GREAT YARNS OF ST. JIM'S AND GREYFRIARS—INSIDE!

The GEM

2d.

The FUNK!

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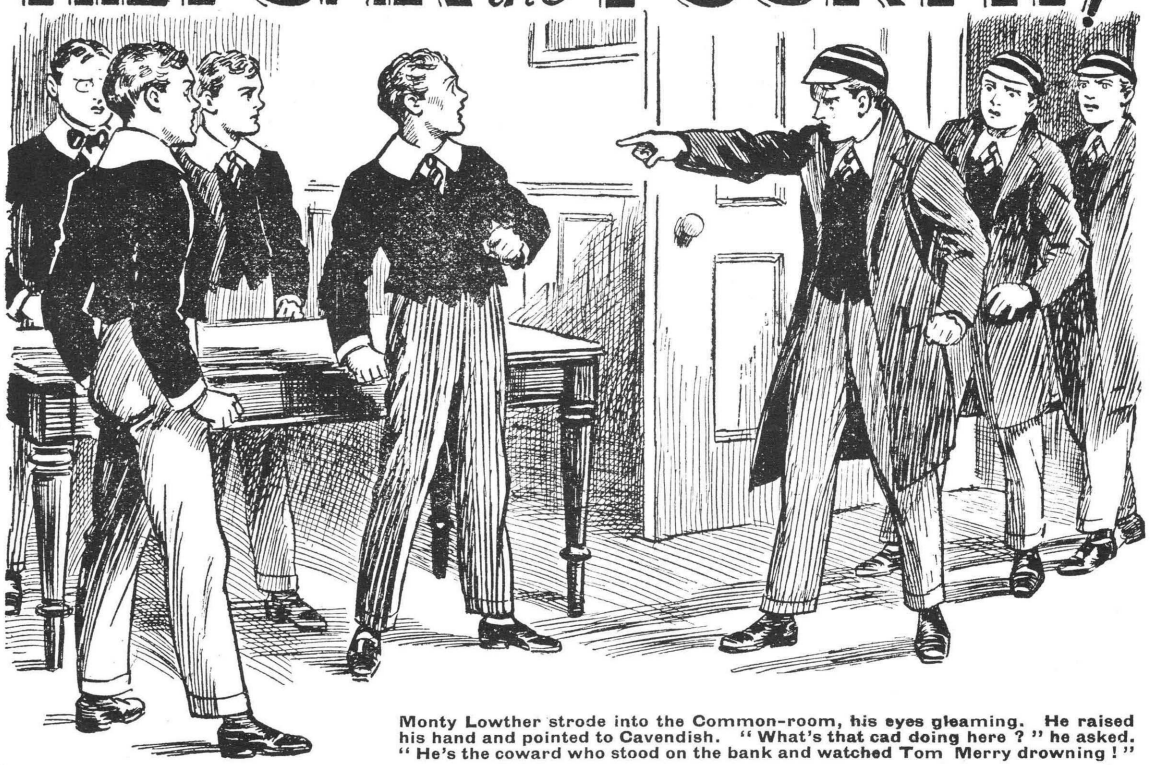
THE NEW BOY WHO TRIED TO LIVE DOWN THE NICKNAME OF "FUNK" BY CHEATING HIS SCHOOL-FELLOWS!

THE FUNK of the FOURTH!



Monty Lowther strode into the Common-room, his eyes gleaming. He raised his hand and pointed to Cavendish. "What's that cad doing here?" he asked. "He's the coward who stood on the bank and watched Tom Merry drowning!"

CHAPTER 1.
A Hot Chase!

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

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

"Yes, rather!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Monty Lowther of the Shell shouted after them in alarm:

"Figgins! Danger!"

Figgins whizzed round.

"What's that?" he demanded.

"Danger!" said Lowther solemnly.

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

When Cecil Cavendish came to St. Jim's he expected to be sought after and popular. But the school soon shows that it has no use for him. So it is that Cavendish seeks by shady means to retrieve an unhappy start.

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

"Wait till that ass Lowther gets on the ice, and we'll bump him over!" muttered Fatty Wynn. "We'll give him a chance to break the ice by sitting down."

And Figgins and Kerr grinned assent.

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

"Look out for Figgins!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Oh, my hat!" panted Tom Merry, as he righted himself at last. "Gerrup and

A POWERFUL LONG YARN OF THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S, INTRODUCING CECIL CAVENDISH, A NEWCOMER TO THE FOURTH FORM.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

after them! We'll squash them for that!"

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

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

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

"What-ho!" grinned Kerr.

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

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

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

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

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

"Good egg!"

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

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

Figgins uttered an ejaculation:

"They've stopped for us!"

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

"Dodge 'em!" said Fatty Wynn.

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

"Right-ho!" grinned Figgins.

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

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

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

"New House!" chortled Kerr and Wynn.

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

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

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

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

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! It's wathah wotten to let the New House beat you, deah boys!"

said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I don't call that upholdin' the honah of the School House, you know. I wegard Tom Mewwy as an ass!"

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

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

"Oh rats!"

"Yaas, wats, you duffah——"

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

Figgins looked suddenly grave.

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

"I suppose nothing could have happened——"

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

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

CHAPTER 2.
In the Shadow of Death!

CRA-A-A-ACK!

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

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

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

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

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

Crac-c-c-ck!

"Oh, my hat!"

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

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

But there was no time.

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

The sudden plunge into icy water made him gasp painfully.

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

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

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

The gap in the ice was several yards across now, and the black water bubbled and swirled round him.

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

There was no help at hand.

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

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

A chill ran through the junior.

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

Nowhere was it strong enough to support his weight.

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

He ceased to struggle at last, and held on to the edge of the ice, to keep

himself from sinking, and shouted again and again:

"Help! Help!"

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

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

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

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

"Help!" shouted Tom.

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

"Hallo!" he called out.

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

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

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

Tom Merry panted.

"I can't keep up much longer!" he exclaimed. "I'm half-frozen! Get something for me to catch hold of—a pole or something! Do you want to see me drown?"

The other hesitated.

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

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

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

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

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

"I—I'll try!"

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

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

"Get across to the island!" he shouted.

"I—I can't! The ice won't bear me!"

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

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

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

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

The other stepped on the ice at last. He crept forward slowly and gingerly, the wooden plank in his hands. An ominous crack from the ice made him halt, and he threw the plank desperately and ran back.

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

The boy scrambled on the towing-path again.

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

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

"I—I can't do anything!"

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

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

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

"We're coming, Tom!"

It was Monty Lowther's voice.

"Help!"

"Buck up, Tommy!"

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

"Right-ho!"

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

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

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

Tom's head came above the water again.

"Hold on!" panted Lowther.

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

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

"Catch hold, Monty!"

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

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

They sank, exhausted, on the ground.

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

Tom Merry's teeth were chattering.

"Yes. If you hadn't come, Monty——"

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

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

"He was funky, I suppose."

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

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

"Can you get up?" asked Figgins doubtfully.

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

"Good egg—if you can do it!"

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

CHAPTER 3.
Cavendish Arrives!

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Rotten funk!" said Blake of the Fourth.

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

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

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

"He can't help being a funk, I suppose," Tom Merry remarked.

Monty Lowther snorted.

"Rats! Anybody can help being a funk!"

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

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

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

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry.

"Not fed-up?" asked Manners.

"No fear!"

And the Terrible Three went down to the river again. Most of the St. Jim's fellows were there, making the most of the ice while it lasted. When the thaw came there would be an end to skating.

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

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

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

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

"I decline to be called a fathead!"

"Ass, then!"

"Weally, Blake——"

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

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

"Cavendish!" said Blake.

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

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

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

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

Hammond of the Fourth shook his head.

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

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

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

"P'r'aps!" assented Hammond.

Arthur Augustus shivered imperceptibly. Hammond, the Cockney schoolboy, was his friend; but even the most affectionate personal regard could not prevent D'Arcy's nerves being a little troubled by Hammond's terrible accent. That accent had toned down a little since Hammond had been at St. Jim's, but it was still very marked.

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

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

"Toff—eh?" asked Hammond.

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

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

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

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

"Well, you see——"

"You are my fwiend. Anybody who doesn't think my fwiend good enough for him need not twouble to speak to me!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "It is only chaps whose social posish is wathah uncertain who are snobbish, Hammond! Weally decent people don't put on snobbish airs!"

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

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

Hammond grinned and nodded. He understood the noble and lofty views of the great Arthur Augustus, and he admired him immensely for them. But Arthur Augustus, being the son of a noble lord, could afford not to be snobbish.

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

Hammond turned his head to look towards the gates.

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

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

He had an air of graceful self-possession as he came sauntering across the quadrangle.

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

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

Levison looked at him.

"New kid?" he asked.

"Yes."

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

"Thank you!"

The new boy sauntered on, and arrived at the steps of the School House. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy raised his silk hat gracefully, and Cavendish responded with a similar greeting.

"Cavendish, I pwesume?" Arthur Augustus asked.

"Yes, that's my name."

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

And he held out his hand.

Cavendish shook hands with him in a somewhat perfunctory way.

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

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

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

Cavendish jumped.

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

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

Cavendish stared at him blankly.

He did not seem to notice Hammond's

Crac-c-ck! With a loud, sharp crack the ice fairly gave way under Tom Merry. "Oh, my hat!" he gasped. And in a second more he felt himself plunging into icy water.

hand, which the Cockney schoolboy allowed to drop to his side again, turning very red.

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

Hammond muttered something, and disappeared into the House. He had been offended by the superciliousness of the new boy, and but for D'Arcy's presence his resentment would probably have taken an active form.

The Cockney schoolboy had succeeded in making himself liked by most of the St. Jim's fellows, and it was hard to be cut and insulted by a new boy before the latter had been five minutes at the school.

CHAPTER 4.
Face to Face!

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

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

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

Arthur Augustus struggled with his feelings.

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

"Yaas," he said at last.

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

"Weally?"

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

"He is Hammond of the Fourth."

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

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

Cavendish nodded carelessly.

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

"The East End of London," D'Arcy replied.

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

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

"Then how did that cad get in here?"

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

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

"My cousin!"

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

Arthur Augustus flushed red.

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

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

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

Cavendish started a little.

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

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

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

"Thanks!"

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

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

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

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

D'Arcy touched him lightly on the shoulder.

"Hammond, deah boy——"

Hammond turned round.

"'Allo, D'Arcy!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Seen Wailton?" asked Arthur Augustus.

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

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

"Whose?"

"My fwiend Hammond's!"

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

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

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

"Yaas."

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

Hammond blazed out.

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

Cavendish raised his eyebrows superciliously.

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

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Imposs," he said.

"But if we asked the Housemaster together——"

"That is imposs."

"But why?"

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

Cavendish reddened.

"Oh, draw it mild!" he ejaculated.

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

Cavendish sneered.

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

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

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

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

"Look here——"

"Wats!"

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

"Oh, Gussy!" grinned Herries.

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

Cavendish glanced at them.

"We're not rowing," he said calmly. "I'm hardly likely to row, I think. I have some faint notions of good form. I was objectin' to having this person, Hamley, I think——"

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

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

"Lump it, then!" suggested Herries bluntly.

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

"My only hat!"

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

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

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

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

SOMETHING TO CROW ABOUT!

"Is that scarecrow you put up any good?"

"Any good! Why, the crows are bringing back the seeds they stole last week!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to K. McClory, Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth, 60, Grove End Road, St. John's Wood, London, N.W.

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CHAPTER 5.
The Coward!

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

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

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

Cavendish receded a pace or two.

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

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

"That's the chap!" said Manners.

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

Blake gave a yell.

"What! You don't mean to say——"

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

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"That rotter!"

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

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath.

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

Cavendish flushed crimson.

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

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

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

"Yes, Lowther did," said Tom Merry. "But this chap isn't built that way. I suppose he can't help it."

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

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

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

"And he's turning up his nose at Hammond!" growled Herries. "Why, Hammond's worth fifty of him!"

Cavendish sneered.

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

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

"I did try."

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

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

Cavendish's eyes glittered.

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

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

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

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

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

Cavendish backed away.

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

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

"Hallo, he's got a little bit of pluck somewhere in his carcase," said Blake.

"Pile in, Lowther! Wipe up the floor with the beastly funk!"

"I'm going to."

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

"Let go!" shouted Lowther.

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

"I tell you I am!"

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

Monty Lowther dropped his hands.

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

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

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

Monty Lowther gave a snort of disgust.

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

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

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

"Yaas, wathah! Let them wip!"

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

CHAPTER 6.
A Change of Houses!

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

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

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

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

"Yes?"

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Railton pursed his lips.

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

"Can I see the Head, sir?"

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

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

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

"Yes, sir."

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

Wally looked at him queerly.

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

"Yes. I'm Cavendish."

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

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

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

And Wally departed with a sniff.

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

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

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

And Cavendish went.

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

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

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

"Oh, they can go and eat coke!"

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

"New kid for this House?" asked Redfern.

"Yes."

"Come in! What's your Form?"

"Fourth."

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

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

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

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

Cavendish laid the Head's note on the table.

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

"Your name is Cavendish?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff's sour expression thawed a little.

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

"He is my father, sir."

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

Cavendish sat down, looking quite pleased.

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

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

"Very well, sir, thank you."

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

"I don't remember it, sir."

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

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

Cavendish felt that he was getting on. The meanness of the Housemaster in kowtowing to him because his father was titled and wealthy did not occur to his mind. He only felt that he was getting his due.

Cecil Cavendish had been brought up to think a very great deal of himself, and he had fully expected to carry all before him when he came to St. Jim's. He had met with a crushing disappointment so far as the School House was concerned. In the New House his prospects seemed brighter, and certainly he would have one friend there in the Housemaster—and a very powerful friend, too. The Housemaster's protection would mean a great deal to him if the fellows turned against him.

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

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

"Very good! I think you will find yourself more at ease in this House," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Far be it from me

to criticise the methods of Dr. Holmes, but, owing to a too great kindness of heart, the Head has admitted boys to the School House with whom a son of Sir George Cavendish would hardly care to consort."

Cecil's eyes gleamed.

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

Mr. Ratcliff nodded indulgently.

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

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

"Ah! Now I understand your coming here. Quite right—and very natural. Now, I must consider what study you shall have. I am sorry to say that we have three scholarship boys from a County Council school here—Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence of the Fourth. It was Redfern who brought you to my study. I mention this as you will not probably care to associate with them."

"Quite so, sir! I thank you!"

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

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

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

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

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

"Thank you, sir!"

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

"With great pleasure, sir!"

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

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

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

"Very well, sir," he said.

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

"Indeed, sir!"

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

"Yes, sir."

And Cavendish followed the prefect from the study.

NO HELP NEEDED!

"It's orl right, guv'nor—we don't need help. We're getting on nicely!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Cox, Ward 1, Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot, Berks.

CHAPTER 7.

Figgins & Co. Are Not Pleased!

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

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

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

"Who are you?" demanded Monteith brusquely.

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

"I mean, what are your people?"

"My father's Sir George Cavendish."

Monteith grunted.

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

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

Another grunt from the prefect.

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

"Mr. Ratcliff said——"

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

And Monteith stalked away, frowning.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You need not trouble."

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

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

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

The study was empty.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Right-ho, Figgy!"

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

"Hallo! You here?" he exclaimed.

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

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

"What are you doing here?"

"I belong to this House."

"Oh, my hat!"

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

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

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

"You mean you funked it!" said Figgins.

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

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

Figgins pointed to Cavendish.

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

"Oh, rotten!" said Fatty Wynn.

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

"Yes."

"Then you're in the wrong House. I heard you were coming, and you belong

to the School House," explained Kerr. "I heard Kildare say so."

Figgins drew a deep breath of relief.

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

Cavendish gritted his teeth.

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

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

"I belong here now."

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

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

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

"Ragged bald-headed!" said Fatty Wynn.

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

Figgins jumped.

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

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

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

"I'm staying here."

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

"What did you say, Figgins?"

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

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

"I—I——" stammered Figgins.

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

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

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

"Oh!" murmured Figgins.

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

"Oh!" murmured Figgins, again.

"Bear that in mind, Figgins, and you others also."

And Mr. Ratcliff hustled away.

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

CHAPTER 8.

A Slide for Ratty!

CAVENDISH did not appear in the Fourth Form that afternoon.

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

Cavendish was no more fatigued than any other fellow who had made a journey, and there was no reason why he should not have attended class. It was one more example of the Housemaster's favouritism.

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

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

Blake smiled in a satisfied manner.

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

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

"Sorry! We don't want him, either."

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

"Fathead!" said Figgins.

"Frabjous ass!" said Kerr.

"Burbling dummy!" said Fatty Wynn.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"No fear!" said the Co. heartily.

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

Cavendish bit his lip.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Ow! Gerroff my neck!"

"Roll off, you ass!"

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

"Bai Jove! Gewwoff!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"You clumsy ass!" he roared.

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

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

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

"My dear fellow——" said Skimpole mildly.

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

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

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

"Rats!"

That was enough for Tom Merry. He grasped Cavendish by the shoulders and sent him spinning along the slide. Cavendish gave a yell as he slid away, vainly striving to stop himself. One of his legs flew into the air, and he spun

along on the other, his arms waving wildly, amid yells of laughter from the juniors.

Unfortunately, just at that moment Mr. Ratcliff looked out of his window. The testy Housemaster was annoyed by the shouts of the sliders, and he looked out to see what the noise was about. He saw Cavendish spinning away from Tom Merry's shove; and in another minute he came striding out of the House.

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

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

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

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

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

"Hold your tongue, D'Arcy!"

"Weally, Mr. Watcliff——"

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

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

"Shurrup, Gussy!" murmured Blake.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Go it!" roared Blake.

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

Whiz!

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

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

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

Perhaps Mr. Ratcliff did not recognise him in the gloom, or perhaps, in his rage, he was simply bound to wreak his feelings upon somebody. At all events, Cecil Cavendish arrived at a very unlucky moment for himself. Without a word of warning Mr. Ratcliff grasped him by the collar and boxed his ears right and left.

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

Then the Housemaster released the squirming, yelling junior, and strode away into the House.

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

CHAPTER 9.
Blow for Blow!

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

Nothing could have been more unlike the reality.

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

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

He was not ragged, but he was avoided. Figgins & Co. spoke to him if he spoke to them, and that was all.

With the School House fellows Cavendish had naturally very little to do,

"Catch hold, Monty!" exclaimed Manners. Lowther gripped the plank with one hand, holding Tom Merry up with the other. As Manners dragged at the plank the ice cracked under him and he went through. But Figgins & Co. were rushing to his aid.

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

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

He could not really understand it.

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

Only the fellows who wanted free feeds or who wanted to borrow money of him took the trouble to make any friendly overtures. And even those hardly concealed the fact that they despised him.

At first Cavendish felt certain that the fellows would come round of their own accord, and that if he maintained a "standoffish" attitude, it would not be long before Figgins and the rest would make friends with him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Quite so!" said Kerr.

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

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

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

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

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

"We know you are!"

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

Smack!

His open palm came sharply across Figgins' surprised face.

Figgins staggered back for a moment.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.

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

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

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

Figgins bit his lip.

"Come on, then!" he said.

"Hold him, Figgy!" said Kerr.

Figgins pushed his chum aside.

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

And Figgins rushed to the attack.

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

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

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

"Go it, Figgy!"

"Pile in, funk!"

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

Cavendish jumped up and rushed at his enemy.

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

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

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

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

He caught Figgins by the collar and dragged him off.

Figgins panted.

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

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

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

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

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

"What! What!"

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

"Oh!" said Mr. Ratcliff.

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

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

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

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

And the Housemaster rustled away.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 10.
Levison's Idea!

"GOAL!"

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

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

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

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

But he was not wanted.

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

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

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

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

He walked away from the football ground at last.

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

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

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

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

Cavendish scowled.

"Rotten!" he said.

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

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

"Of course not," said Levison smoothly.

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

"It's beastly," he said. "The silly ass shouldn't have gone on the dangerous

ice. His chum went in for him, but that's a different matter."

"Quite different," agreed Levison.

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

"No fear!" said Levison promptly.

And that was true enough.

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

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

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

"Clear off!" said Levison sharply.

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

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

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

"Take that and sheer off!" he said.

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

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

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

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

"Yes, of course," said Cavendish.

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

Cavendish shrugged his shoulders.

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

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

"You can order what you like."

"Thanks! You're a good chap!"

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

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

Levison was thinking as he devoured tarts and cakes.

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

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

"It might!"

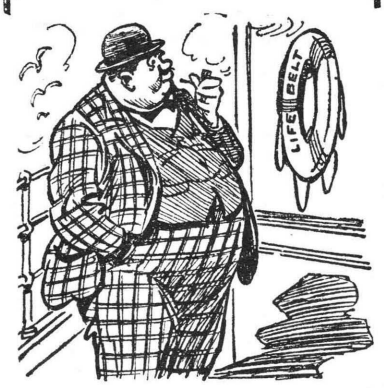
Cavendish stared at him.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean it might be worked."

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

REASSURING!



Mr. Bulky (crossing from Dover to Calais): "Ah, that gives one a feeling of confidence!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss D. Perkins, 120, Western Boulevard, Nottingham.

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

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

Levison coughed.

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

"But it won't happen again."

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

"I couldn't," said Cavendish.

"Why not?"

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

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

Cavendish started.

"Oh!" he said slowly. "I see——"

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

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

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

"Then I shouldn't be believed."

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

"Oh!" said Cavendish.

"It would be quite a lark!" grinned Levison. "And it would set you right."

"But—but suppose it came out——"

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

Cavendish's eyes gleamed.

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

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

"I could easily stand a fiver, if it came to that. But—but he'll be gone by now."

"Easy enough to find him," said Levison. "We shall find him on the road."

Cavendish hesitated.

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

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

CHAPTER 11.
Cavendish Does Not Explain!

"WATHAH an unfortunate wesult, deah boys."

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

Jack Blake grunted.

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

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

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

"Weally, Weilly——"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was Cavendish, the new boy.

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

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

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

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

Cavendish shook his head.

"But you're wet through."

"Yes."

"Have you had an accident?"

"No."

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

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

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

Cavendish hurried into the New House.

He left the juniors in a state of great surprise.

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

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

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

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

And there was much puzzled comment among the juniors.

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

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

The Terrible Three dumped the parcels on the table.

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

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

"Cavendish."

"Oh, that fellow in trouble again?"

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

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

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

"Never mind; let's have tea."

And the School House juniors had tea.

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

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

Figgins was looking perplexed.

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

Figgins laughed.

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

"We saw him coming in," said Manners.

"Wet through?"

"Yes."

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

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

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

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Not that I know of."

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

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

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

"Must have fallen in," said Blake.

"But he says he didn't."

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

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

And Figgins went.

He returned to his own House in a puzzled mood.

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

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

Cecil Cavendish was in bed.

Mr. Ratcliff, much concerned for the son and heir of a wealthy baronet, had ordered him to bed at once. With hot-water bottles at his feet, and a pile of blankets on him, Cecil Cavendish was very warm and comfortable. The doctor had been telephoned for, but had not yet arrived. As a matter of fact, he was not needed.

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Ratcliff stepped on the slide and next instant it s... from under him and he came down with a bump. The... and legs w...

Why, you might have been drowned, especially as you're a funk."

Cavendish turned red.

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

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

"That's my business."

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

"No; I didn't fall in."

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

"I wasn't pushed in."

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

Cavendish grinned.

"Suppose I did?" he said.

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

"Find out!"

Figgins looked at him very hard.

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

"Think what you like!"

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

"Was it that, Cavendish?" asked Figgins.

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

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

Cavendish's lip curled in a sneering smile.

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

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

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

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

"I don't mean to say anything!"

And Cavendish declined to say another word.

as if the earth had risen up against him. His legs shot went careering along the slide in a sitting position, arms wildly in the air!

CHAPTER 12.

Quite a Mystery!

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

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

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

But if it was not that, what was it?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"To pull somebody out, of course!"

There was a general chorus of:

"Rats!"

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

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

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

"Rats!"

"Piffle!"

"Not much of that about Cavendish!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Wathah not!"

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

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

And there was a laugh.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Go ahead!" said Figgins.

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

Figgins stared at him.

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

"What other reasons are there?" Cavendish demanded.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Figgins chuckled.

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

Cavendish left the study abruptly.

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

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

"Yes, I do!" said Cavendish doggedly.

"Well, you can't!"

"Why can't I?"

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

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

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

And Tom Merry turned his back on Cavendish.

Cavendish walked away slowly, biting his lip. He was finding his life very hard and uncomfortable at St. Jim's. Instead of being a sought-after leader in everything that was going on, he was left out and neglected. He had no friends, and no share in the sports and amusements of the fellows. It was due to his own faults but he was far from admitting it.

Even his "funk" might have been lived down in time if he had not added to it the faults of snobbishness and swank. The only chance for him was amendment, but amendment was as far as ever from his thoughts. He was quite satisfied with himself as he was. But he was not satisfied with his position in the school, and he meant that it should be changed, though, as was natural to a fellow of his character, he went the wrong way to work to change it.

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CHAPTER 13.

The Hero!

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

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

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

"Right-ho!"

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

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

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

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

"You clear hoff!" said Taggles.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir——"

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

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

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

"I want to see one of the young gentlemen. My name's 'Iggs—William 'Iggs."

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

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

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

Kildare came towards him good-naturedly.

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

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

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

"What do you want?" asked Kildare.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And Mr. Higgs pointed to Jack Blake.

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

"Oh, yes!" said Mr. Higgs.

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

The juniors were exchanging glances.

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

Was it possible?

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

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

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

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

"On Wednesday afternoon, sir."

"What time?"

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

That seemed to settle it.

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

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

"Imposs!"

"Seems a bit thick," said Lowther. "Let's hunt up Cavendish, and show him to this chap. Whoever it was, he's said nothing about it."

A dozen fellows ran off in search of Cavendish.

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

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

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

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

"Come on!" said Kerr.

"I—I—I——"

"There he is!" exclaimed Mr. Higgs, advancing with outstretched hand. "There's the young gent wot pulled me out o' the river!"

"Cavendish!" shouted all the fellows.

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

"Bai Jove! Levison's quite wight!"

"So it was Cavendish!"

"The funk!"

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

Cavendish flushed.

"Yes," he said quietly.

"And you never said anything about it?"

"Why should I?"

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

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

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

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

"I come 'ere to thank you for a-saving my life, sir. Don't think as how

(*Continued on page* 18.)

The Editor's Chair

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

HALLO, Chums! When this number appears on the bookstalls only two days remain of 1936. One more year is nearing its last hour, yet it hardly seems six months since we were ringing in 1936. It has been an eventful year, which is why it has passed rapidly. Much that has happened will go down in history, but I don't propose to deal with past events now.

At this time everybody is looking forward to the New Year, and the more thoughtful are probably wondering what 1937 holds in store. Fortunately, perhaps, for the peace of mind of some of us, we cannot see into the future. On the other hand, those to whom 1937 is to be a bright and prosperous New Year would like to know just what it does hold in store. At any rate, I should like to emphasise my sincere wish which appears on page 2—that 1937 will be a happy and prosperous year for every GEM reader, with lots of great St. Jim's and Greyfriars stories to provide many happy hours throughout the year.

I can wish you nothing better than that, and, regarding the latter part of it, I am in the happy position to bring about its complete fulfilment. You can rely upon me to see that the high standard of GEM stories is fully maintained. We had some splendid yarns in 1936, but I can promise you that I have some better ones up my sleeve for 1937.

I have had many requests from readers for the return of Reginald Talbot, the schoolboy cracksman, who appeared in what I think was the best series of stories this year. Such a popular character could not be allowed to fade into memory, and his return to St. Jim's is only one of the treats booked for the New Year's programme. There are many others, and in due course you will hear all about them.

"GUSSY'S LATEST LOVE AFFAIR!"

A good laugh is a fine way of starting the New Year, and this is what readers will have when they read next Wednesday's highly amusing yarn.

Blake & Co., accustomed as they are to Arthur Augustus' queer freaks, are somewhat mystified when their aristocratic chum starts to bring into St. Jim's large quantities of cigars, cigarettes, and tobacco. Gussy refuses to explain his amazing behaviour, and the result is that the harmony in Study No. 6 is greatly disturbed. But Blake, Herries, and Digby would not have taken the matter so seriously had they known that the smoking materials were a result of Gussy's frequent visits to see the girl of his dreams in a Rylcombe tobacconist's!

Gussy is never so funny as when he is smitten with a romance of the heart, but in his latest love affair he is funnier than ever.

PEN PALS COUPON
2-1-37

"A CHALLENGE TO GREYFRIARS!"

A feast of fun is provided, too, in the next sparkling chapters of this grand yarn. When Harry Wharton & Co. took up the cricket challenge of a team of French schoolboys, they expected to have an easy victory. But "easy" isn't the word! It's child's play beating the French team, who don't know the first thing about cricket. But it's not the result of the match that matters—that's a foregone conclusion. It's the efforts of the boys from La Belle France—they're a scream! Nothing funnier in the way of cricket has ever been seen at Greyfriars.

Altogether, next Wednesday will be a hilarious day for GEM readers. See that you don't miss the laugh of a lifetime. Make it your New Year's resolution to read regularly the oldest school story paper in the world!

Chin, chin, chums!

THE EDITOR.

PEN PALS

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

Toby Fieldman, 61, Charles Street, **London, E.1**; age 15-16; stamps, technology, cricket, swimming, table tennis.

Raj. V. Rajendram, 622, Galloway Rd., Kuala Lumpur, **Federated Malay States**; age 15-18; stamps, sports, films, music.

K. V. E. Clarey, 76, Felhampton Rd., New Eltham, **London, S.E.9**; age 13-15; stamps; S. Africa.

Gordon T. Allison, 1, Richmond Terrace, Armagh, **Ireland**; wants members for Universal Stamp Club.

Hugh O'Neill, 28, Clarendon Street, Dublin, **Ireland**; age 14-16; London, New Zealand, U.S.A. Postcard views, films, sports.

Melvin Pustejovsky, P.O. Box 167, Moulton, Texas, **United States**; stamps, photos, newspapers; not England.

Colin Richards, 24, Wood Street, Maesteg, Glam., **South Wales**; age 9-10; engines, aviation.

Ronald Clapp, No. 8, Mess 1, T. S. Arethusa, off Upnor, Rochester, **Kent**; age 14-16; music, sea.

Frederick Dixey, Hampers, Lower Maplestead, Halstead, **Essex**; age 13-16; stamps, matchbrands, Pitman's Shorthand, art; Scotland, Jersey, Isle of Wight.

Miss Mary Moore, Mor-Croft, Rhosneigr, Anglesey, **North Wales**; girl correspondents; age 13-15; Guides, horses, dogs; Canada for preference.

J. Rimmer, 4, Ostrich Lane, Prestwich, **Manchester**; age 13-14; aviation, chemistry.

John Wedge, 6, Manor Court, Forest Hill, **London, S.E. 23**; age 14-15; sports, scouting; overseas.

P. Dorkins, 48, Dacre Rd., Upton Manor, **London, E.13**; age 13-15; stamps.

William Whitehouse, 203, Park Rd., Aston, **Birmingham 6**; age 15-18; overseas.

Ong Chu Seng, c/o Ban Hong Leong & Co., 225-227, Victoria St., **Singapore**; age 13-21; stamps.

M. M. Patel, P.O. Box 44, Fordsburg, Johannesburg, Transvaal, **South Africa**; England and the East.

Miss Pat McGwigan, Shell House, Green Market S. 9, Cape Town, **South Africa**; girl correspondents; age 14-16; films, racing; Scotland, Ireland, U.S.

Miss Paddy Buckingham, 10, Avenue Hill, **Leeds, 8**; girl correspondents; age 18-21; books, films, autographs.

Arthur Luckett, 63, Hoppers Rd., Winchmore Hill, **London, N.21**; age 11-14; stamps.

K. O. Newton, 65, Sculcoates Lane, Beverley Rd., **Hull**; age 12-16; overseas; stamps.

Miss Jean Bernard, 73, Greville Rd., Southville, **Bristol 3**; girl correspondents; age 12-14; sports.

Frank Lyham, 63, Victoria Rd., Clapham, **London, S.W.4**; age 10-15; railways, sports.

E. P. Mapleston, 105, West St., Boston, **Lincs**; age 13-17; overseas; electricity, stamps, radio, swimming.

Morton A. Stoker, 1375, Lajoie Avenue, Montreal, **Canada**; age 13-16; stamps.

Leonard Finch, 58, Walton Rd., Plaistow, **London, E.13**; pen pals.

G. Lowies, 58, Fieldhead **Rd., Sheffield**; age 14-18; sports, science.

Eric Cuthbert, Toynton Rd., Halton, near Spilsby, **Lincs**; age 15-17; chemistry, science.

Kenneth Cuthbert, Toynton Rd., Halton, near Spilsby, **Lincs**; age 14-17; stamps, birds' eggs.

Miss Marie Thompson, 56, Huddersfield Rd., Meltham, near Huddersfield, **Yorks**; girl correspondents; age 21-24; dancing, photos, films.

Billie Dell, White Swan, Ware, **Herts**; age 14-17; stamps; overseas.

Dick Owen, 10, Harper Street, Wanganui, **New Zealand**; overseas; stamps, sports.

Geoffrey Phillips, St. George Street, Papatoetoe, Auckland, **New Zealand**; stamps, gardening.

Miss Mavis Hill, 99, Dorchester Rd., **Weymouth**; French girl correspondent; age 14-18.

Miss Mona Dowding, Belmona, 3, Cleveland Avenue, **Weymouth**; French girl correspondent; age 14-18.

I. Case, c/o the Butts, **Oughterside, Maryport, Cumberland**; age 19-35; speedboat racing, sports, books, aviation.

Miss Case, c/o the Butts, **Oughterside, Maryport, Cumberland**; girl correspondents; age 19-30; aviation, travel, sports, music; British Empire, Egypt, China.

Robert K. O'Mara, 20, Fotheringham Street, Marrickville, Sydney, N.S.W., **Australia**; age 18-20; aviation, broadcasting, photography.

I want any money. I ain't that sort. You 'ave been too kind to me already. You paid my bill at the Green Man, or otherwise they wouldn't 'ave took me in, not dripping wet as I was, and nigh dead with cold. I shan't never forget that, sir, not so long as I live."

"That's all right," said Cavendish. "Here's a quid for you to help you on your way."

But Mr. Higgs drew back with great dignity.

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

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

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

Cavendish flushed.

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

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

Tom Merry hesitated a moment.

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

"What do you say, Figgins?"

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

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

"You mean it?" gasped Cavendish.

"Yes; buck up!"

"What-ho!"

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

CHAPTER 14.
Not So Bad!

THE Grammarians arrived at St. Jim's soon after. Gordon Gay & Co. were in great form, and very keen for the match.

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

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

Cavendish looked very fit and well in his football garb.

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

"Here I am!" he exclaimed.

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

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

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

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

Cavendish's flush deepened.

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

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

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

"No," said Cavendish.

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

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

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

"Time!" said Tom cheerily.

The teams lined up.

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

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

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

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

And Cavendish felt very small indeed.

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

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

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

Gordon Gay kicked off, and the Grammarians followed up the kick-off with an attack on the home goal.

The tussle was soon fast and furious.

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

Gordon Gay, Wootton, and Monk brought the ball right up to goal, and shots came in from all angles. But Fatty Wynn in goal was not to be beaten.

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

Cavendish's chance came at last.

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

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

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

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Tom Merry!"

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

"That was a jolly good pass, Cavendish."

"Good man!" said Figgins approvingly.

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

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

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

The score was level.

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

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

But it was not to be. The St. Jim's forwards got away with the ball, Cavendish again playing up splendidly. Cavendish centred to Tom Merry, and Tom Merry was charged over by a

Grammarian back, but not before he had sent the leather to Figgins at inside-left.

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

There was a roar.

"Goal! Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

The whistle rang out sharply.

The match was over.

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

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

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

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

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Cavendish played up jolly well!" said Tom Merry. "He's not quite up to junior eleven form, but I think he ought to have a show in the House team after this!"

And all the fellows agreed.

"I'm putting your name down on the list of reserves, Cavendish," Tom Merry told him a little later in the evening, when the Grammarians had gone.

"Thanks!" said Cavendish. "You're very good. I did my best!"

"You did jolly well!" said Tom Merry warmly. "That pass of yours that I scored from was a beauty—and some wingers would have run on and shot for goal. As a matter of fact, I was rather afraid you would do that. But you didn't."

Cavendish reddened.

"I might have done it," he said. "Only—only—well, I didn't! I say, Merry, I'm sorry I didn't help you that day in the river. I suppose I was a rotten funk!"

"Not a bit of it," said Tom. "You've proved that you're not a funk. We'll put it down to a bit of absent-mindedness; any fellow might lose his nerve now and then. My dear chap, that's all over and done with. What you've done proves that you're a good sort, and anything but a funk. I can tell you the whole school thinks well of you—and they'll go on doing so, unless—unless you——" He paused.

"Unless what?" asked Cavendish uneasily.

"You'd like me to speak out?" asked Tom bluntly.

"Yes, certainly!"

"Well, unless you spoil it yourself," said Tom Merry. "You showed a bit of rotten uppishness when you came here—excuse me—putting on airs over Hammond, for instance, because he was a Cockney—and I've heard you've been rusty with old Reddy, on account of his being a scholarship boy. That kind of thing won't go down at St. Jim's. We don't like snobs!"

"I understand."

"I hope you don't mind my speaking out—I wouldn't have done it, only you've showed yourself to be a decent sort, and I don't like to think of your spoiling it by playing the giddy ox, you know, in small matters."

Cavendish smiled in a constrained way.

"I won't play the giddy ox," he said. "You can rely on that. Whatever I may be, I won't be a snob in the future. I'm going to apologise to Hammond."

"Good man!" said Tom Merry.

And he confided to Lowther and Manners, when he told them about that little talk with Cavendish, that the outsider wasn't such a rank outsider after all, and that in time he would be a really decent fellow.

CHAPTER 15.

The Price of Silence!

"I'M really sorry!" Figgins remarked to the Co., as they came into their study in the New House.

"About Cavendish?" Kerr asked.

Figgins nodded.

"Yes. As it turns out we have been rough on him He's done a jolly decent thing and held his tongue about it. We have been rough on the chap," said Figgins.

"Well, it seems that he isn't a funk, as we believed," said Kerr slowly. "But, as a matter of fact, Figgy, I can't like him. He's a rotten snob. He was perfectly rotten to Hammond, you know, who's worth whole stacks of him."

"Redfern would have smashed him, only he despises him too much," said Fatty Wynn. "He simply lets him rip. I suppose that's the best thing to do with such a silly chump."

"Yes, he's got his drawbacks," said Figgins. "Still, I think we can stand him, and give him a chance now. I was thinking of asking him in here to tea."

"Just as you like," said Kerr.

"Hallo, there he is!" said Figgins, as Cavendish's voice was heard in the passage.

Cavendish was speaking to Redfern, and as the study door was open, Figgins & Co. could not very well avoid hearing what he said.

"I've been looking for you, Redfern," Cavendish was saying, as the two juniors came up the passage. "Can I speak to you?"

"No law against it," said Redfern cheerily. "What's the matter with you? You've not showed any great want to speak to me up to now."

"I'm sorry!"

"Nothing to be sorry about!" said Redfern, laughing. "I wasn't pining for the pleasures of your conversation."

Cavendish flushed.

"I suppose you'll think me a silly ass—you must think me one already," he said. "But—but I wanted to say I was sorry. I've played the giddy ox, and I know it. I didn't seem to see it somehow till just lately. But I was ass enough to think that I was better than some fellows here, and—and I've found out that they're better than I am. I can't say more than that."

"There he is!" exclaimed Mr. Higgs, advancing with outstretched hand towards Cecil Cavendish. "There's the young gent what pulled me out of the river!"

Redfern whistled.

"Well, I'm blessed if I ever expected to hear you talk in that strain!" he exclaimed. "But if you're beginning to see light, all the better. To tell you the truth, I thought you were several sorts of an ass, and I thought worse than that till I heard that man's story to-day. Give me your fin!"

And Redfern shook hands with Cavendish, and nodded to him in a friendly way as he went to his study.

Cavendish remained standing in the passage, a wrinkle in his brow. He started as he felt a touch on the shoulder, and looked round and saw Figgins.

"I heard you talking to Reddy," said Figgins. "Couldn't help it. I was jolly glad to hear you talking like that, Cavendish. Hop into the study. We're just going to have tea, and Kerr's standing something special."

Cavendish's face brightened.

It was the first time he had ever been asked into Figgins' study, and he fully understood and appreciated the honour.

He spent a very happy half-hour in the study with the Co.

For the first time he was on equal and friendly terms with really decent fellows, and he felt that it was better than snobbish seclusion.

He left Figgins' study in high spirits.

When he returned to his own study, Koumi Rao was absent, but the room was not unoccupied. Levison of the Fourth was sitting there, waiting for him.

At the sight of Levison all the brightness left Cavendish's face.

Levison's keen, sharp features, his satirical grin, recalled to his mind all that he wanted to forget.

It made him realise sharply that his new position in the House was founded upon a falsehood—that he was a cheat, and that he would be despised as a cheat if he were found out. He looked glumly and grimly at the cad of the Fourth.

"Hallo!" said Levison, in very friendly tones. "I've been waiting for you. I thought I heard your voice in Figgins' study as I passed."

"I've been having tea with Figgins."

Levison raised his eyebrows.

"It's worked, then, and no mistake!" he exclaimed.

Cavendish frowned and bit his lip.

"Don't talk about it!" he exclaimed. "I don't like to think about it. I'd rather forget the whole matter."

"Yes, possibly!" said Levison, with a chuckle. "Naturally. By the way, have you settled with our cheery friend Higgs?"

"Yes—I dodged out just after the match, and met him in the meadow, as arranged," said Cavendish sourly. "That's all right."

"Nobody saw you?"

"No; I took care of that."

"He played up jolly well," said Levison. "Refusing the quid you offered him was really a master touch. I thought of that, didn't I? I must say that you owe the whole bizney to me!"

"I know I do—and I'm beginning to wish that you had left me alone," said Cavendish bitterly.

"It seems to me that you've got reason to be satisfied."

"In a way, yes. But—but I never felt so like a rotten cad in my life before!" said Cavendish miserably. "I can't stand it, I think. If they doubted me, it wouldn't be so bad—but their confidence makes me feel like a rotten worm!"

"Oh, you'll get over that," said Levison coolly. "The chief thing is to be safe from being found out. Higgs has cleared off, I suppose?"

"Yes—I had bought his railway ticket for him, and I gave him a money order for five pounds, payable at Southampton Post Office. He had to go there to get the money, so he caught the next train. He's gone!"

"Good enough. After all, he earned the money. All you've got to do now is to keep the secret. You can depend on me, too."

"All right!" said Cavendish wearily.

"By the way, I suppose you could lend me a quid if you're not quite cleared out settling with Higgs?" said Levison casually.

Cecil Cavendish looked at him quickly.

Levison asked for the loan civilly enough, but there was a latent tone in his voice that suggested unpleasantness if the loan was not forthcoming.

"You owe me four or five pounds now!" said Cavendish coldly.

"Make it five or six, then!" said Levison, laughing.

Cavendish hesitated a moment or two.

"After all, I've done you a jolly good turn," said Levison.

"Yes, I suppose you have," said Cavendish, with a sigh. "Here's your quid!"

And there was a pound note in Levison's waistcoat pocket as he walked away from the New House, whistling cheerfully. He intended that before much time had passed there should be other pound notes to join it there.

CHAPTER 16.
The Only Way!

CECIL CAVENDISH had gained all that he had aimed at.

His scheme had been quite a success.

He was firmly installed in the good opinion of the St. Jim's fellows. He had been given his place as a member of the New House junior eleven. He was on friendly terms with Figgins & Co., and Redfern.

The School House juniors thought highly of him, too, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was especially chummy. Arthur Augustus was only too glad to be able to be chummy with Cavendish, because, as he mentioned quite a number of times, his people knew Cavendish's people.

Cavendish ought to have been happy—or, at least, satisfied—since everything had worked out according to his desires.

But he wasn't.

In the time of full success he felt more wretched than he had felt at any time since he had come to St. Jim's.

Contact with fellows like Figgins, Redfern, and Tom Merry had insensibly made a change in him, and in his views of things.

The foolish snobbishness and self-satisfaction seemed to have left him, and if self-respect could have taken their place it would have been all for the better.

But he could not respect himself.

The unsuspicious friendliness of Figgins & Co. seemed to him like a constant reproach. It was founded upon a cheat.

If he could only have set his conscience at rest, he would certainly have been very happy now; but, unfortunately, that was the one thing he could not do.

Among his other troubles, there was Levison. Levison soon made it clear that he had not acted out of friendly devotion. His requests for small loans multiplied, and Cecil handed them over for some time without demur. When at last he ventured to refuse, the cad of the Fourth showed his hand at once.

"You can afford it," he said coolly. "Your pater lets you have as much money as you like. I've heard you say so."

"I'm not going to bleed my pater to hand you the money!" said Cavendish fiercely. "You've had enough out of me, and it's got to stop."

"I'm doing you a service."

"I don't see it."

"Would you care for me to write a comic article, giving the true account of that giddy rescue, and put it in the next number of 'Tom Merry's Weekly'?"

Cavendish clenched his hands hard.

"You mean that I've got to pay you to keep quiet?" he asked, between his teeth.

"I mean that one good turn deserves another. You've got plenty of money, and I'm hard up. I'm keeping your secret."

Cavendish looked him full in the face, and drew a deep breath.

"I've paid you all I'm going to pay you," he said deliberately. "I'm not poor, but you've had more out of me the past week than I can afford."

"Then you can look out for squalls!" said Levison. "What do you think the fellows will say when they know the facts?"

"If they know any of the facts, they're going to know all of them," said Cavendish, with a gleam in his eyes. "If the truth comes out, I couldn't stay here. It would be impossible——"

"Quite so!"

"I shall have to go. But, before I go, I shall go to the Head and state plainly that you have been blackmailing me, and demand that all the money I've paid you shall be returned to me."

Levison started.

"You—you wouldn't dare!" he stammered.

"You'll see," said Cavendish, gritting his teeth. "I fancy you'd be sacked from the school within an hour of that, Levison."

"You couldn't prove it," muttered Levison.

"I could prove it quite easily. I have kept the number of the note I gave you yesterday. You've changed it. I saw you change it. I could prove easily enough that that banknote was mine. How would you account for my having given it to you?"

Levison stared at him blankly.

"Well, you—you rotter!" he exclaimed. "You thought of that when you gave me the note!"

"I did. I intended it to be the finish, and it's going to be the finish. You've had enough out of me. Say a single word, and you know what you'll get. Let me find that the secret has got out, and I shall know you've told. And then you can look out for trouble!"

"I—I shan't say anything, of course!" Levison muttered.

"Mind you don't! And don't speak to me again! If you do, I'll knock you down!"

And Cavendish turned on his heel and walked away.

Levison looked after him with rage and dismay in his face. He had regarded Cavendish as a goose to lay golden eggs; but the supply of golden eggs had evidently run out now. After what Cavendish had said, Levison realised very clearly that he dared not say a word.

It was a relief to Cecil Cavendish to have got rid of Levison and his importunities. But his own conscience was a greater trouble than Levison had been.

He grew moody and discontented, and somewhat snappish in his temper. More than once the impulse came upon him to confess the cheat and have done with it. But he shrank from it. To do so was to finish everything. He could not have remained at St. Jim's afterwards to face the ridicule and contempt that would follow.

His curious mood did not escape the notice of the other fellows, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was specially concerned about it.

And when Arthur Augustus saw Cavendish again, he plunged into the subject. Cavendish was walking about aimlessly by himself under the elms in the quadrangle, when the swell of St. Jim's bore down on him. He made a movement to walk away, but D'Arcy appeared not to notice it, and joined him cheerfully.

"Anythin' w'ong, deah boy?" Arthur Augustus asked.

"No," said Cavendish shortly.

"You've been lookin' a bit off colour, you know. I twust you have not been gettin' into twouble. If you have, I'm quite willin' to advise you, as an old hand, you know," said Arthur Augustus, in quite a fatherly manner.

Cavendish paused. The impulse was strong upon him to speak out and get done with it.

"Suppose you'd told a rotten lie?" he said abruptly.

Arthur Augustus coloured.

"I'm afwaid I couldn't suppose anythin' of the sort, Cavendish," he replied. "I weally could not put myself in that posish at all."

Cavendish smiled faintly.

"Then you can't advise me," he said.

The swell of St. Jim's stared at him blankly.

"You mean that you have told a whoppah?" he demanded.

"Yes," said Cavendish desperately.

"Then it's an awf'ly wotten thing to do, and the only way out of it is to own up," said Arthur Augustus promptly.

"Not so easy to do as to say," said Cavendish.

"Bettah than keepin' up a wotten lie," said Arthur Augustus. "I'm weally surpwised at this, Cavendish. I did not think you were a fibbah. But you can wely on it that if you've been tellin' lies you'll never have any peace of mind till you've owned up."

"I suppose not," said Cavendish restlessly. "I'll think about it. Don't repeat what I've said to you, of course."

"Wely on me."

Cavendish walked away. He left St. Jim's, and strolled down the lane, thinking to himself.

Was it better to do as Arthur Augustus had advised? That was the only way to obtain peace of mind, certainly. But——

To leave St. Jim's—to give up all he had won—to part from the fellows he had grown to like, and who had come to like him, that was too hard! Could he do it? And to make them scorn him, as they must if they knew the truth! How could he face that?

"Arternoon, Master Cavendish! I been lookin' for you."

Cavendish started violently.

A ragged man, with a beery, dirty face, had stopped in the lane. It was Mr. William Higgs. Cavendish stared at him with a bloodless face. He had rid himself of Levison. But he knew now that he was not to be so easily rid of Mr. Higgs. The money was gone, and Mr. Higgs had come back for more, that was evident.

The unhappy boy groaned. He was realising what a tangled web we weave when we practise to deceive.

Mr. Higgs grinned at him affably.

"Glad to see my 'eroic rescuer!" he chuckled. "I 'ope you are glad to see me, sir?"

"You should not have come back here—you agreed——"

"I thort as 'ow a generous young gent like you wouldn't mind 'elping a poor man," Mr. Higgs explained. "A few quid ain't much to a young gent like you."

BALD TRUTH!

"Yes," said the bald farmer, "you can't have hair and brains." "Well," said the long-haired one, "it ain't no use thatching empty barns!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Walsh, 172, Legsby Avenue, Grimsby.

"I've paid you once, and I shall not pay you again!" said Cavendish, grinding his teeth.

Mr. Higgs' eyes gleamed dangerously.

"Then p'r'aps the young gents up at the school would like to 'ear wot really 'appened that arternoon?" he suggested.

"You mean you'll betray me, you filthy loafer?"

Mr. Higgs chuckled.

"Mum as a hoyster, if I 'ave a few quid," he replied.

Cavendish looked at him, and drew back his right arm. Before Mr. Higgs realised the kind of reply he was to receive, Cavendish's fist was planted full in his dirty face, and he reeled back and fell with a crash into the ditch.

"Oh crikey! Huh! Groogh!"

The tramp rolled in the ditch, and rolled out again smothered with mud. Cavendish looked down at him savagely.

"Do you want some more, you rotter?" he asked.

"Ow! You keep your 'ands orf!" spluttered Mr. Higgs. "Don't you 'it me! I'm a-goin' to the school to show you up—that's wot I'm goin' to do! You see!"

Cavendish advanced upon him with blazing eyes, and Mr. Higgs picked himself up and fairly ran for Rylcombe, squelching out mud at every step. Cavendish turned and walked moodily back to St. Jim's. It was the end now, and he knew it.

CHAPTER 17.

The Last of Cecil Cavendish!

"ANYBODY seen Cavendish?" Figgins of the Fourth asked the question.

But no one was able to reply to it. Nobody had seen Cavendish for some time. Redfern had seen him leave the New House with a bag in his hand. Apparently he had gone out. That was all that was known. When the hour came for calling-over, Cavendish had not returned.

Mr. Railton was taking call-over. But he did not call Cavendish's name. Apparently he knew that the new boy was not there.

"Blessed if I understand it!" said Tom Merry. "Cavendish can't have left, surely. He wouldn't leave like that."

"I shall ask Wailton," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We've a wight to know if anythin' has gone w'ong with old Cavendish."

And he approached the Housemaster when all the roll had been called.

"Cavendish isn't here, sir," he said.

"I am aware of that, D'Arcy," said the School House master. "Cavendish of the Fourth has left."

"Left St. Jim's, sir!" ejaculated D'Arcy in astonishment.

"Yes."

"Bai Jove! May I ask why, sir? He was a fwiend of mine."

"He appears to have had good reasons for leaving," said Mr. Railton. "His father has phoned to the Head that his son has arrived home, and that he will not be returning to this school. He would not, in fact, be allowed to return after what amounts to running away from school. That is all I can tell you."

It was a mystery, and the juniors discussed it in vain. There was one person who could have let in light on the subject; but Mr. Higgs did not, after all, come up to the school. His nerve had failed him, and he kept his distance. Levison, too, guessed; but he kept his own counsel.

With much excitement, the juniors discussed the matter, but it was not till a letter arrived for Figgins the following morning that they knew the truth.

Figgins brought the letter over to the School House when he had read it, and all the Co. read it together.

It was from Cavendish, and it was brief; but it told them all they had never dreamed of suspecting.

"I've left St. Jim's for good. I couldn't have kept it up much longer, and it was coming out, anyway. It was all a lie. I didn't rescue that tramp from the river. I paid him to come to St. Jim's with the yarn. It was a lie from beginning to end. I meant to keep it up; but it weighed on my mind. I couldn't do it. I had to own up, and as I couldn't face the school afterwards, I've cleared out. That's all."

There was a long silence among the juniors.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at last.

"My hat!"

"Well, this beats it!"

"We never suspected anything of the sort," said Figgins miserably. "I'm sorry for the poor chap. It must have weighed on his mind a lot, I think. I can understand now what was the matter with him the last week."

"Yaas, wathah! The poor kid!"

"He hasn't the nerve to face us now we know, and he was decent enough to tell us," said Tom Merry. "If he comes back, we'll agree to drop the whole matter, and give him a chance."

"Yaas, wathah!"

But it was not likely that St. Jim's would ever see again the junior who had been known as the Funk of the Fourth.

THE END.

THE REMOVE FORM DO THINGS IN STYLE WHEN THEY RECEIVE SCHOOLBOY VISITORS FROM LA BELLE FRANCE!

A CHALLENGE TO GREYFRIARS!

By Frank Richards.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

Tea-time in Study No. 1!

BOB CHERRY came into Study No. 1 at Greyfriars, with an expansive grin upon his rugged, good-humoured face.

"I say, you chaps, there's news!" he exclaimed.

There was no reply. A scent of frying eggs pervaded the study. It was tea-time, and Billy Bunter was cooking for tea over a fire in the grate. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were playing chess under the window.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, was standing by Nugent's chair, directing his moves. Nugent was a novice at the great game of chess, while Hurree Singh, the Hindu, was a pastmaster at it. The juniors were playing with a wonderfully carved set of Oriental chessmen belonging to Hurree Singh.

"News, you chaps!" said Bob Cherry.

There was a grunt from the chess-table, but no other acknowledgment of his remark. Billy Bunter, however, looked up for a moment from the frying-pan.

"Have you brought in anything for tea, Cherry?"

"Myself," said Bob Cherry cheerfully —"and I'm jolly hungry!"

He stepped over to the chess-table.

"Awfully busy here?" he asked. "Too busy to do anything but grunt when a fellow speaks to you?"

Harry Wharton looked up and nodded.

"I'm playing Nugent and Hurree Singh," he said. "Don't interrupt!"

"I've got news—awfully interesting news, too!"

"We'll have it over tea," said Wharton.

"Rats! I——"

"Cheese it!" said Nugent. "You're putting me off my stroke—I mean, off my game! Shall I move the rook up one, Inky?"

The Nabob of Bhanipur grinned.

"No, my worthy chum," he said, in the English for which he was famous at Greyfriars. "If you move the rookful piece forward, you place it en prise with the white pawn, and the esteemed Wharton will take it pawnfully."

"Suppose I shove it this way, then?"

"Not at all, my respectable friend. You will then place it on the same diagonal as Wharton's king's bishop, and our respected opponent will capture it bishopfully."

"Oh, I see!"

"You can leave the rookful piece where it is and move the knight to cover it protectfully. Now, Wharton will not capture the rook with his queenful piece."

"Good!"

"I say, there's news——"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Nugent. "I'm getting on at this game. Now, how long will it be before tea's ready, Bunter?"

"Only a few minutes now," said Bunter, turning a face of crimson hue from the fire. "Just about time for Cherry to cut down to the tuckshop and get some jam and cake."

"There you are, Bob! Off you go!"

"Cash!" said Bob Cherry laconically.

"Oh, I haven't any cash! Have you moved, Wharton?"

"Yes; pawn to knight's fourth."

"What shall I do now, Inky? Better get on to him with the queen, hadn't I?"

The dusky finger of the nabob stayed Nugent's too eager hand.

"No, my worthy chum. If you move the queen forward, our respectable friend will take it rookfully."

"My hat, so he will!"

"Better move the bishopful piece and discover an esteemed check," said the nabob, directing Nugent's hand.

"Good! Check, Wharton!" said Nugent triumphantly. "By Jove, I'm getting on at this game, and no mistake!"

"I say, you fellows, hadn't Cherry better cut down to the school shop and get some jam and pickles——"

Harry Wharton & Co. are nothing if not polite in welcoming a team of French schoolboys who have challenged them to a cricket match. But they are determined to accompany their politeness with a licking!

"Hand over the tin, then," said Bob Cherry. "I don't mind going, though I've been playing cricket while you've all been lazing in the study!"

"I'm sorry, Cherry, but I haven't any tin," said Bunter. "I'm expecting a postal order to-day, but it hasn't arrived yet. If one of the fellows will advance the necessary amount, I will make it good when my postal order comes, and it will be my treat."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Yes, I'm getting to know your postal order, Bunty," he remarked. "Money talks. If there's no tin, there's no jam and pickles."

"Really, Cherry——"

Harry Wharton extracted a two-shilling piece from his pocket and threw it to Bob Cherry.

"Catch, Bob!"

Bob Cherry caught the coin deftly.

"I'll be back in a few minutes," he said, "and then if you haven't finished that game of chess, I shall checkmate the lot of you by turning the table over!"

"Oh, get off!" grunted Nugent. "I'm in a tight corner now, aren't I, Inky?"

The Nabob of Bhanipur nodded.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was a good chess player, but Harry Wharton was a strong opponent. The nabob was playing Nugent's game, and he found that he had his hands full. Bob Cherry picked up a bag and left the study.

"Your move, Nugent!"

"Yes, I know it is. Shall I shove the bishop on his rook, Inky?"

"You would leave the black rook uncovered, my esteemed friend, and the queen would come down and mate."

"My hat, so I should! I can see that all right. I'm really getting on wonderfully well at this game. It's not half so hard as it looks at first sight."

The Nabob of Bhanipur grinned.

"Suppose you move the pawn up?" he suggested.

"Just what I was thinking. There you are, Wharton, you bounder, get out of that if you can!" exclaimed Nugent, pushing the pawn forward.

Harry Wharton did not seem to be in a hurry to make the return move. He rested his chin on his hand and regarded the chess table thoughtfully, evidently weighing the pros and cons carefully in his mind.

"Tea's pretty nearly ready," said Billy Bunter. "The eggs are done and the tea's ready to be made. Can I have the table?"

"Wait a minute, Bunty. I've nearly mated Wharton now He's only got a kick or two left."

"Couldn't you take the chessboard on a chair, and let me lay the table? The eggs ought to be eaten at once, and the kettle's boiling."

"Shut up! It's not fair to bother Wharton when he's in a fearful fix like this. I don't see how he can get out of it, but give him a chance."

Harry Wharton smiled.

He stretched out his hand and moved his knight, and the whole aspect of the board changed at once. Nugent looked anxious for a moment.

"We've got him, all the same, haven't we, Inky?" he asked.

The nabob shook his head.

"Oh, don't give in!" said Nugent encouragingly. "I don't see that his knight being there makes much difference."

"It is on the rookful piece."

"We can move the rook."

"Yes, my worthy chum, but now the knight is moved the esteemed Wharton's bishop is on our queen."

"Well, move the queen."

"I wish you'd move the board!"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"That's all very well, Nugent. I'm sorry to interrupt, but you can play chess at any time. These eggs are cooked jolly well, and ought to be eaten at once. Is it necessary to finish that game?"

"Ring off, you ass!"

"Can't you remember where the pieces were and finish it after tea?"

"Shut up!"

"Then take the board on your knees——"

"Another word, and I'll warm you with this!" yelled Nugent, picking up a cricket stump.

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Keep your head shut, then!"

"Oh, certainly! I don't want to interrupt, but the eggs will be spoiled."

ANOTHER SPARKLING STORY OF FUN AND EXCITEMENT IN THE EARLY DAYS OF HARRY WHARTON & CO. AT GREYFRIARS.

Nugent brandished the stump, and Billy Bunter ceased at last. Then Nugent fixed his eyes anxiously on the board.

"What are we going to do, Inky?"

"Shift the pawn up one more."

"That a good move?" asked Nugent anxiously.

"As good as can be done, my worthy friend," said the nabob.

"Oh, good! There you are, Wharton," said Nugent, pushing up the pawn. "I'm really getting into the hang of the thing now. You're making a good wriggle, Harry, but I think I've got you!"

Wharton laughed and carelessly stretched out his hand and made his move.

"Chess isn't half the difficult game it's made out to be," Nugent went on. "I'm picking it up wonderfully, and I can see everything now that goes on on the board. Shall we move the rook this time, Inky? Why, where are you going?"

"I'm going to have my tea."

"Aren't you going to help me finish the game?"

The Nabob of Bhanipur laughed.

"The game is finished, my worthy chum."

Nugent looked amazed.

"Finished! What do you mean?"

"It's mate in three, as Inky saw at a glance," laughed Harry Wharton. "You're not quite so well up in chess as you fancied, Nugent."

Nugent stared at the chessboard.

"Blessed if I can see how it's mate in three!" he grunted. "We'll work that out if you don't mind."

"Oh, look then! You move your rook, and then I——"

"But I'm jolly well not going to move my rook!"

"You must, ass, or I discover a check in my next move. You've got to put the rook in, or it's mate in two, instead of three."

"Well, shove it in, then."

"There you are—and there! That's mate!"

"H'm, I suppose it is!" said Nugent, looking over the board. "Funny how these things turn out. You were wrong about not moving the rook, Inky."

"Eh?" said the nabob.

"You remember once I wanted to move the rook," said Nugent, rising from the table. "You moved the knight instead."

"The knightful move was the correct one."

"Well, you see what it's led to. I had a feeling all the time that the rook was the piece to move," said Nugent, shaking his head.

"My esteemed friend, if you had moved the rook, the worthy Wharton would have taken it either pawnfully or bishopfully."

"Better lose a rook than lose the game, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Harry Wharton. "If you had lost the rook, you ass, the game would have been finished on the spot!"

"Well, perhaps you're right. You know more about chess than I do. Still, I wish I had moved the rook," said Nugent, with all the obstinacy of a beginner. "I can't help having a feeling that if I had moved the rook when I wanted to, things would have turned out differently."

"Yes, they would," grinned Harry Wharton. "The game would have been over several moves sooner, and we could have had tea. You can have the table now, Bunty."

"About time, too!" said Bunter. "Lot of good it is my cooking eggs for tea if you fellows are going to play some silly game and let them get cold. Take that board off, Nugent, will you, and I'll lay the cloth."

"Right-ho!"

Bob Cherry came into the study and emptied his bag on the tablecloth. Billy Bunter's eyes glistened at the sight of jam and pickles and condensed milk and cake.

"Well, that's ripping!" he exclaimed. "I owe you for these things, Wharton. It's my treat, you know."

"Oh, that's all right, Bunty!"

"Not at all," said Bunter firmly. "I owe you two bob, Wharton. It was I who suggested getting these things, and it's my treat. I owe you for them, and I shall settle up as soon as my postal order comes."

"Who won that game?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, Wharton won!" said Nugent, in a tone that suggested that there was something very curious about that circumstance. "I made a rotten move."

"Only one?" asked Bob.

"Oh, don't be funny! I moved up a pawn instead of my rook."

"It was the knightful piece you moved."

"I mean a knight. I moved a knight instead of a rook."

"If the rookful piece had been moved——"

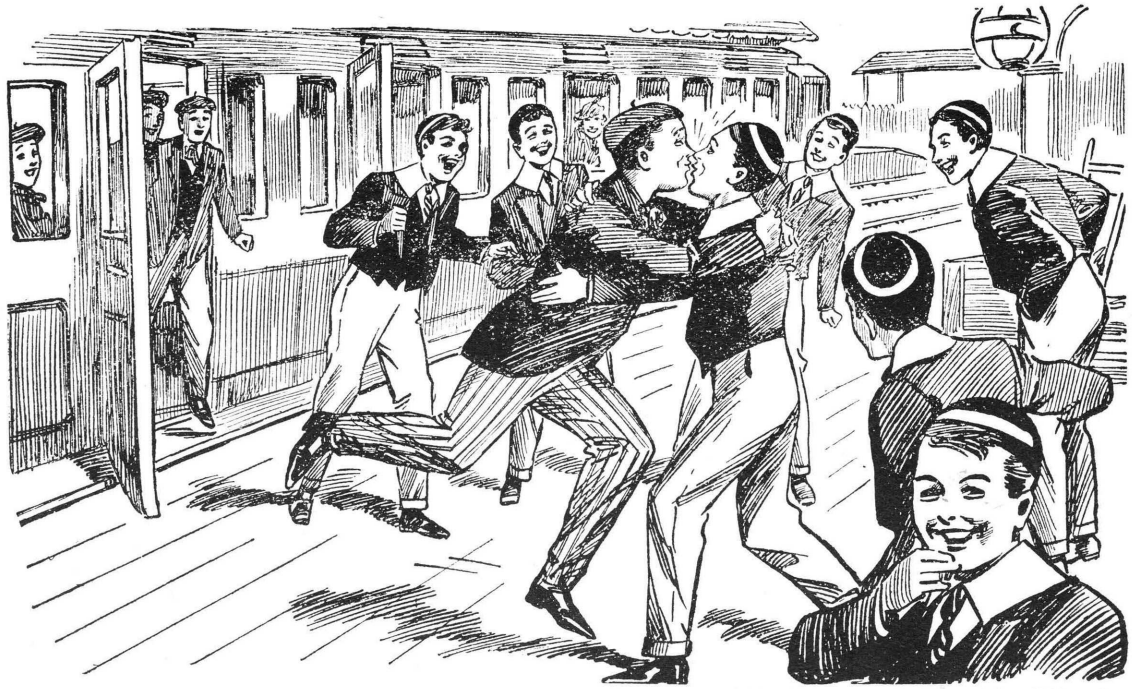
"Oh, it's all right, Inky! Don't think I'm ungrateful for the trouble you've taken," said Nugent. "That's not it. Only I have a feeling that if I had moved the rook——"

"Will you open the condensed milk, Nugent?"

"Yes, if you like. Lend me your pocket-knife, Bob. If I had moved the rook——"

"Oh, blow the rook!" said Harry Wharton. "Let's have tea and let's hear Bob's news. What's the news, Bob?"

And the chums of the Remove sat down to tea.



One of the French boys leaped from the train and rushed at Meunier. "Adolphe!" "Mon cousin!" exclaimed Meunier. "It eez my Cousin Henri!" And the two cousins kissed one another—greatly to the amusement of the Greyfriars juniors.

Aliens at it Again!

BOB CHERRY glanced at the door. "I'm expecting Meunier to come in," he said. "I asked him to tea. I had the news from him, you know."

"But what's the news?"

"Ripping! I expect it will be great fun. There's a cousin of Meunier's, named Henri Lerouge——"

"Is he coming here?"

"Yes; and a dozen other chaps with him."

"All French?"

"Yes, the whole lot. They're on holiday in England from a school in Normandy," Bob Cherry explained. "They're having a run in this country, and, as one of them has a cousin at an English Public school, they naturally want to come down and have a look at the place."

"Naturally."

"But that isn't all. The French lot rather pride themselves on their athletics. It seems that they're great terrors in the gym. They're going to challenge us to a game of cricket."

"Cricket!"

"Yes; Meunier has fixed up the match with his cousin. There's to be a cricket match during their visit to Greyfriars, if a home eleven can be got up to meet them."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That will be easy enough."

"Yes, ratherfully!" said Hurree Singh. "The honourable school can get up an eleven of any agefulness or sizefulness on demand. What is the agefulness of the esteemed French rotters, Bob?"

"They're all much of a muchness with Meunier," said Bob. "Meunier was at the school in Normandy with them until he was sent to England. They will be just about on a par with the Greyfriars Remove, as far as size and age go. It's Meunier's idea to have a Remove eleven to meet them."

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. "The Remove eleven can easily fix that up. Meunier, I suppose, will play on the side of his countrymen?"

"That's it. He will captain the side, I expect. He's picked up something about cricket at Greyfriars, but my idea is that the French team otherwise will play like a lot of girls."

"It will be funniful," said the nabob. "We shall clean up the ground wipefully with them, my worthy chums."

"I like the idea," grinned Nugent. "I don't suppose they can play for toffee. We'll give them beans!"

"Hallo, here's Meunier!" said Bob, as there was a tap at the door and the French junior entered.

Meunier, a rather good-looking lad, with a Gallic cast of features, nodded to the juniors and accepted the chair Bob Cherry pushed towards him. It was Billy Bunter's chair, Bunter having just risen to refill the teapot with water.

"Welcome, Meunier!" said Bob Cherry. "Sit down and wire in. I've been telling the chaps about the coming of the famous cricketers from St. Malo."

Meunier grinned expansively.

"Ze team arrive to-morrow," he said. "Zey be glad to meet ze home team on ze cricket field, and show ze English boys how ze French play ze cricket."

"We'll be glad to see them," said Wharton, who was captain of the Remove cricket team. "We'll give them a good game, anyway. It's a half-holiday to-morrow, so it will be a good opportunity. We had only a practice match on."

"I say, where's my chair?"

"There's the coal-locker, Bunty."

"But I say——"

"Oh, sit down, Bunter, and be quiet! Aren't you going to pour out a cup of tea for our honoured guest?"

"Really, Cherry, I think——"

"Pour out the tea, old fellow, and leave the thinking till afterwards!"

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly through his big spectacles. He swung round the teapot and started pouring into Meunier's cup.

"Next, please!" said Nugent, pushing over his cup.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Certainly, Nugent!" he said, turning the teapot from Meunier's cup, and sending a stream of hot liquid over the legs of Bob Cherry. "I——"

"Ow!" roared Bob Cherry.

He jumped up with a terrific howl. The hot liquid had soaked through his trousers in a moment, and he felt it very much.

"You—you dangerous villain! You're pouring tea over my legs!" yelled Bob Cherry, dancing with pain.

"I'm sorry! You know I'm extremely short-sighted, and these accidents will occur," said Billy Bunter. "I'm sorry."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "He's sorry, Bob. That makes it all right, doesn't it?"

"Ow!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I'm scalded! That dangerous lunatic oughtn't to be trusted with a teapot. Ow!"

"Will you have some more tea, Wharton?"

"Yes, in my cup, please!" said Harry, as the teapot swung round. "Not over my knees, Bunty."

"I'm really sorry I've scalded Cherry. There isn't enough tea left now to go round, so Cherry won't be able to have any more."

Bob Cherry mopped his trousers with his handkerchief.

Billy Bunter sat down in his chair and recommenced his tea. Bunter very seldom finished a meal while anything eatable was still left on the table.

"Here, get off my chair!" growled Bob Cherry. "I don't believe you're such a blind ass as you make out, you young porpoise."

"I'm very comfy here, thank you, Cherry!"

"I dare say you are, but the coal-locker will do for you. You're safer farther off."

"Oh, don't jolt my chair like that, Cherry!" said Bunter, helping himself to pickles. "You will make me spill this juice over Meunier."

"Ciel! It is zat you have spill him already!" exclaimed Meunier. "You spoil my garments, you clumsy idiot!"

"I'm very sorry," said Billy Bunter, blinking at the great blotch that had appeared on the French boy's light trousers. "It was really Cherry's fault for jolting the chair. Really, Cherry—— Ow!"

Bob Cherry tilted the chair backwards, and the Owl of the Remove rolled to the floor, with the pickle-jar in his hands. The jar emptied itself on his chest, and he sat up on the carpet streaming with pickles.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Really, Cherry, I—— Where are my glasses?"

"Zey are on your knees, zere."

"So they are! Cherry, you have upset the pickles."

"Serve you jolly well right for pouring tea over my trucks!" growled Bob Cherry. "You'll be more careful next time. Hallo! Who's that?"

A full, round face was put in at the door. It belonged to Fritz Hoffman, the German junior at Greyfriars. He looked at Bunter in surprise.

"Mein himmel! Vat is te matter pefore? Is it te accident?"

"Oh, no!" said Bob Cherry. "Bunter always eats his pickles on the floor like that; he likes it!"

"Mein gootness!"

"Really, Cherry——"

"I comes to speak mit you," said Hoffman, entering the study. "I hears tat tere is a French team coming to te school to-morrow afternoon to play cricket."

"That's so"

"Dere is Remove eleven got up to meet dem?"

"Exactly!"

"Den I tinks—ach!" said Hoffman, breaking off as he perceived Meunier. "You haf te French peast here, I see."

"Sherman peeg!" said Meunier, looking up over his teacup.

"French pounder——"

"Sherman rottair——"

"Here, shut up!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You're not going to rag one another here Shut up, or you'll get dropped on!"

"I regards te French peast mit gontempt——"

"I despise ze Sherman rottair——"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bob Cherry. "What have you got to say, Hoffman? Why can't you keep to the subject?"

"Te French team is playing cricket mit you to-morrow, I tinks pefore," said Hoffman. "I tinks to meinself tat I likes to play against dem."

"You can't play cricket."

"I plays him first-rate, ain't it? If you finds me place in team I shows you how I plays him pefore."

Harry Wharton laughed.

He anticipated a somewhat comic display of the great summer game, in any case, and with Fritz Hoffman in the English team the comic side of the match was likely to be more pronounced.

"You take me in te team," said Hoffman. "I plays up well. You can leave out vun of te oders to make room for me, ain't it?"

"Well, I'll see what I can do," said Harry Wharton. "I don't promise, but I'll see to-morrow, after I've had a look at the French team."

"Ferry goot! I hopes I play in te match, for I am glad to give te French peastly pounders vun licking, ain't it?"

"Ze Sherman rottair nevair beat ze French——"

"I not speak to you, you pounder! I regards you mit gontempt——"

"Sherman peeg——"

"French peast——"

No more time was wasted in words by the two aliens. They flew at one another and rolled over on the study carpet in a deadly struggle. The juniors were on their feet in a moment, half laughing and half angry.

"Stop that, will you?" shouted Harry Wharton. "What do you mean by rowing in our study, you cheeky bounders?"

But the two excited aliens took no notice. Whenever Meunier and Hoffman met there was a revival of their national rivalry, and they were deaf to remonstrances. They rolled on the carpet, grappling furiously. They rolled in the pickles upset from the jar, but they took no notice of that.

"Kick them out!" said Nugent. "Bump them into the passage! Cheek! Coming and rowing in other people's studies!"

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "We ought to make an example of

them." And he proceeded to refill the teapot with hot water.

"The ratherfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Shall we yank the esteemed rotters into the corridor and roll them down the honourable stairs?"

"We've done that before," said Bob Cherry, "and it hasn't done them any good. I'll give them some tea this time, and see if that has a soothing effect on them."

And Bob Cherry calmly took the teapot and commenced to pour the contents over the two struggling aliens as they rolled on the floor.

The tea was weak and rather hot—not hot enough to scald, but quite hot enough to make the juniors feel as if they were scalded.

There was a roar of laughter from the Removites, and a roar of surprise and pain from the two aliens.

"Vat is tat? Ow!"

"Vat is zat? Ow!"

"Mein Himmel!"

"Parbleu!"

Bob Cherry continued to pour. The warm liquid splashed all over the two aliens. They separated and scrambled to their feet.

"Vat is it zat you do?" yelled Meunier. "You vas scald me—vat——"

"Mein gootness! I am vet all ofer pefore——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Have you had enough?"

"Ach! I have had too mooch!"

"Zat is also viz me. I have had of ze too moosh——"

"Then stop your rowing and travel!" grinned Bob. "That's a lesson to you. Next time you start rowing in this study, I'll have it really hot for you!"

"It is all ze fault of ze Sherman peeg——"

"It is te French peastly pounder tat is to plame——"

"My hat! They're starting again! Hand over that kettle, will you, Bunter?"

"Certainly, Cherry!"

But the two aliens skipped out of the study. They had had enough of Bob Cherry's drastic measures. They scuttled down the corridor, followed by a yell of laughter from the chums of the Remove.

Bob Cherry calmly took the teapot and commenced to pour the contents over the two struggling aliens. There was a roar of laughter from the juniors and a roar of surprise and pain from Meunier and Hoffman. "Vat is tat? Ow!" gasped the German. "Vat is zat? Ow!" yelled the French boy.

Bob Cherry's Idea!

"GOOD!"

It was Bob Cherry who suddenly uttered that exclamation. It was an ordinary one enough, but at that moment it attracted general attention. For the Remove were in their class-room for morning lessons, and Bob Cherry's sudden ejaculation broke the silence of the room like the popping of a cork.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, looked across at Bob Cherry with an ominous frown. Harry Wharton had just been construing from Virgil. Bob Cherry turned red as the Form-master's eyes fastened upon him.

"Cherry!"

"Yes, sir!" said Bob.

"Did you make that remark?"

"I—er—no—yes—sir!" stammered Bob Cherry.

His face grew redder as the glances of the whole class turned upon him. He had evidently been thinking of something that was not in Virgil, and had uttered the exclamation in answer to his own thoughts. Mr. Quelch knew that well enough, but he chose to misunderstand.

"Ah! You were referring, I suppose, to the lines Wharton has just been construing?" said the Remove-master. "You were pleased to remark that they were good?"

Bob Cherry was silent.

"I am very glad to see that Virgil has the honour of meeting with your approval, Cherry," said Mr. Quelch mercilessly. "But it is not permissible to pass comments of this nature in class——"

"I—I—I——"

"You will therefore take fifty lines and keep your enthusiastic admiration within bounds on another occasion," said Mr. Quelch.

Bob Cherry's countenance was a beautiful crimson.

"If you please, sir, I wasn't referring to Virgil," he said.

"Indeed! Surely you were not thinking of anything else, at a time when I am trying to make you understand something of the great Latin poet," said Mr. Quelch, in his smooth, sarcastic way. "And what is it, then, that is more important in your eyes than the lesson we are engaged upon, Cherry?"

"I—I was thinking——"

"Were you really? I should certainly do my best to encourage you in that direction," said Mr. Quelch; and the class dutifully sniggered at the Form-master's little joke. "You certainly are not often guilty of it. But what were you thinking about?"

"It—it was nothing——"

"I asked you what you were thinking about, Cherry?"

"Well, sir, it was about the French chaps coming this afternoon. I was thinking that it would be a good idea to have a motor-coach out in Friardale, and give them a sort of triumphal drive to Greyfriars, sir, and then——"

"I see. Well, in the circumstances, you need not take the fifty lines——"

"Thank you, sir!" said Bob Cherry, brightening up.

"You may take a hundred instead. We will now continue the lesson. You will construe, Nugent."

And Bob Cherry's face fell again.

"The roughfulness is great," murmured Hurree Singh sympathetically. "It is somewhat unfeeling of the instructor sahib——"

"Hurree Singh!"

"Yes, honoured sahib!"

"You were talking!"

"Not exactfully, sir," said the nabob. "I was merely expressing the hearty condolence with my worthy chum, Cherry, upon the disappointfulness——"

"You can do that after school hours, Hurree Singh. You will take fifty lines for talking in class."

"I shall have great pleasurefulness in obeying the august sahib, but may I respectfully and firmly point out——"

"You may not."

"In the circumstantiality of the case, I——"

"Silence! Go on, Nugent!"

"But if I may presumptuously venture to explicate——"

"Take a hundred lines!"

"Better shut up, Inky!" grinned Bulstrode. "He'll make it five hundred if you go on."

"The shutupfulness would be the wisest in the circumstantiality, I suppose," purred Hurree Singh. "But the angerfulness of the teacher sahib is——"

"Shut up! He's looking at you!"

"The angerfulness of the teacher sahib is reprehensible and worthy only of the esteemed hooligan——"

"Hurree Singh!" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!"

"You were talking to Bulstrode!"

"I certainly made an addressful remark, sahib to the esteemed Bulstrode, but——"

"What were you saying to him?"

"A few words of no important particularity——"

"Repeat them to me at once. I will keep order in this class, or I will know the reason why. Tell me at once what you were saying to Bulstrode!"

"With the august sahib's permitfulness I will respectfully and firmly decline to do so," said the nabob.

"I order you to tell me at once!"

"In that case, I have no choicefulness but to obey. I was remarking that the angerfulness of the honoured teacher sahib is worthy of the esteemed hooligan!"

"The—the what?"

"The esteemed hooligan!"

Mr. Quelch turned crimson. An irrepressible giggle burst from the Remove. The Form-master glared round and soon stopped the giggle.

"Hurree Singh!"

"Sahib?"

"You will come to my study immediately after morning school!"

"Certainfully, honoured sahib! The kind invitation is gratifying to my heart, and I shall contentfully accept the same."

The class giggled again. Hurree Singh was not likely to be so contented with what he would receive in the Form-master's study.

Morning school was over at last, and the Remove, glad to get out of the class-room into the open air, crowded into the passage.

"Don't forget your appointment with Quelchy, old son!" grinned Bulstrode, tapping the nabob on the shoulder as he passed him.

"I am obliged to you for the remindfulness, Bulstrode, but I had not forgotten," said Hurree Singh. "I am compelled to make the excusefulness for a time, my worthy chums, while I playfully make the visit to the esteemed rotten Form-master!"

"Better rub something on your hands," murmured Bob Cherry. "The esteemed Form-master knows how to lay it on."

"Do you mean that the Quelch sahib wishes me to go to his study so that he can lick me canefully?" asked the nabob.

"I don't suppose it's for the mere pleasure of gazing upon your inky features, anyway!" said Bob Cherry.

The nabob's face was more serious as he wended his way to the study of the Remove-master. Mr. Quelch was ready for him there, and he had a stout, pliant cane lying on the table. He took it up as Hurree Singh entered, and the dusky junior kept a wary eye upon it.

"I have come, sir, as you kindly invited me!"

"You may hold out your hand!"

Hurree Singh held out his hand, but not in the way Mr. Quelch intended. He held it out as if to shake hands. The Remove-master stared at it.

"What do you mean by that, Hurree Singh?"

"You said I should hold out my hand, sir, and, naturally, I imagine that you wish to greet your guest shake-handfully!"

Mr. Quelch stared hard at the Indian youth. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's face was as grave as that of an image cast in bronze.

"Hurree Singh, if you do not understand me——"

"The understandfulness is great, sahib!" said Hurree Singh, still with his dusky hand extended. "I have accepted the honoured sahib's invitation to visit him in his esteemed study, and, naturally, he wishes to——"

"I did not ask you to visit me in my study——"

"Then I have laboured under the great misapprehendfulness," said Hurree Singh. "I certainly imagined that I heard the august teacher sahib invite me to visit him in his august quarters."

"I told you to come here for pun——"

"If there has been any misunderstandfulness, I am willing to retirefully depart," said the nabob, turning towards the door.

Mr. Quelch wondered dimly whether he had to deal with the simplest or the deepest junior he had ever met. In case of a real misapprehension as to the meaning of the invitation to the study, it would be too hard to cane the unsuspecting Oriental. The Remove-master laid down the cane.

"Hurree Singh——"

"Yes, sahib?"

"I did not—— But no matter. You may go!"

"Thank you gratefully, kind sahib!"

And the nabob left the room. Mr. Quelch shook his head in doubt. The nabob closed the door, still with the same grave face of bronze. But when it was closed a smile broke over his features. He walked away softly.

Bob Cherry tapped him on the shoulder. The chums of the Remove had been waiting for him to return.

"Was it a licking, Inky?"

The nabob grinned.

"I am afraid that the teacher sahib intended the lickfulness," he replied. "But as there was a misunderstanding on the pointfulness, he did not carry out his honourable and august intention."

"You are a deep bounder!" said Nugent admiringly. "Fancy being able to rot the Quelch-bird! Not one of us has ever succeeded in pulling his leg before!"

"Every animal has his dogful day, as your English proverb says," the nabob remarked. "The pullfulness of the sahib's honoured and esteemed leg is great!"

"I wish I could get out of my lines as easily!" grunted Bob Cherry. "However, they will stand over till to-night. What do you chaps think of the idea of having a motor-coach out and giving the French cricketers a rattling good reception?"

"Good idea!" said Harry Wharton at once.

"The goodfulness of the wheezy idea is terrific! We can hirefully obtain the best coachful conveyance in Friardale. Fortunately, the cashfulness is plentiful at the present conjuncture."

"That's so," said Harry. "We are all pretty well in funds, except Billy Bunter."

"Oh, I'm all right this afternoon!" said Bunter, joining them as Harry spoke. "I say, you fellows, I've been thinking that we ought to give the French chaps a ripping reception, if only for the sake of the ongtong cordiale——"

"The what?"

"Ongtong cordiale!"

"What the dickens does he mean by

the ongtong?" demanded Nugent. "Is it something to eat, Bunty?"

Bunter gave Nugent a withering glance through his big spectacles.

"Of course, it isn't, Nugent! The ongtong cordiale is——"

"He means the entente cordiale!" laughed Harry Wharton.

"Of course. But you haven't got the accent quite right, Wharton," said Bunter. "You should put in plenty of ong!"

"The ongfulness of our esteemed Bunter's Frenchful language is terrific!" purred the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Well, what about the idea?" said Bunter. "You fellows can hire the motor-coach to bring the foreigners to the school, and I'll stand a feed."

"You will? It will cost something to stand a feed to a dozen fellows, without counting ourselves," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, that's all right! You fellows have treated me often enough, and it's about time I did something for you," said Billy Bunter.

"But have you got the tin?" asked Bob Cherry suspiciously.

He knew the Owl of the Remove of old.

"I haven't exactly got the ready money," said Bunter; "but I have a postal order coming this afternoon."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We won't depend on your postal order, Bunter. But it's a good idea about the feed, all the same. We can look on these French chaps as the guests of the Remove, and we ought to entertain them in good style. I had a pound tip from my uncle yesterday, and I've got most of it left. We'll pool all we have, and get up something in good style for the visitors."

"Good!" said Nugent.

"The cashfulness is great at the present moment," said Hurree Singh, taking out several pound notes from his pocket wallet. "The needful entertainment must be in rippingful style, and I think we can trust the arrangements into the hands of our worthy chum, Bunter."

"That you can!" said Bunter, blinking with satisfaction. "I'll spend the money to the last penny for you. You can rely on that."

"How many of us are in it?" asked Wharton.

"Half the Remove, I expect," said Bob Cherry. "We'd better let the Form know about it, and they can contribute as they like."

"That's a good idea! We want the French chaps to take away a good impression of Greyfriars hospitality. We're going to lick them at cricket, so we're bound to give them a good feed."

"Ratherfully!"

And that idea was carried out. The Remove at Greyfriars were generous enough when it came to exercising the virtue of hospitality. The contributions were liberal, and the sum raised was sufficient for Bunter to prepare a feast that would uphold the greatest traditions of Greyfriars.

———

Doing Things in Style!

"TIME to be off!" Harry Wharton remarked, as after the midday dinner the Remove came into the Close.

"Ze train come in at tree o'clock," said Meunier.

"Yes, but we shall be some time getting the coach out. Now, Bunty, you know what you've got to do?"

"Yes, rather, Wharton!" said Billy Bunter. "You may rely upon me. I've got four pounds, and I'll lay it out to the last tuppence."

"It's going to be a ripping afternoon!" said Bob Cherry, glancing at the sky, which was of deep blue, flecked with fleecy clouds. "Ripping for cricket. How many of us are going to the station?"

"The more the merrier!" said Nugent. "Hallo, Hazeldene! Are you coming along to meet the foreign team?"

Hazeldene of the Remove was wheeling his bicycle down to the gates. He looked round with a cheery smile.

"Can't. I'm going over home to fetch my sister to see the cricket match."

"Oh, are you?" said Bob Cherry, showing a sudden interest in Hazeldene's proceedings "Going on your bike?"

"Yes."

"It's rather rotten riding alone," said Bob. "If you'd wait for me for a few minutes, I'd get my jigger out, and come for a spin with you."

"Certainly, if you like."

"I say, Bob, you're coming down to the station, aren't you?" said Harry Wharton.

"'Nother engagement," said Bob Cherry, dashing off in the direction of the bicycle-shed.

Nugent gave a chuckle.

"It's a fine afternoon for cycling," Harry Wharton remarked. "After all, you don't want a crowd down at the station to meet the French chaps, you know. I think I might as well take a spin with Cherry and Hazeldene."

"Certainly!" said Nugent. "So will I!"

"Oh, somebody must go to the station, you know."

"Inky will do that—and Meunier."

"I have been thinkfully reflecting that I should like to take the spinful ride with our Cherryful chum," said Hurree Singh.

Harry Wharton looked rather doubtful.

"Oh, come on, you bounders! I suppose we had better get down to the station."

Bob Cherry came dashing up with his bicycle, running beside it with his hand on the saddle. He stopped breathlessly, with a flush in his healthy cheeks.

"Ready, Hazeldene?"

"Right you are! Come along!"

Bob Cherry and Hazeldene mounted their bicycles and pedalled away. The chums of the Remove followed them out of the old greystone gateway.

The two cyclists were disappearing up the road, and Harry Wharton and his friends strode away in the opposite direction, towards the village of Friardale.

"Bob's in luck this afternoon," said Nugent. "I shouldn't mind taking that little spin myself. Never mind."

"The worthy Cherry's luckfulness is great. He will have the honourable pleasure of riding back to Greyfriars with the beautiful Miss Marjorie."

Harry Wharton was looking thoughtful. He would gladly have been in Bob Cherry's place, but, as captain of the Remove eleven, it was his duty to meet and greet the visiting team. A position of responsibility carries duties with it as well as privileges.

It did not take the chums of the Remove long to reach Friardale. It was still only half-past two by the clock of the village church, and the train bearing the French cricketers was not to arrive until three.

"Lots of time," said Nugent, glancing up at the church-tower. "Where are we going to hire the motor-coach, Wharton?"

"We can get one at Brown's garage."

"Good!"

"Here we are," said Harry. "I'll go in and see about it."

The interview with the proprietor of the garage was short and satisfactory. A quarter of an hour later the chums of the Remove were being driven away in a motor-coach from the garage.

Meunier sat in the coach, beaming with smiles. He felt very keenly the compliment to his fellow-countrymen implied in the really imposing reception planned by the Removites. The coach drove up to the station and came to a halt.

Meunier looked at his watch.

"Ze train he come in tree minutes," he remarked.

"Good time to get on the platform," Nugent remarked.

The Greyfriars juniors alighted and entered the station. They were well known, and there was no difficulty about getting on to the platform to meet the incoming train. Nugent looked up the line, and a shrill scream of a whistle rang from the distance.

"There she comes!"

The train was in sight. In a few moments the engine came steaming into the station, and doors flew open and boys tumbled out of the carriages before the train had fairly halted. The Greyfriars juniors looked at them curiously.

They were a jolly, good-tempered-looking set of fellows, less athletic in appearance than Harry Wharton and his chums, extremely excitable, and somewhat shrill in voice, and indefatigable in gesticulation.

One of them, a slim, sallow-cheeked lad, rushed at Meunier and embraced him in the true, effusive French fashion.

"Adolphe!"

"Mon cousin!" exclaimed Meunier. "It eez my Cousin Henri!"

The cousins embraced and kissed one another, rather to the amusement of the English boys.

"My hat!" murmured Nugent. "I hope they're not going to treat us all like this. If anybody starts kissing me I shall cut up rough!"

"The kissfulness seems to me to be carrying the politefulness to extremes," said the nabob. "I sincerely trust that I shall not receive the kissful salute!"

"Same here!" said Harry, with a grimace. "Don't forget they're our guests, though."

"Hang it! A guest hasn't the right to kiss you, I suppose?"

"Honour the strangerful visitor that is within thy gateful door," said the nabob, "even to the extent of submitting gracefully to the honourable and ludicrous kissfulness!"

Meunier led his cousin by the hand towards the Greyfriars juniors, speaking rapidly to him in French.

"Mes amis!" he exclaimed, waving his hand towards the juniors. "Mes amis, mon Cousin Henri. Zis is my cousin, Vharton—zis is Henri Lerouge. Zis is ze captain of ze eleven."

Harry Wharton held out his hand; but Lerouge was bubbling with enthusiasm. He threw his arms round Harry's neck and embraced him.

"Ze friend of my cousin is my friend!" he declared. "I embrace you viz all my heart. I kiss you viz ze true friendship!"

"Oh!" murmured Harry Wharton, as the French lad kissed him on both cheeks.

"Zis is ze Nabob of Bhanipur."

"I embrace him as ze true friend!"

"Zis is my friend Nugent."

"I kees him, too!"

Meunier stood by, beaming, while the English lads underwent what was to them an ordeal, but what seemed to the French boys the most natural thing in the world. The rest of the party were introduced, but as most of them could speak no English, or only a very few words, the introductions did not go for much.

However, everybody was in high spirits and in a good temper, and they sallied out of the station the best of friends.

"How ve get to Greyfriars?" asked Henri Lerouge, looking round with interest at the old English village.

"Zere is ze coach," said Meunier.

"Is zat for us?"

"Oui, oui!"

"Zat is ver' kind of ze Head of ze school to send——"

"It is not ze Head who send; it is ze kind friend Vharton."

"Zen I must embrace him vunce more!" exclaimed Lerouge, throwing his arms round the neck of the astonished Wharton. "I kees him of ze good heart, zat he show so much courtesy to ze foreign visitor."

Harry submitted with good grace, and then the French boys, chattering like a crowd of monkeys, as Nugent remarked afterwards, clambered into the motor-coach with the Greyfriars juniors.

"Have you chaps come down all on your lonesome?" asked Nugent, as the coach drove out of the station approach.

Lerouge looked puzzled. Meunier rapidly explained in French, and Lerouge gave an expansive grin.

"Oui, oui!" he exclaimed. "Ve pay zis visit to Greyfriars by ourselves. Ve find our vay about zis country easy, as I speak so good English. I am always treated viz ze great politeness, and I zink it is because I speak ze English so vell."

"Yes I suppose it would be," said Nugent, with a nod.

"Ze English are so merry," said Lerouge. "I often see ze English people smile viz pleasure ven I talk to zem in zeir own tongue."

"No wonder!" murmured Nugent.

"Ve leave our master in London," said Lerouge. "Ve are here for zis visit by our own selves. Ve are staying in England for tree week. Perhaps ve come down and see you again, mes amis."

"Oh, do, by all means!" said Nugent. "I suppose you play a lot of cricket?"

Lerouge shook his head.

"Ve not play a lot," he said. "Ve play some and ve are ver' good cricketers, you understand. But in France ve not play so much as you English. Ve are bettair zan you in ze gymnasium."

"Oh, are you?" said Nugent.

"Oui! Moosh bettair!" said Lerouge. "Perhaps at ze game of cricket ve not so good; but ve shall see. Ve beat you if ve can."

Nugent grinned.

"You're welcome to try," he murmured. "It's jolly weather for cricket, anyway. Look, there's Greyfriars!"

The tall grey towers of the old school could be seen from the road, rising above the elms in the distance. Lerouge looked at it with great interest, and then at the river, shining through the trees on the left.

"It is ver' pretty country," he said; "almost so pretty as France!"

The other French boys were chattering away at a great rate in their own tongue.

The coach came in sight of Greyfriars, and a crowd of juniors could be seen there, waiting to greet the French team.

"Hurrah!"

Lerouge stood up in the coach and waved his cap in return.

"Zat is ver' polite!" he exclaimed. "It is vat you call ze hearty English vay! Vive l'Anglais!"

He waved his cap with such energy that he lost his footing and rolled down among the legs of the French cricketers.

Nugent fished him out and set him upright again. He was looking flushed and breathless, but his enthusiasm was unabated.

"I zink I fall over——"

"Well, it looked like it!" grinned Nugent. "Are you all right?"

"Oui; yes, razer! Ve are arrive!"

"Yes, hero we are!"

The crowd of juniors in the gateway drew back to the sides, and the motor-coach rolled through the gates into the old Close. The French boys were standing up and waving their caps now, and the Greyfriars lads greeted them with a cheer.

The coach halted, and the French boys tumbled out of it like so many cats or monkeys. The driver then drove the coach away.

Billy Bunter came up, beaming, and nudged Harry.

"It's all right, Wharton!"

"What is?" said Harry, looking at him.

"The feed."

"Oh, the feed. I had forgotten!"

Bunter looked at him witheringly through his big spectacles.

"You'd forgotten the feed?"

"Yes," said Harry, laughing. "Never mind. Is it all right?"

"First-rate!" said Billy Bunter, with much satisfaction. "There's a cold collation ready in the pavilion——"

"A what?"

"A cold collation," repeated Billy, with emphasis. "That means a feed on cold grub, if you don't know. I prefer to call it a cold collation. And there will be a ripping tea after the match. That's all right—eh?"

"Ripping, Bunter! You're a credit to the Remove."

"Well, you know, I rather think I am," said Bunter modestly. "I really don't know how you fellows would get on without me, and that's a fact. I've arranged it all in really ripping style. I was going to add a little more to the feed if my postal order had come, but there's been some delay in the post, and it hasn't turned up yet. But the thing will be really ripping, you know. You'd better bring the French chaps along now to the cold collation."

And Billy Bunter trotted off to the pavilion.

The French boys were soon seated in the cricket pavilion, greatly enjoying Bunter's cold collation. The Owl of the Remove had certainly excelled himself in the preparation of the feed—and there was not much doubt that he would excel himself in disposing—internally—of a large portion of it!

The Greyfriars juniors, meanwhile, eagerly awaited the coming cricket match between the French boys and the Remove eleven.

That game was to prove somewhat amazing and amusing!

(Look out for next week's full-of-fun chapters of this grand story, telling of the amazing cricket match between the Remove eleven and the French team. It's a long laugh. See that your GEM is reserved for you.)

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