

"LOOKING AFTER LOWTHER!" POWERFUL LONG YARN OF **INSIDE.**
TOM MERRY & CO.

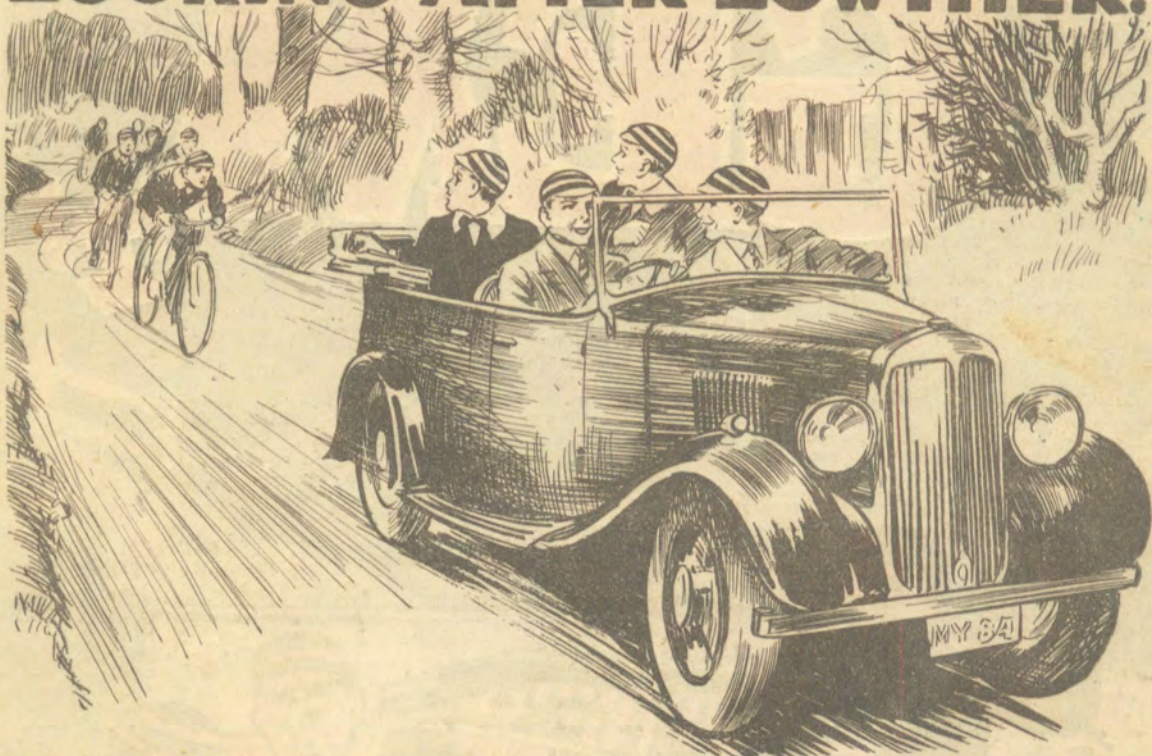
The **GEM** ^{2d}



CUTS
for CUTTS!

WHEN THE "CAY DOGS" OF ST. JIM'S GO ON THE SPREE TO THE RACES THEIR JAUNT HAS ANYTHING BUT A CAY ENDING!

LOOKING AFTER LOWTHER!



"My hat!" exclaimed Levison, looking back along the road. Six cyclists were scorching as hard as they could after the car. Knox and Lowther stared round. "It's Tom Merry," said Levison, "and five other St. Jim's chaps!" "They're after me!" exclaimed Lowther.

CHAPTER 1. A Good Turn!

TOM MERRY stared. He was surprised. He was in his study in the Shell passage in the School House at St. Jim's, when Levison of the Fourth came in. Tom was busy grinding out lines for Herr Schneider, and he was in a hurry to get them done. He wanted to join his chums, Manners and Lowther, who had gone down to the footer practice. Therefore, he was not pleased to see Levison. Besides, he was not on good terms with the cad of the Fourth. And Levison's manner was very mysterious.

He came quickly into the study, and closed the door carefully behind him. Then he came towards Tom Merry, with an expression of suppressed excitement on his face.

He did not speak for a moment, and Tom naturally stared at him.

"Well?" said Tom at last.

"Busy?" asked Levison, with a glance at the sheet of impot paper which Tom Merry was covering with weird-looking German characters—characters that grew weirder and weirder as he hurried over them.

"Yes," said Tom.

"What are you doing—drawing a map?" asked Levison.

Tom Merry frowned. His German THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,511.

handwriting never quite satisfied Herr Schneider, but really it was too bad to have his German imposition mistaken for a map.

"I'm writing German," he said shortly.

"Oh!" said Levison. "Well, that can wait for a few minutes!"

"Sorry," said Tom politely; "but it can't wait. You see, I've got to get down to the footer. Good-bye!"

But Levison did not go.

"I've been waiting for a chance to see you—" he began.

"I'm on view all day; no charge," said Tom. "Still, you can look at me if you like. You don't mind if I get on with this, do you? Werd ich zum Augenblicke sagen—"

"Look here!" said Levison. "This is important!"

"Verweile doch, du bist so schön," murmured Tom Merry.

Levison made an angry gesture.

"Will you listen to me? I've come in here to do you a good turn."

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry in astonishment; and he laid down his pen. "Fire away! Rather a change for you, isn't it, to be doing anybody a good turn?"

"How would you like thirty-three quids?" asked Levison.

Tom Merry grinned, and held out his hand.

"Ripplingly! Hand it over!"

"I haven't got it, fathead! But I can show you where to get it."

"Whose is it?" asked Tom humorously.

"Yours, if you like to take it."

Tom Merry looked puzzled.

"I don't quite see how I'm to get thirty-three quid for nothing," he remarked. "Still, it will come in very useful, certainly. I'd stand new outfits for the junior football club. What is it—a competition?"

"A sort of competition," said Levison.

"With a certainty of winning the prize?" asked Tom, laughing.

"Yes."

"Well, that's the kind of competition a fellow would like to go in for," Tom Merry admitted. "But it sounds a little too good to be true. Go on!"

"You have to risk a quid," explained Levison.

"Sort of entrance fee?"

"Yes; in a way."

"Well, it's worth that, if the thirty-three quids are certain," said Tom still grinning. "I'm on. I can raise the quid."

"You get the quid back, too," said Levison.

"Better and better. What paper is the competition in?"

"It isn't in a paper."

"No," said Tom, in surprise.

"Where is it, then?"

"Wait a minute. If I put you on to it, I want you to lend me a quid, so that I can go in for it, too," explained

A CRIPPING LONG YARN OF SCHOOL ADVENTURE, IN WHICH TOM MERRY & CO. SET THEMSELVES THE TASK OF SAVING AN OBSTINATE CHUM FROM DISGRACE.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

Levison. "I'll let you have the quid back out of my prize."

"Then there are two prizes of thirty-three pounds?"

"Dozens."

"My hat!" said Tom Merry, in astonishment. "I suppose you're not trying to pull my leg, or gone off your rocker, by any chance?"

"I'm quite serious. Anybody who likes to put a quid down can be absolutely certain of thirty-three quids in return. You see, it happens that I've got inside information from a fellow in the know, and it's a dead cert."

"But it wouldn't be quite cricket to enter if you know the thing in advance, would it?" asked Tom.

"Yes; in this case it would. You'll understand when I explain."

"Explain away, then," said Tom Merry. He was quite interested now.

Certainly it sounded a little too good to be true, but he knew that Levison was a clever fellow, and awfully deep. If there was anything in this, it was certainly worth hearing about, even if he had to miss his footer practice. Thirty-three pounds was a large sum, and if it could be won honourably and fairly, there was no reason why he shouldn't go in and win.

"First of all, it's understood, if you take my tip and enter, you'll lend me a quid so that I can enter, too?" said Levison eagerly.

"Done!"

"Good! Well"—Levison lowered his voice—"have you ever heard of the Muggleton Handicap?"

"The what?"

"The Muggleton Handicap."

"What is it—a race?"

"Yes."

Tom Merry frowned. A glimmering of Levison's real meaning began to dawn upon him. But Levison, in his eagerness, did not notice the Shell fellow's change of expression.

"It's a chance of a lifetime," he said. "I dare say you know that an uncle of mine is a professional trainer; and I know quite a lot about racing stables."

"You won't get much good from that kind of knowledge," said Tom, with a curl of the lip.

"Knowledge is always useful. My uncle is trainer to Lord Luscombe, the owner of Four-in-Hand—that's a horse, you know."

"Oh, that's a horse, is it?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes. Four-in-Hand is entered for the Muggleton race, and all the bookies regard him as a rank outsider, without an earthly."

"Do they?"

"You see, he's a dark horse," said Levison, quivering with eagerness by this time. "They don't know it, but he's a dark horse."

"What difference does that make?" asked Tom. "I suppose a dark horse doesn't run any differently from a light horse, does he?"

Levison gave him a pitying glance.

"It doesn't mean his colour, ass! It means that he's been kept dark—his form has been kept a secret, to surprise everybody on the day of the race. The bookies are offering thirty-three to one against him and several other outsiders.

But, as a matter of fact, he isn't an outsider at all—he's being kept dark on purpose, but he's certain to romp home, and leave the whole field standing."

Tom Merry was silent.

"I've got the tip straight from Tom Tuttle, the jockey who's going to ride him," went on Levison. "I made friends with him when I was staying with my uncle last vac. He's let me into this—it's a dead cert. Just think of it. You lay your quid down on Four-in-Hand, and when he gets home you rope in thirty-three quids. The bookies will be tearing their hair after the race, of course—you can bet your socks on that. Everybody will lay money on Four-in-Hand."

"But if he's supposed to be an outsider, nobody will lay money on him, I suppose?"

"Only those in the know," explained Levison. "It's being kept awfully dark, but Tuttle has let me in, and I'm willing to let you in. You needn't have anything to do with the bookie. I'll get the money laid on for you. I know a man in Wayland—"

"You rotten cad!"

Levison jumped.

"Eh? What?"

"You rotten cad!" repeated Tom Merry, rising to his feet, his eyes gleaming scorn at the Fourth Former. "So your competition is a race, and you

I've a jolly good mind to pitch you out on your neck for coming here and asking me to bet. Clear out!"

"You—you fool! You hypocrite!" hissed Levison, too enraged to care what he was saying.

But that was too much for Tom Merry. He was indignant and angry already, and the words were scarcely out of Levison's mouth when the Shell fellow was upon him.

"Hands off, you rotter!" shrieked Levison, and he struck out furiously.

His fist landed in Tom Merry's face, but he had no time for a second blow. The Shell fellow's powerful grasp was upon him, and he was whirled off his feet. Tom Merry tore the door open and sent Levison flying through the doorway.

Then there was a terrific roar from two fellows who were just about to enter the study.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Ow—ow!"

Bump!

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Sorry! Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners, Lowther, and Levison were mixed up on the floor of the passage in a wild array of arms and legs.

CHAPTER 2.

Herr Schneider is Pleased!

TOM MERRY grinned as he looked out from his study doorway. He could not help it.

It was a most unfortunate accident, but it had its comic side—to an onlooker, at least. The comic side, however, was quite imperceptible to Manners and Lowther.

They sat up—when they had sorted themselves out from Levison and from one another—and gasped, and glared at their chum.

"You howling ass!" roared Lowther.

"You frabjous jay!" shrieked Manners.

Levison scrambled up and limped away. He had been considerably hurt, and, from the looks of Manners and Lowther, he guessed that he might be still more hurt if he stayed.

Tom Merry tried to look contrite.

"I'm awfully sorry, you chaps!" he gasped. "I was just chucking Levison out. I thought you chaps were down at the footer—"

"Ow! We came in for you, you silly ass—"

"We came for you, you blithering chump—"

Manners and Lowther picked themselves up and came into the study. Tom Merry retreated round the table. His chums looked as if they would commit assault and battery.

"Pax!" said Tom Merry, holding up his hand. "It was really an accident. And I had to chuck Levison out."

"What's he been doing?" growled Lowther, dusting down his clothes.

"He wants me to put some money on a horse, and we had a little argument."

"The rotter! He ought to know better than to bring that kind of business to this study," said Manners. "He'll get the push one of these days."

"It's a wonderful thirty-three to one chance," said Tom Merry, laughing. "He's got a straight tip from the stables, and he wanted to put me on to a good thing."

"And you were showing your gratitude when we came along?"

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When Monty Lowther is led astray by Cutts & Co., the black sheep of St. Jim's, Tom Merry and Manners determine to save their chum from his weakness and folly. But Lowther resents their interference, and, in consequence, there's more than a little excitement, adventure and trouble in looking after Lowther!

want me to bet on a beastly horse; that's how I'm to make thirty-three quids?"

"Look here—"

"Suppose the Head heard of it?" said Tom Merry. "What would happen to you then, you silly fathead? You'd be sacked from the school."

"Oh, you needn't be afraid! It will be done on the quiet, of course—"

"I'm not afraid," said Tom Merry disdainfully. "But I'm not a blackguard, either. And I'm not putting any money on horse-races. There's the door. Get out!"

Levison's face was almost convulsed with rage. He had fancied that he was getting along quite nicely with Tom Merry. He glared at the captain of the Shell.

"You—you fool!" he muttered. "Can't you see that it's the chance of a lifetime? You can make a small fortune by risking a few pounds. I should think that at a time like this you could give up your humbug for once."

Right conduct always appeared to Levison as humbug. There were few things that Levison believed in.

"I suppose I can't expect you to understand that it isn't humbug, but principle," said Tom Merry quietly. "But I don't want to argue it with you.

"Just so."

"Well, you might have been civil to him, if he was trying to do you a good turn, even if it was some of his blackguardly racing," said Lowther.

Lowther had a bump on the back of his head where it had come in contact with the floor, and it had had a little effect upon his temper.

"Well, he jawed me, too," said Tom mildly.

"I dare say you jawed him first."

"Admitted."

"I expect it's all rot," said Manners pacifically. "I've heard of those precious dead certs before. The only certain thing about them is that the bookmakers get your cash."

"I don't know. Levison has won some money," said Lowther. "What sort of a thing was this, Tom? Let's hear about it."

"Oh, it was all rot!" said Tom. "Help me do my lines instead."

"Rats! Tell us about Levison's dead cert," said Lowther obstinately.

"Well, it's the Muggleton race, and he knows the jockey who's going to ride the winning horse that's being kept dark," said Tom. "It seems that it's a dark horse, and that means a horse that's being kept dark—not a dark horse—"

"Teach your grandmother!" said Lowther. "I know that!"

"Do you?" said Tom, a little nettled.

"Well, if you know more about jockeys and races than I do, I don't know that I envy you."

Lowther sniffed.

"Well, what's the name of the horse?" he asked.

"Better ask Levison."

"What's the odds?"

"Blow the odds!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, ask Levison, if you want to know about it!" said Tom Merry.

"I'm fed-up with his blessed certs, and I've got to do my lines!"

"Well, I will ask Levison, then!" exclaimed Lowther, and he walked out of the study and slammed the door behind him.

Tom Merry glanced at Manners.

"What's the matter with Lowther?" he asked.

"Seems ratty," said Manners.

"Never mind. Let's do the lines. He was rather ratty this morning. He forgot his letter box last week, and his uncle has stopped his pocket-money for a week."

"Poor old Monty! I hope he won't be idiot enough to listen to any of Levison's rot! This study keeps clear of that sort of thing," said Tom Merry anxiously. "We don't want to follow in the footsteps of Cutts."

"Oh, Monty's not such an ass as that!" said Manners. "Give me the next sheet, and we'll get the lines done, and you can take them to old Schneider before tea."

"Good egg!"

And Tom Merry and Manners settled down to do the lines. When they were finished, Tom Merry conveyed them to Herr Schneider's study. The German master was seated in the armchair in his study, smoking a big pipe, and reading over a letter with a very pleased expression on his fat face.

He glanced up at Tom Merry over his spectacles, and nodded kindly.

"Ah! It is tat you have done to lines?" he said.

"Yes, sir," said Tom, wondering what was the cause of the German master's unusual good-humour.

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Herr Schneider was not celebrated for good temper. Indeed, those very lines had been imposed upon the hero of the Shell because he had dropped a German dictionary upon the herr's favourite corn.

The herr had not agreed with the Shell when they thought that it was funny, and Tom Merry had found himself the richer by a hundred lines of Goethe. But Herr Schneider had recovered now, and he was simply beaming over the letter in his hand.

Instead of scanning the imposition as usual, to detect whether more than one hand had been at work upon it, Herr Schneider waved to Tom Merry to lay the sheets upon the table.

"Tat is all-right, mein poy."

"Thank you, sir!"

"I have received a nice letter, ain't it?" said Herr Schneider, evidently so full of satisfaction that he felt compelled to tell somebody about it. "Dere are pupils who remember dere old master, mein poy, as perhaps you will some day afterwards, when it is tat you shall need to speak Sherman, and you will tink of te old Sherman master who try very hard to teach you."

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Tom. "I'm sure we shall always remember you, sir."

"I hope tat tat shall be so," said the herr kindly. "If I giff you lines now, it is for your own good. If I shall rap you on der knuckles mit pointer, tat also is for your own good."

"I'm sure you're very kind, sir," said Tom demurely.

Really, he was not anxious to have the German master so keen on doing him good in that way.

"I have here a letter from an old pupil," said Herr Schneider. "I have to honour vunce pefore to teach Sherman to a great herr—to Lord Luscombe."

"Did you really, sir?" said Tom.

He remembered that name. Levison had mentioned it as the owner of Four-in-Hand, the dark horse that was to romp away with so much of the bookmaker's money on the day of the Muggleton races.

"You have heard tat name, hein?"

"Yes, sir. A racehorse owner, isn't he?"

"Tat is right. A ferry great herr," said Herr Schneider, with satisfaction.

"He ask me to come and see him."

"That is very nice, sir."

"He does not forget his old Sherman master. I go to visit him, and to see races mit mein lord in te grand stand, ain't it?"

"How ripping, sir!" said Tom.

"Ach! It is ferry kind of te lord, I tink."

"Very kind indeed, sir!" murmured Tom Merry, wondering how long he was to stand there and hear about it. "If—if ever I become a lord, sir, I shall ask you to come and—see the races with me."

The German master looked at him suspiciously.

"You may go, Merry," he said quite shortly.

"Thank you, sir."

And Tom Merry left the study, leaving Herr Schneider re-reading his letter, with a faint smile of satisfaction on his face.

Two juniors were standing by the window at the end of the passage, talking in low tones. It gave Tom Merry a slight shock as he saw that they were Lowther and Levison.

They were so earnest in their discussion that they did not observe Tom Merry till he clapped Monty Lowther on the shoulder.

Then Lowther looked round quickly, a slight flush stealing into his face.

"Hallo, it's you!"

"Still light enough for some footer, Monty," said Tom.

"Run on with Manners, then," said Lowther. "I'm just having a jaw with Levison."

Tom hesitated.

"Can't that wait?" he said.

"Oh, rot!" said Lowther. "Why shouldn't I talk to Levison?"

"Look here," said Tom Merry bluntly, "are you talking about horses and races, and that blessed thirty-three to one chance?"

"Suppose we are?" said Lowther defiantly.

"Well, if you are, I tink you're a silly ass, and Levison's a rotten rascal!" said Tom Merry wrathfully.

Levison's lips curled in a sneer.

"You're welcome to your opinion," he said. "I don't see that you are Lowther's master, Tom Merry, to order him about."

"Blessed if I do, either!" said Lowther. "Dash it all, Tom, you're not my grandfather! Let me alone!"

Tom Merry checked the hot retort that rose to his lips, and turned on his heel. He did not want to quarrel with his old chum; and he knew, too, that that was what Levison wanted. He walked away without replying, though he was feeling very angry. But Monty did not notice his clouded face as he went. He was deep in discussion with Levison a few moments later, and he did not even glance after his chum.

CHAPTER 3.

Levison's Tip!

CUTTS of the Fifth lighted a cigarette, as he lay back in his comfortable armchair and stretched his long legs.

"We'll have a car," he said.

Knox of the Sixth was sitting on the edge of the table. He had a cigarette between his fingers, but he had not lighted it. He was looking surprised and uneasy.

"A car!" he repeated.

"Yes, if we can get three or four more fellows to come."

"I think you're off your rocker, Cutts," said the Sixth Former. "Suppose we were seen?"

"Oh, we shouldn't be seen!" said Cutts carelessly. "Muggleton is a good distance from here, and nobody from St. Jim's will be at the races. The risk is nil. And it will be ripping fun."

Knox shook his head.

"Too risky for me altogether," he said. "You forget I'm a prefect. If anything should leak out—"

"Why should it?"

"Well, things do sometimes. I rather like the idea of going to the races, but, for goodness' sake, let's go as quietly as we can, and not attract attention."

"We want to do the thing in comfort," said Cutts. "I don't suggest taking front seats in the grand stand."

"I should hope not."

"A car is the thing. We'll make up a party," said Cutts.

Knox shook his head again. He was quite as big a "plunger" as Cutts, but he lacked Cutts' nerve. Any St. Jim's fellow who went to the races on a half-holiday could be sure of being expelled from the school if his escapade were discovered. Cutts had run that risk more than once; but then he had a wonderful gift for getting himself out

of scrapes. Knox was not quite so sure of his luck.

"We must go, anyway," said Cutts. "I've got a good bit of money, and I'm going to see whether Bully Boy wins without waiting for a telegram."

"Yes, I agree to that. But let's go quietly," said Knox uneasily. "We might get a car and drive over, perhaps; but not a crowd of us."

Cutts shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, if you're suffering from nerves, have your way!" he said. "Anyway, a car will cost money, and we'll get a couple more to share the exes. I think—"

Cutts broke off suddenly and threw his cigarette into the fire, as a knock came at the door of the study.

"Come in!" he rapped out.

Levison entered.

He grinned as he scented the odour of tobacco smoke. Cutts frowned at him as he closed the door behind him. Levison's manner was much more familiar and easy than a junior's manner should have been in a senior's study. But Levison and Cutts were not on the usual terms of junior and senior. The black-guard of the Fifth and the cad of the Fourth had very much in common.

"Well, what is it?" asked Cutts sharply, and he extracted a fresh cigarette from his case.

"Thanks, I'll have one," said Levison.

Cutts extended his case.

Levison lighted a cigarette, Knox looking at him rather grimly. It was Knox's duty as a prefect to come down very heavily on a junior for anything of that kind; but Knox could not come the prefect with Levison. Levison knew too many of his little secrets.

"I saw you with Weekes, the bookie, in Wayland yesterday, Cutts," Levison remarked, as he blew out a cloud of smoke.

Cutts scowled.

"You see too much sometimes, Levison," he remarked. "It will get you a hiding one of these days."

Levison laughed.

"I've come to talk business," he said. "I want to go to Muggleton on Wednesday."

"What for?"

"Guess!" said Levison sarcastically.

"If you're thinking of going to the races," said Knox, attempting to assume the manner of a prefect, "you'd better give it up. I couldn't allow anything of the sort."

"Couldn't you?" said Levison. "But you're going."

"Of course I'm not thinking of anything of the kind."

"Then you've changed your mind suddenly. You were thinking of it five minutes ago," said the junior coolly.

Knox made an angry gesture.

"You young cad, you were listening at the door!" he exclaimed furiously.

"I heard a few words," said Levison cheerfully. "But I guessed that you were going, anyway, you and Cutts. Well, I'm coming."

"You're not coming with us!" growled Cutts.

"Yes, I am," said Levison calmly. "I'm coming in the car with you, and you're going to stand treat."

"You cheeky young hound!" exclaimed Cutts, jumping up.

"Hold on!" said Levison. "I'll explain. I think I can get another fellow to share the exes if I don't hand out anything myself. Besides, I can put you on to a good thing in the principal race."

"I'm on to a good thing already."



As Tom Merry sent Levison flying through the doorway, there was a roar from two fellows who were about to enter the study. "Oh o-umbs!" "Ow-ow!" Levison crashed into Manners and Lowther, and all three went to the floor with a bump and loud yells.

"Bully Boy, I suppose?" said Levison disdainfully.

"Yes."

"Well, that's not a good thing—that's a rotten thing. Bully Boy hasn't an earthly."

"He's the favourite," said Knox.

"So he may be, but there's a dark horse, being kept quiet by the owner, and that horse is going to beat Bully Boy. They've had trials together, and the other horse has beaten Bully Boy hollow."

"I don't believe it!" said Cutts.

"It's a fact, all the same."

"What's the other horse?"

"Four-in-Hand."

Cutts burst into a laugh. He extracted a sporting paper from his pocket and opened it.

"Listen to this!" he said.

And he read out:

"It is not likely that Four-in-Hand, who is in the same stable as the favourite, will run. He has no chance whatever in this race."

Levison nodded.

"The stable is spreading that yarn," he said. "Four-in-Hand is being kept dark. You needn't take my tip if you don't want to, but it's a dead cert."

Cutts bit his lip uneasily.

"Look here, I've got quite a big sum on the favourite," he said. "If there's anything in what you say I'm in a hole. How do you know?"

"Straight from the stable."

"But how?"

"I know the jockey who's going to ride Four-in-Hand, and who has hidden him in his trials with Bully Boy."

"Tom Tuttle?" asked Knox.

"Yes."

"You know him?"

"Yes. He's employed by my uncle,

and I made friends with him last vacation."

The two seniors looked very grave.

"I say, that's pretty rotten," began Knox. "I took your tip about Bully Boy, Cutts, and I've backed it pretty heavily—on tick, too!"

"Same here!" growled Cutts. "How was I to know anything about a dark horse?"

Levison chuckled.

"Everybody who isn't in the know will be astonished when Four-in-Hand gets home," he said. "I'm going to have a quid on him with Weekes, and that means thirty-three quids for me next Wednesday. If I could raise the money I'd put twenty on him!"

"That's the rub," said Cutts. "It's rather hard to raise the ready. But I could hedge on Four-in-Hand, if it's certain."

"I'll show you Tuttle's letter, if you like."

"Tuttle ought to know," Knox remarked.

"Yes, that would settle it," said Cutts, with a nod. "I'll see the letter. And— and if this is really a good tip, Levison, you can come with us, and we'll stand treat. Why, if this is genuine we can simply skin the bookies! I'll pop my watch and Sunday socks on a chance like this."

"It's settled, then," said Levison. "Besides, I can get a chap to stand his whack in paying the exes."

"Who is it?"

"Lowther."

Cutts started.

"What rot! One of that crowd. They never have anything to do with this kind of thing."

"You never can tell," grinned Levison. "Lowther's as keen after a chance

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like this as anybody else—if he's worked the right way, of course! As a matter of fact, it's from him I'm getting my quid. I'm stony myself. And I specially want to get him into it."

"Why?"

"For reasons of my own," said Levison coolly. "I'm up against that study, and it will be one in the eye for Tom Merry when his beloved chum takes to ways that are dark and tricks that are vain. Savvy?"

The two seniors laughed.

"Well, got me Tuttle's letter, and it's a go!" said Cutts.

"Done!"

And Levison left the study in a state of great satisfaction. A drive to the races free of expense, and a loan to stake on a horse that was certain to win—Levison had reason to feel satisfied. It is true that there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip; but Levison was too satisfied to think about that.

CHAPTER 4.

Shut Up!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's polished his eyeglass and jammed it into his eye with an air of unusual determination.

Arthur Augustus was in a determined mood.

He was standing on the steps of the School House at St. Jim's, sunning himself, when Monty Lowther came along.

Lowther did not observe him as he came up the steps. He seemed to be plunged in deep thought.

Arthur Augustus stepped into his path.

"Lowthah, deah boy!" he said gently. The Shell fellow stopped.

"Hallo! What is it, Gussy?" he asked, rather brusquely.

"I want to speak to you, Lowthah."

"Any other time do?" asked Monty Lowther. "I'm rather pressed—"

"I am quite aware of that, deah boy, and I'm goin' to speak to you simply because you are wathah pweessed."

Lowther stared at him.

"Do you generally pick on a time when a chap's pressed to recite to him?" he asked.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Would you mind lettin' me pass and doin' your solo here by yourself?" the Shell fellow inquired sarcastically.

"I must weally speak to you, Lowthah."

"Well, pile in and get it over," said Lowther resignedly.

Arthur Augustus looked round.

"I should pwefer a more pwivate place, Lowthah. Here we may be ovahheard."

"My hat! What is it all about?" asked Lowther in astonishment. "Are you going to tell me a deadly secret? If you are, go and tell Blake, or Herries, or Dig instead."

"It does not concern Blake, or Hewies, or Dig, and it is not a secwet; it is a mattah of the gweatest importance, howevah. Pway come with me, where I can speak to you without bein' ovahheard."

"Can't be did!"

"I must weally insist, Lowthah!"

"Rats!" said Lowther.

"If you pwefer to speak here, Lowthah—"

"I give you one minute," said Monty Lowther. "Life's short, Gussy; no time to listen to all your remarks."

"It's about what you are pweessed for

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time for, and if you want to speak here about the wotten idea you have in your silly head, you will do so at your own wisk!"

Lowther started.

"Do you mean that you are putting a finger in my pie, in your usual way?" he asked, a flush coming into his cheeks.

"Haven't you ever heard that it's a good scheme to mind one's own business, Gussy?"

"I wegard this as my bisney."

"How do you make that out?" demanded Monty Lowther warmly.

"I wegard it as my dutay to look atfah you youngstahs to a certain extent. A fellow of tact and judgment—"

"Ass!"

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"At any othah time, Lowthah, I should probably give you a thwashin' for applyin' that extremely oppwobious epithet to me. Howevah, I will look ovah it."

"Duffer!"

"I will also look ovah that!"

"Fathead!"

"And that also," said Arthur Augustus patiently, evidently determined not to lose his noble temper.

"Will you come with me where I can speak to you, Lowthah, or do you pwefer it where ewevybody can heah?"

"If you must jaw, you may as well jaw in private," said Lowther ungraciously. "Let's trot round to the tower."

"It is hardly necessawy to go so far as that."

Lowther grinned.

"May as well make quite sure of it," he said. "Come on, Gussy! It's really kind of you to interest yourself in me in this way. You don't know how grateful I feel."

And Monty Lowther took the arm of the swell of St. Jim's, and led him away. Arthur Augustus was all smiles now. He felt it his duty to give Monty Lowther some fatherly advice, and he was glad to see Lowther taking the matter so sensibly.

They walked round the School House, and Lowther led the way into the old ruined tower. There Arthur Augustus halted.

"This will do vewy well, Lowthah."

"Better make sure," said Lowther. "Walls have ears, you know. Come up the steps."

"Weally, it is a good thing to be cautious, but that is wathah overdoin' it, you know," said Arthur Augustus, in surprise.

"You can't have too much of a good thing," said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"When you're being cautious, Gussy, you should be really cautious."

"Yaas, but—"

"Come on!"

Lowther drew the swell of the Fourth up the solid stone steps and into a room. He made Arthur Augustus enter first, and then stood in the doorway himself, with his hand upon the heavy old oaken door.

"Now pile in," he said.

"I have been observin' you as a fiend, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus. "You have been talkin' a lot with Levison. Now, I know Levison has a wotten dodge on—he had the awful cheek to pwopose to me to put some money on a horse—some beastly horse that is goin' to win at a big pwice next week."

"And what did you say?" asked Lowther.

"I said some vewy plain things, and

Levison turned quite wed," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "Now, as you have suddenly become thick with that awful outsidersah, I cannot help suspectin' that he has been pwoposin' the same wascaloty to you. I wondah Tom Mewvy doesn't stop you."

"Oh, rats!" said Lowther grimly.

"Wathah not! Fellows get the sack for that kind of thing. Cutts and Levison will both come to grieve one of these days. I wegard you as a fiend, Lowthah, and I cannot possibly allow you to go on the woad to wuin in this way."

"Fathead!"

"I have wewolved to keep my tempah, and I shall wufuse to be pwovoked into thwashin' you, Lowthah. I am goin' to speak sewiously—"

"No objection to that," said Lowther. "How long do you think it will take?"

"Pewwaps ten minutes."

"Make it as long as you like," said Lowther generously. "I don't mind in the least, as I shan't be here. Good-bye!"

Lowther stepped back suddenly out of the room, and drew the door shut after him.

Slam!

"Lowthah, you wottah—"

Arthur Augustus made a spring at the door. There was a grinding sound, as the ponderous iron key turned in the lock.

D'Arcy dragged at the door.

But the door remained fast. Monty Lowther's footsteps could be heard dying away on the steps, and a chuckle could be heard also. Then there was silence.

Arthur Augustus stood staring at the door in anger.

He understood now why the humorist of the Shell had brought him to the room in the tower. It had been with malice aforethought, so to speak, with the intention of shutting him up there, possibly as the only method of shutting him up.

"Bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The awful wottah! The frightful beast! I'll give him a fearful thwashin' when I get out. But how the dooce am I to get out?"

That was a question that required answering. Arthur Augustus hammered furiously at the door for a few minutes, and shouted to Monty Lowther, but there was no sound of Lowther returning. Evidently he had departed to keep the engagement Arthur Augustus had interrupted with his well-meant interference.

The swell of St. Jim's was a prisoner.

He crossed the room towards the old loophole that gave admittance to light. The opening was a yard across the inside, but outside it was only six inches, narrowing through the thickness of the wall.

Through the slit Arthur Augustus could catch a glimpse of the quadrangle and of the corner of the School House. In the distance he spotted Blake strolling with Digby. But they were too far off to hear the sound of his voice.

"Oh, that awful wottah Lowthah!" murmured Arthur Augustus sulphurously. "I've a gweat mind to let the wottah go to the beastly bow-wows in his own beastly way, bai Jove! I wondah how long I am goin' to be shut up here?"

And the unfortunate good adviser stretched his arm through the loophole, with a handkerchief in his hand, and waved it, in the hope of attracting attention from somebody.

CHAPTER 5.

Drastic Measures!

TOM MERRY, Manners, and Blake and two or three other fellows were punting a footer about the quad, about a quarter of an hour later, when the elusive footer led them in the direction of the old tower. Then Tom Merry caught sight of a handkerchief fluttering from the slit high up in the old wall.

He stopped and regarded it with astonishment.

"Who on earth's that?" he asked, pointing.

"Somebody in the tower," said Blake, cocking his eye up at the handkerchief. "Like a giddy imprisoned damozel making signals to her giddy knight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Some silly ass playing the giddy goat!" remarked Manners. "Where's that ball got to?"

"Help!"

The voices of the juniors close to the tower had reached Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in his prison, and he shouted from the loophole for help.

"Gussy!" roared Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha! He's got himself shut up there somehow!" exclaimed Manners.

"Help, deah boys! Pway come up and welease me!"

"Like a bird!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

And the juniors hurried into the tower and ascended the old stone steps.

"Where are you?" called out Tom Merry.

There was a thump on the inside of the locked door.

"Here I am, deah boys!"

"Well, why don't you come out?" demanded Blake.

"The door's locked, ass!"

"Unlock it, then!"

"The key is on the outside, you fwab-jous chump!"

"That it jolly well isn't!" chuckled Jack Blake. "There's no sign of a key here, Gussy. Didn't you lock yourself in?"

"You uttah ass!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, whose temper had suffered a little. "Why should I lock myself in?"

"Blessed if I know! I never do know why you do things!" said Blake. "But if the door's locked on the outside, where's the key?"

"I suppose that beast Lowthah has taken it away with him!"

"Lowther?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas. The uttah wottah shut me up here and locked the beastly door!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothin' to laugh at, you silly asses! It is not funny at all! I am goin' to give Lowthah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you unlock the door, you cacklin' asses, and let me out?" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"How are we to unlock the door without a key?" chuckled Tom Merry. "Do you know where Monty is, Gussy? We'll go after him."

"I believe he is with Cutts."

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Tom Mewwy—"

"Rats, and many of 'em!" said Tom Merry warmly. "Monty hasn't anything to do with Cutts, and I know it! Don't be an ass!"

"If there was not a door between us, Tom Mewwy, I should give you a lickin' for that remark! Will you find that beast Lowthah, and let me out?"

"Well, we'll look for him," said Tom.

"What did he shut you up for?"

"The wottah b'wought me here,



because I was goin' to give him some good advice. Then, instead of listenin' to my good advice, the awful wottah locked me in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not a laughin' mattah at all! Lowthah is goin' to the dogs, and I was goin' to look aftah him. Now I wefuse to do anythin' of the kind! The sooner such a wottah gets the sack the bettah!"

"You're talking out of the back of your silly neck, Gussy!" said Manners. "What has old Monty been doing?"

"He's been makin' bets on waces with that wottah Levison!"

"Bosh!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Bosh!" repeated Manners, with emphasis.

"And if you look for him now, I am pwetty certain that you'll find him with Cutts. He said he had a pwessin' engagement."

"Oh, rot!"

"Well, we'll look for him," said Tom Merry. "Wait till we come back, Gussy!"

"Pway huiwuy! It's wathah cold in here!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I suppose it is. Keep your fatherly advice next time till it is specially requested, Gussy!"

"Wats!"

And the juniors descended the stairs again.

Tom Merry was looking very grave. He had noticed as well as D'Arcy that Monty Lowther had been unusually "thick" lately with Levison, and he had not liked it. But he had not spoken to his chum more than once on the subject, as Lowther had developed an unaccustomed touchiness.

That Levison would have been glad to make trouble among the Terrible Three, Tom knew, and he did not intend to play into the hands of the cad of the Fourth if he could help it. But if Lowther was really getting led into bad company, it was time for his chums to chip in—emphatically.

Cutts was a blackguard of the first water, and the less Lowther had to do with him the better.

"It's all rot!" said Manners, with an uneasy glance at Tom's serious face. "Monty hasn't anything to do with Cutts."

"We'll look for him there," said Tom shortly.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Blake proceeded at once to the School House, and made their way to Cutts' study. Tom knocked at the door and opened it.

Cutts was there with Monty Lowther. They were engaged in an animated conversation, but they ceased immediately the three juniors presented themselves in the doorway.

Lowther turned red.

Gerald Cutts stared at the juniors calmly.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"We want Lowther," said Tom Merry curtly. "Come on, Lowther, old man!"

"I'm rather engaged just now," said Lowther. "I'm having a jaw with Cutts."

"The less you jaw with Cutts the better, I should think."

"Oh, rats!"

"Monty, old man——" said Manners.

"Look here," exclaimed Lowther hotly. "I'm not a little kid to be looked after and watched! That silly ass D'Arcy has been trying it, and I've shut him up. Leave me alone!"

The juniors exchanged glances.

It was a curious thing how easily Cutts could get a younger fellow under his influence, if he chose to exert his powers. He could be a very agreeable fellow when he liked. But the Terrible Three knew him so well, and had had so much experience of his blackguardly ways, that it was surprising that a member of the famous Co. should be taken in by him.

Tom Merry and Manners looked at their chum in mingled surprise and anger.

"Look here, Monty, you'd better come!" said Tom Merry, at last.

"I won't!"

"What have you got to jaw about with Cutts?"

"Never mind that!"

"But I do mind that!" exclaimed Tom Merry hotly. "You know very well Cutts tried to get me into his rotten ways once, and you fellows helped me out. Now he's trying the same game with you, I suppose. You ought to know better, after my experience!"

"Thank you!" said Cutts, with sarcastic politeness. "May I mention that I am not used to being slanged by fags in my own study?"

"You'll get used to it if you don't leave my chum alone!" said Tom Merry. "You know what we think of you."

Cutts yawned.

"There's the door!" he remarked.

"Will you come, Monty?"

"No!" snapped Lowther.

"Then we'll jolly well make you!" exclaimed Tom Merry, whose temper was rising. "You've no business here, and you know it! Collar him!"

"You silly ass!" shouted Lowther. "Leave me alone! Hands off!"

But Lowther's expostulations were not heeded. Tom Merry, Manners, and Blake collared him and whirled him out of the study. Cutts burst into a laugh. The juniors were angry, and had not stopped to reflect; but, as a matter of fact, they were playing into the hands of the blackguard of the Fifth. This course of treatment was only likely to arouse the obstinacy in Monty Lowther's nature.

Cutts did not offer to interfere. He stood with his hands in his pockets, looking on and laughing.

Lowther gave a roar of wrath as he was whirled out of the study. He

struggled in the passage, but the three juniors rushed him along, and his resistance was of no avail.

They arrived, somewhat dishevelled and panting, at the end of the passage. Lowther struggled furiously there. A heavy iron key fell from his pocket and clinked on the floor. Blake picked it up.

"Let go, you fools!" shouted Lowther.

"Come on, Monty!"

"I won't!"

Lowther tore himself loose, and stood panting, his face flushed crimson, his eyes gleaming with anger.

"Let me alone! You've no right to interfere with me. Mind your own business!"

"Look here, Monty——"

"Oh, cheese it! I'm fed-up with you!"

And Lowther, with an angry snort, strode away towards Cutts' study. Tom Merry, Manners, and Blake exchanged hopeless glances. Their drastic interference had evidently done no good.

Blake whistled softly.

"Well, this is a pretty kettle of fish," he said. "I'll go back with you for him, if you like."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Let him have his way," he said, compressing his lips. "We'll mind our own business, as he said."

And Tom Merry walked away, his face darkly clouded. Blake whistled again, and then walked off, making his way to the old tower with the key. A few minutes later, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was free once more. He came out of the room in the tower in a state of great wrath.

"You found that wotah?" he asked.

"Yes!" growled Blake.

"Where was he?"

"In Cutts' study!"

"Yaas, I thought so!" said Arthur Augustus. "Now you can come with me and hold my jacket and monocle while I give him a thwashin' for playin' such a tick on me!"

"Cheese it!" said Blake. "There's going to be trouble enough, I think, without you chipping in. I think Lowther's going off his silly dot. Come on!"

And Arthur Augustus, on second thoughts, decided to let Monty Lowther off that fearful thrashing.

CHAPTER 6.

A Rift in the Lute!

THAT afternoon there was trouble in the Co.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were always on such excellent terms with one another that any rift in the lute was sure to be seen at once. So, before afternoon lessons were over, all the Shell knew that Monty Lowther was not speaking to his old chums.

Curious inquirers wanted to know the reason; but they received only the shortest of replies, and had to retire with their curiosity unsatisfied.

After lessons, Tom Merry and Manners came out of the Form-room together, but Lowther did not join them in the passage.

Lowther did not go down to the footer practice.

After practice Tom and Manners came in to tea, both of them looking somewhat clouded. They were both worried by the fact that they were on bad terms with their hitherto inseparable chum, and still more by the know-

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ledge that Lowther needed them more than ever just now. For a fellow who came under the influence of Gerald Cutts was undoubtedly in need of firm friends to stand by him and see him through.

What Cutts wanted with Lowther they did not know, but they knew it was no good that was in the mind of the Fifth Former. And if Lowther was led into any recklessness, and trouble followed, it was pretty certain that Cutts would get clear, and that all the trouble would fall upon the junior.

The two Shell fellows wondered whether Lowther would come into the study to tea as usual. At the slightest sign of the olive-branch from their chum they were anxious to make it up.

They were both relieved to find Lowther in the study when they came in. He had the fire going, and the table ready for tea.

It was evidently a sign of peace, and their faces lighted up. Tom Merry determined to act just as if there had been no dispute as the easiest way of passing it over.

"Tea ready?" he exclaimed heartily.

"That's good. I'm as hungry as a hunter."

"Same here!" said Manners.

"Just on!" said Lowther, a little awkwardly. "I thought I'd get it ready when you came in. The kettle's on the boil and I've poached the eggs."

"Good!"

And the three juniors sat down to tea with something of their old hearty cordiality.

Monty Lowther was unusually silent and thoughtful, but Tom and Manners were determined to notice nothing, and they chatted in the same strain as usual.

"We shall have a pretty tough match with the Grammar School next Wednesday," Tom Merry remarked. "I hear Gordon Gay & Co. are in great form."

Lowther started a little.

"Next Wednesday!"

"Yes; you haven't forgotten that we're playing the Grammarians?"

"N-no," said Lowther. "But——"

He paused.

"It will be a good match," said Tom Merry. "We want to keep the practice up, too, Monty; we shall have to be in great form."

"I don't think I want to play next Wednesday," said Lowther, colouring.

"You're feeling fit, surely?"

"Oh, yes; I'm fit enough!"

"Then why not play? You would be missed from the team—we haven't another fellow up to your form to put in your place," said Tom anxiously.

"Oh, that will be all right!" said Lowther. "You could play young Hammond of the Fourth—he's a good man."

"But we want you!"

"I'm sorry, but—after all, it's only fair to give some of the others a chance," said Lowther. "Besides, I—I think I shall have an engagement."

There was silence in the study. Lowther did not offer to explain what the engagement was. But both Tom Merry and Manners guessed that it had something to do with Cutts.

The silence lasted a long time, and Lowther's face grew redder and redder. He broke the silence at last.

"Look here, you chaps, I may as well speak out!"

"Perhaps it would be better," said Tom Merry dryly.

"I've been talking to Levison——"

"Well?"

"He's told me about Four-in-Hand, you know, the dark horse for the Muggleton race——"

"The cad!"

"I don't see that he's such a cad in that. Of course, I know that the Head's down on anything of that sort."

"Do you think he's down on it without reason?"

Lowther gave an impatient shrug of the shoulders.

"Well, lots of people make money on horseraces," he said.

"Yes—running horses in races, but not making bets on the races," said Tom. "Racing would be a real sport if there were no betting. When the money comes in the sport goes out."

"Lots of people play bridge for money."

"That doesn't make it right."

"People go to Monte Carlo and play roulette——"

"But they know they ought not to."

"Well, perhaps they oughtn't," admitted Lowther. "But nobody's perfect in this world, you know. Why shouldn't a chap have a bit of fun sometimes?"

"Fun's all right," said Tom, "but blackguardism isn't."

"That's too strong. This horse Levison speaks of is going to win at thirty-three to one against. It seems simply a sin to let such a chance go by. Just fancy getting thirty-three quids by putting on one quid!"

"Whose thirty-three quids?" asked Manners dryly.

"The bookmakers' quids, of course."

"And where do they get it from?"

"From people who lose their money, I suppose."

"Exactly. It isn't their money; it's money won by gambling. And if you talk for a month of Sundays, Monty, you can't make it out that gambling is right."

"Well, if you put it like that, of course," said Lowther uneasily, "gambling is a horrid word, I know. But if you call it sport——"

"Better call a spade a spade!"

"Well, look here, it isn't as if I were going to haunt pubs and pal with bookies, as Cutts and Knox do," said Lowther. "It's just once—and once only. Here's the chance of a life-time—why shouldn't I make something just for once?"

"For one thing, if you begin, you go on," said Tom Merry. "If you win, you want to win again. It would be better for you to lose. Not that you've got any chance of winning, either."

"This is a dead cert."

"I've heard of dead certs before. The only thing certain in racing is that the bookmakers make money out of it. And they don't make money out of their losses."

"I—I suppose they don't," said Monty. "But—but this is a special chance. Levison knows the very jockey—he's got information straight from the horse's mouth."

"Even so, it's a rotten thing to do. You call it sport, or anything you like—but it's practically swindling to keep a horse dark like that and take in the public."

"Well, I don't look at it like that."

"You used to, before Cutts got at you," said Tom bitterly.

"It isn't as if I were going to make a regular thing of it. Why shouldn't a chap have a bit of fun sometimes? Wouldn't you like a drive to the races?"

"I should like that all right."

"Well, then, let's make a break for once," said Lowther eagerly. "I'm just going to put a single quid on Four-in-Hand, that's all. We'll go to Muggleton together on Wednesday, and have a good time. I'll stand treat. It will be a ripping excursion!"

Tom Merry and Manners stared blankly at their chum. It seemed to

them that Monty Lowther was taking leave of his senses.

"Go to the races!" repeated Manners.

"Yes."

"Why, it means the sack if the Head know."

"He won't know."

"A thousand people might see us."

"We shan't take front seats in the grand stand. Cutts will make all the arrangements, and you know how clever he is."

"Clever enough to keep out of trouble, and to let his friends in for it; I know that," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, he isn't such a bad sort."

"You've always thought before that he was a rotten, bad sort."

"I mean, he has his good points. I suppose he's a bad hat, but nobody's quite bad, through and through. He's been very decent to me lately."

"It seems to me that you're going off your rocker," said Tom. "You can't go to the races. It would mean the sack if you were found out."

"I've arranged to go," said Lowther sulkily.

"With Cutts?"

"Yes, with Cutts," said Lowther defiantly. "What have you got to say against it?"

"Lots! You can't do it."

"I can do it, and I'm going to."

"For goodness' sake, have a little

sense, Monty. You can't! Besides, there's the Grammar School match—"

"Blow the Grammar School match!"

Monty Lowther rose to his feet.

"I think you're a pair of narrow-minded duffers," he said deliberately. "I never liked Eric, or Good Little Georgie—never could stand them. I'm not a blackguard, I suppose—and I don't see why you should be down on me because I want a bit of excitement for once in a way. I call it narrow-minded."

"You call it what you like," said Tom angrily. "I call it being commonly decent."

"Which means, I suppose, that I'm not commonly decent?"

"Not if you go to the races and bet on horses," said Tom. "Whatever you choose to say about it, you can't make black white, and wrong right."

"Well, if I'm not a decent chap, you don't want anything more to do with me," said Lowther savagely. "You can go on playing Eric, and I'll go my own way. I'm fed up."

He strode to the door.

"Monty!" exclaimed Tom, jumping up.

Lowther did not reply. He strode from the study, and closed the door behind him with a resounding slam.

There was a rift in the lute now, with a vengeance.

CHAPTER 7.

The Only Way!

TOM MERRY and Manners stared at one another blankly. Monty Lowther's quick footsteps died away along the passage.

He was gone, and he left dismay in the study behind him.

"Well," said Manners at last, with a deep breath, "this beats it, Tommy! I should never have thought that Monty would have been such a silly ass."

Tom Merry compressed his lips.

"I've a jolly good mind to let him go his own way, and have nothing more to do with him!" he exclaimed angrily.

But Manners shook his head.

"That won't do, Tommy. He's our pal, and all this is due to Cutts. We've got to see Monty through this, somehow."

"But how, if he won't let us?"

"We can't let him go his own way. Dash it all, it means the sack! I——" Manners broke off as a tap came at the door.

The door opened, and Blake came in. Blake looked from one to the other of the Shell fellows with a puzzled expression.

"Anything up?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tom Merry shortly.

"Lowther's just passed me with a giddy thundercloud on his noble

(Continued on the next page.)

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brow," said Blake. "You chaps haven't been having a row, surely?"

"I'm afraid we have," said Tom ruefully. "Shut the door, and give us some advice, Blake. Monty's determined to play the giddy ox, and we're determined that he shan't."

Blake closed the door.

"Tell your uncle about it!" he said. "You can rely on your Uncle Blake for good advice in case of family troubles. Pile in!"

"Keep it dark, of course!"

"That's understood; go on."

"Lowther's arranged with Cutts to go to the races next Wednesday."

Blake whistled.

"My hat! That takes the cake, and no mistake!"

"If he does, it's asking for the sack," said Tom Merry. "It's very likely to come out, and you know the line the Head would take."

"A flogging, at least."

"Well, a flogging would serve the silly ass right, but more likely he would be expelled from the school. We don't want that."

"Rather not," agreed Blake. "He's got to be stopped. He seems to be rather an obstinate ass, though."

Blake reflected, wrinkling his brows in thought.

"You've argued with him about it?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And it was no good?"

"Not a bit."

"Then there's only one thing to be done," said Blake. "Unluckily it's the same day as the Grammar School match. Would you be ready to chuck that up for the sake of looking after Lowther?"

Tom Merry looked worried.

"Well, I'm junior skipper, and the Grammar School match is going to be tough," he said. "The fellows will expect me to play. Still—"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Blake reassuringly. "I'd be willing to captain the team in your place, if you like. It would come to the same thing."

"Would it?" growled Tom Merry, unconvinced.

"Yes—or better," said Blake calmly. "I'm willing to volunteer as skipper, so you needn't worry about that. If it's no good talking to Lowther, you'll have to take action—actions speak louder than words, you know. You'll have to watch him on Wednesday afternoon—and you can't do that while you're playing footer. When he goes out with Cutts, you'll have to collar him!"

"Collar him?" said Manners.

Blake nodded coolly.

"Exactly! Collar him, and simply yank him in and keep him in. If he objects, knock him down, and sit on his head."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, that's one way," he remarked.

"It's the only way," said Blake.

"He cut up rather rusty when we rushed him out of Cutts' study, you know," Manners remarked.

"Let him cut up rusty," said Blake. "It's for his own good, isn't it?"

"If Cutts & Co. are bowled out and brought up before the Head, Lowther will be jolly glad he isn't in the party. I should think. He's off his dot just now—he'll be glad afterwards that you chipped in."

"Well, there's something in that," Tom Merry agreed. "Only, if we collar Lowther, Cutts & Co. may chip in, and then—"

"Then there will be a rumpus," said Blake. "And if Cutts takes a thick ear to the races with him, all the better."

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"You'd better have a few fellows with you in case of trouble."

Tom Merry nodded thoughtfully.

"It's rotten to have to cut the match, especially with the Grammarians in such great form," he said. "But I suppose we ought to do it, for Monty's sake—confound him. Let me see."

He drew a slip of paper from his pocket. "This is how the team stands: Fatty Wynn, in goal; Herries and Reilly, backs; Redfern, Kangaroo, and Lowther, halves; Kerr, Figgins, myself, Blake, D'Arcy, forwards. I might put you in as centre-forward in my place, Blake, and young-Hammond as inside-left in your place."

"Good egg!" said Blake.

"And Owen of the New House can take Lowther's place at half. Manners wasn't going to play this time, anyway. But—I'm blessed if I know what will become of the match!"

"Oh, we shall win all right!" said Blake comfortingly. "I'll skipper the team."

"I think we'll leave that to Kangaroo," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"But I really consider—"

"It's rotten to cut the match," said Tom discontentedly. "Lowther ought to be boiled in oil for worrying us like this on the day of the match. I've a jolly good mind to let the silly ass go his own way!"

"Can't let a pal go to the giddy bow-wows," said Blake.

"No, I suppose not. I shall have to have some fellows with me, in case Cutts gives trouble on Wednesday afternoon," Tom Merry said thoughtfully.

"You can speak to Digby about it, Blake—and there's Lumley-Lumley, Glyn, and Clifton Dane. They'll be willing to help, and they can be trusted."

"Right-ho!" said Blake. "No charge for good advice. But are you sure you wouldn't like me to captain the team?"

"I think we'll leave that to Kangy."

"In the circumstances—"

"Oh, never mind the circumstances!" said Tom Merry. "Have some of these chestnuts, Blake; they're good!"

And Blake grinned and consumed chestnuts.

CHAPTER 8.

Lowther Wants to Know!

WHEN Tom Merry posted up the list of players for the Grammar School match, there was a good deal of surprise among the St. Jim's juniors.

Tom Merry's own name was missing from the list, as well as the names of his two chums.

It was a very unusual thing for the junior captain to miss an important match, and the fellows were very curious about it.

Quite a number of them made inquiries of Tom Merry on the subject.

But the captain of the Shell had only to say that he thought it better to stand out on that occasion, and that Kangaroo—otherwise Noble of the Shell—would captain the team in first-class style.

The news came as a surprise to Monty Lowther, as well as to the other fellows. Nothing had been said to him on the subject in the study. The three Shell fellows still did their preparation in the same study together, but they spoke little, and Monty Lowther had been having his tea in Hall, or in some other study, lately.

When they met for preparation they exchanged few remarks.

The rift in the lute was widening.

Lowther spent a good amount of time with Levison now, and was sometimes in Gerald Cutts' study.

Perhaps he was feeling a little lonely being estranged from his old friends, or perhaps it was sheer obstinacy, and he was bent upon showing them that he could do as he liked.

Lowther seemed quite changed from his old self these last few days.

Tom Merry and Manners knew that it was due to the influence of Cutts, and their feelings towards that individual were not pleasant.

They rather hoped that on Wednesday afternoon Gerald Cutts would cut up rusty, and give them an excuse for handling him. If it came to that, they were determined that he should have signs of their vengeance to carry to Muggleton Races with him.

When Lowther read the footer list on the notice-board on Tuesday, he frowned a little over it, and after some thought he looked for his old friends. He found Tom Merry and Manners playing chess in the Common-room.

Lowther approached the table, and stood looking on for some minutes, with his hands in his pockets, without speaking.

Tom Merry looked up genially. He was only too willing to make friends again at the first sign from Lowther.

"Give us a tip," he said. "Would you move the rook?"

"Oh, blow the rook!" said Lowther.

"What about that match to-morrow? It seems that you are not playing."

"No; I'm standing out."

"What for?"

"Well, I've some reasons for standing out."

"Because I'm out of it?" asked Lowther.

Tom Merry did not reply. He seemed to be studying the game intensely, and debating in his mind whether he should move the rook.

Monty Lowther bit his lip, and the lines in his forehead deepened. He was evidently growing angry.

"Look here," he exclaimed abruptly, "have you chucked up the match on Wednesday with any idea of interfering with me?"

"I think I'll shove it on bishop's fourth," murmured Tom Merry, still apparently devoting his whole attention to the chess.

Lowther's eyes gleamed.

"Did you hear me?" he said.

"Don't speak to the man at the wheel!" chided Manners. "You really shouldn't talk to a chap who's going to be mated in three, Lowther!"

"Mated in three thousand years!" grunted Tom Merry. "Why, I've got you fixed! I don't care where you put your queen; I've got it!"

"If you intend to interfere with me to-morrow afternoon," said Lowther in a low, concentrated voice, "I can warn you that it won't do! I shan't stand it!"

"Check!" said Tom Merry.

"Will you answer me, Tom Merry?"

Tom looked up at last impatiently.

"I've got nothing to say," he said.

"Are you planning to interfere with my excursion to-morrow afternoon? That's what I want to know!"

"Wait till to-morrow afternoon, and then you will know," said Tom.

"That means yes, I suppose. Well, now I know what to expect."

And Monty Lowther stalked away, with compressed lips and angry brow.

"He's spotted it, you see," Manners remarked.

"Can't be helped."

"It won't make any difference."

"Not at all."

Monty Lowther made his way directly to Cutts' study in the Fifth Form passage. He found that young gentleman smoking a cigarette and studying a sporting paper.

Gerald Cutts nodded genially to him as he came in. It was a great pleasure to Gerald Cutts to have detached Lowther from his chums. He had never forgotten his old grudge against Tom Merry, and Lowther was very useful to Cutts just then.

Cutts, with all his prospects of untold wealth, when Four-in-Hand romped home, was short of money, and he had been short of money for some time, with the result that his credit was not good. Monty Lowther's contribution to the expenses of the car on the day of the races was very welcome.

"Hallo!" said Cutts cheerfully.

"And you don't feel any scruples about taking the money, Cutts?" he asked.

The Fifth Former stared.

"No. Why should I?" he asked.

"Well, money got by gambling isn't— isn't exactly like other money, is it?"

The senior laughed.

"Your pals have been talking to you, I see," he remarked. "My dear chap, all life's a gamble. What's the Stock Exchange but a big gamble? Monte Carlo under another name. What's business but a gamble? You take your chance in everything, and if you're lucky, you score. And if you've got sense, you freeze on to anything that comes into your hands. That's business."

"But—"

"Why shouldn't you take the bookie's

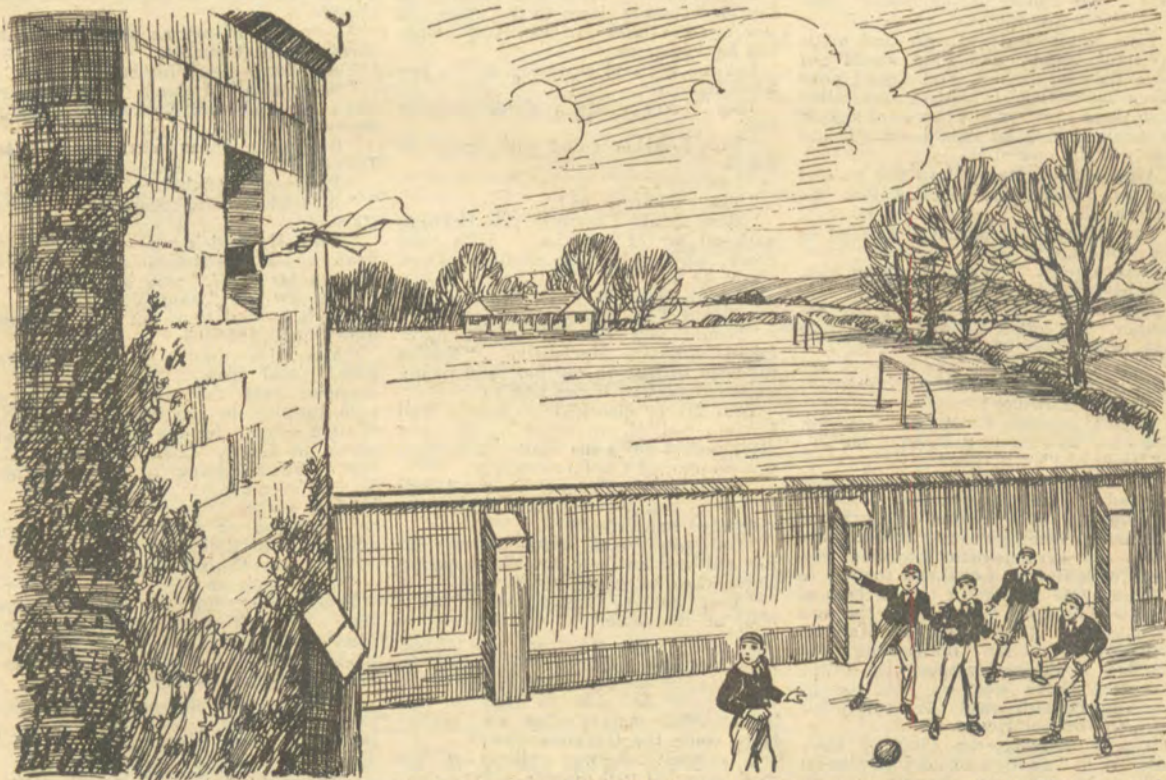
"What? I suppose they won't have the cheek to collar you and keep you in by main force?" Cutts asked, in astonishment.

"I shouldn't wonder if they did."

"Then you'll have to dodge them," Cutts reflected. "Leave half an hour before the rest of us, and wait for us on the road. You'll know where to find the car. It will be waiting on the Muggleton Road, and you'll only have to walk on till you come to it. There will be a chauffeur in charge, and you can ask him if he's waiting for Cutts."

"Yes; that will be all right. I'll clear off immediately after dinner, then."

"Yes. And don't go out by the gates. Drop over the wall. You can do that behind the trees, where you won't be noticed. They won't even know you're outside the school then," said Cutts.



Tom Merry suddenly caught sight of a handkerchief fluttering from an opening high up in the wall of the old tower, and he drew the attention of the other juniors to it. "Who on earth's that?" he asked, pointing. "Help!" came the voice of Arthur Augustus.

"You're not looking very chirpy! Not worried about your quid on Four-in-Hand, are you?"

Lowther shook his head.

"That's as safe as houses," said Cutts. "It's beginning to leak out now that there's a dark horse—a giddy Polonius behind the curtain, you know. The odds against Four-in-Hand have gone down to fifteen to one already. It will be down to five to one to-morrow. The bookies are smelling a rat."

"Then it's really a cert?" Lowther asked.

"A dead cert! Levison's information was quite correct."

"And it means thirty-three quids to-morrow?"

"Thirty-three quids!" assented Cutts.

"It's a lot of money."

"A lot of money to get for nothing," agreed Cutts. "You don't often get a tip like that. Levison is a useful beast."

Lowther seemed to hesitate.

money? Do you think they have any scruples about accepting their winnings?" said Cutts, laughing.

Lowther laughed, too.

"No, I suppose not. It's all right, I suppose. I—I haven't done anything of this kind before. But I say, Cutts, I'm afraid Tom Merry and Manners have some idea of chipping in when we start to-morrow. Tom is standing out of the Grammar School match on purpose, I think."

Cutts frowned.

"They'd better not chip in and bother me!" he growled.

"Do we start from here?" asked Lowther.

"No; we go down to Rylcombe and meet there, and the car will be waiting for us on the Muggleton Road," said Cutts. "We'd better leave the school separately, and that won't excite any attention."

"Those silly asses may collar me—"

Monty Lowther grinned.

"Right-ho!" he said.

And he left Cutts' study feeling more easy in his mind. The excitement of getting away from his watchful friends added zest to his adventure. There was, it was true, a lurking uneasiness in Lowther's breast—a haunting consciousness that he was doing wrong. He had argued it out that there was no harm in what he was doing, and his arguments had seemed reasonable and convincing enough; but he knew in his heart that it is always easy to find arguments in favour of doing what one wants to do.

A still small voice within warned him that all argument on the subject was fallacious, and that it was simply a "dodge" to stifle the promptings of conscience. But the junior, in his obstinacy, refused to listen to the still, small voice.

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When the next day came, Monty Lowther was still determined to throw in his lot with Cutts, Knox, and Levison. And Tom Merry was equally determined that he should not. It remained to be seen what the outcome would be.

CHAPTER 9.

Tricked!

MONTY LOWTHER sat very silent and thoughtful at dinner that day.

He was thinking of the difficulty before him of escaping the keen eyes of his chums.

The thought that they should take it upon themselves to prevent him by force from carrying out his design made him very angry; but he knew that it was useless to mount the "high horse" on the subject.

Tom Merry and Manners had made up their minds, and they would not have listened to him, and would have taken no notice if he had quarrelled with them about it. They were simply determined that he should not go, and that was the end of it.

After dinner Monty Lowther walked off by himself and strolled into the quadrangle.

Tom Merry and Manners strolled in the quadrangle, too. Lowther knew that they were keeping an eye on him, and he gritted his teeth.

But he did not give way to his temper. He called out to Levison, who was talking to Mellish.

"Levison, old man!"

Levison looked round.

"Hallo, Lowther!"

"When you see Cutts, will you ask him when he's starting, and tell me?"

"Right-ho!" said Levison.

Lowther walked away. Levison grinned at Tom Merry and Manners and went into the House. He grinned still more when he was out of sight. He knew the arrangement Lowther had made with Cutts. Lowther's request to him now was simply for the purpose of throwing dust in the eyes of the two Shell fellows. Tom Merry and Manners naturally had the impression that Lowther would be starting with Cutts, and that there was no need to be specially vigilant until they saw Cutts leave the School House.

It was a trick—the kind of trick Lowther had never seemed likely to be guilty of. He was learning fast in the company of his precious new friends!

"We may as well get down to the gates presently," Tom Merry remarked to his chum. "We can see when Cutts goes, and if the Grammarians come first we can meet them there. I'll whistle to the other chaps if I want them. I've arranged that."

"Good egg!" said Manners.

There was no sign of Cutts yet. He was not starting just then. Tom Merry discussed the coming match with Blake and Kangaroo, a little anxious about the result as he himself and Lowther were not playing.

A little later Tom Merry and Manners sauntered down to the school gates, there to keep watch for Cutts & Co.

Kangaroo and the junior eleven were preparing for the match.

"Here they come!" said Manners at last, as two seniors came down towards the gates.

Cutts and Knox were talking cheerfully together as they came out. They glanced carelessly at the two Shell fellows in the gateway.

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"Hallo! Not playing footer this afternoon, you kids?" said Cutts.

"No!" said Tom shortly.

"Slacking, eh?" said Knox.

"We've got something else to do," said Tom Merry deliberately. "A chum of ours has some scheme for going out with a rotten blackguard, and we're going to persuade him not to."

Cutts flushed a little, and Knox scowled.

"I wish you luck!" said Cutts carelessly.

And the two seniors walked out.

Tom Merry was a little puzzled. Had he been mistaken, after all? Lowther had certainly said that he was going to the races with Cutts that afternoon. But had he changed his mind?

Tom Merry hoped that he had.

At all events, there was no sign of Lowther coming down to the gates. A few minutes later Levison came along, but he was alone.

Levison glanced curiously at the two Shell fellows.

Tom Merry made a stride towards him.

"Isn't Lowther going with you?" he asked.

"Lowther?"

"Yes. Where is he?"

"How should I know?" said Levison, with an air of surprise. "He's your chum, isn't he? You ought to know where he is."

"I understood he was going out with you," said Tom Merry.

"Would you like to search me?" asked Levison insolently. "You're welcome to look in my hat, and in my waistcoat pocket, if you like."

Tom Merry clenched his hands, and Levison walked on rather hastily, and disappeared down the road. Still there was no sign of Lowther coming.

"Perhaps he's changed his mind, and he's not going, after all?" Manners suggested hopefully.

"But you heard what he said to Levison half an hour ago about asking Cutts when he would be starting."

"Yes; but he hasn't started with him, all the same."

"I don't quite catch on," said Tom, wrinkling his brows. "I should be jolly glad if he had changed his mind. We should be able to play in the Grammarian match, after all. Hallo! Here come the Grammarians!"

A motor-coach was rolling up the road, crowded with fellows in Grammar School caps.

The coach stopped at the gates of St. Jim's and Gordon Gay & Co. of the Grammar School swarmed down, and were warmly greeted by Tom Merry.

"Here we are again!" said Gordon Gay heartily. "Ready to give you the licking of your lives, my infants!"

"And we're ready to take it!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "We'd better look for Lowther," he said in a low voice to his chum as they walked to the footer ground with the Grammar School crowd.

"No good waiting about any longer. If he's not going, there's no need to miss the Grammar School match. Kangy won't mind if I take my place, after all. He's a good sport."

"Right-ho!" said Manners.

Monty Lowther was not to be seen among the crowd who were gathering on the junior football ground.

Leaving the Grammarians in their dressing-room, Tom Merry and Manners hurried into the School House to look for Monty Lowther there.

But he was not to be seen there.

And no one knew where he was, or

could give any information in reply to their anxious inquiries.

Lowther seemed to have vanished as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up.

Several of Tom Merry's friends, who had willingly agreed to help him in this delicate matter, joined in the search for Lowther. But Glyn and Dane, and Digby and Lumley-Lumley searched in vain.

Monty Lowther, it was soon pretty clear, was not within the walls of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry's brow was darkly clouded as this truth forced itself home upon his mind. He understood now that he had been fooled by Lowther—fooled by his old chum.

"Lowther must have gone out first," he said moodily to Manners. "The others must have arranged to join him outside."

"I suppose there's no doubt he's with them?" said Manners.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"None at all, I think. But he must have sneaked out first before Cutts started."

"But what about what he said to Levison?"

"That was a trick."

"A trick!" said Manners, with a stare.

"Yes. He said it purposely for us to hear, so that we shouldn't keep an eye on him for a bit," said Tom bitterly.

"Oh, my hat!" said Manners.

"Didn't you keep an eye on the gate?" asked Digby.

"Yes. He didn't go out by the gate," said Tom. "He must have dropped over the wall. I shan't be able to play in the match, after all. Wait a minute for me while I go and speak to Blake. Look here, you fellows! You're going to stand by me in this, aren't you?"

"Yes, rather."

"Then get out the bikes, while I go and speak to Blake."

"The bikes!" exclaimed Digby.

"Yes; buck up!"

Tom Merry hurried away to the junior football ground. The Grammarians had changed now, and were ready for play. Blake and Kangaroo met Tom Merry eagerly.

"Well, are you playing?" asked Kangaroo. "If you are, I don't mind a bit, you know. I'm willing to step down."

"No; I can't play. It's all right. I've just come to tell you, that's all. Pile in, and lick the Grammarians, if you can."

"Oh, we'll lick them!" said Blake confidently.

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I am weally in gweat form to-day. It will be all wight, Tom Mewwy. I assuah you that you will not be missed fwom the team at all."

"I hope not," said Tom.

And leaving the two teams on the footer ground, preparing for the tussle, Tom Merry hurried back and joined Manners and the rest. They had brought his bicycle out of the bike-shed, ready, and were waiting for him.

"What's the order now?" asked Digby.

"We're going after Cutts," said Tom Merry decisively. "Lowther's gone with him, and we're going to bring him back."

"Good egg!" said Manners.

"They have a car, and we can't hope to overtake them on the road to Muggleton," said Tom Merry. "But we can save a lot of time by taking a short

cut across country, and we ought to arrive soon after them, if we put on speed. That's the idea. You're game to back me up?"

"Yes, rather."

"I guess we'll back you up," said Lumley-Lumley. "But they've got a prefect with them, you know—Knox."

"I don't care if they have a dozen prefects! I'm going to fetch Monty back, if I have to go after him alone!"

"You won't have to do that," said Clifton Dane. "We're all in it. After all, Knox won't dare to say a word about it afterwards, in case it should come out that he went to the races. He wouldn't remain a prefect long if the Head got to know about that."

"Come on, then!" said Tom Merry. And the half-dozen juniors wheeled their machines down to the gates, and out into the road, and mounted and pedalled away in hot haste—in pursuit of Cutts & Co.

CHAPTER 10.

Run Down!

LEVISON was the last to reach the rendezvous.

Monty Lowther had arrived first, and was seated in the car, when Cutts and Knox arrived. Levison came up ten minutes later.

"Jump in!" said Cutts. Levison jumped in. Cutts had already dismissed the chauffeur who had brought the car to the arranged place.

Knox sat beside him, and Lowther was behind with Levison.

Knox and Cutts and Levison were looking very cheerful as the car hummed away down the road. But Lowther's face was somewhat overcast.

He was thinking. He had been determined to have his way. He had quarrelled with his best friends, and had given them the slip; but somehow he did not feel comfortable in his new surroundings.

The talk of the other three ran upon subjects congenial to them—races, bets, tips, billiards, and so forth—and Lowther felt himself out of it.

And he did not want to feel himself "in it," either.

He had a vague feeling that he was

in an atmosphere of dingy black-guardism, and the talk of the three "sportsmen" jarred upon his nerves.

He tried to be cheerful; but, in spite of himself, his brow became gloomier and gloomier.

It was a bright, fresh afternoon, and very pleasant driving along the green lanes in the car. With his old chums, Lowther would have enjoyed it well enough. But it was no use trying to think that he enjoyed it with Cutts & Co. He couldn't!

Cutts & Co. considered themselves sportsmen of the first water; but as Lowther listened to their talk, he realised clearly enough that "sport" with them meant only one thing—money!

All their thoughts were for the amount they might win—for the cash they would have in their pockets when they had succeeded in "skinning the bookies," owing to Levison's valuable tip.

It was money all the time. A gang of moneylenders could not have been keener after hard cash than those three precious sportsmen seemed to be.

Not a single thought for the race as a race—as a trial of strength and speed between the horses engaged—the only point of view from which it could really be looked upon as a sport.

Cutts & Co. had not the slightest desire for the best horse to win, or for a fair race to be run—they wanted the horse they had backed to win, and they wanted to pocket substantial stakes as a result.

If that was "sport," Lowther reflected, then moneylending and card-sharping might also be considered as "sports."

Monty Lowther had expected to enjoy that excursion, but the enjoyment seemed to be very far off now that he was fairly embarked upon it.

And at home, at St. Jim's, the Grammar School match was going on, and he might have been playing for his school in a healthy, wholesome game, instead of hurrying away on a risky expedition after somebody else's money.

Levison looked at him occasionally with a cynical grin. He thought that Lowther was thinking of the risks of the expedition, and the possibility of the "sack" if the sportsmen were

found out. But to do Lowther justice, he was not thinking of that aspect of the case at all.

It was a wretched feeling that he was an outsider among outsiders that was worrying him and clouding his brow.

"My hat!" Levison exclaimed suddenly.

He was looking back along the road. Six cyclists, scorching at a great rate along the dusty road, had come into sight from a narrow lane which the car had just passed.

Cutts glanced round. "What's the row?" he asked.

"Tom Merry and five other St. Jim's chaps are behind us!" exclaimed Levison.

"Tom Merry!" ejaculated Cutts. "Yes."

"Isn't he playing footer this afternoon?"

"No; he stood out of the match."

Cutts sneered. "So that giddy paragon is going to the races, too!" he exclaimed. "Well, we live and learn. I shouldn't have thought of it of him."

"Digby's with him," said Levison, scanning the rapid riders. "And Dane and Glyn—and Lumley-Lumley—and Manners. Lumley-Lumley's dropping into his old ways again, I suppose, and he's taking the others along with him."

"They're not going to the races," said Lowther curtly.

"Where else can they be going on this road?"

"They're after us!"

"What?" exclaimed Cutts. "They're after me, I mean," said Lowther, biting his lip. "I know they had some scheme for stopping me from going. They've followed."

"They won't catch us!" laughed Cutts. "We'll soon drop them behind."

"Yes; but they'll follow on to Muggleton," said Lowther.

"They'd better not meddle with us if they do!" growled Knox. "I'm a prefect, and—"

"What do you think they care for that?" said Lowther, with a bitter laugh. "You can't report them to the Head, I suppose?"

"Why can't I?" demanded Knox.

"It might come out where you were at the time."

(Continued on the next page.)

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Knox was silent. Certainly, in the circumstances, the fact that he was a prefect was not likely to make much difference.

"Don't worry," said Cutts, accelerating the speed of the car. "We'll steer clear of them at the races. They won't spot us."

The car gathered speed quickly, and Tom Merry & Co. dropped far behind; but they pedalled on grimly after the car, determined to save Lowther from his folly.

Cutts, Knox, and Levison were smiling at the dropping of the six pursuers. But unfortunately for the three black sheep, they smiled too soon. For at that moment the engine began spluttering, and the speed of the car dropped considerably.

"Oh, hang!" exclaimed Cutts. "What's the matter with the rotten thing now?"

Cutts pressed the accelerator up and down fiercely, but the engine failed to respond. It coughed and spluttered all the more, and Cutts was compelled to stop the car.

"I'll have to see what's wrong with the confounded thing!" he said, getting out of the car.

"Well, buck up!" exclaimed Levison. "Tom Merry & Co. will overhaul us if we don't get going again soon."

Cutts opened the bonnet of the car and bent over the engine. He had had a little experience of motor-cars, and he thought he knew what the trouble was. He started tinkering with the carburettor, removing the float from its chamber. In the bottom of the chamber he saw some specks of dirt blocking up the outlet.

"Hurry up, Cutts!" called Knox. "Those kids are coming up fast."

"Hang them!" growled Cutts, who was out of temper. "But I'll soon have this right."

But it was nearly five minutes before Cutts had cleared the dirt from the carburettor.

"Quickly!" exclaimed Knox, as Cutts slammed down the bonnet of the engine. "Here they are!"

As the Fifth Former turned to get back into the car, he saw Tom Merry & Co. racing up on their bicycles. Cutts clambered hastily into his seat, but before he could press the self-starter, the pursuers had jumped from their bikes and were rushing towards the car.

"Clear off, you kids!" shouted Knox.

But the words were wasted on the juniors. They were there to look after Lowther, and if they had to prevent him by main force, they were determined to stop him from going to the races.

Cutts hit out with his fist at Tom Merry as he clambered on to the running-board of the car, but Tom did not heed. He opened the door and grasped Cutts.

"Now, you cad!" muttered Tom Merry between his teeth.

They struggled fiercely in the car. Monty Lowther and Levison jumped out. Levison had no intention of putting up a fight. It did not matter to him whether Tom Merry & Co. collared Lowther or not. Monty Lowther stood undecided. Knox came to Cutts' help, but two or three of the juniors seized the prefect and dragged him out of the car with a bump into the road.

Knox sprawled in the road, and Bernard Glyn promptly sat upon him, pinning him down.

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Tom Merry and Cutts were still struggling, and the powerful Fifth Former would undoubtedly have had the better of it, but Manners came to his chum's assistance.

Cutts was dragged out of the car into the road.

"Hold him!" panted Tom Merry. "He's going to be taught a lesson not to lead decent fellows astray."

"Good egg!" said Lumley-Lumley.

Tom Merry ran to a tree at the roadside and broke off a thin branch. After which Cutts was hauled to the car by Tom Merry, Manners, and Digby, and forced into a bending position over a front mudguard. Then the stick rose and fell upon him.

Cutts roared and struggled, but he could not get loose, and he had to take his punishment.

To be punished by a junior was a new experience for the dandy of the Fifth, and he almost foamed with rage as he writhed under the infliction.

Tom Merry panted as he threw down the stick at last.

"There! I think that will do!" he exclaimed.

"Had enough, Cutts?" asked Digby.

Cutts ground his teeth with rage.

"I'll make you sorry for this!" he gasped, as the juniors released him.

He was looking very dishevelled and wild with rage. For a moment it seemed that he would rush upon the juniors. But he thought better of it. The odds were too much against him, and he did not want any more punishment. He gritted his teeth and clambered back into the car.

"Let me get up, you young hounds!" said Knox, who had not struggled since he was floored. He had kept a nervous eye on the stick instead.

"Let the brute get up!" said Tom. "He doesn't matter to us—or Levison. The cads can go where they like. We want you to come with us, Lowther."

Monty Lowther looked sullen. The thought of yielding to force roused all his obstinacy.

"I'm going with Cutts!" he said.

"You're not going with Cutts!" said Tom Merry sharply.

"I am!"

"Drive on, Cutts!" said Tom Merry quietly. "You and your precious friends can get off."

That was enough for Cutts.

Lowther made a stride towards the car, but the juniors gathered in his way. Lowther had to stop, and he clenched his fists.

"Look here! I won't come back with you!" he said between his teeth.

"You can please yourself about that!" said Tom Merry. "But you're not going with Cutts!"

"What right have you to interfere with me?" asked Lowther passionately. "The right of a friend to save you from making a fool of yourself."

"I don't look on you as a friend!"

"You can look on me as you please, but you're not going with Cutts. That's settled."



"Great Scott!" exclaimed Knox, as he looked at the g
got his field-glasses fixed on us!" "Oh, crumbs!" n
the

"Settled now, at all events, I guess," Lumley-Lumley remarked, with a gesture after the car.

Cutts was driving on, and the vehicle went roaring away down the road. There was no chance of Monty Lowther overtaking it, even if his friends had allowed him to attempt it.

"Now, are you coming, Monty, old man?" asked Manners. "You can have a lift behind my bike, you know."

"I won't."

"It's a long way to walk to St. Jim's," said Clifton Dane.

"I'm not going to St. Jim's."

"Where are you going, then?"

"To Muggleton," said Lowther defiantly.

Tom Merry smiled grimly.

"You're a good few miles from any railway station, and it's twelve miles to walk to Muggleton," he remarked. "You couldn't possibly get there till the races are over. You're welcome to try. Come on, you fellows; let's get off."

The juniors returned to the bicycles. Monty Lowther remained alone in the road, his face dark and angry.

He knew that what Tom Merry had said was correct. He had no chance of getting to Muggleton in time for the races. He stood undecided, hesitating. Not that he wanted to go to the races, as far as that went, but he would not give in.

Tom Merry & Co. came riding back.

"Won't you have a lift to the school, Monty?" Manners called out persuasively.

"No, I won't!" growled Lowther.



stand opposite. "Old Schneider's in the stand and he's ed Levison, turning pale. "What's the old fool doing at ?"

There was no more to be said. Tom Merry & Co. rode back the way they had come, and after they were out of sight, Monty Lowther started walking in the same direction. And as he tramped along the long, white road, he had plenty of time to repent that he had not accepted Manners' offer of a lift.

CHAPTER 11.

Very Rusty!

"GOAL!"

"Bwavo, Figgins!"

The Grammar School match was not over when Tom Merry & Co. arrived at St. Jim's tired and dusty after their long ride.

Immediately after putting up their bikes, the juniors hurried down to the footer ground to see how the game was progressing.

The second half was nearing the end. "How's the score?" Tom Merry asked eagerly, tapping Kerruish of the Fourth on the shoulder. Kerruish was clapping his hands and cheering the latest goal. "One to one now!" said Kerruish. "Gordon Gay scored in the first half; now Figgins has equalised."

"How long to go?" Tom Merry looked at his watch. "Only five minutes. Looks like a draw. Well, that's better than a licking."

"Good old Figgins!"

"Hurrah!"

The teams lined-up again.

Neither side wanted a draw, and they put all their beef into the last five minutes of the match.

The Grammarian forwards came down in a hot attack upon the St. Jim's goal and broke through the defence, and the ball whizzed in.

But Fatty Wynn was ready for it.

A fat fist smote the ball out again, and Herries cleared away to midfield, and the game went back rapidly towards the enemy's territory.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy captured the ball and ran it up the field; and at the psychological moment, so to speak, he passed to Figgins, and Figgins slammed it home, in spite of the desperate effort to save of the Grammarian goalie.

There was a wild yell from the St. Jim's crowd:

"Goal! Goal! Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Figgins!"

Pheep! went the whistle.

The match was over, and the Grammarians had been beaten by two goals to one. All the players looked pretty red and breathless when they came off.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rushed up to Figgins and slapped him ecstatically on the back.

"Bwavo, Figgy, deah boy!" he exclaimed. "That was weally wippin', you know! I could not have done that bettah myself!"

"Go hon!" grinned Figgins

"Wonderful shot!" commented Blake. "Considering that Figgy did it from a pass from Gussy, it was what you'd really call miraculous!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake, you ass—"

"Well, we've beaten them, Tommy," said Kangaroo, as he greeted Tom Merry. "How did you get on with Lowther?"

"We've stopped him," said Tom.

"Brought him back with you?"

Tom shook his head.

"He wouldn't come; he's walking it."

The Cornstalk whistled.

"My hat, what an obstinate ass! He will be pretty fagged by the time he gets in, I should say."

"Serve him right!" growled Tom crossly. He was almost as exasperated with his old chum as he was concerned about him.

"We're goin' to have wathah a feed, and the Gwammah chaps are stayin' to it," Arthur Augustus remarked, as he joined them. "Where's Lowthah? We'll make him come to the feed, and let bygones be bygones, and then it will be all wight."

"He's not in yet."

"Look for him when he comes in, then. Is he watty?"

"A little, I think!" grinned Manners.

"Then pewwaps you had bettah leave him to me," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "If he is in a watty tempah, it is bettah for him to be dealt with by a fellow of tact and judgment. I'll take the boundah in hand when he comes in."

"Don't let him take you to the tower for a private talk again!" chuckled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats!"

Gordon Gay & Co. joined their rivals in a really gorgeous feed in the Junior Common-room, the studies being much too small to accommodate so numerous a tea-party.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy kept an open eye for the return of Monty Lowther.

The kind-hearted swell of St. Jim's was really concerned about the dispute that had arisen among the Terrible Three, and he thought that the present was an excellent opportunity for making peace.

Lowther would come in, tired and hungry, and under the beneficent influence of a handsome feed and Arthur Augustus' tact and judgment, he would "come round," and all would be calm and bright once more.

So while Tom Merry & Co. were entertaining the Grammarians, Arthur Augustus slipped out of the Common-room every now and then to look for the returning wanderer.

But the feed was over, and the Grammarians had departed in their motor-coach by the time Monty Lowther arrived at St. Jim's.

He was tired, hungry, and ill-tempered when he came dragging into the school at last, after his long and weary walk.

Arthur Augustus spotted him in the doorway as he came in, and bore down upon him at once.

"Here you are, deah boy!" he exclaimed genially.

Lowther grunted.

"Tired?" asked D'Arcy sympathetically.

"Yes!" growled Lowther.

"You should weally have had a lift back on one of the bikes—"

"Oh, rats!"

"You were weally a silly ass, you know—"

"What!"

"I don't want to wub it in," said D'Arcy gently, "but you were undoubtedly a silly ass! Howevah, let bygones be bygones. We have been havin' a feed with the Gwammah School chaps—"

"Blow the Grammar School chaps!"

"We beat them in the match—"

"Blow the match!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"And blow you!" added Lowther disrespectfully.

And he walked on.

Arthur Augustus, feeling perhaps that he had not exercised so much tact and judgment as were called for by the circumstances, hurried after him to make another effort.

"Lowthah, deah boy—"

"Oh, dry up!"

"We've got some of the feed left, and we're waiting for you—"

"I don't want any!"

"But it's weally wippin', deah boy, and you must be hungwy aftah walkin' all that frightful distance. And we have agreed to let bygones be bygones, and not say a word about your bein' a silly chump! I am not goin' to mention it to you, for one!"

"Ass!"

"Pway come along, deah boy! We're goin' to treat you as if nothin' had happened, without makin' a single wewefence to the fact that you have played the giddy goat—"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Lowthah, if you persist in applyin' these oppwobvious epithets to me—"

"Dummy!"

And Lowther tramped upstairs.

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye and gazed after him,

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debating in his mind whether he should make another effort or not. He finally decided not. Monty Lowther was in too difficult a temper to be managed just then; and, as D'Arcy confided to Blake afterwards, he didn't want to finish the matter by giving the Shell fellow a fearful thrashing. That would have shown neither tact nor judgment. Arthur Augustus returned to the Common-room.

"Lowther's come in," he remarked.

"Where is he?" asked Tom Merry.

"Gone to his study."

"Oh, all right!"

"I twied my best with him, deah boys, but he seems vewy watty," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally came vewy neah gettin' watty myself, so I've left him alone."

Some time later, Tom Merry and Manners went up to the study to do their preparation. They found Monty Lowther there at work, with a sullen expression on his face. He gave them a very bitter look as they came in.

Tom Merry spoke out at once.

"Look here, Lowther! It's no good keeping this up!" he exclaimed. "You know very well that you oughtn't to have started for the races this afternoon, and that we did quite right to stop you. Now it's all over, let bygones be bygones, and let's say no more about it."

"You had no right to interfere with me, whatever I chose to do," said Lowther.

"Do you mean that you are going to keep this up?" Tom asked bluntly.

"I don't want to have anything to say to you!"

"Very well, you can have the study to yourself, then, to sulk in!" growled Tom Merry. "I'm fed-up with it. I'll do my prep in the Form-room. Come on, Manners."

Manners hesitated a moment, glancing towards Lowther; but Lowther kept his eyes sullenly fixed on the fire.

Then Manners followed Tom Merry out of the study, and Monty Lowther was left alone, with thoughts that were far from happy ones.

CHAPTER 12.

Danger Ahead!

"GREAT Scott!"

Knox dragged a handkerchief from his pocket all of a sudden, and held it to his nose, almost covering his face.

Cutts and Levison stared at him.

Knox wasn't blowing his nose; he was evidently pretending to do so, for the sake of covering up his features.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Cutts.

"Schneider!" muttered Knox.

"What?"

"Old Schneider's in the grand stand, and he's got field-glasses fixed on us!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The car was drawn up amidst a host of other vehicles, where the occupants could obtain a view of the racecourse.

Amid so many spectators, the three young rascals from St. Jim's had not supposed that they were likely to be seen or noticed.

That anybody belonging to the school would be there witnessing the races was not at all probable, and least likely of all was Herr Schneider, the German master of St. Jim's.

But there he was.

Of the fact that Herr Schneider had once taught German to Lord Luscombe, and of the fact that his lordship had kindly asked the old fellow to join his

party on the day of the races, Cutts & Co. naturally knew nothing.

They would as soon have expected to see the Head himself there as Herr Schneider.

But there Herr Schneider was.

It was a new and interesting kind of scene for the German master, and he was greatly interested, and when there was nothing going on, he swept the place with his field-glasses, studying the crowd and the animated faces.

Quite by chance his glasses had lighted upon the vehicle in which sat three St. Jim's fellows.

Then the glasses had become glued, as it were, to the spectacles of the German master.

The sun glinting on the field-glasses had caught Knox's eye, and he had recognised the German master in the distance.

Hence his attempt to conceal his face. But he felt that it was too late. The field-glasses had been fixed upon him a full minute before that.

Cutts and Levison looked in the direction in which Knox was staring.

They, too, made out the German master with his glasses fixed upon them. Levison went quite pale.

Cutts set his teeth. It was a thing he had never looked for, and it took even the cool and iron-nerved cad of the Fifth a little aback.

"Old Schneider, of all people!" he muttered.

"What's the old fool doing here?" said Levison, between his teeth. "He's recognised us!"

"Confound him!" said Knox, putting away his handkerchief. "It's no good. I can see he knows me. The Head will get it now."

"It means rotten trouble!"

"Let's get out, then," said Levison uneasily.

"The principal race isn't run yet!" growled Cutts. "We've got to wait till Four-in-Hand has run before we clear off, if there were fifty German masters goggling at us through field-glasses."

"But, I say—"

"Clear off, if you like; I'm staying!" said Cutts. "Besides, we can't get the car out now, and we can't leave it here!"

"Well, I'm not staying, with that old bouncer watching me," said Levison. "I jolly well wish I had gone back with Lowther now. He was a lucky bargee to get out of it as he did!"

"I—I think I shall clear, too," said Knox uneasily. "It's a good distance, and the old duffer mayn't have recognised us, after all. But as soon as he can, he'll come round to make sure of us. He'll be here after the race, Cutts."

"Let him!"

"Well, Four-in-Hand can win without our watching him," said Knox. "I'm off!"

"Funk!" said Cutts disdainfully.

"Funk or not, I'm not going to be sacked if I can help it."

And Knox slipped out of the car, followed by Levison, and they scuttled away through the crowd, careless of the fact that the race was about to start, almost careless, in their fear of the consequences, whether Four-in-Hand won or lost.

Had the German master recognised them?

They felt that he must have done so, with the aid of the field-glasses. Yet there was a hope that he had not.

At all events, the sooner they got back to St. Jim's the better chance they had of establishing an alibi and escaping detection.

"We can't drive back now," Knox

said, looking at his watch. "We can get a train to Wayland, I think. Good! There's ten minutes. I know the train."

"You've been here before," grinned Levison.

"Mind your own business! Not a word about this at the school, Levison, and you'd better get some pal to swear that you haven't been out of the school all the afternoon. Old Schneider has bad sight, and he may not be able to swear to us."

"There's a chance," said Levison.

They hurried to the railway station.

Ten minutes later the train was bearing them away, and they arrived at Wayland after dark and caught the local train to Rylcombe.

What had become of Cutts, what had happened in the race he had stayed to watch, they did not know and hardly cared.

Their own safety was what they had to think of now, and that was quite enough to occupy all their thoughts.

They passed a crowded motor-coach in Rylcombe Lane. It was bearing the Grammarians footballers back to their school.

The merry fellows contrasted very much with the two uneasy, sullen, worried rascals tramping back to St. Jim's.

They reached the school at last, and Knox went into the New House, to see Sefton of the Sixth, with whom he hoped to be able to arrange an alibi.

Levison hurried into the School House in search of Monty Lowther.

The Shell fellow was doing his preparation, with a sulkily brow. He glanced up as Levison came in, and did not look very pleased.

"Hallo! Back already?" he asked.

Levison sank breathlessly into a chair.

"Yes," he said.

"How did it go?" asked Lowther, with some eagerness. "Did Four-in-Hand get it?"

"I don't know."

Lowther stared.

"You don't know! Didn't you stay for the race?"

"No."

"Oh!" said Lowther, in surprise.

"Anything happened?"

"Old Schneider was there, and he spotted us."

"Great Scott!"

"Knox and I cleared off at once, but Cutts is sticking it out. There's a chance that old Schneider didn't recognise us," Levison explained. "If we can prove an alibi he may think he was mistaken about us."

"You mean if you can make up a set of lies," said Lowther bluntly.

Levison sneered.

"Yes," he said; "it amounts to that. I'm not going to get a flogging or the sack, if I can help it."

"Looks to me as if you will, all the same."

"Not if I prove I wasn't there. You know what a blind old bat Schneider is; he can't be quite certain of us. If a fellow bears witness that I haven't been out of his sight all the afternoon—"

"Better ask Mellish; he'll tell lies for you, if he's got the nerve."

"That's just the difficulty. Mellish wouldn't have the nerve, I'm afraid, and he hasn't much of a reputation for truthfulness. I want you as a witness."

Lowther jumped.

"I?" he exclaimed.

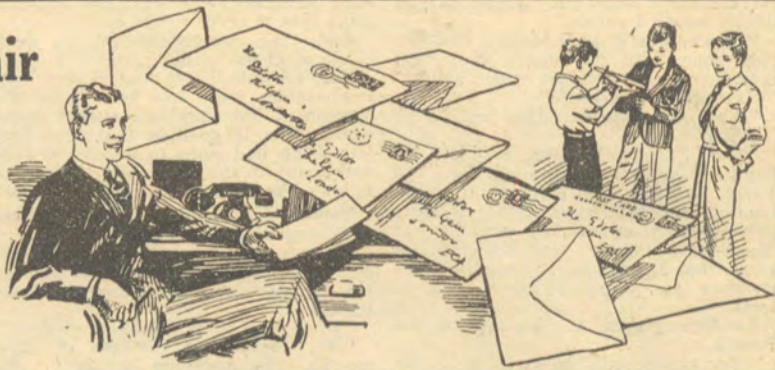
"Yes."

"What do you mean? How can I bear witness that you didn't go to the

(Continued on page 13.)

The Editor's Chair

Let the Editor be your pal.
Drop him a line to-day,
addressing your letters:
The Editor, The GEM,
Fleetway House, Farring-
don Street, London, E.C.4.



HALLO, Chums! To commence with, this week, I should like to remind readers of the Grand Free Gifts which are being presented with our popular companion paper, the "Magnet." In the number now on sale will be found the first two postcards in photogravure of a series depicting Britain's Defenders. Every boy will want to collect this ripping series of photo-cards, showing the latest British tanks, ships, planes, and guns. The first two photo-cards illustrate a Fort on Wheels, a quick-moving and formidable armoured car, and H.M.S. Eagle, one of the largest aircraft-carriers of the British Navy. More grand pictures will be given away in following issues, and I advise GEM readers to make sure of collecting them all by giving an order for the "Magnet" to-day.

In addition to these topping Free Gifts, a great series of Greyfriars stories starts in the first gift number. "The Stay-in Strike at Greyfriars!" is something new in school yarns, and it deals with the sensational scenes which follow when Harry Wharton & Co., in protest against the tyranny of Mr. Hacker, temporary Head in the absence of Dr. Locke, declare a stay-in strike. You simply must read all about it, so don't forget to ask for the "Magnet" to-day, at the same time placing an order for subsequent issues.

Having told you of that excellent treat, let me now tell you of another, which is contained in the next number of the GEM. The St. Jim's story is called:

"THE HOUSEMASTER'S PERIL!"

and it's one of the most thrilling yarns of mystery and adventure Martin Clifford has ever written for us—and that means it's a story of outstanding merit.

It opens on a note of mystery and

menace, for one morning St. Jim's awakens to find a strange warning fixed to the gatepost. It reads:

"I am here! There is one in the school who will understand!"

"G. M."

Who is the author of it? And for whom is the message of menace intended? Tom Merry & Co. are baffled by these problems; but it would seem that there is someone in St. Jim's who has incurred the anger of "G. M.," and that the latter is bent on revenge. This becomes more apparent when later a second warning is posted at the gates—to be followed by a visit at midnight of a masked marauder!

Kerr, the canny Scots junior of the New House, decides to investigate the strange affair, and his investigations lead him and Tom Merry & Co. into a nerve-tingling adventure, the outcome of which is a matter of life and death for Mr. Railton, the School House master!

You cannot fail to be thrilled by this gripping story. It is another tribute to the all-round ability and skill of Martin Clifford as a school story author.

Then we have the second part of the powerful Greyfriars yarn:

"THE KIDNAPPED SCHOOLBOY!"

It tells of the further exciting adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. in Friardale Wood, where they are making a midnight search for Ernest Levison, the missing new boy. The chums of the Remove have little doubt

that he has been kidnapped, and this proves to be the case when they pick up a trail which leads them to the kidnappers! What happens then I will leave Frank Richards to relate to you next Wednesday.

IN REPLY.

A. D. Tarry, Harpenden, Herts.—Sorry, I cannot let you know the full address of W. Knoesen, of P.O., Graskop, South Africa, unless you can tell me at least the month in which his "Pen Pal" notice appeared in the GEM. But this South African reader may read this reply, in which case he will probably write to you.

T. H. Rosser, Neath, Glamorgan.—It was not necessary to write to ask me to put you in touch with the reader whose notice appeared in "Pen Pals." Drop a line to the reader yourself.

R. F. Crook, Bristol.—Very many thanks for your letter. Glad to hear you have enjoyed all the St. Jim's and Greyfriars stories since you started reading the GEM again. Yes, the "Toff" series was excellent. It's a pity you missed the last story. Write to our Back Number Dept., The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and they might be able to supply you with a copy. Thanks for your suggestions; I will consider them.

Miss B. Mountain, Toronto, Canada.—Many thanks for your interesting letter and good wishes. Hilda Richards, who writes in the "School-girl," and Frank Richards are not one and the same person, neither are they related. Wally D'Arcy is twelve years of age. Your "Pen Pal" notice will appear in due course. There is a long waiting list at present.

All the best, chums!
"See" you next Wednesday.

THE EDITOR.

PEN PALS

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

R. A. Sheppard, 34, Albert Avenue, South Chingford, London, E.4. The London Secret Service Agencies. Members wanted in America, New Zealand, Australia, China, India, Italy, also colonies and in London. For admission to membership send your name, address, and age to R. A. Sheppard (secretary).
Miss Lillian Ball, 17, Craig Lane, Newton,

near Alfreton, Derbyshire; girl correspondents; age 15-18.

Howard F. Wilson, 106, Elmer Avenue, Toronto, Canada; stamps.

Miss Patty Loftus, 89, Denison Street, Radford, Notts; girl correspondents; age 15-18.

Miss Mary Ball, Three Lane End Farm, Old Blackwell, near Alfreton, Derbyshire; girl correspondents; age 15-18.

Miss Bessie Fell, 40, Littlemoor, Newton, near Alfreton, Derbyshire; girl correspondents; age 15-18.

Miss Mary Riley, 25, Littlemoor, Newton, near Alfreton, Derbyshire; girl correspondents; age 15-18.

H. L. Cartnell, Denstone College Prep. School, Rochester, Staffs; age 14-17; eggs, photography; South Africa.

J. Beard, The Preparatory School, Denstone College, Rochester, Staffs; pen pals; age 11-13.

Sidney James, Ship Hotel, Swanage; age 20; stage, film production, gramophone records, and travel; home and abroad.

Miss Ena Watson, Perseverance Gold Mine, Finestone, West Australia; girl correspondents; age 17-20; sport, reading, films, general topics; all countries; please write in English, French, or German.

Miss Elaine Crane, Bella Vista, Casterton, Victoria, Australia; girl correspondents; age 18-25; stamps, views.

Stephen J. Fraser, 30, Park Grove, West Ham, London, E.15; pen pals; overseas, America, Canada.

L. Ng, 77, Sultan Street, Kuala Lumpur, Federated Malay States; stamps and scouting.

D. Estill, 13, Low Throston, West Hartlepool, Durham; age 14; films, sport, dance music; England, Australia, Canada.

A. Mackinnon, Kirkton Home, Millport, Bute; age 15; foreign stamps.

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PEN PALS COUPON
30-1-37

“races, when I know jolly well that you did?” asked Lowther.

“You can do it quite easily. Did you ride home with the others after they collared you, or did you return alone?”

“I walked by myself.”

“Then you came in rather late?”

“Yes.”

“Good!” said Levison, rubbing his hands. “Now, that’s ripping. You and I have been taking a long country walk together this afternoon. See? If Herr Schneider imagines he saw me at Muggleton, there’s your evidence to prove that I was with you all the time, strolling on Wayland Moor, and so forth.”

Lowther glared at the cad of the Fourth.

“You rotten cad!” he exclaimed. “Do you think I’m going to tell a pack of lies like that?”

“I think you’d better,” said Levison, compressing his thin lips. “You’re as deep in the mud as I am in the mire. If I get into trouble, you share it.”

“I wasn’t there,” said Lowther. “I owe that to Tom Merry, at any rate. I wasn’t at Muggleton, though I was idiot enough to start.”

“But you started,” said Levison, “and if I’m bowled out over this, Lowther, because you won’t help me, I’ll take jolly good care that you’re bowled out, too. This isn’t a time for being particular about a whopper or two; this is a time for sticking together and facing it out. Suppose Tom Merry hadn’t stopped you, and you’d gone after all? Old Schneider would have recognised you as well as us. Then you’d have had to lie yourself out of it somehow.”

“I shouldn’t,” said Lowther.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

“Well, you could do as you like; but I’m not asking for the sack,” he said. “I want a witness to prove that I never went near Muggleton this afternoon, and you’re my witness.”

“Better ask Mellish or Crooke. I won’t lie for you.”

Levison rose to his feet, a cold, greenish glitter in his eyes.

“You mean that?” he asked, in a concentrated voice.

“Yes, I do.”

“Very well. I’ll do the best I can, but if I’m bowled out, mind, you’re bowled out, too. If the Head is down on me he shall know that you started for the races with us, and that you’ve got money on Four-in-Hand with Weekes, the bookie.”

“You cad! You mean that you’ll sneak?”

Levison gritted his teeth.

“I won’t suffer alone because you’re putting on the goody-goody business at this time of day!” he snarled. “If you wanted to play Good Little Georgie, who couldn’t tell a lie, you should have remembered that Good Little Georgie didn’t go to the races, either, or bet on horses at thirty-three to one against. In for a penny, in for a pound! We’re in the same boat now, and we ought to stick together. But if you let me sink I’ll take jolly good care that you go down with me.”

And Levison quitted the study and slammed the door.

CHAPTER 13.

Facing the Music!

TOM MERRY and Manners were at work in the Form-room, when the door opened and Lowther came in.

The breach in the Co. had grown so

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wide now that Tom Merry had begun to think that it never would heal.

And that thought brought a deep shade of gloom to his brow.

The Terrible Three had always been inseparable; there had been little tiffs sometimes, but they had always blown over. Was it possible that that firm friendship had come to an end at last, and owing to the miserable rascality of fellows like Levison and Gerald Cutts?

Tom Merry looked up, and his face grew eager as Lowther came in.

He was only too willing to meet his old chum half-way, if Lowther showed the slightest sign of extending the olive-branch.

“Done your prep?” asked Lowther.

“No,” said Tom. “Lots of time, though. Is anything wrong?” He scanned Lowther’s face, which was unusually pale. “Monty, old man, what’s the matter?”

Lowther sank upon a form.

“It’s all up; that’s what’s the matter,” he said.

Tom Merry and Manners looked very anxious. Lowther’s tone was desperate; and in that moment, when their old friend was in evident trouble, all thought of quarrel and dispute melted away like snow in the sunshine.

“What is it, Monty?”

“I’ve just seen Levison.”

“He’s got back, then?”

“Yes. Old Schneider was in the grand stand at Muggleton, and he spotted the party.”

“Oh, crumbs!” ejaculated Manners.

“Schneider!” said Tom Merry. “My hat! I remember now—the old chap told me the other day he used to be Lord Luscombe’s German master, and Lord Luscombe is the owner of Four-in-Hand. He said Lord Luscombe had sent him an invitation. So he was at Muggleton to-day?”

“Yes.”

“And he recognised Cutts and the rest?”

“So Levison thinks.”

“Jolly lucky for you you weren’t with them, Monty,” said Manners. “Surely by this time you’re glad we yanked you out of Cutts’ car?”

Lowther groaned.

“It wasn’t any good,” he said. “I’m in it, just the same.”

“How are you?” said Tom Merry.

“You didn’t go to the races.”

“But I started.”

“Schneider can’t know that.”

“He will know it—the Head will know it—when Levison gives it away.”

“Levison! But why should he give you away? He’s cad enough, but it won’t do him any good to get you into trouble.”

“You don’t understand. Levison hopes to bamboozle old Schneider—you know he’s very short-sighted—by making believe that he wasn’t at Muggleton to-day. If he could prove an alibi, old Schneider might think he was mistaken about him.”

“How can he prove an alibi when he was there?”

“By lying, and getting a witness to lie, too.”

“Oh,” said Tom, “there’s a job for Mellish or Crooke! It will suit them.”

Lowther shook his head.

“They’re his pals, and they’re known to be lying cads, and their word won’t be taken. He wants a decent chap to speak up for him.”

“He won’t get one to do it.”

“He won’t,” agreed Lowther. “Not that I’ve got much right to call myself a decent chap, I suppose, after what I’ve been doing lately. But if I don’t speak up for Levison and tell a bundle

of lies to screen him—he’s going to give me away to the Head.”

Tom Merry and Manners sat in silence and consternation.

Although they had not thought about the possibility of Herr Schneider being at Muggleton, they had known that the excursion to the races was dangerous, and they had striven to save Lowther from the danger, against his will.

And they had believed that they had saved him; but the matter was not so simple as they had supposed.

Even the first step on the downward path is not easy to retrace. Lowther’s recklessness had placed him in Levison’s power, and Levison intended to use his power. Unless Monty Lowther saved him he would take care that Lowther shared his disgrace and punishment.

“Well, this is rotten!” said Manners, at last.

“What does Levison want you to do, exactly?” asked Tom Merry slowly.

“I’m to be ready with a yarn that we were out for a walk this afternoon together, and that he never went near Muggleton.”

“The rotter!”

“Old Schneider is short-sighted, and there must have been a big crowd there, and so such a yarn as that may make him doubtful whether he saw Levison, or whether he mistook another chap for him. It’s a chance.”

“You can’t do it, Monty.”

“I don’t mean to. I’ve been a silly fool, but I’m not going to be a silly rascal, too. If I’m bowled out I’ll face it the best I can, without telling lies.”

“But it may be the sack!” muttered Manners.

“Or a flogging,” said Lowther. “It can’t be helped. I’ve got to stand it. Besides, if I told lies, as Levison wants, they mightn’t be believed. Old Schneider may be quite certain that it was Levison. He had field-glasses.”

“Whether it would be believed or not, you can’t tell a lie to the Head about it,” said Tom decidedly.

“Monty, old man, this is a rotten hole for you to be in, and we can’t help you.”

“I know you can’t. I mayn’t be here to-morrow,” said Monty moodily.

“I—I say, I’ve been playing the giddy ox. I know. I’ve been a silly ass! I—I want to tell you chaps I’m sorry, before—before it happens, whatever it’s going to be. If it’s the sack—”

He broke off, with a quiver in his voice.

“It can’t—it shan’t be!” exclaimed Tom Merry, starting up. “After all, you didn’t go to the races!”

“But I started, and there’s the bet with Weekes, the bookie. I can’t deny that.”

“What an awful ass you’ve been, Monty!” said Tom Merry. “Why didn’t you kick that cad out, the same as I did?”

“I wish I had; but it’s a bit too late to wish that now,” said Lowther. “It serves me right. I knew all the time I was doing wrong, only I wouldn’t admit it. Even if that beastly horse wins, I’ve no right to the money, and I shan’t take it. I’ve made up my mind about that.”

“Good!” said Tom Merry.

The Form-room door opened and Jack Blake looked in.

“There’s something on, you fellows. Come out!”

“What is it?” asked Tom Merry.

“Old Schneider’s just come in, looking like a giddy thundercloud, and he’s got Cutts with him.”

Lowther smiled grimly.

"He's sure of Cutts, at all events," he remarked. "There won't be any chance for Cutts to get out of it by lying."

"Do you think he's been spotted at Muggleton?" asked Blake.

"I know he has."

"Great Scott! He will get it in the neck, and no mistake!" said Blake, with a whistle. "Jolly lucky for you you didn't go, Lowther!"

Lowther was silent.

The Shell fellows left the Form-room. There was a crowd gathering in the passage. Herr Schneider, looking very grave and imposing, was making his way to the Head's study, and Gerald Cutts was with him. They had returned to the school together.

Cutts had an air of reckless hardihood, and he nodded coolly to his friends among the crowd of fellows looking on.

If he was going to get it "in the neck" at last, the blackguard of the Fifth at least was facing the music with unshaken nerve and coolness.

"You will come mit me to te Head, Cutts," said Herr Schneider, glancing round.

"Certainly," said Cutts composedly.

"I also vant to ozzer two," said Herr Schneider. "Kildare, please—"

Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, had just come out of his study.

"What's the matter, sir?" he asked.

"I take Cutts to te Head. He has peen to te races this afternoon," said Herr Schneider. "I find him dere, and pring him pack."

"My hat!" exclaimed Kildare. "You must be an awful ass, Cutts!"

Cutts shrugged his shoulders.

"Bai Jove, he's takin' it coolly!" murmured Arthur Augustus, in some admiration. "The wottah has a splendid nerve, at any wate."

"Dere were two ozzers," said Herr Schneider. "Knox of te Sixth, and Levison of te Fourth. Vill you send der in to te Head after me, Kildare?"

"Yes, sir."

"Gum mit me, Cutts!"

And Herr Schneider marched off, with Cutts at his heel.

The crowd of fellows was left in a buzz as the German master and the dandy of the Fifth disappeared into the Head's study.

The excitement was intense.

Three fellows—one of them a prefect—had been spotted on the racecourse, and were to be taken before the Head.

There was only one opinion among the fellows as to what the result would be.

"It's the sack!" said Clifton Dane.

And the other fellows agreed with him.

"Here comes Knox!" said Lefevre of the Fifth.

Knox came in, looking pale and troubled. He had been expending a great deal of eloquence on Sefton of the New House, trying to persuade that youth to help him bolster up an alibi. But Sefton, though not particular about a crammer or two, as a rule, firmly declined to oblige on this occasion. As he bluntly said, it was no use telling crammers that were certain to be found out. So Knox was left to rely solely upon his own powers as an Ananias.

Knox walked quickly to the Head's study, without glancing to left or right. Some pitying looks followed him. Knox was not liked, especially by the juniors, but they could feel sorry for him now. He was in the same boat

with Cutts, but he had none of Gerald Cutts' iron nerve.

Last came Levison. He was looking pale and bitter, with a crafty expression on his face. He paused to speak to Lowther.

"Are you coming in with me?" he asked in a low voice.

The Shell fellow shook his head.

"You won't help me?"

"I won't lie for you!"

"Then get ready to be called in yourself, that's all!" said Levison bitterly.

And he passed into the Head's study.

CHAPTER 14.

Paying the Piper!

DR. HOLMES was listening with a grave face, to what Herr Schneider had to tell him.

The three delinquents stood silent and dismayed.

Of the three, only Gerald Cutts showed anything like courage.

Cutts was icily cool, but he knew that it was wiser to make some show of repentance and regret in the presence of the Head, and he had assumed an expression accordingly.

Knox and Levison were openly dismayed and apprehensive.

Herr Schneider explained with great gusto. The German master evidently thought that he had deserved well of St. Jim's in bowling out the three young rascals.

"I see dem trough te glasses quite plain, sir," he explained. "Two of dem clear off, but Cutts remain. I make my way to te car, and he say—he was very cool—all right, but let him stay till te race was run. I refused."

"Quite right," said the Head in a deep voice.

"So I pring him back mit me to te school, sir."

"Thank you, Herr Schneider! You have done the school a great service!" said Dr. Holmes. He turned his severe glance upon the trio. "Now, what have you to say for yourselves?"

"I am very sorry, sir," said Cutts smoothly. "It was done thoughtlessly for a little excitement, and I'm afraid I did not reflect how wrong it was until afterwards."

"You are quite old enough to know how wrong it was, Cutts, and as a senior it is your duty to set an example to the juniors, and not to lead them into temptation!" said the Head sternly. "And you, Knox—you are a prefect—you have done this, while I have been reposing faith in you."

"I—I am sorry, sir!" stammered Knox, all his intended lies fading out of his mind under the stern gaze of the Head. "I know it was wrong. I—I—I'm sorry! It was just done for a bit of fun, sir; we never meant any harm."

"And you, Levison?"

"I—I went because the others did, sir!" said Levison. "Lowther pressed me to go with him, and I—I didn't like to refuse!"

The Head raised his eyebrows.

"Lowther!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you mean to say that he was with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you see Lowther, Herr Schneider?"

"Certainly not, Dr. Holmes!" said the German master. "Dere were tree of dem, and dese tree are dose tree!"

"Lowther left us half-way to Muggleton, sir!" explained Levison. "Some



"Have you made any bets on a horse running to-day at Muggleton, Lowther?" asked the Head. Lowther was silent. "I must ask you for a reply, Lowther."

"Yes, sir. I made a bet on Four-in-Hand!" said the junior.

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friends came after him and made him go back."

"Then he has some good and wise friends," said the Head. "But you state that he started with you for the races, in the same party?"

"He did."

"Then he should join you here!" said the Head, frowning. "Herr Schneider, will you have the goodness to call Lowther in?"

"Ja wohl, Dr. Holmes."

Herr Schneider stepped out of the study, and returned in a couple of minutes, followed by Monty Lowther.

Lowther was very pale, but he looked composed. The punishment of his folly and obstinacy had come, and he knew that he deserved it, and he had made up his mind to go through it with courage.

"Lowther," said the Head, "I hear that you left the school with this reckless party, to visit the racecourse at Muggleton?"

"It is true, sir," said Lowther quietly.

"But you did not go the whole way?"

"No, sir."

"Did you change your mind, and turn back of your own accord?" asked the Head in a more gentle tone.

"I am sorry to say I did not, sir. My friends had more sense than I had, and they came after me, and made me leave the party."

"It was your intention, then, to go to the races with these others?"

"Yes, sir."

"But for the interference of your friends, you would have carried out that intention?"

"Yes, sir," said Lowther bravely.

"You are speaking very frankly, Lowther, but your admission places you

in exactly the same position as these boys."

"I know it, sir!" said Lowther bitterly. "I'm not pretending to be any better than they are."

"I must inquire a little further before I decide on your punishment," said the Head. "If you visited the racecourse merely to watch the races, that is much less serious than if you indulged in any betting or gambling of any kind. Cutts, I ask you whether you have staked money on a horse?"

Cutts looked astonished.

"I, sir? Certainly not!"

"You did not go there to bet?"

"To bet, sir!" said Cutts, in a tone more of sorrow than of anger. "Oh, sir, I hope you do not really think that of me!"

"We never thought of anything of that kind, sir," said Knox. "We just went off in the car for a bit of excitement. Really, it was as much by chance as anything else that we got to Muggleton at all."

"Yes, sir," said Levison; "we didn't think there was any great harm, sir, as we were out driving, in passing through Muggleton and taking a look at the racecourse."

"Certainly, the harm would not be very great, if that were all," said the Head. "I am not sure it is all, however. You have not spoken, Lowther. Have you made any bets on any horse running to-day at Muggleton?"

Lowther was silent.

"I must ask you for a reply, Lowther!"

Knox, Cutts, and Levison fixed their eyes upon Lowther, with a strange mingling of threatening and beseeching expressions in their faces. If Lowther

joined in the general lying, there was a chance of getting themselves right out of the scrape. But would he?

Levison, at least, had his doubts about that. And Levison soon found that his doubts were justified. Monty Lowther did not intend to lie.

"Yes, sir! I made a bet on Four-in-Hand!" said Lowther at last.

Cutts gave him an almost murderous look.

"For what sum?" asked the Head.

"One pound, sir, to win thirty-three if Four-in-Hand won," said Lowther. "I was an ass, but—but it seemed such a lot to win!"

"You made this bet with a bookmaker on the course?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"With whom, then?"

"With a man who lives in Wayland and runs a betting business, sir."

"His name?"

"Weekes, sir."

"How did you happen to meet him in the first place?"

"I—I've never met him, sir."

"Then how did you contrive to make a bet with him without meeting him?"

Lowther faltered. Levison had given him away without scruple, but he felt some hesitation in returning tit for tat, and giving Levison away. But he had to reply.

"Another fellow arranged with him for me, sir."

"Indeed! And who was it?"

Lowther did not answer.

"Was it one of the boys here present?" asked the Head. "Yes; I see by your face that it was so. Cutts, I cannot accept your statement that there has been no betting. Lowther, who is undoubtedly the least guilty of the whole party, admits having made bets. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that you others have done the same."

"Indeed, sir—"

"I have now to consider," went on the Head, in a deep voice, "the question of your punishment. If I believed that this kind of conduct was a habit with you, I should expel you all from the school immediately. But I prefer to think that you have told the truth in stating that you were led away thoughtlessly by a desire for excitement, and did not consider the consequences. The two junior boys I regard as having acted under the influence of their elders, and I shall, therefore, dismiss them with a caning. But for you, Knox and Cutts, the matter is decidedly more serious—especially for Knox, who is a prefect, and in whom I have reposed my confidence."

Knox's lips trembled.

"I—I hope you'll give me a chance, sir," he faltered. "I—I acted thoughtlessly. I know, and—and I—I'm sorry, and—"

"Lowther and Levison will be caned. You others I give the choice of a flogging or expulsion from the school."

"Oh, sir!"

"You may take your choice," said the Head coldly.

The two seniors stood silent.

"I am quite aware that senior boys are never flogged at St. Jim's, and it will be an unprecedented occurrence," said the Head. "But the circumstances are unprecedented. It is either that or expulsion, and, for the sake of your people, and in the hope that you will be more careful in the future, I am willing to spare you expulsion."

Cutts ground his teeth hard.

To be flogged in public, with all the school looking on—he, Gerald Cutts,

BILLY BUNTER

gets the boot!



Expelled from Greyfriars! Such is the ignominious fate that overtakes the one - and - only William George Bunter. But the Owl of the Remove refuses to go! What happens? You simply must read all about it in this great yarn of Harry Wharton & Co.

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the dandy of the Fifth, the "blade" and the leader of fashion in the school—it was a bitter humiliation.

But it was better than the disgrace of being expelled.

His mind was made up at once.

"Very well, sir," he said; "I choose the flogging."

"And I, sir," faltered Knox.

"Very good."

The Head rose to his feet and picked up a cane.

"Come here, Lowther and Levison!"

The two juniors advanced, and took their caning. Levison writhed under it, but Monty Lowther stood it with fortitude. He knew that he was lucky to escape so easily.

"You may go," said the Head, as he laid down the cane. And the two juniors, squirming painfully, left the study. "Herr Schneider, will you kindly ask Taggles to come here?"

"Certainly, Dr. Holmes!"

Herr Schneider followed the juniors out.

"I shall spare you the disgrace of being flogged in public, considering the high Forms you belong to," said the Head. "The punishment will take place here."

"Thank you, sir!" said Cutts.

They waited for the arrival of Taggles.

Meanwhile, Lowther had joined his chums outside. Tom Merry and Manners had been waiting for him anxiously.

"Sacked?" asked both of them together, as Lowther came down the passage.

Lowther grinned ruefully and shook his head.

"No; the Head's a brick. I've been caned, so has Levison."

"Serve him right!" growled Manners.

"Knox and Cutts are going to be flogged," said Lowther.

"Flogged! My hat!"

"A Fifth Former and a Sixth Former flogged!" exclaimed Blake. "Great Scott! That's something new! They won't be able to look the fellows in the face afterwards, I should imagine."

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "But I must say I considah that it serves them wight. They ought to have been sacked."

"Flogged!" echoed a dozen voices in astonishment. "Knox flogged—a giddy prefect?"

"And Cutts—the admirable Cutts!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "By George! Well, after all, he was really asking for it!"

"Here comes Taggles."

Taggles, the porter, passed them on his way to the Head's study. The door of the study closed behind the porter.

The passage was crowded with excited fellows.

For a Sixth Former and a Fifth Former to be flogged was so unusual that the news spread like wildfire over the school, and half St. Jim's had gathered there.

There was a ceaseless buzz of voices.

From the Head's study there came a sound of swishing. The juniors listened for yells; but there were no yells, somewhat to the disappointment of the fags. As Wally D'Arcy of the Third remarked, it would have been fun to hear old Knox roaring. He had made Wally roar often enough.

But, severe as their punishment was, the two seniors had a sufficient sense of dignity to take it in silence.



Only the 'swishing' was heard from the study, and that ominous sound ceased at last.

The door opened.

Knox and Cutts came out together.

There was a great change in the two seniors. Both of them were deadly pale, and Knox was shaking. Cutts still strove to carry his head high, and he returned the glances of the crowd with savage defiance.

The blackguard of the Fifth was game to the last.

He strode away, his head high, and disappeared, but Knox looked as if he were cringing as he walked unsteadily after him.

There was a deep breath when they had gone.

"Well, this beats it!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I fancy they won't be quite so doggish after this," Lumley-Lumley remarked. "Nothing like a real good flogging to take the doggishness out of a bouncer."

"I was jolly lucky not to get the same," said Lowther in a low voice, as he walked away with his chums. "I say, you chaps, I've been a fool—a crass idiot. But there won't be anything of the kind again, as far as I'm concerned."

"Of course there won't," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"And—and if you fellows will overlook my playing the giddy ox—" faltered Lowther.

"Not another word, you old duffer!" said Manners. "It's all forgotten and done with. Let bygones be bygones."

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"Not another giddy syllable!" said Tom Merry. "Don't think anything more about it. Only, Monty, old man, you—"

He paused.

"Well?" said Lowther.

"About your bet. If it comes off— if Four-in-Hand has won?"

"I shan't touch the money."

"Good!"

"As for the quid I put up, I shan't ask for that, either. It can go. I'm only too jolly glad to be out of the whole bisney," said Lowther. "And if Levison ever comes to me again with the chance of a lifetime I'll give him such a hiding he won't know his face in the looking-glass."

"Hear, hear!"

And so the Terrible Three were on their old terms once more. And Monty Lowther had had his lesson, and, severe as it had been, it had done him good. He was not likely to listen to the voice of the tempter again.

He did not even take the trouble to inquire whether Four-in-Hand had won that race or not; but there were others at St. Jim's who were quite keen on that point. Cutts and Knox and Levison were looking forward to their big winnings as some consolation for the punishment they had received.

Levison, when the pain of his caning had worn off a little, made his way to Gerald Cutts' study. He entered it with some misgivings, not exactly knowing the kind of reception he would receive. Knox was there with Cutts, and both the seniors bestowed angry glares upon the cad of the Fourth.

"Have you heard about the race yet?" Levison asked.

"Not yet!" growled Cutts.

"You didn't see it run, of course?"

"No; that old fool dragged me away too soon."

"How are we going to know?"

"I shall get a telegram giving the winner," said Cutts. "I arranged that before Schneider collared me, in case he came down on me. It may be here any minute now. Of course, that will be all right. We shall make a good deal over the race, and if it were not for that, Levison, I'd skin you. What did you want to drag Lowther into it for? If Lowther hadn't been there we could have stuffed up the Head that there had been no betting."

"I didn't see why he should keep clear of it, when we were getting it in the neck," said Levison sullenly.

"Not for his sake, you idiot, but for ours," growled Knox. "We might have been sacked."

"We've been flogged, as it is," said Cutts, through his set teeth. "We shall never hear the end of that. But there will be a pot of money over the race, that's one comfort."

Tap!

It was a knock at the door.

"The telegram, very likely!" said Knox eagerly.

"Come in!" called out Cutts.

Toby, the page, came in with a telegram in his hand.

Cutts snatched it from him, and signed to him to clear. The door was scarcely closed behind Toby when the Fifth Former tore open the telegram.

He looked over it with avid haste.

Then a change came over his face. His features became fixed, and he stared at the telegram with starting eyes.

(Continued on page 28.)

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THERE IS A SENSATION AT GREYFRIARS WHEN ERNEST LEVISON IS MISSING FROM SCHOOL ONE NIGHT!

THE KIDNAPPED SCHOOLBOY!

The Important Question.

"WHERE'S Bulstrode?" asked Nugent.

"Bulstrode can play cricket," said Bob Cherry, "but he's a beast to get on with. If you let him into the eleven he'll think you can't do without him, and he'll want to start bossing things at once."

"That's what I was thinking," Harry Wharton remarked.

The chums of the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars—were met in consultation in Study No. 1, and the topic under discussion was an important one. The Form cricket match between the Remove and the Upper Fourth was to take place shortly, and Harry Wharton, the cricket captain of the Remove, felt the full weight of the responsibility upon his youthful shoulders. The question of making up the Remove eleven was not an easy one.

Nearly every fellow in the Form considered that he was entitled to play on merit alone. But it was not quite feasible to play forty fellows a-side, and the task of selection and rejection was a thankless one.

"Upon the whole," said Bob Cherry thoughtfully, "I'm not sorry they selected you cricket captain instead of me, Wharton."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It isn't all skittles," he remarked.

"Quite so. If you lose the match the Remove will be ready to scalp you."

"That's always the way of it," grinned Nugent.

"The thanklessness of the worthy Wharton's taskfulness is terrific," said Hurree Singh, the Hindu member of the Remove at Greyfriars.

"But it's up to me to pick out the eleven," said Harry Wharton. "You fellows will be in, of course. Hazeldene ought to go in, too."

"Rather!" said Nugent. "There's a jolly good reason for putting Hazeldene in."

"What's the reason?"

"His sister Marjorie."

Harry coloured.

"Well, I should like to please Marjorie Hazeldene in the matter," he said. "But I hope you fellows don't think I'd put Hazeldene in if he wasn't worth his place."

Bob Cherry slapped him on the back. "That's all right, old chap. We know you put cricket before everything else in the matter of making up an eleven."

"Of course," said Nugent. "I was only joking. Marjorie will be glad to see Hazeldene play, all the same. I suppose Micky Desmond is going in?"

"Yes, I've got Micky's name down, and Skinner's. There's Russell, Mills, and Curtis. They're all good."

"But the eleventh man—"

"I've not decided about him."

"Bulstrode can play," said Nugent thoughtfully. "But he was captain of the Remove eleven last term, and there's bound to be trouble, I suppose, if you put him in."

"That's the difficulty. I know he can play when he chooses, though as a rule he's too lazy to keep himself in form; and, as a matter of fact, he has spoiled his wind by smoking. But I don't know any other fellow in the Remove who is

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By Frank Richards.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

up to his form, except those already members of the eleven."

The chums of the Remove looked very thoughtful. Billy Bunter, who was cutting bread-and-butter at the tea-table, looked very thoughtful, too. His knife ceased to operate and he blinked reflectively at the chums through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't, Bunter," said Bob Cherry. "Why don't you cut that bread-and-butter instead of talking? It would be ever so much better."

"I have a suggestion to make—"

"Go ahead, then," said Harry Wharton. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings—you know the rest, Bob. Bunter may have thought of something we've overlooked."

"That's exactly how the case stands, Wharton, as a matter of fact. From what you say, you seem to be hung up for a fellow for the team—"

"That's it."

"You want a chap who can field, bat and bowl—in fact, a jolly good all-round cricketer?"

"That's it."

"Well, there's one you've forgotten."

"Who is it?"

"Myself," said Bunter modestly. "With a little practice I have no doubt

There's no love lost between Harry Wharton & Co. and Ernest Levison. But when the new boy of Greyfriars suddenly disappears, it is the chums of the Remove who break bounds at night to seek him!

that I should play the game better than you fellows—"

"Kill him, somebody," said Bob Cherry.

"Don't take any notice of Cherry, Wharton, as he is only actuated by envy—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Nugent.

"My dear Bunter, you're all right as a champion ass, but you'll never make a champion at cricket," said Harry Wharton good-humouredly. "I'm afraid that I shall have to leave you out."

"I'm sorry, Wharton—not for my sake, but the sake of the side. I shall be sorry to see the Remove eleven licked for want of a really good all-round man in it to give the side strength—"

"Well, Bunter's a good all-round man, in a sense," remarked Nugent, regarding the Owl of the Remove's ample figure with a grin. "As round as a barrel, I should say."

"Really, Nugent—"

"I dare say he would roll after the ball as fast as we could run!"

"Really, Cherry—"

"Better make the tea and give up visions of figuring as a cricketer," grinned Bob Cherry. "It's not quite your mark, Bunter."

"There's a lot of jealousy in these things," said Bunter. "I make the suggestion for the sake of the side, not from any desire to put myself forward. I only want the Remove to win, but if you prefer defeat, I dare say it will be a lesson to you."

"I say—" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Well, what is it?"

"What about that new chap Levison? I know he plays cricket."

Harry Wharton looked thoughtful.

Ernest Levison was a new boy in the Greyfriars Remove, and he was not an easy fellow to get on with. But that counted for little if he was willing and able to take his place in the Form eleven.

"I'd forgotten him," said Harry. "Have you seen him play, Bob?"

"Yes, I watched him at the nets yesterday, and I thought his batting was very decent. I know we don't want batsmen particularly, but he may be able to field or bowl. Might as well give him a trial."

Wharton nodded.

"I will. We'll try him out after tea, and see the kind of fielding and batting he can put up. If he won't do, I suppose we shall have to fall back on Bulstrode."

And the discussion ended and the chums of the Remove fell to at the tea-table.

Levison is Suspicious.

CHEERY and green looked the cricket ground at Greyfriars when Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh walked down to the pitch. Nugent had stayed behind to call for Levison and bring him out.

The stumps were already pitched. From different parts of the field sounded the merry shouts of the players, both the Fifth and the Sixth being at practice on the ground.

"Hallo, where's Levison?" asked Harry Wharton as Nugent came down to the ground alone and joined them.

Nugent grinned.

"He says he's busy."

Wharton's brow darkened.

"Did you say I wanted to give him a trial at cricket?"

"Yes."

"Like his cheek not to come," said Bob Cherry.

Wharton nodded.

"I'll go and speak to him," he said.

Harry Wharton walked into the House. The incident strangely reminded him of his own early days at Greyfriars. He could remember how, in the sullen obstinacy of that time, he had refused to come down to the football ground, when ordered by the captain of the school, and had been carried there by force by the grinning Removites.

Perhaps that recollection made him decide to deal more gently with the new boy than he would otherwise have done.

He knocked at the door of the study

THE FAMOUS FOUR OF THE REMOVE ARE IN FIGHTING FORM AGAIN IN THIS THRILLING ADVENTURE OF THEIR EARLY SCHOOLDAYS!

Levison shared with two other fellows. There was no reply, and so he opened the door and entered.

Levison looked up with his quick, keen eyes.

"Hallo, Wharton! Do you usually come into a room without being invited?"

Harry Wharton's eyes gleamed for a moment, but he was determined to keep his temper. He looked straight at the new boy of the Remove.

"I knocked," he said quietly. "I want to speak to you. You may not be aware of it, but I am cricket captain of the Form you belong to. I'm willing to give you a trial to put you in the Form eleven."

"I'm willing to go in."

"You would have to have a trial first."

"I don't see why. I played cricket at my last school, and I fancy my form is a bit above that of most of the fellows in the Lower Fourth here."

"You may fancy so, but I don't think a conceited ass is likely to be much of a cricketer," said Harry angrily.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I want to see you play—"

"What's the little game?" said Levison suddenly.

Harry stared at him.

"What do you mean? There's no little game that I know of."

"There are lots of fellows in the Form would jump at the chance," said Levison. "I suppose you've got a motive for trying a new fellow. Are you really thinking of getting me down on the cricket field, and guying me?"

Harry Wharton compressed his lips. "I haven't any time to waste guying you," he said, "and I dare say you would be no good, anyway. You can stay where you are."

And he turned to the door.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Levison hastily. "I don't mind playing if you're serious."

"You can go and hang yourself!"

"I say—"

Harry Wharton walked out of the study, and slammed the door hard. His brows were still knitted when he rejoined his chums on the cricket field.

"Isn't he coming?" asked Nugent.

Wharton shook his head.

"I'm not going to give him a chance. He may be able to play cricket, but he gets on my nerves too much. We should never hit it."

"Good! I suppose it will be Bulstrode?"

"I'll think it over. Let's get to practice now. Have you seen Hazeldene?"

"He's just coming out."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, run away, Bunter! You can't play cricket, so—"

"I haven't come here to play cricket, Cherry. I'm going down to the post office—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What are you going there for? You don't mean to say that you've got a postal order?"

Billy Bunter shook his head.

"No, Cherry; I haven't. I've been expecting one, but, owing to some delay in the post, it hasn't arrived. I'm going to the post office to inquire about it. You know they're so careless in country post offices. My letter may be lying there all the time with the postal order in it."

"That would be hard cheese, Bunter."

"Yes; and I think it's time I inquired. If you fellows want anything brought back from the village,

I am quite ready to oblige you. I shall be passing the tuckshop."

Bob Cherry laughed.

"You can pass it, Bunter."

"Well, it might save a journey to the village another time if I called in now as I was passing," said Bunter.

"There's those ripping little cream cakes they sell there. You can't get those at the school shop here, you know."

Harry Wharton took a shilling from his pocket.

"Make it a bob's worth, Bunter."

"Certainly, Wharton! I expect my postal order is waiting for me at the post office, and I shall, in that case, bring back a ripping feed from the village, and we'll have supper in the dormitory," said Bunter. "I'm off now."

"I say, look out, you know!" said Hazeldene, joining the group.

"I hear that the gipsies are in the neighbourhood again now, and we had trouble with them when they were here last time."

"Oh, they won't kidnap me!" said Billy Bunter. "They kidnapped your sister, Vaseline; but I haven't anything valuable about me, except Wharton's shilling."

"You may be staggering under the weight of a consignment of postal orders coming back," Bob Cherry remarked.

But Bunter seemed to be willing to risk a hostile meeting for the sake of the cream cakes. He toddled down to the gates of Greyfriars, and the chums of the Remove went on the cricket field.

They were at practice when Levison came out of the house with his cap on. He stood looking at them for some time, but did not speak. Harry Wharton did not even glance at him.



"Crack 'im on the 'ead, Simon!" The other ruffian took a menacing grip on his cudgel. Billy Bunter started back. "Please—I—oh dear!" But at that moment the Famous Four came rushing along the footpath. "At them!" shouted Harry Wharton.

The Footpads.

"MASTER HARRY!"

Harry Wharton had come off the field. He had put in half an hour's practice, and there was no doubt that the young leader of the Remove was in fine form. Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, had given him a word of commendation as he came off the field. And a word of commendation from Wingate meant a great deal.

Harry, still in his cricketing flannels, was strolling under the old elms, when the voice came softly to his ears.

He looked round and raised his cap with a good-humoured smile.

It was old Nadesha who stood before him—the old gipsy woman who had warned Harry of an intended robbery at the school by an outcast member of her tribe, and who had since then lived at Greyfriars in the service of the Head's wife, kindly Mrs. Locke.

"Oh, it is you, Nadesha!" said Harry, turning towards the old gipsy.

"You wish to speak to me?"

"Yes. You are in danger."

Harry looked at her blankly.

"I—in danger?"

"Yes. You have not heard that there are gipsies in the neighbourhood of Friardale now?" said Nadesha, in a low, swift voice.

Harry smiled.

"Yes; but they will not harm me. Why should I fear the gipsies?"

"Have you forgotten Melchior and Barengro?"

"But they are in prison, I believe."

"That may be, but they have friends. The gipsies who have come here are not the true Romany, whom you would have nothing to fear from. These are of Melchior's type, and if you should fall in with them in a lonely lane you would be in danger."

"Thank you for the warning, Nadesha! I shall be careful."

"They will not stop in the neighbourhood long. They will go; they are wanderers. For a few days, then, will you remain within the gates?"

Harry laughed.

"Remain shut up in the school because I am afraid of a visionary danger, Nadesha?"

"It is no visionary danger. It is real."

"Even then it would make no difference. I can take care of myself."

The old gipsy made an expressive gesture.

"As self-willed and hot-headed as ever," she murmured.

Harry Wharton caught the words and coloured.

"Not so, Nadesha," he replied. "But you fear too much for me. I should be laughed at if I remained within gates to avoid a danger which might never arise."

"You will have your way, at all events," said the gipsy. "I can do nothing but warn you."

"And that is enough, Nadesha. You have put me on my guard, and now it will not be easy for them to catch me napping if they mean me harm."

"Harry!"

It was Bob Cherry's voice calling under the trees. Nadesha nodded her head, and departed. Harry Wharton watched the old gipsy till she vanished, and then he turned away, with a thoughtful brow, to join his chum.

Old Nadesha had shown a regard for him ever since she came to the place, and he would willingly have done anything he could to please her. But he

was not the fellow to take a single step to avoid danger.

"Harry, where have you got to?"

"Here I am, Bob."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! I wondered where you were. I thought I heard you talking to somebody."

"So I was. It was old Nadesha. She warned me about the gipsies being near Friardale again, and doesn't want me to go out of gates till they're gone," said Harry, with a smile.

Bob Cherry laughed.

"That wouldn't do, Harry. It's just as well to be careful, though. I hear that there was a robbery in Friardale Wood yesterday, and a man belonging to the village was knocked senseless and left in the wood for hours, till he crawled away."

"I should be glad to run into the scoundrel who did it!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "I suppose the police haven't found him?"

"Oh, no! The Friardale police couldn't find anything. I say, that affair, now I come to think of it, occurred in the footpath—the one we use for a short cut to the village."

"What about it?"

"Only Billy Bunter will go that way."

Harry looked serious.

"If he fell in with the gipsies he might get into trouble," said Bob Cherry. "He's too blind to see any danger till he was right into it. Suppose we take a stroll down and look for him."

"I was just thinking of it."

"I'll call Nugent and Hurree Singh, then."

It was getting towards time for locking up, but there was time for the chums of the Remove to go down the footpath to look for Bunter. After changing their flannels, the Famous Four left the gates of Greyfriars, went down the lane, and crossed the stile into the footpath through the old, shadowy wood.

The dusk was growing thick in the wood. Dark shadows were thrown across the footpath, moving as the foliage trembled in the breeze.

The chums of the Remove were silent as they walked on under the overhanging branches. The thought that there might be a dangerous ruffian lurking in the shadows there was quite enough to make them serious.

Harry Wharton stopped and suddenly held up his hand.

"Hark!"

It was the sound of a voice they knew well, and the chums of the Remove could not help grinning as they heard it.

"I'm sorry, but I haven't any money. If I had any, I would willingly give it to you. But I have been disappointed about a postal order, and I'm stony."

A savage voice growled out a reply:

"And over yer watch!"

"I'm sorry, but I haven't a watch."

"Crack him on the 'ead, Simon!"

Harry Wharton made a sign to his companions.

"Come on!" he whispered.

"Rather!" murmured Bob Cherry and Nugent.

"The ratherfulness is terrific," purred the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Silently on the grassy path the chums of the Remove ran swiftly forward. They passed the turn in the path in a few moments, and came upon the scene. Billy Bunter was standing in the middle of the path, with a bag of cream cakes under his arm, and blinking through his big spectacles in a very scared way.

Two ruffianly looking, swarthy fellows were blocking his way, one of them

with a thick, heavy cudgel under his arm. Their faces were savage and threatening.

"Crack 'im on the 'ead, Simon!"

The man with the cudgel under his arm let it slip into his hand.

Billy Bunter started back.

"Please—I—oh dear—"

"At them!" shouted Harry Wharton. The Famous Four rushed to the attack.

Their coming had been so silent that the gipsies were taken by surprise. Harry Wharton's fist crashed into Simon's swarthy face like a lump of solid iron, and the ruffian went reeling half a dozen paces before he fell to the ground.

Bob Cherry and Nugent jumped at the other gipsy like a couple of cats, and had him on the ground in a twinkling.

Billy Bunter reeled against a tree with a gasp of relief.

"Go for them!" he panted. "Go for them, Wharton! Punch his head, Cherry!"

Simon sprang to his feet. He had dropped his cudgel in his fall, and he faced Harry Wharton with clenched hands. But the junior's right crashed into the swarthy face again, and the left followed it up like a hammer.

The ruffian reeled into the bushes and fell—and then picked himself up quickly and ran like a hare.

The other rascal had wriggled himself loose, and jumped up. He seemed about to spring at the boys, but changed his mind, and darted away after his comrade.

"After them!" yelled Bob Cherry. And he was rushing after the gipsies when Harry Wharton caught him by the shoulder and swung him back.

"Hold on, Bob! We could never find them in the wood, dark as it is," he said. "And I don't want to be knocked on the head, either, Bob."

Bob Cherry stopped.

"Oh, just as you like! Hallo, hallo, hallo, Bunter! Why, the boulder's feeding!"

Billy Bunter was indeed sampling the contents of the paper bag. He had a cream cake between his teeth. It was plain that the scare had not impaired his appetite in any way.

"I'm jolly glad you fellows came along," he remarked. "I believe they were going to bash me with the cudgel, you know. I'm not sorry that they didn't know anything about my postal order at the post office. If I had had it with me, those rotters might have taken it."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I dare say it will come by the first post in the morning, Bunter. Let's get back to Greyfriars, or Gosling will lock us out."

The chums of the Remove lost no time in getting back to the school. Gosling, the porter, was coming out with the keys when they arrived. He gave a grunt as they walked in.

"What I says is this 'ere—"

"Hallo! Going out?"

It was Harry Wharton who asked the question, and the person he addressed was Levison, the new boy in the Remove, who came down to the gateway at that moment with his cap on and a light overcoat on his arm.

Knocked Down.

LEVISON glanced at the chums of the Remove, but he had been about to pass them without a word, when Harry Wharton spoke to him.

He nodded shortly.
 "Yes, I'm going out."
 "Then you won't come in agin," said Gosling emphatically. "Which I shuts the gates according to horders. And what I says is this 'ere, that horders is horders."

"I've got a pass," said Levison.
 "Which seeing is believing," said Gosling, with a sniff.
 "There it is."

Gosling looked at the pass Levison held out. It was signed by Carberry, a Sixth Form prefect, and was quite in order. Gosling grunted.

"Which if you'll go out I shall be able to shut the gates," he said.

"I don't see why I should hurry to please you," said Levison. "You're not very obliging to me. You can wait."

Gosling snorted. But he had to wait. "You going to the village?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I really don't see why that should interest you very much," said Levison. "But as a matter of fact, I'm going to the village."

Harry flushed angrily.
 "It doesn't interest me in the least!" he exclaimed. "You can go to the village, or to the deuce, for all I care, but—"

"Then I don't see why you should ask questions about it."

"I want to speak a word to you, that's all," said Wharton. "If you're going to the village, I only want to warn you that it's not safe."

Levison stared.
 "Not safe! What do you mean?"

"There are gipsies in the wood," The new boy in the Remove laughed.

"I suppose gipsies in the wood won't worry me. I'm not afraid of gipsies, however much they may scare some people."

"If you mean that I'm afraid—" Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I didn't say so, did I?"

"No, you didn't, but—" Harry paused. It was not worth while bandying words with the fellow, anyway. "Let me finish. There was a robbery with violence yesterday near Friarale."

"I haven't heard anything about it."

"Well, you have now."

"Such things do happen, I suppose," said Levison carelessly. "But I suppose everybody can't go about in a state of nerves because there has been a robbery with violence."

"It happened in the wood, and as we came through the wood just now we met the gipsies. They had stopped Billy Bunter to rob him. We came up just in time—"

"Like a party of heroes and no mistake," grinned Levison. "I suppose you attacked the villains and wiped up the ground with them?"

"They got away."

"What a pity! You might have got no end of glory by running them in, you know, and then people would have believed your yarn, too."

Wharton's teeth came together hard. "Do you mean to say that you don't believe me?" he asked.

"Well, I don't say that; but it sounds to me a lot like a fairy tale," replied Levison. "If you could prevent me with this 'yarn from going out I can imagine how you would snigger over it afterwards."

"It is true."

"Oh, of course it is! But you can't pull my leg as easily as all this, you know. You would have to make it a bit more plausible!"

"I say, Levison," said Billy Bunter, "it's true, you know. They were going



"Come on!" said Harry Wharton softly; and he swung himself from the box-room window and went down the rope hand under hand. The Famous Four were taking a big risk in breaking bounds, but they were determined to find the vanished Levison.

to bash me with a cudgel, though I told them I was sorry I had no money."

Levison laughed.
 "Pile it on!" he remarked.

"You're a silly ass!" growled Bob Cherry. "You've had a fair warning, and if you go running into danger now, it will serve you right what you get."

"I'm quite willing to risk it. Have you finished?"

"The silliness of the ass is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Supposefully we wipe the ground up dustfully with the silly ass, as a lessonfulness not to show the piggish doubtfulness of our honourable word?"

"Good wheeze!" said Nugent.

"Oh, rats!" said Levison. "You can't take me in. But it's no good getting ratty about it. I'm going out, anyway."

"Which I'm waiting—" began Gosling.

"Wait, then!" said Levison.

"What I says is this 'ere—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"One word more," said Harry Wharton. "I have warned you of your danger, and it is a real one. If you go to the village, go by the public road, not by the footpath through the wood."

"The footpath saves a quarter of an hour."

"Then you are going that way?"

"Yes."

"After what I've told you?"

"Oh, rats!"

Harry Wharton's eyes blazed.
 "You confounded cad!" he exclaimed. "I have half a mind to give you a licking now, on the spot!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Levison. "You can't take me in. I've got my eye-teeth out, you know. A silly yarn

like the one you've just told me— Oh!"

Levison broke off as Harry's fist came out. To be given the lie was a little more than Harry would have stood from anybody. His fist flashed out before the words were off Levison's lips, and the new boy in the Remove rolled over on the ground.

Gosling broke into a chuckle. He was as irritated by Levison as anybody, and the prompt punishment that had fallen upon him was a very pleasing spectacle to the Greyfriars porter.

Levison sat up and rubbed his mouth.

"You did that when I wasn't looking!" he growled.

"You were looking," said Harry contemptuously. "But anyway, get up and I'll give you some more when you're looking. I've had enough of your confounded insolence!"

Levison slowly rose to his feet. There was a trickle of red from the corner of his mouth, and he wiped it away with his handkerchief.

"I shan't fight you now," he said. "I'm going out. I'll call this to your mind to-morrow, Harry Wharton."

"Whenever you like," said Wharton disdainfully.

Levison turned to the gate and passed out into the lane.

Gosling locked up the gates after the Remove had gone, and the chums turned slowly towards the house.

Harry Wharton's face was clouded. He had regretted that blow a few minutes after it was struck. But the old hasty temper that had caused him—and his friends—so much trouble in the past, was not gone yet. Nugent glanced at him as they crossed the Close.

"You're not bothering about that chap?" he asked. "If he gets into trouble it will serve him jolly well right!"

"Rather!" said Bob Cherry. "The ratherfulness is great!" "I'm sorry I hit him," said Harry, in a low voice.

"By Jove," said Nugent warmly, "if ever anybody deserved it he did. I wonder you kept your temper with him so long. He was enough to provoke anybody's temper, especially yours."

"Yes, especially mine!" said Harry bitterly. "I know it's a hasty one!" "I didn't mean that," said Nugent quickly.

"But it's a fact, all the same. I wish I hadn't. But it's no good bothering about it now. Let's get in."

And the chums of the Remove went indoors.

Missing!

WINGATE of the Sixth, captain of Greyfriars, was in his study, conning over a list of names on a sheet of notepaper, when a tap came at his door. The Remove were not the only fellows at Greyfriars concerned with questions of cricket. Wingate was captain of the first eleven, and he was thinking out his team—the team that was to uphold the colours of Greyfriars in an important away match.

"Come in!" rapped out Wingate. Harry Wharton entered the study. The captain of Greyfriars gave him a genial nod. Time had been—and not so long ago—when Harry Wharton had been shown the rough side of Wingate's character, and he had found it very rough indeed. But the captain of Greyfriars had marked the change in Wharton, and the head boy of the Remove and the captain of the Sixth were on excellent terms now—as good terms as the difference in their Forms allowed.

"Hallo, Wharton!" "Can I speak to you a minute, Wingate?"

"Certainly. You can sit down. Some-

thing about the cricket?" asked the Greyfriars captain pleasantly.

"No, not this time, Wingate. I want you to advise me later about that, if you will. But just now there's a matter I ought to speak to you about."

"Go ahead!" said the captain of Greyfriars tersely.

Harry Wharton related the incident in the wood and the rescue of Billy Bunter from the footpads. Wingate listened thoughtfully.

"You were quite right to tell me this," he said. "I will mention it to the Head, and particulars can be sent to the police in Friardale."

"But that isn't all."

"No? What else is there?"

"Levison was going out as we came in, and he wouldn't listen to my warning. He thought I was rotting. He's gone out, and he means to take the footpath through the wood. In fact, he's there before now."

"The young fool! But what does he mean by going out at this time?"

"He had a pass from a prefect."

"Oh, I see; that's all right! But he ought to have had sense enough not to go after what you told him. Let me see—that is the new boy in the Remove, isn't it?"

"Yes; he hasn't been here much over a week."

"H'm! I hope the young fool won't get into any mischief. You say the gipsies cut off after your row with them."

"Yes."

"They mayn't hang about the same spot. Levison probably won't meet them, but he might. How long has he been gone?"

"Twenty minutes, I think. I had to go to calling-over, and then I came here."

"Then he's close to the village by now. It's too late to think of following him and fetching him back," said Wingate. "Anyway, he will have to be in by bed-time, and we can only leave it till then. The young ass ought to have a licking for going out, in the circumstances, but it can't be helped now."

Harry Wharton rose.

"I thought I ought to mention it to you, Wingate, in case—"

"Certainly, that's right. I expect he will turn up in time for bed, and then if the captain of his Form gave him a licking for being an obstinate ass, I don't think any harm would be done," remarked Wingate.

Harry Wharton laughed and quitted the study. He felt less uneasy after the interview with the captain of Greyfriars. After all, it was not likely that Levison would fall in with the footpads.

Wharton entered the Junior Common-room, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh immediately claimed him for a game of chess.

In the intense occupation of the game Harry forgot all about Levison and his obstinacy. He glanced up with a start when Carberry, the prefect, came into the room with a growl.

"Bed-time, you young rotters!"

Carberry was one of the most unpopular prefects at Greyfriars. His mode of address to the juniors was always something in this style, unless there were masters near.

Carberry liked to have the authority and consideration of a prefect, but he did not care for the duties that were attached to the office. When his turn came for seeing lights-out in the Remove dormitory, he generally growled at what he regarded as a troublesome waste of his time, and bullied the youngsters to compensate himself.

Harry Wharton looked at his watch. It was twenty-five minutes past nine, and half-past was the bed-time for the Remove. Wharton looked quickly round the room, remembering Levison. The new boy was not there.

"Mate in four!" murmured the Hindu junior softly.

Harry Wharton nodded assent, and the chessmen were swept into the box. Carberry as well as Wharton was looking round the room.

"Where is Levison?" he asked.

"Haven't seen him," said Bulstrode, at whom the bully of the Sixth was looking when he asked the question.

"I gave him a pass to go to the village after locking-up," said Carberry. "He was to bring something back for me. He hasn't been to my study."

"Has he come back?" said Harry Wharton.

Carberry stared at him.

"You don't say the young rotter has had the cheek to stop out till this time of night!" he exclaimed. "By Jove, I'll warm him if he has!"

Carberry, with an angry brow, inquired right and left for Levison. But he was not to be found. Hazeldene went to look in his study, but he was not there. No one had seen him since calling-over. It was clear at last that he had not returned.

"I'll skin him for this!" said the prefect, snapping his teeth.

"He may have been kept away," said Harry Wharton.

"What could have kept him away?"

"He may have met the footpads in the wood."

"Rot!"

Harry Wharton compressed his lips. "Get off to bed, you young rotters!" said Carberry. "Hanged if I know why I should have to drive you to bed of a night as if I were a nurse! Get off to your dormitory, or I'll warm you! Where are you going, Wharton?"

"I'm going to tell Wingate that Levison hasn't come back."

"You needn't trouble to do anything of the kind. Go up to the dormitory!"

"Wingate wishes me to tell him."

This Week's "Star Turn"

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"Do as I tell you, and never mind Wingate!"

"I shall do nothing of the sort," said Harry Wharton quietly; and he walked away towards the seniors' room, where he knew he would find Wingate at that hour.

Carberry gritted his teeth. Like most bullies, he overstepped the limit sometimes, and provoked defiance, and was then nonplussed. The Removites were chuckling at his discomfiture, and he cuffed several of the smaller boys right and left, and bullied the rest till they crowded upstairs to the dormitory.

Harry Wharton entered the seniors' room, where he found Wingate talking to Baker and Green and several others of the Sixth. The captain of Greyfriars looked towards him at once. He had not forgotten Levison.

"What is it, Wharton?"

"Levison hasn't come back."

"You are sure?"

"Quite sure, Wingate. We have looked for him everywhere."

"That's curious," said the captain of Greyfriars. "Have you asked the porter whether he has let him in?"

"No; but—"

"Better go and ask him, to make sure."

"Certainly!"

Harry left the School House and went down to the porter's lodge. Gosling growled at Wharton's knock and opened the door. Gosling was having his supper, and did not want to be disturbed.

"What is it?" he grunted.

"Have you let Levison in?"

"I hain't let nobody in."

"Then Levison is still out?"

"I s'pose he is, and if I was the Head I'd skin him. What I says is this 'ere—"

But Harry Wharton did not stay for more. He returned to the House and reported to Wingate. The captain of the school looked very serious.

"You had better go to bed," he said. "I will tell the Head about it, and we will see what is to be done. Good-night!"

"Good-night, Wingate!"

The Remove were already in bed, and Carberry was turning the light out when Harry Wharton entered the dormitory. The prefect looked at him with a scowl.

"Well, as you're late, you can undress in the dark," he remarked. "Don't let me catch you lighting anything in this dormitory, or I'll make it warm for you!"

Harry Wharton did not reply. He had undressed in the dark before, and he could do it again. But, as a matter of fact, he did not intend to undress at all just then.

The prefect left the dormitory and shut the door hard, and the juniors were left in darkness.

Bob Cherry sat up in bed.

"What about Levison, Harry?"

"He's not to be found. Gosling hasn't let him in."

"Then the young fool has really got into trouble, after all," said Nugent.

"It looks like it."

"The faultfulness is in his honourable self," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The obstinacy of the ass was terrific. But, all the same, I should be sorry if he has fallen among thieves and received the cudgel bashfulness."

"I think it's very likely he has fallen in with the gipsies," said Harry quietly. "I can't account for his staying out in any other way. He is a new boy here, but he knows what a serious matter it is to stay out after bed-time.

If he has done it for no good reason he will be flogged."

"Serve him jolly well right!" said Bulstrode, turning over. "I'm not going to worry over him, for one. I'm going to sleep."

"Go to sleep, then!"

"Oh, I dare say he'll turn up all right," said Hazeldene; and he, too, settled his head on his pillow.

Harry Wharton sat on Bob Cherry's bed. He did not undress, and his brow was very thoughtful. Bob Cherry squeezed his arm.

"What are you thinking about, Harry?"

"Levison."

"Yes, I know; but why don't you go to bed?"

"I'm thinking—"

Harry paused.

"Go on, old chap!"

"Well, something must have happened to Levison to keep him away like this. It is an accident, or else he has been attacked—perhaps badly hurt. I'm going to see, Bob."

"What?"

"I'm going out to look for him."

Bob Cherry nearly jumped out of bed in amazement.

"You are going out to look for him?"

"Yes," said Harry resolutely. "Of course, the Head will send out to search for him. I expect Wingate will go, with some of the Sixth, but—"

"They'd never let a fellow from the Remove go with them."

"I know they wouldn't."

Bob Cherry drew a deep breath.

"Then are you thinking of going out on your own?"

"Yes, unless you care to come with me, Bob."

"No question about that," said Bob Cherry. "If you go, I go."

"Good!"

"We shall have to set out without being seen, then," said Bob Cherry. "It means a fearful row if we're spotted."

"I'm quite ready to risk that."

"So am I, for that matter. But we shall have to be careful. Shall we two go alone, or—What about Nugent and Inky?"

"Leave it to them to decide."

The talk had been in low whispers, audible only to Harry and Bob. Bob Cherry crossed to Nugent's bed and whispered:

"Nugent!"

"Hallo!"

"Wharton and I are going out to look for Levison."

"My hat!"

"Are you coming with us?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Good!"

"And I am coming, too, ratherfully," purred the soft voice of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "We shall go all together, my worthy chums."

"Right-ho, Inky!"

Quietly, in the darkness of the dormitory, the chums of the Remove dressed themselves. From two or three beds came drowsy inquiries as to what was up, and Bob Cherry politely told the inquirers to go and eat coke. Then the four chums left the Remove dormitory.

The Search in the Wood.

THE passage was dark and gloomy, but from the stairs came a beam of light from the Lower Hall. The chums of the Remove crept cautiously along to the head of the stairs and looked down.

Dr. Locke was standing in the Hall, talking to Mr. Quelch, the master of the

Remove, and Wingate. The Head was looking very troubled, and there was a shade of anxiety upon Mr. Quelch's face. Carberry stood a few paces away, silent, his face clouded.

"The boy must be searched for," said Dr. Locke. "It can only be an accident that has kept him away after the bedtime of his Form."

"He may be staying in the village, sir," said Carberry. "He might have heard something about the gipsies there and been afraid to return after dark."

The Head's face brightened a little.

"Yes, that is possible. What was his reason for going to the village, Carberry?"

"He wished to make some purchases at Tucker's, sir," said the prefect, with a momentary uncomfortable expression.

"H'm! I cannot see that he wanted a pass after hours to do that," said the Head, glancing at Carberry. "Still, matters of this kind are left to the discretion of the prefects, and, of course, you know nothing of the road being dangerous."

"I had heard nothing of the gipsies, then, sir, and even now I don't think it likely they would do any harm to a schoolboy."

"They stopped Bunter in the wood," said Wingate quietly, "and they would have done him harm if Wharton and the others hadn't come up."

"So Wharton says."

"Do you mean that you doubt Wharton's statement, Carberry?" asked the Head quickly.

"Oh, no, sir!" said the prefect. "But juniors have vivid imaginations, you know, and Wharton might try to make himself a hero—"

"Wharton is not that sort of boy," said Wingate. "For my part, I believe every word he has told me."

Carberry sneered slightly and was silent.

"Well, in any case, the boy must be searched for," said the Head. "If he is in the village, he can be brought back. Will you go to the village, Mr. Quelch, with Wingate and Carberry, and inquire for him? You might go by way of the footpath through the wood, and see if there is any trace of him there."

"Certainly, sir," said the Remove master.

"I shall wait very anxiously for your return," said the Head.

The chums of the Remove stole back quietly from the stairs. Harry Wharton's face was dark.

"No getting out that way," murmured Bob Cherry. "Somebody or other will be on the watch there for hours yet."

"Ratherfully, my worthy chum!"

"Did you hear what Carberry said?" muttered Wharton.

"The cad!" said Nugent. "My belief is that Levison is getting something for him in the village that he wouldn't care for the Head to know about."

"I was thinking so, too. Levison had some business of his own to attend to, I suppose, or he wouldn't have gone, but there was no reason why he should get a pass for the evening just to go down to Tucker's. Perhaps he had to go to some place it wouldn't have been prudent to go to in daylight."

"The Green Man, for instance?"

"Yes, very likely."

"I shouldn't be surprised, and it would be just like Carberry. If anything has happened, though, he stands a very good chance of being shown up."

"Serve him rightfully!"

"But how are we going to get out?" said Wharton. "I suppose the only thing is to try one of the back windows."

"That's the wheeze!"

"Then we shall have to get the rope from the study. Wait here for me, and I'll get it, and I'll bring the torch along, too. We shall need it."

"Hurry up, then. If we don't get ahead of the fellows down there, we shan't be able to look for Levison in the wood. They are going by the footpath."

"I won't be a minute."

Harry Wharton hurried away, and in less than a minute returned with a knotted rope and an electric torch.

The juniors hurried to the lower box-room, where they were pretty secure from interruption, and Harry opened the window.

"Fasten the rope to the grate," he said. "That's about the safest place."

"Ratherfully!"

Harry dropped the loose end of the rope from the window. It touched the ground.

"Come on!"

Harry swung himself from the window and went down hand under hand.

A jerk on the rope announced that he was safely on the ground. There were but few stars glimmering in the sky, and it was very dark in the Close.

Bob Cherry went down next, and then Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. Nugent was last, and he closed down the sash of the window before he swung himself down the rope.

"Here we are again!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Now for a sprint!"

The Removites hurried round the House. The great door was open, and the light streamed out into the Close. Mr. Quelch, Wingate, and Carberry were crossing towards the gate. Wingate carried a torch, and each of the three had a stout stick. The chums of the Remove kept well back in the shadows.

"We shall have to sprint to get ahead of them," said Nugent.

"We'll sprint, then," said Harry. "Come on."

It was easy to climb the ivy in a certain spot well known to the juniors. The Famous Four were soon over the wall, and they were sprinting along the Friardale road, before the Remove master and his two companions were outside the gates.

Bob Cherry gave a chuckle. "They won't put on so much pace as we are," he said. "We shall be miles ahead of them."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is great!" purred Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "We are almost at the stile already."

It did not take the four best runners in the Remove at Greyfriars long

others who might have been on the path in the darkness.

At any moment they might run into the one they sought, or into others whom they did not seek, or—and the thought made them shiver—they might stumble over some still form stretched in the gloom under the deep shadows of the trees.

"Think it's safe to switch on the torch, Harry?" asked Bob Cherry in a whisper.

"Yes, I think so. They can't be halfway to the stile yet."

"Good!"

Bob Cherry switched on the torch, and the bright beam cut through the dense darkness of the wood. Birds rose with a rustle from the thickets as the unexpected light flashed upon them, and the juniors started and looked round.

Each of the four had brought a stick with him, and now they grasped them firmly. They would not have been surprised at any moment if the light had shown them an evil face staring from the underwood.

"Come on!" said Harry.

They pressed on up the path. Bob Cherry flashed the light of the torch to right and left. The juniors watched the path and the bordering trees and bushes for any sign of Levison.

If the boy had been attacked and injured, there would probably be some trace of it left, and that would furnish them with a clue.

The Removites had covered about half the distance through the wood when Harry Wharton gave a sudden start.

"Look there!"

On the grass, which seemed to be trampled in this spot, a small packet lay in the bright beam of the torch.

"What is it?"

Harry stooped and picked up the packet and held it out in the light.

It was a packet of cigarettes!

(Have the chums of the Remove found a clue to the disappearance of Levison? Look out for next week's thrilling chapters.)

LOOKING AFTER LOWTHER!

(Continued from page 21.)

Knox was watching him anxiously. "What's the news?" he asked breathlessly.

Cutts gave a yell.

"Sold!"

"What?" yelled Levison.

"Look at that!" shouted Cutts, holding up the telegram in a frenzy of rage. "Look at it! Two Kisses, Bully Boy, the Hermit! No mention of Four-in-

Hand! He hasn't even been placed! We've lost!"

"Lost?" muttered Levison.

"Lost!" yelled Cutts, turning upon him furiously. "Lost! That's the end of it! That's the result of your precious tip! That's your splendid information straight from the horse's mouth! Not even placed, by gad! Nowhere! All our money gone!"

"And I've been betting on tick!" muttered Knox, white to the lips. "Where am I to get the tin from to settle?"

"Where am I going to get it from?" howled Cutts.

Levison almost staggered to the door. Cutts was upon him with the spring

of a tiger. All his disappointment, all his rage, was wreaked in the blows he rained upon the unfortunate junior.

Levison howled with pain and fury; and when he was hurled headlong out of the study at last he went sobbing down the passage.

It was likely to be a long time before the sports of St. Jim's indulged in another plunge, even upon the chance of a lifetime!

(Next Wednesday: "THE HOUSEMASTER'S PERIL!"—a big-thrill yarn of Tom Merry & Co., in which a masked mystery man suddenly becomes a menace to a master at St. Jim's. Whatever you do, don't miss this great story.)



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