954

GEM READERS WIN £10!

Result of "Scarlet Streak" Competition No. 2 inside. (Another £10 offered this week.)

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2D LIBRARY

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May 22nd, 1926.

THE SHADOW OF SHAME!

For Cousin Ethel's sake George Figgins of St. Jim's would suffer anything—even to admitting the theft of a banknote, of which crime he is as innocent as Cousin Ethel herself! (Read the fine, dramatic school story inside.)

OUR "SCARLET STREAK" COMPETITION

First Prize £5,

AND FIVE PRIZES OF £1 EACH.

YOU MUST NOT MISS THIS, BOYS!

HERE is the seventh of our topping one-week competitions, you fellows. You will enjoy it because it is a novel idea, with some jolly good prizes which simply *must be won.*

You are, of course, all reading our new serial, "The Scarlet Streak," which appears on page 23 of this issue. Well, we have written a paragraph about the crooks' headquarters which the artist has put into picture-puzzle form.

Next week we shall give you another new puzzle and there will be more splendid prizes to be won.

In attempting to solve the puzzle it will help if you read the story *and* see the film; also, the sense of the sentences will assist you. But you should remember each picture or sign may represent part of a word, one, two, or three words, but not more than three words.

Try your hand at solving the paragraph—you can see that the opening words are "The crooks' headquarters . . ."—and then write your solution IN INK on a sheet of paper. Cut out the puzzle and the coupon together; attach your solution to the tablet, and, having signed and addressed the coupon IN INK, post your effort to:

GEM, "Scarlet Streak," No. 7,
Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4 (Comp.).

so as to reach there not later than FRIDAY, MAY 28th. Any efforts arriving after that date will be disqualified.

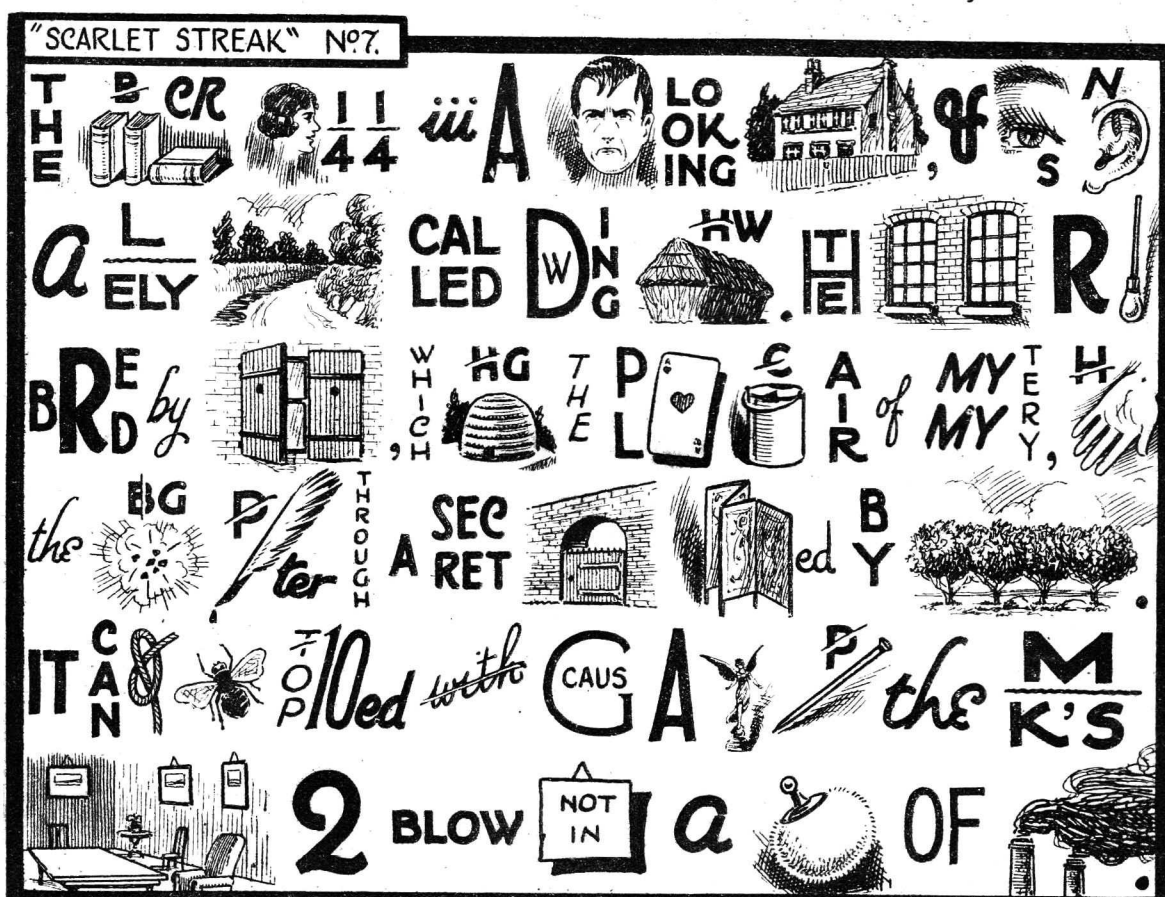
RULES WHICH MUST BE STRICTLY ADHERED TO.

The First Prize of £5 will be awarded for the correct, or most nearly correct, solution. The other prizes will follow in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to divide any of the prizes should it be necessary in the case of ties.

You may send as many efforts as you like, but each must be complete in itself, and must consist of a solution, a puzzle, and a signed coupon. Solutions containing alternatives will be disqualified. The decision of the Editor will be absolutely final.

No one connected with the staff or proprietors of this journal may compete.

Our Grand Story, "The Scarlet Streak," has been filmed by the Universal Co. Read the story *and* see the film.



I enter "Scarlet Streak" Contest No. 7, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

GEM. Closing Date, Friday, May 28th.

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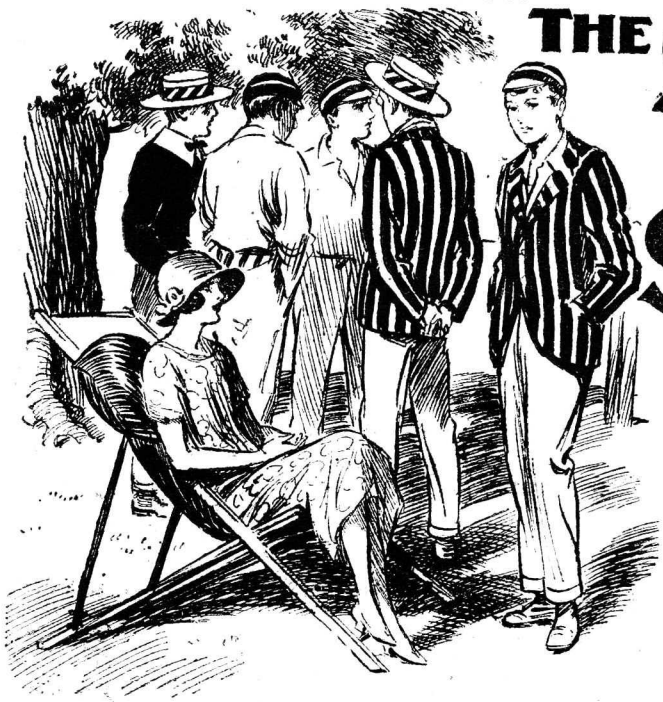
£10 WON!—See Result of "Scarlet Streak" No. 2 on Page 8.

THE REASON WHY! Cousin Ethel is quick to notice that George Figgins is not on good terms with Tom Merry & Co.; that he no longer receives the cheery word, or the grin here and there, as of old. But little does she know that he has become an "outsider" for her sake!



THE SHADOW OF SHAME!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of the Chums of St. Jim's, introducing Cousin Ethel.

By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.
Trimble Wants to Know!

TOM MERRY coloured.

He was crossing the St. Jim's quad in morning break, when he came on Figgins of the Fourth.

As a rule, Tom had a cheery nod and a smile for the junior captain of the New House, when he came in his way.

Now he neither nodded nor smiled. He paused, with a flush in his cheeks, looking, and feeling, extremely uncomfortable.

Figgins did not observe him for the moment.

Figgy was not looking his usual self. Usually he was one of the cheeriest juniors at St. Jim's, and his rugged face, though not precisely handsome, was so fresh and healthy and good-natured, that it was pleasant to look upon. Now his face was utterly downcast, and instead of walking with his accustomed springy step, he was almost slouching along, with his hands deep in his pockets, his eyes on the ground.

Evidently trouble lay heavily upon George Figgins of the Fourth Form.

It was not like Figgins to knuckle under to trouble. It was more like him to meet it with cheery resolution. But there are troubles and troubles; and Figgy's present trouble seemed to have knocked him out.

Tom Merry stopped.

Figgins was coming directly towards him, and the meeting was unavoidable, much as Tom would have liked to avoid it.

A fat junior, leaning on an elm by the path, blinked at Figgins' downcast face, and then at Tom Merry. Baggy Trimble was not of a sympathetic nature, and Figgy's trouble did not worry him. But if he was not sympathetic, he was inquisitive.

"I say, Figgins looks awfully down, doesn't he?" chirruped Trimble. "Looks jolly well squashed, what?"

Tom Merry did not answer.

Figgins heard the fat junior's remark, and looked up quickly.

His face was pale and harassed, but it flushed red as he saw Tom Merry standing in the path.

For a moment he seemed about to speak, and Tom looked more uncomfortable than ever. Figgins changed his mind, his eyes drooped again, and he walked on past the School House junior.

"I say, Tom——" exclaimed Trimble.

Tom Merry walked on, unheeding the fat junior. But Trimble was not to be denied. He detached himself from the elm, and bolted after the captain of the Shell.

"Tom! I say——"

Tom Merry walked on faster.

A fat hand clutched at his sleeve, and stopped him. Baggy Trimble blinked at him, his little round eyes fairly gleaming with curiosity.

"I say, what's up?" gasped Trimble.

"Buzz off!" snapped Tom.

"You've cut Figgins——"

"Oh, dry up!"

"But you have, you know," urged Trimble. "You ain't speaking to Figgins now. You've given him the marble eye. Is it a House row?"

"No, ass!" growled Tom Merry.

"What is it, then?"

"Find out!"

With that somewhat discourteous reply, Tom Merry jerked his sleeve away from Baggy's detaining clutch, and walked on.

Baggy Trimble blinked after him.

Evidently something was "on"—something of a serious nature, to cause a kind-hearted and good-natured fellow like Tom Merry to cut another fellow openly in the quad.

Baggy Trimble prided himself upon being a knowing fellow, always abreast with the latest news. Often he knew as much about a fellow's business as the fellow himself knew—he derived extensive information from his pleasant custom of lurking round corners and lingering at keyholes. And here was something—something quite serious—that he did not know! Something was going on, and he did not know what it was—a state of affairs that was quite intolerable to the Peeping Tom of St. Jim's.

Trimble wanted to know—and he meant to know.

As nothing was to be learned from Tom Merry, Baggy rolled away in pursuit of Figgins.

George Figgins was tramping on dismally under the elms. His two chums, Kerr and Wynn, were not to be seen—the three were generally inseparable—but this morning Figgins seemed to be quite on his own. If he wanted company, however, he did not want Baggy Trimble's, for he gave the fat School House junior a black look as he came up and twitched him by the arm.

"What's up, Figgins?" asked Trimble.

Grunt!

"I say, Tom Merry cut you, you know—the cut direct," said Baggy. "Of course, you're only a New House bounder, but you were friendly enough with Tom yesterday. Have you had a row?"

Grunt!

"You seem pretty down," grinned Trimble. "Has Cousin Ethel given you the marble eye?"

"Shut up!" snapped Figgins.

"But I say——"

"Clear off!"

"Can't you tell a fellow?" demanded Trimble.

"No! Get out!"

Baggy was about to retire in disgust, when Manners and Lowther came sauntering along the path. The two Shell fellows averted their glances as they passed Figgins, and Figgins, with a crimson face, looked at the ground.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Baggy. "There's a lot of them in it! I wonder what the game is."

Giving up Figgins, as he had given up Tom Merry, Baggy hooked on to Manners and Lowther.

"What's going on, you chaps?" he asked.

"We are!" answered Lowther, and the two Shell fellows went on quickly, leaving Trimble blinking in great annoyance.

The bell rang for third lesson a little later, and Baggy had to roll off to the Fourth Form-room. He came on Blake & Co., of Study No. 6, as he went in with the Fourth.

"I say, something's up, you chaps," he said. "Tom Merry's had a frightful row with Figgins of the New House, and they don't speak."

"Rats!" grunted Blake.

"Honest Injun!" said Trimble. "I know all about it. You fellows don't get any of the news."

"Fathead!" said Herries.

"Tom Merry cut him in the quad," said Trimble. "He told me all about it afterwards——"

"What?" exclaimed Digby.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Tom Mewwy has told you all about it, Twimble?"

"Every word," said Baggy calmly. "Tom really hasn't any secrets from me—we're rather pals, you know!"

"I wegard it as vewy wotten of Tom Mewwy to tell you a single word, aftah it was awwanged that it was all to be kept dark!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly.

"You silly ass!" growled Blake. "Tom Merry told him nothing. The fat fraud is only trying to pump us."

"You fellows know, then?" gasped Trimble. "You're in it, too! I say, tell a chap about it."

"I wefuse to say a word to you, Twimble. I wegard you as a pwyin' wottah!" said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"Look here, you know——"

"Wats!"

Blake & Co. went into the Form-room. Levison of the Fourth came up the corridor with Clive and Cardew, and Baggy Trimble proceeded to impart information, little as he had gleaned so far. He never could resist the temptation of posing as the fellow who knew things.

"You chaps heard?" he exclaimed.

"Heard what?" asked Levison.

"About Figgins."

"What about Figgins?" exclaimed Clive with a start.

"Lots!" said Trimble. "I could tell you a lot, if I chose. He's got a row on with a lot of School House chaps—some in the Fourth and some in the Shell—and they bar him. I can't give you all the details, as Blake told me about it in confidence."

"Blake did nothing of the kind," said Levison. "Mind your own business, Trimble."

Levison went into the Form-room with Clive. Baggy clutched at the sleeve of Ralph Reckness Cardew. From Levison's reply, it dawned upon him that the three chums of Study No. 9 were also "in it," whatever "it" was.

"Cardew, old chap——"

Ralph Reckness Cardew shook off Trimble's fat hand, and then, taking out his handkerchief, he wiped his sleeve where Trimble had touched it. Baggy blinked at him in indignant astonishment.

"Don't be a silly ass, Cardew! Look here, do you know what's happened? You might tell a fellow. I say, it's a big row, you know, with all those fellows in it. Let a chap into it, Cardew. Of course, I'll keep it dark!"

Cardew seemed to hesitate.

"You really want to know?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!" gasped Trimble. "I say, what has Figgins done?"

"He's sold his bike."

Trimble jumped.

"Sold his bike? I know he's sold his bike, as I bought it. What on earth——"

"That's it!" said Cardew solemnly. "That did it!"

"But why shouldn't a fellow sell his bike?" asked Trimble in blank astonishment.

"It's not merely selling his bike," explained Cardew with great gravity of manner. "He sold it to you! That is the head and front of his offending, as Shakespeare so eloquently puts it."

"But why?" stuttered Trimble. "I don't see any harm in Figgins selling me his bike when he was hard up."

"You wouldn't!" said Cardew. "Let me enlighten you, dear man. It is unanimously agreed that no decent fellow would touch you with a barge-pole——"

"Eh? What?"

"Or with anythin' but the business end of a boot."

"Look here——"

"To enter into any transaction with you, dear man, is to incur disgrace an' reprobation," said Cardew gravely. "Any fellow who finds himself in your immediate neighbourhood is bound to kick you, as a moral duty. You see that?"

"You silly ass!" howled Trimble.

"That reminds me. I'm talkin' to you myself, and I haven't kicked you," said Cardew. "My mistake. Slue round!"

Cardew twirled the astonished Trimble like a fat humming-top, and his elegant boot was planted rapidly and effectively on Baggy's tight trousers.

There was a howl, and Trimble went into the Form-room quite suddenly. He dropped on his hands and knees there, roaring.

Cardew smiled, and went to his place.

"Ow! Wow!" roared Baggy.

"Trimble!" Mr. Lathom came into the Fourth Form room. "Trimble, why are you sprawling on the floor? Get up at once! Go to your place—not a word! Take your place immediately, you slovenly, disorderly boy!"

Baggy Trimble rolled to his place with feelings too deep for words.

Baggy was not often attentive in class, and in third lesson, on this especial morning, he was less attentive than ever.

There was a secret, known to many fellows, and unknown to Baggy! It was an intolerable situation.

Cardew, evidently, had been pulling his fat leg, in his whimsical way, obviously. Cardew's explanation was not the right one. But what was the explanation?

Ten School House fellows, at least, were "down" on George Figgins of the New House, heretofore one of the most popular fellows at St. Jim's, with almost as many friends in the School House as in his own House.

It was amazing, and decidedly interesting, and Baggy Trimble burned with curiosity. He wanted to know, and he did not know. Naturally, in such circumstances, Baggy had little attention to waste on third lesson, which led to Mr. Lathom bestowing lines, and then the pointer, upon Trimble of the Fourth. And even after receiving the pointer on his fat knuckles, Baggy blinked round at the gloomy face of George Figgins, sitting grim and glum at his desk, and wondered desperately what was "up," without being able even to begin to guess.

CHAPTER 2.
A Surprise for Cardew!

"LEVISON, old bean!"

"Yes?"

"You're an ass!"

"Thanks!" said Ernest Levison with a faint smile.

"I mean it, old scout," said Cardew. "You're no end of a sagacious card, Ernest, but in some matters you're an ass. Look at the way you stick to me, for instance—you, a respectable and highly-respected member of this estimable community, I, a loafin' waster, a dog with a jolly bad name. Even suspected, at one time of baggin' a banknote from D'Arcy's study—that's the opinion some fellows had of me."

"Fatheads!" grunted Clive.

Clive and Levison were at prep in Study No. 9 of the Fourth. Cardew should have been at prep also, instead of which he was lounging in the study armchair with one elegant leg crossed over the other, his hands behind the back of his head, a whimsical smile on his face.

Cardew appeared to have been thinking while his comrades were working. Thinking, perhaps, was not much in the careless fellow's line, but working was much less so; it was a common custom of his to neglect his prep, and "chance" it with Mr. Lathom in the morning.

Levison looked up at him quietly.

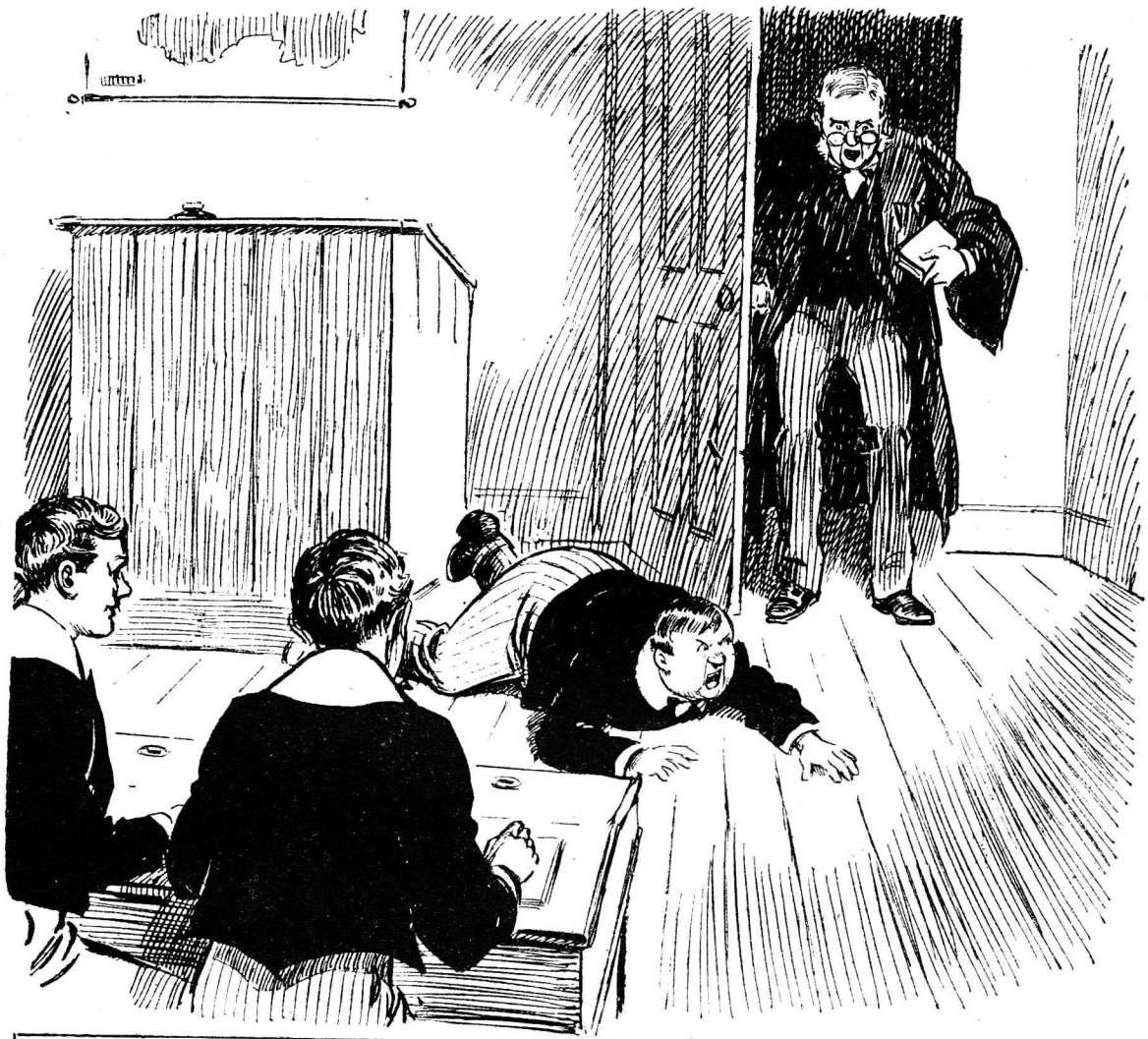
"Hadn't you better do some work, Cardew?" he suggested.

Cardew shook his head.

"I think not, old bean," he answered. "I'm chancin' it once more with dear old Lathom."

"You've been chancing it a little too often lately," said Clive. "Why not pile in for once?"

"I've been thinkin'. The outcome of my cogitations is as stated, and it comes to this—that Levison is an ass," said Cardew lazily. "Levison, findin' out that I was barred on suspicion of baggin' D'Arcy's ten-pound note, took up the cudgels for me like a man an' a brother, and cleared me right up to the hilt. I don't know whether it was worth the trouble, but he did it."



Cardew's elegant boot smote Baggy Trimble's tight trousers quite effectively; there was a wild howl and the fat junior sprawled on the floor. "Ow! Wow!" he roared. "Trimble!" Mr. Lathom came into the Fourth Form room. "Trimble! Why are you sprawling on the floor? Get up at once! Go to your place you slovenly, disorderly boy!"
(See Chapter 1.)

"Is that why I am an ass?" asked Levison good-humouredly.

"Not only that. In clearin' me you worked it out that Figgins of the New House had bagged the banknote."

"Not much doubt about that, when it was found on him," said Sidney Clive with a stare. "He had it in his pocket, and gave it back to D'Arcy. Doesn't that settle it?"

"I think not."

"Then it's you who are an ass, and a silly ass!" said Clive, and he turned to his prep again.

"That your opinion also, Ernest, old bean?" asked Cardew.

"Quite!"

"Well, I said you were an ass," said Cardew. "I'll repeat it if you like. Ass!"

Levison knitted his brows.

"Look here, Cardew, don't play the goat," he said impatiently. "You're always playing the giddy ox, in one way or another. That was why suspicion fell on you when the banknote was missed—you'd had the cheek to go and smoke in Study No. 6 while the fellows there were out, and the banknote was missed afterwards; and then you went on playing the ox and making the fellows wild, till they settled it that you d done it. You'd still be barred as a suspected thief if Clive and I hadn't taken the matter up. Let the subject drop, and play the ox in some other way if you must be a goat."

Cardew chuckled.

"You see, I was barred on suspicion," he said. "Now poor Figgins is barred. I've a natural sympathy for him, havin' been through the same jolly old experience so recently."

"Serve him right!" exclaimed Clive hotly. "He's taken us all in. Every fellow would have sworn that Figgins was incapable of anything of the kind, and yet he had the stolen note on him. I don't think any decent fellow ought to speak to a thief."

"Granted!"

"Well, then, you ass——"

"But I somehow believe in old Figgins," drawled Cardew. "I can't say I like him particularly; he's not my style at all; much too strenuous for me, and so jolly transparent that it's not worth the trouble to pull his leg. But there's somethin' about him a fellow has to respect. I dare say he's every sort of an ass, but he's no rogue."

"Rubbish!" snapped Clive.

"Then how did he come by the banknote?" demanded Levison.

"Goodness knows."

"Oh, chuck it!" said Clive impatiently. "It's only Cardew's rot! The matter's done with. We've agreed to keep it dark, and keep Figgins from being expelled, to give him another chance. But he will always be barred by the fellows who know what he's done. Chuck it, Cardew! It's not a tasty subject!"

"Yes, chuck it!" agreed Levison.

Cardew yawned, and drew himself lazily out of the arm-chair.

"Right-ho!" he agreed. "I'll chuck it and leave you two industrious youths to slog, while I take a little walk across the quad."

"Does that mean that you're going to the New House?" asked Levison.

"Just that."

"Not to see Figgins?"

"Right again."

"And why?" asked Levison very quietly.

"Just to mention to him that he has my sympathy, as a fellow in the same boat that I was in lately."

Levison compressed his lips.

"Well, you'll do as you choose, of course," he said. "No bizney of mine. Shut the door after you."

Cardew paused a moment.

"Don't be huffy, Ernest, old bean," he said, with a touch of earnestness in his manner. "I really and truly feel so end grateful to you for what you did. It was jolly unpleasant a lot of fellows lookin' on me as a chap capable of pinchin' money. But in shiftin' it off me, I fancy you shifted it on to the wrong man."

"I shifted it on to the man who had the stolen money in his pockets, and no explanation to offer."

"I know. But as I've said, I believe in Figgins, and, believin' as I do, I want to tell him so. There's more in this matter than meets the eye, I think, and I want to get to the bottom of it."

"We've got to the bottom of it, and it's over and done with," said Clive. "Figgins is jolly lucky not to be bunked from the school."

"If he's guilty, yes. But if not, he's gettin' pretty hard measure."

"Oh, rats!"

"Rot!" said Levison gruffly.

"Well, let me go my own wilful way," urged Cardew. "As you so justly remarked, I'm always playin' the giddy ox in one way or another, an' this way is as good as any other. Ta-ta, old beans!"

Cardew left the study and strolled down the stairs and out of the School House.

His usually careless face was very thoughtful in expression as he walked across to Mr. Ratcliff's House.

Why he still believed in Figgins, in the face of the overwhelming evidence of his guilt, Cardew could hardly have said. Certainly it was not his judgment that he relied upon. His cool judgment told him that Figgins was guilty. It was rather upon instinct than reason that he founded his belief. The evidence was complete and unanswerable, yet Cardew had a feeling that there was a "catch" somewhere, that George Figgins, if he had chosen, could have given an explanation of the fact that the banknote was in his possession. Why he had not chosen to do so was a mystery. Possibly love of opposition had something to do with Cardew's belief in Figgins; it was like him to set up his solitary judgment against that of a crowd. Tom Merry & Co. were all satisfied that the truth had been found out. No doubt that was a reason for Ralph Reckness Cardew to feel dissatisfied.

The dandy of the Fourth entered the New House and went up the staircase to the Fourth Form passage. He tapped at the door of No. 4 there, and opened it.

Kerr and Wynn were in the study. They were at prep, but working in a very desultory manner, and with gloomy faces. Neither of them gave the School House junior a welcoming look.

Cardew glanced round the room.

"Figgins not at home?" he asked.

"No!" answered Kerr shortly.

"I want to speak to him."

"You do?" exclaimed Fatty Wynn, in astonishment.

"Yes. No harm in that, I suppose?" asked Cardew cheerily. "I believe I'm not supposed to be a character with an improvin' influence, but a few minutes' conversation won't hurt Figgy."

"Oh, don't be an ass! said Kerr. "I thought you were one of the fellows who bar Figgins now."

"Not in the least."

"But you know all about the banknote?"

"All that's known I know; but I fancy there's somethin' more that only Figgins knows," answered Cardew urbanely. "As you fellows are Figgy's bosom pals, it may interest you to hear that I believe Figgy to be perfectly innocent."

"What?" exclaimed the two New House juniors together.

"Have I surprised you, dear men? I thought you'd like an unsolicited testimonial to Figgins from the School House."

The two juniors stared blankly at Cardew, and it was his turn to look surprised.

"Great gad! You don't mean to say that you're not backin' up your own pal?" he exclaimed.

Kerr reddened.

"You see——" muttered Fatty Wynn.

"Why, when the jolly old suspicion was on me, Clive and Levison never rested till they'd rooted it out about the blinkin' banknote and set me right," said Cardew. "I fancied you fellows would be feelin' the same about Figgins."

"The case isn't the same."

"Why not?"

"Because"—Kerr hesitated, and lowered his voice—"as the whole thing is to be kept secret, you may as well know. Goodness knows we feel for Figgy! He must have been mad when he did it—must have been fairly off his rocker! He's owned up!"

"What?" yelled Cardew.

"He's owned up to taking D'Arcy's banknote from Study No. 6 on the day of the House match," groaned Fatty Wynn. "Fairly knocked us over! Of course, he must have gone suddenly potty when he did it."

Cardew almost staggered.

"Figgins owned up to bein' a thief?" he breathed.

"Yes."

"Great gad!"

"He doesn't come to this study now," muttered Kerr miserably. "He does his prep with Reddy and Owen in their room. They don't know, of course. They think it's a tiff. If you were thinking of rooting into the matter on Figgy's account, Cardew——"

"Just that."

"Don't do it, then. Least said soonest mended. We want the whole thing forgotten before something comes out. We stick to it that Figgins must have been out of his senses when he did it, and we're standing by him. He's got to live it down somehow."

"Figgins, you know—old Figgy, bagging a fellow's money!" groaned Fatty Wynn. "I thought he was wandering in his mind when he said it. But he keeps to it. He wants the thing forgotten, same as we do. Least said soonest mended."

Cardew whistled softly.

"And I came over to tell him that I believed in him!" he murmured.

"It was decent of you," said Kerr. "But there's nothing doing."

Cardew nodded and quitted the study There was a curious expression on his face as he walked back to the School House. It had been a generous impulse to seek Figgins out in his hour of affliction and give him the assurance of at least one fellow's faith in his honour. Cardew smiled at himself now for that impulse.

Levison and Clive were still at prep when he came back into Study No. 9 in the School House.

Cardew stood watching them for a few minutes in silence till they ceased their work and looked up at him.

"Well?" said Levison gruffly.

"I give in, old bean."

"What do you mean?"

"There was an ass in this study, as I said. Only it's not you who are the ass, old bean, it is little me. I own up! Figgins is the man, and you nailed him," said Cardew, shrugging his shoulders. "I'm the ass!"

And Ralph Reckness Cardew lounged into the study armchair again, where he idly watched his comrades till prep was over.

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CHAPTER 3.
Figgins Too!

"CRICKET'S cricket!" said Blake.

That undeniable proposition was not denied by the other fellows. But Tom Merry & Co. looked very doubtful.

"Figgins is a first-class bat," went on Blake. "If we leave him out we take a risk in playing the Grammar School. They're hot stuff, and we want every good man we've got."

Tom Merry nodded.

"But——" he said.

"Cricket's cricket, and other things are other things," said Blake. "We bar Figgins because of—you know what. But we've agreed to keep the whole thing dark and let it be forgotten."

"Yaas, wathah!" concurred Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"That being the case," resumed Blake, "I don't see why Figgins should be turned out of the cricket, especially as we want a good man in the batting line. It will cause a lot of feeling in the New House, too, where they swear by Figgins, and don't know the circumstances. Of course, the New House can go and eat coke; still, we don't want to put our House in the wrong."

"Spoken like an oracle!" agreed Monty Lowther.

"Another thing is," went on Blake, "Figgins can't be turned out, unless we speak out against him. We can't say anything against his cricket. So why are we dropping him? Fellows will want to know."

"That's so," agreed Tom.

"Play him, then," said Blake. "After all, we always liked Figgins. I can't understand how he came to make such an awfully bad break; but the fact is I can't feel towards him as I feel towards a thief. I think he must

have gone potty or something. We know he never parted with the banknote, and gave it back to D'Arcy really of his own accord. He had some sort of horrid delusion for a minute, that made him do it; that's the only way I can account for it."

"Yaas, wathah! My Cousin Ethel thinks a lot of Figgins, you know, and she has a lot of tact and judgment," remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Ethel must never know a word about the stolen banknote," said Tom Merry hastily.

"Wathah not! I twust you do not suppose me indiscweet enough to mention it, Tom Mewwy. In fact, I was goin' to warn you youngstahs to be vewy discweet."

"Bow-wow!"

"Weally, Monty Lowthah——"

"Well, to come back to Figgins and cricket," said Blake, "I think he ought to be put in the eleven to play the Grammar School, for the reasons I've given. All the same, I leave it to you, Tommy."

"Well, I agree," said Tom. "But it's dashed awkward. Somehow or other I can't help feeling friendly towards Figgins, in spite of what's happened—and I really think I should fancy there was some mistake in the matter if Figgins hadn't actually owned up to it. It's dashed awkward to meet him and speak to him while we bar him, but I suppose you're right, Blake. If we're going to give him a chance to make good again it would be the worst thing we could do to cut him out of the cricket. I'll go over and speak to him."

The group of juniors who had been discussing the matter in a shady corner of the old quad broke up, and Tom Merry walked towards the New House.

He was in a rather troubled mood.

Figgins had to be barred; the fellow who admitted that he had taken D'Arcy's banknote was not a fellow with whom Tom Merry & Co. could keep on friendly terms.

Yet somehow it was impossible either to dislike or to despise old Figgins.

Why he had done it was a mystery, but he admitted that he had done it, and that ended the matter.

Right up to the finish he had denied the theft, though he had been unable or unwilling to account for the stolen banknote being in his possession. At the finish he had admitted it to Kerr and Wynn, and told them to let the other fellows know, so that the whole wretched business could be dropped and forgotten. Ten School House fellows and two of the New House were in the secret; but they all wished Figgins well, and were eager to forget his strange and terrible lapse from honesty. Levison, perhaps, was hardest, but he had been deeply stirred by the fact that suspicion had first fallen on his chum Cardew. Of all who knew, nobody was likely to let out the secret; but they could not, of course, feel the same to Figgins as of old.

They would screen him, save him from the consequences of his action, but they could not and would not consort with a thief.

In cricket matters Figgins was a great man in the Lower School of St. Jim's; he was junior captain of his House, and he was always a member of the eleven that played for school under Tom Merry's captaincy. Leaving him out meant causing great excitement and resentment in his House, as Blake had remarked. All the New House would want to know why. Only the week before Figgins had distinguished himself in a House match, beating the School House juniors handsomely; so nothing could be alleged against his cricket. And if he was dropped for any other reason his House most assuredly would want to know the reason.

Tom Merry found Figgins loafing about the doorway of the New House with his hands in his pockets. It was not like George Figgins to loaf or lounge; but all the stiffening, so to speak, seemed to have been taken out of him now.

Kerr and Wynn were nowhere to be seen—Figgins was not often seen with his former inseparable comrades now.

But Redfern and Owen of the New House Fourth were with him; Figgy was a fellow whose friends were innumerable as the sands on the shore, he never went anywhere without cordial faces greeting him. Reddy and Owen, knowing that Figgy was down on his luck, without knowing why, were trying to cheer him up—without succeeding. Knowing nothing of the tragic secret, they innocently supposed that Figgins was worried about losing his bike early in the summer—Figgy having sold it to Baggy Trimble much below its value, in a hurry to raise money for some reason of his own. Baggy had bagged the "jigger" for seven pounds, and was already offering it for sale for ten. At the latter price it was cheap, and it was not likely to be long on Baggy's hands. Trimble was quite pleased with himself over this stroke of business. Other fellows had their own opinion about a fellow who drove a hard bargain with a chap who was in sudden and pressing need of cash.

Figgins, as a matter of fact, had forgotten the bike—he had more serious matters than that on his mind.

"The fact is, that fat brute is a regular Shylock," Redfern was saying as Tom Merry came up. "He ought to let you have it back for the seven quid, Figgy; and your friends will lend you the money till you can square."

"I don't see giving the brute ten!" said Owen.

"No fear!"

Figgins did not answer; in fact, he did not hear. Reddy and Owen were being kind and consoling; but they were quite off the mark, as it were, and Figgins was too deep in black thoughts to heed them.

He coloured as Tom Merry came up the steps of the New House. Reddy and Owen looked rather curiously at Tom. They knew that there was some trouble on, and that Tom and his friends barred Figgins. It was no special concern of theirs, but they were prepared to back up a man of their own House, and at a sign from Figgy, would have rolled the School House junior cheerily down the steps.

But Figgy did not give the sign; he only flushed and looked self-conscious and uncomfortable.

Tom was feeling extremely uncomfortable also. But he plunged into the subject at once.

"About the cricket this afternoon, Figgins," he said.

"The cricket?" repeated Figgins.

"The Grammar School match, you know."

"Oh! I—I'd forgotten that!"

Redfern and Owen exchanged a stare of surprise and strolled away. If Figgins had forgotten one of the regular school cricket fixtures, there must be something very wrong with Figgins.

"Well, you're playing?" said Tom.

"I!" exclaimed Figgins. "You don't want me!"

"You're in the eleven!"

"I stand out!" said Figgins curtly.

"Because——"

"Oh, you know why!" said Figgins bitterly. "Do you think I can play cricket with you fellows who think——" He broke off.

"So far as the cricket is concerned, we're willing to go on as if nothing had happened," said Tom.

"I—I suppose I ought to be grateful for that," muttered Figgins.

"That isn't the question," said Tom. "Bother all that! Just play up as usual."

Figgins shook his head.

"I can't! I—I dare say I've no right to be thin-skinned in the circumstances, but—but the less I show up in public the better. Count me out."

Tom Merry had half-expected that answer from Figgins, and had expected to feel relieved if he heard it. But he realised that he did not feel relieved; somehow or other, he could not help feeling concerned about Figgins. Quite to his own surprise, he found himself urging the New House junior to play.

"I quite understand," he said. "But you'd better play up, Figgins. You won't do yourself any good mooching about and brooding."

"I know that."

"There's Miss Cleveland, too——"

Figgins started violently.

"Ethel! What about Ethel? She doesn't know——"

"Of course she knows nothing," said Tom hastily. "She never even knew that D'Arcy had a banknote, or lost it. You can't imagine that a word would be said to Cousin Ethel, to spoil her visit here."

Figgins breathed quickly.

"All right, then," he said. "You were saying——"

"Miss Cleveland is certain to walk down from the Head's house to see the match. She will expect to see you play. She's only staying at St. Jim's a few days longer, with

Mrs. Holmes; nobody wants her to suspect that there's any trouble."

"For goodness' sake, no!" said Figgins.

"Well, then, better play up in this match, even if you cut cricket later," said Tom.

Figgins hesitated.

"And—and you fellows are willing—in the—the circumstances—to—to—to keep me in the eleven?"

"Yes."

Another long pause.

"I'll play, then," said Figgins. "I—I don't want Ethel to suspect anything. It's rotten enough for me without that. Perhaps—sometime—you mayn't think so badly of me as you do now. If you knew all about it, you wouldn't. Never mind that, though. I'll play!"

"Done!" said Tom.

And when Gordon Gay & Co. of the Grammar School came over to St. Jim's that afternoon, Figgins of the Fourth was in Tom Merry's eleven to meet them.

CHAPTER 4.

The Grammar School Match!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, in spotless white, was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever as he escorted Cousin Ethel to the cricket-ground.

Ethel's visit to Mrs. Holmes was drawing towards its end, and it had not been quite so happy as she had anticipated, owing to a little difficulty that had arisen with George Figgins.

Gussy felt many eyes upon him as he walked beside Cousin Ethel, and his noble countenance wore its sunniest smile.

"It's goin' to be wathah a good game," said D'Arcy. "The Gwammah School boundahs are said to be in wathah good form. But, of course, we shall beat them."

"Oh, I am sure of that!" assented Ethel.

"We've got some wathah good bats," said D'Arcy. "Tom Mewwy is weally good, and Talbot is all wight, and, of course, I am wathah a dab at the game, if I may say so without bwaggin'. The School House is the house for ewicketers, you know."

"But you have some New House men in the eleven," said Ethel carelessly.

"Oh, yaas," said D'Arcy unsuspiciously. "They're not up to the form of our House, though—in my opinion, at least. Evewy School House man agwees with me about that."

Ethel smiled.

"Weddy is a good man, in his way," went on D'Arcy. "So is Kerr, and, of course, Fatty Wynn is no end of a bowlah."

"And Figgins?"

"Oh, Figgins is all wight," said D'Arcy. "I fancy he's not in his best form to-day, but I dare say he will put up some sort of a game."

Ethel's smile was less bright for a moment.

"Figgins is not ill?" she asked.

"Oh, no!"

"No accident, I hope?"

"Not at all. Off colour a bit, I think, that's all," said D'Arcy evasively. "I believe Wynn is gweatah than evah, though. He is weally our best bowlah, though a New House man. But Talbot wuns him vewy close, and Blake can send down a good ball, you know."

Evidently Arthur Augustus did not want to discuss Figgins, and Cousin Ethel let the subject drop.

But when she arrived at the pavilion, and was conducted gracefully to her chair by her elegant cousin, her eyes roved round as if in search of someone.

Tom Merry came up, with Manners and Lowther, and most of the cricketers came to claim a word or a glance from Ethel Cleveland. But Figgins did not draw near.

Figgy was there, and he seemed to stand a little apart in rather moody silence, speaking to nobody, not even to Kerr or Wynn.

Ethel's face grew a little clouded as she noted it.

That Cousin Ethel liked George Figgins very much was known to most of the juniors who were his friends, even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy having some glimmering of the fact.

As a rule, indeed, girls did take to Figgins; partly, perhaps, because he never dreamed of suspecting himself to be an attractive fellow.

Certainly Cousin Ethel both liked and trusted him, in spite of the little coldness that had lately arisen between them.

Poor Figgy was not used to keeping secrets. His countenance was a speaking one, and less keen eyes than Ethel's would have detected that Figgy was in the lowest depth of despondency that sunny afternoon.

On the green cricket field, with the sun shining, and white-clad figures dotting the greensward, Figgins ought to have been in his element, and quite merry and bright. It was easy to see, however, that he was the reverse of that, and Ethel wondered why.

Gordon Gay & Co. arrived from the Grammar School, and the game began, with a Grammarian innings. Tom Merry & Co. went into the field, and it was not upon Tom's sturdy form, or the elegant figure of Gussy, that Ethel's glance lingered—it was upon the much less handsome and graceful figure of George Figgins. At the very start she could see that Figgy was not in his usual form. More than once he missed a catch that should have been fairly easy to him, and once or twice a fag yelled from the crowd, "Butter-fingers!" Ethel recognised the voice of her youngest cousin, Wally of the Third, and looked vexed. She saw the flush that came into Figgy's face when D'Arcy minor yelled.

The Grammarians undoubtedly were in good form. Fatty Wynn and Talbot dealt faithfully by them, but the change bowlers had hard work to touch a wicket. And the catches that Figgins had missed were all to the good from the Grammarian point of view. Certainly, other fellows in the

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RESULT OF "SCARLET STREAK" COMPETITION No. 2.

In this competition no competitor sent in a correct solution. The FIRST PRIZE of £5 has therefore been awarded to:

GREVILLE BARNARD,
35, Lansdowne Street, Hove, Sussex,

whose effort, containing two errors, came nearest to correct.

THE FIVE PRIZES OF £1 EACH have been divided among the following seven competitors whose solutions each contained three errors:—

F. R. Collison, 40, Clarence Road, Tottenham, London, N.15.
A. Diver, Junr, 55, Rutland Road, South Hackney, London, E.9.
Albert Goulding, 160, William Street, Swindon, Wilts.
Raymond W. Kernick, 103, Showell Green Lane, Sparkhill, Birmingham.
Edward Limmer, 24, Ceres Road, Plumstead, London, S.E.18.
John V. Marsh, 151, Holme Church Lane, Beverley, E. Yorks.
H. Smith, 32, Berry Street, Walker, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

The correct solution was as follows:—

John Carson, the inventor of the Scarlet Streak, has changed his name to Richard Crawford, to evade the gang who are planning to get his wonderful invention. His laboratory is in a building outside a large city, and he is assisted by his only daughter, Mary. Carson has so concealed the drawings, that the sole clue to their whereabouts is contained in a crossword puzzle.

ANOTHER £10 WAITING TO BE WON! **See page 2.**

ST. JIM'S JINGLES—No. 37.

THE dusky Jam of Blundelpore
The bard now introduces;
I should have dealt with him before,
But—(Silence! No excuses!—ED.)
He hails from India's coral strand,
His ways are hard to fathom,
And much too deep to understand—
They baffle poor old Lathom!

It needs an expert to discern
The inmost mind of Koumi;
He's gay, and then he's taciturn,
He's glad, and then he's gloomy!
No doubt his curious Eastern strain
Affects his disposition;
The fact that he has skill and brain
Requires no repetition.

To see him on the cricket-field
Is quite a revelation;
The willow he contrives to wield
With great determination.
At bowling, he is simply great,
His stuff is seldom smitten;
He is compared with Maurice Tate,
Who bowls so well for Britain!

KOUMI RAO,
of the New House Fourth.

His study is a sumptuous den,
With Oriental trappings;
And carpets made by native men,
And curious rugs and wrappings.
Indeed, the Jam of Blundelpore
Such style and taste evinces,
You'd take him for a Rajah, or
One of the Eastern Princes!

But "Jammy," as he's often called,
Wins general admiration;
Although his schoolmates are appalled
At his pronunciation.
He finds the English language hard
To read, digest, and utter;
He mixes Shakespeare's words (poor bard!)
With chunks of pure Calcutta!

Good luck attend you, dusky friend,
In all your enterprises!
And may Dame Fortune often send
A shower of glad surprises.
For though you're not of British birth,
And act a trifle queerly,
We recognise your sterling worth,
And praise it most sincerely!

field missed catches—even Gussy missed an easy one through choosing the wrong moment to brush a gnat from his noble nose. But Figgins was generally so reliable a man that his little failings were more specially noticed.

Ethel observed, too, that Figgins did not seem to receive the cheery word or grin here and there, which the other fellows exchanged every now and then.

Plainly enough to the girl's anxious glance, there was something wrong—some trouble had fallen on George Figgins—something that had impaired his popularity with the St. Jim's fellows, and had plunged Figgy himself into gloomy glumness.

She wondered whether he would come and speak to her when the Grammarian innings was over, but when the visitors were all down for 100, and the field came off, Figgins did not approach.

Fatty Wynn made a straight line for the school shop as soon as he was at liberty, but Kerr came up to salute the distinguished visitor. Ethel smiled at him. She liked the Scottish junior, partly for his own good qualities, partly because he was Figgy's loyal chum.

"They've got a hundwed up," Arthur Augustus told Ethel. "It would not have been so much if that beastly gnat had not settled on my nose just then. I missed a catch, you know, because——"

"You missed a good many!" grinned Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"It's catching," said Kangaroo of the Shell. "Figgins was missing catches as if he was doing it for a wager. What's the matter with Figgins to-day?"

"Seedy, I should think," said Redfern of the New House. "Not in his usual form, anyhow."

"I hope Figgins is not ill," Cousin Ethel said to Kerr.

"Oh, no," said Kerr uneasily. "Figgy's all right. A bit off colour so far as cricket is concerned, I think."

Ethel opened her lips and closed them again, a little constrained. She wanted to speak to Figgins, but she could not say so, and he did not come. But Kerr was quite canny enough to know what was in her thoughts, and he detached himself from the little crowd round Cousin Ethel's chair, and strolled away to where Figgins stood leaning on the pavilion, moodily staring before him.

"Why don't you go and speak to Miss Cleveland, Figgy?" muttered Kerr. "She expects you to."

Figgins started and coloured.

"Do you think she wants me to?"

"I know she does, ass! You'd know it, too, if you weren't the biggest ass at St. Jim's."

Figgins smiled faintly.

"I'm not feeling very bright," he muttered, "and—and those fellows are round her, and—and——"

"Don't be a goat—she's hurt!"

"Oh!"

That was enough for Figgins. A moment later and he was in the circle round Ethel's chair, raising his cap with a reddened face to the girl.

Ethel smiled at him a little tremulously.

Blake strolled away, and Arthur Augustus became deeply interested in a distant view of the School House. Herries and Digby turned away and began a conversation about nothing in particular. Levison and Clive moved off unobtrusively, but they moved off. Tom Merry, who was approaching, paused, and stopped, and began to speak with Manners and Lowther.

Other fellows—who were not in the secret—nodded cheerily enough to Figgins. But Cousin Ethel could not fail to note the general chilly coldness that had fallen upon Tom Merry and his intimate friends at Figgins' approach.

"So glad to see you here, Miss Ethel," said Figgins awkwardly, his face blazing red. "Not much of a game so far—we're not doing very well."

He stood by Ethel's chair, and for the moment she was able to speak to him without being heard by other ears.

"I want to see you bat well to-day," she said in a low voice. "This is the last match I shall see before I leave, you know."

Figgins' lip quivered.

"I'll do my best, Ethel. But—I—I say, you're not waxy with me now?"

Ethel smiled.

"I never was really angry with you," she said. "I admit I was annoyed by that incident of the banknote. I could not understand you then, and I do not understand now. But that is over. Surely you are not thinking of that now?"

Figgy's gloomy face brightened a little.

"If you're not down on me I can stand the rest," he said. "What does it matter, anyhow?"

"You have had some trouble with your friends?"

"They haven't told you!" exclaimed Figgins.

"I am not blind," said Ethel.

"I—I suppose you've noticed," muttered Figgins dispiritedly. "That—that's partly why I wanted to stand out to-day. But I—I hoped you wouldn't notice."

"What is the trouble?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"You do not wish to tell me?"

"It—it's a sort of misunderstanding," said Figgins haltingly. "Mind, I don't blame them—they've reason for thinking as they do. It happens to be a thing I can't explain, that's all. Nothing to worry about, you know," added Figgins, with a ghastly attempt at cheerfulness.

Gordon Gay, of the Grammar School, came cheerily up at this moment to speak to Cousin Ethel, and Figgins glumly moved away. He was relieved by the interruption, however. He dreaded Ethel's questions. And he did not approach the girl again before the St. Jim's innings commenced.

CHAPTER 5.
Well Played, Figgins!

TOM MERRY opened the innings for St. Jim's, with Figgins at the other end. Tom ran a single, to begin with; and all the eyes in the St. Jim's crowd were on Figgins as he faced the bowling in his turn.

After his extremely poor display in the field, and his general manner of being out of sorts and off colour, the

juniors did not expect much of him at the wickets. Some fellows wondered that Tom had not left him for the tail of the innings, while Kerr wondered whether Tom's object was to get shut of him as quickly as possible. As a matter of fact, Tom Merry did not expect very much of Figgins in his present mood; but Figgy was, after all, a splendid bat when he was in form, and the St. Jim's junior captain was anxious to give him every chance.

If Figgins, with the familiar willow in his grip, pulled round and played a good game, the longer he was at the wickets the better; and if he was going to peter out and score a duck's egg, as the fellows generally seemed to expect, at least it would relieve his feelings to get out of irksome company.

But a change seemed to have come over Figgins of the Fourth.

Perhaps Cousin Ethel suspected the reason, as she watched him at the wickets.

Those few words with Ethel, the wish she had expressed to see him do well for his side, had braced Figgins wonderfully. Whatever the fellows thought of him, there was one who had liked and trusted him, and sincerely wished him well, and would be proud of his success—and that one was the one whose opinion he valued most highly.

Figgins had pulled himself together, and he went on with the determination to play the game of his life, driving every thought from his mind but that. Cousin Ethel should not see him fail his side in the last cricket match she was to witness before she left St. Jim's.

The first clatter of bat and ball warned the watching crowd that Figgins was in form again.

The leather went for four, and there was a cheer from the New House fellows in the crowd.

"Bravo, Figgins!"

"Good old New House!"

"Bravo!"

"Bai Jove, that's wathah good!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was leaning on the back of Ethel's chair while he waited for his turn to bat. "Figgins is pickin' up again."

Ethel's face was very bright now.

That over gave the Grammarians plenty of leather-hunting, and the School House men joined the New House fellows in cheering Figgins.

But in the next over Tom Merry had bad luck, being caught out neatly in the slips by Gordon Gay, and Tom came back to the pavilion rather ruefully, with only seven to his credit.

"Talbot! Man in!"

Talbot of the Shell went to the wickets, and for a good many overs there was hard work for the Grammarians in the field, Talbot being in his usual fine form. But when a wicket went down, it was Talbot's, and George Figgins was still going strong.

Redfern of the New House was next man in, and there was a groan from the men of his House when he was gifted with a duck's egg. Then came Levison of the Fourth, and he gave Figgins a rather inimical look as he passed him on his way.

There was general amazement and dismay when Levison was dismissed for a duck's egg—he had been expected to do at least as well as Figgins. But his luck was out, and he came off and rejoined Clive, who was there to watch the game.

Cardew had not turned up, and Levison was not sorry to miss his malicious smile as he came off so disastrously.

Arthur Augustus hurriedly fastened his pad. He was next man on the list.

"Man in!"

"D'Arcy!"

"Where's that ass Gussy?"

"All wight, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I won't keep you waitin' a minute! I did not expect to be wanted so quickly, you know, as Figgins seems so well set, and Levison weally—— Hem!"

"Never mind me; buck up!" grunted Levison.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! I was not goin' to make any unfeelin' wefewence to the wotten innin's you have put up——"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Levison——"

"Get a move on!" roared Tom Merry. "The Grammarians have to get home some time to-night."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Buck up, fathead!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

Arthur Augustus was ready at last.

"Keep your eye on me, Ethel," he said finally. "I have been cultivatin' a late cut that is wathah good. Without bwaggin', you know, I weally think it is wathah good, and worth watchin'."

"I shall watch you," said Ethel, smiling.

"Wight-ho!"

"Shall we carry him to the wickets?" asked Herries.

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus walked out to the wickets with his usual graceful walk. He took up his stand to receive the bowling, and prepared to execute the master-stroke which was worth watching.

No doubt Gussy's late cut was an excellent thing, or would have been excellent had the bowler known all about it and played up, so to speak.

In point of fact, however, Gussy's late cut came a little too late, and he was surprised by a clatter of bails and stumps.

"Gweat Scott!"

"How's that?" yelled the Grammarians.

"Out!" grinned the umpire.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus faintly.

He walked off again with a very pink face. For the next ten minutes he was busy explaining to anyone who would listen how very remarkable it was that disaster had occurred. It was not, apparently, the Grammar School bowling, but an extraordinary and amazing concentration of circumstances, which had caused Gussy's wicket to go down so promptly. But it had gone down, there was no doubt about that, and really it looked as if the visitors were going to make hay of the home innings.

St. Jim's were five down for 40 runs, and the only consolation was that Figgins seemed set for the finish. It was all the more serious, as it was a single-innings game, and there was no chance of retrieving ill-luck in a second innings. Tom Merry, at this stage of the proceedings, congratulated himself upon having opened with Figgins. There was no doubt that the New House man was a tower of strength to his side, and Tom wondered at the change that had come over him. Not a single mistake had Figgins made, so far, since he had taken the willow in his hands.

Cousin Ethel listened with a rather absent smile to Gussy's earnest demonstration of the fact that his wicket ought not to have gone down. Her eyes were on George Figgins, and probably her thoughts also.

Kerr of the New House joined Figgins, and he played up well. But there was no doubt that the Grammarians were in great form, and the Scottish junior was sent home for only 6. Fatty Wynn was the next on the list, and he rolled cheerfully out to take the place vacated by Kerr. The remaining batsmen—Blake, Lowther, and Kangaroo—looked on anxiously, Tom Merry still more anxiously. Fatty Wynn was a tremendous bowler, and was played for his bowling, and he was not expected to distinguish himself as a bat. But David Llewellyn Wynn was a cool, steady, level-headed youth, without any desire to "swank" on his own, so long as he could help to win. He was good as a stone-waller, at least, and he calmly and cheerfully set himself to back up Figgins, leaving all the brilliancy to him.

And there was no doubt that Figgins was brilliant.

Steady stone-walling on Fatty's part when he had the bowling kept the innings alive; and Figgins proceeded to make the fur fly, so to speak. And Blake, Kangaroo, and Monty Lowther began to doubt whether they would be wanted, after all.

Loud cheers rang out as Figgy scored mighty hit after hit. Even the fellows who barred him forgot that he was barred, and shouted and clapped with the rest. Levison of the Fourth waved his cap, Tom Merry shouted, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy brandished his eyeglass in his enthusiasm, forgetting his own disastrous duck's egg in his generous appreciation of the fact that Figgins was saving the game for St. Jim's. The New House men roared themselves hoarse as the score went leaping up.

Kildare of the Sixth was seen to walk over from Big Side, where the seniors had been at cricket practice, and to stand watching Figgins of the Fourth. Cutts and St. Leger of the Fifth came over to watch. And the news spreading of Figgins' wonderful innings, juniors came from far and near—the New House almost to a man, the School House in swarms. Even Skimpole of the Shell came along to blink at the cricket through his spectacles; even Racke and Crooke left a game of banker in their study, and came to give a cheer for St. Jim's.

"Six down for ninety-six!" Tom Merry chuckled. "I fancy Figgins could give us a dozen times as many as we want."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There he goes for four!" said Kerr.

It was not four, it was three, and Fatty Wynn had the bowling again. St. Jim's wanted one to tie, two to win, with three wickets in hand, and the game was obviously over bar shouting. But the Grammarians played hard to the finish. Gordon Gay tested Fatty's wicket with his best bowling. Fatty Wynn, plump and cheery, steady as a rock, stone-walled with cool determination; he did not score, but he saved his wicket intact, and when the field

No doubt Gussy's late cut was an excellent thing, or would have been had the bowler played up, so to speak. In point of fact, however, Gussy's late cut came a little too late, and he was surprised by a clatter of bails and stumps. "Gweat Scott!" murmured Arthur Augustus faintly. (*See Chapter* 5.)

crossed over again all the crowd knew that it was the finish.

And it was!

It was quite a good ball that came down to Figgins, but he knocked it away for two, and there was a roar.

"Bravo, Figgins!"

"Oh, good man! Good man!"

"St. Jim's wins! Hurrah!"

There was a ripple of hand-clapping, a roar of cheering. Figgins' face, so glum at the beginning of the game, was bright as he came off, fellows pressing forward to smack him on the back and offer "congratters." Best of all to Figgins, however, was the bright glance from Cousin Ethel. Heavily as trouble had fallen on poor Figgy of late, he was elated and happy as he walked off Little Side, with Kerr and Wynn linked to either arm.

CHAPTER 6.
A Blow for Baggy!

"TEN?" said Cardew.

"Guineas!" said Baggy Trimble greedily.

While Tom Merry & Co. were at cricket, and while the Grammar School match was drawing to its exciting close, Cardew of the Fourth had not troubled to walk down to Little Side. He had put in some time with Racke and Crooke in their study, and now he was bestowing his company on Baggy Trimble. For some reason of his own, Cardew was extremely amicable to Baggy that afternoon.

So amicable was he, that Baggy discerned in him a possible customer for the bike he had to sell. Indeed, Cardew mentioned that he was "thinkin' of buyin' a jigger," which was quite enough for Baggy. Baggy Trimble descanted eloquently upon the merits of the jigger he had bought from Figgins of the New House only last Monday.

Figgins, it appeared, had been frightfully pressed for money that Monday. Baggy did not know or care why. He had sold his bike to Baggy for seven pounds, apparently caring little for his loss on it, so long as he obtained the sum he needed. Baggy was first in the field with cash in hand, and he had secured Figgy's jigger at a tremendous bargain. There was not the slightest doubt of disposing of it at a profit; it was only a question of waiting a few days, which Figgy, it seemed, had not been able to do.

As Cardew had plenty of money, Baggy was very glad to hear him mention buying a bike. Baggy had already offered it at ten pounds, but he instinctively made it guineas to Cardew.

"Come and have a look at it, Cardew," he said. "It's in the bike shed. Splendid condition. Lots of fellows have looked at it. They seem to jib at the price, yet Tom Merry told me it was worth a good twelve pounds, and he knows about bikes."

Cardew sauntered along beside the fat Baggy, dodging the fat arm that Trimble would have slipped through his.

For reasons of his own, Cardew might entertain himself by pulling Baggy's leg, but certainly he did not want Baggy's arm.

"You gave Figgins ten?" asked Cardew innocently, as they walked round to the bike-shed.

Baggy Trimble grinned.

"No jolly fear! Figgins was in a hurry to sell—and I'm not. See?"

"I see," assented Cardew.

"I gave Figgins what he was willing to take, and I suppose that's good enough," said Trimble.

"Oh, quite!"

"My price to you, Cardew, is ten guineas."

"And pounds to anybody else!" remarked Cardew with a sweet smile. "I take that as a special mark of your kind consideration for me, Trimble, and I beg to render thanks."

Baggy blinked at him, not quite understanding; Cardew's face was quite grave and serious.

"Well, let's have a look at the jigger," went on Cardew, and they entered the building, with its population of innumerable bicycles. Baggy led the way towards the stand where Figgy's bike stood.

Undoubtedly, it was a handsome and expensive jigger, and Figgins had kept it well. Undoubtedly, too, it must have given Figgy a pang to part with it; only for very serious reasons could he have done so. Cardew wondered for what very serious reason Figgins could have wanted a sum of money so suddenly last Monday.

But though it was an extremely good jigger, Cardew's face did not express admiration as he looked at it. He was playing his own little game with the fat and fatuous Baggy.

"That's the thing, is it?" he asked.

"That's the splendid bike!" said Baggy warmly.

"You're not really asking ten for it?"

"I jolly well am!"

"Shillin's, I suppose you mean?"

"Shillings!" spluttered Trimble. "Certainly not! Pounds—I mean guineas!"

Cardew laughed lightly.

"You say Figgins was in a hurry to sell you that bike?" he asked.

"Yes; he was pressed for money."

"That the only reason?"

Baggy looked a little startled.

"Look here, Cardew, there's nothing wrong with the bike. I don't know much about bikes myself, I admit, but I've asked several fellows, and they all say it's a jolly good bike."

"Then I'd better follow suit, and say the same," grinned Cardew. "I don't want to spoil a jest. It's a jolly good bike, Trimble."

Baggy felt a palpitation in his fat heart.

The dreadful thought rushed into his podgy mind that he had been "done." Figgins had wanted to get rid of an old crock, other fellows had pulled Baggy's leg to help Figgins plant his rubbish on Baggy. Baggy had parted with seven pound-notes, and now——

Was it possible?

Anyone who knew and understood Figgins, and Tom Merry, would have known that it was impossible. But Baggy knew them without understanding them.

Judging others by himself, Baggy had not the slightest doubt that a fellow would sell a school-mate an unsound bike at a sound price, and that his pals would back him up in such a scheme for a "whack" in the loot.

Cardew looked at the bike again, and chuckled.

"You haven't had it to pieces?" he asked.

"Eh? No! I couldn't put it together again, you know," stammered Baggy.

"Well, take my tip, and don't ride it down a steep hill—Wayland Hill, for instance."

"Why not?"

"Because if you do, you'll have it in pieces, old fat bean, and very likely yourself in as many pieces as the bike!"

"You mean I've been done over that bike?" gasped Trimble.

Cardew laughed.

"I gave Figgins seven pounds for it!" said Baggy, trembling.

"Serve you right if you're done then," said Cardew lightly. "You thought it was worth a lot more, and screwed it off Figgy at that price because he was hard up. You've asked for this, Trimble."

"Oh dear!" gasped Baggy. "Do you mean to say that Figgins was only pretending to be hard up, just to have an excuse for selling his bike, and planting it on some fellow who didn't know?"

"I don't mean to say anythin', old bean, exceptin' that you've got the bike, and Figgins has got the seven quids, and I wish you joy of your bargain."

Cardew turned away, smiling.

Baggy clutched him by the sleeve. He was thoroughly alarmed now.

"I say, Cardew——"

"I must get off, old fat bean. I want to see the cricket match finish," said Cardew. "Ta-ta!"

"You won't buy the bike?"

"At the price I've named—yes. Ten shillin's!"

"You silly ass!" roared Trimble. "Don't I keep on telling you that I gave seven pounds for it?"

"Keep it till you can sell it at the same figure, then," said Cardew. "You may have reached a green old age by then. But while there's life there's hope."

"I'll take the shillings off the guineas, if you'll buy it."

"Dear man, you'll have to take pounds off the guineas if you want me to buy it."

"You really think it's a rotten old crock, and I've been taken in!" groaned Trimble. "I—I say, it looks all right, you know."

"Appearances are deceptive," said Cardew gravely. "You can't judge cigars by the picture on the box, you know."

"Oh dear! Hold on a minute, Cardew! Look here, what would you advise me to do? You're the only chap that's told me the truth about that bike. Tip me what to do about it."

"Well, old bean," said Cardew thoughtfully, "in the first place, I advise you not to understudy Shylock, and drive hard bargains with fellows who are hard up. In the second place, I advise you to call the bargain off, if you can. Put it to Figgins. Tell him you want your money back, and he may pay up."

"Not if he's done me over it!" groaned Trimble.

"Tell him you'll complain to your Housemaster if he doesn't. That may bring him round."

Trimble brightened up.

"Good! I'll try it on, I think."

"Do, old bean!" said Cardew, and he walked out of the bike-shed, and took his way towards the cricket-ground, with a whimsical smile on his face. The match was over, and Cardew observed Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn on their way to the New House, and moved to intercept them.

"You're lookin' no end bucked, Figgins," he remarked.

Figgins nodded and smiled.

"We've beaten the Grammar School," said Fatty Wynn. "At least, Figgy has. It was Figgy's game."

"Good man!" said Cardew. "By the way, I was goin' to mention somethin' to you, Figgins. You seem to have sold Trimble your bike."

"Yes," said Figgins.

"Rather at a loss, I imagine, from the look of it, and from the figure Trimble's mentioned."

"Well, yes," said Figgins, colouring.

"Trimble seems tired of his bargain," said Cardew. "If you want the jigger back at the same price, you've only to speak to him. In fact, I think he's goin' to speak to you about it."

Figgins grinned rather ruefully.

"Nothing doing," he said.

"I catch on. Money's tight—what? Would it offend you if a School House man offered to lend you the sum?"

Figgins stared.

"You're awfully good," he said. "Thanks very much. But I couldn't borrow money of you!"

"You can jolly well borrow it of your own pals, though!" exclaimed Kerr. "And you jolly well shall, Figgins! If Trimble's willing to hand back the bike for what he gave, he's going to hand it back!"

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn emphatically.

Cardew smiled and walked away. He felt that he had not quite wasted his afternoon. Figgins of the New House was frightfully down on his luck, but that was no reason why he should lose his bike in addition to his other troubles. Cardew was concerned about Figgins. Even since he had learned of Figgy's confession, a doubt had revived in his mind of Figgy's guilt. That there was something behind it all, he felt instinctively. There seemed to be nothing that Cardew could do to help him out. But it was some satisfaction to undo the hard bargain that Baggy Trimble had driven with him. And he had found some idle amusement in pulling Baggy's leg. And he looked forward with more amusement to seeing Baggy's face when Baggy should learn later that he had handed back for seven pounds a bike that was worth nearly twice as much. Cardew was in quite a cheery mood, as he met Levison and Clive on their way to the School House, and strolled along with them.

"No end of a game—what?" he asked.

"Topping!" said Levison. "I had bad luck, but——"

"But Clive covered our study with glory, I hope?"

Sidney Clive grunted.

"I wasn't in the eleven, ass. I was looking on!"

"So you were. I forgot," said Cardew amiably. "I was comin' along to look on also, but somethin' or other seemed to keep on keepin' me away. Figgins seems to have done huge things. Is he still barred?"

"Of course! Winning a game of cricket makes no difference to that!" said Levison. "I'm not speaking to him, anyhow."

"Nor I," said Clive.

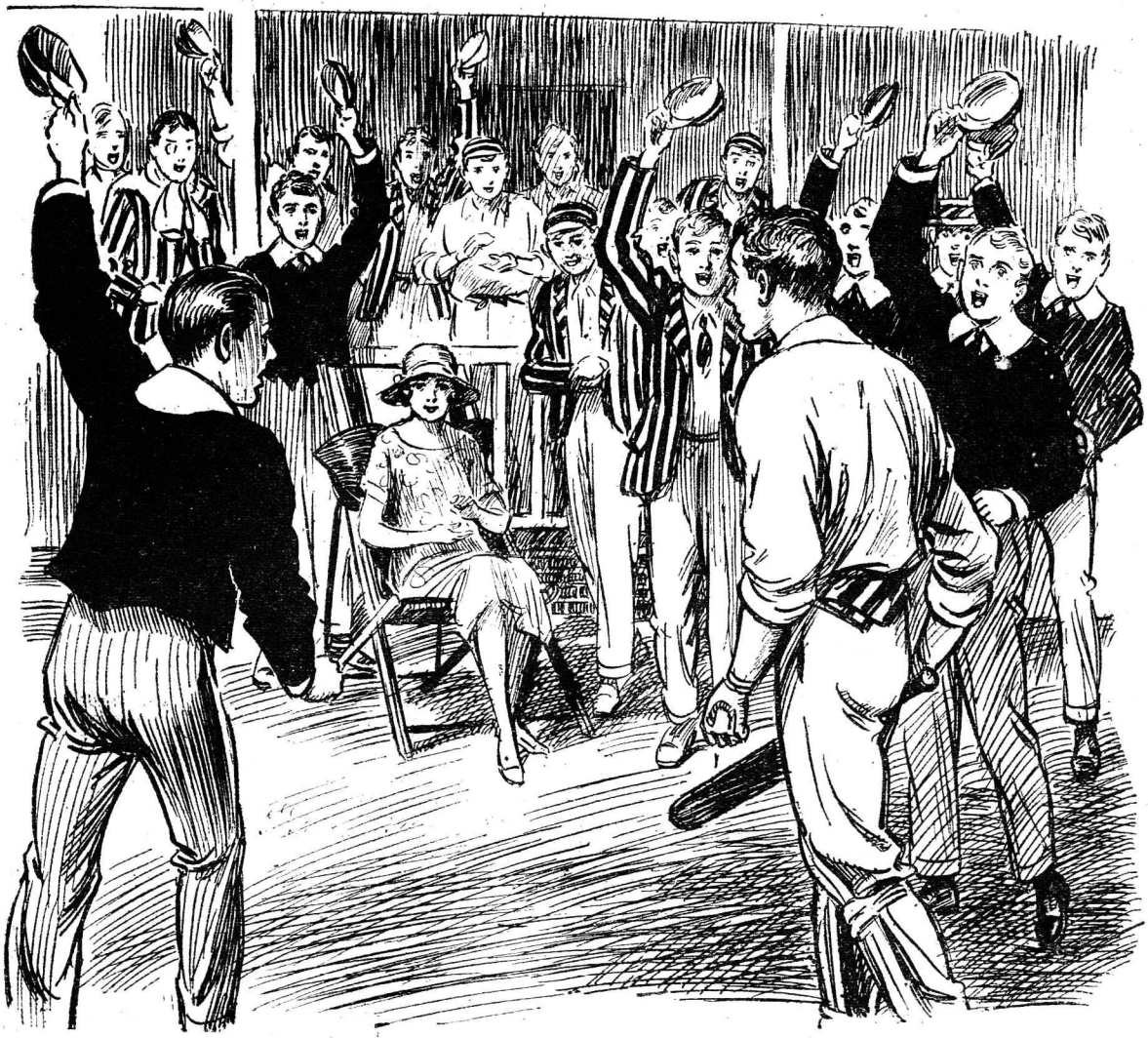
Cardew sighed.

"Mea culpa!" he said. "And I've just been speakin' to him. Quite forgettin' that he was taboo. Poor old Figgins!"

"Oh, bother Figgins!" said Levison. "I really think you might draw the line, Cardew, at a fellow who pinches bank-notes from another fellow's study!"

"But did he?"

"Hasn't he admitted that he did?"



"Bravo, Figgins!" "Oh, good man!" "St. Jim's wins! Hurray!" There was a ripple of hand clapping, and a roar of cheering as Figgins came off the field the hero of the match. But best of all was the bright glance Cousin Ethel gave him. (*See Chapter* 5.)

"Yes; but——"

"Dear man," said Cardew gently, "I've been thinkin' again. Do you know, when those asses barred me on suspicion, why I didn't go to my Housemaster and demand a public inquiry?"

"Well, why?"

"Because I was playin' the chivalrous jolmny, like a jolly old knight of old," said Cardew. "Cousin Ethel had been in D'Arcy's study that afternoon, and an inquiry would have dragged her name into it. I didn't want a girl's name talked up and down the school in connection with an inquiry into a dirty theft."

Levison looked at him.

"Well, that was all right," he said. "But what's that got to do with Figgins?"

"I was wonderin' whether he was playin' the goat in the same way," yawned Cardew. "He's rather attached to Ethel, and he may be takin' this on himself to keep her name out of the business somehow."

"Rot!" said Levison.

And Cardew shrugged his shoulders, and let the subject drop at that.

CHAPTER 7.
Money Back!

"YOU rotter!"

"What?"

"I've been waiting for you to come in! Look here, you rotter——" bawled Baggy Trimble.

Trimble was in the study in the New House when Figgins & Co. arrived there. Figgins had hesitated at the door of the study, but Kerr and Wynn had almost forcibly walked him in. Figgy had felt that it was up to him to leave his chums alone after what he had confessed to them, and Redfern had made him welcome enough in Reddy's study. But Kerr and Wynn had talked it over, and decided that it was not good enough. They had agreed that what Figgins had done had been done in some horrid moment of mental aberration, and a fellow subject to such things needed looking after, and who should look after him but his loyal chums? So Figgy, whether he liked it or not, was marched back into his old study.

There, to their surprise, the three juniors found Trimble.

Trimble was not lolling in the armchair, as might have been expected; he was moving restlessly about the room, a good deal like a wild animal in a cage. Obviously, something had occurred to stir Trimble very deeply, to stir him to the very centre of his fat being.

He started to talk as soon as George Figgins appeared. Figgins stared at him in blank astonishment. Baggy brandished a fat fist at the junior captain of the New House.

"Waiting for you—I want to see you—you rotter!" hooted Trimble. "You've spoofed me—swindled me—you—you—you cad!"

"Are you mad?" inquired Figgins.

"Yah! Rotter! No wonder the fellows bar you!" hooted Trimble. "I jolly well bar you, too, see?"

Figgins started, and his face paled. The keen excitement

(*Continued on page* 16.)

EDITORIAL!

By TOM MERRY.

BY all the signs and portents, this is going to be the greatest cricket season ever! With our rivals and friends from Australia over here, to do battle with England's chosen, there will be no end of excitement and enthusiasm.

How will the Test matches go? Well, that remains to be seen. I am not going to venture into the realms of prophecy. In cricket, as in footer, there are "glorious uncertainties," and you can take nothing for granted. I believe, however, that the English side will prove a more formidable proposition than they were in Australia. I believe they will play up like Trojans, to try and restore some of our lost prestige. Each and every Test match will be a battle of giants; and may the best side win!

The fight for the County Championship honours will be renewed with keenness and zest. Jack Blake declares that the championship is a free gift for Yorkshire. Certainly, the county of the broad acres has put up some wonderful performances during the past few seasons, and it will take a good side to put a brake on their all-conquering progress. Sooner or later, however, it will be a case of "the mighty fallen," and all honour to the county which succeeds in deposing those brilliant, hard-playing, unyielding men of Yorkshire.

Here, at St. Jim's, we are looking forward to a pleasant and exciting season. Already we have played a few matches, and the junior eleven is shaping jolly well. Fatty Wynn's bowling has lost none of its sting; and Talbot's batting is as fine and forceful as ever. Harry Noble keeps wicket in a way which stamps him as a future Oldfield. Kangaroo will be turning out for Australia one of these days. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is as smart a slip-field as ever, and he doesn't muff many catches. On the whole, we have a more than useful side, and we are ready to collect the scalps of Greyfriars, and Rookwood, and Rylcombe Grammar School, and, in fact, all comers!

"Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them,"

as Shakespeare says.

By the way, the Bard of Avon knew something about cricket, for his plays contain many references to the game. In "Hamlet," for instance, he speaks of "A hit, a very palpable hit!" and elsewhere he seems to refer to the batting of George Alfred Grundy—"playing such fantastic tricks before high heaven, as make the angels weep!"

Poor old Grundy! He is again agitating for a place in the junior eleven, but there is nothing doing! Once, in a moment of weakness, I gave Grundy a game, and what happened? Why, the silly chump ran all his partners out when he was batting; and he muffed catches galore when he was fielding; and he caught one of the umpires a terrific crack on the head when he was bowling! It is my firm opinion that Grundy ought never to be let loose on a cricket field.

The great majority of my reader-chums, I know, are worshippers at the throne of King Cricket, so I have no qualms as to the reception of this special number dealing with the grand summer game.

TOM MERRY.

A Cricket Ballad!
By DICK BROOKE.

GRUNDY swaggers to the wicket
With majestic gait;
Thinks himself a dab at cricket,
Thinks he's simply great.

Grundy's scowl is fierce and fearsome,
Grundy's brow is black;
For he cannot fail to hear some
Fellows shouting, "Quack!"

"I will show them I'm a Trumper!"
He exclaims, with spite;
"When the ball comes, I shall thump her
Out of human sight!"

Wynn the Wizard has the bowling,
Starts his usual run;
Round the field the shouts go rolling—
"Now we'll see some fun!"

Grundy shuts his optics tightly,
Rushes out to clump;
Never was a youth more sprightly,
Never such a jump!

Comes a fearful crash behind him,
Down the wickets go!
Sprawling on the turf you'll find him,
Gasping "Ow!" and "Oh!"

"How's that, umpire?" cried the bowler,
With a clarion call;
Umpire, who is no consoler,
Answers, "Out first ball!"

Grundy's blissful dreams are shattered,
Grundy totters back;
See, his stumps lie strewn and scattered.
Hark, the loud "Quack, quack!"

Grundy staggers from the wicket,
Railing at his fate;
Saying savage things of cricket,
Chanting hymns of hate!

CRICKET TERMS EXPLAINED!

By Monty Lowther.

"BOWLING a maiden over" is a feat performed by George Alfred Grundy when dancing in a ball-room!

A "long hop" is what you naturally expect of "Kangaroo" when he is preparing to bowl.

"L.b.w." is a cryptic expression that "leaves batsmen wondering!"

A "late cut" is what Knox of the Sixth, and other bold, bad blades, always make after lights out.

A "silly point" is what Skimpole always raises at a meeting of the Shell Debating Society!

"Fielding in the deep" is what you do when you play water-polo in the sea.

An "extra cover" is what my "Holiday Annual" needs after Herries' bulldog has been "devouring" it!

An "umpire" is an ignorant individual who always says "Out!" when your opponent appeals, and "Not Out!" when you appeal against your opponent!

A "good drive" is what the charabanc-drivers promise you in the summer-time.

A "telegraph-board" is a stupid contrivance that records your ducks-eggs, but forgets to register your centuries!

"Missing a sitter" is the doleful experience of a photographer, when his client bunks without paying!

"Out first bawl!" is a jocular remark made by dentists when they extract an aching molar.

Getting "stumped," and then "bowled out," is the fate of a fellow in the Form-room, when he has neglected to do his prep overnight!

"Fine leg" is a remark made by the Rylcombe butcher when he wants to sell his mutton!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY:

"I shall nevah forget my first cwicket match as long as I live. It was played at my patah's wesidence, Eastwood House, when I was a youngstah of nine. My patah got up an eleven to play the villagers, an' he put me in, more as a joke than anythin'. I had fond visions of makin' a centuwy, an' performin' the hat-twick at bowlin', an' bein' the hewo of the match. But there was nothin' hewoic about my performance. I was fwightfully nervous when I went in to bat; an' when the first ball came down, I made the onlookahs woar with laughtah by sittin' down on my wicket! Of course, I was 'out,' though I couldn't undahstand why, at the time. They still pweserve the score-book at home, an' my people often chuckle when they wead the followin' entwy:

"'A. A. D'Arcy—s.o.s. 0.'

I ought to explain that 's.o.s.' meant 'Sat on stumps.' It's a new way of gettin' out, deah boys!"

JOE FRAYNE (THIRD FORM):

"I played my first cricket match, I remember, in Angel Alley, under conditions which would seem awfully strange to the St. Jim's fellows. Our 'wicket' was chalked out on the wall, at the end of the alley. Our bats were home-made, and as stiff and solid as pokers! The ball was of the rag variety. Most of our matches used to end in a free fight. My first one did, I know. I had a little argument with the umpire; the ball hit me on the chin, and he said I was out—leg-before-wicket! I promptly punched him on the nose, and the next minute Angel Alley was the scene of a pitched battle. The only run I remember making in my first cricket match was when the bobbies came!"

MR. HORACE RATCLIFF:

"I refuse to enlighten the Editor of the ST. JIM'S NEWS with details of my first cricket match."

(From which we may safely deduce that "Ratty" made a duck's egg. Quack, quack!—ED.)

JACK BLAKE:

"My first match was played up in Yorkshire, with 'the lads of the village.' I managed to hit up twenty runs, and capture five cheap wickets; so mine is one of those rare instances of a first match proving a personal triumph instead of a doleful failure!"

BAGGY TRIMBLE:

"I was a bonnie, bouncing boy of three when I played my first kricket match. It was in the spacious park of Trimble Hall that I first wielded the willow, to the delite of my doting parents. Young as I was, I had a jolly good idea of the game, being a born kricketer. We were playing a team of men—berly jiants they were, too—but I flogged their bowling fearlessly to every part of the field. I forget weather I made a century, or a dubble century, but I know we won handsomely; and when my pater rocked me to sleep that night, he mermered, 'My plump son and air, I am proud of you! You are the Grace of the future!'"

(And the dis-Grace of the present!—ED.)

MONTY LOWTHER:

"My first match? I remember it well! When a kid of tender age, I came across a box of wax vestas, and struck one, burning my fingers severely in the process. My first match, in fact, would have set the place alight, and myself into the bargain, had not my governess rushed into the nursery in the nick of time!"

ELEVEN GOOD MEN & TRUE!

"WHO'S WHO" IN THE ST. JIM'S JUNIOR ELEVEN.

By DICK JULIAN.

TOM MERRY.

Captain of the Junior Eleven, and the right man in the right place. Brimful of enthusiasm, and bubbling over with keenness. Always sets a fine example of sportsmanship, and is at his best when pulling a game out of the fire. Batting is Tom's strongest point; but he is a more than useful change-bowler, and his fielding at cover-point is the last word in smartness and dexterity. Undoubtedly the finest "general" a team could hope for to lead it to victory.

REGINALD TALBOT.

A fine, forcing bat, able to collect runs at a fast pace, and take the sting out of the deadliest bowling. Usually opens the innings with Tom Merry. Can play a forceful or defensive game at will, according to his skipper's instructions. Seldom bowls, but can field in any position, and is a sure and safe catch. Next to Merry, perhaps the finest player in the eleven.

JACK BLAKE.

This sturdy son of Yorkshire would be an asset to any team. Bats soundly and stubbornly, and is a very difficult customer to shift, once he gets set. As a wicket-keeper Blake is first-class, and he has been styled "the Strudwick of St. Jim's."

HARRY NOBLE.

Australia's representative in the St. Jim's Eleven, and an all-round player of great ability. A vigorous bat, a brainy bowler, and capable of keeping wicket when Blake needs a rest from this position. The right man in a crisis. "Kangaroo" has often turned the tide by his fearless hitting or by his deadly bowling, which is always right on the mark!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY.

The stylist of the team. Gussy is sometimes rather "shaky" and uncertain when he starts his innings, but if allowed to settle down he is generally good for a score of runs. As a field, Gussy is dazzling at times, his picking-up and throwing-in being extremely smart. He has his off-days, but when in form he can hold his own with the best. Discards his celebrated monocle when batting.

FATTY WYNN.

In the opinion of Kildare, a shrewd judge, Wynn is the best junior bowler St. Jim's has ever known. Never sends down two balls alike, but varies his deliveries in a way that "ties up" the batsman. An untiring worker, he has often been known to run clean through a side, and then resume bowling in the second innings. A useful, but not brilliant bat. Always contends that he plays best after a first-class feed at the tuckshop!

GEORGE FIGGINS.

Tall, lithe, and long-legged, Figgy is a splendid performer on the cricket-field. At deep-fielding, he has no equal. His wonderful catches on the boundary-line have often astonished the batsman, but not the St. Jim's crowd, which always expects great things of Figgy, and is rarely disappointed.

MONTY LOWTHER.

The humorist of the eleven. Not in the same street, as a cricketer, with Tom Merry and Talbot, but can play an inspired game when in the mood. Always cheerful in the face of adversity, and a fighter to the last ditch.

HARRY MANNERS.

A steady bat, and a trier all the time. Sometimes has to forfeit his place in the eleven, to make way for a promising recruit from the reserves; but when in his best form, Manners' claims cannot be overlooked.

GEORGE FRANCIS KERR.

One of the four New House representatives in the team, the others being Figgins, Wynn, and Redfern. A splendid slip-field, and a brainy bowler when called upon to perform.

DICK REDFERN.

A true cricketer, who loves the game for its own sake, and who shines in every department of it. Reddy's batting has improved by leaps and bounds in the last two seasons, and this summer he is excelling himself. Always sure of a place in the eleven, since his form is always dependable, and does not suffer lapses. Like Tom Merry, Reddy is at his best when things are at their blackest. Should make a name for himself in the cricket world.

THE SHADOW OF SHAME!

(Continued from page 13.)

of the cricket match, the cheers of a St. Jim's crowd, the kind glances and words of Cousin Ethel, had bucked him tremendously. He had almost forgotten his black trouble for the time. Trimble's words brought it back to his mind with a rush.

His thought, naturally, was that Trimble was in possession of the story of the banknote. His heart beat painfully. All the fellows had declared that it should be kept secret; but if Trimble knew, it meant that all St. Jim's soon would know.

But the next words of the fat School House junior enlightened him, and relieved his mind at the same time.

"You can have your rotten old bike back!" howled Trimble. "I want my money back—seven pounds! See?"

"Oh! The bike?" said Figgins.

"Yes, you spoofing rotter! Palming off a rotten old bike on a fellow—dishing him for seven quids."

"Why, you fat fool!" exclaimed Figgins angrily. "The bike's worth nearly twice as much as you gave me for it!"

"Tell that to the marines!" snorted Trimble. "It's no good for me—I know better! I've been offered ten bob for it! Yah! Look here, Figgins, if you don't give me my money back, I'm going to my Housemaster! Mr. Railton will jolly soon make you pay up, see?"

Figgins compressed his lips.

"The money's gone," he said, "but I'll be glad enough to get the bike back at the same figure when I can raise the wind. Next term——"

"Next term won't do for me! I want seven pounds this afternoon, or I'll jolly well make you sit up!" roared Trimble.

"Don't shout in this study," said Kerr quietly.

"I'll shout as loud as I like if Figgins doesn't square!" roared Trimble.

"Then you'll jolly well be taught manners," said the Scottish junior, with a glint in his eyes, and he grasped Baggy Trimble by the back of his collar.

Bang!

There was a fiendish yell from Trimble as his bullet head smote the study table with a sharp smite.

"Yaroooooop!"

"Have another?" asked Kerr.

"Yow-ow-ow-ooooop! Leggo!"

Kerr let go, and Baggy Trimble rubbed his head and glared ferociously at the New House trio. But he did not shout again.

Figgins looked at him contemptuously.

"You were after a bargain, and you got one, Trimble," he said. "I'd take the jigger back if I could. But——"

"You can and you will," said Kerr. "I'm lending you the money, Figgins. You won't lose a chance like this."

Figgins shook his head.

"I can't take your money, Kerr! I tell you——"

Kerr gave him a curious look, and the hot blood flushed into George Figgins' face. He said that he could not borrow Kerr's money; and he had confessed, in that very study, that he had taken D'Arcy's ten-pound note. Figgins stood dumb.

"I'm lending you the money, whether you'll borrow it or not," said the Scottish junior quietly. "I got it from the savings-bank on purpose, as I told you. Seven quids, Trimble."

"Hand it over!"

"Look here——" began Figgins.

"Oh, don't you chip in!" said Trimble. "You ought to be jolly glad to get clear of it. A lot of the fellows are barring you for something you've done, as you jolly well know. Diddling a fellow over a bike——"

"You fat idiot!"

"Here's the money!" said Kerr.

"Very well," said Figgins. "I'll borrow it, Kerr, and settle with you as quickly as I can. That's all I can say."

"That's all I want, old scout."

"I gave Trimble a receipt for the money," said Figgins, with a sour look at Baggy. "Trot it out, Trimble, and take your money and go."

"Jolly glad to!" sneered Trimble.

"Hold on a minute," said Kerr in his quiet, business-like way. "Trimble doesn't seem quite to know his own silly mind, crying on and crying off. He can sign a paper that he's sold the bike back to you for the price he paid—seven pounds—and sign it, and we'll be witnesses. That will settle the matter. We don't want any more dealings with Trimble in this study."

"Think I care?" sneered Trimble. "I only want to get my money back—I was diddled in this study, as you know."

"That's enough—put it on paper, and clear."

And Baggy Trimble, having signed the necessary document, carefully counted seven pound notes, and counted them again, jammed them into his pocket, and cleared. And Figgins, with great self-control, did not kick him as he went.

Baggy was feeling considerably bucked as he rolled back to the School House.

He had been determined to have his money back, but he had not expected the transaction to be quite so easy as this. He had expected Figgins to jib—and he had not expected Figgy's friends to help him out. He concluded that they were all afraid of being called over the coals for having "diddled" him over that bike bargain.

Quite elated at his success, Baggy rolled along the Fourth-Form passage, and looked in at Study No. 9, where he found Levison, Clive, and Cardew at a late tea. Cardew looked at him curiously, and Baggy grinned back.

"It's all right!" he announced.

"What's all right, if a fellow may inquire?" drawled Cardew.

"I've got my money back."

"From Figgins?"

"Yes," grinned Baggy. "He jibbed—but I've got it all right, and that dashed old crock is his again. He's welcome to it."

"How good!" said Cardew urbanely.

"Much obliged to you, Cardew, for giving me the tip that I'd been diddled," added Baggy. "All the other fellows seem to have been in the game to help that New House cad spoof me."

Cardew raised his eyebrows, while Levison and Clive stared.

"Who said you'd been diddled?" asked Cardew.

"Eh? You did!"

"I don't seem to remember it."

"What?" Trimble blinked at him. "Didn't you offer me ten shillings for the bike, when I asked you ten guineas?"

"Yes. A fellow can make any offer he likes, can't he?" said Cardew. "No harm in my offerin' you tenpence, if I chose."

Trimble stared.

"Why, you—you said I'd have it in pieces if I rode it down a steep hill!" he exclaimed.

"Quite! That's because you're such a jolly clumsy rider," explained Cardew. "You'd have any bike in pieces if you rode it down a steep hill."

"Why, you—you—you——" It began to dawn upon Baggy Trimble that Cardew had pulled his fat leg. "D—d—d—do you mean to say that you were taking me in? Is—is—is it a good jigger after all?"

"First-rate, I believe."

"Why, you—you rotter——" gasped Trimble. "Mean to say it's worth more than seven pounds?"

"Twice as much, in my opinion."

"Why, you advised me to let Figgins have it back for what I gave for it!" shrieked Trimble.

"Certainly. I'd advise anybody to chuck up swindling and diddling," said Cardew calmly. "You took a mean advantage of Figgins, and I advised you to do the decent thing. You can look on me as your good angel, if you like."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Levison and Clive, greatly entertained by the expression on Baggy Trimble's fat face.

"Why, you—you—you——" Words failed Baggy Trimble, and he shook a fat and furious fist at Cardew's calm face.

Cardew picked up a loaf from the table.

"Where will you have it?" he asked gently.

Trimble did not seem to want it at all; he retired from Study No. 9, slamming the door after him with a terrific slam, and leaving the three juniors there roaring with laughter.

Two minutes later, Baggy, hurried and breathless, burst into George Figgins' study in the New House.

Figgins & Co. glared at him.

"That fat bounder again! Get out!" exclaimed Kerr.

"I—I say, Figgins——"

"Get out!"

"I—I'll have the bike, after all. I've got the money

here. I—I mean to stick to the bargain, you know. I've been taken in. I thought it was an old crock, and—and—and——"

Figgins & Co. rose from their chairs, and without a word in reply to Baggy Trimble, they grasped him and whirled him out of the study.

Then they kicked together.

Baggy roared and rolled along the passage.

Figgins & Co. returned to their study. They were not interrupted again by Trimble of the Fourth. Trimble—a sadder, if not a wiser Baggy—limped back to the School House, gasping and groaning. Figgins' bike had gone back to its owner; and Baggy's only consolation was that he still had his seven pounds. And—had he only known it—he was soon to be deprived even of that consolation.

CHAPTER 8.
Cardew Thinks It Out!

TOM MERRY and Manners and Lowther sat down to prep in Study No. 10 in the Shell that evening in a cheery mood. Tom Merry had not had his usual luck in the cricket match, and Lowther had not been called upon to bat at all; but both of them were elated at beating the Grammar School. Manners had not played cricket, but he had taken a snap of Figgins at the wickets in his big innings, and it was a great success, and a success in the photographic line was enough to buck Manners. So the Terrible Three were all in a satisfied frame of mind—and they agreed what a pity it was that a cricketer like Figgins should be a rank outsider in another respect.

They wondered, too, for about the hundredth time, how it was that Figgins ever had come to do such a thing as "pinch" D'Arcy's banknote from Study No. 6. But cricket and photography and Figgins were banished from their minds as they started prep, and elucidating the beauties—if any—of P. Virgilius Maro.

Prep in Study No. 10, however, was destined to be interrupted. There was a tap at the door, and Cardew of the Fourth strolled in.

"Prep!" said Tom Merry briefly, as a hint to the unexpected visitor that callers were not required.

"I know!" assented Cardew. "Levison and Clive are grindin' at it in my study. It made me tired to watch them."

"You didn't think of doing any prep yourself?" asked Lowther sarcastically.

"I did, old bean; but second thoughts are best, as the proverb declares. So I came along here for a chat instead."

"Better look for some other loafer," suggested Manners. "We're deep in prep. Good-bye!"

"Try Racke," suggested Lowther. "There's more banker than prep in his study—to judge by the con. he hands out to Linton."

"As a matter of taste, I should prefer Racke's study," assented Cardew. "But this isn't a matter of taste—it's a matter of duty. You know what a whale I am on duty."

"Oh, my hat!"

"When duty calls to brazen walls how base the man who stands and squalls," said Cardew. "I don't know if that quotation is quite right, but it illustrates my meanin'. With my well-known dislike for bein' bored, personal inclination would lead me to shun your society as if you had the jolly old influenza. But duty calls——"

"Look here, you ass," said Tom. "If you have anything to say, say it and cut, and let's get on."

"Right on the wicket, as usual!" said Cardew admiringly. "It's Thomas for sound, solid hoss-sense, every time. Now, it's about a subject that bores you, I fear, even to hear it mentioned—Figgins of the New House."

Tom Merry frowned.

"If you mean that rotten affair of the banknote, for goodness' sake give it a rest!" he said. "If you mean Figgins' cricket, you can talk about it as much as you like—after prep!"

"Alas!" sighed Cardew. "I did not even see Figgins' wonderful cricket, bein' frightfully busy at the time pullin' Trimble's leg. It's the banknote—toujours le billet-de-banque, to put it in French, if that will add a little variety to the subject, and bore you a little less——"

"For goodness' sake talk sense, if you must talk," said Manners.

"I'll try, old bean, but remember that I'm not used to it," said Cardew urbanely. "I've been told, to come to the point, that I'm a bad hat—fellows have expressed surprise that a decent chap like Clive should consort with me, and even Levison—though he has been a bit of a goat in his time—is considered miles above me on the moral ladder. Nevertheless, every chap has his limit. Bad hat or not, I hate to see a fellow down on his luck, and barred for somethin' he hasn't done."

"That's not Figgins, I suppose?"

"Yes—Figgins."

"We all know what he's done, and what he confessed to having done," growled Tom Merry. "Chuck the subject."

"If you mean that, I'll cut. I've tried my own pals, Clive and Levison, and they're too fed-up to give me a hearin'. If you're fed-up, I'll try Study No. 6 next. I really want some help in settin' the matter right."

Cardew turned to the door, Tom Merry staring after him.

"Hold on!" said Tom.

Cardew turned back.

"Get it out, and cut it short!" said the captain of the Shell. "I suppose it's only some more of your leg-pulling spoof; but cough it up."

"Very well," said Cardew, a little more serious in manner. "I was no end grateful to old Ernest for clearin' me of suspicion as he did—but I felt all along that he was landin' it on the wrong man. The banknote bein' found on Figgins was a staggerer, I admit—but I held to it that there was some catch somewhere. I went over to the New House to tell Figgins what I thought—and the wind was quite taken out of my sails when I learned that he had confessed. That seemed to settle it."

"It did settle it."

"But my amazin' intellect went on grindin'," said Cardew. "I worried the subject just like you fellows worryin' Latin irregular verbs. I figured out all that happened that famous afternoon when the banknote did the vanishin' trick—Blake and his gang out at the House match, the banknote left on the table, little me meanderin' along to smoke in the study by way of a low jest—Cousin Ethel arrivin' at St. Jim's, comin' up to Study No. 6 to see her Cousin Gussy, and findin' me there instead——"

"That's ancient history."

"No doubt. But when you silly asses suspected me, I refused to ask for a Housemaster's inquiry because I wouldn't have Miss Cleveland's name dragged into such a matter."

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom.

"Surprises you—what?"

"It's surprising, if true!" said Manners dryly.

"I'm not askin' you to believe me," said Cardew, unmoved. "Leave it at that. I was suspected—then all of a sudden Figgins states that he knows me to be innocent—refuses to give details—questioned on the subject, owns up to havin' the banknote in his pocket, and hands it back to D'Arcy, still denyin' that he had pinched it. Later on, he owns up to havin' pinched it—fairly flooring his own chums thereby. Until that confession, Kerr and Wynn believed that Figgins was screenin' somebody."

"Well?" said Tom impatiently. The captain of the Shell made no secret of the fact that he was utterly fed-up with the distasteful subject.

"Well, it's borne in on my feeble mind that Figgins really was screenin' somebody," drawled Cardew. "His giddy confession was all spoof, and part of the same game—to get the matter chucked, so that the person he was screenin' should keep quite clear."

"Rot! Figgins wouldn't do such a fool thing even for Kerr or Wynn, his best chums."

"No man would go that length for another man," assented Cardew. "He might for a member of the gentler sex."

"What!" stuttered Tom.

"That's Figgins all over," said Cardew calmly. "He would let himself be chopped into small pieces to save Ethel Cleveland from a pain in her little finger. You must have noticed that he is that kind of an ass."

"If that's what you call being an ass, I know he is, and I hope other fellows are, too," growled Tom. "But what are you driving at?"

"Cousin Ethel waited in the study that afternoon for D'Arcy to come in from the cricket. Accordin' to all evidence, the banknote was there then."

Tom sprang to his feet.

"You rotter! Do you dare insinuate——"

Manners and Lowther were on their feet also, their eyes blazing at the dandy of the Fourth. Cardew remained unmoved.

"Keep your wool on," he said. "I'm not insinuatin' or hintin' that Ethel Cleveland bagged the banknote. But it looks to me as if Figgins thinks so and is protectin' her, or else he is afraid she might be suspected, and so he is takin' it on himself to make all safe."

"Oh!"

"You see, I've been workin' it out like a jolly old detective," yawned Cardew. "On Monday Figgins was in such

a frightful press for money that he sold his bike to the first comer dog cheap. Shortly after gettin' the money from Trimble, we rounded him out leavin' the Head's garden, where he had seen Cousin Ethel, and the banknote was found on him. He hasn't got the seven quids still, for he couldn't buy back the bike at the same figure when Trimble offered it. Doesn't it look as if that awful need for money, all of a sudden, was for the purpose of gettin' hold of the ten-pound note, and that's how Figgins got hold of it?"

Tom Merry stared at Cardew.

"Do you know what you're saying?" he demanded. "You're practically saying that Cousin Ethel had the banknote, and that Figgins found it out, and got it from her to save her."

"Practically," assented Cardew.

"That can only mean——"

"Dear man, it might mean a lot of things," drawled Cardew. "Do you remember when Figgins first surprised us all by sayin' out openly that he knew me to be innocent of the giddy theft, without givin' his reasons?"

"On Saturday."

"Just after a shoppin' expedition to Wayland with Cousin Ethel," said Cardew. "It was remarked that they seemed to have had a tiff or somethin' durin' that walk, and you fellows were askin' Figgins about it when he blurted out that he had discovered that I had nothin' to do with pinchin' the banknote."

Tom Merry was silent.

"You seem to have pieced it together a good deal like a jigsaw puzzle," said Manners. "But if you mean that Cousin Ethel bagged the banknote you're a dashed villain! And if you don't mean that, what do you mean?"

"I'll try to put it into words of one syllable, suitable to the intellects of the Shell. I don't suspect Cousin Ethel, because that, as jolly old Euclid would say, is absurd. But it looks to me as if she had the banknote, all the same, and Figgins found it out, and was frightened at the idea that she might be suspected."

"But——"

"You remember he told us he knew who had it, and that it was in innocent hands, and that he'd got it back to give to D'Arcy."

"I know he said so."

"How could Ethel come by it innocently, you dummy?" said Lowther.

"Lots of ways. I had a bad note passed on me once," said Cardew. "Stolen notes are passed on innocent people sometimes."

"Oh!"

"Rot!" said Manners. "All very well with currency notes, but nobody would take a ten-pound note from a stranger, unless he signed it on the back. There was no signature on the back of D'Arcy's banknote when Figgins gave it back to him. It hadn't been passed."

"Bright," said Cardew—"very bright! That remark, my dear man, only strengthens the little theory I have formed."

"And what's that, ass?"

"That the banknote never went out of the school, but was palmed off on Cousin Ethel by the fellow who pinched it."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Tom Merry, aghast.

"Do I make you jump, dear man? That's the idea."

"And who was it, as you are so jolly clever?" demanded Manners.

"What about Trimble?" drawled Cardew.

"Trimble? Rubbish!" said Tom. "As a matter of fact, we thought of Trimble when the note was first missed. It was a bit unjust, perhaps, but we did. And we inquired far enough to prove that Trimble could not possibly have gone into Study No. 6 that afternoon before three, and at three he started for Rylcombe to meet Cousin Ethel's train. He had the neck to meet her at the station."

"Fairly conclusive," agreed Cardew. "Conclusive enough for the limited intellects of the Shell, at least. But facts are facts! It has been workin' powerfully in my mind that Trimble, who is generally tryin' to borrow sixpences, is rollin' in money all of a sudden. I shouldn't have noticed it, not bein' a pal of the dear man's, but for the affair of Figgy's bike. Where did Trimble get seven pounds to buy that bike?"

"Blessed if I know or care."

"Well, I don't know, but I do care," said Cardew. "When a ten-pound note is missin', and a fellow is suddenly found buyin' bikes for seven pounds, a fellow who generally hasn't seven shillings to bless himself with, I get a bit suspicious."

Monty Lowther whistled.

"Dash it all, it is a bit queer," he said. "Trimble never has any money, and it seems clear that he did give Figgins seven pounds for his bike."

"And he's done himself rather well at the tuckshop lately, I know," said Cardew. "Several fellows have remarked on it. Half a dozen fellows in the Fourth have been dunnin' him for old debts, findin' out that he's in funds."

Tom Merry was silent and troubled.

Now that Cardew called attention to the fact, he realised that it was at least a striking coincidence that Baggy Trimble should be in possession of large and unusual funds so soon after the theft of the ten-pound note.

Yet it had been demonstrated beyond cavil that Trimble could not have gone into Study No. 6 on the eventful afternoon of the House match when the note disappeared.

On the other hand, again, Trimble was the fellow to whom the thoughts of the juniors had naturally turned as soon as they knew that money was missing. Trimble was a fellow with very confused ideas on the subject of "meum and teum." He was not a thief—that was much too hard a word—but he sailed so very close to the wind that only his extreme obtuseness could be taken as a defence for him. Certainly he had a way of considering that anything he wanted was his, if he could lay his fat hands on it.

Cardew glanced round the thoughtful faces in the study with an amused glance.

"Well, what about it?" he asked. "Is it worth lookin' into? As junior captain of the House, Tom Merry, it's up to you, if you think that there's anythin' in it."

"Trimble might be made to explain where he got his money from," said Tom. "He may have had a present from home, or something. Perhaps he had better be asked. I know that he never went into Study No. 6 that afternoon, though."

"Wasn't there another theory about the banknote goin'?" yawned Cardew. "Gussy left it on the table when his pals rushed him away to the cricket, door and window of the study left open, and it came out that Hammond of the Fourth opened the passage window to call a fellow in the quad. With the giddy wind blowin' through the study, some fellows thought that the banknote might have blown out of the window, and that some rotter picked it up and kept it—not Figgins, he was playin' in the House match. And you seem to have overlooked a little that as Figgins was playin' cricket that afternoon, it wasn't easy for him to dodge away even for a few minutes to sneak into Study No. 6 without bein' noticed. And he wasn't noticed doin' anythin' of the kind. Except for his own confession, there's no evidence that he came anywhere near the School House at all that afternoon."

"I know. His confession did it," said Tom. "Look here, you've made me feel jolly uneasy, Cardew."

"Good!"

"After prep we'll question Trimble. If there's a bare chance that Figgins is innocent, we'll jolly well have it out!"

"Good man!" agreed Cardew. "Now you can go on grindin' at jolly old Virgil, and I'll amble along and have a smoke with Racke."

And Ralph Reckness Cardew strolled out of the study, his hands in his pockets, whistling carelessly, leaving the Terrible Three to finish their prep. But after what Cardew had said, there was little attention given to prep in Tom Merry's study.

CHAPTER 9.

Tom Merry on the Track!

"TOM MEWWY!"

"Yes, old top?"

"I have a message for you, deah boy."

It was the following morning, and the St. Jim's fellows were going to the Form-rooms. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, leaving his friends at the door of the Fourth Form-room, cut along to speak to Tom Merry, who was going into Mr. Linton's Form-room with the Shell.

There was a rather peculiar expression on Gussy's noble face. He adjusted his celebrated eyeglass carefully in his eye, and looked at the captain of the Shell, and coughed twice. Apparently the message he had for Tom Merry was a little difficult to get out.

"Cough it up, old man!" said Tom encouragingly.

"It's fwom Ethel."

"Go it!"

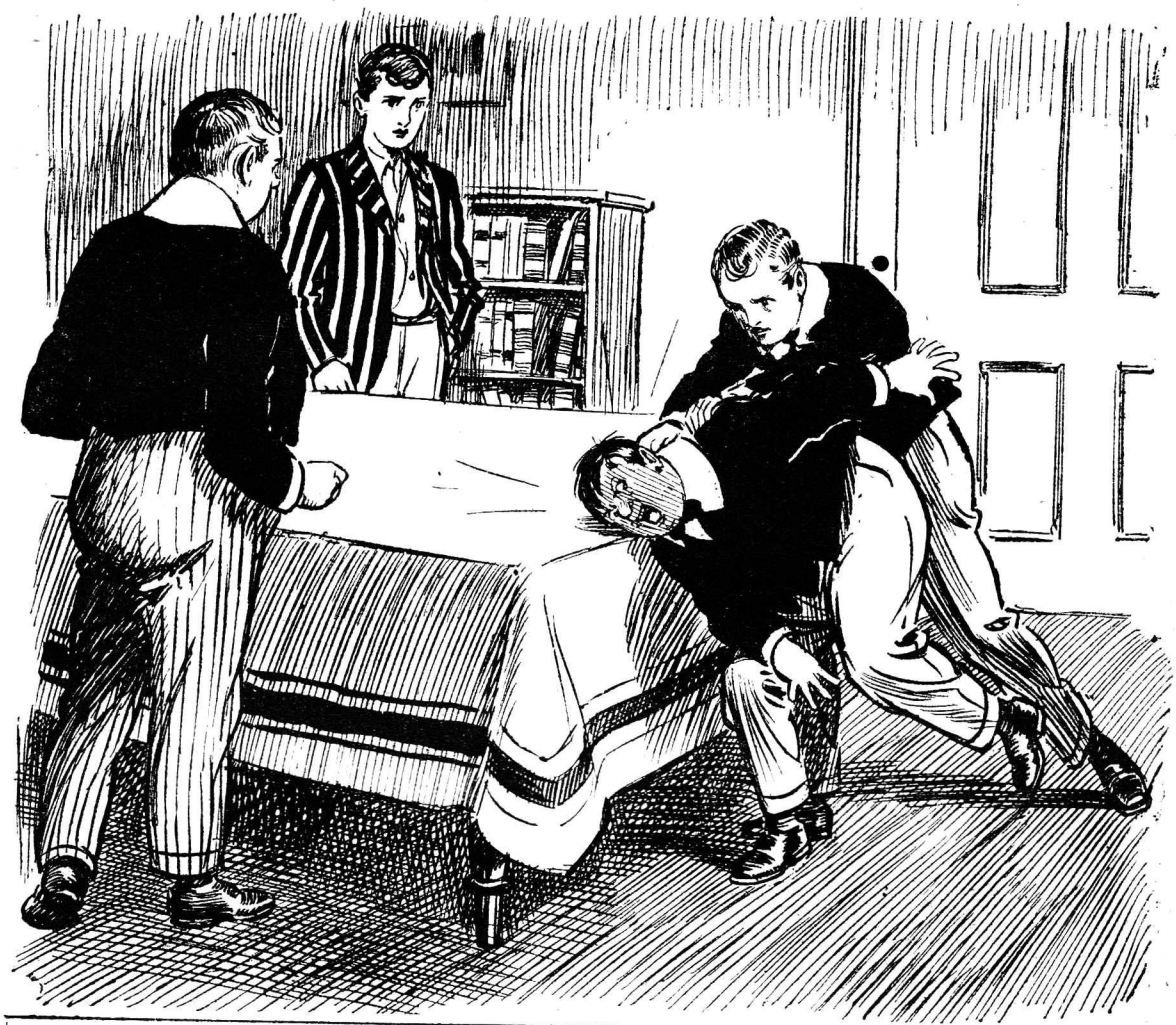
"I saw Ethel back to the Head's house aftah the match yestahday," said Arthur Augustus. "She asked me what it was the fellows had up against Figgins."

"Oh!" said Tom.

"I could not vewy well tell her, you know," said D'Arcy. "It placed me in a doocid awkward posish, you know."

Tom Merry nodded.

"As Ethel pewceived that I did not want to tell her, she dwopped the subject," said D'Arcy; "but she asked me to give you a message. She wants to speak to you in mornin' bweak this mornin', and is goin' to wait at the Head's gate."



There was a fiendish howl as Trimble's bullet head smote the study table with a sharp smite. "Yaroooooop!" "Have another?" asked Kerr, grimly. "Yow-wow-wow!" roared Trimble. "Leggo!" *(See Chapter 7.)*

"Right-ho!" said Tom.

"As a mattah of fact, I feel suah that she is goin' to ask you about Figgins," said Arthur Augustus. "You will be vewy careful, deah boy. Pway don't blurt it all out, you know. It is wathah too wotten a stowy to spwead, and unfit for a gal like Ethel to heah about, you know. Pway let me impwess upon you——"

"Gussy!" bawled Blake along the passage.

"Comin', deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus ambled away, and Tom Merry went into the Shell-room with a very thoughtful brow.

That Cousin Ethel must have noticed, on the day of the Grammar School match, that Figgins was "barred" by a crowd of St. Jim's fellows, he knew. He knew that she must be concerned about it. He had felt uneasily that Cousin Ethel would want to know what the matter was, and hoped sincerely that she would not inquire of him.

That hope had proved ill-founded. Having drawn her Cousin Gussy blank, so to speak, she intended to ask Tom Merry. And Tom wondered what he could say to her.

The captain of the Shell had other matters on his mind that morning as well. He had been deeply disturbed by the theory formed by Ralph Reckness Cardew, and the possibility it opened up that George Figgins was suffering, not for a fault of his own, but from a mistaken and over-drawn sense of loyalty to another.

Tom had determined to question Baggy Trimble with regard to his new source of wealth, but had not seen the fat junior yet. Where the truth was, and what it was, baffled him. It was possible, of course, that the banknote had fallen into Trimble's hands, but how could it have passed into Cousin Ethel's? He knew that Ethel Cleveland did not like the fat, bumptious junior, and never spoke to him if she could help it. It was sheer impudence that had made Trimble meet her at the station on the day of her arrival at St. Jim's, the other fellows being engaged in the House match. The whole thing was baffling, and on the face of it Figgins was guilty; the stolen note had been found on him, and he had actually confessed to the theft. What could be clearer? Yet Cardew's curious theory had awakened deep and painful doubts in Tom's mind.

After second lesson the juniors came out of the Form-rooms, and Tom Merry repaired at once to the gate of the Head's garden, in a secluded spot under the old elms. He rather dreaded the meeting with Ethel; but he had no choice but to go, as she had asked him.

Ethel was already there.

Her kind, sweet face was very grave and thoughtful. Tom raised his cap, and she smiled at him.

"Thank you for coming!" she said.

"Gussy told me," said Tom. "I'm glad, of course——"

"I suppose you know that I want to ask you about Figgins?"

"Well, yes," said Tom uncomfortably.

"You are no longer a friend of his?"

"Well, no."

"My cousin Arthur, and many others, seem to be on ill terms with him," said Ethel. Her colour deepened. "Perhaps it is no business of mine; but you are all my friends, and I am sorry to see this. I should very much like to see you all friends again before I leave the school, and I remain only two days longer. Forgive me for speaking to you about it."

"I understand," said Tom. "I know how you feel about it, Ethel. But—but it's not exactly a matter that a fellow can explain."

"What has Figgins done?"

Tom did not answer.

"He could never have done a mean or wrong action, I am sure," said Ethel. "I know him too well—you know him too well for that."

Tom breathed hard.

Cardew's words were fresh in his mind. If there was anything in Cardew's strange and improbable theory, the stolen banknote must have been in Trimble's hands, and somehow passed from Trimble to Cousin Ethel. Tom debated in his mind whether he should ask the plain question. He shrank from telling Ethel of the theft, especially as she had been in Study No. 6 very near the time when the banknote must have been taken. It had been agreed on all hands that Ethel was to be told nothing. Figgins had been as keen as anyone about that.

And yet, if there was a hidden truth to be discovered—if Figgins could, by any chance, be restored to his old place of honour——

Ethel watched his clouded face.

"You will not tell me?" she asked sadly.

"Miss Cleveland," Tom spoke at last, "I can't very well tell you; but it's a serious matter, I can say that much. If we misjudge Figgins, it's not our fault, but his. It's possible—barely possible—that a mistake has been made, and that a word from you may set it right. There's one fellow who thinks so, and he's a clever chap—a dozen times as keen as I am; but at the same time he's so jolly airy and queer in his ideas that a fellow never knows how to take him and his talk. Will you answer a question if I ask one?"

"Willingly."

"Do you know anything about a ten-pound note in connection with Trimble of the Fourth Form?"

Ethel started violently.

Tom Merry was expecting a surprised answer in the negative. He felt foolish in asking the question. Only the strange influence of Cardew's words induced him to do so.

But Ethel's look showed him at once that the question was not so absurd after all.

"A ten-pound note—and Trimble?" repeated Ethel.

"Yes. I can't explain further; but if you can answer that——"

"I do," said Ethel.

"You do?" exclaimed Tom, with a deep breath.

"I am more and more puzzled," said Ethel. "There seems to be some strange mystery connected with that ten-pound note. Figgins and I almost quarrelled last Saturday when he saw it. He acted and spoke as if he supposed that I had no right to it. Of course he could not have meant that, but he spoke so strangely that I was very angry."

"Good heavens!" breathed Tom. "Do you, by any chance, know the number of that banknote, Ethel?"

"0002468," said Ethel.

Tom Merry stared at her blankly.

She had given him the well-known number of D'Arcy's ten-pound note, stolen from Study No. 6.

"Figgins saw you with that note!" said Tom mechanically.

"Yes; I gave it him to change for me at the Wayland Stores," said Ethel. "Instead of changing it, he paid the bill with his own money, which I afterwards returned to him."

"He knew the number, of course," said Tom.

"I don't understand."

"But if you had the note, Ethel, how did Figgins get hold of it?" asked Tom. "It was found on him."

"He gave me ten currency notes for it on Monday afternoon."

"Great Scott!"

Tom Merry remembered how Figgins had been surrounded and marched off when he was leaving the Head's garden on Monday afternoon. No wonder the stolen note had been on him, as he had just received it from Ethel Cleveland. No wonder he had refused to explain whence he had received it!

"But——" stammered Tom. "But, Miss Cleveland, how did you get hold of the note? For goodness' sake, tell me that! Did you tell Figgins?"

Ethel coloured.

"No; and I cannot tell you."

"You cannot tell me?" exclaimed Tom.

"No. As it happens, it is a secret," said Ethel. "But how does it matter? What can it matter?"

She looked at the captain of the Shell in alarm.

"It matters a lot," said Tom. "For goodness' sake, Ethel, think again, and tell me where you got that note!"

"I cannot!"

"But why not?"

"Because I promised not to do so."

"I can't understand it," said Tom blankly. "I can't! But answer me one more question. Did you get it, somehow, from Trimble of the Fourth?"

Ethel bit her lip.

"I am bound to say nothing about it," she answered. "But, in your turn, Tom, tell me—what is this mystification about that ten-pound note? What does it all mean?"

"I don't know," said Tom. "I can't get on to it. But—but I'm going to follow up what Cardew suggested, and perhaps I may be able to explain then. One thing I can tell you, Ethel—what you've said is good enough for poor old Figgins. We know now that he's all right—I mean I know, and the other fellows will soon know. Figgins is cleared all along the line, and nobody will think of barring him after this."

"I don't understand! What have I said to clear Figgins—and of what?"

"I—I'll tell you some other time if I can. You wanted to set Figgins right with his friends, and you've done it," said Tom. "Thank goodness I asked you that question! Thank goodness Cardew put it in my mind to do so! Do you mind if I leave you now? I must speak to the other fellows about this before third lesson."

Ethel nodded; and Tom hurried away, his brain almost in a whirl. The matter was still perplexing, baffling; but Tom Merry felt that he was beginning to see light.

CHAPTER 10.
Light at Last!

BAGGY TRIMBLE rolled out of the Fourth Form-room after morning class, with an eager, anticipatory look on his fat face.

Dinner was still too far off to cause that happy anticipation to beam in Baggy's podgy features. But the fat junior was well provided with cash, and the school shop was at hand, and there was no need to wait for dinner. The seven pounds he had received back in Figgins' study the previous day almost burned a hole in Baggy's pocket. Some of it had already gone, and the rest was not likely to be long in going. Baggy's intention was to fill in the interval till dinner-time with a series of substantial snacks. And he left the Form-room behind and rolled away across the quad quite briskly, heading for Dame Taggles' little shop behind the elms.

But there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip. All those substantial snacks that Baggy was so happily contemplating were destined never to be devoured by Baggy Trimble.

Half-way to the tuckshop quite a little crowd of juniors converged on Baggy from various directions and surrounded him.

Baggy, to his great surprise, found himself the centre of quite an army.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, Blake & Co. of the Fourth, Figgins & Co. of the New House, Levison, Clive, and Cardew—thirteen fellows in all, and all deeply interested in Baggy Trimble!

No wonder Baggy was surprised—and, having so many sins on his fat conscience, a little alarmed.

Baggy might have observed that Figgins—lately barred by the other fellows—now seemed to be on his old footing with Tom Merry & Co. Baggy, deeply curious and inquisitive as he had been on the subject of the unknown trouble between them, had never been able to learn what it was. Now it seemed to be over—if Baggy had noticed it. But Baggy was thinking only about himself just now. There were grim expressions on the faces of the crowd of juniors as they closed round him.

"I—I say, no larks, you chaps!" exclaimed Baggy. "I'm in rather a hurry, you know."

"This way!" said Tom Merry.

"That isn't the way to the tuckshop."

"Never mind the tuckshop now. Come on!"

"But look here——"

"Kick him."

"Yaroooh!"

Baggy Trimble decided to give the tuckshop a miss for the present, as there was no help for it. He walked away in the midst of his numerous escort, wondering whither they were bound. It proved that they were bound for the quiet grass plot behind the chapel, screened by ancient oaks, where they were safe from general observation.

Trimble was more and more puzzled and alarmed. This spot was sometimes used for personal encounters, far from the eyes of masters and prefects. But fistical encounters were not in Trimble's line; he was not brought there for that. Why was he brought there?

"Look here, you know," stammered Trimble, "if you're going to make a fuss about that cake, Levison——"

"Eh? What cake?" asked Levison.

"Oh, nothing!"

Baggy cut himself short.

"Have you been raidin' our study, you fat villain?" asked Cardew.

"Oh, no! Certainly not!"

"Pway let us get to bizney, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his eyeglass fixed grimly on Baggy. "Go ahead, Tom Mewwy!"

Tom Merry went ahead.

"Trimble, you've had a lot of money lately."

Monty Lowther produced a fives bat from under his jacket and the fives bat came in handy for enlightening Baggy Trimble on the subject of the laws of property. Bending over a rail, in the grasp of two pairs of hands, Baggy received a dozen of the best—and every whack was accompanied by a howl of anguish! *(See Chapter 10.)*

"I generally have," said Baggy. "I get no end of remittances from Trimble Hall, you know. Huge tips from my pater, and all that."

"You can cut that out!" said Tom curtly. "You never have more than a few half-crowns; and now you seem to be rolling in currency notes. Where did you get the money?"

"Tip from my pater. I don't see that it's any bizney of yours, either."

"It's our business to this extent—that a ten-pound note was stolen from D'Arcy's study, and we want to know about it," said the captain of the Shell icily.

Trimble jumped.

"A ten-pound note!" he stuttered.

"Yes. Did you take it?"

Baggy gasped.

"That question's an insult, Tom Merry!" he said loftily—as loftily as he could. "I hope I'm not the fellow to bag money from another fellow's study."

"I hope not!" said Tom. "If we're on the wrong track we'll apologise. But we've got to know the facts."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come to the point, Trimble," said Blake. "Where did you get all the quids you've had lately?"

Trimble felt a little faint. He had almost forgotten by this time having picked up a fluttering tenner under the windows of Study No. 6 on the day of the House match. On the principle that "findings were keepings," he had taken possession of it. As nobody at St. Jim's had made known the loss of a ten-pound note Baggy had not expected to hear anything more about the matter.

Apparently, however, it was not at a happy end, as he had supposed.

He knew that it was futile to tell Tom Merry & Co. that he had found money, and that findings were keepings. That was not quite good enough. On such a subject they were not likely to agree with his peculiar views.

"My—my pater sent me a whacking tip!" he stammered at last.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

"Do you object to your father being asked?"

Trimble almost staggered.

"I—I suppose you can take my word! I—I don't want my father bothered about it! And—and, now I come to think of it, it—it wasn't my father, it—it was my uncle——"

"Oh, it was your uncle, was it? What name?"

"My Uncle Rupert; he's rolling in money, you know. Tenners are nothing to him."

"So it was a tenner?" said Cardew.

"Yes, a tenner—nothing to my Uncle John—I mean, Rupert."

"I've never heard of your Uncle Rupert, or John, before," said Tom Merry grimly. "But give me his full name and address, so that he can be asked."

"Look here, it's no business of yours!"

"If you'd rather go before the Head, you've only to say the word. We'll take you to Dr. Holmes as soon as you like."

Trimble quaked.

"I—I don't want to see the Head. He wouldn't understand."

"You mean, he would understand!" said Tom scornfully. "But you'll answer either him or us, Trimble. Where did the money come from?"

"My Uncle Rupert——"

"What?"

"I—I mean Rupert! The fact is, his name is Robert Rupert Trimble. See?"

"I see. Where does he live?"

"He's gone abroad!" gasped Trimble.

"Where?"

"South Africa, I think—I mean, Japan!" gasped Trimble. "He—he didn't leave any address."

Tom Merry & Co. stared at Trimble. If Baggy expected them to swallow an explanation like this, Baggy was a very sanguine youth. Certainly no fellow present was likely to swallow it.

Tom glanced round.

"I think it's fairly clear now," he said, "that Trimble

had D'Arcy's ten-pound note, and somehow changed it for currency notes."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Take him to the Head!" said Kerr, in disgust. "Let him get bunked out of the school! He's disgraced St. Jim's long enough!"

Trimble gave a yelp.

"I'm not a thief, you beasts! I won't go to the Head! He wouldn't understand! Think I'd steal a banknote? Findings are keepings, ain't they? But—but the Head mightn't understand that."

"I think he mightn't," said Tom. "So you found the banknote, did you?"

"Yes," groaned Trimble.

He realised that confession was the only thing now.

"Bai Jove! You mean to say that you found a banknote in a fellow's study, and kept it, you wotten wascal?"

"No!" howled Trimble. "I—I picked it up in the quad!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Blake.

Cardew chuckled.

"I rather fancied that," he said. "Gussy leaves a tenner on his study table, with the door and window open, and the passage window open; naturally, it blows away. And, naturally, Trimble sticks to it if he picks it up. That's the most natural thing in the world."

"Of course it is, old chap," said Baggy, who was blind and deaf to sarcasm. "Findings keepings, you know."

"We're getting near the bone now, I think," said Levison. "You kept the banknote, Trimble, and changed it?"

"Yes," groaned Trimble. "Findings keepings——"

"Who changed it for you?"

"Cousin Ethel."

George Figgins gave a jump.

"You villain! You had the cheek to ask Ethel to change a stolen banknote for you!" he roared.

He made a stride at Trimble.

Baggy dodged back.

"Here, keep him off!" he howled. "It wasn't stolen, you ass, it was found—findings keepings!"

"Did you tell Ethel you had found it?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Nunno."

"You spun her a yarn about a tip from home, I suppose?" asked Clive.

"Ye-e-es."

"But why couldn't Ethel tell me that?" said Figgins. "Why couldn't I be told that? Why did she say it was a secret how she got the note?"

Trimble grinned for a moment, but did not speak. Tom Merry's eyes were on him.

"Trimble can tell us that, I think," he said. "Did you get any promise from Ethel Cleveland not to mention the matter, Trimble?"

"Well, you see——"

"Yes or no?" roared Figgins.

"Yes!" gasped Trimble.

"And how did you wangle it?" asked Cardew. "Fellows don't generally ask for it to be kept secret when they change a banknote. You must have spun Ethel some yarn."

"You see, I—I——"

"You'd better explain, you fat rascal!" said Figgins, clenching his hands.

"You—you see, fellows here ain't allowed to have lots of pocket-money," stammered Trimble. "I explained to Ethel that—that if my Housemaster knew I had tips of ten quid at a time it would get me into a row, you know. So it would, of course! Mr. Railton wouldn't allow fellows' people to hand them tenners for pocket-money, if he knew."

"You told Ethel that?" asked Manners.

"Yes, it's true, isn't it?" gasped Trimble.

"Yaas, wathah! My patah sent me a tennah to pay a tailah's bill, you know," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "But I am suah that our Housemastah would be watty at tennahs bein' sent for pocket-money. I wemembah Wacke of the Shell had to give up a lot of pocket-money once till the end of the term."

"That's what I told Ethel," gasped Trimble. "She—she asked me to let her off her promise, because some fellows had been asking her questions about the tenner. But——"

"That makes it clear," said Figgins with a deep breath. "That fat scoundrel made Ethel believe that he'd had a whacking tip from home, and that it would get him into a row with his Housemaster if it was known. So she promised not to mention it. That's why she told me it was a secret how she came by the ten-pound note."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Clear enough now," said Tom. "We might have got at this before, Figgins, if you'd spoken out instead of playing the goat."

Figgins coloured deeply.

"I wasn't going to let anybody know that a stolen note had passed through Ethel's hands, so long as she couldn't explain openly how she came by it," he answered in a low voice. "How could I? I knew she must be innocent in the matter, but what would other people have thought? If it came out, she had to explain, and so—so——"

Tom Merry smiled.

"So you took it on yourself, you frabjous ass!"

"Fathead!" said Kerr, but he said it in a very affectionate voice.

"Weally, you fellows, I wegard Figgins as havin' played up like a little man," said Arthur Augustus. "Figgins is a wathah cheekay ass, and seems to look on Ethel as wathah his cousin than mine; but, in this mattah, I quite appwove of Figgins."

"After which there is nothin' more to be said," remarked Cardew gravely. "If Gussy approves, the rest may be taken as read, gentlemen."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Cardew——"

"Only we've got to deal with Trimble!" said Blake, with a glare at the apprehensive Baggy. "Let's take him to the Head to be sacked for theft!"

Trimble gave a howl of dire terror.

"I never thefted—I mean, I never stole anything! I picked up the rotten banknote, didn't I? Findings are keepings. Besides, D'Arcy's got it back now, hasn't he? And I'll pay the money, too, every shilling, as—as soon as I—I can get a tenner from—from Trimble Hall!"

"We won't wait till then," said Tom. "You'll hand over to Figgins what you've got left of the tenner—Figgins gave ten pounds for it, to get it from Miss Cleveland—and you'll owe him the rest, and you'll be kicked every day till you pay up!"

"Hear, hear!"

Baggy Trimble, with a deep groan, handed over the sum of six pounds ten shillings, all that remained in cash of the windfall. Then he tried to back out of the circle of juniors.

But they were not finished yet. Baggy was not to be reported to the Head, but he was to have it impressed upon his mind that when he picked up other fellows' banknotes, findings were not keepings!

Tom Merry & Co. proceeded to impress that important fact upon Trimble. Monty Lowther produced a fives bat from under his jacket, and the fives bat came in very useful for enlightening Baggy on the subject of the laws of property.

Bending over a rail, in the grasp of two pairs of hands, Baggy received a dozen of the best from the fives bat, and every whack was accompanied by a howl of anguish.

Then Baggy was bumped thrice, and then he had to run the gauntlet, and finally he was allowed to flee.

* * * * * * * * *

All was clear at last.

The mystery of the ten-pound note had been finally cleared up, and a good many minds were set at rest.

Baggy Trimble was the only fellow who was not satisfied with the outcome of the affair. Baggy had had to part with his plunder—all that was left of it. Baggy had been batted, and bumped, and kicked, and Baggy was more unpopular if possible, than he had ever been. Baggy felt that this was exceedingly hard cheese on a really nice and taking fellow, whose only weakness was a desire to posssess things that did not belong to him. But there it was. Baggy was used to misunderstanding and injustice, and he felt that he was a more injured youth than ever. But nobody minded what Baggy thought, so that did not matter.

Tom Merry & Co. were immensely relieved and glad that the affair had turned out as it had. Figgins, of course, was the most "bucked" of all.

The little cloud that had arisen between Cousin Ethel and her schoolboy chum had quite blown away.

"It was foolish of you—very foolish!" said Ethel to Figgins, when she knew the whole story; but her glance was very kind and her voice very soft.

Probably she did not like Figgy any the less for the foolishness that had made him sacrifice himself, rather than allow a breath of suspicion to taint her name.

During the remaining days of Cousin Ethel's stay at St. Jim's George Figgins was the happiest fellow in the universe. And when Ethel left, all sorts of plans and arrangements had been made for the next holidays. Trouble had fallen darkly on Figgins of the Fourth, but it had passed, and again all was bright and sunny.

THE END.

(Look out for another magnificent story of St. Jim's next week entitled: "THE MYSTERIOUS CRICKETER!" by Martin Clifford. A "gem" of a yarn it is, too, chums!)

TRAITOROUS FRIENDS! Young Bob Evans gladly welcomes the aid of Count K. and Leontine in his efforts to thwart the Monk, but little does he realise that these two newcomers to his camp are more covetous of the Scarlet Streak and the world power it will bring them than the Monk himself!

An Amazing Story of Romance and Adventure based upon the Death Ray, the most sensational invention of modern times!

Wreckage!

BOB felt his car leap into thin air as it surged over the edge of the steep slope, and he got one glimpse of the crooks' machine, turning over and over in a cloud of dust.

The slope fell sheer before him, with trees at the foot. The machine leaped and lurched to the boulders and rocks on the surface, and, hurtling madly, it swayed from side to side.

A giant rock loomed up in their path; Bob brought all his strength to the steering-wheel as he tried to haul the machine clear. The car skidded wildly, and for yards it slithered broadside down, then the rear wheels caught the side of the rock and the machine leaped sheer into the air from the impact. It crashed on its side, then heaved over!

Bob saw that it was turning turtle. He loosed the wheel, grabbed Mary by the arm and pulled her down, bracing himself with his back against the steering-column.

The fraction of a second afterwards, and the machine turned bodily over, whirling madly as it thundered down the slope. The two were showered with splintered glass and dust; they were deafened by the crash of the fallen machine. A dozen times they were all but pitched out. It was only the fact that they were both wedged down under the dashboard that saved them from being crushed.

With one last terrific crash, the car shot into the trees at the foot of the slope; leaves and twigs and broken branches hurtled all about it, until a heavy tree-trunk brought it up with a final smash.

For some seconds Bob lay gasping for breath, then he struggled from the wreckage of the machine and looked about him. The car was half-covered with earth, smoke lifted on the air, and dust was settling all about them.

Beyond the car was a broad swathe of shorn bushes and trees that had been snapped at the roots under the terrific impact of the falling machine. All the tyres had been wrenched from the wheels, the mudguards had been stripped, and the bodywork was cracked and ripped with great, jagged rents made by rocks against which it had struck.

Through the trees, and some way distant, Bob caught a hint of blue smoke, and he knew that it must come from the Monk's car. He wondered for a moment what had happened to the Scarlet Streak—the death-ray machine must be a complete wreck—then he remembered Mary!

She was wedged against the steering-wheel; she moved as he caught her by one arm and essayed to help her out. She scrambled clear, and leaned against him.

"You're—not—hurt?" Bob panted, and she shook her head. "What a—smash!" he went on. "Wonder what happened—to the others!"

"Probably not hurt at all!" Mary half whispered. "The trees broke our fall—and it would break theirs, too! But their machine must be wrecked—and the Scarlet Streak is certain to be smashed, too! Let's get away, in case they——"

Bob peered over her shoulder through the trees.

"I'd better go across and make sure that the death-ray machine is destroyed!" he said slowly. "It wouldn't do for it to be——"

Mary caught his arm.

"Yes, but think what it means! They may have caught dad at home! They took the machine from there, and if they met him while they were—getting—it—away——"

Her words trailed off, and she stared at him with fear in her eyes. Mr. Crawford had gone ahead of them. The chances were that he had met the Monk and his gang; if he had, they would have no mercy on him.

The thought decided Bob, and he pointed through the trees and up the steep slope.

"We'll cut up that way—the road is at the top!" he exclaimed, and with his strong arm about Mary, they started the climb.

The way was rough and terribly steep, but they made it safely, although a score of times their foothold failed and they slithered for yards ere they managed to bring themselves to a stop. They reached the roadway at the top just as a man in a car was approaching them.

Bob stepped into the road, and the driver of the machine stared in amazement at their dust-covered clothing, as he brought his car to a halt.

"Had a smash?" he asked.

Bob nodded.

"We went over the cliff!" he exclaimed, then he added: "I wonder if you'd mind running us into the town?"

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

BOB EVANS has sacrificed his career as star reporter on the "Daily Times" in order to aid

MARY CRAWFORD, the daughter and sole assistant of

RICHARD CRAWFORD, an inventor who has created a wonderful death-ray machine known as the SCARLET STREAK. Bob and Mary rescue him from the clutches of a gang under the leadership of

THE MONK, who seeks possession of the Scarlet Streak or its plans.

* * * * * * * * * *

After Mr. Crawford is released from the gang's headquarters he returns home alone, to find that the Monk, with his aides, LEONTINE and COUNT K., have stolen the Scarlet Streak. In his laboratory the inventor finds the dead body of a man dressed in his own clothes, and whose face has been mutilated beyond recognition by an explosion. Count K., who poses as a friend of the Crawfords, suggests to the inventor that he should put the papers and letters from his own pockets into those of the dead man and then disappear, and so thwart his enemies.

In the meantime, Mary and Bob are returning to the Crawford home. On the way their car passes that of the Monk and his men, and the two see the death-ray machine in the back of the crooks' car. Bob turns his own car and chases them. He is right on their tail when the Monk's machine crashes through a barrier across the road. An instant later, and both cars hurtle down a steep slope, the Monk's turning over as they fall!

(Now read on.)

"Pleasure!" the driver answered. "Sure you're not hurt? Is the lady all right? My gosh, but you must have had a narrow squeak!"

Bob assured him that they had come to no real hurt, and a few seconds later they were bowling along in the direction of the Crawford home on Euclid Terrace.

As they went, the Monk and his men were disentangling themselves from the wreckage of their own car. They were all badly shaken. The Monk clawed his way to the side of the wrecked machine, and he found that the Scarlet Streak lay crushed beneath the back. Two of his men dragged to his side, clinging to the trunk of a tree to support themselves.

The Monk stared from them to the wreckage.

"The Scarlet Streak is destroyed!" he gasped.

All the delicate mechanism had been shattered by the fall; the heavy tripod was smashed, and the bulbous head had been staved in. It was damaged beyond repair.

The Monk looked up the slope. Through the foliage of the trees he could just glimpse Bob and Mary as they climbed slowly over the top of the cliff.

"It was through him that it's been smashed!" he muttered viciously. His dark eyes blazed venom as he lifted his fist and shook it at Bob's distant figure. "But I'll get you yet, Bob Evans—I'll get you yet!"

The Still Figure!

WHILE Mary and Bob were climbing up the steep slope down which the runaway car had carried them, Leontine—queen of the gang—was on her way back to the Crawford home.

She knew that Count K. had remained behind after the Monk and the rest had got away with the Scarlet Streak, and Leontine believed that the count had stayed because he wanted to see Mary. She was suspicious that he was more interested in Mary than in herself, and it was this that had brought her back to the scene of the robbery.

She stepped from the car and dismissed the member of the gang who drove it. Having watched the machine move away, she stepped to the front door, pushed on it, and entered the hall.

The whole house was strangely silent, and she frowned a little as she made for the steps which led upwards to the laboratory. She glanced about her suspiciously, but saw nothing. She passed through the curtains which cut off the corridor leading to the laboratory from the top of the stairs, and then, her footsteps muffled on the carpet, she stole stealthily towards the laboratory door.

As she neared it, she heard the soft crackle of ruffling papers, and she peered cautiously through the opening. What she saw made her catch her breath and start back.

The count was kneeling beside the body of a man. Leontine recognised his clothes as those of Richard Crawford, the inventor of the Scarlet Streak, and she knew that he was dead, because his face was covered with a cloth, and blood stained the floor.

Leontine watched the count as he examined the wallet and the papers that he held in his hand, then he placed them in the pockets of the dead man's coat. He worked quietly and methodically, and Leontine's mouth hardened as she eyed him.

She thought that the count must have killed Mr. Crawford. Actually, the count was the only one who knew the secret of the mutilated body, which, to all intents and purposes, was that of the inventor.

She saw the count straighten up. He stood a moment looking down at the man, then he began to move towards the door. On the instant, Leontine stepped back and slipped behind curtains in front of the balcony entrance, opposite the laboratory door. From there she watched the count make for the stairs, and, as he went, she nodded to herself and smiled knowingly.

Her sloe-black eyes glinted as she watched him pass through the far curtains, then, stealthily, she started to follow him. He made straight for the hall and for a table on which lay a little bundle of masks. They had been used for the Crawford Masque Ball some time before, and belonged to the count. Calling for them was his excuse for being in the house.

Leontine watched him as he wrapped the masks in paper and began to tie them up. She stepped forward, the travesty of a smile playing about her lips. The count knew nothing of her presence until she touched him lightly on the shoulder.

He started and jerked round. For an instant he stared at her in amazement, then he exclaimed:

"You mustn't be seen here!"

"Mustn't I?" asked Leontine calmly. "And why not? None of the Crawfords know me. Like you, I've always kept in the background when we have had either of them at headquarters. Also——" She broke off, and her dark eyes gleamed as she slowly added: "I know what has happened, and I know who is lying in the other room!"

The count read the meaning that lay behind her words, and his eyes narrowed.

"There's bound to be trouble, and I don't want you mixed up in it!" he exclaimed. "I don't know how things are going to turn out, and, what's more, the Monk doesn't know you're here. If he thought you were running risks like this he'd——"

"Never mind him!" Leontine exclaimed; and she slipped on to a corner of the table and laughed up into the count's face. "I know just a little bit too much for you to play fast and loose with me, count! I'm going to take a real hand in the game now!"

He looked down at her. He could see that she believed he had killed the inventor, and the count had reasons of his own for letting her go on thinking him guilty. Leontine thought she had the whip-hand of him; but Leontine was very much mistaken.

While they were talking in the hall, the butler and the cook were entering the kitchen down below. Their absence from the place had materially aided the Monk and his gang in their spiriting away of the Scarlet Streak; but neither of them knew that.

"It's a relief to have had a bit o' fresh air!" the cook exclaimed, as she took off her shawl. "Sure, an' with the strange goings on around here, it's afeared I am to stay in the house!"

The butler grinned.

"There's nothing to be afraid of while I'm about!" he exclaimed. He stuck out his chest as he spoke and tapped it with his forefinger. "Don't worry—Hi will protect you!"

"It's nice to have somebody who'll——"

The cook broke off. The kitchen cat was up on one of the shelves, and almost as though she heard the butler's words, it moved and set a pan crashing from off the shelf to the tiled floor below.

The butler jumped half a yard off the floor as he yelled in alarm; he made a frantic clutch at the cook, and clung to her with trembling hands.

"'Tis only the cat!" the cook exclaimed disgustedly. "Ye talk about protectin' me—faith, an' it's yerself that needs a pertector!"

She pushed him away, and he gulped as he saw that it was only a fallen pan that had scared him. He backed for the door, and, to cover his confusion, said:

"I'll see if the master 'as returned! He ought to be back by now."

"Get off with ye!" the cook exclaimed. "An' watch out the goblins don't bite ye on th' stairs! You pertect me!" And she made as if to fling something at him.

He dived through the kitchen door and hurried up the stairs by a flight that led to the farther end of the laboratory corridor. He made for the white-walled room, tapped on the door, and then pushed it open. He glanced about to see if Mr. Crawford was there; then he saw the body lying near the bench!

He caught his breath at sight of it, and staggered back against the door, staring at the still figure with horror-filled eyes. He straightened up and cautiously approached it; he lifted the cloth that covered the head, then dropped it hurriedly as he saw the mutilated face beneath.

"The master!" he gasped. And with the words on his lips he leaped for the door.

He went down the stairs in huge jumps, shot through the kitchen door, and cannoned into the cook, sending her and the tray she held flying half across the room.

"The master's dead!" he exclaimed. "Up there in the laboratory—dead!"

"Dead!" The cook stared at him incredulously. "Dead!" she repeated. "Mr. Crawford——" She broke off as the colour drained from her face, and the butler was just in time to catch her as she fell fainting towards the floor.

To both of them the inventor's death came as a shock. Both had been with the grey-haired man a long while, and had grown to respect and to admire him. But though it was a shock to them, there was one to whom it would come as an even greater blow—Mary, at that moment alighting from the car with Bob.

Bob drove at his man, caught him fairly, and sent him flying overboard. "Good man!" yelled Count K. "Good——" His words choked off, for from the engine of the motor-boat came a trail of smoke, backed by a tongue of lurid flame.
(*See page* 27.)

Bob wanted to pay the man for the lift he had given them, but he refused his offer.

"Always glad to help!" he said cheerfully. "Glad I didn't have to do more for you. There ain't many have gone over that cliff and come up again as unhurt as you are!"

They stood talking with him for a few moments, quite unconscious of the fact that Leontine and the count had heard the approach of the machine and were watching from a window near the door.

The count caught Leontine's arm.

"Get away from here before they come in!" he exclaimed urgently. "It won't do for them to see you and——"

With a smile, Leontine cut in:

"On the contrary, Mary Crawford needs a friend. You will arrange it, or I tell her who killed her father!"

"Evans is too smart not to see that——" the count began.

"He'll suspect nothing," Leontine told him. "He knows you as a friend of the Crawfords, and I can be a friend of yours. Either that, or——" And she nodded meaningly.

The count smiled suddenly, almost as though her suggestion suited newly formed plans.

"Very well," he said; "let's slip into the other room at the side of the hall and wait for them there."

When Mary and Bob entered the house they saw no one, and made straight for the laboratory stairs. They knew that if the inventor was in the house he was certain to be in the laboratory. By now he would have discovered that the Scarlet Streak was missing, and if he chanced to have met the gang before they got away—— But Mary would not allow that thought to frame itself in her mind.

It was as they were at the foot of the stairs that Bob caught sight of the two in the room at the side.

"Some friends of yours in there, Mary!" he exclaimed. "Perhaps they've been waiting for you!"

"I suppose I shall have to see what they—— Oh, it's the count!"

She hurried forward, with Bob at her side.

"I hope I did right in waiting to see you," the count said. "This is a friend of mine." And he introduced Leontine to Mary and then to Bob.

"Always pleased to see you, count!" Mary said. "But you must excuse me for a few moments; I must see my father!"

The count nodded, and Mary turned away. Bob started after her, but the count caught his arm.

"Stop her! She must not enter that room upstairs!" he said insistently.

"What's the trouble?" asked Bob. "What——"

"I'll tell you later!" the count whispered. "But we must stop her!"

Bob slipped past him and called to Mary. She stopped at the sound of his voice, and waited for him to overtake her.

"Something's wrong—wait here!" said Bob quietly.

"Don't go upstairs just yet!" the count put in.

Mary glanced from one to the other of them wonderingly. She could see that Bob's face had suddenly grown stern and set. He did not know what was wrong, but he made a guess at something serious from the count's manner.

"Something wrong?" asked Mary. "You mean—dad?"

Neither answered. Before they could stop her, Mary darted away and went racing up the stairs. With a jump, Bob went after her, the count and Leontine almost at his heels. Bob called to Mary, but she did not heed his words.

She had a feeling that what she dreaded most had happened, and when she reached the disordered laboratory her wide eyes went at once to the still figure lying by the bench.

Bob leaped through the doorway, and he tried to get between her and the quiet form, but she pushed him away. He saw her swaying as she stared.

"Dad!" she moaned. "Dad——"

A moment later and she crumpled in Bob's arms. He whipped her off her feet, and carried her to a settee in the passage outside the laboratory door.

With the count and Leontine to help him, Bob tried to revive her; and down below the butler and the cook had packed their luggage and were leaving the house.

In her moment of greatest trial Mary was being deserted by her father's servants, two members of the Monk's gang were posing as her friends, and only Bob Evans stood between her and the unscrupulous crooks who sought the secret of the death-ray machine.

"When Thieves Fall Out!"

LATER in the day, at the House of the Closed Shutters, the gang's headquarters, Count K. and the Monk were coming to the breach which had been foreshadowed for so long. The Monk was trying to blame the count for what had happened that day.

"You had the Scarlet Streak in your hands," the count told him. "Was it my fault that you fell over a cliff and smashed the thing up?"

"No; but you should have known that Evans and the girl were coming here!" the Monk snarled. "If you'd stopped them, they'd never have met us on the road with the machine. It was through that that we went over the cliff—they were chasing us. It's your fault that the thing went wrong, and if it——"

"Don't rave at me!" the count said angrily. "You've bungled every move we've made to get the secret of the Scarlet Streak!"

The Monk jerked out of his chair. His black eyes glittered evilly, and his thin lips writhed from off his ugly teeth. His short, straggly beard seemed to bristle with savage rage, and, without a moment's warning, he lashed out at the count.

The blow staggered the count, but on the instant he sent his right fist smashing home on the bearded jaw. There was more strength and sting behind that blow than even the count himself knew. The Monk was picked clean off his feet, and he crashed to the carpeted floor.

He sat there, holding his jaw. Just for a moment he eyed the count from between narrowed lids, then, with the swiftness of a striking snake, he jerked to his feet and whipped open a door behind him.

A man leaped into the room, and together they jumped at the count.

"Now we'll see who's boss!" the Monk snarled. "Let him have it!" and he lashed out at the count again.

The count dodged his blow, and then, with a swinging right, he sent the Monk's henchman head-over-heels.

Leontine was in the room, and she watched with startled eyes the fierce scrap which followed. The Monk was a powerful man, and so was the tough whom he had called to his assistance. But the count was a match for the pair of them. A dozen times he sent both staggering under his powerful punches, and when the Monk's paid bully tried to work at close quarters, the count heaved him up and crashed him to the ground with a stunning force that shook the breath out of the man's body.

Weakly, the fellow tried to renew the fight, while the Monk grabbed a chair and essayed to crash it down on the count's head. He warded it partly with an arm, and the chair smashed as it struck his shoulder.

The pain of the blow half-sickened him, and he staggered across the table. Instantly the Monk was on him, wrapping talon-like fingers about his neck and laughing evilly.

"Got you—got you!" he growled. "I'll teach you to——"

With a sudden, desperate twist, the count jerked from his grasp. He put his whole weight behind the terrific blow that he rocked to the Monk's jaw, and the leader of the gang went down like a sack.

The count turned to the already weakened man behind the Monk. A single smashing right sent the fellow headlong out of the door through which he had appeared, and he flopped, an inert heap, across the threshold.

The Monk was scrambling to his feet, and the count caught his wrists in a grip of iron.

"You and I part company right here!" he snapped. "I'm through!"

With the words he thrust the Monk from him, and turned to the white-faced Leontine.

"I'm finished with this gang," he said. "If you——"

He checked as the Monk approached him again, his dark eyes blazing; but he made no attempt to renew the fight. He looked at Leontine. He could see—and he had known for a long while—that she was more interested in the count.

"You've got to choose—Count K. or myself!" he ripped at her.

Leontine smiled.

"My choice is already made," she said, and she glanced at the count as she spoke.

The Monk glared from one to another of them, and when he spoke again it was through gritted teeth.

"You're a fool, Leontine!" he hissed. "Go with him! But when I get the blueprints of the Scarlet Streak, you'll wish you'd made a different choice!"

Leontine shrugged her shoulders. She slipped a hand through the count's arm, and, without a backward glance at the raging crook, they left the room.

The Monk watched them go. He saw them enter a car that waited outside the house, and watched the count drive off. In a matter of seconds he was on their trail, following them as they headed for the inventor's home on Euclid Terrace.

The count and Leontine had arranged to return later in the day to discuss things with Mary and Bob, who had accepted the count's offer of aid. Mary was entirely unsuspicious of the fact that Leontine was the masked adventuress of the ball which her father had given, and in her hour of sorrow she eagerly accepted Leontine's friendship.

Mary and Bob were waiting in a room on the ground floor. Leontine arrived at the house alone, and she told them that the count was turning his car in the drive before he came in. While they were waiting for him, Mary told her of the loss of the only death-ray machine that her father had built.

"His idea was that, with the Scarlet Streak, universal peace would come to the world," she said. "The very might of the machine would prevent nations going to war." Then she added: "I am determined on one thing—to find the blueprints of dad's invention and carry on his work."

Her chin sat determinedly as she spoke.

"I know he left a clue to their hiding-place," Bob said. "But where?"

Mary glanced at him thoughtfully, then looked at Leontine.

"There is a clue somewhere about," she said, "and there is only one way to find it. We'll make a systematic search, beginning with the wall safe"—and she indicated a corner near at hand.

A plant in a pot concealed the existence of the combination knob of a small safe let into the panelled wall. Bob took the vase off the pedestal, and Mary slipped her fingers round the combination.

"I know the key to it," she said. "Dad gave me the word, and he never varied it. He always said that, if—if anything happened to him, I might find something in this little safe."

The little tumblers in the combination clicked sharply as the knob turned, and it was at that moment that they heard the front door-bell ringing.

"That's the count!" Leontine exclaimed. "But I am sure I left the door open for him to follow. I'll let him in."

She hurried away, and found the count waiting on the doorstep.

"I left the door open for you!" Leontine exclaimed.

"Doesn't look much like it!" the count answered, with a smile. "It was closed hard enough when I rang. The wind must have blown it shut!"

But it was not the wind—it was the Monk! He had slipped through the wide-open door and, even at that moment, he was hiding in the hall.

Mary had got the round door of the little safe open: she brought out a double handful of papers, and amongst them she found an envelope bearing her name.

"That's dad's writing!" she exclaimed excitedly, as she drew out the contents. "What's this? Why, it's a Cross Word puzzle!" and she held out a sheet of paper that she had drawn from the envelope. She turned as Leontine and the count came on. "Here's a discovery!" she called, and they hurried forward.

The count took the papers that she handed to him, and looked quickly through them.

"Here's a letter!" he said, and handed it to Mary.

"I didn't notice that!" she exclaimed, as she took it. "It's from dad!" and she read the words:

"When you solve this puzzle, you will find a hidden message of twelve words that will reveal the hiding-place of the blueprints. The only clue I dare give you is 'Catalina.'"

"This is just what we wanted!" Mary exclaimed, and the four of them examined the papers—while the Monk slipped cautiously into the room from the hall.

"If we get to Catalina, we might find another clue," said Bob.

"Or work the puzzle out on the way!" Leontine cut in.

"Catalina!" Mary exclaimed. "Father knew the Scotts over there. Maybe they know something about it!"

"The best thing to do would be to go and find out!" the count said, and he smiled as he spoke. "It isn't very far to the island."

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"It wouldn't take long to run across the bay!" Bob put in.

Mary nodded.

"We might as well go," she said. "We can hire a boat, and——"

She broke off as the count exclaimed:

"My motor-boat is at your service. You can start whenever you wish!"

Behind them, the Monk's thin lips stretched in a grin. Catalina—that was all he wanted to know! If the blueprints were on the island, it would not take him long to locate them—or so he thought! Noiselessly he slipped away; just as he went, he heard the count say:

"I'll phone the clubhouse to have the boat ready!"

The Race of Terror!

AN hour later, the four were at the clubhouse dock.

"My motor-boat is moored a little way off shore," the count explained, "but it won't take us long to run out to her. There's one of the clubhouse boats waiting to take us." And he indicated a small motor-boat moored to the side of the quay.

They climbed into the waiting vessel, the men in charge of it cast off, and the boat shot out from the dock, making straight for the speedy-looking motor-boat which lay rocking at its moorings a little distance away.

"She's pretty fast!" the count told Bob, as they neared her, then, as they came alongside, he helped Mary and Leontine aboard; Bob followed, and the count took the wheel.

It was just as the count's motor-boat shot away that the Monk arrived at the quay. He had delayed to collect two of his men, and these hurried at his side as they made for another motor-boat farther along the dock.

Sitting in it was a big-shouldered, flat-faced man, whose whole features had the marks of a pugilist. He was known as "Pug" Logan—and the Monk knew that he could rely on him in an emergency.

"Pug, see that crowd getting into that boat over there?" And the Monk nodded to where Mary and the rest were just climbing into the count's boat. "I've got to stop them getting to Catalina Island!"

Pug Logan's face twisted to a grin.

"Come aboard!" he said. "We'll stop 'em!"

The Monk dropped to his side as Pug started the engine.

"You sure she's fast?" he asked. "Fast enough to beat the count's boat?"

"Don't worry!" Pug growled at him. "She looks like a scow, but she's the fastest boat in the bay!" Almost with his words, the boat shot forward as the men on the quay loosed the mooring ropes and jumped into her.

Ahead, the count's boat was gathering way. Her prow lifted, and giant white waves of water foamed up on either side, while the boat seemed to leap to the surface as it streaked ahead.

"I said she could move!" the count called to Bob, who sat with Mary behind him. "She'd go faster still if we hadn't got that dinghy tied to our stern!"

In the broad wake of the speeding motor-boat, a dinghy leaped and bounced on the water as it was towed swiftly along. The count had brought it in case landing on Catalina Island proved difficult, and he could not bring the power-boat in closely enough; he would then have to use the dinghy to set his passengers on the shore.

It was as Bob glanced at the boat that he got a glimpse of the other vessel speeding behind them. He saw its prow lifting on the waves, and over the covered forepart, he got a glimpse of the bearded features of the Monk as he crouched from the spray. Bob stared at him, hardly believing his eyes. He leaned forward and tapped the count on the shoulder.

"Open up! There's a boat following us! The Monk's in it!"

He heard the count laugh.

"We'll leave them behind!" he called over his shoulder; and with his words the pace of the speeding boat increased.

Bob turned to watch the pursuing vessel. Fast though they themselves were going, the Monk was coming up faster still. Pug Logan was right when he said that his boat was the speediest in the bay.

The Monk watched as he saw that they were overhauling the others, and he turned to one of the men behind him.

"One of you get up on the prow! Pull in close to them, Pug, then he'll jump aboard! Just knock Count K. off the wheel so that we can close in!" he added to the man.

The fellow nodded, and began to clamber on the covered forepart.

Bob saw his move.

"One of 'em going to try and board us!" he yelled to the count; then he stood up and crouched as he saw the other vessel heaving down.

The crook bent for the jump. Pug Logan swung his boat close, and, without hesitation, the man leaped.

But Bob was waiting for him. He staggered as he took the weight and force of the man's jump; he heard Mary cry out, and then he was crashing fierce blows home on the fellow's jaw.

Twice he rocked stunning punches under his chin, then, with a sudden heave, he sent the fellow hurtling overboard, and he disappeared into the foaming wake of the boat.

At the same moment, Pug Logan opened up again, and Bob saw that the second man was shaping to board them. He intended to try and get a footing on the fore-peak, and Bob pushed past Leontine to intercept him.

He was barely on the slippery, spray-washed prow before the second man made his desperate leap. Bob lashed out at him, missed, and then both slipped on the smooth woodwork and went down—the crook on top!

Bob felt the fellow's weight on his chest as the man tried to pitch him headlong off the heaving prow. The stinging wash of swift water lashed Bob's face as the man strove to force him over, then, with a quick twist, Bob writhed from under the fellow.

With all his strength he pitched the crook off, and, as the fellow tried to get to his feet on the lifting, heaving surface, Bob drove at him, caught him fairly, and sent him flying overboard.

"Good man!" yelled the count. "Good——"

His words choked off as Leontine caught his arm. From the engine there showed a thin wisp of smoke, backed by a tongue of lurid flame.

"The boat's on fire!" the count exclaimed. As he spoke he choked with smoke, and twisted away from the flames that now swept from the engine.

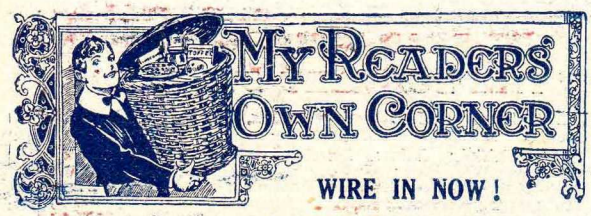
"Got an extinguisher aboard!" Bob asked.

"No, nothing that—— Heavens!"

With a sullen roar, flames shot out, driving the count from the wheel, forcing him back. The boat ran on out of control!

Suddenly it heeled to one side, whipped in a semi-circle, straightened, then the prow suddenly dipped, the stern lifted high—and the fraction of a second later the boat, with all aboard it, plunged under the surface.

(Has the scoundrelly Monk triumphed at last? Look out for another full-of-thrills instalment of this powerful yarn next week, chums, also another easy picture-puzzle competition for the correct solution of which a further £10 in prize money will be offered.)



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All Efforts in this Competition should be Addressed to: "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

SCOTLAND WINS!

SLIGHTLY MUDDLED!

Irish Policeman: "Me lad, if you're goin' to stand there, you'll have to move on." Small Boy: "But isn't this a free country?" Irish Policeman: "This isn't a country at all. It's one of the largest cities in the town of London!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to David Cumming, 20, Baker Place, Shawlands, Glasgow, Scotland.

MISUNDERSTOOD!

A lady entered a tobacconist's shop to buy some cigars. "Would you like them strong or mild?" asked the assistant. "Give me the strongest you have," replied the customer. "You see, the last ones my husband had broke in his pocket!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Hoyer, 112, Eldon Road, Wood Green, N. 22.

HUFFY!

"Life," said the cynic, "is like a game of cards." "I find it more like a game of draughts," said the actor, who had just been ejected from his lodgings for the sixth time that week. "I'm always having to move!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Leonard Woolley, 115, Norton Street, Radford, Nottingham.

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