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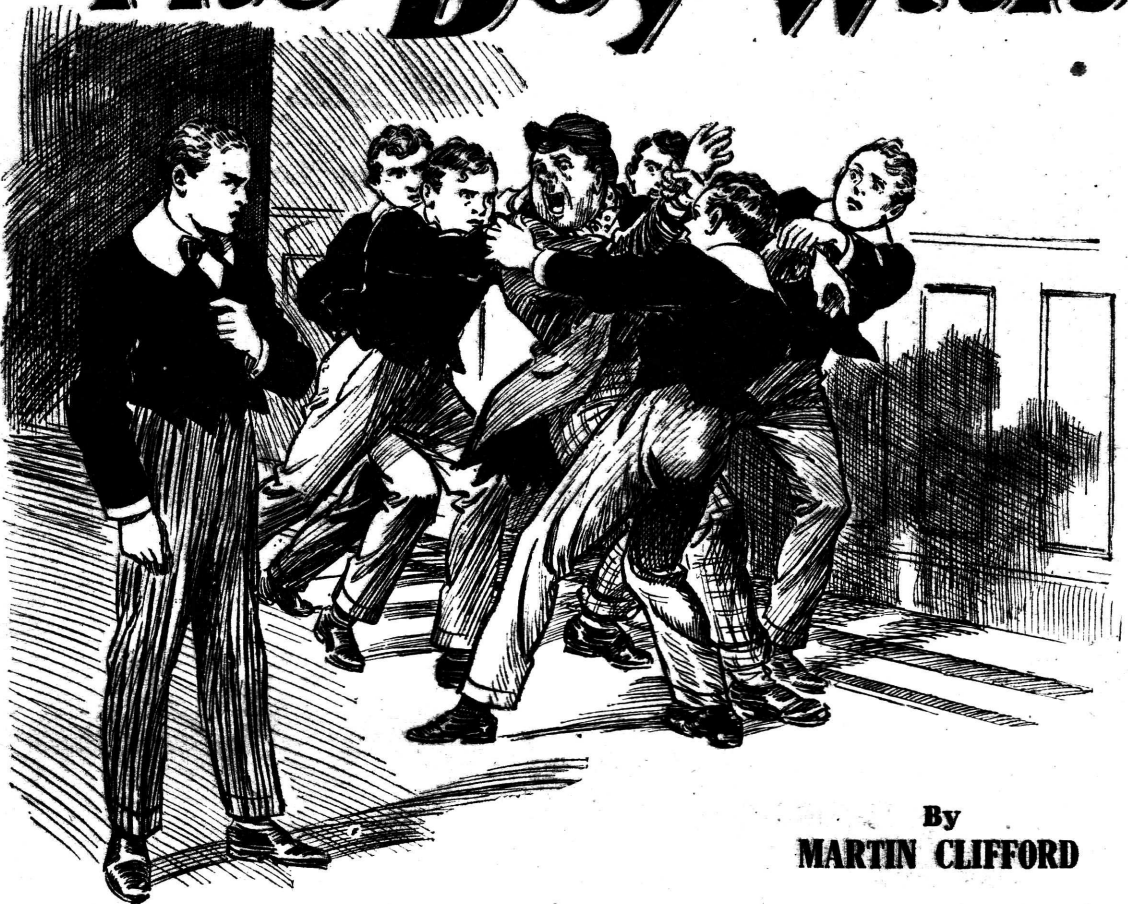
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This
RIPPING
TRICK WATCH

PRESENTED WITH
Next Week's Wonderful Number

THE NEW BOY WHO MADE OUT HE WAS "IT"—YET LIVED A LIE!—

The Boy With



By
MARTIN CLIFFORD

"Orlright!" roared the enraged Mr. Smiley, glaring at Vavasour as the juniors dragged him down the passage. "You'll go back on a pal, will you? I'll tell 'em something, I will!" "Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry. "I ain't going to shut up!" snorted Mr. Smiley. "I'm going to tell you something about that there impostor—"

CHAPTER 1. For Two Pins!

"VAVASOUR!"

"That's it!"

"Sounds a swagger name," said Monty Lowther of the Shell, with a yawn. "Another giddy aristocrat, like the one-and-only Gussy I suppose!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Vavasour," said Gore of the Shell, with a sniff "I'll Vavasour him if he comes any nonsense, anyway. What's his front name?"

"Guy," said Tom Merry.

"My hat! Thicker and thicker!" said Gore, with another sniff. "I'm quite anxious to see Guy Vavasour. If there's any rot—"

"Oh, bosh!" said Tom Merry. "No reason to suppose that the new kid is going to put on side because he happens to be named Guy Vavasour. Chap can't help his name, any more than he can help his face—that's why we're not down on you, Gore!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the matter with my face?" bawled Gore.

"The question is, what isn't the

matter with it?" drawled Monty Lowther. "But Tom Merry's right—you can't help it, and we're not down on you."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. "And I twust you are not goin' to be wude to the new chap simply because he happens to have a respectable name, Gore."

"If he puts on any side—" began Gore angrily.

"He hasn't done so yet," said Tom Merry pacifically. "You haven't seen him yet, Gore. Wait till he puts on side."

"His name's enough for me!" growled Gore.

"Weally, Gore—"

"Oh rats!"

The group of juniors were in the Hall of the old School House of St. Jim's, after lessons on a winter's day. They were discussing a new boy, who had just arrived; a junior who was going into the Fourth or the Shell, they didn't know which.

They knew that he was to be a School House boy, that was all, and that made them a little curious about him. If he had been going into the

New House, they would not have interested themselves in Guy Vavasour at all.

Mellish of the Fourth, the sneak of the School House, had caught sight of the new boy as he descended from the station cab, and was shown by Toby the page into the Head's study.

Mellish's report was that he looked like a swanker; but the other fellows discounted Mellish's evidence very much. Mellish was only too likely to take a dislike to a fellow because he looked straight and decent; indeed, Mellish's dislike, as Monty Lowther remarked, was a compliment to anybody.

"What's he like, Mellish?" asked Manners of the Shell. "You've seen him."

Mellish sniffed.

"Rather tall and slim," he said. "Dresses like a tailor's dummy—like Gussy here!"

"Weally, Mellish—"

"Turned out nobby from head to foot, and looks as if the earth isn't quite a good enough place for him to walk on," nodded Mellish.

"Fits in with the name," said George Gore. "Well, if he comes into

-GRAND LONG COMPLETE YARN OF THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S.

Big Ideas!

the Shell, we'll show him we don't stand any swank."

"Yes, rather!" said Croke.

"In fact, it would be a jolly good idea to rag him a bit for a start, and show him what's what to begin with," said Gore.

"You won't!" said Tom Merry quietly.

Gore glared.

"Why won't we?" he demanded.

"Because there will be thick ears served out if anything of the sort is tried out," said Tom Merry serenely. "You're not going to bully a new boy, simply because he's a new boy, while I'm around!"

"I quite agree with my friend, Tom Merry," said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon Gore of the Shell in a very severe way. "I should certainly refuse to allow anything of the sort!"

"Hear, hear!" said Blake of the Fourth. "Shut up, Gore, for goodness' sake!"

Gore grunted angrily.

"Here he comes!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

There was a general movement as the new boy came down the passage from the Head's study.

He was certainly an elegant-looking youth.

He was taller than most of the juniors there, with a fair face and clear-cut features, and fair hair curling over a high forehead. He was dressed most elegantly, in the best cut clothes, and, indeed, looked quite as well-dressed as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's.

He glanced at the juniors inquiringly.

"You're the new kid?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas."

The new boy spoke in a somewhat drawing voice, as if it were almost too much trouble to speak at all, and his accent was very like that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Vavasour, eh?" said Gore.

"Yaas."

"What Form are you going into?" asked Tom Merry.

"Shell."

"That's my Form. I'm Tom Merry, captain of the Shell."

"How do you do?" said Vavasour.

"And I'm Gore of the Shell," said the owner of that name, in a far from friendly tone, "and I don't stand any nonsense!"

Vavasour looked at him, raising his eyebrows slightly.

"Indeed!" he said.

"I mean that," said Gore.

"Yaas?"

"Gore, deah boy, pway don't be wude and wotten to a newcomer," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You will give him a vevy bad impression of the mannaahs of the coll!"

"I'd give him an impression on his silly nose for two pins!" grunted Gore.

"For two pins?" asked Vavasour.

"Yes, hang you!"

"Good!"

Vavasour, with perfect coolness, felt over the lapel of his elegant jacket, and from it extracted a couple of pins. He laid them in the palm of a very white and well-kept hand, and extended that hand to George Gore.

Gore stared at it as if it were some curious zoological specimen, and wondered what it meant.

The juniors grinned.

Vavasour's manner was perfectly grave and serious, and it was hard to

Full of stiff-necked pride, Guy Vavasour was simply asking for it when he came to St. Jim's swanking about his blue-blooded ancestors—for pride goes before a fall!

think that he was making fun of George Gore, the bully of the Shell. The burly Gore looked as if he could crumple up the elegant newcomer with a single drive of his heavy fist, and he was not a safe fellow to make fun of.

"What do you mean, you ass?" blurted out Gore angrily, and growing very red in the face.

"You said you would make an impression on my nose for two pins," said Vavasour, in his drawing voice.

"Yes, I did, and—"

"Well, there are two pins—get on with the punching!"

Gore drew a deep breath of rage. There was a chuckle from the group of juniors. Gore doubled up his big fists and rushed at the new boy.

Tom Merry & Co. looked a little anxious. They did not want to see the slender fellow hammered by the burly

bully of the Shell. But he had challenged Gore, and it was impossible to interfere.

Gore attacked the new boy, his heavy fists thrashing out, and it looked for a moment as if Guy Vavasour would be swept away before him, if not slaughtered where he stood. But only for a moment.

Then the delicate white hands came sweeping up, and Gore's big fists were knocked into the air, and Gore rushed right upon a hard set of knuckles!

Biff!

"Groogh!"

Gore staggered back. Between the impetus of his own rush and the force of the blow, he had received a terrific drive right on the nose, that brought the water with a rush to his eyes.

He staggered back two, three paces, and sat down with a bump.

"My hat!"

"Bwavo!"

"Groogh!" murmured Gore, dabbing his nose with his fingers, and taking them away crimsoned. "Groogh! Oh! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My nose is still waiting," said Vavasour gently, "and you have not yet earned the two pins!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gore staggered up and jammed his handkerchief upon his flowing nose. He gave the new boy a glare, and stalked away.

"Nuff's as good as a feast," grinned Monty Lowther; "and Gore has had enough! Now, Mellish, it's your turn."

"I don't want to quarrel with the new chap," said Mellish in alarm, backing away. "I—I don't believe in jumping on new kids."

"You did five minutes ago."

"Your turn, Croke."

"Oh rot!" said Croke.

And Croke and Mellish walked away before the argument could be carried any further.

After George Gore's experience they did not want to sample the powers of the new Shell fellow.

Vavasour looked round with a quiet smile.

"I'm sorry to cut up like this my first day here, you fellows," he said. "But it really wasn't my fault, was it? I'm not a quarrelsome chap, and I don't want to row with anybody."

"Good for you!" said Tom Merry heartily. "Gore has only got what he was asking for, and it will do him good. But blessed if I should have imagined you could hit out like that! You—excuse me—you don't look like it."

Vavasour smiled.

"Perhaps not," he said. "But I want to be friends with everybody who will let me. At the present moment I'm looking for the refreshment department. Anybody know the way to the dining-room?"

"We're just going to have tea in my study," said Tom Merry hospitably. "Will you come and have tea with us?"

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AND

A RIPPING TRICK WATCH! (See pages 7 and 11.)

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"By Jove—yes! Thank you so much!"

"I was just goin' to ask the new chap to come to Study No. 6, 'Tom Mewwy."

"Too late!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "We've bagged him now. Besides, he's coming into the Shell, so he belongs to us, anyway. Come on, Vavasour! A chap who has a daisy right-hander like that deserves a good tea!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Vavasour laughed, and walked away with Tom Merry. And the group of juniors broke up, realising that however soft and dandified the new fellow looked, he evidently wasn't so soft as his looks implied. And Gore, bathing his nose in the Shell dormitory, and feeling as if it had suddenly grown two sizes too large for him, realised it, too, and made up his mind to leave the new boy severely alone—at least, so far as fist-cuffs were concerned.

CHAPTER 2.

Pulling the New Boy's Leg!

TOBY, the School House page, met Tom Merry on the way to the study, with a letter in his hand.

Tom Merry recognised the handwriting of his old governess—Miss Priscilla Fawcett. He took the letter with considerable satisfaction. He was always pleased to receive a letter from Miss Fawcett. True, the kind old lady filled up much space in her letters with instructions about keeping his feet dry, and wearing flannel next to his skin, and always having a hot-water bottle in bed on cold nights, and so forth; but it was all prompted by affection, and so Tom Merry bore it cheerfully.

But more valuable than the advice the letter contained were the postal orders that generally accompanied the advice. It was quite easy to tell that it was not the thought of the advice, but the postal order that brought satisfaction to Tom Merry's face as he took the letter and opened it.

"Anything in the letter, Tommy?" asked Manners.

"Ten bob."

"Hurrah!"

"Them's my sentiments," said Monty Lowther heartily. "The funds are already at par—I mean, we already had five bob, and this makes fifteen. We shall be able to have a decent feed, and those kids from Study No. 6 can come. Hand out the filthy lucre, and I'll get the grub, and you can get the fire going, Tommy; and you, Manners, can fetch in the guests."

"Right you are!"

Monty Lowther slipped his arm through Vavasour's.

"You can come and help me carry in the grub," he said.

"The what?"

"Grub."

"Oh," said Vavasour, "you mean the things for tea?"

"I mean the grub," said Monty Lowther. "In other words, the prog."

"I will come with pleasure, my dear fellow," said Vavasour.

"Thank you, my dear fellow! I suppose you've got some room in your pockets for plenty of saveloys and jam sponges?"

Vavasour started.

"I—I'd rather not carry them in my pockets, if you don't mind," he faltered.

"Come on!" said Lowther, apparently not hearing. "This way to the tuckshop. I shall want you to help me bargain with Mrs. Taggles to get 'em cheap."

"My dear fellow—"

They disappeared down the passage. Tom Merry and Manners grinned at one another.

"Monty means to rot the new chap!" grinned Manners. "Well, it may do him good. He's hefty with his fists, but he's just a little bit too lackadaisical for my taste. It's Gussy over again, condensed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther had a solemn face as he walked Guy Vavasour down to the tuckshop in the corner of the old quadrangle of St. Jim's, behind the elms. Lowther was the humorist of the Shell, but no one would have suspected him of being a humorist from his looks now. When Monty Lowther wanted to "rot" some unhappy victim, he could look as solemn as an owl.

The extremely elegant manners and the easy, drawling voice of the new boy had marked him out as an appropriate victim, and Lowther did not see why he should not enliven himself with a little fun at the new boy's expense.

Dame Taggles smiled sweetly at the sight of Monty Lowther with a postal order and five shillings in his hand.

"Help me order the grub, Vavasour, old man," said Lowther. "Do you like pickles?"

"Oh, I never touch them!"

"Are you fond of German sausage?"

"Ahem—no!"

"I suppose you like whitebait?"

"Yaas!"

"Good! Then we'll have some sardines."

"Eh?"

"You see, Mrs. Taggles doesn't keep whitebait, but sardines are really just as good—same thing, really, you know, with a difference."

"Ya-as," said Vavasour, somewhat puzzled.

"Sardines, Mrs. Taggles, please!"

"Yes, Master Lowther."

Monty Lowther issued orders royally, and the pile of good things rose high on the counter before them. They were fastened up in a bundle, which Lowther gave to the new boy to carry.

Vavasour eyed it hesitatingly.

"Can't it be sent?" he asked.

"Why can't you carry it?"

"Well, you see, I don't really like carrying parcels like a shop-boy."

"Carry it like some other sort of boy, then," said Lowther seriously.

"Couldn't you carry it?" suggested Vavasour.

Lowther shook his head.

"I've got to keep my eyes open for Figgins," he said.

Vavasour looked astonished.

"Who's Figgins?" he asked.

"Chap in the New House. He's out there with Kerr and Wynn, and it would be just like those New House bounders to raid our grub."

"By Jove! Do they do that?"

"They do—they does," said Lowther.

"I wonder it's allowed."

"It isn't aloud—it's done on the quiet, you know."

"I didn't mean that—"

"You see, we raid their grub when we get a chance," Lowther explained.

"Perhaps that's their reason. The School House is Cock House of St. Jim's, though Figgins & Co. never seem able to see it, somehow. Jam that parcel under your arm, and put those tins of sardines in your trousers pockets, and come along."

"But—but it will make my pockets bulge."

"I know it will. Buck up!"

Monty Lowther paid for the purchases, and left the tuckshop.

Vavasour hesitated a moment, and then took the parcel under one arm and the tins of sardines under the other, and followed him. Outside, under the elms, three juniors were waiting with smiles on their faces. They were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn of the New House. And their sweet smiles showed that they had a hostile eye on the consignment of good things for Tom Merry's study.

"Now, you run for it!" whispered Lowther. "They're going to rush us, and I'm going to cover the retreat while you bunk."

"Oh!"

"Out of it!"

Monty Lowther did not wait for the enemy to attack. He made a sudden rush at Figgins & Co., bumped Fatty Wynn over, and caught Figgins and Kerr round the neck. Their heads came together with a loud crack, and there was a louder yell.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

Vavasour ran for the School House. A couple of tins of sardines clanged on the ground as he ran, but he did not stop for them. He disappeared into the portals of the School House while Monty Lowther kept the New House trio occupied.

Figgins & Co. had laid violent hands upon Lowther, and he was on his back on the ground, with Fatty Wynn sitting on his chest now.

"What are you up to?" roared Figgins indignantly. "What do you mean by biffing into us like that when we were—were—"

"Just admiring the view," said Kerr. Lowther chuckled.

"The view of our grub," he remarked.

"Well, what do you mean by charging at us, you ass?" asked Figgins.

"Pax!" said Lowther blandly. "The grub's safe now, so you can lemme gerrup. Take that porpoise off my chest!"

"Bump him!" growled Figgins.

"Hallo!" said Fatty Wynn. "That new chap has dropped the sardines."

And the fat Fourth Former dashed to secure the prize.

Lowther was on his feet in a moment, and he ran for the School House before Figgins and Kerr could collar him. He paused a moment in the doorway to kiss his fingers to the breathless New House juniors, and then strolled calmly up to Tom Merry's study.

Guy Vavasour had deposited his parcel on the table. Monty Lowther was considerably dusty, and he jerked out Vavasour's cambric handkerchief in an absent-minded sort of way to dust down his trousers and rub his boots.

Vavasour regarded him in horrified surprise.

"I—I say! That's my handkerchief!" he exclaimed.

"Yes; that's all right!"

"You're making it horribly dirty!" yelled Vavasour.

"Well, you can't rub boots with a handkerchief without making it dirty," said Monty Lowther, in an argumentative way. "Don't be unreasonable."

"You—you ass! Why can't you use your own?"

"My own!" said Lowther, in surprise. "I don't want to get my own handkerchief into that state. What a queer question to ask!"

He handed the soiled handkerchief back to its owner.

Vavasour allowed it to drop to the floor. Evidently he did not want to touch it with his slim and elegant fingers.

Tom Merry laughed. "Shut up rotting, Monty!" he exclaimed. "Remember that Vavasour is a guest within the giddy gates. Don't mind him, Vavasour; he was born funny."

"Yes, he looks it," said Vavasour. "Oh, do I?" snorted Lowther, who, like many humorists, did not like humorous remarks when directed towards himself. "Look here, you fat-head—"

"Shut up, Monty! Here come the guests!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, followed by Blake, Herries, and Digby, came in. Kangaroo of the Shell followed, and Reilly of the Fourth. Then the party was complete. And all the party lent a hand in preparing tea in Tom Merry's study, with the exception of Vavasour. That elegant youth stood and looked on.

CHAPTER 3.

One Little Weakness!

TEA in Tom Merry's study was always a pleasant and cosy meal, and when Tom was in funds, and had company, it was a merry one.

Nearly a dozen fellows made rather a crowd for a junior study; but they were used to crowding.

Vavasour stood by the window looking on at the preparations, and as he was a new boy and a guest the juniors let him do so, excepting Monty Lowther. The extreme elegance of the

new junior seemed to provoke Lowther somehow, and he delighted in finding tasks for Guy Vavasour, and the tasks were of the least elegant description.

Vavasour was requested to stir the fire, and he wrapped a sheet of paper round the handle of the poker before he picked it up.

Monty Lowther asked him to fill the kettle, and he took up the kettle in rather a gingerly manner. True, the kettle was not in a clean state—from having been jammed down into the fire on many occasions. But lily-fingered particularity was not approved of in junior studies—especially by Monty Lowther.

As Vavasour came in with the filled kettle, Lowther took it from him with a jerk that spilt a considerable quantity of water over Vavasour's elegant trousers.

Vavasour gave a yell. "By Jove! Look what you've done!"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Lowther, in apparent distress.

"You clumsy ass!" said Tom Merry. Lowther looked at him, which was fatal, for he tilted the kettle, and a fresh stream of water poured from the spout over Vavasour's trousers and gleaming shoes.

Vavasour jumped back. "Ow! You ass!"

Tom Merry caught Lowther by the hair and jerked him away. Then it was Monty Lowther's turn to yell.

"Yow! Leggo!" "Well, stop it," said Tom Merry. "You mustn't be funny with a guest. It's all right, Vavasour; it will get dry."

"The only thing that doesn't dry up

here is Monty Lowther," remarked Jack Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard it as wathah wotten soilin' a fellow's clothes, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely.

"It's all right, Vavasour," said Kangaroo. "If Lowther starts being funny again, we'll bump him bald-headed!"

Vavasour nodded; but the state of his boots and trousers evidently worried him. He kept as far as he could from the humorous Lowther after that.

Tea was ready at last, and the juniors sat down round the table, and anywhere else where they could find room to sit.

Vavasour's face cleared under the kindly influence of tea and hot muffins and cheery talk. The talk turned upon the new boy himself. New boys were expected to give an account of themselves, and Vavasour was not at all reticent.

"Been to school before?" asked Manners.

"No; I had a tutor," said Vavasour. "First-class man."

"Oh!" said the juniors.

"Vavasour is first-class in every way," said Monty Lowther, with a solemn wink into his teacup. "He comes from a first-class place. Tell us about the baronial hall at home, Vavasour, old man."

"Well, a chap needn't be ashamed of having been born in a baronial hall, that I know of," said Vavasour loftily. "We have a fine place down in Kent; dates from the time of the Conquest."

"My ancestor, Sir Hugh de Vavasour, was at the Battle of Hastings.



"I'd give him an impression on his nose for two pins!" grunted George Gore. "For two pins?" asked Vavasour. "Yes, hang you!" exclaimed Gore. With perfect coolness the new boy extracted two pins from the lapel of his coat and held them out to Gore. "Here are the two pins. Get on with the punching!"

But they were a great family in Normandy before the Conquest," said Vavasour.

"There wasn't any undesirable Aliens Act in those days," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully.

"Shut up, Lowthah, you ass! I think it vewy pwob that Vavasour is a vrelation of mine," said D'Arcy. "The D'Arcys were connected with the Vavasours in the weign of King John. You belong to the Kent Vavasours, old fellow?"

"Yaas."
"Then it's the same family," said D'Arcy triumphantly. "We're sort of distant cousins, you know. There was a mawwiage in the weign of King John."

"Very distant cousins, I should think," yawned Blake. "Get off your hobby horse, Gussy, old man!"

"Weally, Blake—"
"What's in a name?" said Digby. "You can't beat Smith for a really good old English name."

Vavasour turned red.
"Drop that!" he exclaimed irritably.
"Drop what?"

"I don't like jokes of that sort."
"But I wasn't joking."
"Oh, rot!"

"Vavasour's got some relation with that awful name," said Blake solemnly.
"It hits him on the raw."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Vavasour jumped up.
"Look here, I'm not going to stand this! I—"

The juniors stared at him in astonishment. It was evident that the new junior was really angry, and there was a painful pause. Why any fellow should be angry at such a harmless little joke was a mystery.

"Sit down," said Blake gracefully. "I withdraw my remark. But you must allow me to observe that you are an ass."

"Chap can't help belonging to a good old family, and being proud of it, too," said Vavasour sulkily.

"Yaas, wathah, I quite agree with our fwiend Vavasour. I wegard you as an ass, Blake."

Vavasour sat down.
Tom Merry skilfully turned the subject to football, and the clouds cleared. On the subject of football Vavasour could talk, and his talk showed that he knew how to play the game.

"We'll give you a trial in a practice match to-morrow, Vavasour," said Tom Merry. "If you're any good, we'll put you down as a reserve for the junior eleven."

"Yaas," said Vavasour. "Good!"
"By the way, what study has Linton put you into?" asked Lowther.

"No. 8."
"That's Gore's study."
"Who's Gore?"
"The fellow whose nose you punched."

"Well, I can punch it again if he doesn't get on with me," said Vavasour easily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
When tea was over, and the guests had departed, the Terrible Three of the Shell cleared the table, and took out their books to work. Monty Lowther bestowed a comical look upon his chums.

"What do you think of the new chap?" he asked.

"Well, he's all right," said Tom Merry.

"Very high-class," grinned Lowther. Tom Merry laughed.

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"We've all got our little weaknesses," he said. "Vavasour's is swank. But it isn't very bad, and I dare say it will soon get knocked out of him."

"Yes, I think that's very likely. If he talks about the baronial hall here, it will get to be a standing joke."

"He will learn to drop that."
"And the first-class tutor—"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mustn't discuss a departed guest," said Manners severely. "I'm surprised at you, Lowther. But why on earth was he so ratty at the suggestion that he might have a relation named Smith?"

"Couldn't be connected with anything so common," grinned Lowther. "He'd better say so to Smith minor of the Fourth, or Smith major of the Sixth. Then there will be trouble."

"Well, everybody's an ass on some point," said Tom Merry. "Vavasour's an ass on that point, that's all. After all, you know, if he's been brought up in an atmosphere of old family and blue-blood bosh, he can't help it, you know. Now, give me the Latin dic, and shut up!"

And the Terrible Three set to work. They had not been working long when the study door opened, and Gore put an excited face into the room. The three juniors looked at him.

"Is it true that that thing is going to be shoved into my study?" roared Gore.

"What thing?"
"That new thing—Vavasour."

"So I hear."
"I won't stand it! I've got Skimpole already, and he's enough to drive a chap dotty!"

"That accounts for it," said Lowther thoughtfully.

"Accounts for what?"
"For your mental state."
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not going to stand it!" exclaimed Gore, unheeding. "I tell you—"

"No good telling us," said Lowther. "You'd better go and tell Mr. Linton or the Head. Tell 'em that if Vavasour's put into your study, the result will be gore—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh rats!"

Gore departed and slammed the door behind him.

"There's going to be trouble in Study No. 8," Manners remarked.

"I fancy Vavasour can take care of himself," said Tom Merry, laughing.
And the Terrible Three went on with their preparation.

CHAPTER 4.

Not Nice for Gore!

GUY VAVASOUR opened the door of Study No. 8 and entered.

He had a bag in his hand, and a stack of books under his arm. He had come to take possession of his quarters.

There was only one junior in the study when he entered. He was a youth with a very large head, and an especially large forehead, adorned with little tufts of hair. He wore a pair of very large spectacles, and he turned them upon the new boy as he came in.

"Hallo!" said Vavasour. "I think this is my study."

"You are very welcome," said the spectacled junior benevolently. "I fear that Gore will not be pleased, judging from some observations he has already made upon the subject. But I trust that Gore will reflect upon the matter, and realise the uselessness of opposing his individual judgment to the decision of

the Form-master, and also the obligations of hospitality towards a stranger only newly arrived."

Vavasour stared at the speaker. He had never heard such a flow of language from a youth of under fifteen before, and it surprised him.

"You belong to this study?" he asked.

"Yes; I'm Skimpole!"
"I'm Vavasour," said the new junior, putting his books upon the table and his bag upon the chair. "So there will be three of us?"

Skimpole nodded genially.

"Yes, there were two of us before, and the addition of a unit increases the number to three undoubtedly," he said. "I may remark that I am very glad you have come, Vavasour. I do not find Gore a very pleasant study-mate."

"I am not surprised at that."

"I trust that we shall find that we have some things in common," said Skimpole, with a beaming smile. "Are you interested in the subject of Determinism?"

"What is that?"
"Ahem! I see you do not know the subject at all. Have you ever reflected upon the need for social amelioration?"

"Great Scott!"
"You have perhaps given some thought to evolution?"

"Not that I remember."
Skimpole rubbed his bony hands together.

"Then I shall be delighted to be the humble instrument of your enlightenment upon these important matters," he said.

"Thanks!"
Skimpole blinked round the table and opened a large volume. Vavasour glanced at it curiously. The title was "Determinism; being a Treatise in Proof of the Fact that Everything that is as it is, is as it is, and not otherwise. By Professor Balmycrumpet."

It was evident that Skimpole of the Shell had original tastes, and it was not surprising that George Gore did not share them. Skimpole was, in fact, a genius. He took interest in all kinds of weird subjects that would have made any other fellow yawn himself to sleep. Skimpole was a Determinist and an Evolutionist and several other "ists."

He was deeply interested in the important question whether the human race originated in a speck of jelly floating in a primeval sea, or in the mud on the bank of some tropical river.

"Now!" said Skimpole. "There's no time like the present, and it's always an excellent plan to commence at the commencement. Professor Balmycrumpet says—"

"Thanks," said Vavasour politely, "but I'm going to do my prep."

"That is not really important, especially as you only arrived to-day," said Skimpole. "Mr. Linton will excuse you, I'm sure. But you may never have another opportunity of learning what Determinism is."

"What is it?" asked Vavasour.
"It's the belief of the Determinist, you know."

"And what is a Determinist?"
"A fellow who believes in Determinism."

"Quite clear," said Vavasour, grinning. "Can you explain all those things as lucidly as that?"

Sarcasm was quite lost upon Skimpole. He nodded genially.

"Certainly!" he replied. "Now, as a Determinist I hold the view that nobody is to blame for anything. Heredity and environment account for everything—a chap's actions are determined for him before he is born. For instance suppose you were a liar—"

THIS DANDY WATER-SQUIRT WATCH

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To fill the watch with water just press the face and back together and dip the winding-knob in water, which will be sucked up through a small hole as you ease the pressure of your fingers. Then show the watch to your pal—and water shock he gets!

Also, EIGHT SUPERB STICKY-BACK PICTURES, IN FULL COLOURS, OF CHAMPIONS OF SPEED AND SPORT, WILL BE PRESENTED FREE.

(Turn to page 11.)



There is bound to be a huge rush for the GEM next week, so

SEE THAT YOUR COPY IS RESERVED FOR YOU!

Vavasour started.
 "What!"
 "Suppose, for instance, you told a lie—"
 "You ass, what do you mean?"
 "I'm only putting a case," said Skimpole deprecatingly. "Suppose you told a lie, you would not be to blame, because you would be influenced to do it by some part of your character. You didn't make your character yourself, did you?"
 "I don't remember doing it, certainly!"
 "Therefore you are not responsible for what your character makes you do," said Skimpole triumphantly. "Suppose you—"
 Before Skimpole could get any further the door opened, and Gore came in.
 George Gore glared at the new boy.
 "So you're here?" he said.
 "Yes, I'm here," said Vavasour.
 "I heard they were going to shove you into my study," growled Gore.
 "It's my study, too!"
 "Rot! Look here—"
 "Pray don't interrupt us now, Gore," said Skimpole, blinking at the bully of the Shell through his huge spectacles. "I am just giving Vavasour some very interesting instruction in the theory of Determinism."
 "Oh, ring off!"
 "A true reformer never rings off, Gore. Now, Vavasour, supposing that Gore goes for you, as he very likely will, you must not blame Gore. The subtle influence of some savage ancestor is working in his nature—some ancestor who roamed the primeval forests, and probably devoured his fellow-men."

"What!" roared Gore.
 "My dear Gore, you are undoubtedly descended from a race of primitive cannibals whose ferocious instincts are yet alive within you," said Skimpole. "Do not think that I blame you. No chap can resist the influence of his heredity, coupled with that of his environment. Professor Balmycrumpet says—"
 "Shut up!"
 "No; that expression is not used in any of his fifteen volumes. He says—"
 Gore strode towards Skimpole, jerked him off his chair, and sat him down on the study floor with a terrific bump. Then he seized the great volume of Professor Balmycrumpet and brought it down on Skimpole's head. Astronomy was not yet numbered among Skimpole's many sciences, but he saw as many stars at that moment as if he had been the greatest of astronomers armed with the most powerful of telescopes.
 "Ow!" roared Skimpole.
 Gore threw the heavy volume on the floor and kicked it across the study.
 "Now shut up!" he roared. "I'm fed-up with your rot!"
 "Ow! Determinism is not rot!" exclaimed Skimpole. "That is a very common impression. I know, but it is quite a mistake—"
 "Dry up!"
 "My dear Gore, I am far from blaming you for this," said Skimpole, blinking at Gore as he sat on the carpet. "The savage instincts of a brutal ancestor are breaking out in you—"
 "Good!" said Gore. "Therefore, I'll give you some more."
 "Ow, ow! Yaroooh!"
 Bump, bump, bump!

The head of the unfortunate Determinist, as Gore knocked it on the floor, caused clouds of dust to rise from the carpet.
 Vavasour was laughing; but he stepped forward now, caught Gore by the shoulder, and jerked the bully of the Shell away from his victim.
 "Chuck it!" he said curtly.
 Gore glared at him.
 "Mind your own business!"
 "I'm going to mind Skimpole's business at present," said Vavasour cheerfully. "You're not going to bully him!"
 "Hands off!"
 "He can't help being a silly ass!" said Vavasour. "No occasion to jam his head on the floor. Let him alone, I say!"
 "I won't!"
 "Then I'll make you!"
 Vavasour's grip tightened upon the bully of the Shell, and Gore was swung across the study. It was evident that there was a very great deal of strength in the slim and elegant frame of Guy Vavasour.
 Gore reeled against the study wall, and stood there, panting, his eyes burning as they fixed upon the new junior.
 "You—you rotter!" he gasped.
 Vavasour pushed back his spotless cuffs.
 "If you want any more trouble, you can come to me, and let Skimpole alone," he said. "I'm not going to have any bullying in this study."
 Gore panted. But for his previous experience with Vavasour, he would have hurled himself upon the new boy
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and hammered him. But he knew now which way the hammering would go.

With a sudden movement, Gore caught up a heavy inkstand from the table, and made a spring towards Vavasour.

But Vavasour was not caught napping.

If that savage attack had gone as Gore intended, Vavasour would certainly have been very badly hurt. But it didn't. Vavasour sprang to meet him, and a quick blow almost paralysed Gore's right arm, and the inkstand fell upon the floor with a crash. Then came Vavasour's fists, right and left, left and right, crashing into the face of the bully of the Shell, and Gore went down like a log.

But he did not lie there. Vavasour bent down, grasped him, and sent him whirling out into the passage. Gore sat up in the passage, blinking stupidly at the new boy in the door-way of the study.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Oh!"

Vavasour shook an elegant finger at him.

"You won't come into this study again till you've promised to behave yourself!" he said.

"Ow!"

"You can cut off!"

"Yow!"

"If you come in, you'll get pitched out again, on your neck!"

"Groogh!"

The study door closed. Gore did not open it again.

CHAPTER 5.

A Strange Meeting!

"**H**OW long is that blessed Gussy going to be?" Tom Merry asked the question.

The Terrible Three were leaning on the stile in Rylcombe Lane, in a row.

They were waiting for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. D'Arcy and Vavasour were at Mr. Wiggs', the tailor's, in the village. D'Arcy and Vavasour had chummed up very much during the few days Vavasour had now been at St. Jim's. Whether or not they were related, owing to that marriage between members of the D'Arcy and Vavasour families in the reign of King John, certainly they had many tastes in common. And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had taken Vavasour with him to see his tailor; an excursion quite after Vavasour's own heart.

The Terrible Three had been in the village with them; but Mr. Wiggs' little shop was not so pleasant a place to them as it was to D'Arcy, so they walked on, and were waiting for them in the lane.

D'Arcy had said that he wouldn't be more than five minutes. Twenty minutes out of the five, as Monty Lowther put it, had already elapsed. But there was no sign of D'Arcy or Vavasour yet from the direction of the village.

"Oh, he'll be hours!" growled Manners. "Wish we hadn't said we'd wait. We ought to have known our Gussy better."

"Well, you kept us waiting ten minutes at the photograph shop," said Lowther.

"That was different. I was getting films."

Tom Merry laughed

"New clothes are far above rubies, and far above films, with Gussy," he

remarked. "But he'll be along soon, I suppose."

"Here comes somebody," said Lowther.

A pedestrian came in sight from the direction of Rylcombe. But it was a personage very different in appearance from the elegant swell of St. Jim's, or the almost equally elegant Vavasour.

A stout man, with a coarse red face, and a stubby three days' growth of beard on his chin, and the unkempt look that men have who are accustomed to late nights, and plenty of them. The flush in his face showed that the man was under the influence of drink at that moment, though he was not intoxicated. His clothes were shabby, and the bowler-hat he wore rakishly on the side of his head would not have done credit to a ragman.

He was a young man, probably under thirty, but dissipation had set a deep mark upon him.

The juniors of St. Jim's glanced at him, and then turned their glance away. He was not a pleasant object to look at. He seemed very incongruous and out of place in the country lane.

He stopped as he came opposite the juniors, and looked at them.

"'Evenin'," he remarked.

"Good-evening!" said Tom Merry shortly.

"Got a half-crown to spare, young gentlemen?"

"No."

"Make it a bob?"

"I've got nothing for you," said Tom Merry. "You look as if you'd spent more than half-a-crown to-day in liquor."

The man scowled.

"That's none of your business, young cocky!" he said.

"Quite so, if you don't ask me for money. If you beg, you must expect to get plain English," said Tom Merry calmly.

"I'd stand you the price of a cake of soap if I were sure you'd use it!" said Monty Lowther blandly.

"I've 'ad 'ard luck," said the man.

"I'm out of work."

"You're not in a state to be in work, I should think," said Tom Merry, in disgust.

"I've got the push," said the stranger pathetically. "Old Smith, he gave me the push, for no fault of my own. I've been trying to drown it, that's all, young gentlemen. If you could give me half-a-crown to 'elp me on my way? I've tramped all the way from Kent 'ere."

"Man in blue looking for you?" asked Manners sympathetically.

The stranger held on to the stile, and the Terrible Three drew a little farther away. There was a scent of whisky about the stranger that did not please them.

He blinked at the schoolboys with a bleary gaze.

"What if a chap took a drop too much?" he said. "Ain't I worked for old Smith this 'ere ten years? But there wasn't no standing him arter he made his money."

"You'd better go back to old Smith," said Monty Lowther. "If a policeman comes along and finds you hanging on to the stile, he'll run you in!"

"Me and young Smith were pals," said the man dreamily. "But since old Smith made his money, young Smith 'ave become a regular toff."

The Terrible Three laughed—they could not help it. These confidences from a man they had never seen before

struck them as comic. The laugh seemed to encourage the tipsy stranger, for he came a little closer, and went on:

"I got the push!"

"And if you come any closer to me, I shall give you a push, too," said Lowther.

"Hallo! Here's Gussy at last," said Tom Merry.

The two elegant youths came in sight. The tipsy stranger leaned heavily on the stile, and blinked at the newcomers as they joined the Terrible Three. Then suddenly his intoxication seemed to clear, and he gave a low whistle. His bleared, uncertain eyes were fixed upon Guv Vavasour.

"My eye!" he murmured.

"Sowwy to keep you waitin', deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I trust you have not waited long."

"Nearly half an hour!" growled Lowther.

"Sowwy. But Mr. Wiggs was showing us some new suitings—"

"Ripping, they were, too," said Vavasour.

"Same voice," murmured the man at the stile. "It's 'im!"

"Howevah, I'm weady to return to St. Jim's now," said D'Arcy. "Is this chap a friend of yours, Tom Mewwy?"

And he turned his eyeglass upon the tipsy gentleman hanging to the stile.

"No, he isn't," said Tom Merry warmly. "He begged of us, that's all, ass!"

"Weally, deah boy—"

Vavasour glanced at the man and started.

A strangely pale look came over his aristocratic, well-cut face as his eyes fell upon the shabby, tipsy stranger.

The man leered at him.

"'Appy to see you agin, sir!" he said.

Vavasour stared at him.

"You ain't forgotten Smiley, sir?"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in amazement. "Surely you don't know that fellow, Vavasour, deah boy?"

"No!" muttered Vavasour.

"Vavasour!" repeated Mr Smiley in astonishment. "Is that young gentleman's name Vavasour?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then I've made a mistake," said Mr. Smiley, with a disagreeable grin. "I wasn't expectin' to 'ear that the young gentleman's name was Vavasour. My eye!"

"My nam is Vavasour," said the new boy at St. Jim's haughtily. "I don't know you!"

Mr. Smiley grinned again.

"My eye!" he said.

"But if you're hard up, I can let you have some help," said Vavasour, feeling in his pocket.

"That's a kind and generous gent!" said Mr. Smiley encouragingly.

Vavasour's fingers came out of his waistcoat pocket with a pound in them. He held it out to Mr. Smiley.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered an exclamation. He was very careless with money himself; but giving a pound to a tipsy mendicant on the high road seemed to him to be going altogether too far.

"Weally, Vavasour," he remonstrated, "the man will only get drunk than he is now, and get locked up, you know."

"Don't you worry, young gent," said Mr. Smiley, as he held the pound in an exceedingly dirty finger and thumb. "If I was locked up, my generous friend, Mr. Vavasour, would come and

bail me out. Wouldn't you, Mr. Vavasour?"

He laid a strange, sarcastic emphasis upon the name, and it puzzled the juniors.

Vavasour was strangely pale. "You had better get off," he said. "I'm going," said Mr. Smiley, with a loving glance at the pound note in his dirty hand.

"I'm going. I'm thirsty. I 'eard you were at school now, Master Vavasour, but I didn't know where." "Come on, you fellows!" said Tom Merry.

"Old on a minute, Master Vavasour," said Smiley. "You won't mind speaking a few words to a pore man wot 'as got the push?"

Vavasour hesitated. "Go on, you fellows, will you?" he said. "I don't know what the man can have to say to me, but I may as well humour him."

"He may wob you!" said D'Arcy anxiously.

Vavasour laughed, but there was an anxious ring in his laugh.

"No danger of that," he said. "I wouldn't 'urt such a generous young gent," said Mr. Smiley. "That kind-hearted young gent will 'elp me again when I'm 'ard-up, I know that."

"Weally, you wuffian—"

"Oh, come on!" said Tom Merry. It was evident that Guy Vavasour wanted to be left alone with the mendicant, though for what reason the chums of St. Jim's could not guess.

Tom Merry & Co. walked on down the road, leaving them standing together, and a turn of the lane hid them from the sight of the juniors.

Tom Merry and his companions walked on to the school. They did not speak, though each of them was thinking that the matter was very queer. It looked as if the man who called himself Smiley knew Vavasour—had known him before he came to St. Jim's. There was a veiled threat in his manner towards the elegant schoolboy, and it seemed to Tom Merry & Co. that Vavasour had stayed to speak to him against his will. Yet why should he have yielded to the man's demand if he didn't want to? That was a puzzle.

The juniors expected Vavasour to overtake them in a few minutes, but he did not. They reached St. Jim's; and it was ten minutes or more later when Vavasour came in, and then he was flushed, as if he had been hurrying. And he did not speak a word about the curious encounter in the lane.

The chums of the School House did not refer to it—but they wondered.

CHAPTER 6.

Vavasour's Friend!

MELLISH'S unpleasant, cackling laugh was audible in the Common-room that evening when the Terrible Three came down after doing their preparation.

They glanced at the cad of the Fourth as they came into the room.

Percy Mellish and Gore and Crooke were standing in a little group, talking together, and chuckling, as if over something that pleased them very much. "Backbiting somebody!" growled Monty Lowther.

Gore glanced towards the chums of the Shell, and chuckled again. Mellish chuckled once more. Gore had been in a very bad temper for the last few days. All the House knew how he had been ejected from his own study by the new boy, and that he had not been allowed to take up his quarters again until he

apologised to both Vavasour and Skimpole. That apology weighed upon Gore's mind.

The bully of the Shell did not relish having had to eat humble pie, and his dislike of Vavasour had intensified into something very much like hatred.

Mellish and Crooke sympathised with his feelings. The fact that Tom Merry & Co. had taken up the new boy would of itself have been sufficient to turn the cads of the School House against him.

"Well, what's the cackle?" demanded Monty Lowther, meeting Gore's glance. "What rotten plot are you hatching now?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking up from the depths of an armchair, where he had been studying the deeply interesting columns of a gentlemen's fashions publication. "You have been intewuptin' my weadin' with your whispewin' and cacklin', you boundahs!"

"Oh, it's nothing!" said Gore airily. "Nothing it all," said Crooke.

"Only something that Levison happened to see," remarked Mellish.

And then the three of them cackled again.

"Levison!" growled Tom Merry. "Levison happens to see lots of things that don't concern him! What keyhole has he been spying into now?"

"Not a keyhole this time," said Gore. "It was in Rylcombe Lane."

"What was?"

"What Levison saw."

"What on earth was it he saw, then?" demanded Tom Merry, puzzled. "What on earth is the mystery about?"

"About a friend of yours!" sneered Gore.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Tom Merry stared.

"A friend of mine?"

"Yes."

"A new friend," explained Mellish. Tom Merry frowned.

"Do you mean Vavasour?"

"Yes, we do."

"And what did Levison see?"

"Tell 'em, Levison."

Levison of the Fourth was sitting by the window, watching the group of juniors with a gleam in his greenish eyes. The greenish gleam became very spiteful as he turned his glance upon the Terrible Three.

"Well, what is it?" demanded Tom Merry. "What rot have you been getting up to now?"

"I saw Vavasour with his friend," said Levison.

Tom Merry started. He remembered the meeting with the shabby stranger, Mr. Smiley, and he wondered if Levison had seen Smiley, too. Levison had a peculiar knack of seeing things that did not concern him, especially when it was very inconvenient to others for him to see them.

"I wonder you didn't see them, too," said Gore. "You came in this afternoon only ten minutes or so before Vavasour, I remember."

"And you were down in the village with Vavasour," said Mellish.

Tom Merry knitted his brows.

"Never mind what I saw or did not see!" he said. "I know how to mind my own business, which is more than you fellows seem to be able to do!" "Then you did see him!" exclaimed Gore.

"Oh, shut up!"

"I saw—" began Levison.

Tom Merry interrupted him without ceremony.

"Nobody wants to know what you saw!" he said. "Shut up!"

"Hold on!" said Page of the Fourth.

(Continued on the next page.)



MAKE THE JESTER SMILE AND WIN HALF-A-CROWN!

Send your Joke to The GEM Jester, 1, Tallis House, John Carpenter Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

ALL TWO OF 'EM!

Club Secretary: "Come in, sir; they're waiting for your lecture."

Lecturer: "Are the audience all seated?"

Secretary: "Yes, sir—both of 'em!" Half-a-crown has been awarded to K. Fogden, 60, Dewhurst Place, Tong Road, Arnley, Leeds 12.

* * *

A WEIGHTY QUESTION.

A very stout man stood on the weighing machine and dropped a penny in the slot. After a clanking and rattling, the pointer finally came to rest not far from the twenty stone mark.

As he contemplated the result the voice of a small boy piped behind him: "Say, mister, how many times did it go round?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Howe, Black-firs, Ashley Heath, Salop.

* * *

WANTED—A RESTFUL JOB.

Manager: "Now, my man, what are your qualifications for the post of night-watchman?"

Applicant: "Well, sir, for one thing, the least noise wakes me up!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Nicholson, Elm Bank, High Street, Workington, Cumberland.

* * *

CONSOLATION.

Tramp (dejectedly): "Please, ma'am, I ain't eaten anything but snow for three days."

Lady: "Cheer up, my man—summer is coming!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to K. Bird, King Edward VI Grammar School, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk.

* * *

OVERHEATED.

Strict Manager: "Why do you keep your pen in the ink so long?"

Clerk (who has just applied for rise in salary, and is working hard to justify it): "To cool the nib, sir!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. van Onselen, 27, Fifth Street, Boksburg North, Transvaal, South Africa.

* * *

REPLY UNPAID.

Sandy: "So ye dinna go awa' for the Christmas holidays, Mac?"

Mac: "Nae. The Macgregors wrote an' invited me to their place, an' I'd liked to hae gone, but they forgot to enclose a stamped envelope for a reply!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Spence, 15, Western Avenue, P.O. Cambridge, East London, Cape Province, South Africa.

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"No harm in his telling us, Tom Merry. I suppose Vavasour needn't mind."

"I saw Vavasour with a shabby rotter, who was talking to him like an old chum," said Levison spitefully.

"That's rot!" said Tom Merry. "I saw the man—he called himself Smiley—and he was a beggar, and half squiffy. He begged of us, and then of Vavasour, and Vavasour gave him some money. That was all."

"Then why did he call Vavasour 'old pal'?"

"He didn't, that I know of."

"Well, he did, that I know of!" retorted Levison. "I heard him."

"You listened!" said Tom Merry, with a curl of the lip.

"I was coming up the road, and I heard him," said Levison. "He said: 'You won't go back on an old pal!'"

"Oh, rot!"

"Then Vavasour saw me, and caught hold of his arm to make him understand that he was to shut up," grinned Levison.

"Bosh!"

"Well, I saw it."

"You see lots of things," said Monty Lowther. "Wonderful gift you've got for seeing things that don't concern you."

"Well, I think it does concern me," said Levison loftily. "It concerns all of us when a St. Jim's fellow has friends of that sort. It's a disgrace to the school."

"Well, so are you, but it hasn't seemed to worry you much, so far," said Monty Lowther flippantly.

Levison scowled.

"Hallo, here's Vavasour!" exclaimed Page. "He can speak up for himself. I say Vavasour, who's your friend?"

Vavasour, who had just entered the Common-room, looked at him inquiringly.

"I don't understand," he said. "What friend?"

"The old pal you met in Rylcombe Lane to-day," said Mellish.

Vavasour changed colour.

"Queer old pal for a noble and haughty Vavasour!" chuckled Gore.

"What rot!" said Vavasour lightly. "The man was squiffy, and he was over familiar, that was all."

"But you know him?"

Vavasour shrugged his shoulders.

"You've seen him before?" persisted Gore.

"Yes," said Vavasour calmly. "I've seen him before. He's a man who's done some work at one time for my father, at Vavasour Lodge, and he thinks he has a claim on the family in consequence. He was a good workman before he took to drink, and I'm sorry to see him down on his luck. So I gave him a quid. Any more questions to ask?"

"Is that all?" said Gore.

"Yes, that's all."

"He called you his old pal."

"He was squiffy, as I've said."

"Well, I think there's something more in it than that," said Gore obstinately. "In my opinion, your antecedents want looking into, Vavasour."

Vavasour strode towards him.

"I've had bother enough with you," he said. "But if you want some more, you've only got to step into the gym, and I'll oblige you with or without gloves."

Gore made a step backward.

"You can't carry it off like that," he said. "I'm not going to fight you again. I admit that you can lick me, and that's settled. But—"

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"Well, you had better hold your tongue, then."

"Vavasour has explained it perfectly clearly," said Tom Merry. "The man told us himself that he had been sacked by somebody named Smith—"

Vavasour looked round quickly.

"Somebody named what?" he asked. "Smith."

"What else did he say?"

"Hallo, Vavasour's getting curious!" grinned Levison. "He thinks that Mr. Smiley has told you something, Tom Merry."

Vavasour laughed in a rather forced way.

"The man is a drunken blackguard, and he may have said anything," he said.

"Drunken blackguard, eh?" said Gore. "Is that why you gave him a quid?"

"I was sorry for the poor brute, as I said."

"Tell us what else he said, Tom Merry," said half a dozen voices at once.

"Nothing else that I remember," said Tom Merry. "Nothing of any consequence, anyway. And if he had said anything against Vavasour, I shouldn't have believed it."

"Thank you!" said Vavasour.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard you as a wottah, Gore, twyin' to make somethin' out of nothin' to score off Vavasour. If I were Vavasour, I should wegard it as my duty to give you a feaful thwashin'."

Gore shrugged his shoulders and quitted the Common-room. But the subject did not die; and a good many curious glances were cast at Vavasour after that.

CHAPTER 7.

A Brother In Distress:

SKIMPOLE of the Shell came out of the School House with a big book under his arm.

The book was the famous volume of Professor Balmcyrumplet, Skimpole's inseparable companion. It was Wednesday afternoon—a half-holiday at St. Jim's. But Skimpole was not thinking of footer. There was a beaming smile upon Skimpole's face, showing that an idea was working in his mind.

A little crowd of juniors were standing outside the School House with overcoats on over their footer things, waiting for the time of the kick-off in the House match between the School House juniors and Figgins & Co. and the New House junior team. Having nothing better to do for the moment, they hailed Skimpole, with the idea of passing a few cheerful minutes chipping that gifted youth.

"Hallo, Skimmy," said Monty Lowther affectionately. "How are the down-trodden millions getting on?"

Skimpole, being a Determinist, was very strong on the subject of submerged tenths, down-trodden millions, and horny-handed sons of toil.

Skimpole blinked reprovingly at Lowther through his big spectacles.

"This is not a subject for jesting," he said. "You should not jest so upon the misfortune of the down-trodden—"

"Jest so!" agreed Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I only asked how they were getting on," said Lowther. "I understand that when Determinism comes in, there will be no submerged tenths. It will be reduced to a submerged eleventh, or

twelfth, or perhaps to a vulgar fraction."

"Poverty will be completely abolished under Determinism," said Skimpole, beaming with joy as he got upon his favourite topic. "Everyone will work—"

"Howwid!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"There will be an aristocracy of talent," pursued Skimpole. "Every human quality will have an opportunity of shining forth."

"Not first, second, or third?" asked Lowther.

"Really, Lowther—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am now going forth," resumed Skimpole, when the juniors left off laughing. "I am going to Rylcombe—"

"Then you'll have to go third," persisted Lowther, who could never leave off even a bad pun till he had worn it to death. "There's no fourth class on the railway here."

"I am going forth—"

"With a third-class ticket?"

"Cheese it, Monty!" said Manners.

"Put on a new record!"

"I am going forth—"

"Hallo, here's Tom Merry!" said Blake. "Come on, Tommy, or we shall be late, and Figgins & Co. will be waiting. We've got to lick the New House this afternoon!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors melted away, leaving Skimpole of the Shell alone with his big volume.

Skimpole blinked after them through his big spectacles with a sad expression.

"It is extraordinary how the youthful mind shrinks from grappling with really important matters," he murmured. "I should be perfectly willing—in fact, delighted—to enlighten their minds upon such pressing matters as Determinism and the improvement of the environment of the submerged tenth, and, instead of that, they prefer to play foolish games. It is extraordinary!"

And Skimpole shook his head sadly and wandered forth.

It did not occur to Skimpole that he would have been better occupied upon the football field himself. To Skimpole's mighty brain it was quite clear that football was a waste of time when there were great questions like Determinism to be settled.

Skimpole, for once in a way, was flush with money. As a rule, he was short of that useful article, which was, perhaps, one reason why he believed in the urgent necessity of what he termed a redistribution of wealth. An uncle of Skimpole's had come down unusually handsome, and Skimpole had three pounds in his pocket, and Skimpole, like a true enthusiast, was prepared to translate his theories into practice.

According to Skimpole's principles, he had no more right to that three pounds than anybody else had, and he was prepared to share it with the down-trodden millions.

Skimpole was going forth that afternoon with the express determination of doing good. As he was ready to part with his three pounds, he was not likely to be long in want of an object for his intended goodness.

He found the object very quickly. Truly, he was not a pleasant object to look at; but as a true Determinist cannot logically blame anybody for anything, Skimpole did not blame the man he met for being under the influence of liquor. He was only sorrowed at the

sight, and reflected that, under Determinism such things would be impossible—perhaps not having it very clear in his mind how they were to be made impossible.

The man was leaning on the stile in Rylcombe Lane, and Skimpole blinked at him.

"How do you do?" he asked affably.

"Hey?"

"It's a nice afternoon!" said Skimpole.—"I fear you are in want, my friend."

The man stared at him blankly.

"Stony!" he said. "I've just parted with my last tanner for—for food."

"For drink, I should have thought," said Skimpole.

"Ain't touched a drop for weeks,"

"Starving!" said Mr. Smiley pathetically.

"Come with me, and I will give you food and drink, and provide you with a somewhat improved suit of clothes, and a bath, which you sadly need," said Skimpole.

"Gammion!"

"I am quite in earnest, my unfortunate friend. Pray, come with me, and you shall have everything you require."

Mr. Smiley blinked uncertainly at Skimpole. But it was evident that the youth was in earnest, and Mr. Smiley, fully convinced in his mind that he was mad, decided to accompany him. It might be worth while, especially as Skimpole had said that he had three

reprovingly, "I am surprised and shocked that you should act so brutally towards a brother in distress."

"That 'orrid tramp ain't no brother of mine!" said Taggles, who was not a Determinist, evidently. "He's drunk!"

"You are frequently under the influence of gin yourself, Taggles. But this poor fellow is not intoxicated. He is suffering from extreme want."

"He's drunk!" roared Taggles.

"And tramps ain't allowed in 'ere!"

"My dear Taggles—"

"Houtside!"

"I refuse to have my friend ordered out!" said Skimpole, with dignity.

"Pray come with me, my poor fellow! Taggles, keep your distance!"



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said the man. "I'm a teetotaller, young gentleman. If you could 'and me 'arf-a-crown to 'elp me on my way—"

"I trust I can do more than that," said the benevolent Skimpole. "I have three pounds, and it is all at the service of the poor and needy."

"Mad!" murmured the stranger. "Dotty!"

"Not at all," said Skimpole. "I am a Determinist."

"Ho!"

"Pray excuse me for having fancied that you were under the influence of drink," Skimpole went on. "I know that hunger in the extreme state has the same symptoms as intoxication. Want and exposure account for your trembling hands and your thick enunciation."

"Wot!"

"What is your name, my friend?"

"My name's Smiley!"

"Dear me! I have heard that name before somewhere," said Skimpole. "You are in want, my friend?"

pounds. If Mr. Smiley found anything like an opportunity, those three pounds would change owners very quickly.

Mr. Smiley staggered a little as he detached himself from the stile.

Skimpole held out a supporting arm. "Pray lean on me, poor friend and brother," he said. "You are reduced to a state of weakness by want. But I will help you. Lean on my arm."

Without leaning on Skimpole's arm, Mr. Smiley would probably have been unable to walk at all—though it was not hunger that was the matter with him. He leaned very heavily on Skimpole, and the genius of the Shell piloted him to the gates of St. Jim's.

As he led him in there was a terrific yell from the direction of Taggles' lodge, and the school porter came hurrying up.

"You get hout of 'ere!" he shouted.

"Hey?"

"My doar Taggles," said Skimpole

Taggles stood thunderstruck as Skimpole piloted his zigzagging friend across the quadrangle towards the School House.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Taggles. "My only hat!"

And he retired to his lodge. Skimpole and his friend disappeared into the School House.

CHAPTER 8.

Trouble In Study No. 6!

"**B**EATEN 'em!" said Jack Blake, with satisfaction.

"Beaten the New House! That last goal was a regular daisy, though I kicked it myself!"

"Yaas, wathah! I must say that you have played up vewy well, Blake," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You all backed me up vewy well!"

"That's more than you did for me!"

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growled Tom Merry. "You stopped to stick in your eyeglass when you ought to have stopped a pass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Never mind; we've beaten 'em!" said Blake. "Now I'm ready for tea."

"Vavasour will get it," suggested Monty Lowther. "Vavasour is very handy at filling kettles and cleaning pans and things!"

"My dear fellow—" began Vavasour. Vavasour had been a keen on-looker at the game, not having been able to play. Vavasour had shown much keenness for football, and Tom Merry was already thinking of giving him a place in the junior team—though that was likely to meet with some opposition.

"You are an ass, Lowthah," said D'Arcy. "And I do not regard it as in the best of taste to chip my friend Vavasour!"

"I stand corrected!" said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"Yaas, wathah! I think—"

"What with?" asked Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Well, here we are!" exclaimed Jack Blake, throwing open the study door in the Fourth Form passage, while the Shell fellows went to their own quarters. "Hallo! It seems that tea's ready!"

The four juniors stared into the study, and well they might stare.

They had expected to find Study No. 6 empty and the fire out. But the fire was burning merrily and the study was not empty. It had two occupants. One was Skimpole of the Shell; the other was his brother—in a Deterministic sense—the disreputable Mr. Smiley.

Mr. Smiley was seated in the arm-chair, with his feet on the fender. His battered bowler was on the back of his head.

Skimpole was looking after him well, and Mr. Smiley was making huge raids upon the substantial meal upon the table.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Blake, Herries, and Digby together.

"Ah, is that you, Blake?" said Skimpole.

Mr. Smiley looked round with an affable smile. He was still under the influence of the whisky he had lately consumed at the Green Man in Rylcombe, and it made him affable.

The genius of the Shell blinked at the Fourth Formers.

"Yes, it is," said Blake grimly.

"What are you doing in my study?"

"Having tea."

"Yes, I can see that, ass! Who's this treak?"

"That is my brother."

"Your what?"

"My brother," said Skimpole firmly. "I trust you will excuse my taking possession of your study in this way, Blake. Gore cut up decidedly rusty when I took my brother into my own study. You are aware that Gore shares my study with me, and Gore is a very disagreeable person, and does not understand in the least the desire to do good to one's fellow-creatures. He grew violent, and threatened to call in a prefect, so I had no alternative but to take Mr. Smiley to another study. I chose this one, my dear Blake. Of course, as a matter of fact, this study is as much mine as yours."

"How do you make that out?" asked Blake, pushing back his cuffs.

"Under Determinism all studies will be nationalised," Skimpole explained.

"Everything in the world, my dear

Blake, belongs as much to everybody else as to anybody. For example, if I sold your clock in order to raise funds to help the submerged tenth, I should be completely justified in doing so. It is as much my clock as yours."

"You'd better not do it, all the same," said Blake. "There would be a slaughtered lunatic lying about soon afterwards, if you did."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Please come in," said Skimpole, blinking hospitably at the chums of Study No. 6. "You are quite welcome."

"Quite welcome in our own study!" roared Herries?

"Certainly, my dear Herries!"

"Well, my hat!"

"That's Determinism, isn't it?" said Blake thoughtfully.

"Yes, my dear Blake," said Skimpole, beaming, "that is Determinism. Pray excuse me for using your tea-things. I have had the misfortune to break some of them; but, of course, they are as much mine as yours. Under Determinism all teapots and cups and saucers will be nationalised."

"And that's your brother, is it?" asked Digby.

"Yes, my dear Digby."

"You said his name was Smiley."

"Yes; that is his name."

"Then how can he be your brother, fathead?"

"In a Deterministic sense, my dear Digby. Are we not all brothers?" said Skimpole reprovingly.

"Oh, I see!" said Blake. "Blessed if I didn't think it was a relation you had dug up! Where did you pick up that thing?"

"I found him on the road suffering from want. As I chanced to be in funds to-day, I determined to do good—in fact I went forth this afternoon with the fixed intention of doing good," said Skimpole. "I have taken the stranger in."

"He's taken you in, I fancy. What he's in want of is soap and water."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And did you ask permission to bring that giddy tramp into the school, Skimmy?"

Skimmy shook his head.

"That would have been quite superfluous, my dear Blake. This school is as much mine as anybody else's. Under Determinism, of course, all schools will be nationalised. Besides, permission would have been refused."

"Yes; I think that's very likely. Would you like some good advice, Skimmy? Under Determinism, I suppose good advice would be nationalised, so you have as much right to it as anybody else. I'll give you some, anyway. Take your friend the quickest way out of St. Jim's before anybody sees him."

"But why, my dear Blake?"

"Because you'll get licked if he's seen here."

"I am prepared to suffer in the cause of the advancement of the human species, my dear Blake. All pioneers of true reform have to suffer. I do not expect to encounter unscathed the ignorance and prejudice of the age."

"Great Scott! What a flow of language! Skimmy, old man, I won't lick you, because you can't help being dotty. But take that thing out of my study."

"I have already pointed out that it is not your study—"

Blake strode towards Mr. Smiley, and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Time to go," he said.

"Hey?" said Mr. Smiley.

"This is my room! Get out!"

"My dear Blake—"

"Shut up, Skimmy! Smiley, if that's your name, you're superfluous here. Will you get out?"

"Certainly not!" said Mr. Smiley, with a dizzy glare at Blake. "I'm quite comfortable here. I'm having tea with my young friend. I've got another young friend at this ere school, too, wot I'm anxious to see afore I goes."

"Rot! Skimmy's the only lunatic here!"

"My dear Blake—"

"Master Vavasour is my friend," said Mr. Smiley, with dignity. "I ain't going without seeing 'im."

Jack Blake started, and he gave Herries and Digby a quick glance. They remembered the name Smiley now. This was evidently the man whom Levison had seen Vavasour meet in Rylcombe Lane.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, adjusting his eyeglass and looking more closely at the shabby figure sprawled in the arm-chair. "I know that chap now. It's the wottah we met in the lane the othah day who begged of Vavasour."

Mr. Smiley looked at him.

"Ow do you do?" he said affably. "Glad to meet you agin."

"I'm not glad to meet you, you wuffian. I regard you as a vevy disreputable person. Pway wetiah from this study!"

"I ain't going without seeing my young friend Vavasour."

Blake hesitated. He was very much exasperated at finding a tipsy tramp installed in his study, though it was impossible to be very angry with Skimpole.

His first thought was to take Mr. Smiley by the shoulders and sling him out; but if the tipsy fellow should fight it would mean a row, and that would certainly get Skimpole into trouble. If the masters discovered Mr. Smiley in the School House, it would most certainly mean punishment for the junior who brought him there.

The fact that he was Skimpole's brother, in a Deterministic sense, would not influence them at all.

"Pray sit down and have tea with us, Blake," said Skimpole. "I hope you are not so snobbish as to fancy that you are superior to Mr. Smiley in any way."

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, I think I am, a little bit," said Blake. "Mr. Smiley is going out, and he can choose the door or the window. It's a free country, so he can choose which he likes. Is it to be the door or the window, Mr. Smiley?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm going to see my friend Vavasour."

"You're going out."

"I ain't!" said Mr. Smiley.

Blake compressed his grip on the man's shoulder, and jerked him out of the chair.

Mr. Smiley reeled against the tea-table, and fell across it with outspread arms, and there was a terrific crash of crockery.

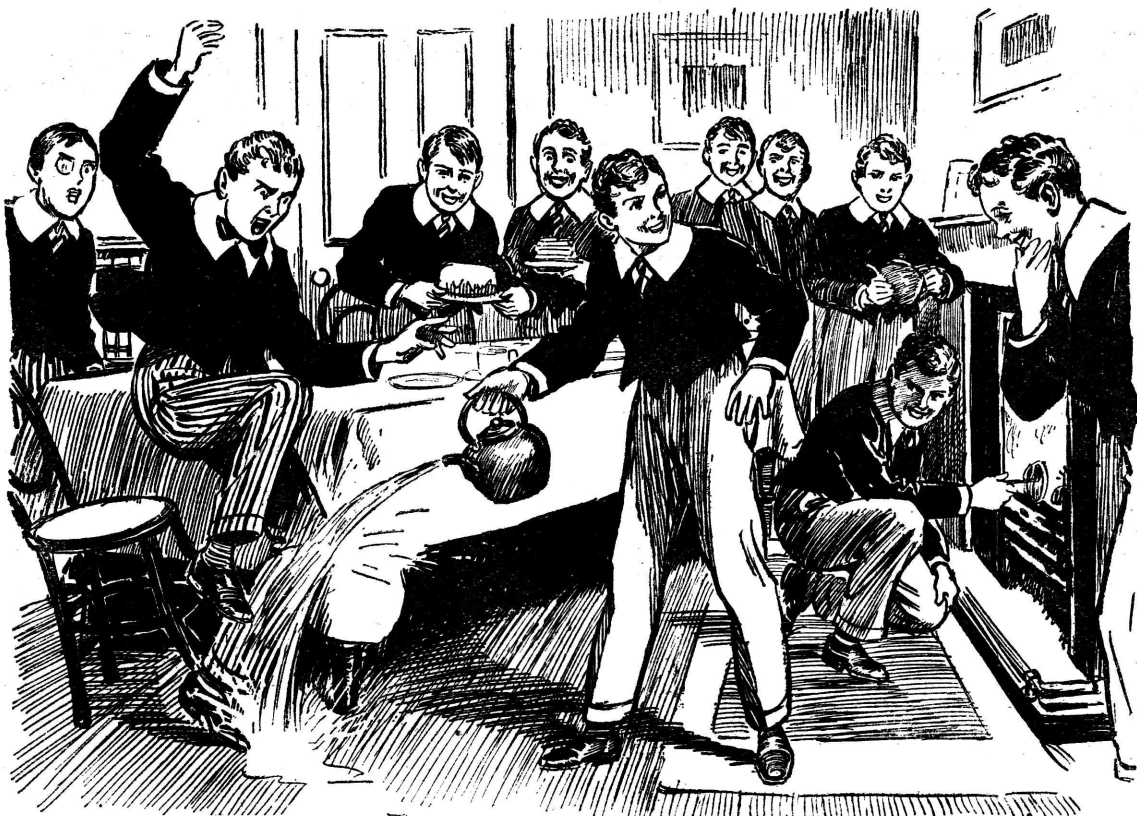
"Dear me!" ejaculated Skimpole.

Blake gave a yell.

"Oh, you fathead! You've smashed all our crooks!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Mr. Smiley straightened himself up rather dazedly. His good humour was gone now, and there was a very warlike expression upon his face. He doubled up his fists and put his back to the wall.



As Tom Merry spoke, Lowther looked towards him. The action was fatal, for Lowther tilted the kettle and a stream of water poured from the spout over Vavasour's trousers and shoes. "Ow! You ass!" yelled the new boy. "Look what you're doing!"

"I ain't going!" he announced.
 "You'll be put out, then."
 "Come hon!" said Mr. Smiley.
 "Collar the cad and run him out!" said Herries impatiently. "I'll lend you a hand."
 "Perhaps you had better retire, Mr. Smiley," said Skimpole. "You have finished tea. I will accompany you, and read you a chapter from Professor Balmcrumpet's volume."
 "I ain't going!"
 "My dear Smiley——"
 Biff!
 Skimpole's dear Smiley hit out as the amateur Determinist came towards him, and Skimpole sat down suddenly on the hearthrug.
 "Oh!" gasped Skimpole.
 He sat on the hearthrug and clasped his nose with one hand and set his spectacles straight with the other.
 "Dear me!" said Skimpole. "I really——"
 "Serve you right!" growled Blake.
 "What did you expect, if you brought a drunken tramp into the place, you fat-head?"
 "My dear Blake, I do not blame him. Ow! My nose is exceedingly painful! Ow! He is not to blame. This is a savage instinct, derived from some remote ancestor, which——"
 "Are you going, you blackguard?" asked Blake.
 "Certainly not!" said Mr. Smiley.
 "Not until I've seen my young friend Vavasour."
 "Then you'll get the order of the boot. Come on, you fellows!"
 "My dear Blake——"
 "Shut up, Skimmy, and get out of the way! Collar the cad, you chaps!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 And the four Fourth Formers collared

Mr. Smiley, and, in spite of his struggles, he was whirled round and whipped through the doorway into the passage.
 But Mr. Smiley, under the combined influence of gin and whisky, or of heredity and environment, as Skimpole would have declared, was in a fighting mood, and he struggled desperately in the passage.
 There was a crash and a bump as Mr. Smiley and the four juniors went to the floor together in a struggling heap.

CHAPTER 9.

Somewhat Mysterious!

"GREAT Scott!"
 "Who is it?"
 "What's the giddy row?"
 "My hat!"
 "Go it, ye cripples!"
 Most of the School House juniors were coming into tea about that time, and there was a crowd upon the spot in a few moments. Fourth Formers and Shell swarmed round the struggling heap outside the door of Study No. 6.
 Vavasour came along with the Terrible Three, and Kangaroo and Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn rushed up after them. Gore, Levison, and Mellish, and Reilly, Page, and a dozen others came out of their studies. The crowd thickened in the Fourth Form passage, and there were exclamations and inquiries on all sides.
 "Who is it?" asked Tom Merry, in amazement. "Looks like——"
 "It's Smiley!" yelled Monty Lowther, catching a glimpse of the man amid the struggling juniors.
 "Smiley!"
 "The tramp!"

Skimpole blinked out of the doorway of Study No. 6.
 "It is my friend Smiley," he said.
 "My brother, and your brother, in the sense of Determinism. I brought him in here to tea, and for some reason Blake is behaving rudely to him——"
 "Great Scott!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "There is nothing whatever to laugh at," said Skimpole. "I regard this as outrageous conduct on Blake's part. This study is as much Smiley's as Blake's, and——"
 "Smiley!" muttered Vavasour.
 "Here!"
 Gore gave him a malicious look.
 "Your friend, Vavasour!" he said.
 Vavasour did not reply.
 "Let him alone, Blake," said Levison. "You've no right to handle Vavasour's friend like that. Why shouldn't Vavasour have a friend if he wants to?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I did not know he was here," said Vavasour, pale to the lips.
 Mr. Smiley wrenched himself out of the grasp of the panting juniors and staggered up.
 "I ain't going!" he gasped. "Not without seeing my young friend Vavasour. He's going to help a pore cove, he is. Where's Vavasour?"
 "Here he is!" exclaimed the delighted Gore.
 "Here he is, Smiley!" grinned Mellish.
 Blake grasped the tramp again.
 "Out you go!" he exclaimed.
 "Yaas, wathah! The howwid beast has cumped my waistcoat and disarranged my collar! I'm goin' to give him a feahful thwashin'!"

"Collar him!" roared Herries.
 "Lend a hand, you chaps!" exclaimed Blake. "We've got to get him out before the prefects hear the row, or there will be a lot of trouble over this!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Ands off!" yelled Mr. Smiley.
 "Better cut, you silly duffer!" said Tom Merry. "You've no right in here, you know that very well!"

"My dear Merry——"
 "Shut up, Skimmy!" said Tom Merry, giving the amateur Determinist a gentle push on the chest, which caused him to sit down in Study No. 6.

"Ow! I say——"
 "Ring off, you ass! Now, Smiley, you're going out."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Elp!" roared Mr. Smiley, as the juniors grasped him. "Don't let 'em chuck me out, old pal, Master Vavasour! Lend me a 'and!"

Vavasour stood quite still.
 "Lemme alone!"
 "Master Vavasour——"

"Vavasour's not going to help you, you silly chump!" said Monty Lowther, getting a good grip on the back of Mr. Smiley's neck. "Now then, come on!"

"Orlright!" roared the enraged Mr. Smiley, glaring at Vavasour as he staggered down the passage in the grasp of the juniors. "Orlright! You'll go back on an ole pal, will you? You'll see an ole pal 'anded like this 'ere? I'll tell 'em something, I will!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry.
 "I ain't going to shut up! I'm going to tell you something about that there impostor——"

"Hold your tongue!" said Vavasour, striding forward.

"Impostor, eh?" grinned Gore.
 "We're getting to it now! Out with it, Smiley! Let's have the whole story!"

"That there young bounder, wot pretends to be a gentleman——"

Vavasour grasped the intoxicated man by the shoulder and shook him.

"Hold your tongue, Smiley! he said. "The fellows don't mean to hurt you. Come with me quietly, and I'll see you out of the gate. Let him alone, you fellows! He'll come with me quietly, won't you, Smiley?"

Smiley gave him a surly look. Tom Merry & Co. released him. They were struck by the white misery in Vavasour's face. The boy looked as if he had received a fearful blow, and the expression on his face almost scared them.

Mr. Smiley stood gasping and exhaling rich odours of gin and whisky.

"Come on, Smiley," said Vavasour; "you mustn't make a row here, you know!"

"I dunno that I'm going," said Smiley. "You wouldn't stand by an old pal when I arst yer. I'm going to tell 'em all about Smith's Brewery——"

"Come on, Smiley!"
 "Look 'ere——"

Vavasour whispered in the man's ear. Smiley gave a sullen nod and allowed Vavasour to lead him away.

The crowd of juniors stood looking on as the elegant Shell fellow and his disreputable friend disappeared down the stairs.

What did it mean?
 What was there in common between Guy Vavasour and this drunken, disreputable rascal? It was an amazing mystery.

"Smith's Brewery," said Gore, puzzled. "What on earth did he mean?"

"He's drunk," said Tom Merry. "We was just babbling."

"Yaas wathah!"
 Gore sneered.

"Yes, you'd like to hush it up for Vavasour's sake," he said. "It's as plain as anything can be that that rotter knows something about Vavasour—something that Vavasour doesn't dare to let us know."

"He's got him under his thumb," said Levison. "You all saw how quickly Vavasour chipped in when the rotter was going to tell us about him."

"Yes, rather!"
 "Faith, and it's queer!" said Reilly.
 "But Vavasour's all right."

"All wrong, you mean," said Levison.
 "There's something jolly fishy about all this, and you all know it very well. I think the Head ought to be told. It's a case of blackmail, that's what it is! Vavasour is under that fellow's thumb!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry.

He looked anxiously down the stairs, wondering if Vavasour would succeed in getting clear with the now quieted Mr. Smiley. The din in the junior passage must have been heard below.

Vavasour was hurrying his companion as much as he could; but Mr. Smiley was in an obstinate mood, and he refused to be hurried.

Kildare of the Sixth, captain of St. Jim's, strode towards them as they were nearing the door.

"Who is this?" demanded Kildare, staring at the tramp "Did you bring this man into the school, Vavasour?"

"No," said Vavasour. "A chap brought him in to give him a meal, and I'm seeing him off the premises."

"Oh! See him off at once, then, and tell the chap if he brings any more tramps into the school there will be trouble!"

"Yes, Kildare!"

Vavasour piloted the man to the school gates. A number of curious fellows followed them. At the gates Mr. Smiley seemed to have recovered his good humour. He insisted upon shaking hands with Vavasour for good-bye, and Vavasour submitted, wincing—the proceeding being watched by fifty pairs of curious eyes. Then Mr. Smiley went zigzagging down the road, and Vavasour walked away.

He did not return to the School House, but walked round the path by the old chapel in the dusk of the falling evening, evidently wanting to be left alone.

It was hours later when Vavasour came into the School House, and he was still looking very pale.

CHAPTER 10.

Tom Merry Means Well!

VAVASOUR was alone in his study, doing his preparation, when Tom Merry came in.

Skimpole was somewhere, deeply engaged in the study of social problems.

George Gore had declared that he didn't care to share a study with a chap who was on familiar and pally terms with a drunken tramp, and he had transferred his belongings to Crooke's study, Crooke having kindly consented to take him in.

Vavasour certainly didn't like George Gore's company in Study No. 8, but the reason Gore gave, in public, for the change was a bitter blow to the elegant junior. Vavasour had proved that he was a good fellow enough since he had been at St. Jim's, but there was no doubt that he had put on a considerable amount of "side." In a fellow bearing an ancient and honourable name, and



As Skimpole led Mr. Smiley in at the gates, Taggles ca-
 "Tramps ain't allowed in 'ere!" "My dear Taggles," sa-
 act so brutally towards a

coming of rich and distinguished people, a certain amount of side was perhaps to be considered. But as Gore and Levison & Co. did not fail to point out, they had only Vavasour's own word for all the grandeur of the Vavasour family and home, and the only connection of his that had been seen at the school was a tipsy tramp.

If Mr Smiley was a specimen of Vavasour's friends a considerable amount of discount would have to be taken off his description of his people. There was no doubt that the appearance and the strange words of Mr. Smiley cast a very grave doubt over Vavasour's own story.

The new boy's appearance, certainly, was aristocratic, and he undoubtedly had plenty of money; but the fellows

compared notes, and found that no one knew his people. Of course, there were scores of fellows at the school whose people were not known to the other fellows. But it was an added circumstance against Vavasour.

If Vavasour really belonged to a distinguished family, and had been brought up in the lap of luxury—if he had a magnificent home to which fellows might be invited—then his side could be pardoned.

But if it were not so—

If there were nothing "fishy" about Vavasour's antecedents, what did the words of Mr. Smiley mean? If Vavasour were not afraid of the tipsy fellow,

and connections were not all that they should be. And the enemies Vavasour had made rejoiced in "rubbing it in."

Vavasour was looking, very gloomy when Tom Merry came into the study.

"Tom Merry nodded cheerily.

"Busy?" he asked.

"No," said Vavasour.

"Doing your prep?"

"Yaas."

"If I'm in the way—"

"Not at all, my dear chap! Sit down."

Tom Merry sat down.

"I've come to jaw to you," he said. "I don't know how you'll take it, but I'm going to speak as a friend, because I feel friendly towards you."

Vavasour smiled.

"Thank you!" he said.

"There's been a lot of talk about that man Smiley," said Tom Merry.

Vavasour compressed his lips.

"I don't want to talk about him," he said, in a low voice.

"I understand. But that's what I've come to speak about. I don't want to meddle in your private affairs, Vavasour. But you're new here, and I'm captain of the Form you belong to, and I thought I ought to speak," said Tom Merry. "You needn't tell anything if you don't want to, but I thought you ought to know what's being said in the House."

Vavasour made a weary gesture.

"Oh, all right, go on!" he said.

"You've shown all of us that you're a decent chap," said Tom Merry. "You've swanked a bit—excuse me, won't you?—but a fellow who belongs to a big family, and has heaps of money, and titled relations, generally does swank a bit. You don't mind my calling things by their right names, do you?"

Vavasour grinned awkwardly.

"I didn't mean to swank," he said.

"No, I know you didn't; it's just training," said Tom Merry. "Fellows accuse Gussy of swanking sometimes, but he doesn't mean it; only he's the son of a lord, and he was brought up having everything he wanted. He's

never seen any hard times, and he's always been kow-towed to by crowds of people. And it gives him a sort of manner that ill-natured people call swank, though there isn't a better chap existing than D'Arcy. It's the same with you, I suppose—the same surroundings have the same effect."

Vavasour winced.

"There's no harm in all that," went on Tom Merry. "But that man Smiley has made a queer impression on the fellows. In the first place he was a ragged tramp coming along here, and he begged of me; yet he has been staying in Rylcombe ever since, putting up at the Green Man, and spending money like water.

"His carrying-on has become the talk of the village. He has been fined

twice, and paid the fine. He gets tipsy every day, and pays for it, or they wouldn't stand him at the Green Man. Where he gets the money from is a mystery. Some of the fellows know about his goings-on, and they think that he gets the money from you."

"Do they?"

"Yes. Gore started it, I think, and the fellows believe it. And really, you know, the way you chipped in to prevent Smiley being chucked out of here—it did look as if you were afraid he would say something about you—as if he was holding something or other over your head."

"Is that what they think?"

"I don't think so," said Tom Merry instantly. "I know you're a straight chap."

"Oh!"

"But the other fellows don't. And I want to put it to you as a friend, Vavasour. Hadn't you better make some explanation?"

"It's nobody's business but my own, I suppose?"

"Well, no, if you put it that way," agreed Tom Merry. "But the fellows will go on surmising. It will grow to be a regular scandal, you know—especially if that man Smiley stays in the neighbourhood. Have you met him since that day we were together?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because Mellish says he saw you together near the Green Man in Rylcombe."

Vavasour did not reply.

Tom Merry waited a moment or two for an answer to his question, but the answer did not come. Vavasour's lips were closed.

"Of course, it's your own affair," resumed Tom Merry, somewhat discouraged. "But I'm speaking as a friend to you about it. You've given the impression that that man has a hold over you."

Vavasour did not speak.

"Of course, it's all rot to suppose that you could ever have done anything to put yourself in his power. I know that."

"So that's been suggested?" said Vavasour bitterly.

"I'm afraid it has."

"It is not true."

"I know it isn't—it's all rot!" said Tom Merry at once. "But the other theory is that there is something fishy about your antecedents."

"Do you think so?"

"I couldn't think so without thinking that you've lied to us about your place and people," said Tom Merry curtly—"and I don't think that. I think that you had better tell the fellows plainly what the matter is. There's no need to keep it a secret, if it's honest and above-board, that I can see."

"Well, suppose I don't—what then?"

"Then I'm afraid Gore will have it his own way. He makes out that there's something fishy about your people, and that Smiley knows it."

Vavasour smiled.

"Of course, there's nothing to be ashamed of, if one's people are hard-up, or anything of that kind," said Tom Merry. "If it were the case, and you'd said so, nobody would have thought the worse of you."

"We have a chap here—chap named Brooke—who works for his living after school hours. He's a day-boy, and we all like him. The snobs here don't matter. But, if you come from a poor place, you've talked a bit off your hat, I must say, and—and the best thing you can do is to own up."

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name hurrying up. "You get hout of 'ere!" he shouted. said Skimpole reprovingly, "I am shocked that you should a brother in distress!"

why had he shown himself so anxious to keep Smiley from talking? Why had he allowed the ruffian to claim him as an "old pal" without venturing to close the man's mouth? If he had nothing to fear from the fellow his course was clear—he could have knocked him down quite easily.

The story that Smiley was an old servant of the family, who had gone to the bad, would not hold water, many of the fellows thought. He did not look like a family servant, for one thing. He looked more like a public-house potman, who had been "sacked" for bad conduct. And that he had some hold over the new boy was hardly to be doubted.

It was fishy, as Gore declared. It showed that Vavasour's antecedents

Vavasour felt in his pocket, and drew out a pocket-book with a cover of Russian leather and a gold monogram. The pocket-book was worth five guineas at least. Vavasour opened it calmly and took out a wad of banknotes.

"I suppose you know what they are?" he said.

Tom Merry started.

"Fivers!" he said.

"Tenners!" said Vavasour.

"My hat!"

"And I've got ten of them here!"

"Great Scott!"

"And I can have as many more as I like to ask for!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Better pin 'em up on the wall in the Common-room for the fellows to look at," he said. "That will dispose of any idea that your people are poor."

Vavasour returned the pocket-book to his pocket.

"It's not safe for a kid to carry all that money about," said Tom Merry.

"If the Head knew, he'd write to your father about it. A hundred quid! My hat!"

"I think that that settles the matter," said Vavasour. "I've already subscribed ten guineas to the sports fund, too. A poor devil from nowhere couldn't do that, I suppose?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, that's settled," he said. "But—but, look here, Vavasour! Does that mean that you're not going to explain?"

"I've got nothing to explain."

"About Smiley claiming you as an old pal."

"He was drunk."

"Yes; but he meant that; he had some idea in his head. And—and excuse me, but we all saw—we couldn't help seeing, that you made him shut up when he was going to say something about you."

Vavasour did not reply.

"What did he mean by Smith's Brewery?"

"Better ask him."

"The fellows are asking one another. Levison has suggested that you have some disreputable relations of that name. If you have, it's not your fault, and it's nothing for you to be ashamed of. But why all this blessed secrecy?"

"I've got nothing to say."

Tom Merry rose.

"Then I've come here for nothing?" he asked.

"I'm afraid so."

The captain of the Shell coloured.

"I'm sorry!" he said. "I wanted to help you out because you're a new chap; but you don't take it as I meant. I'm sorry!"

"I know you meant well," said Vavasour. "I thank you. But I don't care to discuss my private affairs with the fellows simply because they are inquisitive. That isn't the way of a— a Vavasour."

"Oh, if you're going to mount the Vavasour high horse, I'm done!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "I'm off!"

"I'm much obliged to you."

"Not at all."

Tom Merry left the study.

He looked very thoughtful as he went. He had meant kindly by the new boy, but his visit to Vavasour had been useless. It was no longer to be doubted that Vavasour had something to conceal; though what it was, was a mystery. He certainly was not a poor fellow posing as a rich one. He was as rich as any fellow at St. Jim's.

D'Arcy never had anything like so

much money; even Lumley-Lumley, the son of a millionaire, was never known to have a hundred pounds in his possession. Poverty was not Guy Vavasour's secret. He had proved that beyond the shadow of a doubt. But he had a secret. What was it? Tom Merry reflected that it was no business of his, and he was quite willing to let the matter drop and think no more about it; but the other fellows in the School House did not share his views in that respect.

If there was something very shady about Vavasour's antecedents, he had to pay for all the side he put on at St. Jim's.

Left alone, Vavasour's brows knitted. He looked troubled and wretched. He rose from the chair and paced to and fro in the study, thinking. He settled down to his work again at last, but he found it very difficult to keep his attention upon it.

CHAPTER 11.

Backing Up the New Boy!

"I WEGARD it as disgwaceful!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that statement in an unaccustomed high voice in the Junior Common-room.

Fellows turned round on all sides to look at the swell of St. Jim's as he spoke.

Arthur Augustus' cheeks were very pink, and there was a gleam in his eye behind his famous monocle.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Kangaroo of the Shell. "What's biting you now?"

And there was a laugh.

"Nothin' is bitin' me, you duffah!"

"Gussy is holding an indignation meeting all on his own, that's all," said Jack Blake, glancing up from the chess-board, where he was playing with Digby. "Go it, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"What's the trouble, Gussy?" asked a dozen voices.

"Somebody has been sitting on his Sunday topper," said Page.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing of the kind. I was speaking of Vavasour—my fwiend Vavasour."

"Then I quite agree with you," said George Gore heartily. "It is disgraceful, and I said so all along. I think it's a disgrace to the school."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't mean what you mean, Gore."

"I mean what I mean, and what you mean doesn't matter twopence," said Gore cheerfully. "You're right, it's disgraceful!"

"You uttah ass! I mean it is disgwaceful the way my fwiend Vavasour is bein' tweated in this House!" said D'Arcy witheringly.

"Oh, rot!"

"Bosh, Gussy!"

"Ring off!"

"Go home!"

"I decline to wing off. I've chosen this time to speak, so that all the fellows can hear me," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy firmly. "Just because a wagged wuffian speaks to Vavasour, and Vavasour gives him a pound note out of chawity, you all wound on the chap, and say that there's somethin' shady about him."

"So there is," said Gore.

"Wubbish!"

"If there isn't, why doesn't he explain his connections with Smiley, and own up why he gives him money?"

"I don't believe he gives him money."

"He hasn't denied it," said Crooke.

"Natuwally he would wefuse to be questioned and hauled over the coals by inquisitive wottahs. I should wefuse just the same."

"Rats!"

"I wepeat that I wegard it as disgwaceful. Vavasour is a weally stwaight and decent chap, and I feel vewy fwiendly towards him. You chaps are scandalmongahs!"

"What?"

"Scandalmongahs!" repeated D'Arcy firmly.

"Why, you cheeky ass—"

"You fathead!"

"Shut up!"

"Do you want to be bumped?"

"I should uttably wefuse to be bumped. I wegard this set that is bein' made against Vavasour as bein' disgwaceful. I wegard it as the duty of all decent fellows to wally wound him!"

"Rats!"

"I'm goin' to do it!"

"How do you rally round?" said Kangaroo. "Let's see you do it!"

"Weally, Kangy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am goin' to wally wound Vavasour," repeated the swell of St. Jim's, "and I think it is up to all my fwiends to do the same. I call upon them to do so!"

"Vavasour had better explain first," said Monty Lowther.

"He wefuses to gwatify idle cuwiosity!"

"Oh rot!"

"If you chawactewise my wemarks as wot, Lowthah, I shall have no alternative but to give you a feaful thwashin'!"

"Oh!" said Lowther, looking alarmed.

"In that case I withdraw the word 'rot,' and substitute 'rubbish'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have noticed," resumed D'Arcy, with a warlike look at the humorist of the Shell, "that not only cads like Gore—"

"Here, draw it mild!" said Gore.

"Not only cads like Gore and Mellish, but some decent chaps have been giving old Vavasour the cold shouldah since the affair with that wottah Smiley!"

"Faith, and let him explain, then!" said Reilly.

"I am standin' by Vavasour, through thick and thin," said D'Arcy. "I shall wefuse to speak to any chap who doesn't tweat Vavasour with pwopah respect!"

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther. "Anybody who wants to be relieved of the pleasure of Gussy's conversation knows the way now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are a silly ass, Lowthah! Old Vavasour is one of the best, and I decline to see him tweated wottenly!"

Blake yawned portentously.

"You'd better persuade him to tell the truth about the matter, then," he said.

"Does that mean that you wefuse to wally wound him, Blake?"

"My dear kid, I don't care twopence about the matter one way or the other," said Blake. "But Vavasour has put on a lot of side since he's been here. We've heard about Vavasour Lodge, and the crowd of servants in livery, and the giddy ancestors who came over with William the Conqueror. I wasn't there, so I can't say whether they did or not. If Vavasour has been

(Continued on page 18.)



Let the Editor be your pal. Write to him to-day, addressing your letters :
The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums!
HAPPY NEW YEAR TO
YOU ALL!

And a happy start the GEM is making, too—a topping trick watch and thirty-two grand pictures in full colours being presented free to readers during the next four weeks! That was a pleasant New Year surprise, eh, when you saw the announcements on the other pages? As I have already told you, the GEM will be twenty-nine years old soon—on March 23rd, to be exact—and to celebrate its coming birthday and the New Year I thought something extra special ought to be done about it.

And so next Wednesday you will receive the first gifts—a water-squirting watch and eight splendid pictures of champions of speed and sport.

You can have endless fun with the trick watch, and it works a treat. I tried it on the poor old office-boy, so I know! He got the first good wash he had had for weeks! Showing him the watch, I said: "How would you like a nice wash?" I mumbled the last word to make him think I said watch. He, of course, jumped at the offer—and got both! Yes, I gave him the watch so that he could get his own back on somebody else, and he made quite a big splash on the "Magnet" office-boy!

You will be delighted with the coloured pictures, too, for they depict famous ships, trains, planes, and racing cars, and popular personalities of speed and sport. Every boy is interested in these record-breakers and will be keen to collect all the pictures. They have sticky backs and can be easily stuck in your picture-card album. The first set of pictures show Britain's Fastest Fighting Plane, the World's Biggest Loco, the Normandie, and the Russian Stratosphere Balloon. The men of speed and sport are Sir Malcolm Campbell, H. Opperman, who is Australia's star cyclist, Gordon Richards, champion jockey, and Stanley Woods, champion motor-cyclist.

The Wednesday after every reader will receive eight more pictures, and the two weeks following eight more each week will be presented free—making thirty-two, a grand set in all.

"THE RUNAWAY!"

Naturally, to go with these fine gifts some special stories have been put on the programme. The first one is under the above title. It's a humorous and exciting yarn of how a hasty action on the part of the one and only Gussy makes him do something very desperate to save himself. After accidentally punching his master on the nose he fears the consequences, and runs away from St. Jim's. He thinks a flogging and expulsion will be his punishment for the ill-timed blow, and he will at least escape the flogging by bunking. How Gussy gets a job in a posh hotel, and how he fares in his new post makes a story that will keep you chuckling from first to last.

"SACKED FROM THE SCHOOL!"

The Christmas holidays are over, and in the next thrilling story by Owen Conquest it's "back to Rookwood" for Jimmy Silver & Co. But never has a term opened so sensationally as the first term of the year. For the "mystery man" of Rookwood, who has a list of outrages to his name, strikes again. But this time the mystery man is caught—at least, the evidence all points to a certain junior being guilty—and he is expelled from school. This great yarn will compel your avid interest as no story of this series has done before.

Our first grand free gift number is completed with more prize laughs from the Jester and Monty Lowther's fun corner. It will sell like hot cakes, so be sure to reserve your copy in advance—and tell your pals to do the same.

FIFTY-YEAR-OLD FIRE!

J. Baxter, of Glasgow, has heard of a fire which has been burning for fifty years, and wants to know if it's true. It is. This fire rages in the Hocking Valley coalfields in America, and it is

PEN PALS COUPON

4-1-36



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

John Luton, Rendcomb College, Cirencester, Gloucestershire; age 11-14; New Guinea, Gold Coast.

estimated that over one hundred million pounds of damage has been done by it.

The holocaust was started during a strike. The story is that a number of angry miners poured oil over some trucks full of coal, set light to them, and sent them running into different shafts in the pit. So the mine became a blazing inferno, which since then has travelled for miles, spreading ruin and devastation above ground as well as below. People who live in the area never know when they will have to evacuate their homes, for there have been several earth subsidences due to the fire beneath.

All attempts to check the fire have so far proved futile, and unless a big effort is made to put it out it will probably go on blazing for another fifty years. There are many other coal-mines in the district, and they are in danger.

DAREDEVILS OF FIRE AND WATER!

Talking about fire reminds me of a man I read about the other day who earns his living by sitting in them. 'Sfact! He tests the heat-resisting powers of asbestos suits and thinks nothing of going into the fiercest blaze. It's a warm and risky job, but I don't suppose he minds it so much in this cold weather!

Another man who earns a livelihood by his daring is an Englishman named Holden, living in America. Twice a day he leaps off backwards from a hundred-feet-high ladder, turns a somersault in the air, and dives into a tank of water only four feet nine inches deep! For sixteen years this Englishman has been performing his amazing feat, and now, at the age of sixty-four, he's still doing it! That he has been injured thirty-four times has not shaken the nerve of this plucky high diver.

THE LAST LAP!

For lap after lap at high speed S. Zvernick roared round the Ljubljana (Yugoslavia) race-track on his motor-cycle. It was the annual event of the year, and Zvernick, besides winning the race, had a great chance of breaking the existing record. His supporters cheered lustily as he at last roared over the finishing-line, going all out. He had won, and it was given out that he had broken the record. But Zvernick realised nothing of this. Under the impression that he had another lap to do, he went speeding on round the track. He roared into the finishing straight again—and then skidded. Fighting to control his skidding machine, he went careering across the track and smashed into a telegraph-pole, killing himself instantly. In the hour of success had come fatal disaster!

TAILPIECE.

Teacher: "I thought you had turned over a new leaf, Brown?"

Brown: "Yes, sir; but the wretched thing blew back again!"

THE EDITOR.

Laurence Smith, 92, Hartley Avenue, Delph Lane, Leeds 6, Yorks; age 11-15; cycling, cricket, natural history, old GEMS.

Billie Lloyd, Albemarle Hotel, Brighton; stamps.

George Butler, 21, Quinn Buildings, Popham Street, London, N.; pen pals in the Bowery, New York.

William Holmes, 36, Thorney Lane, Midgley, Luddenden, Yorks. Correspondence Exchange Club.

John R. Forrest, Claremont, Lea Green Lanes, Grimes Hill, Wythall, nr. Birmingham; age 14-17; tennis, railways, cycling.

telling a straight yarn, it's all right; but if he hasn't, it's not all right. I don't like spoofers, myself!"

"Do you mean to say that Vavasour is a spoofer?"

"I don't say so. But it's up to him now to prove that he isn't!"

"Wats!"

Blake yawned again.

"Well, let it go at that," he said.

"I wufese to let it go at that. I considah—"

Page of the Fourth came into the Common-room with a letter in his hand, and a somewhat excited look on his face.

"It's come!" he said.

"You are intewwuptin' me, Page!"

"Go hon! I say, you chaps," said Page, "I've got a letter here from my brother! I haven't opened it yet!"

"Oh, blow your brother!" said Gore.

"This will interest you, Gore!"

"How will it?" demanded Gore. "I don't know your blessed brother, and don't want to!"

"My brother lives in Kent, near Sevenoaks," Page explained. "I thought of writing to him and asking him about Vavasour Lodge, and all the rest. If it's such a stunning place, and such a giddy grand family, something ought to be known about it in the neighbourhood, and I thought of asking my brother to tell me!"

D'Arcy's brow darkened.

"I don't wegard that as playin' the game!" he said.

"What rot!" said Gore, interested at once. "If Vavasour has been telling the truth, there's nothing for him to be ashamed of about his place and people. Why shouldn't Page write to his brother about it?"

"Yes, why not?" said Levison.

"It looks to me like spying!"

Page coloured.

"I didn't mean it like that," he said. "I didn't think it was spying. We don't know what to make of Vavasour, and his yarns about a stunning place don't agree with Smiley calling him an old pal. It's as much for his good as anything else to have the truth known about him."

"Something in that," said Blake. "But if you're going to read out that letter, Vavasour ought to be here to hear it."

"Yaas, wathah! Don't wead it out behind his back!"

Page flushed angrily.

"I don't mean to read it out behind his back, if you put it like that!" he exclaimed. "You can fetch the fellow in, if you like."

"Fetch him in!" exclaimed Gore. "Let him hear it, and we'll hear what he's got to say."

"Vewy well; I'll fotch him. Don't wead it out till I come back."

"Right!"

Arthur Augustus left the Junior Common-room in search of Guy Vavasour. The juniors gathered eagerly round Page, who held the letter unopened in his hand. At last, it seemed, the facts were to be known about the new boy who had mystified and puzzled them. They waited eagerly for the return of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 12.

Nothing to Say!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, warm with indignation and loyal faith, hurried up to Vavasour's study.

Vavasour was there with Skimpole. Skimpole was talking at great length upon the subject of the evolution of the human race, and settling the question definitely within a million years or so.

Vavasour was staring into the fire without saying a word; a fact to which the genius of the Shell was quite blind. Skimpole, delighted at having found so good a listener, rattled on without pausing to take breath; and he was going strong when the swell of St. Jim's looked into the study.

Skimpole paused for a moment to blink at D'Arcy with a beaming smile.

"Pray come in, D'Arcy!" he exclaimed. "I am just explaining a most interesting matter to Vavasour. I am telling him—"

"Yaas. Vavasour, old man, you're wanted."

"Please do not go away now," said Skimpole. "I shall be delighted if you will remain, D'Arcy. I was just proving to Vavasour that the fact that the intermediate creature existing between man and monkey—"

"Pway shut up, Skimmy! Will you come with me, Vavasour?"

"Certainly!" said Vavasour, rising.

"If you're not too intewested in Skimmy's wubbish—"

"I haven't heard a word of it."

"Dear me!" said Skimpole.

Vavasour left the study with D'Arcy. Arthur Augustus linked his arm in the new boy's.

"What's on?" asked Vavasour, observing the excitement in D'Arcy's face.

For the moment the swell of St. Jim's had forgotten the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

"Come down to the Common-room. Page had witten to his bwothah at Sevenoaks, askin' him about your people—"

Vavasour staggered.

"Page—what?"

D'Arcy looked at him in surprise. "It's all wight, isn't it?" he asked anxiously.

"Oh, yes!" said Vavasour thickly. "Of—of course!"

"Page didn't mean any harm. I told him it was wotten of him to do it; but he didn't look at it like that."

"I—see!"

"He's got an answah fwom his bwothah now," said D'Arcy. "He's goin' to wead it out to all the fellows."

"Oh!"

"We thought you ought to be pwesent to heah it wead out," explained Arthur Augustus; "that is only fair play!"

"Thank you!" stammered Vavasour.

"Of course, if his bwothah knows anythin' about your home, it will bear out all that you've said," remarked D'Arcy. "Of—of course."

"I know you're not afwaid of anythin' in the lettah, old chap."

"I'm not afraid of anything or anybody!" said Vavasour, with a touch of his old lofty manner.

"Yaas, wathah! I was sure of that! Come on!"

"All the fellows there?"

"Yaas; a big cwowd."

"And Page is going to read the letter out?"

"Yaas."

Vavasour halted in the passage, and jerked his arm away from D'Arcy's.

"Well, I won't come!" he said.

"But—"

"If Page has been spying into my private affairs, and the other fellows want to know what he's spied, they can go ahead!" said Vavasour bitterly. "No need for me to come. Tell them to do as they like!"

"But, weally—"

"I shall not come!"

"But you must come, deah boy!" urged D'Arcy, in anxiety. For a moment a black doubt crept into the loyal, unsuspecting mind of Arthur Augustus himself. "If you don't come, when I've come to fetch you, it will give them an impression that you're afwaid of what Page's bwothah has to say."

"I don't care!"

"My deah fellah—"

"I won't be spied upon and questioned," said Vavasour.

D'Arcy nodded.

"Quite wight; I undahstand that. But this is a diffewent mattah. Bettah come in with me, just to show you don't care."

Vavasour hesitated.



G-MEN of the Ranges!

Flaming six-guns, the scream of hot lead and the thunder of galloping hooves! Who will ride the trail with Johnny Romar and the G-Men of the Ranges, sworn to stamp out the Chicago gangsters who have muscled in on the rustling racket in the cattle country of the West! Hold your horses, everyone, and be ready for this great yarn—the first of a new series of stirring cowboy tales appearing in this week's issue of *The PILOT*.

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"Come on, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. And, taking Vavasour's arm again, marched him into the Common-room.

Vavasour had quite recovered his self-possession now.

He entered the Junior Common-room with D'Arcy, his head held loftily erect and his lips curled scornfully.

He certainly did not look like a culprit coming to judgment; indeed, he looked more like an accuser or a judge himself.

There was a murmur in the crowded room as the new boy entered. Vavasour looked neither to left nor to right. He walked haughtily, looking, as Gore growled to Levison, as if the floor wasn't good enough for him to walk on.

"Here he is!" said Kangaroo.

"Yaas, here he is, weady to heah what your bwothah has to say, Page," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "My fwiend Vavasour has nothin' to be afwaid of."

"I don't say he has," said Page, looking somewhat shamefaced. "And, look here, if Vavasour objects, I won't read out the letter."

Vavasour does not object.

"Let him speak for himself," said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"What do you say, Vavasour?" said Blake.

Vavasour shrugged his shoulders scornfully.

"I have nothing to say," he replied. "You can do exactly as you like. I consider all this beneath my notice!"

"Beggan on horseback!" murmured Gore.

"I don't see that it's beneath your notice what all the fellows in your House think about you, Vavasour!" said Tom Merry, rather nettled.

"I don't care what they think!"

"Then you ought to care!" said Manners.

"Nonsense!"

"Look here——"

"I think all this is caddish spying!" said Vavasour in a very clear voice. "I repeat that it is beneath my notice, and I shall say nothing more!"

"Read out the letter, Page!"

"Well, if Vavasour objects——" hesitated Page, with a glance towards the cold, haughty face of the new boy.

Vavasour did not speak, and made no motion.

"Silence gives consent!" said Gore.

"Oh, go ahead, and get it over!" said Kerruish.

"Very well!"

Page opened the letter.

A dead silence fell upon the juniors of the School House. Nobody wanted to miss a word of the letter.

Page glanced over the letter.

"Ahem—new footer—h'm—extravagant young rascal! What do you want a quid for? H'm! That isn't it! Oh, here it is! Here's Vavasour!"

Page read over the paragraph in the letter in which the name of Vavasour occurred. His face went a little red as he looked up again.

"Read it out!" yelled Gore.

Page hesitated.

"I repeat that I won't read it out, Vavasour, if you object!" he said.

Vavasour made no sign.

"Better read it out now," said Tom Merry gruffly. "Whatever it is, it will do Vavasour more harm than good if you keep it dark, after saying that."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy.

A deeply troubled look was coming over Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's aristocratic visage. A chill of doubt was creeping in his heart.

"If Vavasour doesn't say no——"

Vavasour did not speak.

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther Calling!



Happy New Year, everybody! Drum manufacturers can look forward to booming business.

Did you get that New Year card I sent you? You were lucky if you did, because I forgot to post it.

Headline: "Britain's 100 m.p.h. Gale." What were the speed-cops doing to allow that?

Then there was the chap named Robinson, who loved to cruise so. Ow!

You heard about the Eskimo who described his enemy in a few well-frozen words?

Remember, if you get into a "free" fight, you may have to "pay" the penalty!

Then there was the successful artist who exhibited his paintings in the street because he liked to "air his views."

The fags are always giving pennies

"Very well! Here goes!" said Page.

The juniors listened with a breathless attention while Page read aloud:

"By the way, about the question you ask—about the new boy with you. I know the name Vavasour. There is a Vavasour Hall near here, and it's a very old family in this part. But your Vavasour can't belong to it, as the Hall belongs to Sir Gilbert Vavasour, who is a childless old bachelor. There is no other Vavasour that I know of; and I never heard of Vavasour Lodge. Perhaps you've got the name of the county wrong."

"Is that all?" asked Gore.

"That's all," said Page.

"Not much," said Gore, "but it's pretty clear. I suppose your brother knows the place very well, Page?"

"My people have lived there for years," said Page.

"What have you got to say, Vavasour?"

Vavasour was silent.

"Nothing," sneered Levison.

"It's pretty clear that there's no such place as Vavasour Lodge, and it's all blarney," said Mellish, with his disagreeable cackle. "I thought from the first that Vavasour was swanking about nothing."

"The school will know what to think of his swank now," sneered Levison.

"All rot!" said Tom Merry, but not very heartily. "Vavasour Lodge can exist, I suppose, without Page's blessed brother having heard of it."

"Rats!"

"Speak up, Vavasour, old chap!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy anxiously.

Vavasour found his voice.

"I've got nothing to say," he said, in a cold, steady voice. "I refuse to be spied on and questioned. Fellows who think me a liar can have nothing to do with me. A Vavasour doesn't concern himself with dirty tattle. That's all!"

He walked to the door. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hesitated a single

to a poor old man in Rylcombe. He sells chestnuts.

"Money Matters" reads a headline. Don't we know it!

A composer is writing an account of his darker days. His "black notes"?

Said Mr. Linton: "Ants conserve their strength, and often live several years." "Ant" i waste!

A football referee wants to know what sort of girl he should marry. What about a nurse?

New telephone kiosks have mirrors. "Reflect" before you speak.

During the vac., Skimpole walked all over a farm of 150 acres. Skimpole brought back two "achers"—his feet.

The new Wayland full-back takes size ten in boots. He'll put a "kick" into things!

The glass-house industry is thriving, we read. By no means "cracking up."

Then there was the beauty treatment specialist who lived on the "fat" of the land.

Telephone operators are civil servants, they say. But not always.

A Rylcombe farmer's son has become a bootblack. So the farmer makes hay while the son "shines."

As the skating instructor said: "You may find your feet in the air a bit at first."

Mind your step, lads! Chin, chin!

instant, and then hurried after him and slipped his arm through Vavasour's.

The swell of St. Jim's was loyal to the last.

But Arthur Augustus was the only fellow in the School House who still believed in Guy Vavasour.

CHAPTER 13.

Gore Gets Going!

"WELL," ejaculated Tom Merry, "if this isn't rotten!"

It was rotten, there was no doubt about that. Saturday afternoon had come, and there was a House match on for that afternoon.

Figgins & Co. of the New House had been narrowly beaten in the last match, and they were meeting the School House team again this afternoon, burning to avenge their defeat.

The School House juniors had won by a single goal, kicked in the last minute of the match, and there was no doubt that they had been lucky to win.

Indeed, Figgins & Co. held the view that the victory had morally been with the New House, and they offered to wipe up the ground with Tom Merry & Co. on the next opportunity. And Tom Merry & Co. had been only too willing to give them the chance to try.

But the worst of bad luck had befallen the School House junior team.

Blake, Herries, and Digby all had had colds and couldn't play. Kangaroo had hurt his ankle in practice, and had to be left out. Four of the best men in the School House team had to be replaced, and though there were plenty of fellows eager to replace them, it made the outlook very doubtful for the School House.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, it was true, had announced his intention of really putting his beef into it; but even that did not reassure the School House junior captain.

"Only one thing to be done," said

Blake, sniffing into his handkerchief. "The best men are crooked—"
 "There's nothin' the mattah with me, Blake, deah boy," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I was speaking of the best men, Gussy. The best men being crooked, you'll—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"The best men being crooked," pursued Blake calmly, "you'll have to shove in the best you can, Tommy."

"I'm thinking of Gore," said Tom Merry musingly. "He can play footer when he likes."

"What about Vavasour?"

"Yaas, wathah—what about my fwient Vavasour?" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy warmly.

"H'm!"

"He's shaped well in practice," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! My fwient Vavasour—"

"Vavasour may be your friend, Gussy, but I fancy you're the only friend he's got here," said Tom Merry bluntly.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Well, that's so!" said Blake thoughtfully. "He seems to be proved a spoofer!"

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort. I considah—"

"But that's nothing to do with the footer," said Blake. "After all, Tommy, we want to beat the New House."

"Yaas; and I considah—"

"I don't know how the other fellows will take it," said Tom Merry. "I can't say I like the chap myself. Chaps who tell whoppers can't expect to be liked."

"He hasn't told any whoppahs, deah boy."

"You're an innocent old duck, Gussy."

"I wefuse to be chawacterised as an innocent old duck!"

"I'll speak to Vavasour," said Tom Merry, making up his mind. "After all, he's a good player, and he would be useful. And the Vavasour Lodge and the giddy ancestors yarn hasn't anything to do with Soccer."

And Tom Merry went to look for the new boy.

Guy Vavasour was in his study.

Since the affair of Page's letter from his brother, Vavasour had been given the cold shoulder by a good many of the School House fellows.

As Monty Lowther said, it didn't matter twopence what sort of place he came from; but there was no need for him to lie about it.

And most of the fellows had made up their minds by this time that Vavasour had lied about his place and his people.

There was no direct proof, certainly; but, as Vavasour refused to explain, the fellows considered that the facts spoke for themselves.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy still believed that it was aristocratic haughtiness that prevented Vavasour from entering into explanations. But he was the only fellow in the School House who believed it.

Vavasour gave Tom Merry a steely look as he came into his study.

"I want you," said Tom Merry.

Vavasour's lip curled.

"Any fresh discoveries?" he asked.

The captain of the Shell flushed.

"I'm not going to speak about that," he said. "It's your own business. I want you to play in the team this afternoon."

Vavasour started.

"The School House junior team?"

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"Yes."

"The other fellows won't like it, considering how they have been treating me lately."

"That's all right."

"I don't know that I care to play, in the circumstances."

"It's for the House," said Tom Merry. "We've got four men crooked, and we want you. And if you put up a good game, Vavasour, it may bring the fellows round a bit, and make them think better of you."

"I don't want to bring them round. A Vavasour—"

"Well, will you play?"

Vavasour hesitated a moment.

"I'll play if you like," he said.

"Then get into your things."

"All right!"

"I'll wait for you down below," said Tom Merry. "The kick-off's at two-thirty, so there's no time to waste."

"I'll be with you in a jiffy," said Vavasour.

Tom Merry rejoined the group of juniors at the door of the School House.

Blake gave him an inquiring look.

"He's going to play," said Tom Merry.

"Good!"

George Gore came out of the School House and tapped Tom Merry on the shoulder.

The junior captain turned round.

"You haven't finished making up the team, I hear," said Gore.

"Yes, I have."

"I was going to offer to play," said Gore, with a scowl.

"I was going to ask you," said Tom Merry, "only—"

"Only what—"

"You've been neglecting footer practice for weeks, and I've found a chap who hasn't, that's all."

"I could put up a good game!"

"I dare say; but Vavasour will put up a better," said Tom Merry.

"Vavasour!"

"Yes; he's playing outside-right."

Gore gritted his teeth.

"You're leaving me out to put in that liar and spoofer?" he exclaimed.

"A chap who tells lies by the yard."

"I don't want to hear all that; and there's a chance that Vavasour is true blue, too! Gussy believes he won't explain just out of obstinacy."

"I said awistocwatic weserve, Tom Mewwy."

"Same thing."

"Weally, you ass—"

"Look here, if you're going to play that cad, Vavasour—"

began Gore hotly.

Guy Vavasour came out of the House as he was speaking, with an overcoat over his football clothes. He caught Gore's words and flushed.

"Are you speaking of me, Gore?" he said quietly.

Gore turned furiously upon him.

"Yes, I am!" he exclaimed. "I say it's disgraceful to put you in the team—a chap who's told lies by the bushel!"

Biff!

Vavasour's right shot out like lightning, and Gore rolled off the school steps and sat down violently in the quad.

"Bwavo!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Gore sprang up.

"Now, come on, if you want any more, you cad!" said Vavasour, between his teeth.

Gore looked for a moment as if he would accept the invitation. Then his hands unclenched and dropped to his sides.

"I won't hammer you!" he said

savagely, with a glare of deadly hatred at the new boy. "I know something worth more than that! You've got my place in the team! I'll make you sorry for it before the day's out!"

"I think it's rotten!" said Crooke of the Shell. "Look here, Tom Merry, if you put that fellow in the team—"

Crooke had no time to finish. Vavasour's fist caught him on the point of the jaw, and he rolled on the ground.

"Ow!" gasped Crooke. "Yow! Ow!"

Vavasour, without another glance at the cad of the Shell, walked away towards the football ground with the Co.

Crooke slowly rose to his feet.

"The beast!" he muttered. "He's got a fist as hard as nails! Look here, Gore, are we going to stand this?"

Gore gritted his teeth.

"I'm not!" he said.

"You can't lick him!" said Crooke.

"You can't, either. But we can show him up," muttered Gore. "That fellow Smiley is still in Rylcombe."

"Blow Smiley!" said Crooke, rubbing his chin.

"Look here!" said Gore, lowering his voice. "It's pretty clear that Smiley knows all about Vavasour, and is getting money out of him."

"Looks like it."

"It must be some rotten, disgraceful secret, or Vavasour wouldn't be paying him to keep quiet."

"We all know that!" growled Crooke.

"We know where to find the man," pursued Gore, in the same curious tones.

"That pub is out of bounds!"

"We've risked that before," sneered Gore. "It wouldn't be the first visit to the Green Man for either of us."

"What on earth are you getting at?" demanded Crooke, mystified. "I suppose we could go and see Smiley, if we liked, but what good would it do?"

"We're not short of money," said Gore. "I've got a pound or two I'd spend cheerfully to get even with Vavasour, and you've got plenty of tin."

"I'd stand a fiver to get even with him," said Crooke. "But—"

"Then let's go and see Smiley."

"What for?"

"To get the story out of him, whatever it is."

Crooke shook his head.

"If he's making money out of Vavasour by keeping it dark, you can jolly well bet your hat that he'll keep it dark," he said.

"Not when he's squiffy," said Gore coolly. "I know that sort—once fill him up with whisky, and he'll blurt out everything. He gets a quid or two out of Vavasour every now and then—they've been seen together—but he spends it as fast as he gets it. If we stand him all he can drink and get his tongue loosened, and then plank down a few quids, he'll blab out the whole story."

Crooke's eyes glittered.

"My hat! It looks all right," he said. "But—but there would be a fearful row if it came out that we were at the Green Man, standing booze to a rotten tramp."

"Who's to know? We've simply got to say that the man told us—and that'll be strictly true. It's our duty to clear up this giddy mystery, you know."

Crooke grinned and rubbed his chin again.

"I'm on!" he said.

"Good!"

And the two cads of the Shell left the school to seek Mr. Smiley in Rylcombe: while Vavasour, unexpected the storm



Blake, & Co. stared into their study, and well they might stare! Mr. Smiley was seated in the armchair with his feet on the fender. Skimpole was looking after him well, and the tramp was making big inroads on their substantial meal. "Great Scott!" gasped the juniors. "Who's that?" "This is my brother!" said Skimpole.

that was about to burst upon him, was playing football for his House against the New House team.

CHAPTER 14.

The Winning Goal!

"PLAY up, School House!"
 "Go it, Vavasour!"
 "Goal! Goal! Hurrah!"
 There was a big crowd of juniors round the football field. Some seniors had joined in, too, and were cheering heartily.
 Figgins & Co. and the New House team generally had been looking forward to an easy victory. As Figgins remarked, they could beat the School House any time, barring accidents. And now, with four of Tom Merry's team crooked, it ought to have been an easy victory.
 Three of the empty places in the team had been filled with very average players. But the fourth place—outside-right—was filled by a player who surprised the wisecracks.
 Blake, Herries, Digby, and Kangaroo, in spite of the fact that they were crooked, had joined the crowd watching the game.
 And they yelled as loudly as anybody. And there was something to yell for, too.
 Tom Merry had a keen eye for form where football was concerned, and he had hoped that Vavasour's inclusion in

the team would help the School House to win, and his hope had been more than realised.
 Vavasour scored a goal for the School House in the first five minutes of the game, and Figgins & Co. stared.
 "My hat!" ejaculated Figgins. "That new chap is hot stuff!"
 "Oh, Fatty!" said Kerr, with a reproachful look at Fatty Wynn, who was looking very astonished in goal.
 Fatty Wynn turned pink.
 "Well, that was a scorcher!" he said.
 Tom Merry clapped Vavasour on the back as they walked back to the centre of the field.
 "Good egg!" he said. "Keep that up!"
 Vavasour smiled.
 "I'll try," he said.
 And he did try—with great success.
 He did not score again in the first half; but Tom Merry scored twice from passes by Vavasour—passes that came just when and where they were wanted, and the juniors cheered Vavasour as much as Tom Merry.
 "He's a giddy dark horse!" said Blake enthusiastically. "Blessed if I care twopence whether there's a Vavasour Lodge or not—he's a jolly good footballer!"
 "Three goals to one!" said Kangaroo, with great satisfaction. "Figgins & Co. won't pull it off this time!"
 "No fear!"
 The New House juniors lined up for the second half with grim determination.

Fortune favoured them at first. Two goals came to Figgins, and the score was level. Then for some time the tussle went on without a goal on either side. Sometimes the School House goal was hard pressed, and sometimes the struggle raged before the New House citadel; but Fatty Wynn was not found wanting. Fatty Wynn sent out the leather every time, and the New House cheered their plump champion.
 Jack Blake glanced up at the clock tower.
 "Ten minutes to go!" he exclaimed.
 "Play up, School House!"
 "On the ball!"
 "Wake up, you fellows!"
 That was unnecessary—the School House fellows were wide awake enough. But the New House were equally wide awake.
 Then came a roar.
 "Bravo, Vavasour!"
 "Go it!"
 Vavasour had brought the leather down along the touchline, and he looked round for a fellow to take the pass. But Tom Merry was on his back, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was far behind; and the New House back was closing on Vavasour.
 The new boy paused a second, and then kicked—a long kick from the far wing that looked next to impossible.
 But the ball went home, true as a die, and Fatty Wynn in goal leaped at it a second too late.
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Blake yelled.

"Goal!"

Goal it was.

The ball was in the net, and there was a deafening roar of cheering and hand-clapping.

"Goal! Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

It was a wonderful shot, and it was no wonder that the School House crowd shouted themselves hoarse.

Blake chuckled gleefully.

"Two minutes to go!" he said. "The New House will never get level now. Vavasour's kicked the winning goal!"

And Blake was right.

Figgins & Co. made the most of the few minutes left; they had no chance, and the referee's whistle rang out to tell that the match was over.

Four goals to three!

The New House were beaten again, and this time the New House fellows could not say that it was a fluke.

They had been beaten after a grueling game, which left all the players gasping, and they had been beaten by fine play.

Vavasour had kicked the winning goal, and kicked it under the greatest difficulty. The new boy was the hero of the hour.

As the teams came off the field Figgins slapped Vavasour on the back.

"Jolly good, Vavasour!" he exclaimed. "You ought to be in the New House. That's where you ought to be. You're wasted in the School House."

Vavasour laughed.

"Weally, Figgins," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "we should refuse to part with him. We are proud of Vavasour!"

"What-ho!" exclaimed Tom Merry heartily. "I'm jolly glad I put you in, Vavasour. You've won the match for the House!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, don't!" exclaimed Vavasour, drawing back.

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah. Wats! You've won the match, deah boy!"

"Up with him!"

"Hurrah!"

And up went Vavasour upon the broad shoulders of Tom Merry and Monty Lowther, and he was borne off towards the School House amid a cheery crowd.

The New House fellows joined in the cheering. It was Vavasour who had beaten them, but they could admire a tough opponent—a foeman worthy of their steel.

The cheering crowd arrived at the doorway of the School House.

George Gore stood upon the step.

Gore had his coat and cap on, and had evidently lately come in. There was a disagreeable smile on his face, and Crooke, who was with him, was chuckling. The cheering crowd halted, and Vavasour was set down.

"Hurrah, Vavasour!"

"Hurrah, Smith!" said Gore.

"Hurrah, Smith!" echoed Crooke, with a giggle.

Vavasour started.

"What are you silly asses cackling about?" demanded Tom Merry. "Don't begin any of your rot now, or you'll rot bumped! Vavasour has just won the match for us."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We're not rotting," said Gore. "I suppose we can cheer Smith if we like, can't we?"

"Good old Smith!" chuckled Crooke.

Vavasour was deadly pale.

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"What do you mean by calling him Smith, you fatheads?" demanded Monty Lowther.

"It's his name."

"His name's Vavasour, chump!"

"His name's Smith, fathead!"

"Look here—"

"Ask him!" grinned Gore. "Look at him!"

All eyes were upon Vavasour.

He stood still, silent, his face deadly white. All the colour, all the happiness, had died out of it now, and his eyes had a hunted look.

The shouting died away. It seemed to the juniors as if there were the chill of a tragedy in the air.

The silence lasted some moments, which seemed like hours.

Tom Merry broke it.

"Look here," he said, "we're fed-up with the persecution of Vavasour. I don't care twopence whether he has gassed about his people or not. I know he's a jolly good footballer, and he's won the House match!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You can shut up, Gore!"

"I suppose you care whether a fellow comes to St. Jim's under false colours?" said Gore. "I think we all ought to care if a fellow comes here under an assumed name!"

"It's a lie!"

"It's the truth!"

"Speak up, Vavasour, old man!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy encouragingly.

"We all know that Gore is lyin'. He's a wottah! Speak up, deah boy!"

But Vavasour did not speak up.

The hunted look intensified in his eyes; his face was like chalk. And a grim, uncomfortable silence fell again.

Gore went on:

"I've been to see that man Smiley. He got tipsy—and talked. He's told us the whole story. Vavasour's not Vavasour at all. It's all bunkum about his people, and Vavasour Lodge, and all the rest of it. He's lied from beginning to end. His name's Smith, and he used to be a pal of Smiley's when his father, old Smith, kept the pub!"

"What?"

"It's not twue, you wottah!"

"It's true, every word of it, and he dare not deny it!" said Gore calmly.

Vavasour was silent.

Why did he not speak?

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy felt a chill creep over him.

He knew at last that his loyal faith had been misplaced, that he had placed faith in a fellow who had deceived him—who had tried to deceive them all—and would have been deceiving them yet but for the accident of his recognition by Smiley.

"His name's Smith!" said Gore, with a grin. "His father kept the Vavasour Arms, near Sevenoaks. He was a butler in the Vavasour family before he kept a pub. Smiley was his potman. Young Smith used to keep eye on the cars and do odd jobs about the pub. Old Smith made money, and he's a brewer now—head cook and bottle-washer of Smith's Brewery!"

"Vavasour, deah boy—"

"Call him by his right name," said Gore. "His name's Peter Smith!"

"Peter Smith!" said Levison. "Ye gods! Rather a change after Guy Vavasour! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, you cad!" said Blake roughly.

"He came here under a false name, under false colours!" said Gore. "He was ashamed of the name of Smith, and ashamed of the pub! Guy Vavasour! The only Vavasour about him is the Vavasour Arms!"

"You've said enough," said Tom Merry quietly. "No need to rub it in! You can hold your tongue now. It will be better for you."

Gore thought so, too, and he held his tongue.

"Say something, Vavasour, old man," said D'Arcy miserably. "You've only got to say that the cad is lyin', and we'll believe you!"

Vavasour did not reply.

A change came over his pale, thin face, his features worked, and, with a sudden sob, he covered his face with his hands and rushed into the House.

CHAPTER 15.

Staunch Friends!

THE crowd of juniors broke up in silence.

Their faces were clouded.

There was no doubt in any mind of the truth of the disclosure. Vavasour's manner proved the truth of it clearly enough. The wretched boy had made no attempt at defence; no attempt at sustaining his former attitude of lofty contempt. He had broken down under the accusation; he had given way utterly. The story was true; he had come to St. Jim's under false colours. He had money, certainly, but nothing to boast of. The very name he had seemed so proud of was not his own.

If the exposure had come at any other time, the St. Jim's fellows would probably have laughed over the matter, and considered that it served the impostor right.

But it came at a moment when Vavasour was the hero of the House. He had shown that he had coolness, courage, determination, and loyalty.

And those qualities were a great set off to the snobbish weakness which had caused him to emesh himself in this network of lies and deceit.

If he had attempted to brazen the matter out the fellows would have felt less uncomfortable about it. But the utter surrender had disarmed them; even his enemies.

Gore, who had brought this to pass, was surprised himself to feel that he was not happy over his success. The taste of his triumph was bitter in his mouth. The agony of humiliation and shame in Vavasour's white face haunted Gore's memory, and he wished heartily that he had left the fellow alone.

Crooke, Levison, and Mellish had no such feelings of remorse. They rejoiced. But they rejoiced quietly, for, strangely enough, the fellows who now knew Vavasour to be a humbug felt angry and annoyed with those who had spied out the facts and exposed him.

Vavasour deserved to be shown up, certainly. But they who had shown him up had acted like cads, and the less they had to say the better. And when Mellish cackled on the subject he was bumped along the passage by Kangaroo and Blake, and his cackle was heard no more.

Vavasour had gone to the Shell dormitory.

The other fellows respected his feelings, and left him alone there.

What thoughts were in the wretched boy's mind as he sat upon his bed still in his football clothes?

Black shame had fallen upon him.

He had lied, and his lies were found out. He had boasted, and his boasts had proved to be false. He had assumed a name that was not his own;

(Continued on page 28.)

From Foes to Friends!



Sticking To It!

"NOT too much sticky!" said Lovell.

"That's all right!" replied Dudley Vane.

"I've got to get the blessed things off again, fathead!"

"Leave it to me, old bean!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. were busy in Jimmy's room at Priory House. The chums of Rookwood, having had a Merry Christmas, were making preparations for a Happy New Year!

There was going to be a dance, in fancy costume, on New Year's Day. The five juniors had unpacked a large box, newly arrived, with all sorts of costumes and disguises in it. Now they were trying them on, and making their selections for the great occasion.

Lovell's taste ran to something rather striking. Lovell was going to make up as the Bearded Bandit. Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome were busy with their own occupations, but Dudley Vane kindly lent his assistance to Lovell. Vane, the new fellow in the Rookwood Fourth, was an obliging fellow! He dabbed fixing gum on a huge moustache and fixed it to Lovell's upper lip; he gummed a big black beard, and fastened it to Lovell's chin; he gummed gigantic eyebrows over Lovell's own. Now he was busy with a big black wig, which he was affixing over Lovell's hair.

There was no doubt that Lovell looked striking in that rig. Surveying himself in a pier-glass, he beheld the head and face of a fearful-looking ruffian, and was pleased thereby.

"I say, my hair feels sticky!" said Arthur Edward.

"Does it?" murmured Vane.

"You're rather an ass, Vane! You don't have to stick a wig on—only just a dab. I hope you haven't overdone it."

"Now try on the costume!" said Vane, unheeding.

Really, it was very obliging of Vane. He was not bothering about the selection of his own costume at all; he was giving all his attention to Arthur Edward Lovell. It was all the more obliging of him, because Lovell had

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been rather shirty with him during those holidays at Jimmy Silver's home, and had, indeed, played ghost to give him a scare—though that enterprise, it was true, had resulted in Arthur Edward getting the scare!

Vane sorted out the brigand costume and helped Arthur Edward into it. Meanwhile, the fixing gum which fastened on Lovell's hirsute adornments was drying—hard!

"We ought to have got on the costume first, you know," said Lovell. "I must say you're rather a fathead, Vane."

"Thanks!" said Vane.

It was a punch on the nose that changed Lovell and Vane from friends to foes—but it was a matter of life and death that healed the broken bonds of friendship!

Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome chuckled. Arthur Edward had his own way of acknowledging an obligation!

Lovell was complete at last—a most awe-inspiring figure of a bearded bandit. By that time, Jimmy Silver had transformed himself into a Cavalier, Raby had become a Pierrot, and Newcome a Highlander. Only Vane was still unchanged, having given all his time to Lovell.

"What are you going to be, Vane?" asked Jimmy.

"Oh, any old thing!" answered Vane carelessly. "Lots of time yet. I'm more interested in Lovell. Looks a knut, doesn't he?"

"No end of a knut," said Jimmy, laughing. "Hallo, there goes the bell; we'd better shift these things and get down to lunch. You'll have to try on something this afternoon, Vane."

"That's all right."

Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome were not long in stripping off the costumes. Arthur Edward was longer. He gave a squeak as he jerked off his moustache.

"Ow!"

"Anything the matter?" asked Vane blandly.

"I knew you'd put too much sticky on, you ass!" grunted Lovell. "That blessed thing would hardly come off at all."

He tugged at the beard.

"Wow!"

Lovell yelped.

The beard came off, but it almost seemed to bring a patch of skin off Lovell's chin with it. He glared at Vane.

"You ass! Didn't I tell you to be careful with that sticky?" he howled. "I don't believe these dashed eyebrows will come off at all."

"Let's all pull together!" suggested Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, keep away, you ass!"

Lovell tugged at his brigandish eyebrows. They came off, but very unwillingly. Lovell's face was crimson, with exertion and wrath by the time they came off.

"You idiot, Vane!" he gasped.

"I'm rather glad I didn't help Lovell," remarked Newcome. "I should hate to be thanked in that hearty way!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" snapped Lovell. "I'm sticky all over! That howling ass must have used up pints of fixing gum on these things. I shouldn't wonder if he's stuck the wig down, too!"

"Just a dab of the gum!" murmured Vane.

"Yaroooh!" roared Lovell.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Jimmy Silver

"It won't come off!" shrieked Lovell.

"Oh, my hat!"

Lovell tugged at the hairy black wig. It refused to budge. Moustache and

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beard and eyebrows had come off, but a liberal dose of fixing gum, now dried hard, attached that wig to Lovell's own hair. It was as firmly fixed to his head as the hair that grew there!

He tugged, and howled—he tugged, and roared. He gasped for breath, tugged again, and shrieked. The other fellows chortled.

"You cackling fatheads!" howled Lovell. "Lend a hand with this, will you? Do you think I can go down to lunch with this mop on my napper?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Co., quite taken by storm at the idea. As a part of a fancy make-up for a dance, that big black wig was all right. But as part of Arthur Edward's regular outfit, the rest of him being a junior schoolboy, it was altogether too extraordinary.

"All hands on deck!" gasped Jimmy, and, while one gripped Lovell round the waist, the others grasped the hairy wig and pulled.

The yell that came from Arthur Edward Lovell as they did so rang far beyond Priory House. It rang over a good deal of Wiltshire!

"Yoo-hoo-hooop!" Leggo! You blithering idiots, you're pulling my hair out by the roots. Yaroooh! Stoppit!"

"Well, you asked us!" gasped Raby. "Yarooop! Leggo!" shrieked Lovell. "I'll punch you! Leggo!"

They let go. There was nothing doing. That big black wig was a fixture. Lovell gasped and spluttered. But he did not tug at the wig any more; it was too painful.

"That fool Vane!" he roared. "You did this on purpose, Vane! You must have pumped about a gallon of fixing gum on to it! You fooled about with the costume so as to let it dry hard. Think I don't know? You rotter!"

"Vane, you ass!" gasped Jimmy Silver. It dawned on all the Fistical Four now why Dudley Vane had been so obliging.

"Don't you think it funny, Lovell?" asked Vane demurely.

"Funny?" bawled Lovell.

"Well, as funny as playing ghost to give a fellow a scare," suggested Vane.

Lovell did not answer that. With a crimson face under his hairy black wig, he rushed at Dudley Vane, his fists clenched.

Vane dodged out of the room, laughing.

Lovell, about to pursue him, remembered the wig. He could not show himself about the house like that.

"I—I—I'll smash him!" he gasped. "Pulling a fellow's leg—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" roared Lovell. "Do you think this is funny? I'll jolly well punch that rotter! I'll smash him! How the thump am I going to get this beastly thing off? It's stuck in my hair—"

Dudley Vane's handsome face glanced in at the door.

"Soak it in hot water!" he suggested.

"What?" yelled Lovell.

"For about half an hour—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome at the idea of Arthur Edward soaking his head in hot water for about half an hour.

Lovell, frantic, made a rush at the door. Vane disappeared, his cheery laugh floating back as he went. Lovell paused again, breathing fury.

"I'll smash him!" he gasped. "I'll—"

"Oh dear!" gurgled Jimmy Silver. "Well, you asked for it, old chap—you set out to pull Vane's leg, you know, and it's only tit for tat!"

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"What am I going to do?" raved Lovell. "I can't go down like this! Can I let your pater and mater and Phyllis and young Algy see me like this? What will the servants think?"

"They'll think it funny, you bet!" gasped Raby. "Look here, keep it on till New Year's Day—only a couple of days—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I'll—" gasped Lovell. "You cackling asses—you sniggering dummies—you chortling chumps—you—you—"

Words failed Lovell. He rushed at his chums, punching fiercely, and drove them, yelling like hyenas, from the room.

Lovell Loses His Temper!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL did not come down to lunch that day.

He couldn't!

With that bushy black wig stuck on his head, immovable, he simply could not show himself in public.

Lunch was sent up to his room.

The servant who brought up the tray nearly fell down at the sight of Lovell. The tray had a very narrow escape.

Lovell heard the man gurgling as he went away.

He breathed fury.

Fortunately his fury did not affect his appetite. He made an excellent lunch. Afterwards he roamed round his room like a tiger in a cage.

Again and again he had tugged and twisted at that wig! But it would not come off unless his own hair came with it. And such a parting would have been altogether too painful.

Once or twice he suspected that he heard sounds of laughter from below. He even suspected that he heard the trill of Cousin Phyllis' laugh—which was the unkindest cut of all. Everybody had heard of that extraordinary jape which made him a prisoner in his room. Everybody thought it funny. What there was funny in it was a mystery to Lovell.

His feelings towards Dudley Vane were almost homicidal.

He had never really liked the chap. He had been cheeky the day he arrived at Rookwood School. Lovell had had trouble with him the first day, and had not had the best of it. He never did seem to get the best of it. His stunt of playing ghost had been a ghastly frost. Lovell's mind was made up; the minute he saw Vane again he was going to punch him—hard!

It was not, perhaps, in accordance with the manners and customs of the best circles for guests to punch one another at a Christmas party. But if a fellow asked for it, and begged for it, a fellow was going to get that for which he asked and begged!

Arthur Edward's mind was irrevocably made up on that point.

Looking from his window in the frosty afternoon, Lovell had a view of a cheery party going down to the lake to skate. He saw Dudley Vane glance up at his window and smile. He fancied he saw Cousin Phyllis smile. There was no doubt at all that Raby and Newcome were grinning. Jimmy Silver was not with them—no doubt he would have been grinning, too!

Lovell's feelings were quite bitter.

Going off to skate—leaving him shut up here. Nice sort of way to treat a fellow. He was tempted to clear off home for the rest of the hols. Still, he couldn't clear off with that black, bushy wig on his head. He would have caused too much of a sensation en route.

Jimmy Silver came in—smiling. But

he ceased to smile and looked as grave as he could as he caught the expression on Lovell's face. To Arthur Edward, at all events, it was no smiling matter.

"Now, let's get going, old chap!" said Jimmy. "Hot water will get that dashed thing off sooner or later."

"You silly ass!"

"Hem! Keep smiling, old chap—"

"You frabjous fathead!"

"My dear chap—"

"Idiot!"

Jimmy Silver made no reply to that. The soft answer failed to turn away wrath, and silence was golden. Lovell consented, however, to submit his unhappy napper to his chum's ministrations.

Jimmy laboured long. Plenty of hot water and patient manipulation worked the oracle—to the accompaniment of a series of painful yelps from Lovell. By the time Uncle James of Rookwood was through he was as fed-up with Dudley Vane's idea of a practical joke as Lovell was.

Lovell's hair was still sticky. His complexion was like that of a freshly boiled beetroot. His temper was at boiling point. But it was done, and Lovell at long last was able to emerge from retirement.

He went downstairs with Jimmy. He fancied he detected faint smiles on the faces of Mr. and Mrs. Silver. There was no fancy about the giggle he heard from young Algy.

He stuck his cap on his sticky hair and went out. Jimmy Silver judiciously kept him company. It was rather distressing to Jimmy to think of scrapping between two of his Christmas guests. He could hardly imagine what his father and mother would think of it. He could only hope that Vane would be careful to avoid trouble till Lovell had had time to calm down and remember what was due to good manners. Lovell headed for the lake—and, fortunately, Phyllis was there with the juniors. The most exasperated fellow could not think of scrapping in a girl's presence. So Jimmy hoped that it was all right.

Alas for his hopes! The skating was over and Raby and Newcome had walked away with Cousin Phyllis, who was going to show them the Monk's Leap in the Priory Wood. Vane, who had already been shown that interesting spot, was coming back to the house, carrying the skates.

Lovell's eyes flashed as he saw him alone. Jimmy touched his arm.

"Keep your temper, old chap!" he murmured.

Lovell did not answer. His eyes were fixed on Vane as the new junior came up the path. Vane smiled.

If Lovell had thought of keeping his temper, that smile would have torn it. Shaking off Jimmy's detaining hand, he made a rush at Dudley Vane, hitting out as he did so.

"You rotter!" bawled Lovell.

Vane, burdened with skates, was taken at a disadvantage. Lovell did not think of that. He did not think of anything. There was only one idea in Lovell's mind—the fixed idea of punching Vane's nose as soon as he came within punching distance of it.

And he punched—hard!

Dudley Vane went over backwards as if a bullet had struck him. There was a clatter of scattering skates, and the new junior thudded on the frosty ground on his back.

"Take that, you cad!" bawled Lovell.

Vane sprawled on his back, with the crimson spurting from his nose. He bounded to his feet, his eyes blazing. Jimmy Silver sprang between.

"Stop!" he gasped.

He grasped Vane and held him back. "Lovell, you fool, clear off!" he snapped. "Do you want to start a fight here, you dummy? You may be seen from the windows. Vane, old chap, for goodness' sake—"

"Hasn't he asked for it?" roared Lovell. "Do you jolly well think—"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Jimmy. "Get out of it, you fathead!"

Lovell, with knitted brows, tramped away. Jimmy was holding Dudley Vane back; but Vane, after the first moment of fury, had recovered his coolness and did not need holding.

"All serene," he said in a low voice. "You needn't worry—I'm not going to make a fool of myself if Lovell does."

"One fool's enough!" grunted Jimmy Silver.

"Quite!" agreed Vane.

He dabbed his streaming nose with his handkerchief. Jimmy Silver gathered up the skates. Lovell, tramp-

The Monk's Leap!

"GOT it off?"

Raby and Newcome asked that question together. Cousin Phyllis smiled faintly.

"It was too bad!" she said. "I think it's very nice of Arthur to be so good-tempered about it. A good many people wouldn't."

Lovell flushed scarlet.

After leaving Jimmy and Vane he had tramped away into the frosty woods. Tracks in the snow, among the leafless trees, showed him the way Phyllis and the two juniors had gone after leaving the lake, and he followed the tracks. And so he met Raby and Newcome, and Jimmy's cousin coming back from the Monk's Leap, which was a deep rift in the earth, in the heart of the solitary woods, a couple of miles from Priory House. Lovell had covered half the distance when he met them.

He mumbled something in answer to Phyllis and moved on. The girl went on towards the house with Newcome, but Raby, catching a sign from Lovell, dropped back to exchange another word with him. He suppressed a desire to grin, from a chummy consideration for Lovell's exacerbated frame of mind.

"Where are you off to, on your own?" asked Raby. "Come back to the house with us, only for goodness' sake, keep your temper when you see Vane."

"I've seen him—and punched him!" growled Lovell. "He's got a nose like a cauliflower now."

"Well, you utter ass!" exclaimed Raby in dismay. "What on earth will Jimmy Silver's people think?"

"I shan't know, anyhow, as I'm not going back," said Lovell savagely. "I'm clearing off. I can see I'm not wanted here. That's what I wanted to say to you. You can tip Jimmy to send my things after me."



"All hands on deck!" exclaimed Jimmy, gripping Lovell round the waist. The others grasped the wig and pulled. "Yoo-hoo-hooooo!" shrieked Arthur Edward. "Leggo! You're pulling my hair out by the roots! Yaroooh!" There was nothing doing—that wig was a fixture!

ing away sulkily with his hands in his pockets, disappeared into the wood.

"Let's get to the house," said Jimmy dimly. "You'd better bathe your nose, old bean."

"It needs it!" assented Vane.

They walked up to the house together. Mrs. Silver was in the hall when they came in, and she glanced at Vane.

"Dear me! Did you fall on the ice?" she asked. "You have hurt your nose."

"It's all right—just a tap," said Vane, with a smile. "I knocked it on something. I'll run up to my room and bathe it."

He ran lightly up the stairs. Jimmy Silver, relieved in his mind, went out again, to look for Phyllis and Raby and Newcome. As he had said, one fool was enough, and it was a great relief to "Uncle James" to know that Vane, at least, knew how to keep his temper.

The question asked by Raby and Newcome, referring to the sticky wig, would assuredly have led to angry words but for Phyllis' presence. The girl's remark had the effect of oil on the troubled waters. But it made Lovell feel rather ashamed of himself.

So far from having taken that jape good-temperedly, as Phyllis supposed, he had knocked Dudley Vane down; and he knew that Vane's nose would betray all beholders the fact that something had happened. And Vane, who was the last fellow in the world to be knocked down with impunity, had let it go at that—from a regard for decorum, which Arthur Edward had forgotten.

Lovell was still very angry, but a little regretful of his hasty act; and now he felt ashamed as well. It was altogether a very uncomfortable state of feelings.

"Look here, Lovell, you can't do it! You—"

"Jimmy doesn't want a chap here kicking up rows and punching fellows' noses," said Lovell sardonically, "and I can tell you, if I see that grinning ape again, I shall punch his nose again. I'm fed-up with him—right to the back teeth! See you again at Rookwood!"

"But look here—" exclaimed the dismayed Raby.

"Jimmy can tell his people something. What the thump will they care whether I go or not?" snapped Lovell. "I dare say they thought it awfully funny for me to be made to look a silly fool. The man who brought up my lunch was giggling—why, you silly fat-head, you're giggling, too!" hooted Lovell.

"I—I didn't mean— Look here, I—"

"Oh, rats! You can give Jimmy my message. If he'd rather have his precious Vane here than me, well, he's got him!"

"He wouldn't. You—"
"Oh, rot! I'm going, anyhow. I shall cut across the wood to the village, and you can tell Jimmy I've gone."

Lovell tramped on, without waiting for a rejoinder. Raby looked after him, and then hurried after Newcome and Phyllis. It was useless to argue with Arthur Edward at any time, and less use now than ever. His back was up—and his mind was made up!

Lovell tramped on, his hands driven deep into his overcoat pockets, his brows knitted and dark.

He was a little ashamed of his outbreak of temper, and, at the same time, in a mood to give Dudley Vane some more of the same. Certainly, if he could not keep the peace at a Christmas party it was better for him to go. And he was not feeling like keeping the peace. Quite the reverse.

Between anger, indignation, a lurking sense of shame, and a deep feeling of grievance, Lovell was not in a happy mood as he tramped on sulkily through the frosty woods. Far in the distance, over the frosty, leafless branches, he could see the village spire, and he headed in that direction, with the fixed intention of taking the train at the local station.

Suddenly he came to a halt. Before him, wide and deep, stretched a rift in the earth, barring his way.

Lovell breathed hard.

It was rather like him to have forgotten the Monk's Leap. Now he had arrived at it, and it stretched across

his path, extending a great distance in either direction.

"Blow!" growled Lovell.

According to tradition, a monk of the old Priory, pursued by foes, had leaped across that deep rift to make his escape. But as it was about fifteen feet across, and the edges crumbling with snow, Lovell was not prepared to attempt to repeat the performance of that ancient monk. He stared angrily at the rift, turned, and tramped along it, to get round the end.

But after tramping a quarter of a mile he found himself up against a hillside, tangled with thickets, and banked with snow. Getting through that obstruction was almost hopeless. It would have meant at least an hour or two of desperate scrambling.

Breathing harder than ever, Lovell walked back along the edge of the rift to the spot where it narrowed to fifteen feet or so, where the monk was said to have leaped it.

He stopped there and stared across. The December afternoon was waning into dusky darkness now, and he did not want to be still tramping in the frosty woods when darkness fell. It was quite possible that he might lose his way when he lost sight of the village spire. Standing by the rift, he calculated his chances of making a successful jump.

But he shook his head. With a good run, on firm ground, and a good landing on the other side, he fancied he could have done it—perhaps! But jumping from crumbling snow to land on uncertain snow at the other side was rather too risky, even for a reckless fellow like Lovell. How deep the rift was he did not know, but he knew that

a fellow who fell in would not find it easy to get out again.

A rustle in the frosty wood caught his ear, and he looked round.

Owing to his waste of time, walking along the rift and walking back again, Jimmy Silver had had ample time to get the message from Raby. Lovell wondered savagely whether Jimmy had hurried out to find him, and persuade him to return. Still, Jimmy could not know that he had blundered on the rift, and lost time.

He looked round, but he saw nobody. He was sure that he had heard somebody, but if so, the person he had heard had taken cover behind a tree or a snowy bush. There was no one to be seen.

Lovell's heart beat a little faster. He was a couple of miles from anywhere, and dusk was falling. It would not be pleasant to meet some wandering tramp in such a place. And he was certain that somebody was at hand, though out of sight.

He turned to the Monk's Leap again, almost making up his mind to the jump. But again he shook his head, realising that it would not do. He had to go back a good half-mile to reach the footpath through the woods to the village, and, unwelcome as the idea was, he had to make up his mind to it.

He turned.

Crash!

Something soft but heavy—he did not realise at the moment that it was a snowball—crashed right in his face as he turned.

He gave a muffled gasp and spun over.

The next second he was shooting downward, over the edge of the rift, amid a shower of dislodged snow.

Bump!

He landed in snow, deep down. It was fortunate for him that a couple of feet of snow lay at the bottom of the rift, for had he fallen on hard earth he would certainly have been seriously damaged. As it was, he bumped hard and rolled over in snow, his leg twisting under him.

"Urrrrh!" gurgled Lovell.

He struggled up. A sharp yelp of pain left his lips as he did so. His leg was hurt. He had twisted his ankle in falling, and the pain, for the moment, was excruciating. Half-fainting with that sudden rush of pain, Lovell sank on the snow.

He fancied he heard, on the winter wind, the sound of a laugh, and a rustling of thickets, that died quickly away. Silence followed.

Whoever it was that had knocked him over the edge into the rift was gone, leaving Lovell alone, to the silence, the solitude, and the thickening winter darkness.

Vane to the Rescue!

DARKNESS thickened over the lonely, frosty woods. Lovell made an effort, and dragged himself to his feet. He had to get out of this.

He was not alarmed—so far. His chief feeling was of intense anger against the unknown fellow who had knocked him into the rift.

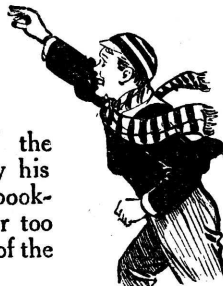
Who the dickens could it have been? Some ill-disposed tramp, lurking in the woods—some thoughtless village lad? Whoever it was, Lovell wanted to get at him—and he was in a mood to tackle the heftiest tramp that ever tramped, and give him something in return for that rotten trick. The fellow was gone; but there was plenty of light to pick up his track in the



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snow, and Lovell's idea was to get after him before he could escape reprisals.

That idea, however, was soon driven from his mind. He essayed to clamber up the steeply sloping side of the rift—and rolled back helplessly.

The side was steep, and twenty feet to the top. It was slippery with snow. It was no easy climb at the best of times. And with his twisted ankle, Lovell could not do it.

Twice, thrice he made the attempt, and each time he fell back into the thick snow at the bottom. Then he lay gasping for breath.

It was very dark at the bottom of the Monk's Leap now. Overhead, there was still a glimmer of wintry sunset on the woods. But that would not last long.

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Lovell. Alarm was creeping into his breast now. Lovell had plenty of pluck—heaps of it. But he knew what his danger was.

Unhurt, he could have clambered out. Hurt, he could not.

The fellow who had knocked him in did not know that, of course—probably had not thought of it for a moment, even if he cared. Anyhow, he was long gone. And it came into Lovell's mind, with a chill, that the fellows at the house, two miles away, would not think of looking for him when he did not return.

He had sent the message back by Raby that he was going. By that time they would suppose that he had taken his train and gone.

Without being a magician, Jimmy Silver could not guess that he had blundered on the Monk's Leap, and that some unknown rotter had knocked him into it, and that he had hurt his ankle and could not climb out.

They would not expect him back at the house. When they went to bed that night they would fancy that he was going to bed, too, at home—a hundred miles away. And he would be—here! Here, freezing to death in the snow at the bottom of the Monk's Leap!

Lovell shuddered. He was warmly clad, but the chill of the snow was already creeping through him, creeping to his very bones. What would it be like in an hour—two hours—all night?

He had to get out! He struggled up once more, and summoned all his strength, all his courage, all his obstinate determination for the climb.

Sweating, in spite of the bitter cold, he clambered up, gaining inch by inch, foot by foot. Six feet—ten feet—nearly fifteen feet—the crumbled edge above was a dark rim to his eyes in the gloom. Then, as he slipped, he jammed himself hard on the slope to save a fall—his sprained ankle gave a pang of sharp pain, and he rolled back.

He clumped into soft snow again. It was long before he stirred.

That terrible effort had exhausted his strength—and he had failed! He knew that he would never succeed now. Lying there, spent, breathing in spasms, he looked up at a dark sky, in which the stars were beginning to glitter.

He struggled to a sitting posture at last. His leg was too painful to stand upon. His face was almost as white as the snow about him.

There was only one resource left—to shout for help! He knew that it was useless. Who was likely to hear him in the heart of the solitary woods after dark—far from any path, save the one that led to the Monk's Leap—never

trodden at night, and seldom even in the day-time?

If his friends could only have known, how they would have rushed to his help—even that rotter Vane. But they could not know—they could never dream—if they were thinking of him at all, they were thinking of him sitting in a railway train, nursing his sulky temper, on his way home.

No one would hear him—no one could hear him. But it was the only chance he had left—and he shouted hoarsely for help.

Again and again his despairing shout rose from the rift, and echoed among snowy thickets and frosty trees.

"Help! Help! Help!" But only the echoes answered, and the wail of the December wind. He gave it up at last, exhausted by his efforts.

There was no help—and he was a lost man! The gleaming stars in the dark wintry sky seemed to mock him.

Suddenly there was a flash of light—that was not a glitter of starlight. It flashed into the darkness of the rift from the edge above. Lovell,

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staring up dazedly, realised that it was the flash of an electric torch.

Someone was there—and he shouted, wildly and desperately:

"Help! Is that you, Jimmy? Help! Help!"

A call came back: "Who's that? Is somebody down there?"

"Vane!" gasped Lovell. He knew the voice. "Is that you, Vane?"

"Great pip! Is that Lovell?"

"Yes!" panted Lovell. "Help!"

"What on earth are you doing down there?" Lovell saw a startled face looking down. Vane, lying on his chest, had his face over the edge, and was flashing the light on him and staring down at him. "Did you fall in?"

"No!" panted Lovell. "I'm not the fellow to fall in, I should think!" Even at that moment Arthur Edward, was still Arthur Edward! "Some awful rotter knocked me over the edge with a snowball—hours ago!"

"Well, why the thump don't you climb out?"

"You silly idiot! Do you think I should be still here if I could climb out?" bawled Lovell. "I've hurt my ankle, and I can't budge!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Vane.

"Look here, you cut off, and tell them at the house. Tell Jimmy Silver—"

"My dear man, it's a couple of miles to the house, and it would take rather too long to fetch Jimmy. I'm coming down for you."

"Look here, I don't want you to! You cut off, and—"

Lovell was interrupted by a shower of dislodged snow falling on him. He spluttered. Dudley Vane was coming down.

Swiftly the active Vane slithered down the slope.

He landed in the snow beside Lovell, and flashed on the light again. His handsome face was very serious—and it was not quite so handsome as usual, with a red and rather bulbous nose. It was no easy task that Dudley Vane had set himself—and he knew it.

But he set about it quietly and resolutely. He put the torch into Lovell's hand, grasped him, and lifted him from the snow.

Lovell was not a light weight by any means. But Vane had already shown that he was an unusually strong fellow—though it was said that he had been an invalid before he came to Rookwood School.

"You can't do it!" gasped Lovell. "You'll never be able to get me out! You'd better cut off and fetch the fellows—"

"And find you frozen to death by the time we get back, fathead! You're half-frozen already. Hold that torch and take a grip round my neck. Stick on my back, and I'll get you out."

"I tell you—"

"Rot!" said Vane cheerily. "We'll manage it, old man! I say, I'm sorry about sticking that wig on your mop this morning."

"I—I'm sorry I punched your nose!" gasped Lovell. "But—"

"Stick on!"

"Oh, all right! But you can't do it."

Lovell was wrong—which was not uncommon. Vane could do it—and did it! How he managed it Lovell hardly knew—perhaps Dudley Vane hardly knew himself. But he did it. Slowly, clamping himself with hands and feet to the steep slope, with set teeth, he clambered, with Lovell on his back, holding on round his neck. It was slow—terribly slow—and again and again it seemed as if they must slip back and crash down into the snow at the bottom of the rift.

But they did not slip back. The distance was only twenty feet up, but it was a quarter of an hour before Dudley Vane's hands were over the edge at the top. He got a grip on frozen grass roots, and dragged himself over and out; and Lovell with him.

Strong as he was, he was exhausted. They rolled in the snow, two or three feet from the edge, and for long minutes neither of them stirred.

Vane was the first to move. He picked himself up, breathing hard and deep. Lovell blinked up at him.

"I say, I think I could get along if you lend me a hand!" he gasped.

"Lean on me, old fellow!"

Dudley Vane helped him to his feet. Lovell leaned heavily on his arm as they started up the path through the dim woods. Limping, and suppressing yelps of pain from the strain on his

damaged ankle, Lovell leaned more and more heavily. Vane stopped at last.

"You can't walk, old scout! I'm going to carry you."

"You're not!" gasped Lovell.

"I jolly well am!"

"Look here, you ass—"

"Stick on!"

Vane had his way. There was, in fact, no help for it, for Lovell was at the end of his tether. Leaning forward, with Arthur Edward on his back, holding the torch to light the way, Dudley Vane tramped on slowly but steadily, and without a halt.

It seemed an age, to both of them before, the lighted windows of Priory House came in sight. At the door, Vane let Lovell slip from his shoulders, and, staggering with fatigue himself, gave him a supporting hand.

"All serene now!" he gasped. "No need to tell them I carried you home, you know."

He rang a peal on the bell.

Lovell gulped. It was a concession to his self-love; but Lovell was not going to accept that concession.

"Rot!" he gasped.

The door opened. There was a shout within. Jimmy Silver, Baby, and Newcome ran out.

"Lovell—Vane—what—" stammered Jimmy.

Mr. Silver hurried across the hall.

"What has happened?" he asked.

"Somebody knocked Lovell into the Monk's Leap with a snowball," said Vane. "I helped him out."

"Chuck it!" gasped Lovell. "Vane climbed out of that awful place with me on his back, you fellows, and carried me home on his back—my ankle's hurt, and I couldn't walk. How he did it goodness knows; but he did—"

"After—" gasped Jimmy.

"Yes—after I'd punched his nose! He can punch mine now if he likes!"

"Fathead!" said Vane.

Arthur Edward Lovell did not clear off, after all.

He had a day in bed, and the day after that he was still limping; but he was quite merry and bright for the New Year celebrations.

And he was very pally with Vane.

It was sheer luck, as everybody agreed, that Vane had had a fancy for seeing the Monk's Leap by starlight. Who had hurled the snowball and knocked Arthur Edward into the rift remained a mystery; but nobody liked to think what would have happened had not Dudley Vane discovered him. Vane was the hero of the hour, and loudest of all in singing his praises was Arthur Edward Lovell—and there was general satisfaction at their change from foes to friends.

(Next week: "SACKED FROM THE SCHOOL!"—another great gem of Jimmy Silver & Co. Look out for it in our first Free Gift number.)

THE BOY WITH BIG IDEAS!

(Continued from page 22.)

and his real name was known. How could he ever hold up his head at St. Jim's again? How could he look anybody in the face? He must go—that was all. Go from the school in shame and humiliation—the school he had grown to love, the place where he had won honour and esteem. If he had not had big ideas, if he had not been ashamed of things in which there was really no shame, if he had told the truth, he would have been liked and esteemed on his own merits.

He knew that now. But he had been a snob, and this was the penalty. It was a heavy penalty.

The dusk was deepening over the old quadrangle of St. Jim's—the shadows thickened in the dormitory.

Still Vavasour sat upon the bed, motionless, save for the sob that shook him at intervals.

The door opened at last. Vavasour did not look up.

Several fellows came in; they came towards him. Vavasour raised his head. He saw Tom Merry, Blake, D'Arcy, Lowther, Kangaroo, Manners, and several more.

A bitter look came upon his handsome face.

"So you're come," he said.

"Yes; we've come," said Tom Merry.

"You might let me off this," said Vavasour.

"Going?"

"Yes. I suppose you don't think that even a liar and a boaster and swanker could have the nerve to stay here after an exposure like this!"

"What did you do it for, Vavasour?" asked Tom Merry.

Vavasour made a weary gesture.

"Because I had big ideas. I was the son of a public-house keeper. He kept the Vavasour Arms. And old Sir Gilbert Vavasour had always been kind to me, and took a lot of notice of me. I always had tastes above my station. Then my father made money, and—and I had new prospects. We changed our name—you know, that can be done legally. I wasn't satisfied with being Peter Smith. My father became Mr. Vavasour; I became Guy Vavasour. Why don't you laugh?"

"I don't feel like laughing," said Tom Merry.

"Vavasour's my name now—legally. I was born Smith. I was an ass—that's all. I came here under false colours. I was a liar from beginning to end. I didn't mean to be, but one thing led to another, and—here I am. I shall be gone to-morrow, and you can remember the joke to laugh over."

"Nothing of the kind," said Tom Merry. "I thought you had some idea of that sort in your mind, and that's why we came. We don't want you to go."

Vavasour stared.

"Why not?"

"Because you're a good chap, and we like you," said Tom Merry at once.

"You've done wrong—or rather, you've been a fool. A fellow who is ashamed of his name and his origin is a fool. There's nothing in either to be ashamed of. And now it's all over we know you will be straight; and you will have friends to back you up, too. We're all ready to stand by you and give you a chance."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That's what we've all come to say," said Manners.

"But—the other fellows?" Vavasour muttered.

"They're not against you. Even Gore has just said to me he's sorry he meddled in the matter. You've got to stay here, Vavasour, and face the music like a man, and you'll pull through all right."

"I'll stay," said Vavasour.

It was not an easy thing to live down; but Vavasour lived it down. His borrowed plumes had been shorn from him; but that gave his own good qualities a better chance of showing themselves. And from that day there was no "straighter" fellow at St. Jim's in the boy who had had big ideas.

THE END.

(Next Wednesday: "THE RUN-AWAY!"—a sparkling St. Jim's story starring Gussy as the runaway. Don't miss it.)

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