

740



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No. 740
Vol. XXI

20 Pages.

Every Wednesday.

April 15th, 1922.



MR. RACKE'S PROTEGE.
(An Amusing Incident from the Grand Long Complete School Story Inside.)

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"

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(If your name is not here this week it may be next.)

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Lady: "Why do you say 'your train,' my man, when you know it belongs to the company?" Porter: "Dunno, ma'am. But why do you call me 'my man,' when you know I belong to my old woman?"
Half-a-crown awarded to Kamdia A. Bharucha, 10, Sholapur Road, Poona, India.

The Right To Live.

A very kind-hearted man, who often intervenes on behalf of dumb animals, saw a crowd of boys pitching stones and sticks into the boughs of a tree. "Boys," he said, "what are you pelting—a squirrel or a cat?" "Neither, sir," replied one youngster. "It's a bat." "Well, poor bat," said the stranger. "It has a right to live." "Yes, sir," answered the boy; "but this is a cricket-bat."—Half-a-crown awarded to R. Cockburn, 15, Claremont Gardens, Leith, Scotland.

The Numidian Gazelle.

The Numidian gazelle is a beautiful creature, which inhabits the North of Africa. In some districts it is found in vast herds, which would be innumerable but for the fact that the gazelle is the chief prey of the lion. The Numidian gazelle is a species of antelope, and is very graceful. Its horns are black. It can run very swiftly, and when attacked a body of these animals will form a circle with their horns, offering a very formidable defence.—Half-a-crown awarded to Kenneth Paton, 9, Arcadian Gardens, Bowes Park, London, N. 22.

Money.

Money may be divided into two classes, as it were, coin and paper. A golden sovereign is worth a pound, but a pound Treasury note is not. It resolves itself into this, that, literally speaking, a Treasury note is worth a pound, face value, but it is not worth a pound in gold. Some countries, America, for instance, will not accept payment for a consignment of goods in any other manner than by bullion, or gold. Money is really and truly a means of exchange. If, for example, the country were running short of ready money, the Government would issue a considerable number of notes, and that would be termed inflating the currency. By so doing the value of money would decrease to an alarming extent. This was proved during the recent war.—Half-a-crown awarded to G. P. Ballantine, 89, Hazelbury Road, Silver Street, Edmonton, N. 13.

This Wins Our Tuck Hamper.

Not What He Meant.

A dull and not very industrious youth was discharged from the service of the firm he had worked for. He asked his employer for a testimonial, the youth applied to another firm for a job. The manager read what was written. "I see you have many blots on your character," he said sternly. "Er—well," answered the youth, "I think it must have been the employer's bad pen."—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck has been awarded to Leslie Hadfield, 64, Earle Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Manchester, Lancashire.

Editorial Chat!

Address your letters to The Editor,
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My Dear Chums,—

"Sons of the Empire" is the title of next week's stirring yarn in the GEM. It is a great story, with plenty of punch: in it, Greyfriars comes to St. Jim's for an inter-school match—just what I am always being asked to give. In this match the Colonial players on both sides acquit themselves so well, scoring all along the line, that a special team is formed, all Colonials. These Sons of the Empire win plenty of honours, just as one might expect.

This week's number is a record one in every way. I am positive you will approve of the extra-size illustrations. In the past I have had grumbles that the pictures were not large enough.

The first of the new series of breezy articles by the Sporting Doctor appears this week. I am sure this feature is a winner, and I have only to draw your attention to it for all to say the same.

The Rally-Round Club has started well. I have heard from myriads of staunch supporters of the GEM. The postman has come to the conclusion that something special is on the way. It is the Rally-Round Club. I want you to rally in your thousands and keep it up. The GEM appeals to everybody as a front-rank story paper, and everybody who reads the GEM ought to make a point of joining the new club. It will be worth it. The second coupon appears in this issue.

No need to ask you to keep your eye on the Tuck Hamper Competition. For the smartest paragraph, a splendid Tuck Hamper is awarded, and there are money prizes for all others used.

A correspondent down in Surrey, who always evinces intense interest in the GEM, asks a few questions: "Has Trimble a minor; if so, can we hear about him? May we have more of Cousin Ethel in the stories? May we also hear more of Mr. Selby and the fags, and Dr. Holmes' daughter, Cecilia?"

Well, I am prepared to do almost anything to please readers. Are these suggestions to our likin'? If so, please let me have a line!

It is to be hoped you are all making sure of the wonderful series of coloured plates of railway engines now being given away in the "Popular." There has never been such an opportunity as this. I am hearing about these plates from all over the country, and bitter disappointment is expressed when some correspondent has failed to secure one of the set. Of course, a standing order for the "Popular" is the only way to be sure, and better be sure than sorry any day of the week.

I have a good many more special treats coming for GEM readers, but more about all that next week.

YOUR EDITOR.

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CHAPTER I.
A Narrow Escape.

"MY hat!" Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, gave vent to that sudden startled exclamation, and looked round. Manners and Lowther, also of the Shell, looked round, too, as they heard their leader's sudden cry.

"Oh, the fool!" said Manners.

Lowther nimbly side-stepped into the hedge at the side of the little lane.

It was evening time, and the Terrible Three, as they were usually called, were returning to school. They were in rather a hurry, for prep had to be done, and they had not yet had their tea. Tom Merry, as captain of the junior football team, had been to the village to buy a new practice ball.

It was not very light in the narrow lane, for on either side was a hedge, and behind the hedges were trees.

But it was light enough to see a car far behind them in the lane. There was something remarkable about the car—not in its construction, it was too far off as yet to see that distinctly, but in its movements. Its course was erratic, to say the least of it, and Tom Merry, as he stared, uttered another involuntary ejaculation.

"Well, I'm blown!"

"You'll be jolly well run down," grunted Monty Lowther from the hedge.

"Yes; Tommy, come off the road! Don't be an ass!" admonished Manners.

But the captain of the Shell heeded them not. The car gave a violent lurch, and Tom Merry continued to stare.

"What the dickens is wrong?" he muttered. "Surely the man can't be drunk!"

"Of course he's drunk—or mad," grunted Manners disgustedly. "He can't be doing that for fun—Look!"

He pointed, and as he did so the car swerved wildly into the side of the road.

"Good heavens!" muttered Tom Merry. "There's going to be a smash in a minute!"

The car came on again at an increased speed, still swaying. Tom Merry wheeled round to glance down the road.

Fortunately, it was empty of vehicles; but ahead was the figure of a lad shabbily dressed.

"Hi! Look out!"

Tom Merry placed his hand to his mouth and gave a hearty yell.

The boy looked round and stared. Then, catching sight of the car, he moved to the side of the road.

"Can't we do anything to stop it?" asked Manners, with a slight frown.

The captain of the Shell shook his curly head. "I can't," he said rather worriedly. "And unless you know more about cars than I do, you can't."

"No good pulling it up?" asked Manners doubtfully. "I mean, by putting something across the road?"

"No," answered Tom. "Besides, there isn't time. Here, get up in the hedge!"

The car came by in a flash. It swerved towards the hedge where the Terrible Three were seated, and Lowther toppled over.

As the car passed, Tom Merry dropped back on to the road, and ran forward, as though intending to stop it. But the car rushed madly ahead, and he was soon left far behind.

He stood still and watched. Manners, from the hedge-top, was watching, too.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Look, that kid's going to pull it up!"

Anxiously the two Shell fellows watched the back of the

rocking, swerving car as it careered wildly in the direction of the youth. He stood waiting on the right-hand side of the lane, but as the car drew nearer to him, he commenced to run with it. Then with a sudden spring he leapt on to the footboard.

Brushing aside the driver, who, half-dazed with drink, glared at him with glazed eyes, he took the steering-wheel.

"Heavens!" gasped Tom Merry. "If he can't stop it, the car will reach the hill-top. There's sure to be a smash at the bottom."

"He's pulling it up—look!" cried Manners excitedly.

Sure enough, the huge car was slowing up. A hatless, red-faced man leaned out of the window, and his excited cries floated back to the three Shell fellows.

"I know that voice," exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Hang the man," grunted Manners. "He's scared stiff! My hat! The car's stopping!"

The shabby youth had switched off the magneto, and the car was running on its own momentum. As it climbed the hill it came to a standstill. Then it slid slowly backwards.

"Great Scott! It's coming back!"

Even as the words left the Shell fellow's lips the car curved gracefully into the hedge that bordered the left-hand side of the road. With a scarcely perceptible jerk it came to a standstill.

Tom Merry ran quickly forward. Manners followed him, and hardly a moment later Lowther, slightly ruffled, clambered over the hedge and joined his chums.

When the Shell fellows arrived on the scene the swaying driver was standing beside the car. With him, trembling, and very red in the face, was the occupant. He was waving his arms excitedly and talking incoherently.

"You—you—you!" he spluttered. "Get away! You're sacked—sacked, I say!"

He waved his arms again, and the chauffeur bleared at him. He raised his right arm feebly, then let it drop to his side.

"Don't wancher job!" he breathed, and fell to the road.

"Ugh!"

The owner of the car stirred the fallen man with his foot. Then, remembering for the first time his rescuer, he turned round, and held out his hand.

"Splendid!" he gasped. "You—you saved my life! This drunken fool would have killed me!"

The shabbily dressed youth glanced up at him, and took the proffered hand. His face was well shapen, with clear-cut features, and there was an expression of intelligence in his blue eyes.

"You saved my life," went on the apoplectic-looking gentleman, patting the lad encouragingly, "and never shall the world say that Herbert Racke, of Racke & Haacke, was ever ungrateful!"

Tom Merry started, and looked at his chums. So that was how he knew the voice and face. Racke, of Racke & Haacke! It meant, of course, that the man was the father of Aubrey Racke of the Shell at St. Jim's.

Racke of the Shell was not popular, in point of fact, he was distinctly unpopular. His father's war profits had served to swell his head. Always a bouncer, Racke had been able to extend his "bouncing" proclivities. A bouncer with money has just one more vice than other bouncers.

Mr. Racke looked the shabby youth up and down.

"There isn't much time to talk now," he grunted. "We'd better get to the school. You can drive, of course?"

"Eh? Oh, yes, I can drive. Where do you want to get to, sir?"

It was a pleasant-sounding, well-cultured voice, and Tom Merry looked at the lad in a rather puzzled manner. It struck the captain of the Shell as being rather queer that a

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youth with such a cultured voice his face should be wandering, shabbily dressed, at large on the King's highway.

"I'll pay you," said Mr. Racke pompously.

"Thank you," smiled the youth, with a bow. "I do not require payment for small services."

"Eh? Oh, all right, just as you like," puffed Mr. Racke, and he turned to enter the car. The chauffeur, having staggered to his shaky legs, stood dazed by the roadside.

It was then for the first time that Mr. Racke caught sight of the Shell fellows.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, beaming fatuously. "St. Jim's lads, eh? Friends of Aubrey? You know my boy Aubrey? Aubrey Racke of the Shell—eh?"

"Ahem! Yes, rather," murmured Tom Merry.

"We do—we does!" muttered Lowther significantly. But the significance was lost on Mr. Racke.

"Ah! That's the way, Aubrey was always a one for friends. Just jump in, and we'll have a little talk."

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther stepped into the luxurious body of the car.

Mr. Racke seemed to have taken it for granted that the shabby youth would drive them. There was no doubt at all that Herbert Racke, of Racke & Hacke, was a hustler. And the curious part was that everyone seemed always to fall in with his plans. It was not much good doing otherwise.

"What about the chauffeur?" asked Manners. But his question was drowned as the engine started with a roar.

Manners repeated his question in a louder tone.

"Eh?" asked Mr. Racke. "Oh, him. He's sacked."

"But you can't leave him there—" began Tom Merry.

"Can't I? You watch!"

Mr. Racke gave a slight fat chuckle and leant back. From his outside pocket he drew a cambric handkerchief and wiped his glowing face. The worries of Simpson, the chauffeur, seemed not to trouble him a great deal.

"I shall phone the local garage for a chauffeur," he grunted. "Simpson's not so bad that he can't find his way to the police-station. They'll look after him. He deserves to get into some trouble—I don't know what the firm would have done if I'd been killed. He nearly did me in."

"This fellow drives jolly well!" said Tom Merry, as there came a break in the conversation.

Mr. Racke frowned slightly.

"He does. He's a smart lad. Now, what he wants is education. Nothing like education for brightening up a chap. Wish I'd had more in my time. Still, Aubrey's getting his share—"

The Terrible Three smiled. Aubrey Racke's idea of education was to learn just how to win at cards, and how to avoid trouble. In that sense he was quite well educated.

"I've been thinking," mused Mr. Racke, "that I'd send this lad to St. Jim's."

"Send him to St. Jim's?" Tom Merry asked in some surprise. "I say, sir, that would be jolly good of you."

Mr. Racke swallowed visibly with pride.

"Yes, I am good, though I say it. That lad might do a deal of good with education. He might do all right in my office. Couldn't very well put Aubrey in."

"Nunno."

It was certainly quite obvious that Aubrey Racke was not suited to a position in his father's office. And it was as well that Mr. Racke realised that fact.

All conscious of the plans for his future that were being worked out inside the car, the shabby youth with the pleasant face drove the car down the side lane that led to St. Jim's.

The gates were still open, and the car crept through them. Taggles, the school porter, touched his dilapidated top-hat respectfully, but stared rather curiously at the chauffeur, as did several other fellows in the quad.

"Well," frowned Mr. Racke, as the car drew up. "What do you think of the idea?"

"Topping," grinned Lowther softly. "Won't Aubrey be pleased!"

And his chums chuckled. They wondered!

CHAPTER 2.

Racke's Tea-party.

"Gussy, you're not going!" Jack Blake, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, shook an admonishing forefinger at his elegant chum.

Blake, Herries, and Digby, who were seated round the table in Study No. 6, shook their heads wisely and decisively.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sniffed, and screwed his monocle into his left eye.

"I fail to see," he said freezingly, "what it has to do with you fellows."

"That's just it," growled Blake. "Gussy, my dear old thing, you'll come to a bad end—"

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"Wats! I uttally wufese to come to a bad end, deah boy."

Jack Blake sighed regretfully.

"Well, you might think of the honour of the study," he said.

"That's it," repeated Herries, who was not a particularly bright youth. "Think of the honour of the study."

"Wats! I fail to see how the fact of my going to tea with Wacke can affect the honour of the study."

"Racke's an outsider," said Digby. "You know that well enough."

"Yas, but Wacke has weformed; he told me so."

"Ass!" grunted Blake. "You'd believe any yarn."

"I wufese to discuss the mattah any furthah. Cardew is comin' to tea, also. He twusts Wacke, anyway."

"Ass!" said Blake. "Cardew's pulling Racke's leg, and yours too. He knows Racke all right."

"Anyway, I'm goin', deah boys, whethah you like it or not. I considah it a case of noblesse oblige, when Wacke's patah is comin'."

"Now, don't get on the high horse, Gus," sighed Herries. "Can't you see that Racke wants to impress his pater," pleaded Digby. "He wants his pater to think that he's 'in with the nob's—that's how Racke's pater would put it."

The swell of St. Jim's made no reply, but sniffed scornfully.

"It wequahs a little tact and judgment," he said loftily. "Wacke is pwobably quite a decent fellah. If he has weformed—"

"If—"

grunted Blake.

Blake, apparently, had little, if any, faith in Racke's reformation, regarding it as a stunt to get Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to the little tea-party that had been arranged for the benefit of Racke senior. It was possible that, as Blake pointed out, Racke considered the son of an earl would be an ideal guest. But Arthur Augustus, in his simple faith, valued by the post higher than his Norman blood, forbade his attributing an ulterior motive to an invitation. If Racke really intended turning over a new leaf, then he was rightly bound to attend.

Jack Blake took a heavy ruler from the table.

"I can see that argument is no good," he said, darkly. "Look here, Gussy, cut out this nonsense and do your prep. I'm coming along to Study No. 7 later on, and if I find any card-playing, we betide you and Racke."

"Weally, deah boy, You suahly do not imagine that I would play cards—"

"Oh, yes, you would," chuckled Herries. "If Racke asked you, it would be a case of noblesse oblige."

The swell of St. Jim's opened his mouth to make a retort, but at that moment there came a tap at the door.

"Come in, fathead!" called out Jack Blake cheerily.

The door opened, and Cardew of the Fourth entered.

He glanced at the three seated juniors and nodded. Then he turned to the swell of St. Jim's.

"Coming along to the tea-party, Gussy?" he asked. "Dear old Racke will be getting excited. I see you've got your best bib and tucker on." He glanced approvingly at the slim, well-attired figure of the swell of St. Jim's, and turned to Blake with a slight smile. "Only wants a blue bow round his neck, and you'd naturally say 'Here, Fido!'"

Blake chuckled, and Arthur Augustus gave the humorous Cardew a withering stare.

"Weally, Cardew—" he began.

"Take him away, Cardew," sighed Blake. "Don't let him start all over again. And for goodness sake look after the ass. Don't let him get into trouble."

"Do I look a leader astray?" asked Cardew. "No, no; my noble kinsman and I will sun in the glances of the super aristocracy, the new rich. Aren't you coming along, Dig? Surely, as the only son of a baronet, you've had an invitation?"

Robert Arthur Digby shook his head, and grinned.

"I haven't," he said, quite cheerfully. "I'm trying to bear up, though."

Cardew nodded.

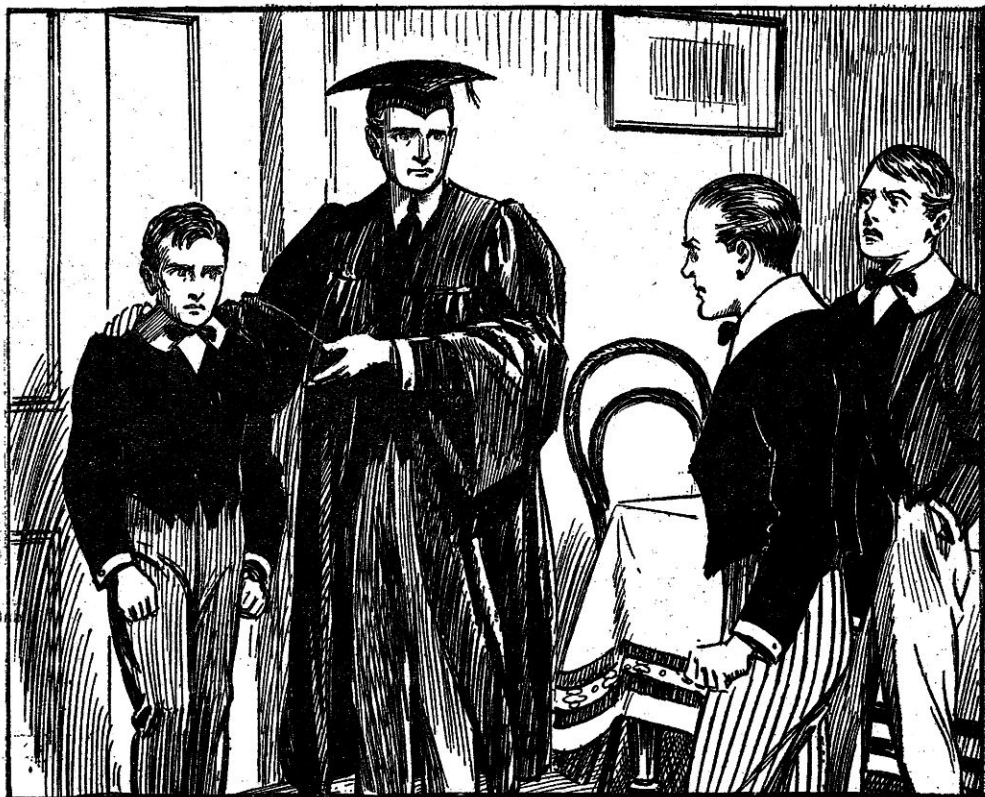
"Splendid. Come along, Gussy—friend Racke will be getting agitated."

Cardew linked his arm with that of his cousin and led him off in the direction of Racke's study on the Shell floor.

Cardew was such a peculiar combination of good and no good that it was difficult to sort the one from the other. Always there was behind his every action a cynical vein of humour which made the distinction all the more difficult.

Only Cardew could have derived pleasure from having tea in the company of Racke, for the sole purpose of pulling the leg of the inestimable Aubrey.

They reached Study No. 7 on the Shell floor. Racke was there with his studymate, Crooke. Racke was pacing up and down the study in a rather agitated manner. Racke senior was late, and Aubrey was worried—not for his pater's sake, but for the sake of the tip that should have accompanied the arrival.



"Racke," said Mr. Railton, "your father, as you know, has made this boy Robinson his protege. The Head has decided that he shall share your study. As he is new to the school, I want you and Crooke to do your utmost to make him comfortable. You understand?" "Yes, sir," said Crooke. Racke made no reply, but glared fixedly at Robinson, who smiled slightly. (See page 6.)

"Pater's dooced late," he muttered. "Whero on earth can he have got to?"

"Ah, these paters—these paters," sighed Cardew, sinking into the armchair. "Never mind the pater bird, get on with the reforming stunt, Racke, my merry bird."

Racke scowled at the cheerful Cardew.

"Don't rot!" he growled. "I can't imagine what's happened to the pater—I'm jolly hungry."

"Yaas, dear boy. You might get your jolly old pater to arrange to come at a more reasonable time so that we can have a respectable tea. I don't know what my people would say if they knew I hadn't had tea yet."

"Don't wot, Cardew, you ass!" said D'Arcy severely. "Hark!"

Racke listened and held up a warning finger.

"Was that a car?"

Crooke nodded.

"Yes, that's your pater, Racke," he said. "Come on down."

Racke opened the door and raced along the passage. Crooke followed him closely. At a pace consistent with his dignity, Arthur Augustus brought up the rear in company with Cardew, who was smiling at some hidden joke known only to himself.

There was a small group of fellows in the doorway, and Racke pushed to the fore. At the sight of his father's Rolls-Royce, chauffeured by the shabbily dressed youth, he pulled up in surprise.

"What the dickens!" he growled. "Where's Simpson?"

Tom Merry opened the door of the car, stepped out, and assisted Mr. Racke to alight. Manners and Lowther followed.

"Hallo, pater!"

"Ah, Aubrey! Not too late, eh? Had a terrible time, though. That infernal Simpson fellow was intoxicated. Fortunately I was saved from a violent death by the courage of this lad."

"Tom Merry?"

Racke gave the Shell captain a quick glance.

"You know him, then, the lad at the wheel?"

"Oh, him," said Racke disgustedly. "No, I don't know the beggar. Why should I?"

"Oh, you don't know him, then?"

"No, I don't!" grunted Racke. "Aren't you coming in, pater? Tea's waiting, been waiting ages."

"Yes, yes. But my rescuer must have some tea. You're glad I was rescued, Aubrey?"

"Yes, of course, pater," said Racke irritably. "But I don't see—"

"Very well, then. This lad must have some tea. Hi, you!"

Thus addressed, the youth at the wheel turned and smiled genially upon the crowd in the doorway.

"You want some tea?" asked Mr. Racke, beaming, and looking as pleasant as his face allowed.

"Thanks awfully, sir. Now I come to think of it, I am rather hungry."

The lad stepped from the car. There was a silence as he followed the fat form of Mr. Racke up the school steps.

His face seemed so out of keeping with his shabby clothes that the murmurs of surprise were not inexplicable.

The Terrible Three followed behind. They had already accepted Mr. Racke's invitation to tea.

Racke, frowning angrily, led the way to his study. He did not in any way approve of his father's new protege.

Racke did not believe in doing good turns, and he could not see that his father owed much to his rescuer. In Racke's opinion money would have been sufficient.

Cardew and D'Arcy dropped back with the Terrible Three and fired off some rapid questions, which the three Shell fellows answered cheerfully enough.

"Bai Jove! I must say my opinion of Mr. Wacke is much highah than my opinion of his son," murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Hear, hear!" grinned Lowther. "It could hardly be less. But I think Aubrey disapproves of his father's rescuer."

Lowther was right. For when the stranger entered the study, he was greeted with a scowl. And so also were the Terrible Three.

"What the dickens do you want?" demanded Racke as they entered the study.

"Ahem! Nothing exactly—"

But Mr. Racke interposed.

"They're coming to tea, Aubrey. They're my guests! Come in, my lads."

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, since they were on anything but friendly terms with the black sheep of the Shell, were not in the habit of accepting invitations to tea in Study No. 7. But this was a special occasion. Moreover, the invitation had come from Mr. Racke, and he had been insistent.

While in the car, Mr. Racke had invited them to tea with his son. It had never occurred to Mr. Racke that his son could be unpopular, especially after he had instructed him to "get in with the nob's."

For Tom Merry to have explained the true state of affairs would have been awkward; moreover, it would savour somewhat of kicking a fellow in the back.

Therefore, the Terrible Three, not without misgiving, and greatly to the surprise of Gussy and Cardew, entered Study No. 7.

CHAPTER 3.

Racke Is Annoyed

"**B**AI Jove! Tom Mewwy, deah boy, I didn't know you were comm'!"

"Nor did I—but here I am. What are you doing here?"

"Wacke asked me to meet his patah. You see, he's w-e-formed. He's nevah goin' to play cards—"

Racke shifted uncomfortably and talked louder, so that his father should not hear any of the conversation that was taking place between Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Tom Merry.

Crooke, for the same purpose, 'dropped a poker.

But Arthur Augustus went on, unheeding.

"Wacke is not goin' to be an uttah wotter any moab. What are you makin' that face for, Lowthah? I know he's—"

As Cardew grabbed him by the arm, the swell of St. Jim's broke off abruptly.

"I wish you wouldn't be so beastly wuff, Cardew, deah boy."

The whimsical Fourth-Former smiled.

"You haven't been introduced, yet," he said with mock solemnity. "I hope they did not ignore their hosts, and commence talking to other guests where you were brought up—"

"Bai Jove! I didn't think of that."

Arthur Augustus wheeled round, and bowed politely as Mr. Racke moved towards him.

Aubrey Racke smiled. There was a cunning glint in his eyes, and Tom Merry frowned angrily. He knew only too well that Aubrey Racke had no intention of reforming; that he was not, and never would be, anything more than a "smoky rotter." It was obvious, too, that D'Arcy was merely a decoy—but for what exact purpose, Tom knew not. At any rate, he was tolerably certain that it was not for genuine friendship, that being a quality absent in Racke, and totally unknown to him.

"This, pater, is one of my friends, the Hon. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy."

Mr. Racke elevated his eyebrows, and smirked.

"Indeed! Very pleased to meet you, sir. Very pleased. And how is your father, the earl?"

"Vewy well, deah boy—I mean deah sir."

"Excellent. You must come down to our little place some day. I've often asked Aubrey to bring 'ome—home, some of his schoolmates. Not a very large place, you know, but middling. Looks as well as money can make it."

"Yaas, wathah."

D'Arcy's face wore a rather troubled look.

Mr. Racke lingered awhile, shaking the unfortunate Fourth-Former's hand for some few minutes, until Arthur Augustus, in despair, drew it away.

"And this is Ralph Reckness Cardew, grandson of Lord Reckness, pater. You've heard of Lord Reckness?"

"Very pleased to meet you! Oh, yes, I know his lordship! Read about him a lot, y'know. Why don't you come home? Aubrey, you must bring your pals home. Always plenty to eat and drink, billiard-room and everything."

"Toppin'!" murmured Cardew. "Any shootin'?"

"Oh, yes! Lots of it! Lots!"

Tom Merry nudged the smiling Cardew. He saw that, unless he were stopped, Cardew would commence a little

gentle leg-pulling at the expense of Mr. Racke. Pulling Racke's leg was fair and above board; but Mr. Racke was to be respected, and it was not the game to pull his leg. Such a thing would not worry Cardew. He was amused at everything and everything; one and all were bows for his shafts of wit.

"Pway intwouce me to our friend heah, Wacke, deah boy!" asked Arthur Augustus.

Racke turned round, and stared at the shabby youth who, during the introductions, had been standing by, smiling slightly, with cap in hand.

"I don't know who he is mysclf," he said coldly, and turned away.

The stranger turned not a hair. He did not go red as many others under similar circumstances would have done; nor did he look angry. He smiled.

"I haven't a name," he said, half sarcastically, half jestingly. "At present I am 'No one.'"

"No one, deah boy? That's wathah funny. You must have a name. Where did you come fwom?"

All eyes were now turned in the lad's direction, and he shrugged his shoulders.

"I can't remember my name," he said. "I'm just on the road. People such as I do not have names. Why should they? What's in a name?"

Cardew, thinking of Racke's tea-party and the tip that on the strength of it might follow, chuckled.

"You think it funny. Perhaps it is." The lad shrugged his shoulders again. "I have no name. I don't want one. Call me what you will."

"I should call you a 'ero—"

"Hero, pater," corrected Racke quickly.

"Yes, that's what I said. Now, I'm sure you are hungry, young fellow, and I know you three are," he added, looking at Tom Merry & Co. "So what about tea?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

So, for the moment, the subject of the unknown rescuer was dropped.

Tea for nine people was a large order; especially as Racke had only expected five. But the juniors soon got busy.

Tom Merry fetched a few eatables from his own study, also one or two cups; for it was crockery that was lacking chiefly. Racke, since he was usually well supplied with cash, kept a well-stocked cupboard.

Crooke made the tea from the kettle which had since boiled on the fire; Cardew arranged the extra crockery on the table; and Lowther turned out his pot of jam into the soap-dish he had brought with him. The only jam-dish their study possessed was filled with some of Manners' chemical fluid—some mysterious concoction that had to be preserved in the dark.

With many hands the work was light, and the party of nine were soon seated round the table, Mr. Racke at the head.

When the tea had been poured out, and the bread-and-butter handed round, talk recommenced.

"I was just going to tell you, Aubrey," murmured Mr. Racke, helping himself to the jam, "how this young fellow saved my life. Simpson, like a fool, had drunk more than was good for him at the Crown, where we pulled up for—ahem!—for—"

"Lubrication," suggested the smiling Cardew.

"Er—yes, that'll do—I mean lubrication. He wobbled about in a most dangerous manner—awful! These young gents here will tell you—"

"He certainly was a bit wild," mumbled Tom Merry.

"Yes, very wild," added Manners, remembering Lowther and the hedge.

"That's right. I can tell you, I was rather worried about it. Especially as I can't drive a stroke—I mean at all, myself. Luckily, just as we were going up the hill this plucky lad jumps forward and catches the wheel, pulls the car up dead, then backs it into the hedge. If we'd reached the top of that hill and gone down—"

Mr. Racke shivered.

"Wotten!" frowned Arthur Augustus.

"Yes. What's more, though, he drove us here, safe and sound, otherwise I shouldn't be here now."

"Good man!" murmured Cardew.

The strange youth smiled.

Arthur Augustus turned to him.

"You aren't a chauffeur, deah boy?" he asked.

"Oh, no," murmured the youth casually, as he cut his bread-and-butter with careful precision; "but, of course, I can drive."

"Yaas." The swell of St. Jim's frowned thoughtfully. "I think I shall call you Wobinson."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther yelled. And the others gazed at him in surprise.

"Good old Gussy!" he chuckled. "He calls every chauffeur



Holding the basin aloft, Racke poured its contents over the unfortunate Robinson's head. The new boy struggled frantically, but he was helpless. Jam and treacle, in a sticky mess, descended upon his hair and face, and trickled down his neck. He wriggled and turned, but it was useless. Only when the basin was empty did Racke stop. (See page 9.)

Robinson, because that's the name of his own chauffeur at home."

"Good old Gus!" murmured Cardew. "You would be in a fix. Suppose Mr. Racke called all his chauffeurs by the same name, where would he be? Of course, he could call them Robinson one, Robinson two, Robinson three, but it would sound funny when it reached double figures."

"It couldn't run to more than three," smiled Mr. Racke, feeling rather flattered. He failed to see the sarcasm behind the Fourth-Former's remark.

But Tom Merry saw it, and frowned. For some reason the stranger was also smiling, as though he saw something to amuse him.

"I'm sure I don't mind being called Robinson," he said. "It's a splendid old English name, at any rate! What could be better?"

"Only D'Arcy," said Cardew. "But that is Norman, so you see everything has its drawbacks, as the fellow said when he scored a six and was summoned for a new window."

The stranger, "Robinson," smiled, but Racke was scowling heavily. He wished devoutly that the boy had never rescued his father. Not that he wanted his father injured, but that he hated the stranger already. There was no reason for it, and that made it the more intense.

His father's next words took his breath away.

"Aubrey, our friend here, 'Robinson,' is coming to St. Jim's."

"He—he's what?" gasped Racke.

"Bai Jove!"

Mr. Racke smiled blandly, and looked round the table with a well-satisfied, smug expression on his expansive countenance.

"Coming to St. Jim's!" And he banged the table emphatically. "Every boy is entitled to education. I never had much; that's why I'm giving you some, Aubrey. True, I've made some money, but with education—"

The result, according to Mr. Racke's expression, might be better imagined than explained.

"So," he continued, "I shall give this young fellow what I missed. I can afford to do it, and it will be something for you to do to help him."

There were grins at this remark, and Lowther chuckled. He could imagine Racke helping anyone.

"A—a charity schoolboy?"

"Well, that's a hard name, but yes, if you like—"

Racke scowled more heavily than ever. It was quite obvious to all present, save perhaps his father, that he did not like the scheme. Mr. Racke still laboured under the delusion that his son was popular.

"It will be a splendid opportunity for you—er—Robinson; you can make good, and become all sorts of things. There is no reason at all why you should not some day make your fortune."

For a moment, as Mr. Racke stopped speaking, there was silence, broken only as the stranger slowly stirred his tea. Then he looked up.

"Of course," he said, "it's good of you, sir; most awfully good! And really I can't see that I've done anything. Besides, it—"

His voice tailed off. It was obvious that although he felt bound to accept the offer he was not over keen. It seemed almost as though he would rather have refused. The swell of St. Jim's gave him a compassionate look.

"Pewwaps Winobson has some appointment," he suggested brightly.

"Oh," laughed Mr. Racke. "If you've got a job, of course. If you happen to be with the local grocer or someone, you can't start yet, but perhaps later."

"Well," laughed Robinson, "I must confess, I'm not in a job. I'm afraid that a grocer would hardly care to have me. Of course, I should like very much to go to school—"

"You would?"

"Yes, rather!" Mr. Racke thumped the table, and looked round triumphantly. "You shall start at once. There is no time to be lost. Come along with me to Dr. Holmes, and I will see that everything is arranged. You will, at least, have somewhere to sleep to-night."

Smiling, the stranger rose to his feet, and followed Mr. Racke, although he had scarcely started his meal. But Mr. Racke was never a man to leave things for a moment longer than necessary. He was primarily a man of impulses, but very well considered and designed impulses.

They left the room in a buzz of talk, and there were two dissenting voices. Two, at least, of the seven juniors were not pleased, and one was distinctly amused.

Aubrey Racke jumped to his feet. "I won't stand it!" he shouted. "The pater must be mad. A—charity schoolboy."

"Don't be a cad, Racke," snapped Tom Merry. "Yaas, dear boy. He's here the same as you. Your father's paying the fees for both. An' after all, he's more of a gentleman than you," mocked Cardew. "Get out, all of you!" shouted Racke. "Hang you all, get out."

Tom Merry rose to his feet, and the others followed suit.

"Look here, Racke," said Tom Merry sternly. "There is no reason at all to lose your temper. Your pater's doing a jolly decent thing, a thing you couldn't do in a hundred years."

"Yaas, dear boy," smiled Cardew. "It's just a decent white man trick. But then, dear Aubrey doesn't understand decent tricks."

"If that's what you call a decent trick, I don't. What do we want with gutter chaps, slum brats picked up on the road?"

"Wats! You are a cad, Wacke. He's a jolly decent chap. He saved youah patah—"

"You silly tailor's dummy, that's what he's for. He's probably only a chauffeur—"

"And what of that?" asked Manners quickly. "Well, St. Jim's isn't the place for out-of-work chauffeurs."

The noise had already collected a crowd outside. It was useless waiting any more. No one would accept Racke's inhospitality, and now that Mr. Racke had gone, there was little point in staying.

"Thanks for the jolly evenin', Racke," smiled Cardew. "Bring your adopted brother along when he comes back—"

"Hang you, get out!" "All right, don't get excited. See the crowd you've collected already."

With an angry snarl, Aubrey Racke slammed the door on the curious crowd without. He turned round and faced his grinning chum. Crooke, as he saw the look upon Aubrey Racke's face, tried to look concerned, but he could not. It was evident that there was no sympathy to be gained from George Gerald Crooke.

The crowd without hammered on the door, but Aubrey Racke only scowled, seeing no reason why he should gratify their curiosity by entertaining them with the news of his father's strange idea.

Racke was not exactly proud of his father; although his father's wealth was something about which he deemed it useful to boast.

In many ways, however, Mr. Racke was a more estimable person than his son; but even he had a weird and wonderful love of titles, and it was for that reason he had instructed his son to make friends with as many sons of noble families as St. Jim's held. A great many of the fellows were well connected. But as they were mostly sport-loving athletes they soon learned to steer clear of Racke, whose taste, it must be admitted, lay more in the direction of nap and late hours. And he did not always play for nuts. Quite a deal of money had been lost and won behind the closed door of Study No. 7. Even fellows in the upper forms dropped in to have a game with Racke, but they were merely other Rackes of different degrees.

Now he had to become guardian of his father's protege. At that moment the ill-tempered Aubrey was thinking unpleasant things about his father.

CHAPTER 4. Two to One.

TAP! Racke wheeled round suddenly at that sudden tap at the door.

"Aubrey!" It was his father's voice, and Racke opened the door, and closed it quickly as his father entered the room.

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"Well, pater?"

His tone was sullen. Racke never took the trouble to hide his ill-temper; but if Mr. Racke noticed the sullenness he made no comment.

"It's all right," he said.

"All right?"

"Yes, I have fixed everything up with Dr. Holmes. The lad is to start at once. For lack of a better name he will be called Robinson. Now, I haven't any time, Aubrey—"

Racke scowled, and bit his lip. "Pater," he blurted out suddenly, "I think you might have thought of me before you decided to send this bounder here to school."

Mr. Racke raised his brows in surprise.

"I don't understand you, Aubrey." "I—I mean, it won't be nice for me. You know what the fellows will be saying—"

"I don't see why they should object. Of course," Mr. Racke smiled, "there is no reason at all why you should associate with Robinson. I wouldn't suggest that. My intention in sending you here was that you should learn to comport yourself in Society—get polish and er—all that, you know. But there are some quite ordinary lads here, Merry and the others, and they would be friendly with Robinson. Oh, I don't think you need worry about him, he'll find his level."

Crooke smiled slightly. He knew only too well whom Racke had been thinking of. It certainly wasn't Robinson. Mr. Racke fingered about in his pocket and drew forth his notecase. Racke, who had opened his mouth to say something, stopped short.

"Here you are, Aubrey. Here's a fiver. I suppose I must give Robinson one as well. Can't very well leave him here without any. I'll just trot along and see him."

He held out his right hand, and Racke took it mechanically, with thoughts and feelings too deep for mere words. Mr. Racke left the study and closed the door softly behind him.

"My hat!" breathed Racke, through set teeth. "Did you hear that? That cad—that rotter—has got my fiver. If it hadn't have been for him I'd have got ten."

George Gerald Crooke pulled a face. "That's knocked our little outing on the head," he frowned. "Rotten. I'd been looking forward to that."

"Blow that! I don't care two pins for the outing. What about my tips in future, if that young brat's going to get half? I know what it'll be in the end. He'll get the larger tips, so that people sha'n't say that pater treats him badly. Hang him; I hate him!"

And Crooke, thinking of the outing, began to hate him, too. It was totally unreasonable. But then neither of the cads had ever been reasonable. It was extremely probable that, Robinson or no Robinson, Racke would only have received a fiver, but then Racke did not look at things in that light.

"If he thinks I'm jolly well going to tolerate the bounder he's mistaken," growled Racke savagely, and he flung a Latin dictionary across the room. "If he comes in here he'll get slung out!"

"Hear, hear!" said Crooke. He looked towards the door, for there was an imperative knocking.

Thump, thump!

Racke started.

"Hallo! Who's there?" he called.

"It is I—Mr. Railton."

Racke crossed the room and opened the door. In the doorway stood Mr. Railton, the School House master, and with him was the new boy, Robinson. Behind them was quite a large crowd of juniors. Shell and Fourth-Formers were there, all waiting to see what was to happen. But they were doomed to sad disappointment, for as the new boy followed the Housemaster into the study, Mr. Railton closed the door; and from the crowd came a groan of chagrin.

Racke looked heavily at the master, and Mr. Railton frowned. He disliked Racke intensely, and he felt certain that Robinson would not find things comfortable in Study No. 7. He knew Racke, however, and decided that if things did come to a head and there was a scrap Racke might be taught an invaluable lesson.

"Racke, your father, as you know, has made this boy Robinson his protege. The Head has decided that he shall share your study. Now, as he is new to this school, I want you and Crooke to do your utmost to make him comfortable. Owing to his age he will be placed in the Shell. You will give him all the help you can with his preparation. You understand?"

Crooke scowled.

"Yes, sir."

Racke made no reply, but glared fixedly at Robinson, who smiled slightly.

"You understand, Racke?" repeated the Housemaster quietly and ominously.

"Yes, sir," answered Racker through his teeth.
 "Very well, then. Good-night, Robinson! Good-night, Racker and Crooke!"
 "Good-night, sir!"

For some minutes after the door had closed there was dead silence. Racker leaned back against the table, clenching it so hard that his hands went white. Crooke leaned his elbow on the mantelpiece. Both surveyed the new boy with looks so fierce that they might have pierced his skin.

He stared at the two for a while and smiled. His voice broke the almost painful silence.

"Well?"
 "You cad! You interfering cad! You're not wanted here! Get out!"

Racker's voice was thick with anger, and his hand trembled as he pointed to the door.

Instead of turning round, the new boy stared.
 "I don't understand you," he said quietly. "Mr. Racker is paying for my fees here; the headmaster has allocated me to this study—"

"Hang the headmaster! The pater must be mad! Get out!"

"My dear chap, please don't raise your voice. There's a crowd outside, remember—"

"Hang the crowd! Get out! If you don't—"

"Well, if I don't!"

Racker spluttered.

"You impudent bounder! I'll make this place too hot to hold you! Get back to the gutter!"

The new boy frowned, and Racker continued. As he did so the new boy's face darkened, and he strode forward with clenched hands.

"Don't shout!" he repeated. "I'm tired of your voice. It's a pretty poor one, anyway, and it jars."

Racker faced him, but Crooke, who had no pluck at all, drew back a bit. Racker had very little pluck, but his temper often urged him on to rashness that he afterwards regretted.

For a moment he stared angrily at the new boy. Then, unclenching his hands, he leant back against the table and laughed.

"I won't hit you," he said. "You're not worth it. But don't think you're going to stay. You're not wanted!"

Suddenly he turned his back on the new boy and commenced to clear up the tea-things. The new boy stepped forward to help.

"Where do I put these things?" he asked, picking up several cups and saucers.

Racker leered at him; then, without the slightest warning, struck the new boy a cowardly blow full on the nose. There was no time for guarding, there was not even the chance. It was cunning and cowardly.

As Robinson fell heavily to the ground Crooke laughed and kicked some of the broken crockery aside. Racker fell forward on the new boy, digging his knees into his chest, making him gasp painfully.

"Hold him down, Crooke!" he whispered. "I'll teach him!"

Crooke placed a knee on either one of the fallen boy's bicep muscles, and placed his hands on Robinson's face. Every time the new boy raised his head it was bumped heavily back on the floor.

"Let me up!" he panted.

Bump!

Crooke, with an evil grin, bumped the boy's head once more on the floor.

"Quiet!" hissed Racker, slipping off the new boy's necktie, to use as a means of tying together his feet.

"Give me your tie, Crooke. All right, I'll take it."

In a second the lad's hands were bound with Crooke's tie. Helplessly he glared up at his captors. But in their faces he read no mercy. Racker was out for revenge—revenge for what, he knew not.

"I'll give him what for!" breathed Racker, and for the first time he chuckled. "Give me the jam, Crooke!"

Crooke, smiling broadly, passed the jam.

Robinson eyed him suspiciously.

"Don't you bring that near me!" he said.

Racker chuckled and motioned Crooke to lock the door. He did not want any interference from outside, although by now the crowd had drifted away.

"Spoon!" said Racker briefly. He leant back thoughtfully. "And give me a basin, too."

Racker placed an old paper under the new boy's head to save the carpet. The sight of anyone else suffering always pleased Crooke, and he executed his leader's orders with great cheerfulness.

"How about this?"

Crooke held up the treacle and a small pot of honey.

"Save the honey. It's rather a waste on this roiter!" said Racker. "Give me the treacle."

"Take it away!" yelled Robinson.

"Shut up!" snapped Racker.

He took a fancy handkerchief from his pocket and stuffed it into the new boy's mouth.

Robinson's protests died away into a murmur, and he could only glare fearfully, surmising what was to follow. He had vague doubts and strong suspicions. From the start he had not trusted Racker, and now that he knew him better he trusted him a great deal less.

Racker dug the spoon deeply into the treacle, then poured the whole lot into the basin. On top he poured the jam. Then, with a thoughtful expression, he stirred the mixture to make it more even. Crooke watched with a cruel smile.

"Now, how about some snot?"

Racker pointed to the chimney.

"Crooke, old lad, shovel down some snot—as much as you can."

"You bet!" grinned Crooke. He grabbed the shovel, and, watched anxiously by the new boy, scooped down a whole layer of thin, fine snot.

"That's the stuff!" chuckled Racker.

Holding the basin aloft, he poured the contents over the unfortunate Robinson's head.

The new boy struggled frantically, but he was helpless. Jam and treacle in a sticky mess descended upon his hair and face, and trickled down his neck. He wriggled and turned, but it was useless. Only when the small basin was empty did Racker stop. Then, heedless of his own hands, he rubbed the sticky mess into the new boy's hair and face. Gradually the hair assumed the appearance of a straggly mop, and stuck up in sticky spikes.

Crooke was almost convulsed, and Racker smiled almost genially.

"Now," he grinned, "what we want is snot. Hand me the shovel."

Crooke approached with the shovel, and Robinson opened his eyes. At the sight of the black mess, however, he closed them and wriggled.

Raising the shovel high, Crooke allowed the black mess to descend in a shower on the sticky upturned face.

Swish!

"Grooh!"

Robinson coughed and choked out the handkerchief. But Racker quickly replaced it.

It was fortunate, indeed, that Racker had placed a paper between Robinson's head and the carpet, for the new boy's head was in a shocking state.

"Get a sheet of double foolscap," ordered Racker, "and write this. Got the ink? I am the charity schoolboy. Do I look snot-able for St. Jim's? Please kick me out!"

Crooke chuckled, and in a sprawling array of capitals wrote as his leader had dictated.

This done, the boy was raised to his feet.

Racker flung open the door, and when Crooke had released the feet, strappings, Robinson was flung unceremoniously into the passage and the door slammed behind him.

CHAPTER 5.

Cardew's Little Wheeze.

"MY—my aunt!"

Baggy Trimble jumped away from the door of Study No. 7, and gave a yell. Baggy had an unpleasant habit of listening at keyholes, under the pretence of tying his shoelace. Knowing that something mysterious was going on behind the locked door of Study No. 7, he had crept quietly forward. It was just as he arrived that the door had opened.

Trimble stared for one second at the queer apparition, then fled, yelling.

"Yow! Help! Murder!" he chattered wildly.

Doors were flung open at Baggy's wild yells.

"My hat!"

"What the dickens!"

George Alfred Grundy of the Shell gave a sudden yell.

"What is it? Ha, ha, ha!"

Fellows crowded out into the passage. Prep was in progress, but prep was a thing easily forgotten, when there was some chance to forget it.

Robinson, almost blinded by the sticky mess on his face, groped wildly about. He could not speak, for his mouth was gagged. His hands were tied so securely that he could not tear them apart.

Certainly it was not a welcome to look forward to. At that moment Robinson heartily regretted that he had ever accepted Mr. Racker's invitation.

George Alfred Grundy, thoughtless, but kind-hearted, blinked in the half light at the notice. The beginning of it was written small, and he did not notice it. But he saw the "kick me out."

Grundy jumped to a hasty conclusion. Grundy was very good at that. He gave a wild yell.

"New House bounder. Kick him out!"

"Down with the New House!"

The cry was taken up on all sides.

Startled by this new cry, the boy shrank against the wall, and tried to dodge the juniors as they rushed at him. He knew not what the New House was, but instinctively he felt that trouble was brewing.

The juniors did not stop to think. They took the blackened figure to be a New House boy. And New House juniors were not encouraged in the School House. There was a deadly war run on friendly lines between the two Houses, and, save under a white flag, or at lesson times, a New House boy dared not show his face in the School House. Many a time was a New House junior sent back scototed to his own House, and School House visitors of the New House met the same fate.

"Boot him!" yelled Grundy, and he led the way.

Biff!

The big Shell fellow's large-sized boot smote the new boy heavily, and he sank to his knees. Grundy grabbed him by the neck and ran him forward. As he released him, many willing boots dribbled the unfortunate Robinson along the passage.

"Hurrah! Down with the New House!"

Tom Merry, wonderingly, followed behind.

"That can't be Figgy," he said. "Besides, who did it?"

Before his question could be answered, the boy was at the end of the passage, with Grundy and a crowd of other juniors following.

Robinson, now thoroughly awake to all his dangers, decided to make a bolt for it. Down the stairs he raced, with the crowd in full pursuit behind him; and after him went Grundy.

At last the lighted Hall was reached. Robinson went on, and Grundy and the others would have followed, but at the moment a stern voice broke in.

"Stop!"

Automatically the new boy stopped short.

Mr. Railton stepped forward.

"What does this mean?" he asked sternly. "Boy, who are you?"

For a second the Housemaster stared in blank surprise, then his eyes caught sight of the printed notice, and he dropped back a pace, amazed.

"What does this mean?" he ejaculated, at length. "What is this absurd foolery?"

He glared around him angrily, and the excited crowd, now quieted, dropped back a pace. Several of the more timid fellows in the rear walked quickly away.

"Robinson, turn round!"

The sound of the name caused a general gasp of surprise, and as the new boy turned round, there was almost a yell. For the first time the crowd caught a real glimpse of the notice.

"My hat!" gasped Grundy. "Oh, I say! I didn't know—"

He went as red as fire. Grundy was the last fellow in the world to hurt anyone's feelings, and at that moment he felt a cad.

The crowd drew back. Every fellow, save only the cads, felt uncomfortably small in the keen gaze that the master turned upon them.

"I am surprised, and disgusted," said the master sternly, "that juniors in my House should treat a boy in this manner. You shall be severely punished for this. I little dreamt that my House was composed of snobs!"

His tone was bitter and hurt.

Grundy took upon himself the duties of spokesman.

"I—I'm sorry, sir. We—we didn't see the notice. I thought it was a New House cad—I mean, chap," he said lamely.

"Oh, that alters matters rather! But, surely, surely, Grundy, you do not treat all New House boys in this manner?"

"Nunno."

"Am I to take it that you are responsible for this horrible concoction on Robinson's head?"

"Eh? No, sir. I—I just—"

The Housemaster cut him short.

"Very well," he said. "I will attend to you later, Grundy. At present I want the name of the boy who is responsible for this outrage."

He cast his eyes over the whole crowd. But there was no reply. Quickly he untied the new boy's hands, and removed the gag from his mouth.

"I will not ask you to sneak, Robinson," he said. "But I am determined to find the culprit. I do not think I have far to look." He turned once more to the crowd. "Will someone send Racke to my study. Wilkins, take this unfortunate lad, and help him wash off this mess."

Half a dozen contrite juniors stepped forward. All wanted to show their regret at having taken part in the proceedings. Baggy Trimba, in high delight, ran for Racke.

By this time the crowd had considerably increased. Sixth-

Formers and fags were there now, and as the crowd broke up there was much questioning.

"Bai Jove, deah boy, whatviah is the mattah?"

Arthur Augustus, Blike, and Harries came up with Digby.

Tom Merry frowned.

"Why, Racke has been starting his games already," he frowned. "Poor old Robinson, all messed up with soot, was mistaken for a New House chap, and booted down the stairs. Railton's sent for Racke."

"Savvy Augustus, jolly well right," growled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Wheah's poor old Wobinson?"

"Wilkins has taken him to wash," replied Manners.

"There's about a dozen others to help, so I don't suppose you'll be needed."

"Good old Gussy," smiled Cardew. "Always in at the death. Just like a D'Arcy."

"Wats! A D'Arcy always leads, deah boy. I'm going to be the first to thwack Wacke."

"Too late," smiled Cardew serenely. "He's just gone in to see Railton. A master has forestalled a D'Arcy. Shame."

D'Arcy started to speak, but Tom Merry was before him. "Racke will have to be taught a lesson," said Tom.

"You'll never make him kow-tow to the new chap," grinned Lowther. "Hitting Racke will only make him hate the chap more."

"This is where Study No. 9 leads," smiled Cardew. "You watch me make Racke take the new boy's arm and treat him like a brother."

"Tot!"

"You don't believe me?"

Cardew smiled and raised his eyebrows. Evidently some scheme was working in his brain, and it was equally obvious that the juniors did not believe him.

Cardew leaned forward.

"Listen," he said, "but keep it dark!"

He whispered softly, and there was a sudden chuckle.

"Mr. hat!" laughed Tom Merry. "Cardew, you are an ass—but a jolly clever ass all the same. It might work."

"It will work."

And Cardew strolled off. Racke might have given a great deal to know that scheme. But he would learn—perhaps!

CHAPTER 6.

A Surprising Change.

"YOW-OW-OW!"

Sounds of anguish proceeded from Mr. Railton's study.

Aubrey Racke was inside, and it seemed as though Racke were having a far from pleasant time. It was not often the School House master used the cane, for he only punished such wrong-doing as came to notice out of lesson time.

In this case, however, he felt the cane necessary. He had never liked Racke, and knew that at heart the Shell fellow was a snob, and in many respects a cad.

At each stroke of the cane Racke yelled, and Mr. Railton compressed his lips. He had no intention of lessening the punishment on account of the Shell fellow's whining.

"Thwack!"

"Ow-ow!"

At last Mr. Railton laid down the cane, and Racke moved towards the door. But the master had not yet finished with him.

"Racke!" he said sternly.

Racke turned towards the master, but made no reply.

"If ever again you take it into your head to persecute a boy on account of his social position," said the master sternly, "I shall take stronger measures. Let this be a lesson to you. This lad has come to the school as your father's protégé. It is your duty to uphold your father's action—to help this lad Robinson as best you can. You understand me?"

Racke scowled, but made no reply.

"You understand me?" repeated the master.

"Yes," mumbled Racke, as he screwed his hands into his armpits.

"You will take heed, and help this lad?"

"Yes," groaned Racke. "I—I'll help him."

"Very well. I shall keep an eye on you, and if I hear any rumour of ragging, let me tell you that there will be trouble in store for you."

"Yes, sir."

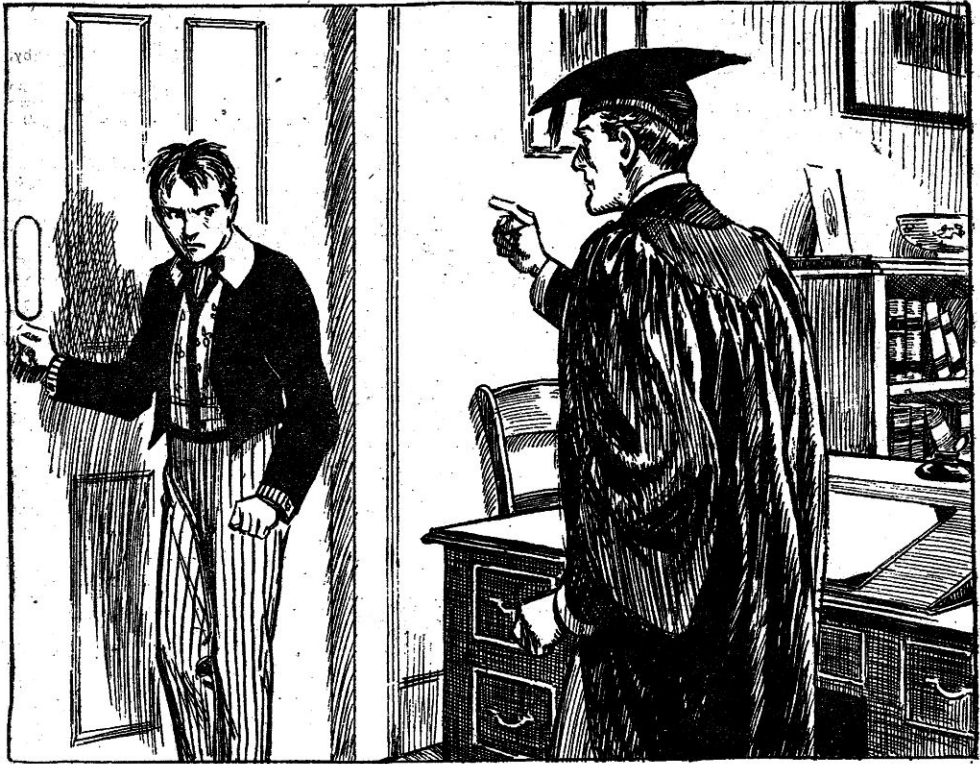
"You can go."

The master returned to his desk, and as far as he was concerned the incident was closed.

Racke left the study, and only by a great effort refrained from slamming the door.

"So this is what it has come to!" he muttered savagely, and shook his fist at the closed door. "I'll pay the rotter!" he ground out vindictively. "I'll teach him to come poking his nose in!"

His face was almost livid with rage and pain, as he stood rubbing his aching palms together. He blamed that



Mr. Railton laid down his cane, then turned again upon Racke. "If ever again you take it into your head to persecute a boy on account of his social position, Racke," he said sternly, "I shall take stronger measures. This lad has come to the school as our father's protege, and it is your duty to uphold your father's action." Racke scowled, but made no reply. (See page 10.)

punishment on to Robinson; and he was determined that Robinson should reap the doubtful benefit of his threats.

With the bitterness of memory he recollected how his father had told him to get in with the better class fellows, and make friends of them. His father believed that he had. Of course, he little dreamt that his son was disliked and scorned by practically the whole Form.

Racke had tried hard to be on friendly terms with D'Arcy; but it takes two to make a friendship, and D'Arcy had different ideas and standards of friends.

Racke would have longed to go home with D'Arcy, or even with Cardew. But he had never had the chance. There was a great deal of the snob in Racke. But he had been too purse-proud to make friends with fellows less wealthy than himself, and the wealthy ones would have nothing to do with him. It was galling, but it was a fact.

He walked along the passages to his study, his mind a prey to bitter thoughts, when a drawing voice broke in upon his meditations. Cardew was speaking with someone else in a little alcove behind the big curtains. And, as he heard his name mentioned, Racke stopped dead still.

Cardew could not have heard him approaching.

The voice proceeded, and Racke could hear distinctly all that was said. For a few moments the full purport of the remarks did not dawn upon him. Then he realised all.

"Poor old Racke," came in Cardew's well-known drawing tones. "If he only knew!"

"But he doesn't."

Lowther was the other speaker, and Racke crept closer to the curtain. He had no compunction about listening to other people's conversation. It is said of listener's that they never hear any good of themselves, and so it was with Racke.

"It would be a good wheeze," went on Lowther's voice, "to let him go on ragging the chap. Just imagine his face." Lowther chuckled.

"Oh, rather," drawled Cardew. "Dear old Racke, when he realises that he has been ragging a real live earl. 'Oh, what a falling off,' as Shakespeare remarks."

"It would spoil the whole joke if he knew," mused Lowther. "We'll egg him on to rag the chap, that'll make it all the funnier when he knows."

And Cardew chuckled again.

"What a fluky bit of luck!" he murmured. "The runaway schoolboy at St. Jim's. The missing earl. Quite like a melodrama, what?"

Racke stood quite still. Robinson, the charity schoolboy, a runaway earl!

In a second he realised what had not occurred to him before. It was indeed a startling thought, but it would account for everything. Of course, as a runaway schoolboy he would not dare to say who he was. And what safer harbour could he have than St. Jim's.

Racke sidled away. He had heard quite enough. Walking quickly, almost at a run, he hurried to Study No. 7.

His palms still tingled, but he had forgotten them, forgotten everything, even that he had tormented the new boy, in this sudden revelation.

So the new boy was an earl!

He flung open the door of his study, and as he entered, Crooke, glancing up from the sporting paper he had been reading, gave him a surprised stare.

"What the dickens!" he ejaculated.

He glanced blankly at his leader's face. He had expected to see Racke enter the study with a black scowl, and instead Racke was smiling.

"Well," asked Crooke curiously, "what's the joke?" Racke dropped into the armchair. For reply he winked at his chum.

"My boy," he said, "we're on the big thing. Who the dickens do you think that chap Robinson is?"

"Eh? Why, a charity chap your pater picked up on the road."

"Then that's just where you're wrong," grinned Racke. "He's not. He's an earl."

The paper he had been reading dropped from Crooke's

hand as though it had suddenly become red-hot, and he stared blankly with open mouth at his leader.

For a moment he wondered whether Racke had gone mad, or if the caning had turned his brain in any way. It was some moments before he spoke.

"H-h-h has Railton been biffing you on the napper?" he asked at length.

Racke scowled.

"Don't be funny," he said. "As a matter of fact I could hardly believe it myself. But as I was coming along the corridor I heard voices."

"That's nothing. I've heard voices many times——"

"Don't interrupt. I stopped because I heard my name mentioned. And I heard Lowther and that ass Cardew talking together. What do you think they said?"

"How should I know?" answered Crooke. "Something kind about you!"

Racke went on.

"They were working a jape. They've found out that this new chap is an earl. Cardew apparently knows him. And they're going to let us go on ragging him. My hat!" exclaimed Racke, as a new idea struck him. "What would the pater have said when he found the new chap was an earl and I'd been ragging him?"

"What will he say, anyway?" asked Crooke.

"He won't hear, old chap. In future," smiled Racke, "we're going to be as nice as butter to the new chap. I can easily apologise. Apologies cost nothing, and he can't refuse it. He'll have to come back to this study."

"Yes; if he's really an earl," mused Crooke, "it won't be too bad. We shall get the kudos of having been his best pals in his hour of stress."

"Exactly. We're going to have him all to ourselves. Besides, just picture Cardew's face when we veer round and lick that chap's boots!"

"I'm dashed if I'm going to lick anyone's boots!"

"Ass! I'm only speaking metaphorically. Come on. No good wasting time. Let's come and look for the rotter!"

Racke sprang to his feet. Crooke, rising more slowly, followed him out of the study.

The two black sheep of the Shell went downstairs, passing several fellows who gave them scornful looks. Racke's treatment of the new boy was regarded with a baleful eye.

Racke, reaching the Common-room, flung open the door. As he entered, the conversation that had been in progress suddenly ceased. Obviously the subject of conversation had been the afternoon's incident.

The Shell fellow stood in the doorway, all eyes being turned upon him. He glanced round, and saw in a far corner Robinson with a small crowd round him, and Grundy of course was there. After the afternoon's fiasco Grundy felt that he owed the new boy an apology.

Grundy was never a fellow to hide a fault. He had done wrong, or at any rate acted too hastily, and he was at once ready to admit it.

As Racke entered, he—Grundy—glared at him. Grundy did not approve of Racke or of his principles, and he let the Shell fellow see it.

"Well?" he asked aggressively, as Racke crossed the crowded room. "What do you want?"

"Not you," said Racke. And he turned to the seated Robinson.

There was a hush, an almost painful hush, in the Common-room, and much less than a pin could have been heard drop.

"Robinson," he said, extending his hand, "I want to apologise to you!"

The silence was suddenly broken at this startling remark.

"My hat!"

An uncontrolled gasp of astonishment swept across the room. It was the last thing the crowd had been expecting.

"You want to apologise to me?" asked Robinson. He eyed Racke up and down questioningly. The change of front was sudden and so unexpected that he hardly knew what to say in reply.

"What's happened, Racke?" asked Lowther. "Has Railton made you do this?"

"Bai Jove, that's it, deah boy!"

And it seemed to the crowd that Lowther had hit the nail on the head.

"No," said Racke. "I realise that I have been a cad!"

"My hat!" gasped Jack Blake faintly. "Hold me, someone!"

"I'm not joking," said Racke earnestly. "I am really sorry, and if Robinson will take my hand, here it is."

For a second the new boy stared in doubt at the extended hand.

"It's clean," chuckled Lowther. "Shake and make up, dear lads!" And there was a chuckle.

Rather red in the face, Robinson took the extended hand. "I accept your apology," he said quietly. "I am glad

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that you realise you have been a cad. Still, we're all at fault at times." A strange look came over his handsome face, but in the general excitement it went unnoticed.

"Now kiss!" grinned Lowther. "Like nice, good little Erics, kiss and be friends!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry glanced from one to the other of the two figures.

"If this is genuine, Racke," he said, "of course I'm jolly pleased. I didn't think, really, that you would ever apologise to anyone. I suppose I must have misjudged you."

"Yaas, wathah; and I, too, Bwavo, Wacke! As one gentleman to another, y'know, I apologise for thinking you were a howling, low down wottah!"

"Hear, hear!" said Talbot. "Good man, Racke!"

Racke, under this sudden swarm of approbation, reddened rather. Never in his life had an action of his been applauded save by his own particular chums. This was a new and not unpleasant state of affairs.

"And are you going to apologise, Crooke?" asked Manners.

"Eh?" Crooke started. "Oh, yes, of course, I'm sorry, too."

He extended his hand, and the now boy, with a somewhat whimsical smile, shook it.

"Then I can come into my study?" he asked.

"You can," said Racke. "Now, too. I shall be only too pleased."

Robinson rose to his feet.

"I'm jolly glad, you fellows," he said. "I like making friends. I think—I mean I know I can trust Racke now!"

"Don't you be so jolly sure," growled George Alfred Grundy. "I wouldn't trust him farther than I could throw him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, let a drowning man float!" said the new boy.

"When a dog's got a bad name, don't hang him; try stroking him, you know!"

"That's the way!" said Talbot. "Good man, Robinson!"

Smiling all over his face, Racke led his new studmate from the room, followed by Crooke. Crooke was not so certain as his leader that all was well. But he said nothing.

As the door closed, the Common-room buzzed with talk. One and all wondered. What was Racke's game?

CHAPTER 7.

The B-mbshell.

"HERE we are!"

Monty Lowther kicked open the door of Study No. 10 in the Shell passage, and led Robinson into that famous apartment.

Manners, with a frowning, anxious face, was examining a snapshot that had recently been printed. The table was littered with numberless negatives and printing-frames, whilst the fire in the hearth burned exceedingly low.

"You silly ass!" said Lowther indignantly. "What about our tea, you slacker? Here are we, returning from honest toil, from banging the merry old footer about——"

"Hungry as hunters," supplemented Tom Merry, who had just followed his chum in. "You are an ass, Manners. Clear that rubbish off. Can't you see we have our worthy guest Robinson?"

"Sorry!" growled Manners, as he gathered up his paraphernalia. "I forgot. How did the footer go, Robinson?"

"Oh, O.K., thanks!" said the new fellow. "I'm a bit out of practice."

"You'll soon get into it again!" said Tom enthusiastically. "You'll be a rod in pickle for the New House. We'll make old Figgie sit up. Here, help me on with this cloth, Monty!"

The Terrible Three, in a business-like manner, set about getting tea. Manners built up the fire and filled the kettle. Lowther scouted round for another tea-cup and saucer, while Tom Merry laid the table.

For a while Robinson stood by, but he was not of an idle disposition, and he was soon helping Tom Merry.

"No sugar?" he asked.

"Oh crumbs, no!"

Tom Merry scratched his curly head.

"I'll go and beg some from somewhere," he said. "S'pose there isn't any in your study? Funny idea asking a guest to bring his own grub——"

"Not at all!" laughed Robinson. "I'll get some. Is there a basin, or dish——"

He took the basin that Tom Merry handed him, and ran off. While he was gone the others got everything ready, and on his return he found them waiting.

The kettle had boiled, and Manners was making tea.

"Sorry I was so long," he apologised. "But Racke and Crooke were at home. They wanted me to stay——"

"Can't stay with them—imposs," said Tom. "You're our guest. Hallo, no knife for the butter! Fish one out of the drawer your end, Robinson, will you? That's right——"

Robinson lifted the cloth, and pulled out the drawer. He groped in it, and pulled out something. But it was not a knife. It bore no resemblance to one, and Tom Merry looked surprised.

"Can't cut the butter with them very well," he grinned. "They're only cards."

"Didn't know you played!" said the new boy, in surprise. "We don't. They're some we took from your worthy study companion—dear Aubrey," explained Monty Lowther. "Never mind them, though, Tommy's waiting for the knife."

Robinson got out the knife, and passed it, but he did not put back the cards. He remained staring at them in a fascinated way.

Tom Merry frowned, rather puzzled by the new boy's expression, for Robinson's eyes had in them a light of excitement that Tom had not seen before.

"Have some bread-and-butter, Robinson?" asked Monty Lowther, with a grin. "Or would you rather eat the cards? You're looking at them rather hungrily!"

"—Oh, thanks!" Robinson took a slice, and laughed rather awkwardly. The Terrible Three stared at him as a flush mantled his cheeks.

"—Shall I take these back to Racke?" he asked, noting their looks, and feeling it incumbent upon him to break the silence.

"Just as you like!" said Tom Merry. "It doesn't matter much. I dare say the rotter's got lots more. We took them from him because, he was using the pavilion as a sort of den for his merry parties."

"Haven't seen any of Racke's merry parties, have you?" grinned Lowther. "They're an eye-opener. All the brightest specimens at St. Jim's attend and play all sorts of games."

Robinson opened his eyes, and fingered the cards, smoothing them—almost affectionately, it seemed.

"I didn't know card-playing was allowed here," he said. "It isn't," answered Tom Merry. "But, all the same, like

a good many other things that aren't allowed, it goes on. We try to put it down, but it takes some doing."

"But why—why put it down, I mean?" asked Robinson. "Nothing harmful in cards. I—"

He broke off, and hid his inexplicable confusion by feigning to pick up something.

Manners and Lowther looked at one another, and Tom Merry frowned. Monty Lowther tapped his head significantly.

"Decent fellows here don't play cards," explained Tom Merry. "Card-playing leads to gambling, and no decent fellow does that."

"I—I suppose not," said Robinson, after a pause.

A rather awkward silence followed, and Tom Merry at length broke it by chatting about football, a topic of conversation that was happily chosen, for Robinson joined in it gladly.

The cards were forgotten then, but they still remained on the table. When tea was over Manners got out a chess-board and looked across at Robinson.

"Any good at chess?" he asked.

Robinson shook his head, at the same time gathering up the pack of cards from the table.

"Not much," he said. "I— Thanks awfully for this tea, you chaps! I've enjoyed it awfully. But—but I think I'll be going now."

"Oh, all right!" said Tom Merry. But he gave the new boy a peculiar look.

Tom had not failed to observe the furtive manner in which Robinson had gathered up the pack of cards, and although he did not like to suspect the new boy, he could not help thinking that his unexpected eagerness to slip away had some connection with cards.

"Oh, just stay to see one game!" urged Manners. "You can't want to go so soon!"

"I'm not much good at it," said the new boy hesitatingly,

(Continued on next page.)

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as he half turned from the door. "Lowther will give you a game."

"No, he won't!" said Lowther emphatically.

Robinson hesitated, and then, with an effort of will, came back into the study.

"Just one game, then," he said, with obvious reluctance, and sat down at the table.

Manners drew back, and set his men. Robinson set his, and Tom Merry and Lowther, who were watching, stared at him in surprise. For the chessmen were laid out wrongly. The bishops were in the knights' places.

"Sorry," said Robinson confusedly, when Lowther pointed out the mistake. "I—I'm afraid my mind was wandering."

He pulled himself together. But that first slip expressed the rest of the game. Robinson may or may not have been a good chess player. At the present moment he was negligible.

Manners triumphantly took piece after piece, and Lowther and Tom Merry grinned.

Robinson, in his absent-minded way, did not seem to mind a great deal. Once or twice he missed something especially obvious, and Manners stared at him, but the Shell fellow was so obsessed by his own game that he put his easy win down to pure skill.

"Mate in two!" said Manners triumphantly, and leaned back.

In ordinary circumstances Robinson should have looked depressed, defeated, or, at any rate, a little set back. Instead of that, he sighed with obvious relief.

"Good!" he said.

Manners nodded.

"Yes; I must admit I played that rather well," he admitted modestly. "I'll give you your revenge, if you like."

"No thanks. I mean—another time," corrected Robinson as he rose. "Thanks—thanks awfully for the game. Sorry I didn't play better."

"You couldn't help it," smiled Manners. "It's a new stunt I've got. I've licked both these chaps on it."

"Rats."

Monty Lowther and Tom Merry uttered the emphatic denial together.

He would have added that he thought Robinson was one of the Tom Merry crowd, or, as he preferred to them, "the little Eric."

"Well, I have played," admitted Robinson rather awkwardly.

He was anxious, very anxious to make good use of the opportunity Mr. Racke had given him, and he had no wish to appear ungrateful by acting contrary to the school rules.

And yet—something in him yearned for cards. The sight of them aroused in him some inexplicable longing.

"I suppose we couldn't play—it's against the rules!" he ventured.

Racke looked quickly at Crooke.

"Not at all," he said. "Some people have an absurd prejudice against cards. But it's all rot, of course. Tom—Tom Merry doesn't play; but lots of fellows do—Sixth Formers, that."

He looked cunningly at the new boy. He had been sufficiently quick to realise that it would not do for him to follow his usual practice of decrying Tom Merry and Co., for Racke was out to please the "earl."

"Then there won't be any harm in a game," said Robinson with evident relief. "Could we make a four for bridge?"

"Bridge is a bore," yawned Crooke.

George Gerald was not a thinking man, and the exertion of bridge wearied him.

"Then nap?" said Robinson.

And his face eager, his hand slightly trembling, he drew a chair to the table.

In a minute the three were playing.

"Sixpenny points," said Racke, and the new boy nodded.

It was a fast rate of scoring, and money changed hands. The players sat engrossed, not noting the time. Robinson seemed to be winning, and Racke and Crooke scowled unpleasantly. It was quite clear that the new boy was an expert. His judgment was sound, and he always played the right card.

When his winnings lay in a pile before him, and Crooke had just brought out another Treasury note, there came a tap on the study door.

The handle was tried, but Racke had carefully locked it.

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"Mean I haven't?" demanded Manners scornfully. "Why why, I'll play you both together, blindfolded."

Robinson slipped quietly from the study, and closed the door behind.

"He's gone," said Tom Merry. "What a funny chap he is! You could see he wasn't taking any interest in the game. Listen, he's just gone into Racke's study—with the cards. I hope he's not going to take to that stunt. I like the chap, I must admit. And he's a topping half."

"Oh, he's all right," said Monty Lowther easily. "He's not that card-playing sort."

But Monty Lowther, if he had been able to see behind the door of Study No. 7, might have changed his mind.

Robinson tapped on the door of his study, and entered. Racke nodded and Crooke gave what he deemed to be a sweet smile.

"Glad you've come," said Racke politely. "Here's the armchair, dear boy."

Robinson stood up, however. He did not quite like Racke and Crooke, although after the way in which they had apologised for their rather rough handling of him he had done his best to be pally.

Palliness with Racke and Crooke was difficult, however, especially to a fresh-air-loving lad like Robinson.

But the cards of the Shell had been almost oily in their politeness since their discovery, and Robinson had felt it incumbent upon him to put up with them.

"I've brought back these cards from Tom Merry, Racke," he said.

The new boy had taken the pack from his pocket and was running his thumb along the edge of them longingly.

"Yes, they're mine," nodded Racke. "Chuck 'em down, old son."

But Robinson, instead of doing as requested, commenced to shuffle the cards skillfully and with a practised hand.

"Hallo," said Racke, opening his eyes. "Are you a card man?"

"Quick!" hissed the cad of the Shell. "The cards!"

He picked up the money, and the others followed suit, and the cards were shoved in the drawer.

"It's Tom Merry," said a voice.

Racke flung open the door, and Tom Merry entered, looking suspiciously from one to the other of them.

"Robinson," he said rather curtly, "you're wanted."

Robinson seemed rather shamefaced at the sight of Tom Merry, but at the captain of the Shell's announcement he looked up sharply.

"Wanted?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Tom. "A gentleman wants to see you. He's with Railton at present."

"What sort of man?" asked Robinson, and he clutched Tom's arm.

"What on earth's the matter?" frowned Tom. "He won't eat you. Quite an ordinary chap. Short, rather fat, dark hair, florid face—"

"Graham!" ejaculated Robinson, and his face went a chalky white. Then he groaned. "It's all U P," he said dully.

He looked round him fearfully, like a hunted rabbit, and would have gone through the door save that at that minute two figures coming down the passage blocked his way.

"There is the lad," said Mr. Railton.

The man Tom Merry had described stepped forward, and Robinson dodged back. Racke and Crooke, greatly amazed, stepped back.

"It's no use, Dillon," said the man, "I've got you. You may as well come quietly."

Robinson shrugged his shoulders, and let the man take his arm.

"What's wrong, sir?" asked Racke. "That's the missing ear!"

"Missing ear!" exclaimed the man. "This is Clay Dillon, who escaped from a reformatory."

The ST. JIM'S NEWS

Edited By TOM MERRY.

"My Lot!"

BY THE EDITOR HIMSELF.

Tom Merry.

ALTHOUGH I edit the "St. Jim's News" I ain't often that my name appears above an article in the paper. Being a jolly old editor is quite enough work.

One of my principal jobs is getting copy. Sometimes it comes in thick as leaves in Vallombrosa, and at other times it's as scarce as Bagey Trimble's remittances from his titled relatives. On these occasions the Editorial Staff goes on the war-path, generally armed with cricket-stumps or lives-hats, and endeavours to persuade copy contributors to come up to the scratch.

Of course, I could always get enough copy to carry on with—if I cared to publish it. Skimpole, for instance, is always willing to come to the rescue with one of his famous—and fatuous—articles on "Balmysim." His manuscripts contain enough words to occupy the whole of the "News" for the next ten years or so, and I can imagine what would happen if I printed one of them.

Gussy is almost as long-winded on the subject of togs, and if I only manage to persuade him to say something interesting, short, and snappy, I may give him a chance.

Lowther is another blighter who runs to columns and columns when he gets going. He wants a "Comic Column" to himself in the "News," but he must get some new gags first.

Wiggins rather fancies himself as a writer of sensational fiction, stories of the Wild and Woolly West, and so on; but, unfortunately, there isn't much space to give him, otherwise I'd be glad to include him among the regular contributors, as the New House are not very much to the fore in the old paper. Of course, if they haven't got the brains, it can't be helped, but I don't want to incur a charge of favouring my own House.

Talbot could spin some thrilling yarns of his own experiences before he came to St. Jim's—stories that would make the average detective tale seem jolly tame; but although I have several times had it suggested that I should ask him, I don't want to invite him to drag up recollections that he would prefer to forget altogether.

A Slacker.

Cardew is one of the most able fellows on the Editorial Staff, but at the worst of it is he's so confoundedly slack. He's a first-rate journalist, with a keen news-sense, and a good style in his writing. The only thing that he lacks is energy. But I've got my eye on him, and in the near future I'm going to keep him up to his job, and you can look forward to seeing a lot of his stuff in these columns.

Some of the fags, too, send in copy that, after it has been carefully sub-edited, is quite valuable.

As for Trimble—well, I'm always getting copy in from him. He complains that it is rarely printed, but that's true; that Cardew is responsible for that. I never attend to Trimble's contributions personally. I always hand them over to Cardew, who has a knack of faking them into shape without sacrificing anything of their individuality. It appears that if Cardew isn't in the mood for bothering with one of Bagey's wonderful effusions, he simply loses it.

Opposition.

By the way, I have heard a whisper that Racke is going to bring out a paper of his own. I don't know any of the details, but I've put Monty on the track to find out as much as he possibly can. From time to time the "Smart Set," as they call themselves sometimes, have submitted articles to me which I have absolutely refused to print. They have been mere outpourings of spite, and it would have been simply asking for trouble to print them. One or two of Racke's effusions I have passed, after they have been carefully watered down in parts, but there are limits beyond which I refuse to go. If what I hear is correct, their new venture is to know no limit.

Good News.

I should like to mention that I have managed to persuade a number of the seniors to promise articles for the paper. I suppose that it is Kildare's lead they are following, and so it's doubly fortunate that I managed to get the skipper to write those contributions that have lately appeared.

All the same, the credit of obtaining their consent really is due to Cardew. He's got the cheek of a dozen, and has a way of getting people to do things for him that they wouldn't do for anyone else. I generally put him on to jobs of this kind, as he's always willing, because the more contributions we get in the safer it is for him. Once we ran short of copy, and had to turn out an article at a moment's notice. It gave him a shock that he's never quite recovered from, and he'd move heaven and earth to prevent the same thing happening again. Anyway, he'd sooner persuade other people to write than do it himself, even if it required more effort to overcome their objections than it would to produce an article of his own.

Much goes on in the Upper School that would be of great interest to my readers, and I am certain that they will greatly appreciate the articles by Sixth and Fifth Formers that I shall soon be in a position to publish.

"Brother Ass!"

THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF CHATTY HEALTH ARTICLES.

By the Sporting Doctor.

DID you ever hear of that good old Christian, St. Francis of Assisi, who always called his body "Brother Ass"?

That was just his jolly way of speaking—because he was one of the best all-round fellows who ever lived, even though he was a Saint. But it was a good way of speaking—as you will see.

"Brother Ass"—that is, St. Francis body—was a bit of a fellow. He was lazy (he liked his bed in the morning), and he was a bit of a coward. So poor St. Francis had a hard struggle to get him to work and face things. But in the end "Brother Ass" was trained—and after that there was no more bother.

What do you make of that? Illness is a thing which upsets your body, isn't it? So, after all, when you feel funkish it is only poor old "Brother Ass" who is a bit off colour. You—you yourself—are not funkish at all.

Think of it that way. When you feel in a funk, say, "Hallo, here's old 'Brother Ass' got sick again."

And so, of course, it will be up to you to get him fit and strong at once.

But how can you cure the poor old fellow if you don't know anything about him?

First of all give "Brother Ass" (your body, that is) enough exercise. He's a funny fellow, and if he stays in the stable long he gets "rotten." He sort of poisons himself. But when he's running about the poison works away out of his brain and his muscles.

It's "poison" that makes funking. Every funk has poisoned nerves. Sometimes the poison comes from real disease which needs a doctor; but not very often. Mostly it comes from slackness or overeating, or both.

So you jolly well see to it that you play as many games as you can. Of course, "Brother Ass" will often hate that. He'll say, "I don't feel up to it." I'd rather stay in the stable, and so on.

When that happened to St. Francis, "Brother Ass" got a kick, and off he went.

Have you ever been to a horse show and seen a horse refuse to jump? His rider doesn't, just let him refuse—oh, no! He puts him at the gate again and again till he gets him over.

You do the same. After all, you're the rider; "Brother Ass," your body, is only—"Brother Ass." He's got to do what you tell him.

That's my second tip for this week. Think like a master, not like a slave. Funks are all slaves; they've let a sick body run away with their true selves. Ever seen a donkey lying down by the roadside?

You can't get fit by thinking, I know. But you can master "Brother Ass," and make him take exercise and stop eating too much; you can put him into a cold bath; you can spur him on to play games. And these things will make him fit by getting the poison out of him.

Besides, it's a great thought that you and I are not funks. We're not. The only funk is poor old, greedy, slack "Brother Ass."

(Another breezy article next week.)

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Buy MY MAGAZINE for May, and colour the outline drawing of Gainsborough's BLUE BOY which is given inside every copy. The cover shows this famous picture in full colours, and £50 will be awarded for the best attempt at copying it made by anyone under 17. Fifty copies of solution notes of £1 each also offered. For full particulars see

My Magazine

Out on Thursday, April 13th. 1/-

This Wonderful Story is Pleasing Everybody!

THE ISLAND OF PLEASURE

Our Magnificent Story of Daring and Adventure.

READ THIS FIRST.

Donald Gordon and his brother Val leave St. Christopher's School in company with Tommy Binks and Septimus Todd, a junior master, commonly known as "Scat," to join their uncle, who is on a big plantation in the Solomon Islands.

Captain Targe, in charge of the schooner Wittywake, learns of the party's quest. He plans to abandon the boat and leave them to their fate, with the intention of over-throwing the wealthy plantation owner and obtaining hold of his land. Taga, the black cabin-boy, hears of this, and warns the party. Unknown to the villainous captain, he places the boys in one of the ship's boats, and they are about to make their escape when Anna, the captain's daughter, taking the opportunity of getting away from the harsh treatment of her father, joins them.

Not long after the party has started on their perilous journey a severe storm breaks out. The party are rescued from their boat, but, luckily, get washed up on the "Island of Pleasure."

Cast on the island, they at once set about preparing their new home, refreshing themselves with various fruits which they find growing there, whilst the rest of the party are asleep. Don, Scat, and Taga see a number of strange figures, each carrying a skull, land on the island. These gruesome objects they deposit on the knees of a hideous idol which is seated on a carved throne.

Scat takes aim at the skulls with his sling, hitting one and sending the others tumbling to the floor.

(Now read on.)

The Flight of the Cannibals.

SCAT, from behind his boulder, cast one final stone, this time aiming full at the figure of the grotesque, masked leader. He put an extra pound or two of energy into this shot, and the sharp flint smote the heavy mask, splitting it in two, so that it fell from the head and shoulders, revealing the staring, horrified face beneath it. This was the final signal from the angry Fire Spirit. It had struck at its chief priest, showing how deep was its wrath.

A wild, terrified roar went up, and a panic-stricken stampede began. Helter-skelter down the rough hillside, and on through the trees, calling to each other like frightened sheep, the semi-naked shapes sped, casting their torches away from them as they ran, until at last the side of the hill was dotted by yellow flames, flickering and dying where the torches had fallen.

"Quick, Taga, let's see them go!"

Don had jerked Taga to his feet before he could get the youngster to accompany him, and they tore off across the slope and on under the trees.

As they emerged into the moonlit space beyond, they saw the first of the natives had already reached the canoe, and for ten minutes Don and Taga watched that final scene.

As soon as there were enough men on the beach the canoe was lifted and carried into the water. The terrified cannibals scrambled into it directly it floated, and began to paddle desperately out to sea, allowing the stragglers to rush after them and plunge into the waves, until the quiet bay was filled with the bobbing heads of the swimmers.

The canoe came to a halt a couple of hundred yards from the shore, and swimmer after swimmer reached it, to be drawn on board.

The last figure to cross the stretch of sand was a swaying, stunted one, with fragments of a mask he had worn dragging behind.

Don watched it take the water, and swim out into the silvery beam of the moonlight.

until it reached the canoe; then the long, black shape began to move off, the rows of paddles dipping in unison. At last, faint and far off, from the canoe, there came a low chant which echoed and re-echoed in the quiet air.

A laugh sounded, and Taga turned his head to Don.

"Don had fellas singing the song of never-return," he said, in his quaint pidgin-English. "They finished with this place. Master Don. The debbil-debbil no want them any more."

The Picnic.

WHAT I would like to know is what you beggars have been up to? No good your feeling me that you have been here all night, for I know you haven't."

Tommy's voice was a very aggrieved one. The little group were gathered round a small fire, which Taga had lighted, and were having breakfast, a meal which consisted of baked yams and fruit.

"Look at Scat, for instance," Tommy went on, pointing a scornful finger at the tutor. "He looks as though he could do with about six hours' sleep."

Scat was leaning back against a portion of the wall, and certainly his long face bore traces of fatigue; but the grin which he gave Tommy was bright enough, and the stout youngster finally arose to his feet with a snort of disgust.

"All right," he said. "Keep your blinking secrets!"

Don reached out, and grabbed Tommy by the ankle, giving him a jerk which brought the fat body down on the soft earth with a thud.

"Don't be a fool, Tommy," Don remarked. "If we have a secret, it is a very innocent one. It is quite true that Taga and Scat and I were on a little job last night, but there was nothing particularly exciting about it, and we didn't want to spoil your beauty sleep."

It had been arranged between Don and the others that nothing should be mentioned about the grim scene which they had taken part in.

Following the flight of the terrified cannibals, Don and Taga had returned to the gap in the hillside, and a final ceremony had taken place there. Scat had set fire to the wooden idol and its grim burden, and all that remained now of the awesome Fire Spirit was a heap of smouldering ashes which had been forced into the cavern.

The chums made a complete examination of the ruined house and plantation that morning, then early in the afternoon the return journey was commenced.

"We musn't leave Some Girl too long," was Don's comment to Val and Tommy, who were rather inclined to linger behind.

"You'd much better show than the one we have got, Don," Tommy said, "and I don't see why we should not jolly well move round here at once."

"Perhaps we shall, Tommy," Don remarked. "But there's no hurry for that."

Yet, in his own mind, Don had appreciated fully the value of their find. The previous settler on this island had certainly laid the foundations for a comfortable existence, and although the house was a mere shell, there still remained the framework, and energetic hands could easily restore the building again.

But Don had another secret locked away in his breast, and until this matter was satisfactorily settled, the leader of the little

group of castaways knew there would be no peace for them on their island paradise.

Taga was given the task of picking the trail homeward, and he set a race pace, with the result that dusk saw them descending the hill on the home side of the island, and three hours later they came in sight of the heap of boulders and the cliff.

A fire was glowing, and Don gave a shout, a shout which was answered by the clear, silvery voice of Anna.

Five minutes later she was welcoming her chums home, and it was a real banquet which she spread for them—turtle soup, broiled mullet, and a mass of vegetables which Tommy declared was like asparagus and sea-kale and celery rolled into one, followed by a great dish of fruit in syrup.

"Where did you get this vegetable, Anna?" Tommy asked.

Anna smiled.

"I had to climb for it," she answered. "It is the top of the cabbage palm. I found a lot of them growing just behind Scat's clearing."

"You mean to say you got to the top of a palm just to collect this stuff?" said Tommy. The girl nodded.

"It was an awful job," she confessed, "but I managed it."

She was obviously very happy and relieved to have her friends back again, and she had another little gift for them.

A couple of shells had been artfully contrived so that they could be used as oil lamps, and a length of fibre dipped into oil burnt with a steady, clear flame.

"It is cocconut butter," said Anna. "I had no end of a job to get it, but it burns beautifully."

"Strikes me you have been hard at work since we've been away," Don remarked. "I suggest that to-morrow we all have a holiday—a real picnic. Where shall we go, Anna?"

Anna thought for a moment.

"Let's go west," she said. "We can keep inside the barrier, and there's room in the catamaran for all of us. We've never been round the west side of the bay. I want to see what lies behind Turtle Bay."

Under her questioning she had already heard of the discovery which had been made on the opposite side of the island, and Don had promised to take her there some day.

It was late on the following morning before the chums wakened to find that Taga, the indefatigable, had already prepared breakfast, and the catamaran had been brought round to the beach in front of their little home.

As it was a special occasion, Taga had made a raid on the scrub fowls' nest, and there were a dozen eggs broiled in cocconut butter as a dish for breakfast. Tommy had a share for his share, and would gladly have removed more. His grin of solemn contentment indicated that he, at any rate, was thoroughly enjoying himself.

"Of course, I am very anxious about the matter," he said to Don, "but, apart from that, I would rather stay here than go to beastly school! This is no end of a topping good place, Don, and I'd like to spend the rest of my life on this spot!"

When a start was made for the catamaran, Taga carried with him a number of long spears, which he had fashioned from hard wood, and had spent many laborious hours pointing and toughening over the fire.

Don carried the precious axe, and Val brought with him a net which he had made out of twisted fibre strands, while Scat was trusted with the knife. They took with them a quantity of dried turtle flesh and a good supply of fruit, which they stowed away in the stern of the canoe in charge of Anna.

Taga had made four broad-bladed paddles, and when the catamaran got under way, with

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2:

the four youngsters at work, they drove across the lagoon at a great pace.

It was a perfect morning, the water of the lagoon was like mother-of-pearl, without a ripple on its surface. The murmur of the bird-life in the tropical jungle which formed a background to Turtle Bay, were the only sounds to break the silence.

The sun was hot, but they had grown accustomed to it now, and their tanned young bodies glistened with sweat as they paddled steadily onward.

Both Don and Val had filled out tremendously during the brief interval on the island, and the muscles rippling under their healthy skin indicated the surging strength which had come to them. Even Scat's bony frame had toughened and developed.

The long length of the lagoon was completed, and they found themselves moving along in a wide stretch where the trees seemed to grow down into the sea, and Taga, who sat in the bow of the catamaran, suddenly raised his paddle as a signal to halt.

The canoe ran on smoothly, and Taga pointed to the shore.

"They mangroves," he said. "Grow right down into sea. They good place for hunting. We go along into them—soon find plenty fish there."

They went on again, covering another half-mile or so, and found themselves in another wood-guarded bay.

It seemed to Don that the jungle grew right up to the apex of the hill, and there was no sign of any place where they could land.

The catamaran was gliding smoothly through the clear water, and Anna, reaching behind her, drew a bunch of bananas on to her lap.

"Catch the fruit we called.

An invitation of this kind was never refused by Tommy, and he commenced to peel one of the fruit.

A swing of his hand saw the soft peel cast some fifteen or twenty yards away from the catamaran. Tommy, in the act of placing the long white fruit into his mouth, saw a black shadow appear below the surface. There was a splash, and a deep, long "Whoof" came up from the sea there arose an apparition, which brought a gasp of astonishment from the fat youngster's lips, and the banana fell from his hand.

"Wh-wh— Look, Don, look! What the deuce is that?"

A great wet head, with staring, saucer eyes, a massive, slobbering mouth and jaw, and great shoulders appeared. In the soft mouth the banana-skin was held, and the loose, sloppy lips munched and twisted the peel, finally opening to let it slip into the red gullet.

"It—it looks like a cow!" Tommy gasped. He had a vision of two fore-limbs with bristling flappers, then there was another "Whoof" a long, sighing sound, and the creature sank again.

Its eyes were fixed on the catamaran, and, as Tommy afterwards declared, it winked at him as it sank below the surface.

"Quick—quick! Get 'em paddles! That good fella to eat!"

"What was—that was it? Come on, Scat, you ought to know."

Scat, the never-failing, had recovered from his amazement, and turned to Don now.

"It must be a dugong," the tutor remarked. "I think they used to be found along the coast of Australia, but I didn't know they came out as far as these islands."

Taga had risen to his feet, and he was fumbling in the bottom of the catamaran. Now he lifted a couple of his long, wooden spears.

"You look out!" he called. "It come up again presently. See, there's another!"

Two or three hundred yards away, near to the shore, another black shape had broken the surface, and soon the excited youngsters in the catamaran realised that they had discovered a feeding-ground for the almost extinct sea-cow.

There were at least a dozen of them, and Scat, at a high pitch of excitement, began to explain the phenomenon.

These creatures live on seaweeds along shallow shores. There's no need to be afraid of them, for they are absolutely harmless, and their flesh tastes just like beef."

"Beef—eh? Right you are, Scat! Let's get busy! I could do with a bit of steak!" was Tommy's excited reply.

Then a long hunt began.

Dugongs are known to be particularly unintelligent creatures: their stolid countenances reveal the mildness of their temper. They possess a voracious appetite, and this stretch of the shore, with the thick, succulent weeds, was obviously a feeding-ground. Yet it was evident that this particular school of dugongs knew what it was to be attacked by men, for, although the catamaran tried again and again to get within striking distance of the great animals as they momentarily rose to the surface to breathe, the lumbering creatures avoided them. It was after a long two hours' exciting chase that, close to the shore, Taga saw a massive head and shoulders rise, and with a quick call to his companions, the bronzed youngster cast his spear.

It entered the shoulder of the sea-cow just where the folds of fat formed a mantle-like covering. There was another "Whoof!" and a splash, then the lumbering shape dived, carrying the spear down with it, and leaving a track of blood on the surface.

"Quick, Don; we go for him. Not let him get away."

The water was only some fifteen or twenty feet deep, and they could see the great shape moving along the weed-covered bottom.

Don turned to Scat.

"Lend me your knife, old chap," he said. The knife was handed over, and Don stood up on the frail craft.

"We musn't let it get away," he said. "It is a fair fight. Here goes!"

At school Don Gordon had been one of the best divers of his term, and the sleek, beautiful way in which he took a header down into the clear water was a treat to behold. He went straight down, his arms extended, his body motionless, and Anna, watching breathlessly, saw the white figure flash over the top of the lumbering sea-cow. Then the arm was raised and lowered twice in quick succession!

There was another mighty upheaval of the water, and the great creature shot forward, then arose to the surface, leaping half out into the air, and beating the water with its great, jointed flappers for a moment.

Don came up like a cork, tossing the water from his long, wet hair. A couple of strokes saw him reach the catamaran.

"I think I managed it," he said; as he caught at the side of the canoe.

Twenty yards away the great dugong was threshing the water as he dying struggles. Twice it sank and rose, then it turned inshore, and they saw its massive shape roll over on the edge of the mangrove swamp, revealing a grey-tinted hide.

"Yes, you got him, all right!" Taga cried.

They took to the paddles again, and the catamaran was run inshore. The great creature lay across the roots of a submerged tree. As the catamaran came alongside, the head was lifted for a moment, and the saucer-like eyes stared dully, then, with a final tremor, the head dropped.

"Oh, I don't like it—I don't like it!" Anna called, covering down in her seat in the stern for a moment.

"It seems such a shame—it seems such a shame!"

"It won't seem such a shame when we are

having a jolly fine steak, Miss Anna," Tommy said; "although how we're going to get at the blinking thing is more than I know!"

It was Taga who solved this difficulty. He selected a number of creepers which were fast growing in among the mangroves, and twisted them into a stout cable. He adjusted it under the limp flappers of the great sea-cow, then attached the other end of the twisted creepers to the cross-piece of the catamaran.

But before they could get the dead animal launched from the roots, Scat and Val had to wade into the water, and push the heavy carcass, while Don and Tommy and Taga laboured at the paddles. The great creature was launched at last, and sagged along behind the canoe, its body half out of the sea.

"I don't think we ought to go any farther on the picnic, Anna," Tommy commented. "We can't drag this blinking whale with us all day. Let's go back to Turtle Bay, and have some grub there."

His suggestion was adopted, and somewhere about noon the catamaran ran on to the sandy beach, with the dugong floating behind it. Then the party waded ashore, and carried the food up under the shelter of the tall palm-trees of the jungle, where they had their meal.

"I'll tell you what, chaps," said Scat. "We're not very far away from that—that sago tree I found. What about tackling it, and seeing if I am right?"

"More work," said Tommy. "This is supposed to be a picnic, isn't it?"

He rolled over on his side.

"In any case, one of us will have to stay here and watch the old dugong to see it doesn't come to life and make off. I think I had better do that. You chaps can go on with your sagoing. I'll go down to the catamaran, and keep an eye on it."

They were all accustomed to Tommy's idleness by now, and no one demurred at this suggestion, so presently Don and Val and Taga and Anna were led off by Scat. Tommy, helping himself to another bunch of bananas, went down the beach, stretched himself at full length under the catamaran, and dozed off.

The sand was warm and comfortable, and the murmur of the sea made a lullaby.

Swish!

A fierce current of air striking across Tommy's face made the youngster open his eyes sleepily. He stared for a moment, then, as a black shape swung across his vision again, he sat up with a gasp of dismay.

It was an immense bird, with, as Tommy afterwards said, wings like lug-sails. He had



"Wh-wh— Look, Don—look!" cried Tommy. "What the deuce is that? A great wet head, with staring, saucer eyes and a massive, slobbering mouth, appeared. In the soft mouth a banana-skin was held."

a fleeting view of a cruel head and a long, hooked beak. As the bird swept over the catamaran, Tommy, rising to his knees, saw a great white bird land on the carcass of the dugong.

It was a sea-eagle, and already another similar bird was hard at work on the tough hide.

Sea-eagles are strangely aloof birds, but they always hunt in pairs, and are known for their courage and tenacity.

Tommy saw the larger bird of the two make a fierce sweep with its beak, and a great piece of tough hide was removed.

"Here, stash it! That won't do! It's our blinking dinner you are after!"

Tommy grabbed a paddle, a broad-bladed, hefty weapon, and, remembering his duty as guardian of the dugong, set about carrying it out.

He waded into the sea, waving his arms and shouting.

"Shoo! Get away! Shoo!"

The female sea-eagle was nearest to him, and it turned at the sound of his voice, raising a blood-stained beak to peer at him for a moment. The look of those cold eyes over the crooked beak was singularly sinister and malevolent; the wings were half-raised, and the bird set out a hoarse, strident cry.

Tommy was up to his knees in the water now, and he came to a halt for a moment, making another spectacular wave with his paddle.

"Go on! Sheer off!"

Two strides saw him come up to the dugong's shoulders where it had grounded on the beach. Using the paddle as a weapon, Tommy drove a half-hearted thrust at the evil-looking bird. A quick, spiteful dive saw the hooked beak snap at the paddle, and a splinter of wood flew from it, indicating the power of the stroke. The paddle was almost jerked out of the fat youngster's hand, and he staggered back a pace.

"You blinking parrot! What's the game, eh? You sheer off when I tell you!"

Tommy's dander was up now, and, clenching the paddle with both hands, he raised it over his head, and made a hefty swing at the poised creature.

The paddle caught the sea-eagle on one of its wings, and sent it clawing and scraping down the fat flank of the dugong.

Its mate hopped round, then launched itself from the other side of the dugong straight at Tommy's head. The lad smote at it as it came, and was fortunate enough to cause it to swerve, so that the first sweep missed its mark. Yet the talons gripped at Tommy's shoulder as the bird shrieked past, and he felt the sting of the claws as they crossed the skin.

By this time the female eagle had recovered its balance, and launched itself into the fray.

High in the air it rose, with its wings flapping strongly, and its mate followed suit. A moment later the two powerful-winged creatures were circling round and round Tommy's head, making swoops at him, and sending out their high-drawn battle-cries.

It seemed to Tommy as though he were surrounded by wings—wings which buffeted

and smote him, and he hit out again and again with the heavy paddle.

Another sweep saw the male eagle claw Tommy's shoulder for a moment, and the beak fastened itself in the youngster's arm.

A shout and a punch saw the vindictive bird knocked away, and Tommy, realising now that he was in deadly peril, swung round, and, splashing to the beach, began to run across the silvery sand as hard as he could pelt, with the great, white-winged creatures swooping and screeching behind him.

To the Rescue!

"**N**OW then, all together—heave!"

Scat, his eyes alight with the fire of battle, was standing on the top of a stump yelling his loudest, while Don and Val and Taga, with Anna to lend a hand, were straining at a long length of fibrous vine, which they had twisted round the top of the massive sago-palm.

It was a real game of its kind, with a girth of four or five feet, and a thick crown on the top made it look like a gigantic candelabrum.

They had spent a busy half-hour hacking at the cork-like base, and now Scat, swinging the hatchet in his hand, was superintending the felling.

The great palm creaked and groaned, and Scat let another yell out.

"Once more, heave—heave!"

Again the thick trunk swayed, then Scat, leaping from the stump, dashed at the straining tree and gave half a dozen quick strokes with the hatchet.

There was a heartrending groan and a report as the trunk gave way.

"Stand clear! Look out!"

Don and his companions scattered to left and right, and the tree fell with a thud into the cleared space, sending a cloud of warm, pungent dust up.

"Bravo!" Scat cried. "By James, that's a fine bit of work! I hardly thought we'd ever manage it."

Don and Val came out of the dust to find Scat on his knees, peering at the interior of the trunk.

Val placed his foot on a mushroom-like growth which was hanging at the bottom of the tree and started to crush it.

"Be careful, old chap!" Scat exclaimed. "These are real mushrooms, and they have a splendid flavour. D-don't waste them!"

"Well, are you satisfied? Is it sago?" Don asked.

By way of reply the tutor clawed at the soft pulp in the interior of the trunk, scraping a handful out; then, rubbing the fibres between his fingers, he detached a little portion of the meal from it.

"Taste it for yourself," he said. "It is sago all right, and there's at least two or three hundredweight here."

Taga and Anna came forward, and Scat, seizing the axe again, began to work on the trunk.

The bark was fairly soft, and split readily enough. Taga, who had made a number of hard wood wedges, came to Scat's assistance, and presently they had worked a great gap into the trunk.

"We'll have to split it into pieces," Scat said. "Then we can get at the pith. Afterwards the pith will have to be kneaded in water, and strained, in order to separate the fibre from the meal, but I can assure you we have enough food here to last us for five months, if we're careful."

"Right you are, old chap," Don returned, giving the tutor a quick nod. "We'll take your word for it, but we haven't the time to tackle it now. What I suggest is that we should come along here to-morrow and put in a full day at it."

Anna had strolled away to the edge of the clearing, and presently they heard her silvery voice calling to them.

"Don—Val! Quick! Something is happening to Tommy!"

They turned, and made their way round the fallen tree. As they drew nearer to where Anna was standing, a mysterious sound came to them. It was as though an army of beavers were at work in the undergrowth on the other side of the jungle.

A high-pitched squeak followed by heavy beating filled the air; then, quite distinctly, there came a familiar voice.

"Stash it! Whow! Help, help!"

"That's Tommy all right," Don said. "Come along, you fellows, let's see what kind of mischief he's got into now."

They moved off at a sprint through the jungle, and Don was the first to clear the trees, emerging on to the strip of beach.

He came out within six or seven yards of a thicket, and caught sight of two white things sweeping and beating in the heart of the growth.

"Here, Val, come along! Come on, Taga! Don had a stout staff in his hand, and he darted towards the thick bushes, waving it above his head.

With an angry cry the male sea-eagle swept upward, turning its long, curved beak and cruel eyes towards the approaching youngster.

Taga and Val and Scat came barging out of the undergrowth and made a bee-line for the scene of the fight. It was only then that the stout figure of Tommy came creeping out from under the thick growth, and, as he emerged, the female eagle made a last final sweep at him.

"Whow, you beast! Kill it somebody!"

With Scat and Val and Taga to help, Don managed to drive off the infuriated birds, and at last they arose in a hazy, slanting line into the air, poised for a moment, then went winging off seaward.

Tommy, clambering heavily to his feet, came down the beach to where his chums were standing.

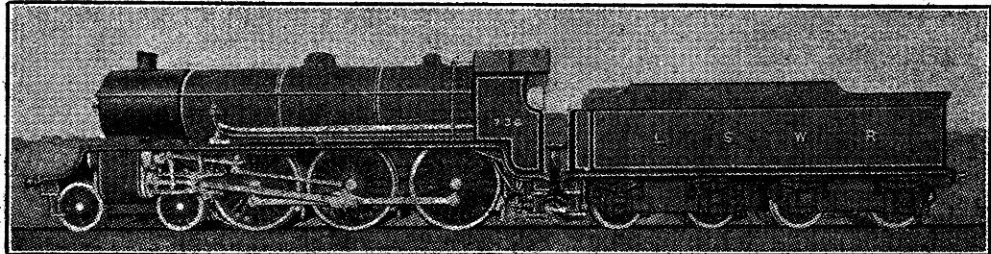
"Nice blinking thing you did to me, you fellows!" he bellowed indignantly. "Next time you kill a darned dugong, just you come and look after it yourself! You might have known jolly well that a herd of blinking eagles would have come down!"

"Herd?" Don said. "As far as I could see there were two of them."

"Well, two is quite enough, believe me," said Tommy. "Look at me. I seem to get all the bumps going."

(Another grand long instalment of this magnificent serial next week!)

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"Mr. Racke's Protege."

(Continued from page 14.)

"Reformatory!" howled Racke. "I say, there's some mistake—"

Robinson shook his head. "There is no mistake," he said rather bitterly. "I am Dillon, the escaped reformatory boy. I thought I had got clear, and had another start in life—"

The man who was holding him stooped and picked up from the floor a card which had escaped Racke's notice.

"Cards?" he asked. Dillon nodded.

"Yes, cards," he said heavily. "I—I can't keep away from them. I did try, sir. But—but I fell."

"The old story again, eh?" said the man. "I'm sorry for you, Dillon; it's got you bad. Cards have always been your ruin. You can take a lesson from this lad, you who've been playing with him. He is in a reformatory because of cards. They've got a fascination for him. He can't keep away from them. And card-playing led to gambling, and that to theft. He tries to fight against it, but if he sees a pack of cards he's done."

"Poor old chap," said Tom Merry sympathetically.

"It can't be helped," said Dillon. "I shall live it down some day. But I've been a cad. I've been ungrateful to the man who gave me my second chance. Just let me stay a minute longer, Graham. Let me write a letter of thanks and apology to Mr. Racke."

And that plea was allowed. Watched angrily by the disappointed Racke and Crooke, the reformatory boy wrote his letter.

Then with bowed head he went from the study. Down the passage he went, with his goaler beside him.

The passage was crowded with fellows all of whom had got the wind of what had happened. Soon the procession came to a standstill, and a well-known voice rang out:

"Mr. Wailton, pway stop! I wish to make a wequest."

"Yes, D'Arcy." The Housemaster stopped, and eyed the Fourth-Former in surprise.

"I wish to ask a favour, sir, on behalf of the Lowah School. May we give Winobson a send-off feast, sir? He's been a jolly good sort—and it may help him to live down his weakness—"

"Hooray!" came a roar. "Good old Gussy!"

Mr. Railton held up his hand, then spoke to the reformatory official.

"Under the circumstances, I accede to your request, boys," he said, "and I am only too pleased to do so."

Dillon left St. Jim's that night, but he went with happy memories, and the best wishes of the juniors. Racke and Crooke kept aloof, but there were many at the gates when Dillon took his last farewell.

"Come back some day, old man," said Tom Merry. "Keep a stiff upper lip, Robinson, and think of St. Jim's. Don't forget we want you to help us lick the New House."

And Dillon—alias Robinson—went off happily. His heart was lighter than it had been for months, and on the morrow he received a letter from Mr. Racke that made him still happier.

For that letter was encouraging—it gave him hope, and stated that Mr. Racke would see that he was released as soon as he had conquered his weakness, and that on his release he would once more become Mr. Racke's protege.

THE END.

(There will be another grand long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled: "SONS OF THE EMPIRE." By Martin Clifford. You should make sure of reading this splendid story by ordering your copy of The GEM LIBRARY early.)

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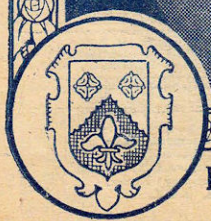
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