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"NOT WANTED!"

A SPLENDID, LONG, COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE OF TOM MERRY & CO. AT ST. JIM'S.

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No. 308. Vol. 8.

NOT A HERO!

"I'm sorry!" called out the stranger. "I can't get at you! The ice isn't safe!" "Do you want me to drown, you funk?" shouted Merry.

(An exciting incident in the grand, long, complete tale contained in this issue.)

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NOT WANTED!

A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Tale Dealing with the Adventures of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Hallo, what's wrong with Cavendish?" exclaimed Tom Merry. Cavendish was drenched with water, and shivering with cold. "What's happened?" asked Tom. "Fallen in the river?" (*See Chapter* 11.)

CHAPTER 1.
A Hot Chase!

"THE ice is ripping!" said Tom Merry, with great satisfaction.

"Simply wippin', deah boy!" chirruped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form. "Now we'll show those New House boundahs what skatin' is weally like!"

"Yes, rather!"

It was a keen, sharp winter day. Morning lessons were over at St. Jim's, and half the school had crowded down to the banks of the Ryll.

The river, which in summer bubbled and murmured among the rushes, was frozen hard; from bank to bank was a hard surface of gleaming ice.

And the thoughts of all the St. Jim's fellows turned to skating. Those who did not possess, or could not beg, borrow, or steal skates, had to content themselves with the humbler joys of sliding.

Tom Merry & Co. of the School House had brought their skates down to the bank as soon as they were out of the Form-room. And Figgins & Co. of the New House were there just as soon.

The towing-path was crowded with fellows, juniors and seniors. In twos and threes and fours they whizzed out on the ice.

Naturally, the old rivalry of School House and New House broke out at once. Figgins & Co. meant to show the School House fellows that what they didn't know about skating wasn't really worth knowing, and Tom Merry & Co. intended to make it quite clear that they could skate Figgins & Co.'s heads off, so to speak.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn soon had their skates on, and they slid out on the ice together.

Monty Lowther of the Shell shouted after them in alarm:

"Figgins! Figgy! Danger!"

Figgins whizzed round.

"What's that?" he demanded.

"Danger!" said Lowther solemnly.

"Rats!" said Figgins. "The ice is as hard as a rock! If you're troubled with nerves, Lowther, you'd better sit there and watch!"

"No ice could possibly stand Fatty Wynn's weight!" replied Lowther, pointing a warning forefinger at the fat Fourth-Former. "You're in danger! If Fatty should sit down it means a shocking skating fatality for the whole party——"

"Silly ass!" shouted Fatty Wynn, turning red.

Fatty Wynn was a good weight, but he did not like allusions to that circumstance.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wait till that ass Lowther gets on the ice, and we'll

Next Wednesday:

"D'ARCY'S DELUSION!" AND "SECRET SERVICE!"

bump him over!" muttered Fatty Wynn. "We'll give him a chance to break the ice by sitting down."

And Figgins and Kerr grinned assent.

The Terrible Three of the Shell—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther—soon had their skates on, and were gliding out from the bank. Blake of the Fourth shouted a warning to them:

"Look out for Figgins!"

"Here, you keep off the grass, you New House asses!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as Figgins & Co., with their hands joined, came shooting down upon the Terrible Three.

But the New House trio only grinned, and came on at a terrific speed.

At the last moment, when a collision seemed unavoidable, they parted, and circled round the Shell fellows, at the same time reaching out and shoving them violently in passing.

Monty Lowther and Manners sat down on the ice, their feet flying into the air, and Tom Merry only saved himself by performing a series of kangaroo-like jumps that elicited yells of laughter from the fellows on the bank.

"Ow!" gasped Lowther. "The silly asses——"

"Yow!" said Manners. "The dangerous fatheads——"

"Oh, my hat!" panted Tom Merry, as he righted himself at last. "Gerrup and after them! We'll squash them for that!"

Lowther and Manners laboured to their feet. Figgins & Co., laughing loudly, were speeding down the river. Right down the Ryll, as far as the island more than a mile away, the sheet of ice extended, unbroken—a splendid run for the skaters. Not till the island was past was there any thin or dangerous ice.

Figgins & Co. skated on at breathless speed, and fast on their track raced the Terrible Three.

"We'll go right round the island and give 'em a race back!" chuckled Figgins. "We'll show 'em the New House can skate!"

"What-ho!" grinned Kerr.

They swept on past the island. In summer a mass of green trees and flowers, the island was now grim and leafless, banked with frozen snow, surrounded by frosty and rotten reeds. Beyond the island the ice was less safe where the river broadened out and the current ran fast among the shallows. But Figgins & Co. skated on, thinking only of beating the School House fellows in the race.

They were holding their own too; the Terrible Three were twenty yards behind as the New House trio swept past the island.

Tom Merry was well ahead, gaining a little on Figgins & Co., but Manners and Lowther had not gained an inch.

As Figgins & Co. shot past the island Tom Merry turned his head a little to call back to his chums:

"They're going round the island. I'll keep on. You fellows turn back there, and get in their way and stop 'em!"

"Good egg!"

Figgins & Co. disappeared round the island. Tom Merry put on a spurt and raced after them, and a mass of leafless trees hid him also from view. Manners and Lowther circled round, and shot back to get between the returning New House juniors and St. Jim's.

Round the island came Figgins & Co., their faces red with exercise, their scarves flying in the wind.

Figgins uttered an ejaculation;

"They've stopped for us!"

Manners and Lowther were right in their road, skating to meet them.

"Dodge 'em!" said Fatty Wynn.

"We can skate their silly heads off!" said Kerr confidently. "We'll walk round 'em!"

"Right-ho!" grinned Figgins.

The New House trio whizzed on, and suddenly separated and circled round Manners and Lowther, simply leaving them standing.

In a second they were past, and Manners and Lowther turned furiously in pursuit.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "This is where we smile! Who's cock-House at St. Jim's?"

"New House!" chortled Kerr and Wynn.

Tom Merry was still out of sight behind the island. Manners and Lowther skated desperately after Figgins & Co., and gained on them a little. But the New House juniors were still well ahead when they came whizzing home.

"New House wins!" roared Redfern. "Go home and learn to skate, you School House bounders!"

"Where's Tom Merry?" chuckled Figgins. "Blessed if he isn't still out of sight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners and Lowther halted, panting. Figgins & Co. grinned at them provokingly.

"You'd better run back and pick Tom Merry up and carry him home!" he suggested. "The poor chap is fagged out! He's sitting down to rest somewhere!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Lowther crossly.

The chums of the Shell were extremely exasperated. They had been beaten in the race, and their leader, the champion skater of the School House, had actually not come into sight yet. Manners and Lowther looked back along the river. The island was out of sight, hidden by a bend of the stream. Round the bend they expected every moment to see Tom Merry come whizzing. But he did not come.

"Oh, he'll come home in a cab!" chuckled Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! It's wathah wotten to let the New House beat you, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I don't call that upholdin' the honah of the School House, you know. I wegard Tom Mewwy as an ass!"

"He might have bucked up for once!" said Jack Blake crossly. "I don't think this is a time for sitting down to rest."

"The poor kid is tired!" chuckled Figgins. "We've run you School House bounders off your legs!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Yaas, wats, you duffah——"

"I say, the ice isn't safe on the other side of the island!" remarked Digby of the Fourth. "What did you find it like, Figgins?"

Figgins looked suddenly grave.

"I didn't think about that," he said. "I remember I heard a crack as we came round, but we were soon on good ice again."

"I suppose nothing can have happened——"

The laughter suddenly died away among the juniors. It was extraordinary that Tom Merry did not return. The slowest skater there would have been back by that time.

Monty Lowther's face became pale at the terrible thought that shot into his mind, and without a word he turned and raced desperately up the river, Manners at his heels. In a moment Figgins & Co., and Blake, and Herries, and D'Arcy, and Digby, and half a dozen more fellows were tearing after them, the same thought in all minds, that Tom Merry had met with an accident on the thin ice; that even while they had been laughing and chipping the Shell fellow might have been struggling in the icy water—struggling with grim death!

CHAPTER 2.

In the Shadow of Death.

CRA-A-A-ACK!

Tom Merry drew in his breath quickly as he heard the long, threatening crack of the ice under him.

Figgins & Co. had vanished round the island, and Tom Merry was following in their tracks.

But the ice which had creaked under Figgins & Co., cracked as Tom Merry came dashing across it.

In the excitement of the race, the juniors had forgotten that in the shadows beyond the island the ice was thin and unsafe.

Tom Merry was forcibly reminded of it as he heard the long crack under him.

Crac-c-c-ck!

"Oh, my hat!"

A long slit opened in the ice—slits appeared round it, spreading on all sides. Water oozed over the ice.

Tom Merry put on a desperate spurt to get past the dangerous zone.

But there was no time.

With a louder, sharper crack, the ice fairly split under him, and in a second more he was struggling in the water.

The sudden plunge into icy water made him gasp painfully.

Fortunately he was a first-class swimmer. His head did not go under. He struck out at once amid the fragments of floating ice, struggling to reach the yet unbroken portion of the frozen surface, to drag himself out.

Mr. Rateliff's legs shot from under him as he stepped on the slide, and he sat down with a bump; but his impetus was great, and he shot along at terrific speed in a sitting position, his feet in the air, and his hands clawing wildly at the atmosphere. *(See Chapter 8.)*

But the thin, crumbling ice broke off in his grasp.

Once he succeeded in getting his knee on the frozen sheet, but as he dragged himself up his weight broke it through, and he plunged in again with a gasp.

The gap in the ice was several yards across now, and the black water bubbled and swirled round him, seeking to drag him under to his doom.

Tom Merry was brave, but he shuddered at the thought of being sucked away under the ice in the grip of the current—to certain death.

There was no help at hand.

Figgins & Co., with Manners and Lowther after them, were speeding back to St. Jim's as fast as they could skate. The mass of the island hid them from Tom Merry's sight, and they were out of the reach of his voice.

He shouted as loudly as he could, but only the echo of his voice from the frosty trees on the bank answered him.

A chill ran through the junior.

He felt the chill of the water creeping into his very bones, as he struggled there, seeking to drag himself upon the cracking, crumbling ice.

Nowhere was it strong enough to support his weight.

Under his frantic efforts it broke away in sheets, and the gap round him grew larger and larger.

He ceased to struggle at last, and held on to the edge of the ice, to keep himself from sinking, and shouted again and again.

"Help! Help!"

Where were his friends? If he did not return they could come to look for him. But how long—how long? They had no idea that there had been an accident. Figgins & Co. had gone safely over the dangerous ice; they would not guess that it had collapsed under Tom Merry.

His gaze swept anxiously along the towing-path. Surely someone must come!

He gasped with relief at the sight of a boy in an overcoat and a silk hat, striding along the towing-path from the direction of Rylcombe.

He was a lad of about Tom Merry's own age, and looked like a schoolboy, though he was not a St. Jim's fellow. Tom Merry did not know him by sight.

"Help!" shouted Tom.

The lad on the towing-path stopped and looked round, as he heard the shout; and then, seeing the junior in the gap in the ice, he ran along the bank until he came abreast of him.

"Hallo!" he called out.

"Help!" shouted Tom. "Come and lend me a hand!"

The other looked at him doubtfully, and came out on the ice. But at the first threatening crack he backed away precipitately.

"I—I say, I'm sorry!" he called out. "I can't get to you! The ice isn't safe!"

Tom Merry panted.

"I can't keep up much longer!" he exclaimed. "I'm

half frozen! Get something for me to catch hold of—a pole or something! Do you want to see me drown?"

The other hesitated.

His face had gone pale, and he backed further away, and scrambled back to the safety of the bank.

On the towing-path again, he looked about him helplessly.

Tom Merry gritted his teeth. The fellow was evidently in a state of helpless funk, and nothing would have induced him to venture upon the ice again.

"What can I do?" the boy called out. "I'll do anything I can! But the ice won't bear my weight!"

"Drag a paling off the fence there!" shouted Tom Merry. "Then come out and hold it to me, and I can pull myself out!"

"I—I'll try!"

The boy ran to the fence at the back of the towing-path, and dragged at one of the long palings. It resisted his efforts for a minute or more, but he dragged away desperately, and the paling came off. He ran down to the rushes with it in his hands.

It was six feet long, and if he had ventured out on the ice with it, he could have reached the shore of the island, and so extended it to Tom Merry. There would have been risk in doing it, but Tom Merry would have taken that risk without a thought, and he naturally expected the other fellow to do it.

"Get across to the island!" he shouted.

"I—I can't! The ice won't bear!"

"Do want to see me drown, you funk?" shouted Tom Merry. "Come near enough to chuck it to me, then!"

The boy hesitated, his face flushing and paling in turns.

It was evident that he did not want to set foot on the frozen river again.

Tom Merry shouted to him furiously. His limbs were frozen by the chill of the water, his hands numbed by their contact with the ice he was clinging to. He knew that he could not hold out for many minutes now. It was maddening to see the fellow hesitating on the shore, while dark death was creeping upon him. If only one of his chums had been near!

"Throw it to me!" Tom shouted. "I can hang on to it till help comes, if you're afraid! I can't hold on to the ice any longer! Come near enough to chuck it!"

The other stepped on the ice at last.

He crept forward slowly and gingerly, the wooden paling in his hands. An ominous crack from the ice made him halt, and he threw the paling desperately and ran back.

The paling crashed on the ice, six or seven feet out of Tom Merry's reach.

The boy scrambled on the towing-path again.

Tom Merry's eyes blazed. With the wooden paling to support him, he might have floated till help came. His numbed and nerveless hands could no longer grip the ice. But the paling was out of his reach.

"Oh, you funk!" he panted. "You'll let me drown—you funk!"

"I—I can't do anything!"

The boy stood on the shore, his face deadly pale.

"Help!" shouted Tom Merry. "Help! Help!"

To his joy, an answering shout came from beyond the island.

"We're coming, Tom!"

It was Monty Lowther's voice.

"Help!"

"Buck up, Tommy!"

"Look out for the gap!" Tom Merry shouted. "Get on the island!"

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry, with new hope in his heart, heard Lowther scrambling on the island, and a moment or two later the Shell fellow came bursting through the frozen thickets.

He had kicked off his skates. He gave a quick glance round for Tom. But Tom Merry's strength was expended, and even as Lowther spotted him he went down.

Lowther did not hesitate a second. With a tremendous leap, he was in the water, and his grasp fastened upon Tom Merry and dragged him up as he was sinking.

Tom's head came above the water again.

"Hold on!" panted Lowther.

Tom clung to him with his numbed arms, and Lowther held on to the cracking ice. Three or four more juniors came bursting through the thickets to the shore of the island.

Manners crept out cautiously on the ice, and reached the paling where it lay.

"Catch hold, Monty!"

Lowther caught the paling with one hand, holding on to Tom with the other. Manners was on the ice six feet from the island shore. He dragged, and the ice cracked under him. He went through, but at that spot the water was shallow close to the shore, and his feet rested on the ground four feet under the surface.

Figgins and Kerr and Wynn plunged in recklessly to his aid. A channel was smashed through the crumbling ice to the shore, and Tom Merry and Lowther were dragged along it, and lifted out of the water.

They sank, exhausted, on the ground.

"Oh, Tom!" Lowther gasped. "You old duffer! That was a close shave!"

Tom Merry's teeth were chattering.

"Yes. If you hadn't come, Monty——"

Figgins's eye fell on the stranger, who had watched the rescue from the bank with staring eyes.

"Why didn't that chap help you?" he demanded. "Has the silly chump been standing there watching you?"

"He was funky, I suppose."

"The—the rotter!" said Manners, between his teeth. "I've a jolly good mind to go across and give him a hiding!"

"Let him alone, old chap! Let's get back to the school; I'm frozen!"

"Can you get up?" asked Figgins doubtfully.

"Yes. You fellows lend me a hand, and I can skate back; it will make me warm."

"Good egg—if you can do it!"

The juniors helped Tom Merry out on the ice, on the safe side of the island. The captain of the Shell was chilled and numbed all over, but he was able to start, supported by Lowther and Manners on either side. And the rapid exercise of skating soon restored his circulation, and the warmth had returned to his limbs and the colour to his cheeks by the time they came speeding back to the school.

CHAPTER 3.

Cavendish Arrives.

TOM MERRY & CO. did not linger on the ice.

They took off their skates, and ran at once into the school, to rub down and change their clothes.

When they came down again, they were looking little the worse for their dangerous adventure, only Tom Merry remaining a little pale.

Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, gave Tom Merry a severe lecture upon the subject of recklessness, to which Tom Merry listened with great meekness. As a matter of fact, he had been reckless, and he knew it. But, as Lowther had said, all was well that ended well. But both Manners and Lowther, and all the other fellows who heard about it, were deeply indignant at the conduct of the fellow who had stood on the bank and seen Tom Merry's danger without helping him.

"The rotten funk!" Monty Lowther said, a dozen times at least. "Why, you might have gone under for good, Tommy, with that silly ass standing there like a stuffed owl, and watching you all the time!"

"Jolly lucky for him he doesn't belong to St. Jim's!" growled Manners. "If I ever come across him again, I'll punch his nose, anyway!"

"Rotten funk!" said Blake of the Fourth.

Blake had not seen the stranger, having arrived on the scene after the rescue, when Tom Merry was being helped off the island.

As a matter of fact, only the Terrible Three and Figgins & Co. had seen him; but they all remembered him, and at least five of them had resolved to punch his head in case of a future meeting.

Tom Merry was the only one who did not make that resolve.

"The poor beast can't help being a funk, I suppose!" Tom Merry remarked.

Monty Lowther snorted.

"Rats! Anybody can help being a funk! Rubbish!"

"Rot!" said Manners.

"Piffle!" said Jack Blake. "Lucky for him he isn't a St. Jim's chap, that's all! Poof!"

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "If he belonged to St. Jim's, I should wegard it as a disgwace to the school! I should tweat him with uttah contempt!"

"Well, yes, I'm glad he doesn't belong to us, whatever he is," admitted Tom Merry. "He looked like a school kid, too. Abbotsford chap, perhaps."

And the juniors went in to dinner, and the miserable conduct of the stranger was dismissed from their minds.

Tom Merry's narrow escape had not spoiled his appetite, as he proved at the dinner-table. And when they came out of the dining-room, Lowther chuckled and asked him if he was going to skate again.

"Yes, rather," said Tom Merry.

"Not fed up?" asked Manners.

"No fear!"

And the Terrible Three went down to the river again. Most

of the St. Jim's fellows were there, making the most of the ice while it lasted. When the thaw came there would be an end to skating.

"Come on, Gussy!" said Blake, as he came out of the School House with his skates in his hand, and found the swell of St. Jim's adorning the School House steps.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Pway excuse me, deah boy; I'm goin' to wait heah!"

"What are you going to wait here for, fathead?" demanded Blake.

"I decline to be called a fathead!"

"Ass, then!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Come on, duffer!" said Digby. "We sha'n't have the ice very long. There's bound to be a thaw soon!"

"Yaas; but I've got an engagement, deah boy. Cavendish is comin' to-day!"

"Cavendish!" said Blake.

"Yaas—the new kid in the Fourth, you know. As a mattah of fact, he ought to have been heah befoah this, as his twain came in some time ago."

"Oh, blow Cavendish!" growled Blake. "I suppose you don't want to hang about waiting for a blessed new kid?"

"I don't want to, deah boy; but I wegard it as a dutay," D'Arcy explained. "I don't know Cavendish myself, but my people know his people, so a chap is bound to be civil, you know!"

"Another giddy animal you're going to pet, I suppose, like Hammond!" growled Herries. "Let him take his chance!"

"Wats! As my people know his people, a chap is bound to be civil, you know. I'm goin' to meet him, and show him wound, you know, and put him up to things. You chaps can go and skate if you like. I don't mind."

"Well, we're not going to stand here waiting for a blessed new kid!" said Digby. "Come on, you fellows! You coming, Hammond?"

Hammond of the Fourth shook his head.

"I'll stay 'ere with Master D'Arcy," he said.

And Blake and Herries and Digby ran off, skates in hand, and Arthur Augustus and Harry Hammond were left on the School House steps. There was hardly anybody in the quadrangle, the good skating surface on the river having attracted all the fellows there. Arthur Augustus, as a matter of fact, wanted to skate as much as anybody; but he felt that he had a duty to do, and nobly made up his aristocratic mind to do it.

"The chap ought weally to have been heah to dinnah," he remarked. "Pewwaps he walked fwom the station and missed the way?"

"P'r'aps!" assented Hammond.

Arthur Augustus shivered imperceptibly. Hammond, the Cockney schoolboy, son and heir of the millionaire proprietor of Hammond's High-Class Hats, was his great pal. There had been no slackening of the queer friendship; but even the most affectionate personal regard could not prevent D'Arcy's nerves being a little troubled by Hammond's terrific accent. That accent had toned down a little since Hammond had been at St. Jim's, but it was still very marked.

"Wot kind of a feller is this 'ere Cavendish?" Hammond asked.

"I weally do not know, Hammond. I have nevah seen him."

"Toff—eh?" asked Hammond uneasily.

"He belongs to a vewy good family," said D'Arcy. "They are quite wich, and vewy decent."

"P'r'aps I'd better cut off," said Hammond thoughtfully. "Mebbe 'e won't care to meet me, arter all!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his famous eyeglass into his eye, and regarded Hammond with a severe glance.

"I weally wish you wouldn't be such an ass, old chap!" he said.

"Well, you see——"

"You are my fwiend. Anybody who doesn't think my fwiend good enough for him need not twouble to speak to me!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "What does it mattah if you were a hattah in Bethnal Gween? A hattah in Bethnal Gween is as good as anybody anywhah else, I suppose? It is only chaps whose social posish is wathah uncertain who are snobbish, Hammond! Weally, decent people don't care for those things!"

"I know you don't, Master D'Arcy; but this chap——"

"If Cavendish turns out to be a snob, Hammond, I shall have nothin' whatevah to say to him, of course. I should wegard it as bein' beneath my dignity to know a snob!"

Hammond grinned and nodded. He understood the noble and lofty views of the great Arthur Augustus, and he admired him immensely for them. But Arthur Augustus, being the son of a noble lord, could afford not to be snobbish. Fellows who were not the sons of noble lords were sometimes a little more particular.

And Hammond had a secret dread of meeting the unknown Cavendish. The mere name sounded to him extremely "class," as he would have called it, and he did not expect Master Cavendish to tolerate him as D'Arcy did. However, as D'Arcy wished him to remain, he remained. There was a great deal of doglike fidelity in Harry Hammond's friendship for Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove! I think that must be the chap!" Arthur Augustus exclaimed.

Hammond turned his head to look towards the gates.

A slim and elegant lad, in a very well-cut overcoat and a gleaming silk topper, had walked in.

It was evident that he was a new boy, and it was equally evident that he had none of the shyness of the average new boy.

He had an air of graceful self-possession, and he twirled a cane easily as he came sauntering across the quadrangle.

He stopped half-way to speak to a junior—Levison of the Fourth.

"Can you tell me where is the School House?" he asked politely.

Levison looked at him.

"New kid?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Oh, you're the giddy Cavendish D'Arcy's waiting for, I suppose!" said Levison. "Birds of a feather, to judge by the look of you. There's the School House."

"Thank you!"

The new boy sauntered on, and arrived at the steps of the School House. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy raised his silk hat gracefully, and Cavendish responded with a similar greeting. And Hammond, as he saw the action of the two "toffs," raised his hat also.

"Cavendish, I pwesume?" Arthur Augustus asked.

"Yes, that's my name."

"I'm D'Arcy of the Fourth. My people know your people, so I take the liberty of intwoducin' myself," said Arthur Augustus gracefully.

And he held out his hand.

Cavendish shook hands with him in a somewhat perfunctory way.

"Kind of you," he said. "I was told I should meet you here. You'll be in my Form. I'm going into the Fourth."

"Yaas. This is my fwiend Hammond, also in the Fourth."

"Glad to meet yer. Shike!" said Hammond, extending his hand.

Cavendish jumped.

He had certainly never expected to be addressed by a St. Jim's fellow in such an accent.

Hammond, as a matter of fact, was a little nervous, and when he was nervous, his Cockney accent became more pronounced than ever. His turning the word "shake" into "shike" made Arthur Augustus shiver a little.

Cavendish stared at him blankly.

He did not seem to notice Hammond's hand, which the Cockney schoolboy allowed to drop to his side again, turning very red.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eye gleamed behind his eyeglass.

Hammond muttered something, and disappeared into the House. He had been cruelly wounded by the superciliousness of the new boy, and but for D'Arcy's presence his resentment would probably have taken an active form. The Cockney schoolboy had succeeded in making himself liked by most of the St. Jim's fellows, and it was hard to be cut and insulted by a new boy before the latter had been five minutes at the school.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face had hardened.

CHAPTER 4.

Face to Face.

CAVENDISH did not appear to have noticed Hammond's disappearance. He was glancing round the quadrangle, and at the old, ivy-clad buildings of St. Jim's.

He was evidently prepared to be friendly with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the son of Lord Eastwood; but he had detected Hammond at a glance as a totally different kind of fellow, and had made it clear that he did not want to have anything to do with him.

"Rather a decent place, this!" he remarked.

Arthur Augustus struggled with his feelings.

Cavendish's supercilious rudeness to Hammond had nettled him very much; but he did not want to jump on a new kid, and he remembered that his people knew Cavendish's people, so he tried to choke back what he would have liked to say.

"Yaas," he said at last.

"I'm glad to meet you, D'Arcy. I think we shall be able to get on together," said Cavendish.

"Weally?"

"Yes. By the way, who was that horrible bounder who was here just now?" asked Cavendish. "Is it possible that he is a St. Jim's chap?"

"He is Hammond of the Fourth."

"He speaks like a bargee," said Cavendish. "I thought this was a pretty decent school. How on earth did they come to let that chap in?"

"Hammond is one of the best!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "He is a fine fellow, and as bwave as a lion. He wisked his life to save my cousin fwom dwownin'."

Cavendish nodded carelessly.

"Yes, I dare say. Those people have their qualities, of course," he remarked. "I wouldn't deny it for a moment. But how did he come to be admitted here? I should think some of the fellows' fathers would make a fuss about it. Where does he come from?"

"Bethnal Gween!"

Cavendish stared.

"Where?"

"Bethnal Gween!" repeated Arthur Augustus, rather enjoying the effect of that name upon the lofty new boy.

"Where is that?" demanded Cavendish.

"In London—East End!" D'Arcy explained

"My hat! Do you mean to say that East End bounders are admitted into this school?" Cavendish exclaimed, in dismay. "Why, I understood that St. Jim's was quite a decent place—quite up to Eton!"

"I twust that St. Jim's is wathah bettah than Eton," said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"Then how did that cad get in here?"

"I must wequest you not to call Hammond names. I have alweady wemarked that he is my fwiend."

"Yes, yes; I understand that you speak to him, if he saved your sister—was it——"

"My cousin!"

"Yes, your cousin—from drowning. But, of course, you can't be friends. His accent is simply unbearable. I don't know how I shall be able to tolerate him in the same Form. It's a rotten shame to let such awful outsiders in here!"

Arthur Augustus flushed red.

"I want to be civil to you, Cavendish, as my people know your people," he said. "But if you say anothah word against my fwiend Hammond, I shall decline your acquaintance."

"Oh, that's all right, if he's your friend!" said Cavendish, with a stare. "No accounting for tastes, I suppose. By the way, where are all the fellows? The place seems deserted."

"They're on the wivah!" D'Arcy explained. "The ice is good to-day, and they're all skatin.' If you came by the towin'-path you would have seen them."

Cavendish started a little.

"Have you had your dinnah, deah boy?" D'Arcy asked. "You are a little late."

"Yes, thanks. I lunched at the hotel in Wayland," said Cavendish. "I started to walk here by the towing-path, but—but I turned back—and I thought I might be late for dinner. I lunched at the hotel. I suppose I'd better go in and see the Housemaster—what?"

"I'll show you the way," said D'Arcy.

"Thanks!"

Arthur Augustus showed Cavendish to Mr. Railton's study, and left him there. The new boy entered, and D'Arcy walked on slowly to the common-room.

D'Arcy's brow was somewhat troubled.

In the kindness of his heart, he had wanted to be a friend to the new kid, and help him on his way. The discovery that Cecil Cavendish was a snob of the first water worried Arthur Augustus considerably.

One thing was quite certain—unless Cavendish was quite civil to Hammond, Arthur Augustus intended to have nothing to say to the new boy.

D'Arcy found Hammond in the common-room. Hammond was standing with his hands thrust deep into his trousers-pockets, gazing gloomily out of the window.

D'Arcy touched him lightly on the shoulder

"Hammond, deah boy——"

Hammond turned round.

"'Allo, Master D'Arcy!"

"Pway don't be down-hearted, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus awkwardly. "You must not allow a new kid's bad mannahs to wowwy you."

"'E wouldn't shike 'ands with me!" said Hammond.

"I am afwaid he is wathah a wottah."

"'Tain't that!" said Hammond. "You're orfully good to me, D'Arcy, but that there chap won't look at things as you do. He's suited to be your chum. I ain't!

"That young person will not be my chum, Hammond. I want to be civil to him, because my people know his people, that is all!"

"'E's your own class, Master D'Arcy, and I ain't!"

"Wats!"

Hammond's face brightened up.

"Well, I don't mind," he said. "It was rotten of 'im to treat me like that, as I've never done nothin' to 'im. But if you want to be civil to 'im, D'Arcy, I won't punch 'is 'ead!"

"If he is wude to you again, Hammond, you are quite at liberty to punch his head," said Arthur Augustus, with a smile. "In fact, I would wecommend punchin' his head. It would pwobably do him good!"

"Then I'll do it, if I 'ave any more of 'is sorse!" said Hammond.

The two juniors remained looking out of the window. The fellows were beginning to come in from the river now, flushed and healthy with their warm exercise.

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

Cavendish glanced at D'Arcy, and nodded, apparently quite ignorant of the existence of Harry Hammond. Hammond's eyes began to glitter. The new boy was not bound, of course, to take any notice of him; but his ignoring of the Cockney schoolboy was an insult in itself.

"Seen Wailton?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Yes. I'm to go into Study No. 5. Know where that is?"

"Bai Jove! That's Hammond's study!"

"Whose?"

"My fwiend Hammond's!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Cavendish, in dismay.

"There will be four of you—Smith minor and Bates and Hammond, as well as you, Cavendish, deah boy. There are four of us in the next study, too, No. 6."

"Do you mean to say that this chap is going to share a study with me?" Cavendish exclaimed, condescending at last to take cognisance of Hammond's existence.

"Yaas."

"Then I think I'd better go and ask Railton to put me somewhere else. I couldn't possibly stand it!"

Hammond blazed out.

"Why couldn't you stand it?" he demanded. "Wot do you mean to sye? Ain't I good enough for you to dig with?"

Cavendish raised his eyebrows superciliously.

"My dear fellow, I don't want to argue with you!" he said cuttingly. "I dare say you are a very decent person—in Bethnal Green. But I do not, as a rule, choose my associates from Bethnal Green. I decline to share the same study with you. That is an end of it. D'Arcy, wouldn't it be possible for me to change into your study?"

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Imposs.," he said.

"But if we asked the Housemaster together——"

"That is imposs."

"But why?"

"Because my study-mates would nevah consent to have such a wotten snob planted on them in their study," said Arthur Augustus deliberately.

Cavendish reddened.

"Oh, draw it mild!" he ejaculated.

"And I would nevah consent, eithah. I wegard it as vewy wuff indeed on my fwiend Hammond to have to tolewate you in his quartahs!"

Cavendish sneered.

"I thought we were going to be friends," he said.

"It is quite imposs. for a decent chap to be fwiends with a beastly snob," said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head.

"You are calling me some pretty names," said Cavendish, his eyes beginning to gleam.

"I am quite weady to meet you in the gym., at any time, with or without gloves," said the swell of St. Jim's calmly. "I am quite pwepared to back up my words."

"Look here——"

"Wats!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Jack Blake, coming into the common-room, ruddy and glowing. "Hallo, rowing with the new kid already, Gussy?"

"Oh, Gussy!" grinned Herries.

"Where is the giddy repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere?" grinned Dig.

Cavendish glanced at them.

"We're not rowing!" he said calmly. "I'm hardly likely

to row, I think. I have some faint notions of good form. I was objectin' to having this person, Hamley, I think——"

"Hammond!" said the Cockney schoolboy, his teeth coming hard together.

"Yes, Hammond!" said Cavendish negligently. "I was objecting to having this person, Hammond, in the same study with me. I don't like the idea."

"Lump it, then!" suggested Herries bluntly.

"I have wemarked that Cavendish is a beastly snob!" said Arthur Augustus heatedly. "I am sowwy to have to chawactewise him in that mannah, as my people know his people. But he is certainly a beastly snob!"

"My only hat!"

It was a shout from the doorway. The Terrible Three had just come in, and they had looked into the common-room at the sound of D'Arcy's excited voice. They started as they saw Cecil Cavendish, and uttered a sharp exclamation all at once.

Cavendish looked at them, and evidently recognised them, and the flush died out of his face.

Monty Lowther strode in, his brows knitted, his eyes gleaming. He raised his hand and pointed to Cavendish.

"What is that rotten cad doing here?" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER 5.
The Coward.

MONTY LOWTHER'S words fell like a bomb upon the astonished juniors.

Cavendish had made far from a good impression upon the St. Jim's fellows who had seen him so far. But Blake & Co. did not understand why Lowther of the Shell should "jump" upon him in that sudden and emphatic manner.

Lowther's eyes were blazing, his whole expression was one of fierce scorn and contempt, as he pointed at the new boy.

Cavendish receded a pace or two.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I was not aware that you knew Cavendish, Lowthah!"

"I don't know him!" said Lowther. "I wouldn't know such a rotten worm! Anybody who really knew him would jolly soon stop knowing him, I should think!"

"That's the chap!" said Manners.

"Yes, that's the fellow right enough!" said Tom Merry. "But, for goodness' sake, let him alone, you chaps! I had no right to expect him to help me, and the ice was really dangerous to get on."

Blake gave a yell.

"What! You don't mean to say——"

"Yes, I do!" said Monty Lowther fiercely. "That's the cowardly cad who stood on the bank and watched Tom drowning, and was too funky to lend him a hand!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"That rotter!"

"Only natural that he should be a snob, too!" said Blake, with a bitter curl of the lip. "He's just raising objections to sharing the same study with Hammond—Hammond, who risked his life to pull Cousin Ethel out of the river!"

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath.

"You uttah wottah!" he exclaimed, his eyes gleaming at Cavendish. "If I had known that you were that wotten funk, I would nevah have shaken hands with you. Pewwaps you can't help being a coward. But you can help bein' a snob as well. Hammond, deah boy, I am sowwy you have to have that wank outsidah in your studay!"

Cavendish flushed crimson.

"Haven't you got anything to say for yourself?" demanded Blake. "Why did you stand on the bank and watch Tom Merry drowning?"

"The ice wasn't firm enough to bear my weight," said Cavendish sullenly.

"And you couldn't run any risk to save a chap from drowning? Lowther went in head first as soon as he got there!" exclaimed Manners.

"Yes, Lowther did," said Tom Merry, with an affectionate glance at his chum. "But this chap isn't built that way. I suppose he can't help it!"

"I did all I could!" said Cavendish. "I suppose I wasn't called upon to get drowned for the sake of a chap I didn't know!"

"What sort of a rotter do you call yourself?" snorted Blake.

"I call him a cowardly beast!" said Manners. "I think it's rotten that he's come to St. Jim's at all! We don't want his sort here!"

"And he's turning up his nose at Hammond!" growled Herries. "Why, Hammond's worth fifty of him, and I don't care whether he comes from Bethnal Green or Limehouse!"

Cavendish sneered.

"You may like a vulgar bounder, but I don't," he said, "and I don't see why you're all down on me. I did all I could. I didn't even know that that was a St. Jim's chap I saw in the river!"

"That makes no difference—you ought to have tried to get him out!"

"I did try!"

"What would have happened if I hadn't got there in time?" demanded Lowther hotly. "You could have done just the same as I did—and you had plenty of time—but it was touch-and-go when I jumped in!"

"Fellows should be careful how they go on unsafe ice," said Cavendish sullenly. "If a fellow who's old enough to know better runs into danger, he can't expect a perfect stranger to risk his life pulling him out."

"He can't expect you to, that's certain," said Blake, with a sniff. "I think it's disgusting to have that fellow put in the School House. Why couldn't he have been shoved in the New House. Figgins & Co. would have been welcome to him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Why, they'll chip us no end, when they know we've got a funk in the House!" said Digby. "It will be rotten!"

Cavendish's eyes glittered.

"I'd jolly well like to be changed into the other House!" he exclaimed. "I should get away from East End bounders, at all events!"

"Good egg!" said Lowther. "Go and ask Railton to change you over. As it's your first day here, he may do it, if you say you specially want to be in the New House."

"Yaas, that's a wippin' ideah!"

"We'll give you a licking before you go," added Manners.

"You stand back," said Lowther; "I'm going to give him a licking."

Cavendish backed away.

"Shut up, Monty!" urged Tom Merry. "Let him alone. Besides, if he's a funk, he won't fight you."

"I'm not a funk," said Cavendish, pale to the lips. "I'll fight any fellow here."

"Hallo, he's got a little bit of pluck somewhere in his carcase," said Blake. "Pile in, Lowther! Wipe up the floor with the beastly funk!"

"I'm going to."

Monty Lowther pushed back his cuffs and advanced upon the new boy. But Tom Merry caught his chum by the shoulder and forcibly dragged him back.

"Let go!" shouted Lowther.

"I won't! You're not going to handle him."

"I tell you I am!"

"Do shut up, Monty!" urged Tom Merry. "There's nothing to hammer him for. He acted rather rottenly, but it's over now!"

"He ought to be licked," growled Monty Lowther. "You're too soft, Tommy. He ought to be licked for not helping you, and he ought to be licked again for having the cheek to come into the School House."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I won't trouble your rotten House long," said Cavendish savagely. "Let me pass! I'll go and ask at once to be changed into the other House!"

Monty Lowther dropped his hands.

"Well, get out!" he said. "After all, you're hardly fit for a fellow to touch!"

"Yaas, that's quite wight. It would be wathah a disgwace to have a wow with him," Arthur Augustus remarked. "Pway, welieve us of your pwesence, Cavendish. I was pwepared to be vewy fwiendly with you, as my people know your people; but I find it quite imposs. undah the circs. You are a wank outsidah."

Cavendish cast an angry and scornful glance at the juniors, and strode out of the room. The bitter contempt upon him by the St. Jim's fellows did not seem to make any difference to his self-esteem. He was as satisfied with himself as ever, and he held his head very high as he walked out.

Monty Lowther gave a snort of disgust.

"You ought to have let me lick him, Tommy!" he growled. "He wants a licking! What beats me is how such a rotter can possibly have the cheek to consider himself better than anybody else. Bah!"

"Well, I shall be glad enough if he changes over to the other side," said Tom Merry. "We don't want him here, that's a cert. But Figgins & Co. will be fearfully ratty if they get him!"

"Oh, blow Figgins & Co!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Let them wip!"

And all the fellows agreed that the least Cavendish could do, under the circumstances, was to take himself off and relieve the School House of his membership. And they hoped fervently that his application to the Housemaster would be successful.

CHAPTER 6.
A Change of Houses.

MR. RAILTON looked a little surprised as Cavendish presented himself in his study again.

The new boy was looking pale and disturbed, and his eyes were gleaming under his knitted brows.

But he cleared his face as he caught the Housemaster's surprised glance.

"I have a favour to ask, sir," he began.

"Yes?"

"I suppose it really doesn't matter which House I am placed in?" Cavendish asked.

"I suppose not," said Mr. Railton, in surprise. "But you have been entered in the School House now. That was understood."

"I should prefer to be in the other House, sir, if I may," said Cavendish. "My father does not mind which House I am in, and I should greatly prefer it."

"You have friends in the New House?" asked Mr. Railton.

"No, sir. But there are a number of fellows in this House with whom I find that I am on bad terms, and I should prefer to start here in the other House."

Mr. Railton pursed his lips.

"That is a very strange request to make," he said. "It will be necessary for you to speak to Dr. Holmes. I have no power to alter the arrangements."

"Can I see the Head, sir?"

"You may go to his study. You will find him there. If he decides to accede to your request, he will give you a note for Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster in the other House. But have you considered this, Cavendish? I trust you are not desirous of making this change because of some foolish quarrel with the juniors?"

"No, sir. I've good reasons for wanting to start in the other House."

"Very well. You may go to the Head and make your request. Come back here and tell me the result."

"Yes, sir."

Cavendish left the study. He glanced about him, not knowing his way to the Head's study. He asked the first junior he met. It was Wally D'Arcy—D'Arcy's minor of the Third Form.

Wally looked at him queerly.

"Hallo! You're the new chap, ain't you?" he inquired.

"Yes. I'm Cavendish."

"Well, you'll be cut, Cavendish, I fancy," chuckled Wally. "So you're the funk—the chap who watched Tom Merry drowning instead of helping him?"

"I could not help him," said Cavendish between his teeth.

"Rats!" said Wally. "Here's the Head's study, if you want it. Yah! Funk!"

And Wally departed with a sniff.

Cavendish tapped at the Head's door, and went in. Five minutes later he presented himself in Mr. Railton's study once more, with a satisfied expression upon his face.

"The Head has consented, sir," he said. "He has given me a note to take to Mr. Ratcliff."

"Very well," said Mr. Railton shortly. He was by no means flattered by the new boy's desire to quit his House. "You may go."

And Cavendish went.

He walked out of the School House, and as he was seen crossing the quadrangle, the juniors understood that he had been successful.

"He's changed over!" grinned Blake, with great satisfaction. "That's ripping!"

"Figgins & Co. won't think it's ripping," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, they can go and eat coke!"

Cavendish crossed the quad., and arrived in the New House. He found Redfern of the Fourth in the doorway, and asked him the way to the Housemaster's quarters.

"New kid for this House?" asked Redfern.

"Yes."

"Come in! What's your Form?"

"Fourth."

"Same as mine," said Redfern cheerfully. "Here you are. Mind how you deal with Ratty. He's always a bit edgewise after dinner—indigestion, you know."

And with that warning, Redfern of the Fourth left the new boy.

Cavendish tapped at the door and entered. The thin, sour-looking man who greeted him with a sharp stare was a great contrast to Mr. Railton. Mr. Ratcliff looked by no means good-tempered, and the redness of his nose was a sign that he was a victim to the indigestion Redfern had so unsympathetically mentioned.

"Close the door!" he said irritably. "What do you want?"

Cavendish laid the Head's note on the table.

Mr. Ratcliff opened it and read it, with a sour look, and then glanced at the new boy again.

"Your name is Cavendish?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff's sour expression thawed a little.

"Any relation of Sir George Cavendish?" he asked.

"He is my father, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Ratcliff, still more agreeably. Sir George Cavendish was a very wealthy baronet, and wealthy baronets were very great personages indeed to Mr. Horace Ratcliff, who was a tuft-hunter of the first water. "Pray sit down, Cavendish!"

Cavendish sat down, looking quite pleased.

Mr. Railton had not asked him anything about his father, and certainly did not care whether he was the son of a baronet or a butcher. Mr. Ratcliff was evidently a gentleman of a different frame of mind. The graciousness of his manner had made Cavendish feel satisfied with his change of Houses. He felt that he would get on better in the New House.

"How did you leave your respected father?" asked Mr. Ratcliff smoothly.

"Very well, sir, I thank you."

"I have had the honour of meeting him," Mr. Ratcliff explained. "I was at the same college at Oxford. It is not unlikely that you have heard him mention me?"

"I don't remember it, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff looked a little disappointed. It would have made him very happy to be remembered by a wealthy baronet. At college he had been a humble hanger-on of Sir George Cavendish, who had utterly forgotten his existence afterwards, as well as the existence of a dozen other tuft-hunters.

"Well, well, we were really in quite different sets," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Probably he would not remember me. I am very pleased to welcome his son into my House. I trust we shall make you comfortable here, Cavendish."

Cavendish felt that he was getting on. The meanness of the Housemaster in kowtowing to him because his father was titled and wealthy did not occur to his mind. He only felt that he was getting his due. Cecil Cavendish had been brought up to think a very great deal of himself, and he had fully expected to carry all before him when he came to St. Jim's. He had met with a crushing disappointment so far as the School House was concerned. In the New House his prospects seemed brighter, and certainly he would have one friend there in the Housemaster—and a very powerful friend, too. The Housemaster's protection would mean a great deal to him if the fellows turned against him.

"I had heard that you were coming to the school," went on Mr. Ratcliff. "But I understood that you were to enter the School House."

"I asked the Head to let me change, sir."

"Very good! I am glad of it! I think you will find yourself more at ease in this House," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Far be it from me to criticise the methods of Dr. Holmes, but, owing to a too great kindness of heart, the Head has admitted boys to the School House with whom a son of Sir George Cavendish would hardly care to consort."

Cecil's eyes gleamed.

"I have seen one of them!" he exclaimed. "An East End rotter—— Excuse me, sir——"

Mr. Ratcliff nodded indulgently.

"The expression is a trifle strong," he said. "But I do not wonder at your feelings of indignation at being asked to associate with such a person. You will be fortunate not to be in the House where such persons as Hammond are harboured."

"They were going to put me in the same study with him, sir," said Cavendish.

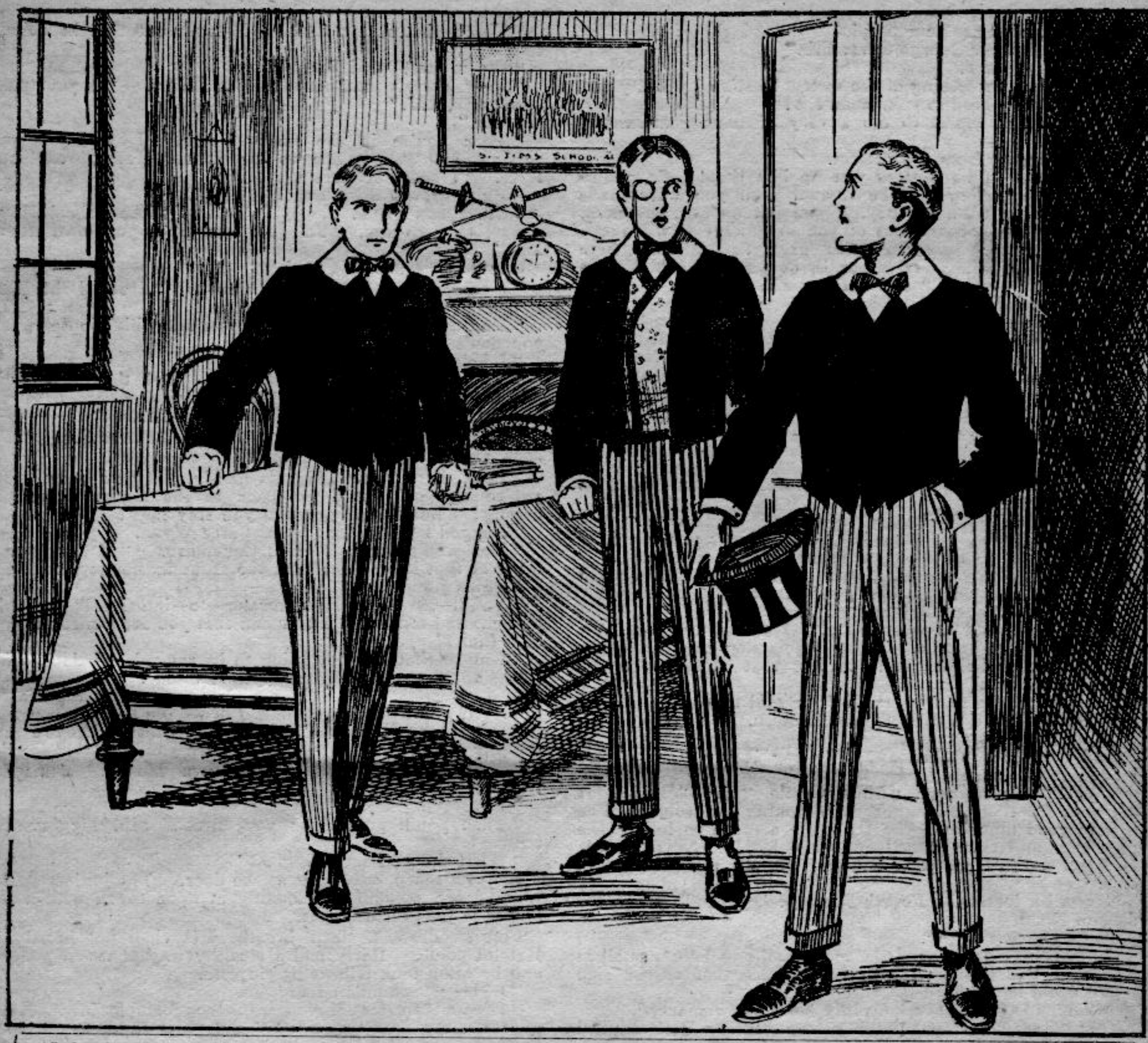
"Ah! Now I understand your coming here! Quite right—quite right, and very natural! Now, I must consider what study you shall have. I am sorry to say that we have three Scholarship boys from a County Council School here—Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence of the Fourth. It was Redfern who brought you to my study. I mention this as you will not probably care to speak to them, and you can be on your guard against them from the first."

"Quite so, sir! I thank you!"

Cecil felt that Mr. Ratcliff was indeed a Housemaster after his own heart. The snobbish character of Ratty was very like his own.

"There is an Indian prince in the house," said Mr. Ratcliff—"Koumi Rao, the Jam of Bundelpore. He has a study to himself at present. Would you care to share his room?"

Mr. Railton had not asked Cavendish whose study he would care to share.



"I decline to share the same study with you, Hammond!" said Cavendish. "D'Arcy, wouldn't it be possible for me to change into your study?" "Imposs. My study-mates would nevah consent to have such a wotten snob planted on them!" said Arthur Augustus deliberately. (*See Chapter* 4.)

"I suppose I can't have a study to myself, sir?" asked Cecil.

"I am sorry! The number is limited, and all are occupied," said Mr. Ratcliff urbanely. "But you will find the prince a very agreeable companion, and you will like, I think, to share a room with a boy of your own station."

"Thank you, sir!"

"I will send for a prefect to show you to your room," said Mr. Ratcliff. "If there is anything I can do for you, pray mention it to me. When you write home, you might send my respects to your father."

"With great pleasure, sir!"

Mr. Ratcliff touched a bell, and when the page presented himself, he requested that youth to send Monteith to the study. Monteith of the Sixth, the head prefect of the New House, presented himself a few minutes later.

"Monteith, this is Cavendish, a new boy for the Fourth Form," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Will you kindly show him to his study—No. 3, which he will share with Koumi Rao. I wish Master Cavendish to be treated with every consideration."

Monteith stared. He was not much accustomed to treating Fourth-Form fags with much consideration, and he was not pleased to be called upon to show a junior boy to his study, as if he were a servant. However, as he could not disregard the Housemaster, he nodded shortly.

"Very well, sir," he said.

"I wish you to observe that Cavendish is not troubled by any ragging, or anything of that kind, such as new boys are sometimes subjected to," said Mr. Ratcliff.

"Indeed, sir!"

"Yes, indeed," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Pray follow Monteith, Cavendish."

"Yes, sir."

And Cavendish followed the prefect from the study. Mr. Ratcliff was left with a pleased grin upon his face. He was thinking of the advantages he might possibly obtain from the wealthy and influential baronet, by means of his son, if he treated Master Cecil with circumspection. As a matter of fact, if he had only known it, he was going the worst possible way to work, so far as Cavendish was concerned. He might gain some advantage from Cavendish's father, but Cavendish was not likely to gain much by the Housemaster's favouritism.

CHAPTER 7.

Figgins & Co. are not Pleased.

MONTEITH looked very grim as he marched out into the passage, with the new junior at his heels.

A dozen paces from the Housemaster's door he halted, and stared at the new boy.

Cecil was looking somewhat elated. He had found one man, at all events, who appreciated him at his true worth, as he considered it.

"Who are you?" demanded Monteith brusquely.

"My name's Cavendish," replied the new junior, a little surprised by the question, and by the Sixth-Former's decidedly brusque manner.

"I mean, what are your people?"

"My father's Sir George Cavendish."

Monteith grunted.

"I suspected something of the sort. That's why Ratty was so confoundedly civil to you, wasn't it?"

"Mr. Ratcliff seems to me a very pleasant gentleman," said Cecil.

Another grunt from the prefect.

"He would—if he butters you up like that! So you're not to be ragged—got to be treated as if you were made of glass—eh? Well, my boy, if you put on any airs here, you'll get them knocked out of you so quickly it will make your head swim," said Monteith gruffly. "Nobody here cares twopence who your father is, or what he is? You're just a Fourth-Form kid, and nothing else! See?"

"Mr. Ratcliff said——"

"Never mind what Mr. Ratcliff said—just listen to what I say," said Monteith roughly. "Ratty may be a tuft-hunter, but he's the only one in the House. Your study's No. 3, in the second passage from the second landing. You can find it yourself!"

"Mr. Ratcliff said you were to take me there."

"Do you want to start here with a thick ear?" demanded the prefect.

Cavendish backed away.

"If you don't, you'd better be careful how you talk to a prefect!"

And Monteith stalked away, frowning.

Some of Cecil's satisfaction left him. His way in the New House was not to be wholly a primrose path, after all.

He went slowly upstairs, and Redfern of the Fourth spotted him, and came to him good-naturedly.

"Looking at your quarters, kid?" he asked.

Cavendish stared at him coolly. He had not forgotten Mr. Ratcliff's remark about the Scholarship boys from the County Council School, and the fact that Redfern of the Fourth was one of them.

"Thanks; I can find my study!" he said stiffly.

"I'll show you if you like," said Redfern.

"You need not trouble."

And Cavendish walked away, leaving Reddy staring after him in astonishment.

"Well," said Redfern, with a whistle, "I'm blowed! It seems to me that that merchant is looking for trouble. I've a jolly good mind to——" He made a move to follow the new boy, and then paused and chuckled. "Never mind; he'll get a thick ear soon enough, without my giving him one!"

Cavendish found the Fourth-Form passage, and opened the door of No. 3.

The study was empty.

Cavendish glanced round the room, and noted that, small as it was, it was furnished with an elegance that only a rich fellow could have afforded.

"Gad! I think I can be comfy here," he remarked.

There were footsteps in the passage, and a dark-skinned junior came in. Cavendish guessed that it was Koumi Rao, the Jam of Bundelpore, who was to be his study-mate. The Jam looked at him inquiringly.

"Hallo!" he said. "Where did you spring from?"

"I'm Cavendish. I'm a new boy. This is my study," Cecil explained.

"Oh, rotten!" said the Jam, who evidently spoke English quite well. "No, I don't mean that," he added. "You're very welcome. I thought I was going to have the study to myself for the rest of the term, that's all."

"Buck up, Jammy!" shouted Figgins's voice from the passage. "The bell will be going in a tick!"

"Right-ho, Figgy!"

Figgins looked in at the door. The Jam had come there for his books. Figgins's eyes fell upon the new boy, and he jumped.

"Hallo! You here?" he exclaimed.

Cavendish bit his lip. He recognised Figgins as one of the fellows who had taken part in Tom Merry's rescue on the river.

"Yes, I'm here!" he snapped.

"What are you doing here?"

"I belong to this House."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You know the kid, Figgy?" asked Koumi Rao.

"Know him!" growled Figgins. "He's the rotten funk who stuck on the bank and watched Tom Merry in the water without helping him!"

"I couldn't help him!" shouted Cavendish.

"You mean you funked it!" said Figgins.

"Well, it can't be helped," said Koumi Rao. "If Ratty has shoved him in here, I shall have to stand it!"

"What's the row?" asked Kerr, looking in with Fatty Wynn.

Figgins pointed to Cavendish.

"That's that rotten funk! It turns out that he belongs to us!"

"Oh, rotten!" said Fatty Wynn.

"I say, there's some mistake," said Kerr. "Is your name Cavendish, kid?"

"Yes."

"Then you're in the wrong House. I heard you were coming, and you belong to the School House," explained Kerr. "I heard Kildare say so."

Figgins drew a deep breath of relief.

"Oh, that's good!" he exclaimed. "The School House are welcome to him. You just buzz off to your own House, kid!"

Cavendish gritted his teeth.

"I belong to this House," he said. "I asked the Head to change me over, and he has done so!"

"You asked the Head to put you into this House, where you don't belong!" roared Figgins.

"I belong here now."

"You don't! You can clear off! Ask the Head again, and he'll change you back!" said Figgins excitedly. "Do you think we want a rotten funk in this House?"

"I don't care what you want!" snapped Cavendish. "I'm here, and I'm going to stay here!"

"Look here," said Figgins darkly, "if you know when you're well off, you'll get back to the House where you belong! You'll get ragged if you stay here!"

"Ragged bald-headed!" said Fatty Wynn.

"You won't rag me!" said Cavendish. "If there's anything of that kind, I shall ask the Housemaster to interfere!"

Figgins jumped.

"You'll—ask—the—Housemaster—to—interfere!" he said, in measured tones. "You mean that you are a sneak as well as a funk?"

"I mean that I'm not going to be ragged. I don't think I was to blame for what happened to-day. If a fool falls into a river, he can't expect a stranger to risk his life for him. If you think I'm a funk, I'm willing to meet you with the gloves on!" said Cavendish. "But if there's any ragging, you'll get into trouble, I warn you of that!"

"Are you going back to your own House?" demanded Figgins.

"I'm staying here."

"Then you'll go out on your neck!" said Figgins excitedly.

"What did you say, Figgins?"

It was a sharp, cold voice at the door. The juniors started round. Mr. Ratcliff was looking in upon them, with a cold glitter in his greenish eyes.

Figgins drew a deep breath. He had not heard Mr. Ratcliff come. Ratty had a stealthy way of moving about, and he often took fellows by surprise.

"I—I——" stammered Figgins.

"I came to see if you were comfortable in your new quarters, my dear Cavendish," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I find that you are already thinking of ill-using and bullying the new boy, Figgins!"

"Oh, no, sir! Only—only he doesn't belong to this House, and——"

"He does belong to this House, Figgins! You will take two hundred lines for uttering threats to Cavendish!"

"Oh!" murmured Figgins.

"And I shall keep a very sharp eye on you!" said Mr. Ratcliff severely. "If Cavendish is troubled in any way, I shall ascertain it, and the aggressors will be punished with the utmost severity—the utmost severity!" repeated Mr. Ratcliff, with a glare.

"Oh!" murmured Figgins, again.

"Bear that in mind, Figgins, and you others also. Do you hear me?"

"Ye-e-es, sir," murmured Kerr and Wynn.

And Mr. Ratcliff rustled away.

Figgins and Kerr and Wynn exchanged glances, and left the study with Koumi Rao, without another word to Cavendish.

CHAPTER 8.

A Run for Ratty!

CAVENDISH did not appear in the Fourth Form that afternoon.

The juniors had expected to see him there, but he did not come. Mr. Ratcliff had sent a little note to Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, asking him to excuse the new boy, who was tired from his journey. Levison—who knew everything—knew that, and the rest of the Fourth soon knew it from him. The disgust of the juniors was great.

Cavendish was no more fatigued than any other fellow who had made a journey, and there was no reason why he should

not have attended class. It was one more example of the Housemaster's favouritism.

After lessons, when the Fourth Form came out, Figgins & Co. bestowed enraged looks upon the chums of the School House. They guessed easily enough that Tom Merry & Co. had had something to do with the circumstance that Cavendish had changed his House.

"I suppose you rotters planted that chap on us?" Figgins said savagely.

Blake smiled in a satisfied manner.

"Well, we didn't hinder him," he confessed. "You are welcome to him, Figgy."

"We don't want the brute!" roared Figgy.

"Sorry! But we don't want him, either."

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy emphatically. "I was pwepared to be vewy decent to him, because my people know his people; but it is quite imposs. He is a wank outsidah. And you will admit, Figgay, that the New House is a more suitable place for a wank outsidah than the School House."

"Fathead!" said Figgins.

"Frabjous ass!" said Kerr.

"Burbling dummy!" said Fatty Wynn.

"How are you getting on with him, Figgy?" asked Tom Merry. "Have you had rows already?"

"Well, not exactly; but Ratty is making a favourite of the beast already," said Figgins. "I was going to hoof him out because he doesn't really belong to our House, you know; but Ratty chipped in. He's taken the cad under his special wing."

"And he mustn't be ragged!" growled Kerr. "Mustn't be touched, spoken to, or looked at. He's a pearl of price, and far above giddy rubies."

"It was rotten to plant him on us," said Figgins. "We sha'n't be able to get rid of him. The Head won't be bothered with him again, if he should ask for another change."

"That's what I thought," grinned Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I should wecommend you to give him a lickin' or two, Figgay, and pewwaps you will be able to lick him into shape."

"And have Ratty down on me every time!" snapped Figgins. "No thanks! I shall leave the brute alone."

"It won't do him any good if the Housemaster favours him," Tom Merry remarked. "It will set all the chaps against him, and they're against him enough already. Jolly glad he isn't in this House."

Figgins & Co. crossed over to the New House in a very dissatisfied mood. The honour of their House was very dear to them, and it was a disgrace to have a snob and a funk "planted" on them. But there seemed to be no help for it.

"One thing's jolly sure, we sha'n't have anything to do with him," said Figgins. "It's bad enough to have him there, but we needn't talk to the beast!"

"No fear!" said the Co. heartily.

Cavendish was lounging in the doorway of the New House when Figgins & Co. came in. The three juniors walked in with their noses in the air, taking no notice of the new boy.

Cavendish bit his lip.

He had intended to pick and choose his acquaintances in the House; and he had decided to "cut" Redfern and Owen and Lawrence. But to be cut himself was an unpleasant surprise, and he did not like it. His brow was gloomy as he stood there staring out into the wintry dusk in the quad.

After tea, Figgins & Co. came out, and Cavendish was still there. Some of the juniors had made a slide in the quadrangle, and Figgins & Co. joined them. A long line of juniors went skimming along one after another in the deep dusk, with shouts of laughter as some unlucky fellow tumbled over.

Tom Merry & Co. were all there, and they were enjoying themselves. Cavendish watched them for some time, and then joined the crowd.

The School House fellows who noticed him stared at him, but made no remark. They did not want to have anything to do with him; but, on the other hand, they were not disposed to interfere with him.

Cavendish joined the line of juniors skimming along the slide, taking his turn. Skimpole of the Shell was just ahead of him, and Skimpole lost his footing and rolled over, and Cavendish bumped into him, and stumbled and fell.

Behind Cavendish the juniors were coming on too fast to stop themselves.

Arthur Augustus piled on him, and Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther piled on D'Arcy and on each other, and then half a dozen more fellows tumbled over.

Figgins & Co., who were after them, succeeded in stopping just in time.

"Don't block up the way!" roared Figgins. "If you School House chaps want to go to sleep, why don't you go to bed?"

"Ow! Gerroff my neck!"

"Roll off, you ass!"

"You're s-s-squashing me!"

"Bai Jove! Gewwoff!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The breathless juniors sorted themselves out. Skimpole scrambled in search of his spectacles. Cavendish staggered to his feet, muddy and breathless and furious. He shook his fist at Skimpole.

"You clumsy ass!" he roared.

Skimpole, having found his spectacles, dabbed them on his nose, and blinked at Cavendish.

"Dear me!" he said. "I wish you would not be so clumsy, Cavendish. You gave me quite a shock when you fell on me, you did really."

"You silly chump! I've a jolly good mind to punch your silly head!" said Cavendish savagely, and he shook his fist in Skimpole's surprised face.

"My dear fellow——" said Skimpole mildly.

"Shut up, and get off the slide, Cavendish!" said Tom Merry. "You're blocking up the way."

"I'll block up the way as long as I like, confound you!" said Cavendish, who was thoroughly out of temper.

"Will you? If you don't get aside, you'll get shoved."

"Rats!"

That was enough for Tom Merry. He grasped Cavendish by the shoulders, and sent him spinning along the slide. Cavendish gave a yell as he slid away, vainly striving to stop himself. One of his legs flew into the air, and he spun along on the other, his arms waving wildly, amid yells of laughter from the juniors. Unfortunately, just at that moment, Mr. Ratcliff looked out of his window. The testy Housemaster was annoyed by the shouts of the sliders, and he looked out to see what the noise was about. He saw Cavendish spinning away from Tom Merry's shove; and in another minute he came striding out of the house.

Cavendish had collapsed on the ground. Mr. Ratcliff strode among the juniors with his gown rustling, and his eyes gleaming.

"Merry," he snapped, "how dare you treat a new boy in that way? This is not the first time that I have caught you bullying."

Tom Merry flushed red. Bullying was not at all in his line, and Mr. Ratcliff's statement was not, as a matter of fact, truthful.

"I wasn't bullying!" Tom exclaimed hotly.

"Certainly not, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "That person was standin' on the slide in the way, sir, and he had to be wemoved."

"Hold your tongue, D'Arcy!"

"Weally, Mr. Watcliff——"

"Silence! I will not have any impertinence. If you utter another word, D'Arcy, I shall box your ears!"

"I should uttahly wefuse to have my eahs boxed!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy indignantly. "The Head does not allow anythin' of the sort; and, besides, you are not my Housemastah, Mr. Watcliff."

"Shurrup, Gussy!" murmured Blake.

"I decline to shut up," said Arthur Augustus, who was fairly mounted on the high horse. "Mr. Watcliff has no wight to thweaten to box my eahs!"

Mr. Ratcliff apparently did not agree with D'Arcy. He started towards the swell of St. Jim's with the evident intention of carrying out his threat.

Unfortunately for Mr. Ratcliff, he had not noticed the slide. As he ran towards Arthur Augustus, he stepped upon it!

The next instant it seemed to Mr. Ratcliff as if the earth had risen against him.

His legs shot from under him, and he came down on the slide with a bump; but his impetus was great, and he shot along at a terrific speed in a sitting position, with his feet in the air, and his hands clawing wildly at the atmosphere.

A yell of laughter burst from the juniors at the extraordinary sight.

"Go it!" roared Blake.

"My hat, he's beating the record!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff. "Oh dear! Help! Ow—ow—yow! Yah! Oh! Help!"

Whiz!

Right along the slide he went, amid hysterical yells from the onlookers, till he stopped at last, sprawling on the ground.

"Time we got off, I think," murmured Monty Lowther.

The other fellows thought so, too. The crowd dispersed at top speed, and Mr. Ratcliff was left sprawling alone, with no one to vent his rage upon. Only Cecil Cavendish remained, and he ran towards the Housemaster to help him up.

Perhaps Mr. Ratcliff did not recognise him in the gloom, or perhaps, in his rage, he was simply bound to wreak his feelings upon somebody. At all events, Cecil Cavendish

arrived in a very unlucky moment for himself. Without a word of warning Mr. Ratcliff grasped him by the collar and boxed his ears right and left.

Biff, biff, biff, biff!

"Oh! Ow! Leggo!" shrieked Cavendish. "Yah! Oh! Leggo, you beast! Oh!"

Biff, biff, biff, biff!

Cavendish roared and struggled, but the Housemaster did not let him go till he was quite breathless. Then he tossed the squirming, yelling junior aside, and strode away into the House.

Cavendish stood, dazed and flushed and furious, rubbing his ears. And from the dusk in the distance came a yell of laughter from the fellows who had seen the incident. The Housemaster's favourite had not fared so well at the hands of the Housemaster, after all.

CHAPTER 9.
Blow for Blow!

DURING the next few days Cecil Cavendish found his surroundings far from comfortable. The expectations with which he had come to St. Jim's were far from realised. He had looked forward confidently to carrying all before him, to choosing his own friends among the best fellows in his House, to being courted by fellows less fortunately circumstanced than himself, to having a good time, and to riding the high horse generally.

Nothing could have been more unlike the reality.

He was not sent to Coventry, but very few of the fellows wanted to have anything to do with him. His snobbishness might have been forgiven, but the fact that he was a funk told heavily against him.

He was not a coward in the ordinary way. He did not shrink from a fistic encounter. If he had his life in the school would hardly have been tolerable. But he had refused to run any risk to save a fellow who was fighting for his life in the frozen river, and probably his conduct had been dictated by selfishness as much as by cowardice. That bad beginning could not be remedied.

He was not ragged, but he was avoided. Figgins & Co. spoke to him if he spoke to them, and that was all. Even Fatty Wynn declined an invitation into the tuckshop, though it made his heart ache, for Cavendish was rolling in money, and could have stood a really first-class spread.

Perhaps Fatty Wynn would have given way, but Figgins and Kerr were firm. They solemnly promised to bump Fatty till he was black and blue if he accepted any favours from the new boy, and Fatty Wynn heroically resisted the temptation.

With the School House fellows Cavendish had naturally very little to do, being in a different House. Two or three fellows in the School House were willing to be friends with him, such as Levison and Mellish of the Fourth and Crooke of the Shell, but they were not the fellows he would have chosen.

Instead of being sought after and courted he was neglected, and after a few days he felt his position very keenly.

He could not really understand it.

There was Redfern, a mere County Council Scholarship boy, poor as a church mouse, who was thoroughly popular. And he, Cecil Cavendish, heir to a baronetcy, with plenty of money in his pockets, was disliked and despised.

Only the fellows who wanted free feeds or who wanted to borrow money of him took the trouble to make any friendly overtures.

And even those hardly concealed the fact that they despised him.

At first Cavendish felt certain that the fellows would come round of their own accord, and that if he maintained a "stand-offish" attitude it would not be long before Figgins and the rest were courting him.

But it did not come to pass, and after a few days of the "cold shoulder" he realised that it was likely to continue.

If he wanted to be on good terms with them he had to make the overtures himself, and for a time his pride prevented that. But he made up his mind at last, and even yet he did not realise that his overtures might be declined without thanks.

He joined Figgins & Co. when they left the Form-room after lessons one day. Figgins and Kerr were chatting in the quad., talking football, when Cavendish came up.

The three juniors looked at him, and moved away. Cavendish flushed, and followed them.

"Look here!" he exclaimed abruptly. "What are you fellows down on me for?"

"I think you know pretty well," said Figgins coldly.

"I want to join the Fourth Form footer club!" said Cavendish angrily. "I've spoken to the secretary, and he says I'm not wanted."

"Quite so!" said Kerr.

"I'm not accustomed to this sort of thing," said Cavendish angrily. "You fellows treat me as if I were some rotten outsider like Hammond or Redfern!"

"You'd better tell Reddy he's an outsider," said Figgins drily. "There wouldn't be much left of you when Reddy had finished with you!"

"I suppose it's what happened the day I came here?" said Cavendish doggedly. "I don't see that I was bound to go into the river for that silly fool!"

"Of course you don't see it!" said Figgins. "That's why you're such an outsider! If you weren't an outsider you'd see it fast enough!"

"I suppose you think I'm a funk?"

"We know you are!"

"I'll jolly soon show you that I'm not, then!" blazed out Cavendish. "Take that!"

Smack!

His open palm came sharply across Figgins's surprised face.

Figgins staggered back for a moment.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.

"Wipe up the ground with him, Figgy!" said Kerr.

"Not here under the Housemaster's window," said Figgins. "Come into the gym., you worm, and I'll make you sorry for yourself!"

"Are you a funk, too?" sneered Cavendish. "Are you afraid of the Housemaster seeing you?"

Figgins bit his lip.

"Come on, then!" he said.

"Hold on, Figgy!" said Kerr.

Figgins pushed his chum aside.

"Rats! I'm going to lick him here! I'll show him whether I'm a funk or not! Shut up, I tell you! I don't care if Ratty's looking out of the window! I'm going to lick the cad!"

And Figgins rushed to the attack.

Cavendish knew something about boxing. He stood up to Figgins well, and a sharp drive on the nose stopped Figgy's rush.

But that check only roused Figgy's ire the more. He came on again, and this time his drives simply swept Cavendish off his feet. The new boy went down with a bump and a yell.

"My hat! There's the funk fighting!" exclaimed Monty Lowther; and there was a rush of fellows from all sides to see the fight.

"Go it, Figgy!"

"Pile in, funk!"

"Go it, ye cripples!" said Blake of the Fourth cheerfully. "Two to one on Figgy!"

Cavendish jumped up and rushed at his enemy.

He grabbed hold of Figgins, and they pommelled one another with terrific energy.

There was a warning shout of "Cave!" as Mr. Ratcliff came striding upon the scene. But both the combatants were too excited to heed it.

Tramp, tramp, tramp! Biff, biff, biff!

"Boys!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "Cease this instantly!"

He caught Figgins by the collar and dragged him off.

Figgins panted.

"Oh, crumbs!" he murmured. "All right, sir!"

He dropped his hands at once. Mr. Ratcliff shook him.

"Did I not warn you, Figgins, that you were not to rag the new boy? You have directly disobeyed my orders!"

All eyes were turned upon Cavendish. He was expected to own up that he had struck the first blow, but no one really thought that he would do it.

But Cavendish understood the looks that were cast upon him, and, fortunately for himself, some intuition made him do the right thing.

"It wasn't Figgins's fault, sir!" he blurted out.

"What! What!"

"I hit him first, sir," said Cavendish.

"Oh!" said Mr. Ratcliff.

He released Figgins. He had intended to give that cheerful youth a sound caning, having a long-standing dislike for Figgins. But in view of Cavendish's confession, he could hardly proceed to do so.

"Indeed? That alters the case!" he said. "It is very right and manly of you to own up in this way, Cavendish!"

"Figgy would have got a licking, but Cavendish only gets a pat on the back!" murmured Blake, in disgust.

"You must not fight, especially in the quadrangle," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Please let there be no more of this!"

And the Housemaster rustled away.

Figgins dabbed his nose with his handkerchief, and looked at Cavendish in a rather uncertain way.

"That was decent of you," he said, with an effort. "I should have got a big licking. Ratty was glad of the chance. It was decent of you to own up. You're not quite such a rotter as I thought."

"Thanks!" said Cavendish, with a curl of the lip.

And he went away to bathe his nose. It needed it.

"Aftah all, he isn't such a feahful wottah," Arthur Augustus remarked. "If he wasn't a beastly funk, and if he hadn't left Tom Mewwy to get dwowned we might possibly be able to stand him."

But, as it was, the fellows declined to "stand" Cavendish, and any number of fistical encounters—and he had quite a large number—did not alter the general opinion that he was a funk.

Before Cavendish could be accepted on equal terms by any of the fellows, excepting sycophants like Levison and Mellish, he had to rehabilitate his character—and ere long he was driven to consider ways and means of doing so. But it was not easy—and for a long time he turned the matter over in his mind in vain.

CHAPTER 10.
Levison's Idea!

"GOAL!"

It was a half-holiday, and a junior House-match was in progress.

Tom Merry & Co., and Figgins's team of New House juniors were hotly engaged on Little Side, with a big crowd of the Lower School looking on and cheering.

Cavendish stood among the crowd, with his hands thrust deeply into his trousers-pockets, and a frown upon his brow.

He was a footballer, and he had expected to take his place in the game at St. Jim's, and to cut quite a figure there.

But he was not wanted.

After a time, he had been allowed to put his name down as a member of the New House junior football club, and he joined in the regular practice.

But he had no chance whatever of getting into a House-match, even if his form had been good enough; and it was not quite good enough.

His thoughts were glum enough as he stood watching the match.

Redfern and Owen and Lawrence, the three Scholarship boys, were all in the New House side. Harry Hammond was playing in Tom Merry's team. And the idea of being left out, while those outsiders, as he regarded them, were playing, made Cavendish grit his teeth.

He walked away from the football-ground at last.

Levison, of the Fourth, joined him. Cavendish did not specially want his company, but he was glad to have somebody with him.

"Coming for a walk?" Levison asked amiably. "What do you say to a trot down to Rylcombe? They have ripping tommy at Bunn's teashop."

Cavendish's lip curled. Levison would not have bothered about him, unless he profited by it in some way. But the new boy was feeling lonely, and he gave a nod of assent, and they strolled out of the school gates together.

"How are you getting on in your House?" Levison asked casually.

Cavendish scowled.

"Rotten!" he said.

"They've still got that old story up against you, I suppose?"

"I suppose it will be up against me all the time that I'm at St. Jim's," said Cavendish savagely. "I can't see that I was to blame. Do you think so?"

"Of course not," said Levison smoothly.

Cavendish knew that that was untrue; but he wanted someone to pour out his indignation to, and Levison was the only confidant at hand.

"It's beastly," he said. "The silly ass shouldn't have gone on dangerous ice. His chum went in for him, but that's a different matter."

"Quite different," agreed Levison.

"He was a stranger to me—I didn't even know he was a St. Jim's chap. Why should I have risked my life to pull him out. Would you?"

"No fear!" said Levison promptly.

And that was true enough.

"But I suppose I shall never get over it," said Cavendish restlessly. "They've got it up against me, and it'll stick to me for good."

"Spare a pore man a copper, young gentlemen."

A dilapidated figure was leaning on the stile in the lane, and he detached himself from it as the schoolboys came by, and held out a ragged hat. He was evidently a tramp, and there was a strong smell of drink about him, and his eyes were bleared. Cavendish made a gesture of disgust.

"Clear off!" said Levison sharply.

"'Elp a pore man on 'is way, young gents," whined the tramp. "I'm looking for work."

"You'd die of shock if you found any, I fancy!" said Levison, with a grin.

Cavendish tossed a shilling carelessly into the tramp's ragged hat.

"Take that, and sheer off!" he said.

"Thank you kindly, young gent," said the ragged wayfarer. "I s'pose you couldn't make it 'arf-a-crown. I've got a job waiting for me at Lantham, if I could raise the railway-fare. I'm a honest workman—anybody'll tell yer that Bill Higgs is a honest man. If you could make it 'arf-a-crown——"

"You'd be able to get quite drunk at the Green Man, instead of only half drunk," Levison suggested.

"I got a job waitin' for me at Lantham," whined Mr. Higgs. "If I could raise a 'arf-crown, I could——"

"Clear off, you cheeky rascal!" said Cavendish irritably.

And the two juniors walked on, leaving Mr. Higgs with his ragged hat still in his hand. Levison and Cavendish reached the village, and walked into Mr. Bunn's teashop, where Cavendish ordered tea.

"Your treat—eh?" asked Levison, with a grin. He wanted that to be understood before the time came for paying.

"Yes, of course," said Cavendish, a little snappishly.

"Right-ho! It must be ripping to be rolling in money!" said Levison enviously.

Cavendish shrugged his shoulders.

"It doesn't seem to do me much good at St. Jim's," he said. "I thought I was going to have a good time there. They give me the cold shoulder, and make a fuss about rotten outsiders like that fellow Hammond—a frightful Cockney from Bethnal Green. I think it's sickening."

"So it is," agreed Levison. "I say, these tarts are jolly good! We'll have some more if you don't mind."

"You can order what you like."

"Thanks! You're a good chap!"

And Levison ordered what he liked—and a considerable quantity of it. Levison liked a good feed when he did not have to trouble about settling for it.

Cavendish's brow was gloomy. Levison was not the companion he would have chosen for that afternoon's stroll. He was annoyed and exasperated, and labouring under a sense of injury.

Levison was thinking as he devoured tarts and cakes.

"You want to get over that bad start?" he asked abruptly.

"There's no chance of that," growled Cavendish. "Perhaps I'd do differently if it happened over again; but it won't."

"It might!"

Cavendish stared at him.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean it might be worked."

"I wish you'd speak plainly," said Cavendish irritably.

"Well, I can give you a tip," said Levison. "I think you're a good sort, and I'd like to help you to get right with the fellows. You've done for yourself by funking——"

"It wasn't funk," said Cavendish fiercely. "I didn't choose to run the risk, that was all."

Levison coughed.

"Well, put it like that," he agreed. "You've done for yourself, at any rate. The fellows think you're a funk because you let Tom Merry stick in the water under your eyes instead of helping him. But there's a way to set the matter right. You've only got to prove that you're not a funk—that you'd be willing to take the risk if it happened again. That's all."

"But it won't happen again."

"Suppose somebody fell into the river—off the bridge—a drunken tramp, for example," said Levison, lowering his voice. "You plunge in and save him—the river's very dangerous just past the bridge, and a chap who'd go in there for a drowning man would have to have heaps of pluck. Suppose you did that——"

"I couldn't," said Cavendish.

"Why not?"

"What rot you're talking! I suppose a tramp won't fall into a dangerous part of the river to please me," snapped Cavendish.

"Yes, he would—if you made it worth his while."

Cavendish started.

"Oh!" he said slowly. "I see——"

"You risk your life to pull him out—you don't say anything about it at St. Jim's, but it comes out—and there you are, a giddy hero!" grinned Levison.

"But I'm not going to risk my life!" snapped Cavendish.

"That could be worked, too. No witnesses, of course."

"Then I shouldn't be believed."

"Yes, you would—if a grateful tramp came up to the school asking for the brave young gentleman who saved his life, to thank him."

"Oh!" said Cavendish.

"It would be quite a lark," grinned Levison; "and it would set you right. Of course, nobody in his senses would have gone in for Tom Merry that day the ice broke. Lowther was a fool to do it."

"I agree with you there."

"But the fellows think you ought to have done it. Well, you make out that you're sorry you didn't—you lost your nerve, you know—and when something of the kind happens again, you go to the rescue like a giddy Briton," Levison chuckled. "I tell you, they'll all be sorry when they know you've risked your life."

"But—but suppose it came out——"

"How could it? You give the man something decent for his trouble, and buy him a railway-ticket for a place a hundred miles away."

Cavendish's eyes gleamed.

"Well, that sounds all right," he said, with more animation. "But—but who——"

"There's that tramp in the lane," said Levison. "He's a stranger in these parts, just tramping through. He would be glad to earn a few quids—you can afford to pay him well—you've got plenty of money."

"I could easily stand a fiver, if it came to that."

"I expect he'd sell his soul, if he had one, for half that," said Levison, laughing.

"But—but he'll be gone by now——"

"Easy enough to find him. He'll have spent that bob at the Green Man and have been kicked out by this time," said Levison. "We shall find him on the road."

Cavendish hesitated.

"Anyway, we'll go and look for him when we've finished tea," said Levison casually. "I'm only trying to help you as a friend. Of course, I don't stand to gain anything."

And Cavendish's mind was quite made up by the time they left the teashop. It did not occur to him then that if he carried out that precious plan, and it succeeded, he would be under the thumb of Levison, of the Fourth, who would always have it in his power to expose the cheat if he chose. He did not think of that, but Levison was thinking of it.

CHAPTER 11.
Cavendish Does Not Explain.

"WATHAH an unfortunate wesult, deah boys."

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he rubbed down his noble person after the football match, in the Fourth-Form dormitory.

Jack Blake grunted.

"Yes, we ought not to have drawn with them. With any luck I should have taken a goal, only it hit the goalpost."

"Yaas, and if you fellows had backed me up a little bettah, I should certainly have scored," said Arthur Augustus severely.

"If you hadn't got in the way, I should have put it through, you mean," said Reilly, with a snort.

"Weally, Weilly——"

"Never mind; they haven't beaten us, that's one thing," said Digby. "Buck up! I've heard the Shell fellows go down, and there's tea in Tom Merry's study. I'm hungry."

"Yaas, wathah! I feel wathah peckish, too."

And the footballers finished changing, and went down. They had drawn in the match with the New House, and both sides were perfectly satisfied that with any luck they would have made it a win.

Tom Merry was standing tea in his study after the match. The Terrible Three had hurried over their dressing, and were gone to Mrs. Taggles's little shop for supplies. Tom Merry had received a remittance from his old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, and he was generously "blowing" it on a big feed for the team.

Dame Taggles served the chums of the Shell with cheerful alacrity. It was a princely order, and there were several large packages for the Terrible Three to carry away. They came out of the school shop heavy laden. The winter dusk was beginning to fall in the old quadrangle of St. Jim's.

The sound of loud voices near the gates made Tom Merry & Co. look round.

A crowd was gathering there, round a junior who had just come in.

It was Cavendish, the new boy.

"Hallo! What's wrong with Cavendish?" exclaimed Tom Merry, as his eyes fell upon the juniors. "Looks as if there's been an accident."

And the Terrible Three, forgetting the feed for the moment, hurried towards the new boy, who was coming across the quad.

Cavendish was drenched with water and shivering with cold. His nose and fingers were almost blue.

"What's happened?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Fallen into the river?"

Cavendish shook his head.

"But you're wet through."

"Yes."

"Have you had an accident?"

"No."

"You must have been in the water," said Tom Merry, puzzled.

"Yes, I've been in the water," said Cavendish, through his chattering teeth. "Excuse me, I want to get in and dry myself, or I shall catch a fearful cold."

"Buck up!" said Kangaroo, of the Shell. "You'd better have a rub down with a hard towel, and turn into bed."

Cavendish hurried into the New House.

He left the juniors in a state of great surprise.

"What's happened to him?" asked Tom Merry.

"Blessed if I know," said Redfern. "I spotted him coming in wet, and asked him, and he said he'd been in the river."

"But he says he didn't fall in."

"And he couldn't have jumped in for amusement, in this weather," grinned Kangaroo. "I can't make him out. I suppose he wouldn't go for a swim with his clothes on? He can't have been skating; the ice is off the river since the thaw."

And there was much puzzled comment among the juniors.

The Terrible Three went into their House, and made their way to their study. They found the Fourth-Formers there ready for tea.

"Where on earth have you been?" demanded Blake.

The Terrible Three dumped the parcels on the table.

"There you are!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Got the kettle boiling? That's right. All hands on deck!"

"What's that row about in the quad.?" asked Blake, as he began making the tea.

"Cavendish."

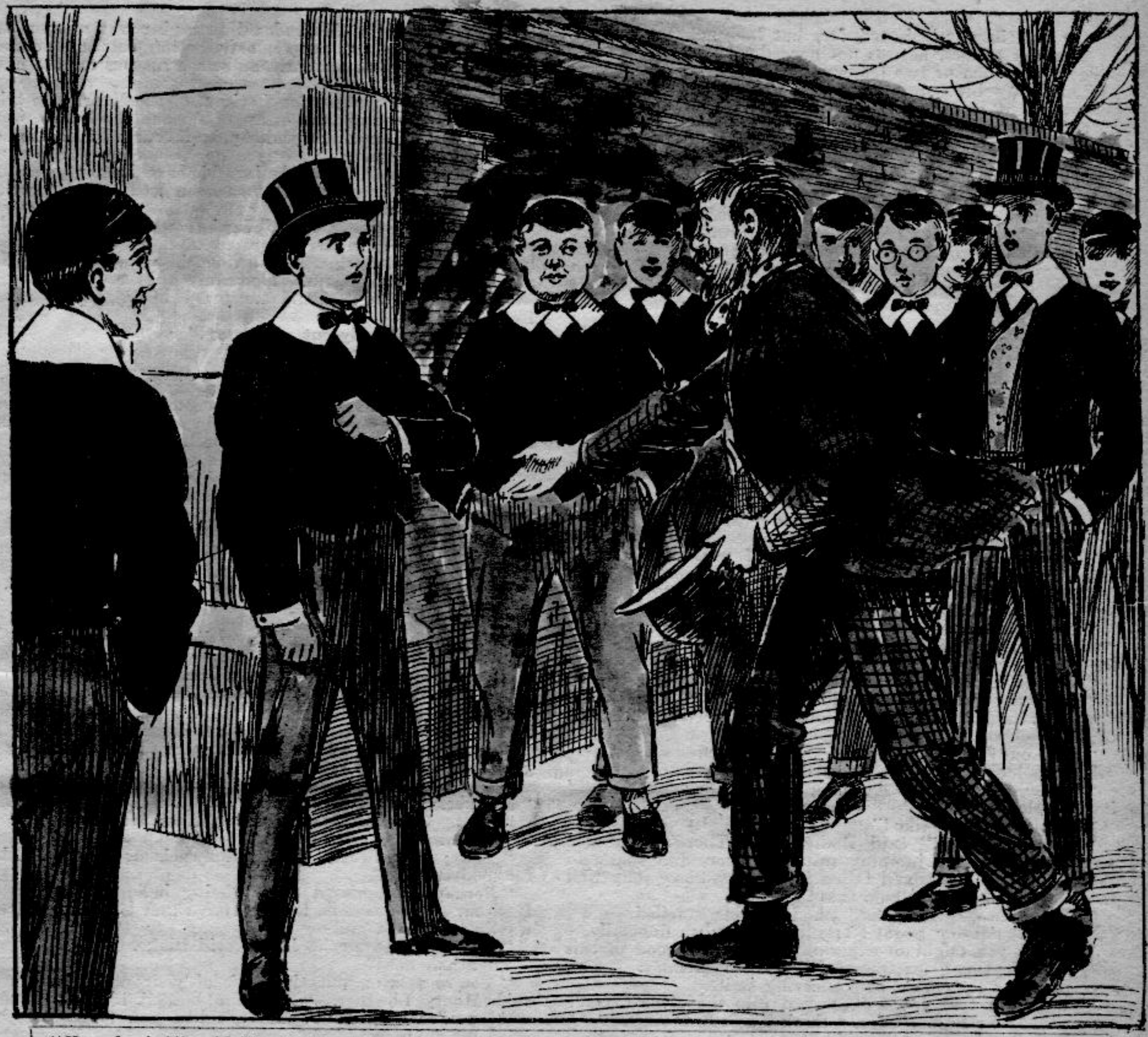
"Oh, that fellow in trouble again?"

"He's just come in soaked to the skin. He's been in the river, it seems," said Tom Merry. "But he says he didn't fall in."

"Pushed in, perhaps," said Blake. "Somebody larking on the raft."

"That would be a rather rotten sort of lark. I can't make it out."

"Never mind; let's have tea."



"Here he is!" said Mr. William Higgs, pointing to Cavendish. "That's the young gent who jumped into the river, and fetched me out. I was werry near a goner when I felt 'is 'and on my shoulder." "I'm glad you haven't caught a cold!" said Cavendish. (*See Chapter* 13.)

And the School House juniors had tea.

But they were very much puzzled by the condition in which Cecil Cavendish had returned to the school, and very curious about it.

They had nearly finished tea when there was a knock at the door, and Figgins, of the Fourth, came in.

Figgins was looking perplexed.

"Just in time for the last egg," said Tom Merry hospitably. "And there's some jam left."

Figgins laughed.

"Thanks! I've had tea. Have you fellows seen Cavendish?"

"We saw him coming in," said Manners.

"Wet through?"

"Yes."

"Do you know what's happened to him?"

"No. I suppose he's been in the river?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes; that's certain. But he won't say a word. Ratty was very alarmed about him when he saw him. He's had him tucked into bed, with hot-water bottles at his tootsies, and sent for the doctor. Talking about danger of pneumonia, and so on. No danger that I can see. The fellow's all right, but he might have a cold. Still, it's no joke to drop into the river in this weather. I suppose it isn't a School House lark?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Not that I know of."

"Ratty has asked him how he came to be in the water, and he won't say," said Figgins. "Ratty thinks he was pushed in for a lark and that he won't give the fellow away who did it. Ratty wants to know badly who it was."

"It would be a rotten thing to do, and I don't think any chap in the School House would do it," said Tom Merry. "Perhaps somebody on your side."

"No. I've asked all the chaps. Nobody likes Cavendish, but they wouldn't treat him like that. But how, then, did he get into the water?"

"Must have fallen in," said Blake.

"But he says he didn't."

"Then it's a giddy mystery. Anyway, if he was shoved in, it's pretty decent of him not to give the other rotter away. That would be a beastly trick to play."

"Well, I thought I'd ask you chaps if you knew anything about it," said Figgins. "We're all very much puzzled. Ta-ta!"

And Figgins went.

He returned to his own House in a puzzled mood.

Figgins did not like the Funk of the Fourth, but Figgins did not approve of anything like bullying or ragging to the extent of danger. If Cavendish had been pushed into the river, his life had been endangered; and the chief of the New House juniors felt that he was bound to put his foot down heavily on that if it was a junior who had done it, and it could hardly have been a senior.

As soon as he reached the New House he went up to the Fourth Form dormitory.

Cecil Cavendish was in bed.

Mr. Ratcliff, much concerned for the son and heir of a wealthy baronet, had ordered him to bed at once. With hot-water bottles at his feet and a pile of blankets on him, Cecil Cavendish was very warm and comfortable. The

doctor had been telephoned for, but had not yet arrived. As a matter of fact, he was not needed.

There were one or two fellows in the dormitory, and they had evidently been questioning Cavendish as to the accident. But it was equally evident that they had received no satisfactory information from him.

Figgins came towards the bed, and Cavendish looked at him inquiringly.

"Look here, Cavendish!" said Figgins abruptly. "We want to know what's happened."

"You can go on wanting," said Cavendish coolly.

"If it was a rag, it's got to be looked into," said Figgins. "We don't like you, and we don't make any secret of that. But if you've been chucked into the river, it's going too far, and if you'll tell us who did it, we'll see that he gets a dressing-down, to stop him from playing rotten tricks like that in the future. Why, you might have been drowned, especially as you're a funk."

Cavendish turned red.

"Oh, let that drop!" he snapped. "Look here, I'm not going to tell you anything, so you may as well leave off asking questions."

"What do you want to keep it a secret for?"

"That's my business."

"You have said that you did not fall into the river by accident," said Figgins.

"No; I didn't fall in."

"Will you tell me whether you were pushed in?"

"I wasn't pushed in."

"Then you must have jumped in of your own accord. There's no other way."

Cavendish grinned.

"Suppose I did?" he said.

"Then you must be dotty to jump into icy water with your clothes on," said Figgins. "What should you do that for?"

"I might have had a reason."

"But what reason?" demanded Figgins. "Why should any chap in his senses jump into the river on a winter's day?"

"Find out!

Figgins looked at him very hard.

"I should think you were mad, if you did such a thing!" he said slowly.

"Think what you like!"

"Must be potty!" said Redfern. "There's only one possible motive for jumping into the river, and that's to fetch somebody out who'd fallen in, and we know jolly well that Cavendish wouldn't do that!"

"Was it that, Cavendish?" asked Figgins, startled.

"I've got nothing to say!" replied Cavendish doggedly.

"I think you ought to explain. What's the good of this silly mystification?" exclaimed Figgins impatiently.

Cavendish's lip curled in a sneering smile.

"Suppose I told you I'd jumped into the river to save somebody?" he said. "You'd think I was bragging!"

"Well, we know you wouldn't do that! You funked trying to help Tom Merry when he was in the water!"

"Well, then, if you wouldn't believe me, what's the good of my saying anything?"

"Do you mean to say that it was that, then—that you jumped in to save somebody?"

"I don't mean to say anything!"

And Cavendish declined to say another word.

CHAPTER 12.

Quite a Mystery.

THERE was much puzzling over what had happened to Cavendish that day and the next.

The obvious explanation—that he had jumped into the river to rescue someone—was scouted on all sides.

The Funk of the Fourth wouldn't have done that. Nobody entertained the idea for a moment.

But if it was not that, what was it?

He couldn't have tumbled into icy water for the fun of the thing, and he had risked, if not his life, at least a bad cold.

And as Arthur Augustus pointed out, he had spoiled his clothes—a very serious thing indeed in the eyes of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Most of the fellows concluded that Cavendish had been pushed into the river by some ragger, in spite of his own assertion to the contrary, and that he was keeping it secret for the sake of not "sneaking."

And they could not help regarding that as really decent of Cavendish; though, as Jack Blake said, there was really no need for him to tell lies about it.

Curiously enough, there was one fellow who backed up the idea of a rescue, and that one was Levison, of the Fourth. As a rule, Levison was far from disposed to give anybody credit for anything. He had a disparaging way of speaking of all things and all people, and finding out bad motives for the best possible actions, and selfish reasons for the most generous conduct.

It was quite a portent for Levison, of the Fourth, to take a candid or generous view of anything, and the fellows were astonished to hear him speaking in favour of the outsider of the New House.

Tom Merry could hardly believe his ears the next evening, when he came into the common-room and heard Levison talking on the subject.

"Seems to me pretty clear," Levison was saying. "If the chap fell into the water he'd say so. If he was pushed in, he could keep it dark who had done it, without telling lies about it. He jumped in. That's my opinion!"

"And, sure, why should he jump in intirely?" asked Reilly.

"To pull somebody out, of course!"

There was a general chorus of:

"Rats!"

"Levison's trying to pull our giddy leg!" Jack Blake remarked. "If Cavendish had done something really decent, Levison would be the first chap to run him down and pretend that there wasn't much in it, after all."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, that's my opinion," said Levison. "I don't suppose we shall ever know the facts, but if we ever do, you'll see I'm right."

"I hope you are," said Tom Merry. "But if Cavendish pulled somebody out of the river, why shouldn't he say so?"

"Might be modest about what he'd done," said Levison.

"Rats!"

"Piffle!"

"Not much of that about Cavendish!"

"Well, Manners did the same once," said Levison. "Manners fetched a kid out of a burning house, and never said a word about it, and it came out quite by accident."

Manners turned a little pink. It was quite true that upon that celebrated occasion he had acted like a hero, and he still possessed a splendid camera presented to him by a grateful parent as a souvenir.

"That's quite different," said Monty Lowther promptly. "Manners would do a thing like that, but Cavendish wouldn't. Cavendish would yell it from the house-tops! I know his sort!"

"Yaas; he has certainly nevah stwuck me as wemarkable for modesty!"

"Perhaps he's afraid of not being believed," suggested Levison. "You see, he lost his nerve that time Tom Merry was in the water, and——"

"He never had any to lose!" said Blake.

"Wathah not!"

"You're talking out the back of your neck, Levison!" said Monty Lowther. "And I'm blessed if I understand what you're getting at! It isn't like you to say a good word for anybody!"

"Cavendish has been lending him money, perhaps?" suggested Gore.

And there was a laugh.

And Levison's view of the matter did not gain ground. Whatever had happened to Cavendish on that mysterious occasion, the fellows were quite certain that it was not a rescue calling for pluck and devotion. Cavendish was the last person in the world to distinguish himself in that way.

But the fellows tired of puzzling over the matter at last, and it was dismissed from mind. Tom Merry & Co., indeed, had other and more important matter to think about.

They were playing Rylcombe Grammar School at football on Saturday afternoon, and Tom Merry devoted most of his time to the team.

Gordon Gay & Co., of the Grammar School, were a very strong eleven, and the St. Jim's fellows always had all their work cut out to beat them.

The school junior team was composed of the best players picked from both House teams. On the present occasion there were six School House juniors in it—Tom Merry, Lowther, Herries, Kangaroo, Blake, and D'Arcy. Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, Redfern, and Lawrence made up the New House contingent.

On Friday evening Figgins & Co. were surprised by a visit from Cavendish in their study. Figgy sang out "Come in!" as a knock came at the door, and the new boy walked in. The Co. regarded him with surprised inquiry.

"I want to speak to you about the match to-morrow, Figgins," Cavendish said abruptly.

"Go ahead!" said Figgins.

"I've been here nearly a fortnight now. I've kept up regular practice, and I think my form is pretty good. Don't you think I ought to have a chance of playing in the junior eleven?"

Figgins stared at him.

"You'll be a jolly lucky bargee if you get into the eleven when you've been here a term, or two terms," he said. "No; I don't think you ought to have a chance. I've seen you at practice, and you're not up to second eleven form, even if there were no other reasons for barring you!"

"What other reasons are there?" Cavendish demanded.

"You know well enough. The whole team would be against it—nobody wants a funk in the eleven."

"Same old tale!" said Cavendish bitterly. "I suppose I'm never going to hear the end of that!"

"Probably not," said Figgins coolly. "You can't expect to. Suppose Tom Merry had been drowned that time? I can tell you you wouldn't have found life worth living here. I consider you're getting off pretty cheaply."

"Then you won't give me a chance?"

"Can't be done. In this case, too, I've no power. Tom Merry is captain of the junior eleven; I'm only captain of the New House junior team."

"Then I'd better speak to Tom Merry?"

Figgins chuckled.

"You can speak to him if you like," he said. "It won't do any good; still, it won't do any harm. Speak to him by all means."

Cavendish left the study abruptly.

He carried out his intention of speaking to Tom Merry. The captain of the Shell heard his request, and then looked him up and down.

"You want to play for the eleven?" he ejaculated.

"Yes, I do!" said Cavendish doggedly.

"Well, you can't!"

"Why can't I?"

"Not good enough," said Tom, cheerfully and candidly.

"You play a beggarly Scholarship boy, and tell me that I'm not good enough!" said Cavendish savagely.

"I don't care twopence who or what a chap is, if he can play footer," said Tom Merry. "If you were good enough, I'd put you in, against my own inclinations; but there are a dozen reserves better than you. You can go and eat coke!"

And Tom Merry turned his back on Cavendish.

Cavendish walked away slowly, biting his lip. He was finding his life very hard and uncomfortable at St. Jim's. Instead of being a sought-after leader in everything that was going on, he was left out and neglected. He had no friends, and no share in the sports and amusements of the fellows. It was due to his own faults, but he was far from admitting it. Even his "funk" might have been lived down in time, if he had not added to it the faults of snobbishness and swank. The only chance for him was amendment, but amendment was as far as ever from his thoughts. He was quite satisfied with himself as he was. But he was not satisfied with his position in the school, and he meant that it should be changed, though, as was natural to a fellow of his character, he went the wrong way to work to change it.

CHAPTER 13.

The Hero.

TOM MERRY & CO. came cheerfully out of the School House after dinner the next day. It was a bright, cold, frosty day, without a sign of rain.

"Good weather," said Jack Blake. "I was afraid there would be rain after that blessed thaw. Good luck!"

"Grammar chaps get here at half-past two!" Tom Merry remarked. "We've got some time on our hands. Trot out the ball, and let's keep ourselves warm."

"Right-ho!"

And a merry crowd of juniors punted the footer about the quadrangle. Figgins & Co. joined them. It was getting towards time for the arrival of the Grammar School brake, when a curious-looking individual walked in at the gates of St. Jim's.

He was a ragged man, with a battered bowler hat, and a ragged muffler tied round his neck in place of a collar.

He looked like a tramp, and Taggles, the porter, came out of his lodge in great wrath, at the mere idea of such an individual desecrating the sacred precincts of the school with his undesirable presence.

Taggles planted himself in the man's way, and pointed to the gates.

"You clear hoff!" said Taggles.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir——"

"You ain't allowed in 'ere, my man," said Taggles, a little mollified by the "sir." "You clear off!"

"I come to speak to somebody, sir. I ain't come to beg. I ain't a beggar."

"There ain't any jobs goin' 'ere," said Taggles.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, I want to see one of the young gentlemen. My name's 'Iggs—William 'Iggs."

"Wot do you want with one of the young gentlemen?" said Taggles suspiciously. "Look 'ere, your kind ain't wanted. You sheer off!"

Kildare of the Sixth was crossing the quadrangle, and he glanced towards the gates, as Taggles prepared to hustle the tramp out. Mr. Higgs called to him.

"Can I speak to you a minit, sir?"

Kildare came towards him good-naturedly.

"Certainly!" he said. "Let him alone a moment, Taggles."

"'E only wants to beg, Master Kildare," said Taggles, with a sniff.

"I ain't a beggar," said Mr. Higgs, with dignity. "I wouldn't take no money, not if it was orfered to me. I'm an honest man, I am. I ain't come 'ere to beg."

"What do you want?" asked Kildare.

"It's like this, sir," said Mr. Higgs. "On Wednesday I'd 'ad a drop too much—I admit it. I was goin' 'ome to the Green Man by way of the bridge acrost the river, and I fell in. I don't deny that I was a bit screwed, but that ain't either 'ere nor there. A young gentleman jumped in, and pulled me out. I was pretty far gone, and the young gent 'ad me carried 'ome to the Green Man, and I 'eard arterwards, that 'earing I 'adn't any nioney, 'e paid for me to stay till I was able to move. I ain't the feller to sponge on anybody. I'm able to go on my way to-day, but I wanted to come 'ere and thank the young gentleman first. He was werry kind to me. But don't you think as 'ow I'm arter asking him for money. That ain't my sort. I ain't a beggar."

"I haven't heard anything of this," said Kildare, in surprise.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. Most of the juniors had gathered round now, curious to know what the man wanted, and half the Lower School had heard Mr. William Higgs's story.

"Are you sure it was a fellow here who pulled you out?" asked Kildare.

"Yes, sir. The landlord told me it was a St. Jim's young gentleman, but he didn't know his name, never 'avin' seen him afore."

"Well, he's a decent chap, whoever he is," said Kildare. "How old was he?"

"I dunno. I wasn't in a state to see werry clear," confessed Mr. Higgs. "But I s'pose he was about as old as that young gentleman, and 'bout the same size."

And Mr. Higgs pointed to Jack Blake.

"A junior, then," said Kildare. "Will you know him again if you see him?"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Higgs. "Rather, sir."

"You don't want anything from him, excepting to thank him for what he did?" asked the captain of St. Jim's, a little suspiciously, for Mr. Higgs did not look like a very disinterested gentleman.

William Higgs drew himself up loftily, to the full height of his squat figure.

"I ain't a beggar," he said. "I don't want to see the young gentleman alone, nor to ask him for nothing. But he risked his life to pull me outer the water, and I felt as 'ow I couldn't go on my way without sayin' a word, sir. I didn't say nothin' at the time—I wasn't in a state to."

"Quite right," said Kildare. "If the chap jumped into the river near the bridge, he took his life in his hands. The water's dangerous there."

"That's wot he did, sir."

"Do any of you kids know who it was?" asked Kildare, looking round.

The juniors were exchanging glances.

William Higgs's story afforded the explanation for the state in which Cavendish of the Fourth had returned to St. Jim's on Wednesday afternoon.

Was it possible?

"Can you see the boy here, my man?" Kildare asked.

Mr. Higgs scanned all the faces round him, and shook his head.

"He ain't 'ere, sir," he said. "He was a werry elegant young gentleman, and werry 'andsome. I'd know 'im again anywheres."

"When did this happen, Mr. Higgs?" asked Tom Merry.

"On Wednesday afternoon, sir."

"What time?"

"I think it was about three o'clock or 'arf-past, sir."

That seemed to settle it.

If Cavendish had pulled the man out of the river, and had him taken to the Green Man for shelter, and then returned to St. Jim's, he would have reached the school just about the time Tom Merry had seen him come into the quad., drenched and dripping.

"But it isn't possible," said Blake. "The Funk wouldn't do a thing like that. It can't have been Cavendish."

"Imposs.!"

"Seems a bit thick," said Lowther. "Let's hunt up

Cavendish, and show him to this chap. Whoever it was, he's said nothing about it."

A dozen fellows ran off in search of Cavendish.

"What makes you think it was Cavendish?" Kildare asked.

"He came in wet on Wednesday afternoon, and wouldn't explain how he came to get into the river," said Figgins.

"That's queer. Well, we shall see."

Kerr and Wynn came back with Cavendish. Cavendish was looking surprised; the two juniors had not told him what he was wanted for. Cavendish started as he saw William Higgs, and drew back.

"Come on," said Kerr.

"I—I—I——"

"There he is!" exclaimed Mr. Higgs. "There's the young gent wot pulled me out of the river!"

"Cavendish!" shouted all the fellows.

"What did I tell you?" chuckled Levison. "Who's right, after all?"

"Bai Jove! Levison's quite wight."

"So it was Cavendish!"

"The Funk!"

"Not much of a funk if he did what this man says," said Kildare. "It must have been touch and go for him. Cavendish, are you the chap who pulled this fellow out of the river last Wednesday afternoon?"

Cavendish flushed.

"Yes," he said quietly.

"And you never said anything about it?"

"Why should I?"

"Why should you?" said Figgins warmly. "Well, as all the fellows were calling you a funk, you might have told us."

"Yaas, wathah, Cavendish, deah boy!"

"'Ere 'e is," said Mr. William Higgs effusively grateful. "The young gent wot jumped into the river and fetched me hout. I was werry near a goner when I felt 'is 'and on my shoulder. ''Old on to me,' he says. 'I'll save you,' he says. 'Don't struggle,' he says. 'Jest 'old on.'"

"I'm glad you haven't caught a cold," said Cavendish. "What did you come here for?"

"I come 'ere to thank you for a-saving my life, sir. Don't think as 'ow I want any money. I ain't that sort. You 'ave been too kind to me already. You paid my bill at the Green Man, and otherwise they wouldn't 'ave took me in, not dripping wet as I was, and nigh dead with cold. I sha'n't never forget that, sir, not so long as I live, and I've swore never to touch a drop of drink again, sir."

"That's good," said Cavendish.

"I mean it, young gentleman, and I sticks to it," said Mr. Higgs, with dignity. "I come 'ere to thank you for saving of my life, and that's all—and p'r'aps you'd like to know that it's bin a lesson to me, and I'm goin' to sign the pledge."

"Best thing you can do," said Cavendish. "Next time you tumble into a river there mayn't be anybody near to pull you out. Here's a quid for you to help you on your way."

But Mr. Higgs drew back with great dignity.

"Not a shilling, sir," he said. "I didn't come 'ere to beg. Thank you kindly, sir; but you've already done too much for me. I ain't a beggar. I wish you good-day, sir, with all the gratitood of a poor man's 'eart!"

And Mr. Higgs raised his battered bowler hat respectfully, and walked away, and disappeared out of the gates. Cavendish returned the sovereign to his pocket. Kildare clapped him on the shoulder kindly.

"I've heard what happened the day you came here, Cavendish," he said. "The kids thought badly of you. But I think they'll change their opinion now."

Cavendish flushed.

"I—I—I didn't want to say anything about it, Kildare. I know I did wrong that day Tom Merry was in the water. I was tired after a long journey, and—and I suppose I lost my nerve. That was it. But—but if I was a funk I shouldn't have gone in for that chap, should I?"

"I imagine not," said Kildare, with a smile. "You must have run a fearful risk. I think all you kids ought to admit now that you have misjudged Cavendish."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kildare walked away. Cavendish was surrounded by the juniors at once. What he had done, or was believed to have done, was more risky than what he had left undone on the occasion of Tom Merry's danger. He had redeemed his character. And all the fellows were in a hurry to shake hands with him, or pat him on the back.

"I wegard him as wippin'," Arthur Augustus declared. "It was splendid to fish that wotten twamp out, and vewy wippin' to say nothin' about it. Cavendish, deah boy, you are a bwick. And I have an ideah, Tom Mewwy. I'm quite willin' to wesign my place in the eleven this aftahnoon in favah of Cavendish, if you will play him."

Tom Merry hesitated a moment.

He wanted to be kind to Cavendish, but that was carrying it rather far. Football was football! But, after all, Cavendish was a fairly good player. Tom had seen him at practice. If he played up and did his best, he would be able to keep his end up. Tom Merry quickly decided.

"What do you say, Figgins?"

"Put him in," said Figgins heartily. "He's a credit to his House, and he's all right for the team. Shove him in!"

"Right! Get into your things, Cavendish; the Grammarians will be here in a shake now."

"You mean it?" gasped Cavendish.

"Yes; buck up!"

"What-ho!"

And Cavendish fairly ran for the New House, to change for the match.

CHAPTER 14.
Not So Bad!

THE Grammarian brake rolled up to the gates of St. Jim's, and Gordon Gay & Co. descended.

The Grammarian juniors were in great form, and very keen for the match.

Tom Merry & Co. were ready, but Cavendish had not yet arrived.

He came on the ground while Tom Merry was chatting with Gordon Gay.

Cavendish looked very fit and well in his football garb.

His face was flushed, and his eyes sparkling. He was a keen footballer, and the undreamt of chance of playing in the junior eleven delighted him.

"Here I am!" he exclaimed.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave him a friendly nod and a smile.

"Jollay glad you're in the team, deah boy," he said. "I twust you will play up for all you're worth for St. Jim's."

"Yes, rather," said Cavendish eagerly. "I—I say, D'Arcy, you're standing out to make room for me. It's jolly decent of you to give me a chance like this."

"Not at all, deah boy," said D'Arcy, with a graceful wave of the hand. "Only too pleased. I feah I have done you w'ong. I wegarded you as a wotten funk because you didn't help Tom Mewwy that time, and you've pwoved that you have heaps of pluck. I was mistaken. I'm only too glad to see that you are the wight sort aftah all."

Cavendish's flush deepened.

"Quite so," said Blake heartily. "I don't think you can blame us, Cavendish, considering what happened. But we're jolly glad that you've have a chance of showing that you are true blue. What I can't understand is, why you should have gone in for a blessed tramp, when you wouldn't risk it to help Tom Merry."

"I—I hadn't my wits about me on that occasion," said Cavendish haltingly. "I—I was taken by surprise, you know. I—I'd just made up my mind to go in when Lowther arrived. I was sorry enough afterwards."

"Well, it's all right. What you've done shows that you're not a funk, anyway. And you weren't going to say a word about it?"

"No," said Cavendish.

"Well, I'm glad it's come out."

"Yaas, wathah."

"I—I wish it hadn't," muttered Cavendish uneasily, and his face was very red. He had not expected to be troubled with any pangs of conscience over his trick, but, somehow or other, the simple trust and faith of the St. Jim's fellows troubled his mind. "I—I wish that fellow Higgs had never come here."

"Oh, wats!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I think it was quite wight of Higgs to come and tell you he was gwateful. And I'm jollay glad we've found out by accident that you are weally a decent chap."

Tom Merry had tossed with Gordon Gay, and won the toss. The Grammarians were given the wind to kick off against.

"Time!" said Tom cheerily.

The teams lined up.

Cecil Cavendish had been put at outside-right in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's place.

His face was troubled as he lined up with the others. His conscience was troubling him strangely. He felt a curious wish that some of the fellows had doubted the story told by Mr. William Higgs, that their faith in him was not so complete. It never even occurred to Tom Merry & Co. that a trick had been played. And Cavendish, who was not accustomed to thinking badly of himself, felt like a cad. He was glad to be in the junior eleven, but he knew that he was there under false pretences. He knew that all the fellows who were so friendly and cordial to him now would have despised him utterly if they had known the truth. He was a cheat, an

impostor, and he realised it with a bitter clearness that he had not expected.

But he was in for it now. It was too late to think of that. He had listened to the voice of the tempter, and he had fallen. Now there was nothing for it but to see the matter through, to live up to the lie, to bolster up one falsehood with another, and make the best of it.

He glanced at Redfern, right-half in the St. Jim's junior team. It was borne in upon his mind that Redfern, the County Council scholar, whom he had despised, would never have played a trick like that, that he would have scorned the bare idea of it.

And Cavendish felt very small indeed.

But the starting of the game drove all other thoughts out of his mind.

At least he could play up for the school, and do his best for his side, and redeem himself to some extent in his own eyes.

He was a keen player, and though his form was not equal to that of the rest of the team, he meant to do his best, and not disgrace his side if he could help it.

Gordon Gay kicked off, and the Grammarians followed up the kick-off with a rush into the home half.

The tussle was soon fast and furious.

The red shirts of the St. Jim's fellows mingled with the blue and white of the Grammar School in a hot struggle.

Gordon Gay, Wootton, and Monk brought the ball right up to goal, and there was a sharp attack. But Fatty Wynn in goal was not to be beaten.

The Welsh junior was all hands and eyes, and he saved three times in rapid succession amid loud cheers, and then Herries cleared, and the struggle swayed away to midfield.

Cavendish's chance came at last.

He captured the ball, and bore it along the touchline, and wound through the Grammarian defence.

He was tempted to rush on, and kick for goal, but he checked the selfish impulse. The "game" was to centre to Tom Merry, who was well up and ready for a pass.

And Cavendish sent the ball in, and Tom Merry captured it, and slammed home into the net. And there was a roar from the St. Jim's crowd.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry gave the new junior a word of approval as they walked back to the centre of the field.

"That was a jolly good pass, Cavendish."

"Good man!" said Figgins approvingly.

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, standing at the ropes, clapped his noble hands, and cheered.

Tom Merry's goal was the only one taken in the first half, though the Grammarians did their best to equalise.

After the interval Gordon Gay & Co. played up their hardest, and Fatty Wynn was beaten by a lightning shot from the Cornstalk junior.

The score was level.

After that the struggle was hard and fast. Some of the fellows had "bellows to mend," but both sides played up with great keenness right to the finish.

Right up to within five minutes of time the score remained even, and the spectators had decided in their minds that it was to be a draw.

But it was not to be. The St. Jim's forwards got away finely with the ball, Cavendish again playing up splendidly. Cavendish centred to Tom Merry, and Tom Merry was rushed over by the Grammarian backs, but not before he had sent the leather to Figgins at inside-left.

Figgins slammed the ball home, and the leather grazed the finger-tips of the Grammarian goalie as it shot into the net.

There was a roar.

"Goal! Goal!"

"Hurray!"

The whistle rang out sharply.

The match was over.

St. Jim's had won by two goals to one.

"Never mind!" said Gordon Gay cheerfully, as he rubbed himself down after the match. "We'll beat you next time!"

"A wippin' wesult," was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's comment. "We've beaten the Gwammah bounders by two to one—and I wasn't playin'!"

"That's the reason!" explained Monty Lowther blandly.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Cavendish played up jolly well!" said Tom Merry. "He's not quite up to junior eleven form, but I think he ought to have a show in the House team after this!"

And all the fellows agreed.

"I'm putting your name down on the list of reserves, Cavendish," Tom Merry told him a little later in the evening, when the Grammarians had gone.

"Thanks!" said Cavendish. "You're very good. I did my best!"

"You did jolly well!" said Tom Merry warmly. "That pass of yours that I scored from was a beauty—and some wingers would have run on and shot for goal and lost it. As a matter of fact, I was rather afraid you would do that. But you didn't."

Cavendish reddened.

"I might have done it," he said. "Only—only—well, I didn't! I say, Merry, I'm sorry I didn't help you that day in the river. I suppose I was a rotten funk!"

"Not a bit of it," said Tom. "You've proved that you're not a funk. We'll put it down to a bit of absent-mindedness; any fellow might lose his nerve now and then. My dear chap, that's all over and done with. What you've done proves that you're a good sort, and anything but a funk. I can tell you the whole school thinks well of you—and they'll go on doing so, unless—unless——" He paused.

"Unless what?" asked Cavendish uneasily.

"You'd like me to speak out?" asked Tom bluntly.

"Yes, certainly!"

"Well, unless you spoil it yourself," said Tom Merry. "You showed a bit of rotten uppishness when you came here—excuse me—putting on airs over Hammond, for instance, because he was a Cockney chap from Bethnal Green—and I've heard you've been rusty with old Reddy, on account of his being a Scholarship boy. That kind of thing won't go down at St. Jim's. We don't like snobs!"

"I understand."

"I hope you don't mind my speaking out—I wouldn't have done it, only you've showed yourself to be a decent sort, and I don't like to think of your spoiling it by playing the giddy ox, you know, in small matters."

Cavendish smiled in a constrained way.

"I won't play the giddy ox," he said. "You can rely on that. Whatever I may be, I won't be a snob in the future. I'm going to beg Hammond's pardon!"

"Good man!" said Tom Merry.

And he confided to Lowther and Manners, when he told them about that little talk with Cavendish, that the outsider wasn't such a rank outsider after all, and that in time he would be a really decent fellow.

CHAPTER 15.
Quite a Success.

"I'M really sorry!" Figgins remarked to the Co., as they came into their study in the New House.

"About Cavendish?" Kerr asked.

Figgins nodded.

"Yes. As it turns out we have been rough on him. He's done a jolly decent thing, and held his tongue about it. We have been rough on the chap," said Figgins.

"Well, it seems that he isn't a funk, as we believed," said Kerr slowly. "But, as a matter of fact, Figgy, I can't like him. He's a rotten snob. He was perfectly rotten to Hammond, you know, who's worth whole stacks of him."

"Redfern would have smashed him, only he despises him too much," said Fatty Wynn. "He simply lets him rip. I suppose that's the best thing to do with such a silly chump."

"Yes, he's got his drawbacks," said Figgins. "Still, I think we can stand him, and give him a chance now. I was thinking of asking him in here to tea. Koumi Rao's gone over to the School House to visit D'Arcy, and Cavendish will be alone in his quarters."

"Just as you like," said Kerr.

"Hallo, there he is!" said Figgins, as Cavendish's voice was heard in the passage.

Cavendish was speaking to Redfern, and as the study door was open, Figgins & Co. could not very well avoid hearing what he said.

"I've been looking for you, Redfern," Cavendish was saying, as the two juniors came up the passage. "Can I speak to you?"

"No law against it," said Redfern cheerily. "What's the matter with you? You've not showed any great want to speak to me up to now."

"I'm sorry!"

"Nothing to be sorry about!" said Redfern, laughing. "I wasn't pining for the pleasures of your conversation."

Cavendish flushed.

"I suppose you'll think me a silly ass—you must think me one already," he said. "But—but I wanted to say I was sorry. I've played the giddy ox, and I know it. I didn't seem to see it somehow till just lately. But I was ass enough to think that I was better than some fellows here, and—and I've found out that they're better than I am. I can't say more than that."

Redfern whistled.

"Well, I'm blessed if I ever expected to hear you talk in that strain," he exclaimed. "But if you're beginning to see light, all the better. To tell you the truth, I thought you were several sorts of an ass, and I thought worse than that till I heard that man's story to-day. Give me your fin!"

And Redfern shook hands with Cavendish, and nodded to him in a friendly way as he went to his study.

Cavendish remained standing in the passage, a wrinkle in his brow. He started as he felt a touch on the shoulder, and looked round and saw Figgins.

"I heard you talking to Reddy," said Figgins. "Couldn't help it. I was jolly glad to hear you talking like that, Cavendish. Hop into the study. We're just going to have tea, and Kerr's standing something special."

Cavendish's face brightened.

It was the first time he had ever been asked into Figgins's study, and he fully understood and appreciated the honour.

He spent a very happy half-hour in the study with the Co.

For the first time he was on equal and friendly terms with really good fellows, and he felt that it was better than snobbish seclusion.

He left Figgins's study in high spirits.

When he returned to his own study, Koumi Rao had not come back, but the room was not unoccupied. Levison of the Fourth was sitting there, waiting for him.

At the sight of Levison all the brightness left Cavendish's face.

Levison's keen, sharp features, his satirical grin, recalled to his mind all that he wanted to forget.

It made him realise sharply that his new position in the House was founded upon a falsehood—that he was a cheat, and that he would be despised as a cheat if he were found out. He looked glumly and grimly at the cad of the Fourth.

"Hallo!" said Levison, in very friendly tones. "I've been waiting for you. I thought I heard your voice in Figgins's study as I passed."

"I've been having tea with Figgins."

Levison raised his eyebrows.

"It's worked, then, and no mistake!" he exclaimed.

Cavendish frowned, and bit his lip.

"Don't talk about it!" he exclaimed. "I don't like to think about it. I'd rather forget the whole matter."

"Yes; possibly!" said Levison, with a chuckle. "Naturally. By the way, have you settled with our cheery friend Higgs?"

"Yes—I dodged out just after the match, and met him in the meadow, as arranged," said Cavendish sourly. "That's all right."

"Nobody saw you?"

"No; I took care of that."

"He played up jolly well," said Levison. "Refusing the quid you offered him was really a master touch. I thought of that, didn't I? I must say that you owe the whole bizney to me!"

"I know I do—and I'm beginning to wish that you had left me alone," said Cavendish bitterly.

"It seems to me that you've got reason to be satisfied."

"In a way, yes. But—but I never felt so like a rotten cad in my life before!" said Cavendish miserably. "I can't stand it, I think. If they doubted me, it wouldn't be so bad—but their confidence makes me feel like a rotten worm!"

"Oh, you'll get over that," said Levison coolly. "The chief thing is to be safe from being found out. Higgs has cleared off, I suppose?"

"Yes—I had bought his railway-ticket for him, and I gave him a money-order for five pounds, payable at Southampton Post Office. He had to go there to get the money, so he caught the next train. He's gone!"

"Good enough. After all, he earned the money. All you've got to do now is to keep the secret. You can depend on me, too."

"All right!" said Cavendish wearily.

"By the way, I suppose you could lend me a quid if you're not quite cleared out settling with Higgs?" said Levison casually.

Cecil Cavendish looked at him quickly.

Levison asked for the loan civilly enough, but there was a latent tone in his voice that suggested unpleasantness if the loan was not forthcoming.

"You owe me four or five pounds now!" said Cavendish coldly.

"Make it five or six, then!" said Levison, laughing.

Cavendish hesitated a moment or two.

"After all, I've done you a jolly good turn," said Levison.

"Yes, I suppose you have," said Cavendish, with a sigh. "Here's your quid."

And there was a golden coin in Levison's waistcoat-pocket as he walked away from the New House, whistling cheerfully. He intended that before much time had passed there should be other golden coins to join it there.

CHAPTER 16.

The Only Way.

CECIL CAVENDISH had gained all that he had aimed at.

His scheme had been quite a success.

He was fairly installed in the good opinion of the St. Jim's fellows. He had been given his place as a member of the New House junior eleven. He was on friendly terms with Figgins & Co. and Redfern.

The School House juniors thought highly of him, too, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was especially chummy. Arthur Augustus was only too glad to be able to be chummy with Cavendish, because, as he mentioned quite a number of times, his people knew Cavendish's people.

Cavendish ought to have been happy—or, at least, satisfied—since everything had worked out according to his desires.

But he wasn't.

In the time of full success he felt more wretched than he had felt at any time since he had come to St. Jim's.

Contact with fellows like Figgins and Redfern and Tom Merry had insensibly made a change in him, and in his views of things.

The foolish snobbishness and self-satisfaction seemed to have left him, and if self-respect could have taken their place it would have been all for the better.

But he could not respect himself.

The unsuspicious friendliness of Figgins & Co. seemed to him like a constant reproach. It was founded upon a cheat.

He had lied, and he was reaping the fruits of a falsehood. He was still the Funk of the Fourth, though no one called him that now. He was worse than he had been, and he realised it. He was better in many ways, but that only made him feel his false position with more intolerable keenness.

Any reference to his rescue of Higgs, the tramp, touched him on the raw, so to speak, and he became so ratty when that matter was mentioned that the fellows soon left off making any reference to it.

If he could only have set his conscience at rest he would certainly have been very happy now; but, unfortunately, that was the one thing he could not do.

Among his other troubles, there was Levison. Levison soon made it clear that he had not acted out of friendly devotion. His requests for small loans multiplied, and Cecil handed them over for some time without demur. When at last he ventured to refuse, the cad of the Fourth showed his hand at once.

"You can afford it," he said coolly. "Your pater lets you have as much money as you like. I've heard you say so."

"I'm not going to bleed my pater to hand you the money!" said Cavendish fiercely. "You've had enough out of me, and it's got to stop."

"I'm doing you a service."

"I don't see it."

"Good! Would you care for me to write a comic article, giving the true account of that giddy rescue, and put it in the next number of Tom Merry's 'Weekly?'"

Cavendish clenched his hands hard.

"You mean that I've got to pay you to keep quiet?" he asked, between his teeth.

"Oh, that's a rotten way of putting it!"

"But that's what you mean?"

"I mean that one good turn deserves another. You've got plenty of money, and I'm hard up. I'm keeping your secret."

Cavendish looked him full in the face, and drew a deep breath.

"I've paid you all I'm going to pay you," he said deliberately. "I'm not poor, but you've had more out of me the past week than I can afford. You had the whole fiver my father sent me yesterday, and now you're asking for more."

"Like Oliver Twist," said Levison, with a grin, "I want more."

"You won't get it! Not a shilling! Not a penny!"

"Then you can look out for squalls!" said Levison. "What do you think the fellows will say when they know the facts?"

"If they know any of the facts, they're going to know all of them," said Cavendish, with a gleam in his eyes. "If the truth comes out, I couldn't stay here. It would be impossible——"

"Quite so!"

"I shall have to go. But before I go, I shall go to the Head and state plainly that you have been blackmailing me, and demand that all the money I've paid you shall be returned to me."

Levison started.

"You—you wouldn't dare!" he stammered.

"You'll see," said Cavendish, gritting his teeth. "I fancy you'd be sacked from the school within an hour of that, Levison"

"You couldn't prove it," muttered Levison

"I could prove it quite easily. I have kept the number of the note I gave you yesterday. You've changed it. I saw you change it. I could prove easily enough that that

A WARM TIME FOR THE REMOVE.

(An incident in "Ructions in the Remove!" the grand, long, complete school tale, by Frank Richards, which is contained in the current issue of our Companion Paper, "THE MAGNET" Library. Now on sale. Price One Penny.)

banknote was mine. How would you account for my having given it to you?"

Levison stared at him blankly.

"Well, you—you rotter!" he exclaimed. "You thought of that when you gave me the note!"

"I did. I intended it to be the finish, and it's going to be the finish. You've had enough out of me. Say a single word, and you know what you'll get. Let me find that the secret has got out, and I shall know you've told. And then you can look out for trouble."

"I—I sha'n't say anything, of course!" Levison muttered.

"Mind you don't. And don't speak to me again. If you do, I'll knock you down!"

And Cavendish turned on his heel and walked away.

Levison looked after him with rage and dismay in his face. He had regarded Cavendish as a goose to lay golden eggs; but the supply of golden eggs had evidently run out now. After what Cecil had said, Levison realised very clearly that he dared not say a word. If Cecil carried out his threat, the exposure would mean ruin to the cad of the Fourth, and now, indeed, he was more interested in keeping the secret than Cavendish himself.

It was a relief to Cecil Cavendish to have got rid of Levison and his importunities. But his own conscience was a greater trouble than Levison had been.

He grew moody and discontented, and somewhat snappish in his temper. More than once the impulse came upon him to confess the cheat and have done with it. But he shrank from it. To do so was to finish everything. He could not have remained at St. Jim's afterwards to face the ridicule and contempt that would follow.

His curious mood did not escape the notice of the other fellows, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was especially concerned about it.

"Cavendish seems to be quite off colah," the swell of St. Jim's remarked in Study No. 6. "He's wefused to come heah to tea to-day. He seems to have somethin' on his mind, deah boys. I weally think I ought to see about it, as my people——"

"Know his people," grinned Blake.

"Yes; exactly. He seems to be wathah avoidin' me. If

he's been gettin' into any twouble, I think he ought to confide in me as his own uncle, you know. In case of a difficulty you can't do bettah than consult a fellow of weal tact and judgment."

And when Arthur Augustus saw Cavendish again, he plunged into the subject. Cavendish was walking about aimlessly by himself under the elms in the quadrangle, when the swell of St. Jim's bore down on him. He made a movement to walk away, but D'Arcy appeared not to notice it, and joined him cheerfully.

"Anythin' wong, deah boy?" Arthur Augustus asked.

"No," said Cavendish shortly.

"You've been lookin' a bit off colah, you know. I twust you have not been gettin' into twouble. If you have, I'm quite willin' to advise you, as an old hand, you know," said Arthur Augustus, in quite a fatherly manner.

Cavendish paused. The impulse was strong upon him to speak out and get done with it.

"Suppose——" he began slowly.

"Yaas, deah boy?" said D'Arcy encouragingly. Pile in!"

"Suppose——"

"Fiah away!"

"Suppose you'd told a rotten lie?" said Cavendish abruptly.

Arthur Augustus coloured.

"I'm afwaid I couldn't suppose anythin' of the sort, Cavendish," he replied. "I weally could not put myself in that posish at all."

Cavendish smiled faintly.

"Then you can't advise me," he said.

The swell of St. Jim's stared at him blankly.

"You mean that you have told a whoppah?" he demanded.

"Yes," said Cavendish desperately.

"Then it's an awf'ly wotten thing to do, and the only way out of it is to own up," said Arthur Augustus promptly. "Go to the fellow you've lied to and tell him the twuth."

"Suppose there were a lot of fellows?"

"Tell them all the twuth."

"Not so easy to do as to say," said Cavendish.

"Bettah than keepin' up a wotten lie," said Arthur Augustus. "I'm weally surpwised at this, Cavendish. I did not think you were a fibbah. But you can wely on it that if you've been tellin' lies you'll never have any peace of mind till you've owned up."

"I suppose not," said Cavendish restlessly.

"Make the plunge, deah boy."

"I'll think about it. Don't repeat what I've said to you, of course."

"Wely on me."

Cavendish walked away. He left St. Jim's, and strolled down the lane, thinking to himself.

Was it better to do as Arthur Augustus had advised? That was the only way to obtain peace of mind, certainly. But——

To leave St. Jim's—to give up all he had won—to part from the fellows he had grown to like, and who had come to like him, that was too hard! Could he do it? And to make them scorn him, as they must if they knew the truth! How could he face that?

"Arternoon, Master Cavendish! I been lookin' for you."

Cavendish started violently.

A ragged man, with a beery, dirty face, had stopped in the lane. It was Mr. William Higgs. Cavendish stared at him with a bloodless face. He had rid himself of Levison. But he knew now that he was not to be so easily rid of Mr. Higgs. The money was gone, and Mr. Higgs had come back for more, that was evident. The unhappy boy groaned. He was realising what a tangled web we weave when we practise to deceive.

Mr. Higgs grinned at him affably.

"Glad to see my 'eroic rescuer," he chuckled. "I 'ope you are glad to see me, sir?"

"You should not have come back here. You agreed——"

"I thort as 'ow a generous young gent like you wouldn't mind 'elping a pore man," Mr. Higgs explained. "A few quid ain't much to a young gent like you."

"I've paid you once, and I shall not pay you again!" said Cavendish, grinding his teeth.

"Oh, draw it mild!" expostulated Mr. Higgs. "Five quid wasn't werry much for a duckin' in a cold river, and I never did like water, inside or hout. I dessay you can 'and me a couple of quid now to 'elp me along."

"I shall give you nothing."

Mr. Higgs's eyes gleamed dangerously.

"Then p'r'aps the young gents up at the school would like to 'ear wot really 'appened that arternoon!" he suggested.

"You mean you'll betray me, you filthy loafer?"

Mr. Higgs chuckled.

"Mum as a hoyster, if I 'ave a few quid," he replied.

Cavendish looked at him, and drew back his right arm. Before Mr. Higgs realised the kind of reply he was to receive, Cavendish's fist was planted full in his dirty face, and he reeled back and fell with a crash into the ditch.

"Oh, crikey! Huh! Groogh!"

The tramp rolled in the ditch, and rolled out again smothered with mud. Cavendish looked down at him savagely.

"Do you want some more, you rotter?" he asked.

"Ow! You keep your 'ands orf!" spluttered Mr. Higgs. "Don't you 'it me! I'm a-goin' to the school to show you up—that's wot I'm goin' to do. You see!"

Cavendish advanced upon him with blazing eyes, and Mr. Higgs picked himself up and fairly ran for Rylcombe, squelching out mud at every step. Cavendish turned and walked moodily back to St. Jim's. It was the end now, and he knew it.

CHAPTER 17.

The Last of Cecil Cavendish.

"ANYBODY seen Cavendish?"

Figgins of the Fourth asked the question.

But no one was able to reply to it.

Nobody had seen Cavendish for some time. Redfern had seen him leave the New House with a bag in his hand. Apparently he had gone out. That was all that was known. When the hour came for calling-over, Cavendish had not returned.

Mr. Railton was taking call-over. But he did not call Cavendish's name. Apparently he knew that Cecil was not there.

"Blessed if I understand it," said Tom Merry. "Cavendish can't have left, surely. He wouldn't leave like that."

"I shall ask Wailton," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We've a wight to know if anythin' has gone w'ong with old Cavendish."

And he approached the Housemaster when all the roll had been called.

"Cavendish isn't heah, sir," he said.

"I am aware of that D'Arcy," said the School Housemaster. "Cavendish of the Fourth has left."

"Left St. Jim's, sir!" ejaculated D'Arcy in astonishment.

"Yes."

"Bai Jove! Might I ask why, sir? He was a fwiend of mine."

"He appears to have had good reasons for leaving," said Mr. Railton. "His father has telegraphed to the Head that his son has arrived home, and that he will not be returning to this school. He would not, in fact, be allowed to return after what amounts to running away from school. That is all I can tell you."

And Arthur Augustus retired unsatisfied.

It was a mystery, and the juniors discussed it in vain. There was one person who could have let in light on the subject; but Mr. Higgs did not, after all, come up to the school. His nerve had failed him, and he kept his distance. Levison, too, guessed; but he kept his own counsel.

With much excitement the juniors discussed the matter, but it was not till a letter arrived for Figgins the following morning that they knew the truth.

Figgins brought the letter over to the School House when he had read it, and all the Co. read it together.

It was from Cavendish, and it was brief; but it told them all they had never dreamed of suspecting.

"I've left St. Jim's for good. I couldn't have kept it up much longer, and it was coming out, anyway. It was all a lie. I didn't rescue that tramp from the river. I paid him to come to St. Jim's with the yarn. It was a lie from beginning to end. I meant to keep it up; but it weighed on my mind. I couldn't do it. I had to own up, and as I couldn't face the school afterwards, I've cleared out. That's all."

There was a long silence among the juniors.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at last.

"My hat!"

"Well, this beats it!"

"We never suspected anything of the sort," said Figgins miserably. "I'm sorry for the poor chap! It must have weighed on his mind a lot, I think. I can understand now what was the matter with him the last week."

"Yaas, wathah! The poor kid!"

"He hasn't the nerve to face us now we know, and he was decent enough to tell us," said Tom Merry. "If he comes back, we'll agree to drop the whole matter, and give him a chance."

"Yaas, wathah!"

But it was not likely that St. Jim's would ever see again the junior who had been known as the Funk of the Fourth.

(Another splendid, long, complete story of TOM MERRY & CO. at St. Jim's next Wednesday, entitled "D'ARCY'S DELUSION!" by Martin Clifford. Please Order Your Copy in Advance.)

SECRET SERVICE!

The Opening Chapters of a Grand New Serial Story. By AGENT "No. 55."

NOTE!

The author has, for obvious reasons, to conceal his real identity under the pen-name of Agent "No. 55." Concerning his position, I am allowed to say no more than this: that if his real name were revealed it would cause something like consternation in Diplomatic and Secret Service circles.

THE EDITOR.

THE FIRST INSTALMENTS.

Jerry Osborne, a young Britisher taking a holiday in Berlin, goes to the assistance of a man who has been knocked down by a motor-car in the street in

THE GERMAN CAPITAL.

To his surprise he recognises in the injured man his employer, Mr. Muller, the head of the London office in which Jerry works. After the accident Mr. Muller's brain seems to be affected; he has lost his memory, and mutters continually. As

THE INJURED MAN'S ONLY FRIEND

in Berlin, Jerry is asked by the German police to accompany him home to England. The lad therefore takes charge of his employer. He is surprised to note how much attention his charge attracts during the train journey to the frontier.

At Flushing Jerry is attacked by several Germans, and in the scuffle Mr. Muller is knocked down. The blow restores him to his full senses, and Jerry is amazed to see him rush off with his aggressors to catch the steamer, which Jerry himself just misses. He is pondering over the strange turn events have taken, when a stranger introduces himself. He is an English airman and inventor, named Max Elton, and Jerry finally accompanies him to his lonely house on the marshes about seventy miles from Flushing. Subsequently Jerry makes a compact of friendship with Elton, who believes himself to be in danger from secret emissaries of the German Government. Jerry discovers the reality of the danger when, on returning suddenly to the house one day, he finds it in the hands of Muller and his friends. The lad tells the Germans that Elton is away, and with that they bundle him on board a motor-boat, which is bound for the Hook. Jerry understands that they wish to get him out of the way before returning to deal with Elton.

(Now go on with the story.)

Jerry's Great Ride!

An hour later the boat drew alongside the wharf at the Hook, a short distance below where the English steamers brought up, and Muller was assuring Jerry he would provide for his night's accommodation. Save for one loafing fellow, the wharfside seemed deserted. Looking about him, Jerry saw Hendricks, one hand in his jacket-pocket.

"You shall go ashore in a moment," said Muller.

And Jerry understood that he was being conveniently disposed of.

"Ah, Klopt, is that you? Good!" shouted Muller, as the boat was brought adjoining a flight of slippery wooden steps, to which the loafer had crawled. The man shouted in return.

"A good fellow, this!" explained Muller to Jerry. "He will take you where you can stay the night. I will command him. And we must then try to get a stock of oil. Klopt!"

Followed a string of guttural German, and Jerry, no other course open to him, stepped upon the damp, greasy stairway. Muller followed.

"We will come for you in the morning, Osborne," called Muller cheerfully after the three had walked for a couple of minutes. "You will excuse me not coming to the hotel with you, but there will be difficulty in finding oil in this hole. The hotel is private. Order what you like. Good-bye!"

Following his guide, with a heavy heart, Jerry arrived at a decent house that looked a good deal more like a private dwelling than an hotel. He had been dished, very thoroughly tricked, and in such a manner that he was helpless.

But more than he had done—and that was little enough—was impossible. He could not have fought Muller and his gang successfully. What had taken place he could not have prevented. Yet he felt angry with himself.

At the "hotel" a man—he saw no women-servants—showed him to a neatly-furnished bed-room, and, speaking English, informed him a meal was ready when he was. But Jerry did not want to eat. Without a word, he left the house, and retraced his steps to the quayside. And there his suspicions were confirmed.

The motor-boat was gone.

On its way to land the spies for their night-attack on Elton. And he, Jerry, was helpless to give warning to, much less assist, his friend.

Miserably, Jerry walked away, too wrapped in his dismal thoughts to notice that the quayside loafer Muller had hailed

was not far away. Elton was over a hundred miles away, and to reach him was beyond Jerry's power—beyond the power of any man.

Elton! Jerry could think of nothing else. At the hotel he ate mechanically, not knowing what passed between his lips, and then, careless if he were watched or not, sauntered out of doors, caring nothing to where his feet carried him. Presently he found himself on a white, narrow road, dirty, wet grassland on either side, dreary, deserted. A railroad ran near. A few lights twinkled faintly in the distance.

He glanced at his watch. Six o'clock! Where was the motor-boat? What was Elton doing? Was it possible that his own disappearance had warned Elton, and that the latter had left? He prayed it might be so. But what was more likely was that Elton, his search for Jerry hopeless, would return to the house. He would never guess what actually had taken place.

Looking ahead, Jerry saw a figure beside the road; it was a man either repairing or re-inflating a bicycle—a clean, well-kept machine, too.

Jerry looked without interest.

And suddenly, without warning, a plan flashed, ready made, into his brain. With that bicycle it would be possible to reach Elton. Somehow or other, he would find the road.

He didn't stop to think over the idea. He acted. With a sprint, he reached the owner of the bicycle.

"The road to Leyden—which is it?" he cried, remembering that on the night ride with Elton the latter had told him they were passing near that town.

The native straightened up, staring vacantly into the Englishman's excited face. He was a young fellow, squat, heavily built and powerful looking.

"Leyden!" yelled Jerry again and again, pointing along the road.

And at last it entered the Dutchman's thick skull that this person was inquiring if he could reach Leyden by the road they were upon.

"Ja, Leyden!" he said, nodding vigorously.

And then that burly young Hollander—cycling to see his sweetheart, as it happened—got the surprise of his life. Jerry didn't know his errand, and wouldn't have cared a button if he had; he meant obtaining the use of the bike. A hand seized the Hollander's wrist, a second clutched at his coat-collar, there was a wrench and a jerk of Jerry's right foot, and the owner of the machine was lying on his back.

He met the ground with a bump and a gasp of wonder. But when his saw his assailant lay hands upon the bicycle, upside-down on handle-bars and saddle, and reverse it, the gasp became a roar of anger and consternation.

"Thief!" he cried huskily, struggling to get up quickly, for no man loves less than the Dutchman the losing of any of his possessions.

But agility is not the strong point of the Hollander. The burly young man was on his legs, full of righteous indignation and pugnacity, just as Jerry started the machine running, preparatory to springing into the saddle.

Something tinkled in the road, an unintelligible shout reached the ears of the Dutchman as he stood with gaping mouth and wide eyes, and Jerry was flying along the road at fast-increasing speed. Overtaking him was out of the question, and the Dutchman didn't attempt it. Staring, he stood until the rider was lost to sight. Then, with a grunt, he leisurely got on the move, no doubt to report the violent annexation of his bike to the proper authorities. But first he prudently picked up and stared solemnly at the three gold coins that Jerry had left behind as part payment of the forcible hiring he had accomplished.

That night's riding Jerry never forgot, and more than once while making it he had good reason to feel thankful that he was an athlete and had made cycle-racing one of his recreations. One hundred miles to go, and six hours to midnight. Could he do it? Well, a hundred miles had been ridden many a time inside five hours, over English roads, and now Jerry intended to do as well upon Dutch. He just had to do it. With teeth set and coat buttoned, he buckled down to his task, though, as he soon found, this was no racing-machine of which he had become possessed.

If only he had known the road! Time was lost in appealing to chance met and terribly wooden-headed Hollanders, who probably believed it was a lunatic who accosted them. But he made them understand somehow. Covered with perspiration and dust, the muscles of his legs and thighs beginning to protest, he shoved every ounce of himself into the effort to get to the lonely house between sea and marsh before the men in the motor-boat should reach it, praying that he be delivered from punctures.

Now and again he looked at his watch, and each reference acted as a spur to increased effort. And at last, by the feel of the salt, fresh air upon his left cheek, he knew that he had gained the far-stretching road upon the dyke-top. Would he be in time?

Mile after mile was left behind. Darkness had fallen upon the dreary land, and he looked at his watch less frequently, not daring to waste the time expended in pulling up and striking matches. His lungs were labouring, his legs like lead, his ankles going weak. The thick walking-boots he wore seemed to weigh a ton.

He pulled up, struck a match, and dragged out his watch. A groan escaped him—ten minutes past midnight. Remounting, he dashed off again. And then, on his right hand, something tall and inky black loomed up upon the darkness of the sky. By George, a windmill!

Jerry could have yelled. For miles but one windmill stood near to the road—the one in which Elton had said was stabled his waterplane. He had passed Elton's house. It must be so. Staring ahead, he had not thought himself so near, and had omitted to try to locate the building.

Thank Heaven, though, he had not far to turn back! But it was waste of time, and he knew well enough that the motor-boat travelled rapidly enough to have got from the Hook to off the shore opposite Elton's in considerably less than six hours. Perhaps the terrible tragedy was already completed, the wretches landed, and Elton already a corpse.

Hope whispered that Elton was not at the house; that the spies had come, found the dwelling deserted, and had retired. But apprehension killed hope. Such a happening was too good to be true.

In time of stress the brain works quickly, and Jerry had thought over a dozen possible happenings during the mile or so ride between the windmill and Elton's house. And suddenly his heart gave a great leap.

On his right hand, out at sea, yet apparently quite near the dyke, he saw a tiny gleam of yellow, a speck of light amid the blackness, tiny, almost lost. It was a light upon the motor-boat. He was in time.

And if the house were deserted, and, while he was within, the Germans entered and found him! The idea came to him as he leaped from the bike, let it fall, and groped blindly for the causeway. He found it, reeled rather than ran along

it, and reached the house. No light or sign of life was there.

Round to the back he went and tried the door. It was fast. He rapped with his knuckles, fearful that the noise might reach the spies, now, perhaps, crossing between sea and dyke. There was no reply to his rapping. There was no time to find stones; pulling some copper coins from his pocket, he flung them to where he could faintly discern a window. He heard the crack and tinkle of falling glass.

Nothing. The Germans must have gained the dyke-road by now.

Trembling, his ears strained, Jerry slung up another coin. And then he caught the sound of a human voice.

"Window gone, sir! No harm. Coppers, not bullets."

"Neb, Neb! It's I, Jerry Osborne!" Jerry cried, loudly as he dared.

But seconds elapsed, though, to Jerry, an age seemed to pass. Then the back door opened gently.

"Jerry!"

"That you, Elton?" And Jerry stumbled forward.

"It is. What's the matter, Jerry?" And Elton, coming forward, Jerry fell against him.

"They've come. They're here!" Jerry gasped.

And then his head seemed to go round and round, a rushing noise as of a falling of many waters filled his ears, his eyes closed, and he felt himself falling from a tremendous height.

Baffled!

Four men tramped quietly through the marram grass covering the side of the dyke, and came to a halt on the edge of the road opposite the causeway leading to Max Elton's house. Behind them glowed faintly a light in the motor-boat they had just left. Said one:

"Better to have knocked that Englishman on the head than left him at the Hook. I distrust him."

"Hendricks, you have good hands but no head; you can fight, but you cannot plan," came the reply. "I have use for that Englishman; you will read of it later. Never destroy a tool of which use can be made."

Hendricks grunted, and, Muller leading, the four crossed to the causeway. Hendricks was not satisfied. In his opinion the only thing to be done with an enemy was to get rid of him. He had not forgotten the force in the blows he had received at the Hook station. Krug or no Krug, one fine day he meant having his revenge.

It was at that moment that Max Elton, opening the door, received Jerry's falling body in his arms.

The faint was only brief. With the taste of brandy in his mouth, Jerry sat up on the floor to find Elton kneeling beside him. On the floor stood a lighted candle, so placed that it could not be seen from outside. They were in the living-room.

"They're coming, you say," whispered Elton. "D'you know how many?"

"Four or five."

"And do they know you're here, old chap?"

"No. I got away at the Hook."

"The Hook?"

"Six o'clock this evening. Found a——"

Elton whistled.

"All right, Jerry; no time now. Tell me later. Don't you worry; lie here, and don't be seen if you can help it. Neb and I are ready for the beggars. Here, it may be necessary." He shoved a revolver into Jerry's hand. "Neb."

"Sir," came from somewhere.

"You look after the back of the house; don't stir. I'll attend to the front," ordered Elton. "Jerry, stay here, and make no noise."

And then Elton slipped away, putting out the candle, leaving Jerry on the floor full of a tense excitement that made him forget for the time the fearful exertion through which he had passed.

The room was black as a cellar, and Jerry crawled to a position midway between the door and the window, kneeling by the table. Elton it appeared had gone upstairs, anticipating attack on his bed-room. Though his ears were strained, Jerry could catch no sound of the enemy's movements. Perhaps they were doubtful if Elton were in the house. Would they set the house afire—blow it up with dynamite? Had his imagination deceived him, and that light been no more than a mere fancy?

Crouched in the black silence, while hours seemed slipping away, thoughts crowding into his brain, Jerry almost began to think that he must have been deceived.

And then the silence was shattered. Overhead abruptly broke a sharp, cracking sound, like that from a stock-whip, and two others trod so quickly on its heels that the three reports sounded as one. Then dead silence again.

To some purpose, Muller and his men had spent the time in the house before Jerry's arrival and surprised capture. The position of the bed in the room, which was obviously Elton's, had been carefully noted. Now that they had come a second time, Hendricks, standing on a ladder brought from the boat, had noiselessly cut away a portion of the glass, pushed the muzzle of his pistol through the opening, and sent three shots straight to the position occupied by the sleeper's head. He had had no need of a light; the interior of the room was photographed on his brain.

To Jerry the silence following the shooting was even more dreadful than before. Was Elton dead? Surely he would have replied if he were alive. But no answering shots came. The game Elton—if alive—was playing, Jerry could not fathom. The suspense grew intolerable, but he had received his orders, and obeyed.

He was not the only one puzzled. Hendricks, fully assured—he was a dead shot—that he had finished Elton, waited at the top of the ladder, wondering why on earth Elton's servant, who must have been aroused by the shooting, did not rush into the room to see what had happened. Hendricks knew the location of the door, he would hear Neb enter, and, having disposed of the master, his next business was to kill the servant. Muller did things thoroughly, and believed in leaving no inconvenient witnesses behind. But the servant did not rush in, and Hendricks wondered. That the man was in the house they had assured themselves already.

"What in Henker we do now?" Hendricks asked, in a growling whisper from his perch.

"We must get in," whispered back Muller from beneath. "I will tell Peters. Await my return, and then you enter by the window."

And he crept swiftly to the back of the house where the two other men were stationed. In thirty seconds he was back again.

"We enter together, Hendricks!" he called softly. "When I say 'Now.'"

It was then that Jerry heard the faintest of scratchings up on the living-room window. The glass was being cut. Crouching by the table, he clutched more tightly at his weapon.

Up went the window—oh, so gently, until it was wide open, and he was aware a man was stepping into the room. And then, firing his pistol once, he dropped it, and leaped squarely upon the intruder. And back went the man with an involuntary cry of alarm, Jerry's arms about him. His legs collided with the wall beneath the window frame, and through the opening Jerry and Muller tumbled headlong. For an instant they hung suspended across the window-ledge, to slip over its edge, and fall in a heap on the soil outside.

It was at that moment came a crashing report of firearms from front and rear of the house, a medley of shots, cries of pain, and shouts of rage. The window of Elton's bed-room was flooded with a brilliant light.

But Jerry had quite enough of his own to do to pay attention. The man beneath him was fighting like a tiger, and clutching and striking, the pair rolled over and over, filling their mouths with sand as they battled for the mastery. Clothes were rent under the grip of wrenching hands. Jerry felt his fingers catch in something—a pocket probably—and the pain was so sharp he feared broken bones; a hard wrist struck him violently under the jaw, and twice he felt his own knuckles connect with some part of his adversary's face. He knew it was Muller with whom he was fighting, though it was much too dark to distinguish faces, and he was determined the man should not escape. And Muller had made up his mind to the contrary. Somehow or other, he could not understand it—the attack had failed, and the sooner he was away the better.

Once he gained his feet, but Jerry was clinging to him, and a strong back heel made the German stagger. He collided with the ladder, and thus kept upon his feet, but the ladder was shifted from its position, and, as the wrestlers changed their position, down it slid. Jerry felt a stunning crack upon the head, his grip relaxed, and down he fell senseless.

With a leap Muller was six feet away, running for the causeway, along which Peters and the other man stationed at the rear of the house had already preceded him.

"Don't mind that fellow; he's safe enough. Come down, and let us get after the other beggars. They've all gone."

With this direction to Nebuchadnezzar, Max Elton rushed down the stairs, and unfastened the front door. Then he remembered Jerry, hurried into the living-room, and turned on the electric-light, saw the emptiness of the room and the open window, and stepped outside. His next step was on Jerry, and Jerry, consciousness returning, resented it loudly. He grabbed at the leg, suspecting an enemy, almost upsetting

Elton, but the latter, turning on an electric torch, recognised him.

"Hold on, old chap!" he sung out. And helped Jerry to his feet. "I was going after these fellows——"

"They've a motor-boat close in shore."

"Motor-boat! Then we can say good-bye to capturing them. Neb," the little man just appeared, "we won't trouble to go after them. And now, Jerry, let's get indoors. I'm dying to hear about you. One of your fellows lying upstairs, though; we must attend to him first. I rather fancy I've spoiled him for a bit for this kind of fun."

Close by the bed-room window Jerry saw the burly form of Hendricks, and at first he thought the man dead.

"Not so bad as that," Elton said. "I fired purposely at his legs, and he's fainted with loss of blood. But we must attend to him."

The wounded spy bandaged, Elton explained how he had waited by the door, revolver in hand, and had perfectly understood Hendricks' shooting at the bed.

"I'd have replied, but I wanted to get hold of one of the fellows, so I did nothing," he said. "I expected they'd enter the house. When this one came through the window I just switched on the light, and cut loose. More useful alive than dead, I thought. And now, old man, let's hear your adventures. I was no end surprised when I got back to find you vanished. I thought you'd been a dickens of a time finding that key. Afterwards I couldn't imagine what it was you had found. Thought you'd discovered the Arabian Nights' magic carpet, and were experimenting. I blamed myself for waiting so long before coming to see what had happened to you."

"Lucky thing you did delay!" cried Jerry thankfully. "I was hoping and praying you wouldn't come."

"Tell me."

And Jerry did tell him as briefly as possible, Elton interrupting now and again with humorous comments, roaring with laughter at the account of the commandeering of the all-important bicycle.

"I can see you getting seven years in gaol, my young friend," he said gravely. "Highway robbery with violence is a serious matter in Holland."

"It was the only way of getting here."

"The only means on earth by which my life could have been saved to-night," said Elton, suddenly becoming really grave. "And I don't believe there's another fellow would have done what you have, Jerry. But for you those beggars would have had me as sure as fate. And I'm not forgetting it, either. Old man——"

With changed face and voice, not altogether steady, Max Elton seized Jerry's right hand in both of his, and gripped tightly.

"I'm not going to turn off a lot of guff about undying gratitude, and blessing you for ever, and that sort of tommy-rot!" he cried earnestly. "But I'm not going to forget it. You saved my life, Jerry—ay, and more than that. I don't specially want to go under, but I do think a lot more of Old England and her safety than of any man's life, and though it may sound like conceit, and all that to say it, it's our country whom you've saved, Jerry. I'm no chap for heroics and that nonsense; but here's our country, and it's the duty of every mother's son to do something for her and be ready to help her and the British Flag. We've enemies enough, Heaven knows, and unless every Englishman is ready and willing to take risks that his country may benefit, we shall go under. Patriotism isn't something only to talk about; it's something to live for."

And in that was summed up the principle of Max Elton's life. For his country, for England's safety and honour, for the maintenance of her supremacy, he worked, not for his own profit or honour.

"You're one of those who do understand that, Jerry," he said; "and you and I are as good as brothers."

And he shook hands again.

(Another splendid long instalment of this grand new serial next Wednesday. Please order your copy in advance.)

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The doctor opened his medicine-chest and gave the animal some powder.

The ass switched his tail, tossed his head, and started on a mad gallop down the road.

The hawker first looked at the flying animal and then at the doctor.

"How much did that powder cost, doctor?" he asked.

"Oh, about a shilling," was the reply.

"Well, give me two shillingsworth, quick! I've got to catch the beast!"—Sent in by F. G. Street, Bournemouth.

NOT HIS FAULT.

Grocer (angrily stalking into the butcher's shop next door): "What do you mean by sending me only twelve ounces of steak when I send for a pound?"

Butcher (drily): "It's not my fault if you are short weight. I lost my pound weight, as a matter of fact, and used one of your pound packets of tea."—Sent in by K. Stubbs, Cardiff.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT.

The mistress of the house heard the sound of male laughter in the kitchen, and forthwith descended to evict the stranger. Mary protested she was mistaken, as there had been no visitors. Certainly no one could be seen. But the mistress of the house had kept house for many years, and investigated the big cupboard. Crouching beneath a shelf was a portly policeman.

Mary threw up her hands in amazement.

"Well, I never!" she ejaculated. "Lor, ma'am, he must have been left here by the last cook!"—Sent in by A. Ambler, Halifax.

DONE THAT TIME.

In an hotel one day an American was boasting that Yankees were much sharper than the British.

"You can't do a Yankee," he declared, "not if you tried six months."

"Well," said an Englishman calmly, "I'll sell you something for a penny which cost me twopence, and yet make a penny profit over the transaction."

After a few minutes' thought the Yankee accepted the offer, and handed over his penny.

His surprise can be better imagined than described when he received in return a twopenny tram ticket!

He has altered his views.—Sent in by E. Griffiths, Monmouth.

STILL DISSATISFIED.

The burly labourer was looking so downcast and miserable that the inquisitive old gentleman felt bound to ask him the reason.

"Ah, these be cruel hard times for the working-man!" said the dejected one.

"Why, what's the matter now?" asked the old gentleman. "Another strike coming?"

"No such luck, sir! The bloomin' masters have given in, and we've got to start work on Monday morning!"—Sent in by G. Holt, Chatham.

HE KNEW.

Inspector: "If a man took six pounds of sugar from one shop, twelve pounds from another, and three pounds from another, how much would he get?"

Small Boy: "About three months, sir."—Sent in by L. Stratton, Southampton.

CORRECTING PUSSY!

Mother: "Tommy, I'm ashamed of you! What are you hitting poor pussy with that whip for?"

There was a serious look on Tommy's face as he looked up at his mother and replied:

"He's dirty. He spits on his feet and wipes 'em on his face!"—Sent in by E. Bennett, West Bromwich.

NOT NEEDED.

He (as they pass a graveyard): "Don't you think it's silly to put those fine railings round here?"

She: "No, I don't. Why do you?"

He: "Because the people inside can't get out, and those outside don't want to go in."—Sent in by J. Fry, Bowes Park, N.

SO RECKLESS!

"It's no use talking," said Banks dejectedly. "It's impossible to make a woman understand even the first principles of finance."

"What's the matter now?" asked his friend Jones.

"Matter!" ejaculated Banks disgustedly. "Why, yesterday the baby swallowed a halfpenny, and what does my wife do but call in a doctor, and pay him five shillings for getting that coin back!"—Sent in by R. J. Thomas, Cardiff.

A GOOD REASON, TOO!

"You're afraid to fight—eh?" said Binks to Jinks.

"No, I'm not afraid to fight, but my father would know."

"Get out! How would your father know?"

"He would see the doctor going to your house."—Sent in by E. A. Merchant, Forres, N.B.

BETTER FUN.

Aunt Sophia: "And is Tommy a good boy at school?"

Tommy: "Yes, auntie."

Aunt Sophia: "I am glad to hear that. There was a time when you used not to be."

Tommy: "Yes. But I've found that it is far better fun to see other boys getting a tanning than having one yourself."—Sent in by F. Codrington, Bristol.

Little Sister: "Hallo, Fred, what are you doing away from your lessons?"

Fred: "I gave mamma the slip."

Little Sister: "Well, I heard her say she is going to get even, and is waiting for you with the slipper."—Sent in by R. Phillips, Morriston.

SELF-CONTAINED.

The man in a hurry dashed into a teashop in the Strand, and beckoned to a waitress.

"Bring me a ham sandwich, please, miss," he said.

"Do you wish to eat it here, or take it with you?" asked the waitress.

"Both," replied the man curtly.—Sent in by A. Thompson, Preston.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED!

Readers are invited to send ON A POSTCARD Storyettes or Short, Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the senders will receive a Money Prize.

ALL POSTCARDS MUST BE ADDRESSED The Editor, "The Gem" Library, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

THIS OFFER IS OPEN TO READERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

No correspondence can be entered into with regard to this Competition, and all contributions enclosed in letters, or sent in otherwise than on postcards, will be disregarded.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE

THIS WEEK'S CHAT

WHOM TO WRITE TO:
EDITOR,
"THE GEM" LIBRARY
THE FLEETWAY HOUSE,
FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS
"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY.
EVERY MONDAY
AND
"THE PENNY POPULAR"
EVERY FRIDAY.

For Next Wednesday.

"D'ARCY'S DELUSION!"
By Martin Clifford.

Our next grand, long, complete tale of the chums of St. Jim's deals with the amazing behaviour of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form. Accustomed as they are to their elegant chum's strange freaks, Blake & Co., of the Fourth, are hopelessly puzzled by "Gussy's latest," and the usual harmony of the Co. is woefully disturbed. When the truth of the matter comes out at last, Tom Merry & Co. put their heads together, and, with the aid of Kerr, the clever Scots junior of the New House, succeed in completely curing

"D'ARCY'S DELUSION!"

"CHUCKLES!"

The time has now come when I feel myself at liberty to relieve my readers from the state of suspense which they have been kept in; in other words, I wish to announce this week that the name of our latest companion paper will be

"CHUCKLES!"

"Chuckles!" Just that, and nothing more. The very title, I think, for a paper whose sole object is to amuse, to while away a leisure hour in the pleasantest way possible; to add to the fun and gaiety of this old world; to bring

LAUGHTER AND LIGHT-HEARTEDNESS

into every home

For such is the object which has brought "Chuckles!" into being, such the mission our new companion paper is designed to fulfil.

It is only a few weeks ago that the idea of such a paper was first mooted by a reader in a letter published in the "Magnet" Library. The idea was taken up eagerly by many thousands of fellow-readers. Letters poured into this office, and the clear fact soon penetrated to the Editorial sanctum that "something must be done." My readers had spoken decisively, and that was enough. The Editorial brains, therefore, such as they are, were set to work, and they have been working ever since, and at high pressure, too. They have set the brains of authors and artists to work, also, and as a result of all this terrific concentration of brain-power

THE FIRST NUMBER

of "Chuckles!" has been produced, and in the course of a week or two now will be in my chums' hands.

It will contain many special features, and will be "got up" in a really first-class manner, such has never before been attempted by any paper selling at the price of one halfpenny. For remember that "Chuckles!" will only cost one halfpenny, so that it may be within the reach of every one of my chums. The price, however, will be the only cheap thing about "Chuckles!" It will be printed on good quality, fine-surfaced paper only, while the front page will be

PRINTED IN FOUR COLOURS.

For our front page artist I have been lucky enough to secure Mr. Tom Wilkinson, admittedly one of the very foremost humorous artists of the day, whose work is famous throughout the world.

I have no room to give here a list of all the splendid features with which "Chuckles!" will be packed from cover to cover, but the grand

COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY,

by popular Frank Richards, is a feature worthy of special mention.

Tell all your friends the good news that

"CHUCKLES!" IS COMING,

and ensure a grand welcome for

THE GREATEST HALFPENNYWORTH EVER OFFERED.

HOUSEHOLD PETS (Special Article) No. 1.
By Dr. Gordon Stables, R.N.

Hedgehogs

are interesting pets to grown-up people as well as young folk; but you must love them and treat them kindly, else they will disappear. The young are born blind, and naked, just as we are, but we don't, as a rule, grow bristles. A hedgehog must have its own little hutch, clean and sweet and warm, and be regularly fed. They are not dainty, but everything should be fresh. They are very droll, and will repay your study of their tricks and their manners. They are fond of bread and milk, but they don't suck cows. They like a morsel of egg, boiled, but they don't steal and suck them. Wild rats do, and hoggie gets the blame. Neither will hoggie keep rats at bay, but they will kill mice. They won't live without bits of raw meat. Sometimes they eat beetles, but let no one tell you they can clear a house of those pests.

Dormice.

I must confess that I like to see every animal in its own home and not confined; but, as a pet, give dormice a large, roomy cage with a dark sleeping-room, and some branches arranged for exercise, and they will be pleased and happy. They are by no means offensive in odour, but of course all creatures that we keep in captivity must receive attention with great regularity, and both birds and beasts should be tame enough to be taken out for a scamper every day round the room and across the table. Dormice should be kept in pairs, and will of course breed, but the bedding should be plentiful and the nesting material also.

They will thrive on a good allowance of grain, not maize, nut kernels or nuts, fruit, acorns, and mast. Crusts of bread, of course. But you must have them know you before they will become quite tame and loving. They are not really mice, but belong to the squirrel family.

Squirrels

are most engaging pets if tame and well treated. The cage should be large, with branches to climb, a dark room and a revolving wheel. They are apt to breed fleas unless all their surroundings are kept exceptionally clean. They like a bed of white cotton-wool. Food: Bread and milk, fresh every morning, nuts, acorns, grain, biscuit, with now and then a little raw meat.

(Another of these grand articles next Wednesday.)

The Editor

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DON'T MISS THIS GRAND TOM MERRY STORY!

TRACKED DOWN!

A Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale dealing with the Adventures of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Better tell the truth, young man!" said the constable sternly. "You've run away from school, I suppose, and want to get back again?" "Nothing of the sort!" retorted Tom Merry hotly. "I simply don't know how I got here!"

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Strange Encounter.

"I GUESS that's him!"

Tom Merry gave a start as the words fell suddenly upon his ears.

It was a fresh afternoon, and Tom Merry, with a ruddy glow in his cheeks, and his cap on the back of his head, was sauntering along the lane from St. Jim's to the village of Rylcombe.

It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and the chums of the Shell—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—had left the school to stroll down to the tuck-shop in the village. Manners and Lowther had dropped behind to examine a forsaken birds'-nest, so Tom Merry was for the moment alone.

"I guess that's him, Bunker."

Tom Merry looked round quickly. Two men had suddenly appeared from the hedge, and the junior looked at them distrustfully. One—the man who had spoken—was a tall, thin, loose-jointed fellow, with a hooked nose and a short beard, evidently an American. The other, a short, thick-set individual, was more roughly dressed, and rougher in general appearance. Both were strangers to Tom Merry, and he did not like their looks. He had little doubt that he had fallen in with a couple of footpads, and he was on his guard at once.

"Hallo!" he said coolly. "What do you want?"

"I guess we want you," drawled the tall man.

And the other chuckled.

"I guess we do, Silas Shucks."

Tom Merry laughed.

"You had better keep your distance," he remarked. "I am not alone, as you seem to think; so if you are thinking of robbery, you had better give up the idea. I say, Monty! Manners! Come here!"

"Collar him, Bunker!"

The two men ran straight at Tom Merry. At the same moment the voice of Monty Lowther was heard up the lane.

"What's wanted? We're busy."

"Come here!"

For a moment the two rascals hesitated. Then Silas Shucks muttered something in a fierce whisper to his companion, and they rushed at Tom Merry.

"Collar him!"

The next moment the hero of the Shell was struggling in their powerful grip, and shouting at the top of his voice.

"Help! Help!"

"None of your gammon!" came back the voice of Monty Lowther. "We're coming presently!"

"Help! Help!"

Tom Merry struggled desperately. What could be the object of the ruffians he did not know. They did not seem to wish to rob him, but to drag him from the road into the wood.

"The chloroform! Quick, Bunker!"

Tom Merry heard the words, and they nerved him to a desperate effort. He broke loose from the grasp upon him, and started to run. But in a moment he was seized again and borne to the ground.

"Help!"

There was a thud of rapid footsteps in the lane. The ring in Tom's voice told that he was not "rotting," as Monty Lowther had at first suspected, and the chums of the Shell were tearing to the rescue. They saw Tom Merry in the road, with the two ruffians over him, and they did not wait to speak. They hurled themselves upon Tom's assailants without an instant's pause, and sent them flying across the lane. Bunker and Silas Shucks rolled gasping in the grass under the trees, and Manners helped Tom Merry to his feet.

Tom was panting for breath.

"What's the row?" asked Lowther, thumping him on the back to assist him in regaining his wind. "Were they going to rob you, Tom?"

"I don't—know. They jumped on me all of a sudden. But——"

Silas Shucks sat up in the grass. He was looking rather dizzy, but there was an expression of astonishment on his narrow face.

"Tom!" he repeated. "Tom! What might your name be, young gentleman?"

"Mine? Tom Merry."

The two men looked at one another curiously. They rose slowly to their feet, but did not offer to renew the attack. The Terrible Three were shoulder to shoulder now, quite ready for them; but the two rascals had evidently had enough.

"I say," said Silas Shucks, "I reckon there has been a mistake here."

Monty Lowther grinned.

"Yes; you tackled rather too large an order," he said. "Why don't you come on? You were full of fight a minute ago."

"If that young chap's name is Tom Merry——"

"What did you think it was?" said Tom Merry curiously. "Have you taken me for somebody else?"

"That's it," said Silas Shucks, still evidently in doubt—"that's it. But if your name is Tom Merry—— But where do you come from?"

Tom Merry made a gesture towards the tower of St. Jim's, rising in the distance over the trees.

"From the school?"

"Yes."

The two men exchanged glances again. They were evidently amazed, but at what the chums of the Shell could not quite see.

"You could tell that by my cap, if you looked at it," said Tom Merry. "What are you getting at, anyway? Did you really take me for somebody else, or is that gammon because you've got the worst of it?"

"That's more likely," said Monty Lowther. "Let's run

(Continued on page iv of cover.)

them in. We three could easily handle a couple of weedy rotters like that!"

"Right-ho!" said Manners. "Come on!"

"I guess it was a mistake."

"Rot! Collar them!"

The Terrible Three ran forward. As they were not assailed they became the assailants. But the two ruffians had had enough of it. They bolted through the hedge and disappeared among the trees before the chums of the Shell could get within reach of them. Monty Lowther was rushing after them through the gap in the hedge; but Tom Merry pulled him back.

"Hold on, Monty!"

"Better collar the rotters!" said Lowther. "It will be fun, anyway, taking them to the station, and would mean a lot of eclat for us!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"But it wouldn't be easy, Monty, and I don't see how we are to run them down in the wood, anyhow. Let's get on to the village!"

"Well, perhaps you're right."

"Of course I am, my son. Come along!"

And the Terrible Three sauntered on down the lane. Tom Merry had little expectation of ever seeing the two ruffians again, and he little dreamed how soon they were to meet, and what strange results would follow.

* * * * * * * *

"Bai Jove, deah boys, you look wathah dusty! Have you been havin' a wow with the Gwammawians?"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of Study No. 6 in the School House at St. Jim's, who asked the question as the Terrible Three came in at the gates.

"No," said Tom Merry. "I haven't seen the Grammarians to-day."

The swell of the School House adjusted his eyeglass and looked him over.

"You look as if you had been in a wow," he remarked.

"So I have," said Tom Merry, laughing. "But it was with a couple of footpads. If you had been there, Gussy——"

"You could have scared them away," remarked Lowther—"with your face, you know!"

"Weally, Lowthah!"

"I feel a bit dusty," remarked Tom Merry. "I think I'll go and get cleaned. Well, what is it, Gussy?"

"You have been attacked by a couple of footpads?" said D'Arcy, producing a little silver pencil and a gilt-edged notebook from his pocket.

"Yes; at least, I suppose they were footpads."

"Did these wottahs leave any footpwints in the lane?"

"No," said Lowther. "They took them all away with them——"

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowthah! The question of footpwints is an important one. But I cannot expect you fellows to notice anythin' weally important. Well, Tom Mewwy, I will do my best with this case, and will weport latah!"

And the swell of the School House put away his notebook and pencil, and walked off. The Terrible Three grinned, and went on their way to the School House.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Thief in the Night.

"QUIET!"

"I guess so, Silas Shucks."

"I'll have the pesky window open in a jiffy."

It was night at St. Jim's. Darkness lay upon the school; the hour of midnight had tolled from the tower, and all was again silent. Two dim forms had flitted through the darkness of the quadrangle, and stopped at the porch of the School House.

A tall man and a short, thick-set one, with caps pulled down over their brows, and cautious, sidelong glances. They seemed to breathe more freely when they were out of the open quadrangle in the dusk of the deep porch. The taller of the two closely examined the fastening of the hall window that glimmered beside the stone pillars of the porch. He gave a chuckle.

"It's easy enough, Bunker. Only the old-fashioned catch, and the winder opens on a hinge. It's dead easy."

"Good luck, Silas!"

"I'll have it open in a jiffy."

There was a faint click in the gloom. Then a creak of the wooden window-frame. Bunker drew a quick, deep breath.

"It's open?"

"I guess so."

"Mind, it's your idea, Silas, not mine. That's understood."

"Oh, stow your croaking!" growled Silas Shucks impatiently. "Of course, it's my idea—it was my idea from the first, wasn't it, to make a fortune out of the little lord?"

"I know it; but this is a new development."

"It will make everything safe."

"Well, you're boss, and I follow your lead. Only mind, it was your idea from start to finish. That's understood."

"Yes, that's understood. And now stow your cackle," said Silas Shucks roughly.

The window swung back into the hall. Silas Shucks put one leg over the sill, and peered intently into the dense darkness before him. Slowly and dimly he made out the form of the objects there.

"All serene, Silas?"

"I guess so. Stow your cackle."

The long-limbed, loose-jointed rascal drew himself into the opening, and disappeared into the darkness of the hall. Bunker slowly followed. Then Silas Shucks's thin, wiry hand closed the window noiselessly, without fastening it.

"Come on."

Silently, in rubber-soled shoes, the two ruffians stole up the stairs. Up to the second floor, till Silas Shucks opened a door, and the sound of regular breathing falling upon their ears warned them that it was a dormitory.

A couple of minutes later Silas Shucks was opening the door of the Shell dormitory. The long-limbed ruffian entered, and proceeded from bed to bed, allowing the glimmer of light from a tiny electric lamp to rest for a moment upon the face of each youthful sleeper.

He scanned the faces of Gore and Skimpole and Lowther and Manners. Then he uttered a low exclamation of satisfaction as his glance rested upon the face of Tom Merry. Bunker stepped quickly to his side.

"Is that him?"

"I guess so."

They scanned the face of Tom Merry.

"He's wonderfully like him," said Bunker, in a whisper.

"Didn't we mistake him for the other to-day?"

"I guess so; but if you saw them together——"

"That would show up a difference, of course; but they won't be seen together. This is your quarry at present."

"Well, it's your idea."

"Stow your cackle! Have you got the chloroform-pad?"

"Here it is."

"Hold the light, then."

Bunker held the glow-lamp, and Silas Shucks bent over the sleeping boy with the pad drenched in chloroform in his hand. The pad was slowly approached to the face of Tom Merry, and he breathed in the fumes unconsciously, and his sleep took on a sounder, deeper heaviness. Then the pad was pressed gently on his face. One start he gave, and that was all. Unconsciously he glided from sleep to insensibility.

Bunker drew a breath of relief. Silas Shucks grinned.

"I guess it was easy."

"We haven't got him away yet."

"That won't take long."

"What about his clothes?"

"We don't want his clothes. We've got clothes for him, haven't we?"

"Lend me a hand with him."

The bedclothes were rolled back, and Tom Merry was lifted from the bed. The hero of the Shell was quite unconscious, and he did not make a single movement. He lay as limp as a dead body in the grasp of the kidnappers.

He was lifted into Silas Shucks's powerful arms, and carried silently away. The ruffians emerged from the dormitory, and Bunker closed the door. Then they stole down the stairs, Tom Merry's weight apparently being very little to the big American. They halted at the unfastened window.

"Get out first, Bunker."

"I guess so, Silas Shucks."

"And don't jaw."

Bunker climbed through the window, and received the insensible junior into his arms. Then Silas Shucks followed, and the window was closed. The two ruffians quickly crossed the quadrangle, and Bunker climbed the wall, and drew Tom Merry up after him. Shucks followed. In a couple of minutes the kidnappers stood in the lane.

(The subsequent adventures of Tom Merry in the hands of his kidnappers, the consternation of his chums at his disappearance from St. Jim's, and the strange events which lead Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, to take up the case, form the subject of a most absorbing school story. If you wish to continue "Tracked Down," by Martin Clifford, buy the current issue of our grand companion paper, "The Penny Popular," which is now on sale everywhere. Price One Penny.