carried off the field, cheered by the juniors.

"Bai Jove, you know, you've licked them, Tom Mewwy!" Arthur Augustus remarked.

D'Arcy seemed surprised.

"Yes; I told you what would happen if you didn't play," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I regard you as an ass, Lowthah! But I must remark that Gwimes has played up remarkably well. I couldn't have headed that ball into the net better myself."

"Go hon!" said Kerr.

"Weally, Kerr, if you doubt my statement—"

"I don't, old son!" chuckled Kerr. "Not a bit!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "it has been a good match, and the teams on both sides were jolly good. The St. Jim's team might have been improved a little, but no mattah. Gentlemen, it's been a good game, and now it's ovah I have the honah—"

"That you haven't!" said Lowther. "We have the honour!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Or, rather, it's honours divided!" said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

"I have the honah—"

"How do you make that out, Gussy?"

"I have the honah to invite all the gentlemen pwsent to tea in Study No. 6!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Ah, now you're talking!" said Lowther.

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"I weceived a fivah fwom my governah this mornin'," said D'Arcy, with a beaming smile. "I told him we had a wippin' team comin' ovah to play us—"

"Hear, hear!" said Gordon Gay.

"And he wose to the occasion like a woad sport!" said D'Arcy. "Gentlemen, Twottah has been pwepawin' the tea while you've been kickin' goals, and it's all weady!"

"Come to my arms!" sobbed Redfern, hugging the swell of St. Jim's affectionately.

"Weally, Weddy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus jerked himself away from the demonstrative Redfern. And the footballers, after they had rubbed down and changed, followed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy quite cheerfully up to Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 11.

The Fool at the Feast!

STUDY NO. 6 in the Fourth Form passage in the School House was a large room for a junior study.

But the largest study at St. Jim's, senior or junior, would hardly have accommodated the number of guests Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had brought in.

There were eleven Grammarian players, and five or six other Grammarians who had come over with them. There were the St. Jim's eleven and their friends. They crowded in the passage, and as they crammed into the study after D'Arcy, it was only too evident that the dimensions of that famous apartment would not stand the strain.

"Gentlemen!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Hear, hear!"

"Owin' to lack of accommodation, there isn't suffish space in the study. Would it be askin' too much to allow me to entahtain you in the passage?"

"That's all right," said Fatty Wynn. "So long as the grub's good, and there's plenty of it, it doesn't matter much where we have it."

"Hear, hear!" said the juniors.

"Then if you don't mind waidin' chairs out of the studies, deah boys—"

"Right-ho!"

All the juniors were willing to oblige, Grammarians as well as Saints. They dragged chairs and stools out of the studies and planted them in the passage, and the Fourth Form passage was crowded from end to end.

Trotter, the page, was in Study No. 6 in charge of the commissariat department. Five pounds goes a long way in purchasing "tuck," and Arthur Augustus had nobly "blued" the whole fiver to entertain the Grammarians. He had preserved only half-a-crown as a tip for Trotter.

"By George!" said Fatty Wynn, as he surveyed the piles on the study table. "Gussy, old man, you're a prince!"

"Good old Gussy!"

"I twust you fellows will forgive the accommodation," said the swell of St. Jim's modestly. "I think the grub's all wight."

"Right as rain!" said Gordon Gay. "May your shadow never grow less, and may your feet never grow more!"

"Weally, Gay—"

"This way, Trotter!" roared Monty Lowther. "Hand out the pies!"

"Yes, Master Lowther!"

"Bring round those giddy tarts, Trotter!"

"Yes, Master Kangaroo—I mean,

Noble!"

"I'll help myself, I think," said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully. "I should keep Trotter on the go all the time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowded passage rang with merry voices and laughter. Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, came upstairs to see what the noise was about. He stared at the sight of the juniors feeding in the passage.

"What's this—a beanfeast?" he demanded.

"No," said Monty Lowther, with a gleam in his eye which told that a particular wretched pun was coming; "it's a being feast."

"What?"

"When it's over, it will be a bean feast," Lowther explained. "At present it is correct to use the present participle."

"You young ass!" said Kildare, laughing. "Blessed if I've ever seen a celebration like this before. What's it all about?"

"Celebrating the fact that Gussy had a fiver this morning," explained Blake. "If he kept it, he would waste it, so we—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come and have a bite, Kildare, old son!" said a dozen voices. "The Sixth are admitted free of charge!"

"Yaas, wathah! I shall be honahed, Kildare, deah boy, if you will join us!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Kildare smiled.

"Thank you," he said. "I appreciate the honour, but I have Darrell to tea in my study. Don't make too much row."

"Wight-ho!"

And Kildare departed, laughing.

"Now Knox would have made trouble," said Blake. "Kildare's a brick!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Trotter was very busy. The juniors all had good appetites, especially Fatty Wynn. Fatty Wynn deserved feeding after his labours in keeping goal, and, as he explained pathetically, he hasn't tasted a bite for an hour and a half. He was making up for it now. The scene of joyous hilarity was at its height when Levison came upstairs and tried to make his way along the passage. Chairs had been raided from all quarters, and juniors were sitting on them in a double row, and among the chairs fellows were sitting on cushions or on the floor, or leaning against the walls, or sitting on other fellow's knees.

It would have been a matter of difficulty to clear a way along the passage, and no one felt inclined to incommode himself for Levison.

"Let me get by, confound you!" growled Levison, scowling.

"Weally, Levison—"

"Get out!"

"Go round!" said Monty Lowther.

Levison stared at the humorist of the Shell angrily.

"How can I go round?" he demanded.

"Walk!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Walk round the House, and get in at the box-room window—the same window you use when you're breaking bounds to go out for smokes," said Lowther innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, I want to come by!" shouted Levison. "I'm going into my study for tea."

"Stay and have tea with us, Levison, deah boy," said D'Arcy, with a noble effort.

(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!—I'm starting my Notebook with a few words about next week's magnificent long St. Jim's yarn. I can assure you all that it is a real treat in store, and I am convinced it is one of the finest stories famous Martin Clifford has ever written.

"THE PLOT AGAINST TOM MERRY!"

That's the title! And the plotter is Bingham, the rascally prefect of the Sixth Form. Bingham, who hates Tom Merry, is determined to make the popular leader of the Shell suffer, and a bitter feud arises between the Sixth Former and the junior. So the unscrupulous prefect sets his cunning wits to work—and how well he succeeds becomes only too apparent when Tom Merry finds himself accused of associating and betting with an ex-pugilist who has a particularly bad reputation in the district.

Tom stoutly protests his innocence—but the evidence is overwhelmingly against him. Dr. Holmes pronounces his verdict—and Tom Merry is expelled from St. Jim's! Drama, fun, and thrills have been cleverly combined by the author to make this a really wonderful yarn—so don't miss it, chums! Next week's GEM will also contain another super-thrilling instalment of Edwy Searles Brooks' exciting story—

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

Nelson Lee and Nipper, not forgetting Handforth and the other chums of St. Frank's, continue their desperate fight against the sinister Dr. Zangari. Watch out for big thrills and big surprises in next week's gripping chapters. Take a tip from me and order your copy of the GEM in advance.

I should like to take this opportunity of reminding you once again that the 1936 issues of those ever popular annuals, "The Greyfriars Holiday Annual" and "The Popular Book of Boys' Stories," are now on sale. The former, price 5s., is bigger and better than ever, and contains ripping long complete stories featuring Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, and also many other yarns introducing the cheery chums of Greyfriars, Rookwood, and St. Frank's schools. Thrilling stories of sport and adventure, including motor-racing, flying, the Wild West, and the Great War, etc., make "The Popular Book of Boys' Stories" the finest on the market at the price—which is 2s. 6d. You'll be interested to know that both these fine books can be obtained by paying to your newsagent a small weekly sum. Ask him for details of his book club.

CAUGHT IN MIDAIR!

A Russian airman has just had an

altogether miraculous escape from death. As far as I can trace, he is the only man who has ever escaped with his life when a parachute failed to open.

He had jumped out of a plane flying over a Moscow aerodrome to make a practice descent, and when he pulled the ripcord of his chute to open it nothing happened! It certainly looked as if he was doomed, but by incredible good fortune he fell plumb on to the parachute of another man who had jumped just before. As he rolled off this parachute its owner managed to grab him round the waist, and succeeded in hanging on to him until they reached the ground. How's that for luck?

Whether he becomes a member of the famous Caterpillar Club is a bit doubtful, for to be a "caterpillar" you must have saved your life by parachute, and perhaps saving it by someone else's parachute doesn't count!

THE CATERPILLAR CLUB!

Actually the Caterpillar Club must be the strangest in existence. It has no clubhouse, its members pay no subscriptions, and they never meet. They do not even know one another.

Everyone who saves his life by jumping out of a crashing plane automatically becomes a member and is presented with a tiny brooch in the form of a gold caterpillar by the Irving Company—the firm who manufacture most of the parachutes in use in the world. If you save your life twice you get a bar to add to your brooch. Colonel Charles Lindbergh—Lindy to you—is the senior member of the Caterpillar Club. He has jumped for his life on no fewer than four occasions.

Incidentally a new parachute costs £70—and it takes you hours to learn to pack one properly after it has been opened!

OVER EVEREST— WITHOUT PARACHUTES!

Strangely enough, the airmen who achieved one of the most dangerous trips ever made—that of flying over Mount Everest—took no parachutes with them. The reason? The air is so "thin" at the height they had to fly that even if they had jumped their parachutes would not have opened!

A BLOCK OF GOLDFISH!

Coming back to earth, do you know how goldfish are brought to this country? Most of them come from Japan, and, as you can realise, shipping them in large tanks of water would be difficult as well as inconvenient. So they just freeze the fish into big blocks of ice and bring them to this country in cold storage. When the blocks are unloaded they are thawed out, and the fish swim away, apparently none the worse.

THE WORLD'S ODDEST MEAL!

The well-known capacity of ice to preserve meat recently gave a Siberian tribe a most amazing meal. These people, living inside the Arctic circle, discovered a strange beast buried in the ice of an enormous glacier. They dug it out, and, finding the meat good, promptly ate it. Scientists who were shown the bones later were amazed to find that the beast was a mammoth—a huge creature, like an elephant only about twice the size, which has been extinct for thousands of years. The Siberians had eaten meat older than Julius Caesar—and thoroughly enjoyed it!

AN AMAZING FIND!

Even stranger things may have happened in Siberia without the rest of the world knowing, for Siberia is thousands of miles from end to end and contains only a handful of people. There are areas as big as England entirely uninhabited. Only a few years ago some explorers, making their way through it, came across an enormous pit over two miles across which had apparently been recently dug. On investigating they discovered that the pit had been made by a meteorite of unguessed-at size striking the earth.

If that meteorite had landed on London it would have wiped the whole city out in half a second. But, as it happened, it landed in Siberia, and no one knew anything about it!

WHAT IS A METEORITE!

Meteorites are actually lumps of iron and other metals which have been drawn into the earth's atmosphere from outer space. Some of them have been found to contain gold and silver.

While travelling in space they are invisible, but as soon as they reach our atmosphere the resistance of the air makes them white-hot, and you can then see them—especially at this time of year—as shooting stars. If you have seen a shooting star you'll have realised that it was moving pretty fast. Actually meteorites do between twelve and fourteen miles a second, which works out at about 50,000 miles an hour! They don't strike the earth at that speed, however, for the resistance of the air, besides making them hot, slows them down.

One of the most famous meteorites ever to fall came down in Turkey in ancient times. The superstitious inhabitants decided that it must be a god, and started worshipping it.

After a time, however, a Roman oracle heard about it, and announced that if the Romans possessed the stone they would be prosperous for as long as it remained in their city. As a result an expedition set out, captured the meteorite, and brought it back to Rome, where it was set up with due ceremony.

Strangely enough the oracle's words came true. For some time later the meteorite mysteriously disappeared—and the power of Rome started to wane from that moment!

FALLING OFF THE EARTH!

Quite apart from their belief in oracles, the people who lived in those days had some pretty weird ideas. They used to think that the earth was flat, and their navigators never ventured far west of Gibraltar for fear of falling off the edge! Another of their ideas was that the sky was solid, and that, if you walked far enough, you would come to the place where it met the earth!

THE EDITOR.

But his effort was not appreciated by Levison.

"I don't want tea with you, D'Arcy."

"Weally, you wude beast—"

"I'm going into my study. Then I shall want to come and fill the kettle, and then I shall want some coals," said Levison deliberately. "You've no right to block up the passage like this. If room isn't made I shall appeal to a prefect."

The juniors glared at Levison. It was exactly like the cad of the Fourth to come upon a merry party, and refuse to join it, and to make himself as unpleasant as possible.

"My 'at!" said Grimes. "You might give less trouble, Master Levison."

"I'm not talking to grocer cads!" said Levison loftily. "Are you going to let me pass, you fellows, or must I ask Knox to get the passage cleared?"

"Oh, come on!" said Monty Lowther, moving his legs out of the way. "Let him pass, you chaps. Make way for the great and noble Levison, the One and Only."

Monty Lowther winked with the eye that was turned away from Levison. The juniors understood, and there was a chuckle.

Unfortunately for Levison, he did not understand what that chuckle portended. He was satisfied with having disturbed the party, and he pushed his way through the juniors roughly as they cleared a path for him, deliberately knocking over several plates and glasses in his progress. He reached half-way to Study No. 9, and then the juniors closed up before him tighter than ever, and further progress was barred.

"Let me pass!" shouted Levison.

"Not this evening," murmured Blake gently. "Some other evening."

"You rotters—"

"No passage," said Manners. "Anybody who tries to pass me will get this jam tart in his neck. That's a warning."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison looked round him. But the crowd had closed up behind him now, and there was no path open for retreat. He stood jammed in the midst of the juniors whom he had exasperated by his insolence, and their looks made him feel a little alarmed.

The crowd in the Fourth Form passage was growing thicker and thicker. The news of the great feed had spread, and half the Lower School seemed to have come to join in it.

"Let me get out!" growled Levison. "I—I don't especially want to go to my study."

"Then you've given us all this trouble for nothing," said Monty Lowther.

"Well, I—I—"

"Can't have the trouble for nothing," said Lowther, with a shake of the head. "Gentlemen, it used to be a custom to have a fool at the feast, to make the guests merry. I humbly offer the suggestion of using Levison as the fool, according to old-fashioned custom. He will not have to make up for the part."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Begin by standing on one leg, Levison," said Lowther. "Stand on one leg, and keep the other in the air, till I tell you to stop!"

"I won't!" roared Levison.

"Gay, you're nearest to the cad," said Lowther. "Will you punch him for me?"

"With pleasure," said Gordon Gay politely.

Biff!

"Oh!" roared Levison, as Gay jabbed a jam tart upon his nose. "Oh—aw!"

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You beast! Yow! I'll smash you—yowp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison plunged blindly at the Australian junior. Somebody put out a boot, and Levison stumbled over it and fell. He fell upon his knees—there was no room to fall full length in the crowded passage. And as he fell, Gordon Gay, Manners, Digby, and Figgins grasped him together and jammed tarts upon his face and down his neck, and Herries poured lemonade over him, and Reilly squeezed jelly into his ears.

When Levison was released and scrambled up, he was blinded with jam and jelly, and spluttering wildly.

The passage rooked with laughter.

"Groogh!" gasped Levison.

"Groogh! Oh! Groogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, will you stand on one leg, or will you have some more?" asked Monty Lowther politely.

"Ow! No, I won't! Groogh!"

"Collar him and give him—"

"Hold on!" said Levison. "I—I—I'll do it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Levison stood upon one leg, and held the other in the air, at the same time clawing away at the jam on his face.

His aspect was so utterly ridiculous that the juniors simply shrieked with merriment. Even Fatty Wynn was observed to pause in his operations upon a steak-pie for some seconds.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as funnay! Ha, ha, ha!"

Everybody seemed to regard it as funny, with one exception—that of Levison. Levison stood upon one leg, hopping to keep himself from falling, while the feast proceeded with great enjoyment and plenty of noise.

CHAPTER 12.

Prefects Called In!

THE best of things must come to an end at last, and so did the feast in the Fourth Form passage.

It was a great feed, long remembered by both St. Jim's fellows and Grammarians. And when it was over the Grammarians bade farewell to their hosts, and Tom Merry & Co. escorted them as far as the gates.

Levison was released from his unpleasant ordeal at the end of the feast, and he proceeded to a bath-room to wash off the jam and the lemonade and the jelly. He came out of the bath-room at last, looking in an angry state of mind, and his temper was not improved by the yells of laughter that greeted him when he appeared in public.

"Bai Jove! It was a funnay expewience, deah boy!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "You looked an awful ass, you know!"

Levison gritted his teeth.

"Hang you!" he muttered. "Hang you! I'll make you sorry for it—and your grocer friend, too! You'll see!"

"Found that pound note?" asked Blake, with a grin.

"No; I'm going to complain to the prefects about it."

"Better send for the police," Blake suggested gravely.

Levison sniffed and strode away. He went to Knox's study. Knox of the Sixth was a prefect, and the most unpopular one in the School House.

He was on good terms enough with Levison. They were birds of a feather.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The wottah means business, you know."

Blake chuckled.

"Looks like it."

"Bettah tell Gwimey," suggested D'Arcy.

"Yes, rather! Get him ready for the giddy ordeal."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Fourth made their way to Study No. 9.

Lumley-Lumley and Grimes were there.

Lumley-Lumley was taking Grimes upon a personally conducted tour through the intricacies of the Latin grammar, and Grimes was suppressing a strong desire to go to sleep during the process.

He was keeping awake with heroic efforts, however, and doubtless imbibing considerable knowledge from his chum.

Blake and D'Arcy grinned as they looked into the study.

Grimes did not show up to so much advantage there as on the footer field.

"Now, take 'sum,'" said Lumley-Lumley.

Grimes looked round the table.

"Some what, Master Lumley?" he said.

Lumley-Lumley chuckled.

"The verb sum, you ass, Grimey! Sum, fui, futurus, esse. Now—"

"Oh!" said Grimes. "Is that a verb?"

"Yes."

"Do I decline it?"

"No, you ass; you conjugate it," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Grimey would rather decline it, wouldn't you, Grimey? You'd like to decline the whole giddy grammar?"

"Yes, Master Blake," said Grimes, with a sigh. "This 'ere is 'arder than weighing up butter and takin' shutters down."

"It comes easier in time," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Yes, I s'pose it does," said Grimey.

"I'll take your word for it, anyway, Master Lumley."

"Now, what does 'sum' mean?"

"Blessed if I know, Master Lumley. I ain't lookin' at the book."

"I am," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Yes; but I ain't," said Grimes.

"What?"

"I ain't looking at the book, if you are, Master Lumley."

"But I'm not, either," said Lumley-Lumley.

"You said you am—I mean, you are!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I was giving you the construe, you ass! 'Sum'—I am!"

"Oh!" said Grimes.

"Es—thou art."

"Es—I art," agreed Grimes.

"Es—thou art, fathead!"

"Yes, Master Lumley. 'Es'—thou art, fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"You'd better not put it that way to Lathom, Grimey. Look here, you chaps, it's time to chuck sum, es, est. Something more important on."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Lumley-Lumley yawned.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

"Levison!"

"I guess Levison can go and eat coke!"

"He's calling in the prefects to look for his missing pound."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! And here he comes!" said D'Arcy.

There were footsteps in the passage, and they stopped at the door of Study No. 9. Levison looked in unpleasantly, and Knox and Kildare followed him into the study.

Knox was not looking displeased by any means. Knox was very much "up against" Jerrold Lumley-Lumley and his friends, Tom Merry & Co. And Knox was as much down on the grocer boy as Levison was.

But Kildare was looking annoyed and concerned. Kildare had had to enter into the matter, as head prefect of the House, and he did not like the task.

Grimes looked rather nervously at the prefect. Lumley-Lumley nodded to them with perfect coolness.

"Come in, kids!" he said cheerily.

"None of your cheek, you young rascal!" growled Knox.

Kildare smiled.

"Levison has lodged a serious complaint with the prefects," he said. "He declares that he has lost a pound, and, as it hasn't been found, he believes it is being kept back by somebody."

"Levison is a faithful fabricator, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Grimes has got my pound!" said Levison. "It was in my pocket when I was struggling with him here the day before yesterday. I missed it immediately afterwards. He got up that row with me to pick my pocket."

"You got up the row with him," said Blake. "I know all about it."

"I suppose there's no truth in this, Grimes?" asked Kildare.

"No, Master Kildare."

"I demand a search!" said Levison. "That pound note happened to be marked, and there can be no doubt about it if it's found. I demand a search of Grimes' pockets!"

"Rotter!" said three voices in unison from the passage. The Terrible Three had arrived upon the scene.

Levison scowled at Tom Merry & Co.

"You mind your own business!" he snarled. "This is nothing to do with you. Grimes has got my pound note, and he's going to hand it over. I accuse him of stealing it."

Kildare compressed his lips.

"You have no evidence to make an accusation like that, Levison," he said.

"I think the evidence is clear enough," said Levison. "Grimes saw me put the pound note in my pocket, and he had a row with me a few minutes afterwards. We struggled, and he pitched me out of the study. Then I missed the pound note from my pocket. I came back to the study and searched for it, and there wasn't a sign of it. Where was it gone, if Grimes hadn't taken it? I hadn't been out of the House. I hadn't

even been downstairs. I searched in the passage for it, but I didn't find it."

"Looks to me like a good case," said Knox. "Grimes ought to be searched. If the note's marked and it's found on him that will settle the matter."

"It won't be found on him," growled Kildare. "I believe the kid's as honest as the daylight!"

"Thank you, Master Kildare!" said Grimes gratefully.

"Hold on!" exclaimed a voice in the passage. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had come into the study, and now Kangaroo of the Shell appeared in the doorway, dragging a plump youth, bristling with buttons, by the arm.

It was Trotter, the substitute of the absent Toby, and he was looking very surprised and flustered.

Kildare frowned.

"What does this mean, Noble? What have you brought that kid here for?"

The Cornstalk grinned.

"Evidence!" he said tersely.

"What evidence?"

"On this case—the case of Levison's pound note!"

"Oh!" said Kildare. "Does Trotter know anything about it?"

"He knows something about Levison," chuckled Kangaroo, "and that's just as much to the point."

Levison turned pale.

CHAPTER 13.

The Missing Pound Note!

TROTTER jerked himself away from Kangaroo and gasped for breath.

As soon as he had heard what was on in Lumley-Lumley's study, Kangaroo had rushed the page up to the Fourth Form passage, much to Trotter's astonishment.

"Oh, Master Noble!" gasped Trotter.

"Do you know anything about this, Trotter?" asked Kildare.

"No, Master Kildare."

"Hold on!" said Kangaroo. "Just you let me question him, and we'll have it all out. He knows more than he knows—I mean, more than he knows he knows—"

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy.

"Now, Trotty," said the Cornstalk, wagging his forefinger at the page, "you were page at Greyfriars before you came here to have a busman's holiday?"

"Yes, Master Noble."

"You saw a lot of Levison when he was a Greyfriars boy?"

"Yes, Master Noble!"

"He was sacked from Greyfriars, wasn't he?"

"Well, he 'ad to leave," said Trotter. Levison broke out passionately:

"What's all this got to do with my pound note being lost? This is nothing

to do with the matter, Kildare. I protest—"

"I can't see that this bears on the case at all, Noble," said the captain of St. Jim's.

"You will soon," said Kangaroo. "Let me go on. Levison has started this thing, and if he hears unpleasant details about himself, it can't be helped. Fellows shouldn't get sacked from schools if they don't like to hear about it afterwards. Now, Trotter, isn't it a fact that Levison used to play rotten tricks on the fellows at Greyfriars, and made himself unpopular?"

"Yes, Master Noble."

"It's a lie!" said Levison.

"It's true," said Kangaroo. "I've had it from the Greyfriars chaps themselves, who came over here for the footer. I'm only calling Trotter in as a witness—a giddy eye-witness. Now, Trotty, among Levison's other wonderful accomplishments, such as telling lies and listening at keyholes, isn't he a clever conjurer?"

"Yes, Master Noble."

"Wasn't there a row once among the Remove fellows at Greyfriars through Levison making something appear in somebody's pockets?"

"Yes, there was."

"Oh!" exclaimed Kildare.

"There you are!" said Kangaroo triumphantly. "Levison has done conjuring tricks since he's been here, as we all know. But what I wanted to get at was that he got into trouble at the old school for making something turn up in a fellow's pocket without the fellow's knowledge. And if he did that rotten trick at Greyfriars, he could do it at St. Jim's. If that marked note was in Grimes' pocket at all, Levison put it there by sleight-of-hand!"

"By Jove!" said Kildare.

"It's a lie!" screamed Levison.

"Which I believe it's true," said Trotter. "It would be just like Master Levison. I know he's done the same kind of thing at Greyfriars, and that I can swear to."

"It's a lie!"

"It's not a lie," said Kildare roughly. "It's the truth, Levison. Thank you. Trotter, you can go. I'm much obliged to you. Levison, this lets in some light on the matter. Your spite against Grimes is well known, and as a fellow who knows you well has declared that you are a conjurer, and you can pass things into people's pockets without their knowing it, and that you've been known to play such dodges—well, even if your marked note is found on Grimes I shall not believe that he stole it. You are as full of tricks as a monkey, and this looks to me like another of them."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison gritted his teeth. Ha was

(Continued on the next page.)

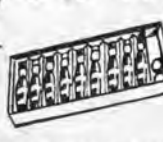
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pale with rage. Trotter's unexpected evidence had indeed, as Kildare said, let in a flood of light on the subject.

"Do you want this to go any further, Levison?" asked the captain of St. Jim's.

Levison panted. If he dropped the matter there, he would be pointed out as a slanderer, he knew that.

"Yes," he said, between his teeth. "Grimes has got my pound note; I want it back."

"You want Grimes searched?"

"Yes."

"Quite right," said Knox. "Let's search him."

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry.

"Mind your own business," said Knox, with a scowl. "In fact, you juniors had better clear out of the study altogether."

"I've got something to say," said Tom Merry.

"Hold your tongue!" snapped Knox.

"Let him speak, Knox, if he's got anything to say about the matter," said Kildare quietly.

"I've got this to say," said Tom Merry. "Levison says he's lost a pound note. But he's got to prove that he's lost it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I suggest, therefore, that Levison is searched first," said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

"What rot!" exclaimed Levison angrily.

"If the marked note turns up in Levison's own pocket, we can consider the matter closed," said Tom Merry imperturbably.

Kildare looked at him sharply.

"This is getting extraordinary!" he exclaimed. "Does that mean that you have some reason to suppose that Levison still has the pound note about him?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"What utter rot!" Levison exclaimed.

"Turn out your pockets, then," said Tom Merry.

"Rot!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, grinning. "Turn out your beastly pockets, you uttah wottah!"

"Turn out your pockets!" shouted Monty Lowther.

Kildare nodded.

"Turn them out," he said.

"But look here—"

"Do as I tell you!" said the captain of St. Jim's crisply.

Levison, with a sullen face, turned out his pockets. He could not understand the turn affairs were taking. Why Tom Merry should want him to turn out his pockets he could not understand; but, like a fox or a wolf, whatever he could not understand he was afraid of. He turned out his pockets slowly and unwillingly.

"Is that all?" asked Kildare, as he ceased.

"That's all," said Levison.

"There's a hip-pocket in your bags," said Monty Lowther.

"I never keep anything in it," said Levison.

"Turn it out, all the same!"

"Oh, rot!"

"Do as you're told, Levison," said Kildare.

"Oh, all right!" growled the cad of the Fourth.

He groped in the unused pocket, and an expression of blank astonishment came over his face. He tried to compose his features the next moment, but it was too late.

"You have something there?" asked Kildare.

"Y-e-es."

"Hand it out at once."

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Levison withdrew his hand. He held a pound note in it.

"Hand it to me," said Kildare.

The captain of St. Jim's took the note, and looked at the back of it.

"This note has a number fifteen in blue pencil written on it," said Kildare.

He held it out to Levison to see.

"Is this the note, Levison?"

And Levison faltered:

"Yes."

CHAPTER 14.

The Quality of Mercy!

THERE was silence in the study for a full minute.

Kildare stood with the note in his hand, and storm clouds gathering on his brow.

The juniors were grinning, and Grimes had to suppress a chuckle.

Knox looked angry and annoyed. He had hoped that the matter would turn out to the disgrace of Grimes, and he had been disappointed.

His anger turned against Levison now.

As for Levison, he seemed to be dumbfounded. He knew that the marked note had been in Grimes' pocket—for the best of reasons—he had put it there. To one so skilled in sleight-of-hand as Ernest Levison, that had been quite easy. How the note had come back from Grimes' pocket to his own was a marvellous mystery. Some amazing chance had interposed, evidently, to turn his conjuring trick back on himself.

Levison could only stand blinking at the note as if he could scarcely believe his eyes.

"Well?" asked Kildare, at length.

"This is the note, Levison?"

"Ye-e-es, I suppose so!" stammered Levison.

"I suppose you did not happen to have two marked notes?" the captain of St. Jim's asked sarcastically.

Even Levison could not venture to make such an assertion. He shook his head.

"Then how comes it that you have the note in your pocket all the time, while you are accusing Grimes of stealing it?" demanded Kildare sternly.

"I—I—I don't understand!" gasped Levison.

"You have been lying," said Kildare contemptuously.

"Give the young cad a licking for bringing us up here and making asses of us," growled Knox angrily.

"I—I didn't know the pound was there," stammered Levison.

"You had forgotten you had it?"

"I—I never used that pocket. I don't know how it got there."

"And you accuse Grimes of stealing it as soon as you miss it, without taking the trouble to go through all your pockets?" said Kildare.

"I—I—I—"

"You have slandered Grimes," said Kildare, "and you will have to learn that accusations of theft can't be brought so lightly as this against a fellow. You have accused Grimes of stealing a pound note that was in your pocket all the time. I shall give you the biggest licking you have had since you've been here! Come to my study!"

"I—I—I—I—"

"Follow me!" thundered Kildare.

"But I—I—I say!" panted Levison.

Kildare's strong grip dropped upon his shoulder.

The cad of the Fourth writhed in the grasp of the St. Jim's captain. His face was deadly white now. The result of his plotting against Grimes was a

licking for himself; and the expression of Kildare's face showed that it would be well laid on.

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry, with a scornful look at the shivering cad of the Fourth. "There's a little bit more to tell you, Kildare, now that the cad has been shown up."

Kildare paused.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The other day we were stony in my study, and Grimes lent us half a quid."

"Ten shillings, dear boy," murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Shut up, you ass!" growled Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Grimes lent us ten shillings," said Tom Merry. "At the same time he found a pound note in his pocket, and he was surprised to find it there. He told us all that it wasn't his, and we all supposed that it had been slipped into his pocket for a joke. It was a marked note. Figgins & Co. raided our grub, so we called on Grimey for the pound note, intending to repay it to whomsoever it belonged to on Saturday, when we should have some cash. We had supposed it was a practical joke, so far, though we couldn't see any sense in it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then yesterday Levison complained of losing his pound note, and hinted that Grimes had taken it. Then we knew it was a scheme of his. He had slipped it into Grimes' pocket, and he had waited to give him a chance of spending it. Like the cad he is, he fancied that Grimes would be glad enough to be a pound richer, and wouldn't say anything about it. Grimes hadn't noticed it was marked, but I did. If he spent it, or kept it about him, it could be traced by the mark, and Levison didn't suspect that the moment Grimes found it in his pocket he showed it to all the fellows who were with him, and said it wasn't his."

"Oh!" murmured Levison.

"As soon as we knew what Levison was getting at we played this little jape on him," said Tom Merry. "I got the quid back from Mrs. Taggles, and Monty Lowther shoved it in the Fourth Form dorm where Blake could find it. Blake put it into Levison's hip pocket while the rotter was asleep, so that he had his pound note back without knowing it."

"Oh!" murmured Levison again.

Jack Blake grinned.

"I couldn't have done it while Levison was awake," he explained. "I'm not a giddy conjurer."

"Then we let Levison rip," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "As he wanted to call the prefects in and make a false accusation against Grimes, we thought we'd let him call 'em in, and show himself up as a slanderer and a trickster."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Levison's been too clever by half, as usual," said Jack Blake. "He's always laying some little scheme, and always getting it mucked up by being too jolly clever. We've given him rope enough, and he's hanged himself."

"It's all lies!" wailed Levison.

"They—they knew Grimes had stolen it, and so they put it back to get him out of trouble."

Kildare knitted his brows.

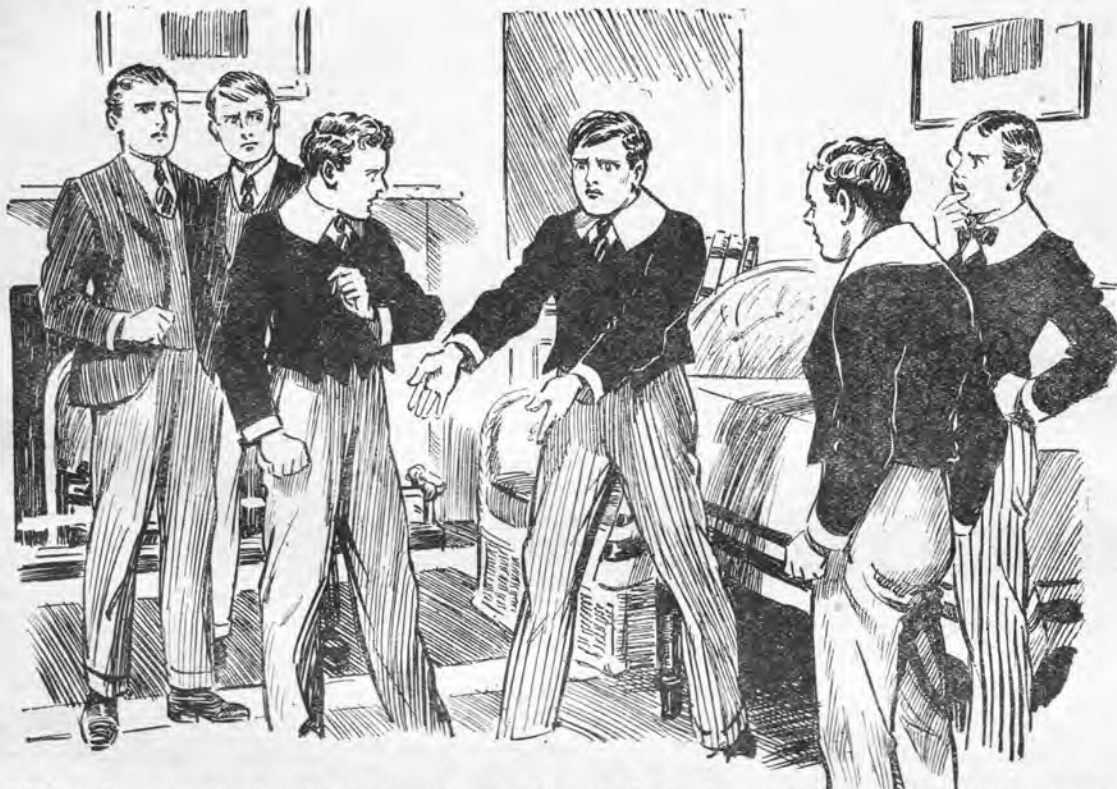
"You accuse all these fellows of being in league with a thief?" he asked.

"Ye-es."

"Bai Jove!"

"You say Grimes showed you the pound note, and said it wasn't his?" said Kildare to Tom Merry. "Plenty of witnesses?"

"Nearly a dozen. All these fellows, and some others."



"Grimes," exclaimed Levison thickly, "speak a word for me! Don't get me sacked from the school!" "I ain't wantin' anythin' of the sort," said Grimes, pitying the wretched junior. "I don't bear malice."

"That was soon after his tussle with Levison?"
"Yes."

"That settles it," said Kildare. "You shouldn't have played that trick with the pound note. You should have come and told me about it. But I can understand you wanting to take a rise out of that rotten cad Levison. It seems, then, that Levison was not making a mistake in supposing that he had lost the pound note, but he deliberately planted it on Grimes, and then complained of losing it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That makes it blacker than before. If the Head knew about this the rotter would be expelled from the school."

Levison gasped.

"I—I—I say, do-don't tell the Head!" he groaned. "I—I don't mind being licked, Kildare, but don't tell the Head. I—I—I daren't go home!"

Kildare gave him a scornful look.

"You should have thought of that before you played this rotten game!" he said.

"I—I—I— Don't tell the Head!" wailed Levison. "I—I won't do it again. And—and it was really only a joke. I—I should have owned up, you know. I—I was really only playing a conjuring trick on Grimes, and I was going to own up afterwards, and we should all have had a good laugh over it."

"Do you expect me to believe that?"

"Well, I—I—"

"Bai Jove, that chap gets a biggah liah evvery day," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in astonishment. "I wegard it as amazin'. I should not have imagined that any chap could roll out whoppahs like that."

Kildare fixed his eyes upon the trembling cad of the Fourth.

"I shall leave it to Grimes to say!"

he exclaimed. "I shall take you to my study, and give you the hiding of your life, or else I shall report the whole matter to the Head. Grimes has a right to ask that it shall be reported, as he was your victim."

"My 'at!" said Grimes.

Levison fixed a haggard look upon the fellow he had always designated as a cad and an outsider. Time's revenges are curious enough, and it had come about that Levison's fate depended upon the boy he had vilified and injured, and attempted to disgrace.

It was an opportunity for Grimes to pay off all old scores with interest; for if the matter had been reported to the Head there was no doubt that Levison would have been turned out of St. Jim's.

He had risked that punishment before by his rascality, and it would have fallen upon him this time without hope.

It all depended upon a word from Grimes, and the fellows in the study all looked anxiously at the new junior.

Rascal as Levison was, the juniors did not want to see him expelled. A good licking he undoubtedly deserved, but they did not want to be too hard on him, and they were anxious to hear what Grimes would say.

If ever any fellow had a right to be vindictive, if ever any fellow could justly say, with the prophet of old, "I do well to be angry," it was Grimes of the Fourth.

But Tom Merry & Co. need not have had any doubts in the matter. There was no hesitation about Grimes. There was no bitterness in his looks. Pity for the wretched junior who had schemed and failed could be read in Grimes' honest face; pity mingled with

contempt, but nothing like vindictiveness.

"Grimes," exclaimed Levison thickly, "speak a word for me! Don't get me sacked from the school! Don't!"

"I ain't wantin' anythin' of the sort," said Grimes. "I don't want nothin' to be said about the matter. I don't bear malice, Master Levison. I only 'ope that you won't tell lies about me any more. I 'ope Master Kildare won't say a word about it. That's all I've got to say."

"You hear that, Levison?" said Kildare sternly. "If you're not kicked out of the school, you owe it to Grimes. Follow me!"

Levison followed the captain of St. Jim's without another word.

In Kildare's study he had a most tremendous licking, and his howls could be heard far and wide; but the matter ended there, and for some time afterwards Ernest Levison was in a very subdued state.

Whether it was due to repentance or the fear of further trouble, cannot be said, but certainly he was careful to give no further offence to Grimes.

CHAPTER 15.

Grimes Goes!

DURING the next two or three days—Jerrold Lumley-Lumley often regarded his chum with a very thoughtful look.

Grimes was getting on in the Fourth. The first mysteries of the Latin tongue had been penetrated, and he was beginning to take part in the regular work of the Form-room.

At football he was as good as anybody in the Fourth, and he was growing in popularity.

The persecution by Mellish and Levison was over. Levison carefully avoided giving trouble, and never allowed even a sneer to escape him, and Mellish followed the example of his leader.

It seemed as if the thorns had been gathered from the path of the new junior, and that all was plain sailing before him.

But Lumley-Lumley had his doubts. The conviction had been growing in his mind that in bringing Grimes to St. Jim's he had done an unwise thing.

Lumley-Lumley was a practical fellow himself. If anybody had offered him a chance of any kind, he would have accepted it if useful, and refused it otherwise.

But he realised that Grimes was a different sort of fellow. That a fellow could take up a mode of life he did not care for rather than appear ungrateful to a chum who was trying to benefit him, seemed incredible to Lumley-Lumley at first, but he gradually came to realise that it was the case. That a fellow could prefer the prospects of a grocer's lad to those of a Public school chap amazed Lumley-Lumley. Life was much the same in all stations of society. Different kinds of pleasures and different kinds of trouble doubtless, but in most ways much the same.

And Lumley-Lumley suspected that Grimes preferred his own line in life, and that he was far from regarding his translation to St. Jim's as an improvement in his lot.

But Grimes did not say so, did not give him the least hint, and if Lumley-Lumley had not been a very keen fellow he would not have suspected it.

Lumley-Lumley, in his direct way, determined to have the matter out; and a few days after the scene in his study, he tackled Grimes upon the subject.

Grimes was in the study, wrestling with mensa, a table, and mensae, of a table, and mensae, to a table, when Lumley-Lumley came in.

Grimes looked up from his grammar cheerfully, but the keen eyes of the Outsider noticed that his cheerfulness was forced.

"Getting on, Grimey?" he asked.

Grimes nodded.

"Yes, I think so, Master Lumley," he said. "This 'ere ain't so 'ard when you begin to get used to it."

"Do you like it yet?"

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"Oh, I like it all right, Master Lumley. Anyway, it's a very useful thing to learn. Not much use in business, of course."

Lumley-Lumley grinned.

"No; you're not likely to have many Latin correspondents when you've got a big grocery business going," he remarked.

"No, Master Lumley. Still, I s'pose it's a useful thing to know. Anyway, I'm pegging away at it, and I'm gettin' on. It's very kind of you to coach me as you do."

"Oh, rot!" said Lumley-Lumley.

There was a pause. Lumley-Lumley sat on the corner of the table and swung his legs.

Grimes returned to mensa, a table, and mensarim—by, with, or from a table.

"I guess I want to have the truth, Grimey," said Lumley-Lumley.

Grimes looked up again.

"The what, Master Lumley?" he faltered.

"The truth, Master Grimes."

"Oh!" said Grimes.

"You know, I've knocked about the world," said Lumley-Lumley. "I'm rich, and I've been poor. I've seen queer sights, and a good many countries, and different kinds of people. I know that money and position don't make happiness. The happiest man I ever saw was a lame beggar in San Francisco. The happiest time in my life was when I hadn't a dime in my pocket and my boots were tied up with string. Grimey, old man, I had forgotten what I've learned by experience, and was following the usual stick-in-the-mud way of thinking when I thought that it would be a good thing for you to come to St. Jim's."

"Oh, Master Lumley!"

"I've been thinking it over, I guess. Look here, Grimey! You've got to tell me exactly how it is. Would you rather be at St. Jim's, or back in your old business?"

Grimes was silent.

"I guess it's pretty clear what you've got in your mind," said Lumley-Lumley, laughing, "or you'd answer up at once."

Grimes reddened.

"I don't want to seem ungrateful, Master Lumley," he said.

"I guess it's not a question of that. I want you to do as you like. If you want to stay at St. Jim's, here you are. If you'd rather have the grocer's business, there you are. You've only got to say, you know."

Grimes drew a deep, deep breath.

"You wouldn't be offended, Master Lumley?" he asked.

"No. Honest Injun!"

"And—and you wouldn't think me ungrateful?"

"I guess not," said Lumley-Lumley, grinning.

Grimes' questions showed pretty plainly what his answer was going to be.

"Well, Master Lumley—"

Grimes hesitated.

"Go it."

"Well, it seems to me an awful waste of time 'ere," said Grimes hesitatingly. "Fellows old enough to be thinkin' about the future seem to be thinkin' of nothin' but lessons and games. Them as is preparin' to earn their livings in the future is called swots, as if there's somethin' rotten about 'ard work. And the swottin' they do seems to me all—ahem—"

"All what?" grinned Lumley-Lumley.

"All rubbish!" said Grimes, coming out with great frankness now that he had once started. It was evident that he had given a great deal of thought to the subject. "They ain't learnin' anythin' of any use. There's a lot of work to be done in the world, Master Lumley, and they ain't learnin' 'ow to do any of it. They're only learnin' 'ow to live without doin' any. It don't seem to me right."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lumley-Lumley roared. It struck him that he would have liked the Head and the Board of Governors to hear Grimes' summing-up of Public schools and their methods.

"That's 'ow I look at it," said Grimes sheepishly. "I know it's very classy to come 'ere. But I was more use in the grocer's shop."

"I shouldn't wonder if you're quite right, Grimey," said Lumley-Lumley, clapping his chum on the shoulder. "You'll do better in the grocery line, I guess. And so we'll tell the Head. And Mr. Sands will give you your job again."

Grimes started to his feet.

"You mean it, Master Lumley?" he asked eagerly.

"I guess so."

"And you ain't offended?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Of course not!"

"Then I don't deny that I'd rather be in my old business," said Grimes. "I must say it seems to me more sensible and useful-like."

(Continued on page 28.)



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PEN PALS COUPON

5-10-35

THRILL FOLLOWS THRILL THROUGHOUT THESE CRIPPING CHAPTERS OF—

The BLACK HAND at ST. FRANK'S!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

The Smoke Screen!

NELSON LEE, the schoolmaster detective of St. Frank's is investigating the strange case of a murdered airman, and he discovers that behind the two crimes is some lawless and sinister activity, in which Dr. Zangari, the astronomer, living at Gallows Mere, is the prime mover.

Eight boys of St. Frank's are also concerned in the affair, for before the airman died he entrusted to them a package which they were to deliver to "No. 1" at Gallows Mere. He also pledged them to secrecy. The juniors deliver the package, and from that moment their lives are in danger from masked men in black, two of whom are killed in their efforts to "silence" the boys. It is obvious to the St. Frank's juniors that they know too much for Dr. Zangari.

Nelson Lee endeavours to get the juniors to tell him what they know, but they cannot do so without breaking their oath to the airman. So the detective warns them against interfering in the mystery.

Lee is investigating early one morning near Gallows Mere, when Handforth, Church, and McClure, three of the juniors "in the know" come on the scene. Later, Nipper and the other four put in an appearance; and then Church tells the detective how they became involved in the mystery.

While they are standing talking two miles from Gallows Mere they little know that Dr. Zangari is watching them through binoculars. He decides that now is his chance to wipe out those dangerous to him. In a crash helmet and goggles, he drives out in a death car, which has silent machine-guns in the headlamps. The car hurtles towards Lee and the boys, and Zangari's finger is on the button, which will spread death amongst them.

As the death car, with the goggled Dr. Zangari at the wheel, drove towards

Nelson Lee and the eight schoolboys on the lonely road, the driver's hand was on the button which would send streams of lead pouring silently from the disguised "headlamp" machine-guns.

Dr. Zangari saw that three cars stood on the roadside—Nelson Lee's, William Napoleon Browne's, and Handforth's. But they did not block the road. There was ample room to pass. Only those nine human figures were in sight. For the hour was early, and the road was little used. On sped the death car, Dr. Zangari crouching low over the wheel, his hand ready.

Nelson Lee, always alert, was more than usually alert this morning; for he knew there was danger so near to Gallows Mere. Indeed, he had just warned the boys to get back to St. Frank's without any delay. And now before they could start he saw this strange car, low and rakish, coming straight towards them.

Without hesitation he rapped out his orders. This strange car might be harmless, but it cost nothing to take precautions. Some instinct seemed to warn the great detective that death was staring them in the face. He remembered the gas-bomb which had been flung into Handforth's dormitory during the night.

"Down!" he shouted suddenly.

"Begad!"

"What the dickens—"

"I say, sir—"

"Into the ditch—all of you!" roared Lee urgently. "Don't ask questions! Dive into that ditch, and lie flat! Quick—if you value your lives!"

They leapt to it. The detective's words were so urgent that they did not stop to think twice. Even Handforth, prone to argue on every occasion, made a headlong dive into the ditch. It was a wide ditch, deep and dry. It was close at hand, and all eight schoolboys leapt into it as though actuated by a single spring. Even in that dramatic second Lee had a feeling that he was making himself ridiculous. Well, it wouldn't matter. Better to appear

ridiculous than to subject the boys to an unknown danger.

Phut, phut, phut!

At the very moment the boys dived into the ditch, Dr. Zangari pressed the deadly button. Too late! Until that second he had had no inkling that his intended victims would take alarm. Twin streams of bullets seared harmlessly through the air. Lee, the last to drop, heard the whine of the death missiles. Some of them sped right over his head, and he knew that he had escaped death by a hairsbreadth.

Zurrrrr! Zoom!

With a roar the mystery car rushed past. Dr. Zangari, foiled, mad with rage and alarm, took no chances. To stop would have been fatal. So he trod on the throttle, and the car under him leapt like a live thing as it rapidly accelerated.

Lee, still on the ground, reached for his gun, and attempted to shoot at the tyres of the enemy car. But within five seconds it was out of range. The detective leaped to his feet, thankful that the mode of attack had not been poison gas.

"Great Scott! What—what happened, sir?" gasped Nipper, struggling to his feet in the ditch. "What was that sound we heard just before the car whizzed by? A sort of whining—"

"Bullets!" said Nelson Lee grimly.

"Machine-gun bullets!"

"Odds shocks and staggerers!"

"What?"

"My only sainted aunt!"

"I wasn't sure; but I suspected," continued Lee. "The machine-guns were cunningly hidden, and they were silent, too. By Heaven, these infernal assassins shall pay the full penalty—and soon!"

While speaking he was leaping into the driving seat of his powerful car, and with a roar the engine burst into life.

"You saved us, guv'nor," said Nipper huskily. "If you hadn't given us that warning—"

"Never mind that now," broke in

Lee. "I'm going in chase. Boys, get into your cars, and follow! Keep as close to me as possible! Understand?"

"Yes, yes!" they chorused.

A moment later Lee was roaring away in pursuit. Less than two minutes had passed since the death car had gone, and Nelson Lee, whose car was capable of track speed, trod hard on the throttle as he gave chase.

The fugitive car was a powerful one, and Lee suspected that Dr. Zangari himself was at the wheel. There had been something about the helmeted, goggled figure which had suggested the famous astronomer. But it was improbable that Zangari was an expert driver, and on these narrow roads.

How right Nelson Lee's conclusion was, became evident less than ten minutes later. For the detective, taking a bend at seventy with shrieking tyres, saw the fugitive automobile not two hundred yards ahead.

It was a spot just about a mile from the hamlet of Edgmore; a lonely road, with woods on one side and gorseland on the other. Lee saw his quarry glance back, and the car swerved madly, nearly coming to grief. Then the driver bent over his wheel again, and the exhaust belched smoke.

Nelson Lee reached for his gun, and he took aim at the offside rear tyre of the death car.

But before he could pull trigger an amazing thing happened. The belching smoke from the exhaust pipe of the other car increased. It became a dense cloud of white smoke. It rolled on, spreading outwards, upwards, and hiding the fleeing car completely.

A smoke screen!

Nelson Lee could see nothing. In a second he was hurtling through the dense white fog. It was bewildering; he was driving blind. Further pursuit was out of the question. For the safety of his own life he was compelled to lift his foot from the throttle and jam on his brakes.

Not a moment too soon.

With all sense of direction lost, with the road hidden, his car suddenly jolted madly, heaved into the air, slewed round and skidded to a standstill.

Breathing hard, Nelson Lee jumped out. The white fog surrounded him like something absolutely solid. He was aware of a choking sensation in his throat, and his eyes smarted; but the smoke screen was not poisonous. Its only purpose was to baffle pursuers. In that it succeeded thoroughly.

"They're clever devils!" muttered Lee grimly. "But they'll slip up sooner or later."

For a moment or two he had heard the purring of the fleeing car, but now all was silence. The white fog, as dense as cottonwool, still surrounded him. He could not even see his own car, although he was standing within two feet of it.

The fog clung tightly to the ground, and as it gradually dispersed, it sank lower and lower. Quite suddenly, Lee found his head and shoulders in clear air; he could see the trees on one side of the road, and he could see right across the countryside. But all round him, lying lazily on the road, moving sluggishly like something alive, was the white fog. Its upper surface, undulating and eddying, looked for all the world like a mass of solid cotton waste. For a space, Lee's car was left clear, and he saw that he had run off the road, and was actually half-way through a dense clump of gorse on the heath. It was lucky he had swerved

in this direction, for had he turned the other way he would have crashed into the trees. The fog shifted again, swirling round and blotting out the car.

He heard some yells, and when he turned he saw the boys, in their two cars, some distance away. At least, he saw the upper sections of the cars; they had been obliged to come to a halt on the road, barred from further progress by the smoke screen. Nelson Lee was able to get his bearings, and, stumbling over some clumps of gorse, he soon felt the hard road under his feet, and he walked back to the stationary cars. The boys had climbed out, and were standing waist high in the amazing obstruction.

"What happened, guv'nor?" asked Nipper, bewildered. "What's this white mist?"

"It is a smoke screen of a very dense kind," explained Nelson Lee. "I was on the point of overtaking my quarry when he let this stuff loose on me. When I first encountered it, it was as high as the tree-tops. Naturally, I was compelled to stop. Luckily, I did not wreck my car."

"So Brother Zangari got away?" said Browne regretfully.

"What makes you think the man was Dr. Zangari?" asked Lee sharply. "Just a guess, sir," admitted Browne.

"Exactly—a guess," growled the detective. "We haven't a scrap of real proof."

"But that car came from Gallows Mere, sir," protested Handforth. "We know that much."

"Do we? How can we prove that the car came from Gallows Mere?" said Nelson Lee. "None of us saw it leave Gallows Mere. It may have come along the road from Bannington—from anywhere."

"You don't believe that, guv'nor," said Nipper.

"No, of course I don't; I am just as certain as you are that the car not only came from Gallows Mere, but that Dr. Zangari himself was at the wheel," said Lee. "But where is our evidence? We could not possibly take our information to Chief Inspector Lennard and suggest that he should get a warrant. He wouldn't get his warrant. And if he did—what then? A police raid on Gallows Mere would be a waste of time. The police would find everything in perfect order. No, boys, we've got to be patient. Even though we ourselves are certain that the danger came from Gallows Mere, we can take no action. I must point out, however, that our danger is now greatly intensified. At the moment we are safe, and you boys can motor back to St. Frank's without danger. And that's what you've got to do."

The white fog, by this time, had become dissipated; only a few wreaths of it remained on the heathland, clinging amongst the gorse and hugging the grass.

"There must be no more investigation, Handforth," continued Lee gravely. "That goes for everybody else, too. Get into your cars and drive to the school. And when you get to the school, go indoors and stay indoors."

"I say, look here, sir—" began Handforth.

"You must understand that these people are determined to wipe us all out," broke in Lee, almost angrily. "They are desperate now; they know we have discovered their headquarters. I don't think they'll bolt, because they

believe we have no evidence. All the same, they'll move heaven and earth to destroy us. Get into your cars and drive to the school. Nipper, I rely upon you to see that your Form fellows obey my orders. Browne, I don't need to repeat what I have already said."

"Having a fondness for life, sir, I shall break all speed records in getting back to St. Frank's," declared Browne with conviction. "And, having arrived at St. Frank's I shall proceed to incarcerate myself within its massive walls, and I shall also avoid all open windows."

Meanwhile, Dr. Zangari, livid with rage, was driving at random. He had shaken off the pursuit, it was true, but he had failed in his object. Nelson Lee and his schoolboy enemies were still alive. He cursed savagely. Within a short distance of Edgmore, he had turned into a narrow side lane, and now he was making a wide detour, caring little which direction he took. Behind him his pursuers were baffled. He had nothing to fear from them.

Gradually his confidence returned. Matters were not so bad as he had first supposed. Now that he could think more clearly he recognised this narrow lane. It wound and twisted, as such country lanes do, and finally joined up with the other road on the farther side of Gallows Mere.

He drove more rapidly, and at length he came to the spot where the lane joined up with the more important road—which, in itself, was only a little frequented by-way. He turned into it. Nobody was in sight. The road basked in the pale morning sunshine. Dr. Zangari increased his speed; he took a bend, and now Gallows Mere was in sight. Still the road was empty. With an exclamation of satisfaction, he turned through the gateway, went up the drive, and took the car through into the rear garden. Five minutes later the automobile was again securely hidden in its secret garage. Dr. Zangari, minus his crash helmet and goggles, went into the house.

He was met by the man who acted as his butler.

"We were afraid, excellency!" said the man, in agitation. "You went so suddenly, you gave no instructions—"

He broke off, for Dr. Zangari, without even looking at him, strode past. He went across the hall, entered his comfortable study, and slammed the door. It was just such a study as one would expect an astronomer to own; there were maps of the stars on the walls, charts and telescopes of various sizes.

Dr. Zangari opened a cupboard and pressed a hidden button. The floor vanished as though by magic, revealing an iron ladder. He descended into darkness, but when he reached the bottom of the ladder, lights came on. He was in a little concrete cellar, and he sat down before the control-board of a miniature broadcasting station. He turned switches, valves glowed into life, faint humming quivered on the air. He drew a microphone towards him and commenced speaking.

"Calling all members," he said deliberately, speaking in Italian. "Urgent! Headquarters calling all members!"

He waited, and after a space repeated what he had said, word for word. Again he waited.

"Attention, all members!" he said, at

length. "Report to-night at headquarters. All members report at midnight. Let no man fail! That is all."

He switched off, glanced at his watch, and a sudden gleam came into his eyes. Then again he switched on, waited for a space, and spoke.

"Attention, Member No. 75!" he said. "Attention, Member No. 75! Here are special instructions for No. 75."

Although his language was Italian, his actual words, in the Italian language, were sheer gibberish; for he used a code known only to the members of his own organisation. The transmission was on a secret wave-length; and even if it were picked up none could understand, except those who were required to understand.

The instructions he gave to Member No. 75 were decisive—and deadly.

He was quite certain that if the police raided Gallows Mere within the next hour they would find nothing. The car would be hidden. Nelson Lee decided that a police raid would be a mistake. Far better to let Zangari think he had got away with the morning's trickery. The detective was patient; he could wait.

There was no activity at Gallows Mere now; the old house was placid and peaceful. Lee, having seen so much, abandoned his lofty perch. Climbing nimbly down, he drove his car on to the road again, made his way to Edgmore, and then, instead of returning to St. Frank's, he took the road for Bannington. He went straight to the police station, and found Chief-Inspector Lennard in a state of considerable excitement.

"Where on earth have you been,

is a great deal bigger than we first supposed."

"The posting of the parcel in London was evidently a blind," said Lee thoughtfully. "It seems to me, Lennard, that the murderers had some other motive for sending the severed hand of their victim to the police."

"But what's their game?" asked the inspector helplessly. "First, a murdered airman—a crook Italian. Then an Abyssinian—then that devil, Luigi Lombardo—then the other Italian who was killed by his own poison-gas last night. It's getting a nightmare, Lee! What does it mean? Are the Italians and the Abyssinians bringing their infernal war into the Sussex countryside?"

"I cannot help thinking, Lennard, that this severed black hand has a special significance," said the detective.



Phut—phut—phut! At the very moment the St. Frank's boys dived into the ditch Dr. Zangari pressed the button operating the silenced machine-guns concealed in the headlamps. Twin streams of bullets seared through the air!

The Orders of No. 75!

NELSON LEE pursed his lips and smiled grimly.

"You are a very daring man, Dr. Zangari," he murmured.

The great detective, safely perched in the topmost fork of a high tree, was inspecting Gallows Mere, two miles distant, through powerful binoculars. And he had just seen the death car turn openly into the drive of the old house and disappear among the trees towards the rear. Dr. Zangari had not been so free from observation as he had supposed!

As soon as Nelson Lee had seen the boys away in their two cars, he had taken his own car some distance back along the road. The idea of climbing a tree and watching Gallows Mere had come to him; he concealed his car in the woods, selected his tree, climbed it, and kept watch. Sure enough, within ten minutes the expected had happened, for Lee had half believed that Zangari, after making a detour, would return.

"Well, we know the car is at Gallows Mere—and that's useful knowledge," Lee told himself.

Then he shrugged. Was it so useful?

Lee?" asked the Scotland Yard man. "I've been ringing St. Frank's, and they told me you were out somewhere. But that was the deuce of a time ago."

"I've been doing a little work," said Lee, smiling. "What's the excitement, Lennard? Has anything fresh happened?"

"Look at this!" said the inspector grimly.

They were in the inner office, and Lennard pointed to a newspaper parcel which lay on the desk. It was open, and Lee, bending over, saw the contents.

"The severed hand of the murdered Ethiopian!" he exclaimed. "An unpleasant sight, Lennard. A black hand. H'm! I wonder if there can be any special significance—"

"It came by post," interrupted the inspector. "Look how the parcel is addressed. Not a ghost of a clue there. Just two circles in blue pencil on a sheet of the local rag—the words 'Police Station' and 'Bannington.' The beggars don't take any chances, do they? The parcel was posted in London, at the G.P.O. Not a chance of a clue there, either. But it seems to indicate that this gang, whatever it is,

"The trouble between the Italians and the Abyssinians has nothing whatever to do with the mystery which confronts us. The criminals happen to be Italians, that's all; and some of their associates, or enemies, are Ethiopians. That proves nothing. By Heaven, I wonder—"

"You wonder what?"

"Mussolini has his hands exceedingly full at the moment, Lennard," went on Lee.

"You're telling me?" scoffed the inspector.

"So full, that the criminals of Italy might conceivably regard this hour as a great opportunity for them to strike," continued Lee. "It's a possible theory, Lennard."

"What's a possible theory?" asked the exasperated Yard man. "I don't know what on earth you're talking about!"

"Perhaps I'd better drop the subject, then, for the moment," said Lee. "By the way, Lennard, I know where to put my hands on our crooked friends."

"You know—what?"

"This morning I discovered their headquarters."

"You discovered—"

Lennard
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gaped. "Man alive, you stand there and tell me this as though you were talking of the winner of the three-thirty! You've discovered the gang's headquarters!"

"It's an old house called Gallows Mere, on a lonely stretch of road, not far from the village of Edgmore," explained Lee calmly. "The arch-villain, surprisingly enough, is that astronomer fellow, Dr. Zangari. You remember, you made some inquiries about him, and decided he was above suspicion."

"You know thundering well that Zangari is as harmless as a kitten," said the inspector. "We checked up on him days ago. He's a member of goodness knows how many astronomical societies. They say he is one of the cleverest astronomers in the world—a man of honour, a man—"

"Nevertheless, he tried to murder me this morning, and he tried to murder eight St. Frank's boys," interrupted Lee evenly. "Unfortunately, Lennard, I can't prove anything. This information is for your private ear—because you can't put it to any official use."

And he gave the amazed Lennard a full account of what had recently happened in the neighbourhood of Gallows Mere.

"You see the cunning of it all?" he said, in conclusion. "Yesterday evening young Nipper nearly met his death in the mere. The attempt failed, and, lo and behold, it appears that Nipper was butted by a mere goat."

"You see—no proof. Nothing. In the night Handforth and his chums were foolish enough to prowl about that old house. They were taken into a barn, and they saw machinery, and they escaped, as I have just told you. But when we looked at that barn this morning it was just an ordinary barn. Again, no proof."

"A car comes for us with hidden machine-guns but it gets away. I saw the car go back into Gallows Mere, but if we went to Gallows Mere now we shouldn't find that car."

"It's my firm conviction that the place is a maze of hidden secrets. Any ordinary search would be useless. We can't do anything until we're in a position to practically blast it down with high explosive."

"In any case, with the meagre evidence in our hands, you could not even apply for a search warrant, and you know it."

"That's true enough," admitted Lennard. "What do you suggest, then? Thanks to young Church's outburst, we know that the boys pledged themselves to take a package from the dying airman to Gallows Mere. That definitely establishes Gallows Mere as

the headquarters of the crooks. But how can we act?"

"We can't act—yet," replied Nelson Lee. "We've got to play a waiting game, old man. Let the enemy make the next move; we shall be watching, and we shall be prepared. I believe they are desperate and if we are patient they will probably make a false move and place themselves within our clutches. Better for us to pretend to be baffled."

"Pretend!" said Lennard scornfully. "I like that. We are baffled. What are you going to do now?"

"I'm going back to St. Frank's. I'm not altogether comfortable about the boys, and I shall have to think of some way of keeping them safe," replied Lee. "I may even find it necessary to secretly send them away. See that the reporters get hold of this 'severed hand' story, Lennard; let them understand the police are floundering in the dark."

"In other words, I'll tell them the truth," nodded the inspector.

He walked out with Nelson Lee, and they shook hands in the doorway.

As Lee walked down the police station steps he heard something like an angry hornet shoot past his left ear. A bullet! He heard a dull "plop" as the bullet struck the wall.

Lee acted with characteristic presence of mind. His knees sagged, he staggered, and then fell in an apparently lifeless heap at the foot of the steps.

Lennard, half-turning, stared in amazement. He had heard nothing, and Bannington High Street was normal.

"What on earth—" he began.

"Back Lennard, if you value your life!" hissed Lee, without moving. "Get inside—quick!"

Lennard jumped. He fairly dived for cover, and as he did so he reeled and gasped, clutching at his left arm. Had he not moved at Lee's command, he would have been a dead man. As it was, the bullet had cut an ugly furrow in his arm which bled profusely.

One or two passers-by, having no idea of what was happening, looked at him in wonder.

Nelson Lee, from the position in which he was lying, could see right across the street. One or two cars were passing to and fro, the opposite pavement was dotted with pedestrians here and there, and a man, a little higher up, was industriously grinding knives on his portable stone.

No. 75

In a word, Tony, the itinerant tinker—the man whom Handforth had chased on the Helmford College football ground. He was hard at work, bending over his rapidly turning grindstone. Not a sound had come from

that direction except the hissing of the sharpening knife.

One or two people came forward to assist Nelson Lee; they supposed that the detective had tripped and fallen. Before they could reach him, however, they were astonished to see him leap suddenly to his feet, bound up the police station steps, and dive like a rabbit within.

Nelson Lee, in

fact, had seized his opportunity. It was no moment for standing on ceremony. He had been convinced that the first movement from him would be the signal for another bullet—and the second one was not likely to miss him. Then a big six-wheeled lorry, laden high with hay, had driven past. As it came opposite the police station Lee dashed within.

"I thought the hay would provide me with cover for long enough," he said calmly. "Hallo, Lennard! They winged you, then?"

"The infernal devils!" exclaimed the inspector savagely. "This will cripple me for weeks!" He became calmer. "Thanks, Lee, for warning me," he added. "I might have been dead by now."

Inspector Jameson, who had come out of his office into the passage, was bewildered and flustered and dismayed.

"But this is intolerable!" he said, his face alight with alarm. "Good heavens! Do you mean to say that somebody shot at you from across the street? I'll send some men out—"

"They'll only waste their time, and it might result in the sacrifice of more than one valuable life," interrupted Nelson Lee. "The man who fired the shots is certain to elude you."

"But he's probably at one of the windows of a house opposite," said Jameson. "He can't be far away, anyhow—"

"He used a silent gun," said Lee grimly. "In all probability, he's well away by this time."

They were in the office by now, and Lee, having removed the inspector's coat, examined the wound. It was nasty, but not serious. He patched it up, and then asked Inspector Jameson to send for a doctor.

"Might as well have it properly bandaged, Lennard," he said. "I don't think you'll be much inconvenienced. Well, this latest move proves one thing. Our wily friends are scared, and they are taking chances. In a word, we've got them rattled."

"They haven't got us rattled, by any chance?" retorted Lennard. "Hang it all, we might as well be living in Chicago!"

"I think I can go out safely enough now—"

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" snapped the inspector. "We're responsible for you here, Lee, and we're not going to let you commit suicide like that."

The detective smiled.

"But the danger is over," he said.

"I'm not so sure!"

"But look at it calmly, Lennard. An agent of this organisation is told to 'bump' me. He makes his attempt, and fails. That shot at you was probably an after-thought, as you looked such a nice mark. The gunman, having muddled his job, would certainly not hang about. Until the enemy has had time to think up a fresh stunt, I'm safe."

"All the same, I don't want you to go out," growled Lennard. "You walk out into the open, and the next moment you're dead! And where's our man? Not a sound of a shot—not a puff of smoke—nothing! I've never been actually scared by crooks, but I'm pretty near it now."

"I'll get you out safely," declared Nelson Lee. "And I'll tell you how I'll do it."

Five minutes later a stalwart-looking police constable walked down the police station steps, adjusting his helmet strap as he did so. He walked to the spot

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where Nelson Lee's car was parked, climbed in, and drove away.

The "stalwart constable" was Nelson Lee himself, and the simple ruse was successful.

The Invisible Menace!

WHEN Nelson Lee arrived at St. Frank's, morning lessons had just commenced. As it happened, nobody saw him go in, and he was thus able to change his clothes without arousing any comment. He remained indoors during the morning. He did not seriously think there was any danger at the school, for the ground was far too open to harbour any daylight sniper. Such a thing could be done with comparative safety in a crowded thoroughfare. But at St. Frank's a stranger would have been noticeable at once.

As soon as morning lessons were over, Lee sent for Nipper.

"I want to have a serious talk with you, Nipper," said Lee gravely. "Sit down. Tell me everything you know. Church said so much this morning that you might as well tell me the rest."

"There is no 'rest,' guv'nor," replied Nipper, with a shrug. "On the whole, I'm glad Church let the cat out of the bag. I don't think we're under any moral obligation to keep that secret."

"Of course you're not," agreed Lee. "You are in danger of your lives, and therefore you are perfectly justified in breaking any promise you made if by so doing, you lessen your danger. This is a very serious business, Nipper."

"Don't I know it, sir!" replied Nipper, with feeling. "I'm all jumpy—and so are the 'other chaps.' Things have got to such a stage that we don't know what's going to happen next."

"Nothing is likely to happen during the day-time—particularly if you all keep indoors," said Lee. "Now, let's have that story."

Nipper told it—every detail. Lee listened attentively.

"I'm sorry you did not tell me all this at first, Nipper," said Lee, at length. "We might have been able to raid Gallows Mere with success, for we could have taken the enemy by surprise. It's too late now, of course; they are definitely on their guard, and there's no scrap of evidence in the place. Well, there's nothing we can do at the moment. You eight boys must keep indoors until the danger is over—"

"Keep indoors, sir!" broke in Nipper, aghast. "But that's impossible!"

"Impossible or not, you've got to do it."

"Oh, hang it, sir! There's a football match on this afternoon—with the River House chaps," objected Nipper. "We can't mess up a fixture like that. Most of us are in the eleven."

"I'm afraid the football match must be scratched."

"But what are we to say to the rest of the chaps, sir?" asked Nipper earnestly. "We've kept this secret—the eight of us. Travers and Reggie Pitt and Gresham and a few others have twigged something rummy's going on, and they've asked lots of questions; but we've managed to put them off. But what are we going to say if we scratch this match? Dash it, there's not likely to be any danger in the school grounds, sir!"

"These people will take desperate chances," replied Lee. "I don't like it, Nipper. I don't want any of you to go out of doors. However, your argument is sound enough. Perhaps you'd better play the match. But you

must promise me that none of you will venture, in any circumstances, beyond the school property."

After Nipper had gone, Nelson Lee rang up Inspector Lennard and arranged for half a dozen plain-clothes men to be at St. Frank's before the time of the match. These men were to station themselves in the fields and meadows round about the school. As it happened, however, they were not needed, and the arrangement was cancelled. For the afternoon set in soaking wet; rain poured down in sheets from a leaden sky, and the match was scratched as a matter of course. Nelson Lee was glad. He felt more comfortable.

The boys, most of them grumbling at the weather, busied themselves with indoor pursuits. Some gathered in the Common-room, playing draughts or chess; some had books; some remained in their studies, listening to the wireless. When it was too late, of course, the rain partially cleared off, but nobody felt inclined to go out. It was a dripping, cheerless world out of doors.

"It's all rot!" growled Handforth, as he stood glaring out of the window of Study D. "I know there's danger—but is that any reason why we should be cooped up like a lot of infants? I want to be making some investigations."

"It's about time you chucked it, Handy," said Church. "After being nearly machine-gunned this morning, I should think you would have had enough of it! Why, Zangari and his crooks are after us in earnest! They may even come to the school to get us!"

"What! Raid St. Frank's?" scoffed Handforth. "What rot! You're talking out of the back of your neck!"

Even as he was speaking the words,

two things were happening out of doors. A very ordinary-looking barge was making its way slowly and leisurely up the River Stowe, near the school; and from the direction of the sea, high above, an aeroplane was making its way inland, and shaping its course so that it would pass over St. Frank's.

Both barge and aeroplane were commonplace enough, for barges were always passing up and down the Stowe, and aeroplanes were constantly passing over St. Frank's. The barge was ordinary looking, and so was the plane. It was a two-seater machine, with open cockpits; it had the regulation identification letters, and it was maintaining a good height.

A mile from St. Frank's, however, the plane dropped lower, the engine now purring at half-throttle. Lower and lower it came, and then, gracefully, it commenced to circle St. Frank's and the school property. Something small and black dropped from the rear cockpit. It dropped like a stone, landed in the lane, and rolled into the ditch. Another black object dropped in the corner of Little Side. A third landed in the very middle of the Triangle. Boots and Christine of the Fourth happened to be standing in the Modern House doorway, and they saw the thing fall. They had been watching the aeroplane.

"Did you see that?" asked Boots, staring. "Look over there! That giddy airman dropped something. Must have been an accident."

"Looks like a thermos flask," said Christine.

They both ran towards the object, which was lying on the gravel. While they were still some yards distant from it they checked. Both seemed to stagger, and expressions of startled surprise

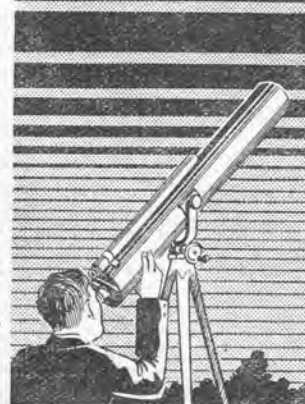
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came into their faces. Next moment their legs gave way under them, and they collapsed on the wet ground. They lay still.

"Look out there!" ejaculated Chambers of the Fifth, from a window in the West House. "Did you see what happened to those kids? They both fainted, or something!"

Chambers had not seen the object fall, and he knew nothing of it. He and two other Fifth Formers, ran out into the Triangle, and before they had taken half a dozen strides they reeled, stared round them in amazement, and collapsed. There was nothing to see; the peril, whatever it was, was utterly invisible.

While these alarming incidents were taking place in the Triangle, similar things were happening all over the school—not only in the school, but round about, in the garages, in the out-buildings, in the stables and gardens. The aeroplane, circling, had dropped over a dozen of the strange missiles; each one had landed quite harmlessly, doing no damage. They were scattered all over the school property. Within three minutes two gardeners were lying prone; a group of Sixth Formers crossing Inner Court were struck down as though by some invisible hand. It was the same all over the school. Everywhere, people were collapsing. They felt no pain; they felt nothing at all. Suddenly, and for no apparent reason, they lost consciousness and dropped to the ground.

And now, quickly, insidiously, the invisible menace was sweeping into the school itself; through open doorways, open windows, spreading, rising. In the lobbies, in studies, in Common-rooms, seniors and juniors were dropping to the floor, one after the other, some uttering startled cries, but most of them collapsing so suddenly that they were unable to utter a sound. As soon as they were down they lay motionless, breathing quite evenly. The invisible gas, odourless, unseen, was harmless enough. It struck down, but it did not destroy. The main feature of it was that it was practically instantaneous in its effect. Months, weary months, had been spent in the manufacture of this gas, in the secret workshops at Galloway Mere. But Dr. Zangari felt that he was justified in using a certain quantity this afternoon.

Nelson Lee, working quietly in his own study, satisfied that there would be

no danger during the afternoon—yet constantly on the alert—knew nothing of what was happening until he became aware of a confused shouting.

He rose from his desk, walked to the window, and looked out. He saw a number of figures lying motionless on the wet ground, and he saw a group of excited fags dashing along. They suddenly scattered in all directions, stumbling and rolling over like ninepins. Then they lay still.

"Great heavens!" ejaculated Lee, aghast.

In a flash he guessed what was happening. Rushing to the door, he tore it open, and went down the passage. Somebody was coming out of a study door at the farther end of the passage—Fenton of the Sixth. Fenton suddenly clutched at the doorpost and sank in a limp heap. In that instant, Lee knew that the danger, whatever it was, was invisible. He clapped his lips shut and held his breath; then he rushed upstairs. From a cupboard in his bedroom he produced a gas mask; one which he had procured from the Bannington Police Station that very morning, in consequence of the tragic incident of the night. Fixing the mask to his face, he hesitated.

He knew that he could do nothing, for during his run upstairs, whilst he held his breath, he had seen scores of fellows lying motionless. It was too late to give any alarm—too late for the boys to escape from the school premises. Not a doubt that St. Frank's, from end to end, was affected.

At that very moment, if Nelson Lee had only known it, he was the only living being in the school who retained his senses! With lightning rapidity the invisible gas had spread into every room, upstairs, everywhere.

And, on the River Stowe, the ordinary looking barge opened its hatches. Men emerged, a dozen men, all clothed from head to foot in sombre black, even to their hands and faces. With none to hinder them, with safety gas masks under the black covering, they advanced towards the silent, stricken school.

(Never have Nelson Lee and the chums of St. Frank's faced greater danger or more ruthless enemies. The battle of wits between the famous detective and the sinister forces of the Black Hand continues unabated in next week's super-thrilling chapters!)

ONE O' THE BEST!

(Continued from page 22.)

"Hear, hear!" said Lumley-Lumley. "Come with me to the Head."

And he marched Grimes off at once to the Head's study.

Tom Merry & Co. heard the news with regret.

They were sorry to lose Grimes of the Fourth.

But, as Blake sapiently remarked, very likely Grimes knew his own business best, and the Co. agreed that very likely he did.

Grimes bade a cheery farewell to his friends at St. Jim's.

"We shall see you again, of course, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he shook Grimes by the hand.

Grimes nodded and grinned.

"Yes, Master D'Arcy, if you want to. I shall bring the groceries, you know."

"Bai Jove!"

"And I shall be playin' in the Rylcombe Wanderers, too," said Grimes. "We'll meet on the footer ground, Master D'Arcy. I'm sorry to leave all you fellows." Grimes went on, "but a chap 'as to make 'is way in the world, you know, and it's best to begin young. But I 'ope we'll always be good friends when we 'appen to meet."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The next day Grimes reappeared at St. Jim's, but he was not in Etons, and he had a basket on his arm, and he came to the tradesmen's entrance.

But his honest face looked very bright and happy, and he grinned cheerily at Tom Merry & Co. when they walked round to speak to him.

Fourth Former of St. Jim's, or grocer's lad with a basket, Tom Merry & Co. were agreed that Grimes was One of the Best!

(Tom Merry expelled from St. Jim's in deepest disgrace... the victim of a rascally Sixth Former's scheming! That's the big sensation in next week's wonderful long complete school story entitled "THE PLOT AGAINST TOM MERRY!" Make sure you read this yarn, chums—it's a treat in store!)

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