"The Cockney Schoolboy"

A Magnificent, New, Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

Complete Stories for ALL, and Every Story a GEM.

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THE COCKNEY SCHOOLBOY TO THE RESCUE.

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Hammond's glance went dizzily towards the boat—he recognised Kerruish and Smith minor, who were looking towards him with white faces. Crack! went the branch again. It would not last a minute now—even if the exhausted boy's strength lasted so long. Were the rescuers in time? (See Chapter 16.)

CHAPTER 1.
The Cockney Arrives.

HE walked into the School House at St. Jim's as if it belonged to him.

Some of the fellows spotted him at once, and, as a new boy, he was favoured with curious glances. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form, put up his famous monocle in order to survey him with more accuracy. But the new-comer did not seem at all abashed. New boys in a big school sometimes—not always—suffered from shyness, a slight uneasiness at finding themselves alone among crowds of fellows they did not know.

But this particular new boy did not suffer from anything of the sort.

He stood with his thumbs in the holes of the armhole of his waistcoat, surveying the place, with a critical expression upon his cheerful, sandy-coloured face.

He was evidently taking stock of St. Jim's, and "sizing up" the school and the fellows he could see.

And some of the fellows grinned. Tom Merry smiled broadly. The coolness of the new "kid" tickled him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not smile. The new fellow's attitude worried him, and if he had not been a perfect stranger, Arthur Augustus would have ventured to hint to him that standing with one's thumbs in the armholes of one's waistcoat was an attitude that offended against all the canons of good form. But as D'Arcy did not feel entitled to convey that valuable piece of information to a fellow he did not know, he turned away his head.

There were other things about the new boy that worried D'Arcy, as well as his attitude. He was dressed in Etons, but he wore a check waistcoat, and across the waistcoat was a gigantic gold chain. There was a diamond pin in his tie, and it was quite a big diamond. His hair, which was curly and somewhat sandy in colour, glistened with oil. And all

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those things worried Arthur Augustus D'Arcy considerably. They did not worry the new fellow himself. He was evidently in a state of the most complete self-satisfaction—a state so complete, indeed, that some of the fellows felt an immediate desire to take him down a peg or two. Even fellows who were not given to ragging new kids, as a rule, felt a desire to take a rise out of this cool and extremely self-satisfied individual.

The new-comer was not handsome. He had a somewhat bony face, and his nose was what the French politely call retrousse—inclined upward. His mouth was large, and it was ornamented with a good-natured grin.

Having surveyed the School House hall, he walked across to the nearest group of fellows, who had been talking football before he came in; but who were now not talking at all, but were staring at him.

"This 'ere is St. Jim's, eh?" said the new-comer.

"It are!" said Monty Lowther of the Shell solemnly.

"And this 'ere 'ouse is the School 'Ouse—wot?"

"Quite right again!" said Lowther, with equal solemnity. "This 'ouse is the School 'Ouse, and this is the 'all where you 'ang your 'at."

There was a chuckle from the other fellows.

It seemed to surprise the new-comer, who apparently had not noticed anything funny in Monty Lowther's pronunciation.

"Right-'o!" he said. "I'm 'Ammond."

"Not really?" said Lowther.

"Yes. 'Arry 'Ammond," said the new boy confidentially. "'Ammond's 'Ats, you know."

"Wha-a-at!"

Even Monty Lowther was taken aback. The other fellows stared at Harry Hammond almost open-mouthed. The deliberate way in which he shifted his h's out of his words sounded as if he did it on purpose; and yet he was evidently unconscious of it. And what Hammond's Hats might be the fellows did not know.

"I'm a noo boy!" 'Arry 'Ammond went on cheerfully.

"Yes, you look rather new," Manners of the Shell remarked. "Chess-player, I suppose?"

"No," said Hammond, in surprise. "Why?"

Manners gently touched his flaring waistcoat with a forefinger.

"Pawn to king's fourth," he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Hammond grinned. He understood the allusion to the large check pattern on the waistcoat, though he did not play the noble game of chess.

"So you're a new kid?" said Tom Merry good-naturedly. "What Form are you going into—do you know yet?"

"No. I got to see a man—Railton I think his name is."

"That is our Housemaster."

"That's right—right on the dot," said 'Arry. "The 'Ousemaster. Knowed his name a long time ago, afore I ever thought of comin' 'ere. We supply 'im with 'ats."

"You do!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yes; 'Ammond's 'Ats, you know—'Ammond's 'Igh-class 'Ats. All one price—three-and-nine!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy indignantly. "I wefuse to believe anythin' of the sort!"

Hammond turned upon him.

"'Allo, what's bitin' you?" he demanded.

"I wefuse to cwedit your statement, Hammond, or whatever your name is. I wegard it as an insult to Mr. Wailton to suggest that he wears three-and-ninepenny hats."

Hammend chuckled.

"'Ammond's 'Igh-class 'Ats, all one price, three-and-nine, are our special line," he explained. "But we have other qualities to suit all heads and all purses. We supply Mr. Railton with our special twenty-five shilling topper, same as supplied to the nobility and gentry. But it was the 'igh-class 'ats at three-and-nine that made the fortune, you bet your life! Wot?"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, retreating from the lively new-comer. "What a vewy dweadful person!"

The juniors were chuckling and grinning. 'Arry 'Ammond was certainly the most peculiar new boy that had ever "happened" at St. Jim's. That a fellow who spoke as he did should be admitted to any Form at all was surprising; but evidently he was to be admitted, for he had come. Taggles was carrying in his trunk at that moment. 'Arry 'Ammond was booked for St. Jim's, and the fellows wondered while they chuckled.

"Well, of all the no-class bounders that ever came along, I think that bounder takes the giddy biscuit!" exclaimed Crooke of the Shell.

And for the first time since he had been at St. Jim's, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was inclined to agree with the cad of the Shell.

"This is wathah dweadful, isn't it, deah boy?" he murmured to Jack Blake.

Blake grinned.

"What's the matter with him, Gussy?" he asked. "If you take him in hand a bit, as you did young Frayne, and Lynn, too, you'll soon lick him into shape."

D'Arcy shuddered.

"It would be quite imposs. to have anythin' to do with him, deah boy. Look at his waistcoat!"

"Well, it's a little gay," admitted Blake; "but he'll have to change that if he stays here."

"Wegard the way he puts his thumbs into the armholes of his howwible waistcoat!" said D'Arcy, in great distress.

"Horrible!" grinned Blake. "But if you take him in hand——"

"Imposs."

"How on earth did such a merchant ever get to St. Jim's?" murmured Manners. "I hope I'm not a snob, but that fellow does seem the giddy limit."

"It must be a mistake," said Crooke of the Shell. "He's probably a new boot-boy, and he's pretending to be a new chap for a joke."

Crooke made that remark purposely loud for the new boy to hear. Harry Hammond turned on him at once.

"Don't you give me any chin-wag!" he said. "I'm a peaceable chap, but I ain't taking any of your old buck, I warn yer."

"Don't speak to me," said Crooke loftily. "The best thing you can do is to go to a County Council school."

"Bin there," said Hammond cheerfully. "Not so much as I orter, but as much as I could. 'Ammond's 'ats didn't always sell as well as they do now, you know."

"Some new, rich bounder," remarked Gore. "His pater's made money, and planted the young hopeful on St. Jim's to have him made into a gentleman. Won't be much of a success, I fancy."

"No, it don't seem always a success, do it?" said Hammond, staring at him. "I s'pose you are another of the failures—what?"

Gore turned crimson, and the other fellows laughed loudly. It was one to the new kid, as Jack Blake remarked. Evidently the new fellow knew how to take care of himself so far as words went.

"If you give me any of your cheek——" began Gore.

"Well, you've give me some of yourn," said Hammond; "but I ain't lookin' for trouble. P'r'aps some of you young gents will tell me where the 'Ousemaster is?"

"Do you really mean to say that you've got the cheek to come to this school, you awful outsider?" exclaimed Crooke.

"Wot's that?" demanded Hammond, doubling his fists, and starting towards Crooke. "Wot did you call me?"

"Rotten outsider!" said Crooke, with a sneer.

"Let him alone, Crooke," said Tom Merry.

"I'm not touching him," said Crooke. "I wouldn't touch him with a barge-pole if I could help it. But he may as well know our opinion of him soon as late. Look here, young hatter, or whatever you are, you're not wanted in a school like this. It isn't the kind of place for you. The best thing you can do is to go back to the hat-shop."

"No business of yourn, I suppose?" said Hammond.

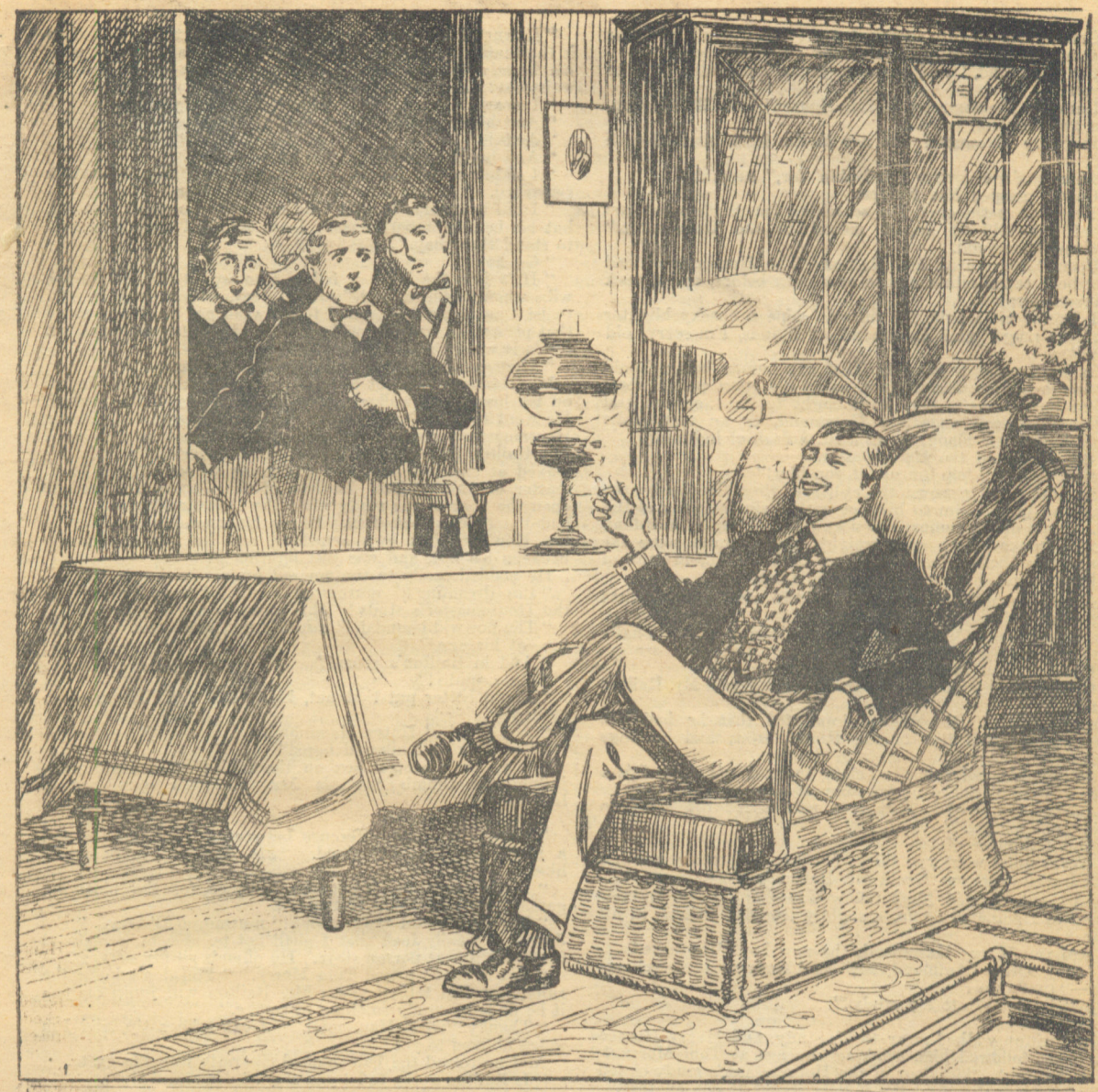
"The fact is, nobody here will speak to such an awful toad!" said Crooke. "Blessed if I know what the Head means by admitting you. Why, Lynn the boot-boy is a finished gentleman compared with you."

"And with you!" remarked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, who was a very kind friend to Lynn the boot-boy; not having anything snobbish about him in spite of his noble manners and customs.

"You shut up!" said Crooke, with a scowl. "I think the fellows ought to join together and protest against such an awful outsider as this being allowed in the school. I consider that we ought to say—— Yaroooh!"

Smack!



"I'm dreaming!" murmured Jack Blake. "Smoking—and in the Housemaster's study! This must be a giddy dream." Harry Hammond nodded coolly to the amazed juniors in the doorway, and quietly resumed his smoking. (*See Chapter 2.*)

Crooke staggered back as the new boy's open hand smote him across the face. Harry Hammond tore off his jacket and hurled it upon the floor, spat upon his hands, and squared up to the big Shell fellow in a very warlike attitude.

"Come on!" he shouted. "I've given you a wipe on the kisser, and now you come on, and see me make rings round yer! Wot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Go it, Crooke!"

Crooke backed away. He was nearly a head taller than Hammond, but he did not like the warlike looks of the new junior at all.

"We can't fight here!" he muttered. "We shall have all the masters down on us in a shake. And I'm not going to fight a low guttersnipe——"

"You should 'ave thort o' that afore you let your chin wag so much," said Hammond, flourishing his fists. "Put up your dukes, you rotter! Put 'em up, I sye!"

"Go it, Crooke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Smack!

"You can't let him knock you about like a punching-ball, Crooke!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Wade in!"

Crooke made a furious rush at Hammond, and the next moment he was sprawling on the floor, and Hammond was dancing round him excitedly, calling upon him to get up and have some more. Never had such an extraordinary scene been witnessed before in the old oak-panelled hall of the School House of St. Jim's. And as Crooke gasped on the floor, and Hammond danced round him, and the other fellows roared with laughter, Mr. Railton, the Housemaster, came down the passage, and stopped to stare at the scene in astonishment.

CHAPTER 2.

Hammond Makes Himself at Home.

"CAVE!"

Tom Merry gasped out the warning as the Housemaster came in sight. But the word was unknown to the ears of Harry Hammond, and, besides, he was too excited to heed.

He continued his war-dance round the fallen Crooke, flourishing his fists, and calling upon the cad of the Shell to get up and take his medicine.

"What is this?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

He strode forward and laid a heavy hand upon the shoulder of the excited Hammond.

"Cease these absurd antics at once, boy!" exclaimed the Housemaster. "What do you mean? Who are you?"

"I'm 'Ammond," said the new junior cheerfully. "Who are you?"

"I am the Housemaster of this House!" said Mr. Railton, in an awe-inspiring voice.

But Harry Hammond was not in the least inspired with awe.

"Then you're the cove I'm lookin' for," he said.

"Cove!" gasped Mr. Railton.

"Yes—you're the coon I'm searching for, that's what you are! I was told to report meself to the 'Ousemaster," explained Hammond.

"Coon!" murmured Mr. Railton. The Housemaster had never been called either a cove or a coon before, and it took his breath away.

"I 'ope it ain't agin the rules to wipe a cheeky blighter round the mug!" said Hammond. "If it is, I'm sorry, old sport!"

The juniors simply gasped. That any human being should venture to address Mr. Railton as an old sport passed their wildest imaginings. The floor ought to have opened and swallowed up the audacious Hammond, or an earthquake should have come along, or, at least, a flash of lightning.

"Boy!" gasped the Housemaster.

"Yes, sir! I'll 'elp 'im up, if you like!"

And Hammond grasped the still sprawling Crooke by the collar and jerked him to his feet with a single swing of the arm. Some of the juniors noted how little effort it cost him, though Crooke was a good weight, having much more fat than muscle about him. The queer Cockney kid, in spite of his bony frame, was evidently strong enough.

"Groo!" gurgled Crooke. "You're chok-choking me! Leggo my collar, you low blackguard!"

"There yer are!" said Hammond, releasing him. "That's wot I call gratitood!"

"Grooh! You rotten beast!"

"Crooke, kindly moderate your language!" said Mr. Railton sternly.

Crooke panted. He was so infuriated that he had lost some of his usual fear of the Housemaster, and his rage burst out.

"Is that low cad going to belong to St. Jim's, sir? It's a shame. He isn't fit to be boot-boy at this school!"

"Silence, Crooke! That is a matter for the Head to decide, not for you!"

"But I think——"

"Never mind what you think, Crooke. If you say another word I shall cane you!" said Mr. Railton sternly.

And the infuriated Shell fellow was silent. Mr. Railton turned to Hammond again, a slightly troubled wrinkle in his brow.

"Are you Harry Hammond, the new boy?" he asked.

"'Arry 'Orace 'Ammond, sir," said the new junior cheerfully—"that's me!"

"Kindly come into my study!"

"Cert'nly, sir!"

Mr. Railton walked away to his study, and Harry Horace Hammond followed him, winking one eye at Tom Merry & Co. as he went. The door of the Housemaster's study closed behind them both. And the juniors stared at one another.

"Well, if this doesn't put the giddy lid on!" said Jack Blake, with a deep breath.

"Takes the whole cake factory!" said Monty Lowther. "Jolly breezy kind of a kid, ain't he? Not troubled with shyness or diffidence, or anything of that sort."

"Ha, ha! No!"

"He can hit, too," said Tom Merry. "Look at Crooke's chivvy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a disgrace to the school!" growled Crooke dolorously, rubbing his nose. "We're coming to something at St. Jim's, I must say. There's that rotten boot-boy Lynn allowed to compete for a scholarship—but he's a gentleman beside this chap—and this chap is going to belong to the school!"

"Rotten!" said Levison of the Fourth.

"Disgusting!" said Mellish.

"I must say it's a bit thick," remarked Manners. "The kid isn't quite up to our style. They ought to have taken the edge off him before they sent him here."

"What on earth was the Head thinking about to take him in?" Gore exclaimed.

"Better ask him!" suggested Kangaroo, of the Shell.

Gore snorted.

"I twust," said Arthur Augustus, looking round—"I twust no one here wegards me as a snob——"

"Certainly not!" said Blake kindly. "We regard you simply as an ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I twust I am not a snob. But I weally think that chap is the limit. Did you observe the way he was standin' with his beastly thumbs in the beastly armholes of his beastly waistcoat? It was howwid!"

"I nearly fainted!" said Monty Lowther gravely.

"And his fwightful clothes——"

"Awful!"

"And his beastly cheek, you know——"

"I didn't notice his cheek so much as his nose," Lowther remarked. "It was a noble and aspiring nose——"

"I did not wefer to that kind of cheek, Lowthah, you ass, but his beastly impertinence. I am afwaid I sha'n't be able to stand that chap."

"Go hon!"

"He's just the kind of fellow who would dig you in the wibs when talkin' to you," said D'Arcy, with a shudder. "I twust I am not a snob, but I feah I shall not be able to stand that person. I twust he will altah his mind and go away. St. Jim's is weally not the place for him!"

"Here comes Railton!" murmured Kangaroo.

Mr. Railton came out of his study with a thoughtful frown on his brow, and walked on without looking at the juniors. He went to the Head's study. The new boy was left in the Housemaster's room. The juniors knew, just as well as if Mr. Railton had confided it to them, that he was a little dismayed at the new boy, and was going to consult the headmaster on the subject. Levison of the Fourth ventured to open the door of the study when the Housemaster was gone, and the fellows looked in. Harry Hammond was sitting in the Housemaster's own armchair, and he had a cigarette between his lips, and was just lighting it.

He nodded coolly to the amazed juniors in the doorway.

"I'm dreaming!" murmured Blake. "Smoking—and in the Housemaster's study! This must be a giddy dream!"

"The howwid boundah!" said D'Arcy, in disgust. "Smoking—at his age!"

"And in Railton's room!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"You'd better put that out, kid!" said Tom Merry good-naturedly.

"W'y?" asked Harry Hammond.

"Smoking isn't allowed here!"

"W'y, 'ere's a cigar-box on the table!" said Hammond, jerking his thumb towards Mr. Railton's own box of Larranagas.

Tom Merry laughed.

"There's a slight difference between a Housemaster and a junior kid," he explained. "Mr. Railton can do as he likes."

"Wot's sauce for the goose is sauce for the blooming gander, ain't it?" said Hammond.

"Oh, what awful expwessions!" murmured D'Arcy. "Bai Jove! I weally feah that I shall not be able to wemain at St. Jim's if that person stays. He offends all my nerves."

"Put it out!" urged Tom Merry. "You don't know the rules, but I'm telling you. Mr. Railton will jump on you if he finds his study smelling of smoke."

"Thanky!" said Hammond. "I can take a tip, and I'm much obliged to yer."

And he tossed the half-smoked cigarette into the grate.

"Is Railton going to let you stay?" demanded Gore.

"I s'pose so!"

"It's a rotten shame!"

"Lookin' for a fat nose like your pal?" asked Hammond undauntedly. "I'm ready to give you one, if I 'ave much of your lip!"

"You beastly outsider——"

Hammond jumped up, and came across the study in a bound. Gore backed away hastily. He was not afraid, but he did not want to be caught fighting in the sacred precincts of the Housemaster's study. Tom Merry discreetly drew the door shut, and the juniors melted away. And while Harry Hammond remained in the study, awaiting the return of the Housemaster, there was only one topic among the juniors of the School House—and that was the new boy, and his weird and wonderful manners and customs.

CHAPTER 3.

A Surprising New Boy.

DR. HOLMES, the Head of St. Jim's, was in his study when Mr. Railton arrived there.

The frown upon the Housemaster's brow caught his attention at once.

"What is wrong, Mr. Railton?" the Head asked.

"The new boy has arrived, sir."

"Ah! Hammond?"

"Yes!"

"You are not pleased with him?" asked the Head, understanding the Housemaster's look.

"Well, he seems an honest and good lad enough, so far as I can see—but—but—but——" The Housemaster paused.

"But not quite suitable for this school?" asked the Head, with a smile.

"Exactly, sir!"

"What are his faults?"

"A dreadful manner of speech, for one thing, and then an utter ignorance of our ways here, a total want of respect for his master," said Mr. Railton.

"Faults that good training can amend," suggested the Head.

"Quite probably, sir; but meanwhile——"

"I quite understand, Mr. Railton. But unless you should find that the boy has serious faults—viciousness, or anything that cannot be tolerated—I wish to give him a chance. He is a little out of the common run of St. Jim's boys, I am aware. Until quite lately he worked in his father's hat-shop in a poor quarter of London. Mr. Hammond has made a large fortune in hats, I think, and is now very rich indeed. His natural desire is to give his son a good education—the best that money can buy."

"A natural and praiseworthy desire, certainly," agreed Mr. Railton. "But surely the boy might have obtained such advantages without coming here."

"True; but it is not only education he requires—he needs polish of manner far more than book knowledge, I understand."

"That is indeed true!"

"The fact is, Mr. Railton, I have been specially requested by one of the governors, Sir John Tressady, to take this lad into the school. Sir John is interested in a charity organisation in Bethnal Green, and Mr. Hammond has given no less than ten thousand pounds towards it. Sir John desires to do what he can for Mr. Hammond's son in return. He has seen the boy, and pronounces that he is a good and honest lad, with some little peculiarities due to want of training and education. He has, in fact, promised Mr. Hammond that he will see his son installed at this school, and he asked me as a favour to allow the boy to come. Upon Sir John's assurance that there is nothing whatever against the boy, excepting the little peculiarities I have mentioned, I consented to take him in and see what could be done."

Mr. Railton nodded.

"I understand, sir. And it is your wish that he should be in the School House?"

The Head smiled.

"Yes; as I think that you, Mr. Railton, will probably understand and sympathise with him more than Mr. Ratcliff might, if I placed him in the New House."

"Thank you, sir! Under the circumstances I will do my best!"

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Railton. I hope the boy will turn out well; but if he does not, it is always easy for him to leave."

"I understand, sir."

And Mr. Railton quitted the Head's study.

He returned to his own quarters in a thoughtful mood. What the Housemaster was chiefly thinking of was the chipping, and perhaps persecution, that the Cockney would have to endure at the hands of the other juniors. Certainly a good number of fellows would make a set against such an addition to the School House, and the new junior was likely to find his path a thorny one. But if he had pluck and determination enough to hold his own, there was a chance that he might tone down in time into an ordinary St. Jim's fellow. Certainly, at all events, the Cockney did not seem to lack pluck and coolness.

Mr. Railton entered his study and sniffed.

There was an acrid odour of tobacco, and a half-smoked cigarette in the fender. The new boy was sitting in the Housemaster's armchair, eating toffee.

"Hammond!" rapped out the Housemaster.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you not know that you should rise when your master enters the room?"

"No, sir."

"You know it now?"

"Certainly, sir. I beg your pardon," said Hammond, rising to his feet.

Evidently the boy, whatever his faults, was anxious to do what was right, as soon as he knew it.

"You should not sit down in my armchair, Hammond. It is disrespectful."

"Most comfy chair in the blooming room, sir!" said Hammond, in explanation.

"You must not say blooming, Hammond. It is a vulgar expression."

"Werry well, sir!"

"Have you been smoking here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Boys at this school are not allowed to smoke. It is a silly and unhealthy habit."

"Werry well, sir! One of the blokes told me it wasn't allowed, and I chucked the fag away, sir," said Hammond.

"Very good! Don't use the word bloke. It is not English."

"Sorry, sir—I meant cove!"

Mr. Railton could not help smiling.

"You should not say cove, either, Hammond. But never mind that now. I must examine you a little now, to ascertain what your capabilities are. I understand that you have been prepared to take your place in the Fourth Form here?"

"That's it, sir—three months' crammin' ever since the guv'nor got the quidlets!"

"And before that?" asked Mr. Railton, forbearing to take any notice of the "guv'nor," or the "quidlets."

"I was at a County Council school for a bit, sir, but not much. I 'ad to help father a lot."

"Well, we will see," said Mr. Railton.

And he sat down to examine the new boy.

The result astonished him.

The boy had attended a County Council school, and had had three months' cramming to prepare him for entrance at St. Jim's. Mr. Railton expected to find him a monument of ignorance. But he was agreeably disappointed. The keen, sharp intellect of the Cockney had mastered in a short time what would have taken the average St. Jim's boy whole terms to learn. In the keen, busy life of London, the mind is sharpened, and the young Cockney was as keen as Sheffield steel.

His pronunciation of English was what he had been born and bred in, and it is always more difficult to unlearn than to learn. He spoke unconsciously as all his associates in his early years had been accustomed to speak. His ear had grown attuned, as it were, to such a mode of speaking, and failed to recognise anything abnormal in it. But in other matters, three months' cramming had worked marvels. He had a good grasp of French, though his accent in French was horrible. He had a working knowledge of Latin, though he pronounced it somewhat as he pronounced English. He had a smattering of German; quite enough to enable him to hold his own in the Fourth Form. In mathematics he surprised the Housemaster more than in anything else, for in that branch of knowledge he was quite up to anybody in the Fifth Form at St. Jim's, and, far ahead of the cleverest of the juniors. History and geography were also more than satisfactory.

"You have certainly made the most of limited opportunities, Hammond," said Mr. Railton. "I must congratulate you. Did you find it easy to acquaint yourself with these subjects, some of which must have been quite new to you?"

"Easy as winkin', sir!" said Hammond cheerily. "Why, it was nothin' arter doin' real work, sir!"

Mr. Railton coughed.

"You do not consider French, Latin, German, and mathematics as real work, my boy?"

Hammond grinned.

"No, sir—it's ony play arter wot I call work."

"And what do you call work?"

"Wot I used to do, sir, 'elpin' father. I kep' all the books for the business, and with the credit we give, in them days, that was 'arder than decimal fractions and simple equations, you bet your 'at, sir. I used to git up at five to take the shutters down, clean out the shop, and I never got to bed afore eleven. Arter that, it was pretty easy to begin crammin' at ten in the mornin', chucking it at six."

"I suppose so," said Mr. Railton. "I hope you have come here, Hammond, with the intention of working hard."

"I 'ope so, sir."

"Your knowledge of English grammar is very good, Hammond, but in speech you have very much to learn. You are, doubtless aware of that."

"I've bin told so, sir."

"You have not noticed it yourself?"

"No, sir."

"Ahem! Doubtless you will come to notice it in time. You will be put into the Fourth Form, Hammond."

"Yes, sir."

"I shall assign you to Study No. 5, with Bates and Smith minor. You will try to get on peaceably with your study-mates, I trust. I think I have observed that you have already quarrelled with some lad here."

"He give me too much of his lip, sir."

"You must take chaff, and that kind of thing, good-temperedly, Hammond. You must remember that you are new here, and strange to the ways of the school. If you are a quarrelsome boy, you will have endless trouble on your hands. Please try to be peaceful."

"Cert'inly, sir."

"You may go, Hammond."

"Yes, sir."

Hammond walked out of the study, and burst into a shrill whistle in the passage. Mr. Railton called him back.

"Hammond!"

"Yes, sir?"

"You must not whistle indoors."

"Why, sir?"

"You must not ask a master the reason why. You must do as you are told without question," said the Housemaster.

"Oh, orlright, sir!"

And Hammond walked away without whistling.

CHAPTER 4.

Not Desired!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY wore a worried look. The chums of Study No. 6—Blake, Herries, D'Arcy, and Digby of the Fourth—were at tea in their study. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell were with them, partaking of the hospitality of Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus was standing the feed, but he was looking much less cheerful than his guests. There was evidently something on the mind of the swell of St. Jim's.

He passed the eggs when Tom Merry asked for the jam, and he poured out tea into the sugar-basin instead of Digby's cup—proofs that his thoughts were wandering.

"What's wrong with the noble Adolphus?" Monty Lowther inquired at last. "Has Cutts of the Fifth been down on you again for turnin' your trousers up, Gussy?"

"I wefuse to take any notice of Cutts of the Fifth, Lowthah. I insist upon my wight to turn my twousahs up."

"Has the order gone forth reducing the height of junior collars to less than six inches?" asked Monty humorously.

"Wats!"

"Then what's the matter?"

"Nothin's the mattah yet."

"Then why go round looking like a bear with a sore head, or a chimpanzee with the toothache?" queried Lowther pleasantly.

"I am not aware, Lowthah, that I beah the slightest wesemblance to a beah with a sore head, or a chimpanzee with the toothache."

"Gussy is thinking about the new kid!" chuckled Blake. "He can't get over Hammond's h's, or, rather, his want of them, and his sticking his thumbs in his waistcoat."

"That isn't all, deah boys."

"What's troubling his 'ickle mind, then?" asked Lowther sympathetically.

"Suppose that awful boundah is put into the Fourth Form?" said D'Arcy.

"It's likely enough. What about it?"

"He might be put into this study then."

"Well, that would be rotten!" agreed Blake. "We're four already, and they shoved a new chap in on us once. Luckily, he went away."

"I weally could not stand that person at close quartahs, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus in distress. "He affects my nerves, you know. He gwates on me howwibly. I twust there is nothin' snobbish about me. But I weally cannot stand him. I wegard him simply as a howwah. If he should be put into this studay, I should have no wesource but to change out."

Tap!

"Come in!" sang out Blake.

The study door opened, and Harry Horace Hammond presented himself, with his usual broad grin adorning his large mouth.

Arthur Augustus shuddered. It seemed as if his dread forebodings had been realised already. The new junior nodded cheerily to the tea-party.

"Hallo, young shaver!" said Blake.

"Same to you, and many of 'em!" said Hammond affably. "This 'ere is the Fourth Form passage, ain't it?"

"It are!" said Blake.

"Bai Jove, do you mean to say that you have been put into the Fourth Form, Hammond?" asked D'Arcy faintly.

"Well, I didn't mean to say it, but I 'ave," said Hammond. "Wot's the 'arm—eh?"

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

"You're not shoved into this study, are you?" exclaimed Herries.

"That depends on the number," said Hammond. "I can't make out the blooming numbers over the doors—they want repainting, I must say."

"What's your number?"

"Five!"

"Oh, good! That's next door," said Blake, and Arthur Augustus sighed a deep, deep sigh of relief.

"You call this 'ere little garret a study—wot?" asked Hammond.

"Why, you cheeky young sweep——"

"No offence, only tryin' to learn the nimes of things," said Hammond.

"Oh! Yes, this is a study."

"You coves 'ave tea in your studies—eh?"

"We do!"

"We does!" said Lowther.

"Well, that's a bit of orlright," said Hammond. "You stand it yourselves—eh?"

"Yes, we buy the grub at the tuckshop. If you want tea, you'll find the school shop in the corner of the quad.," said Blake, as a hint to Hammond to clear out. "You can have tea in hall, if you prefer it, though. Only you're too late for that to-day."

"Might arsk a cove whether he's 'ungry, I should sye," said Hammond in an aggrieved tone.

Blake hesitated. Study No. 6 was famous for its hospitality. But, considering the view Arthur Augustus took of the new boy, Blake did not care to ask him to tea.

"Well, we'll ask that with pleasure," said Monty Lowther. "Are you hungry?"

"Yes."

"Then I should recommend a visit to the tuckshop."

Hammond grinned.

"I reckon I don't want to plant myself 'ere if I ain't wanted," he said. "Nex' door, you say. Orlright."

And Hammond stepped back into the passage and closed the door. Blake shook his head solemnly at his aristocratic chum.

"Gussy, I'm surprised at you."

"Weally, Blake——"

"I couldn't ask him to your feed, but it was up to you. He's a new kid, and he has nowhere to lay his giddy head. It was up to you to ask him to tea."

"Wats!"

Hammond turned away from Study No. 6 with undiminished cheerfulness. He could see that his arrival at St. Jim's was not received with enthusiasm by the dwellers there; but it did not seem to trouble him very much. He moved along to the next study, and scanned the half obliterated number over the door. It was a seven, as a matter of fact, but it could not be read clearly, and Hammond took it for a five, especially as Blake had told him that No. 5 was next door. Hammond knocked at the door and opened it.

Study No. 7 belonged to Reilly, Kerruish, and Ray of the Fourth. They were at tea when the new junior looked in. They had seen his arrival, and, as a matter of fact, were talking about him and chuckling when his well-oiled head gleamed in at the door.

"Evenin'!" said Hammond cheerily.

"Same to you, intirely," said Reilly. "Go straight downstairs, and across the quad., and you'll find yourself in the New House."

Hammond looked puzzled.

"And wot am I to do in the New 'Ouse?" he asked.

"Stay there!" explained Reilly politely.

"I ain't doin' nothin' of the sort. This 'ere is my study."

"What!"

"Oh, crumbs," said Kerruish, "they've put him in the Fourth, and they've bunged him in on us! What a rotten swindle!"

"Too rotten bad!" said Ray.

"Sorry," said Hammond. "But that's 'ow it is. Sorry if you can't take it cheerful. But you've got to take it some'ow."

"Look here," said Kerruish, "you go back to old Railton, and tell him we don't want you. Tell him we can't stand you. Tell him you're past the limit. Tell him——"

"Rats!"

Kerruish jumped up.

"Did you say rats to me?" he demanded, pushing back his cuffs.

"Yes, I did, and I'll say it agin, if you like," said Hammond independently. "I'm stayin' 'ere. Mr. Railton said No. 5, and this 'ere is No. 5, so——"

"Oh, what luck!" gasped Reilly. "'Tisn't No. 5, Hammond darling, 'tis No. 7. Your study is on the other side of No. 6. Good-bye!"

"You ain't stuffin' me?" asked Hammond suspiciously.

"Honour bright!"

"Oh, orlright!"

Kerruish sat down again.

"If you're lookin' fur a thick ear I don't mind obliging you afore I travel," said Hammond.

The Manx lad laughed. He was good-natured, and as Hammond was not coming into the study, he did not want to punch him any more.

"Oh, buzz off!" he said. "I dare say you'll find trouble enough in No. 5 when Bates and Smith minor know you're planted on them."

"Rats!"

Hammond withdrew and slammed the door. Then he made his way into No. 5. No. 5 happened to be empty, so Hammond was able to take possession unopposed. He glanced round the study with a somewhat disparaging eye, and sat down on the table, and whistled.

"My heye! Don't look werry cheerful to begin with," he reflected. "I s'pose them young toffs don't want nothing to do with me, 'cos I'm 'Arry 'Ammond, of Bethnal Green, and the guv'nor made 'is money out of 'Ammond's 'Igh-class 'Ats. Well, I s'pose I shall survive it, even if they don't want me. I've paid my footin' 'ere, and they can go and eat coke. My 'at, though, I'm 'ungry!"

And Hammond decided at once that a visit to the school shop was the order of the day; and he forthwith proceeded in search of it. In the quadrangle he came upon Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, and he spoke to him as coolly and calmly as if a Sixth-Former and a prefect were a mere ordinary human being.

"I sye, can you tell a cove where the shop is?" he asked.

Kildare jumped.

"What—what did you say?"

"I'm lookin' for the shop," Hammond explained. "I'm 'ungry. Where is it?"

"Who are you?" asked Kildare.

"'Arry 'Orace 'Ammond, of the Fourth Form."

"Oh! The shop's over there," said Kildare, pointing.

"Thanky, old sport!"

Hammond walked away, leaving Kildare staring after him blankly. The head of the Sixth had seen all sorts and conditions of youngsters arrive at St. Jim's, but he had never seen anything quite like Harry Horace Hammond before. The Cockney schoolboy seemed to be quite in a class by himself.

CHAPTER 5.

Hammond Finds a Friend.

FIGGINS & Co., of the New House, were in the tuckshop discussing ginger-beer and football when Harry Horace Hammond came in. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn had not seen the new boy yet, but they had heard of him. All St. Jim's had heard of him by this time. They looked at him as he came into the shop, and guessed at once whom he was.

"This 'ere the tuckshop, I s'pose?" said Hammond.

Figgins & Co. grinned.

"Quite right!" said Figgins. "Goal first time. You're the new kid?"

"Yes."

"Name?"

"'Ammond—'Arry 'Orace 'Ammond."

"Form?" asked Kerr.

"Fourth."

"That's our Form," said Figgins graciously. "We have the honour to welcome you into the Fourth Form, Master Harry Horace Hammond."

"Good hegg!" said Hammond. "I ain't seed you before ——"

"We belong to the New House," Figgins explained. "You are a School House chap. That old casual ward yonder is the School House. I hope you'll have a high old time at St. Jim's, my son."

"Thank you kindly!" said Hammond. "I must say you're more perlite than the fellers in my 'Ouse. Lumme, you are, straight!"

Figgins looked astonished.

"You don't mean to say that they haven't greeted you with open arms, and welcomed you like a long-lost brother?" he demanded.

"They ain't done nothin' of the sort," said Hammond, a little ruefully. "They don't seem to want me, 'cos I'm 'Arry 'Ammond, of Bethnal Green. Seems to me that they put on a lot of side 'ere. I'm pally with plenty of chaps in Bethnal Green, and the right sort o' blokes, too, but I don't seem likely to get a pal 'ere."

Figgins smiled genially. He had intended to rag the new fellow a little, but his kind heart smote him. Whether St. Jim's was a suitable place for Harry Horace Hammond or not, it was hard lines upon him that he couldn't find anybody there to pal with. Figgins realised that.

"Oh, you'll pull out all right!" assured Figgins, not quite with conviction, though. "You're a bit strange in the place at first, that's all. You'll find a lot of the fellows quite decent in the long run."

"I 'ope so," said Hammond. "Anywye, I ain't down-'earted. I bin through worse things than this 'ere, afore the guv'nor made 'is money out of 'Ammond's 'Igh-class 'Ats. P'r'aps you young gents would like to join me in a feed? I know I ain't your class, and I ain't sayin' that I am, but you'll find me all right in my wye, and I've got plenty of oof."

Figgins & Co. grinned.

"My dear chap," said Fatty Wynn, quite cordially, "we'll join you with pleasure."

"Shurrup!" whispered Kerr.

But Fatty Wynn was firm.

"I don't believe in being snobbish," he persisted. "What's the matter with the chap? I'm surprised at you, Kerr."

"We're not going to chum with him," growled Kerr, in an undertone; "and if we're not going to chum with him, we can't take his grub."

"I don't know about chumming with him," said Wynn; "but I'm willing to be friendly with any chap who—who——"

"Who can stand a feed!" sniffed Kerr.

"Who's decent," said Fatty Wynn calmly. "You two can hike off, if you like. I'm not going to turn my nose up at a chap because he drops his h's."

Dame Taggles surveyed the new boy in some astonishment. But she was all smiles as he took a banknote out of a Russia-leather pocket-book. Evidently the heir of Hammond's High-Class Hats was well supplied with that very necessary article, cash.

"Chynge that, please, ma'am?" asked Hammond.

"Certainly, sir."

"You blokes joinin' me?" asked Hammond.

"Thank you very much, but we've got an appointment," said Kerr, very politely, and he took Figgins's arm, and walked him out of the tuckshop.

"You got an appointment, too?" asked Hammond, with a sniff, looking at Fatty Wynn.

"No, fear!" said the fat Fourth-Former promptly.

"Good hegg! What'll you take?"

It appeared that Fatty Wynn was prepared to take many things. Hammond having requested him to call for anything he liked, the fat Fourth-Former proceeded to do so. Mrs. Taggles was kept very busy.

The two juniors sat upon high stools at the counter, and Dame Taggles had all she could do to look after their wants. Harry Hammond had a keen, healthy appetite, and he was very hungry after his journey, and Fatty Wynn was always ready for a feed to any extent.

Dame Taggles was beaming with smiles. She had a keen eye to business. From the way the two boys were beginning, it looked as if there would not be much change left out of the five-pound note by the time they had finished.

"I say, you must be pretty flush with tin, Hammond," Fatty Wynn remarked, as he finished his cold chicken, and started on tongue.

"'Bout the only thing I've got that's any good 'ere," said Hammond. "The guv'nor give me twenty quid when I left 'ome."

Fatty Wynn's eyes opened wide.

"Twenty pounds."

"Yes."

"My hat! I wish I had your governor for my uncle," said Fatty Wynn feelingly. "Do you get an allowance as well?"

"Three quid a week regular."

"Oh, crumbs! You can live on the fat of the land, if you like. Why, your pater must be rolling in money," said Wynn, in astonishment.

"Jolly near a million, I fancy," said Hammond, "and made it all out of 'Ammond's 'Igh-Class 'Ats, too. It's a limited company, now, you know, and the guv'nor is the managing director. We ain't always been rich."

Fatty Wynn smiled. He could guess that.

"We've 'ad some 'ard times," said Hammond confidentially. "I used to 'elp father in the 'at shop. I can iron an 'at with anybody in London. I've knowed wot it was to get to bed 'ungry."

"Oh, that's awful!" said Fatty, with a shudder.

"But that's all over now, you bet your 'at," said Hammond. "We're simply rolling in it now. And I like the chynge, I can tell you. The guv'nor's sent me 'ere to pick up wot I 'aven't 'ad a chance of pickin' up at 'ome. Can't say I like it so well as 'ome, but I'm goin' to do my best to please the guv'nor."

"Quite right!" said Fatty Wynn. "Some tarts now, Mrs. Taggles, please. You must come and have a feed in the New House to-morrow, Hammond."

"Glad to," said Hammond. "I sha'n't git much chance of feedin' with anybody in my own 'Ouse, the wye things look."

Fatty Wynn felt an inward misgiving. If this fellow was going to be cut by everybody in his own House, he was not

exactly a desirable sort of fellow to ask over to the New House, and Fatty wondered how Figgins and Kerr would take it. But Fatty Wynn glanced at the pile of luscious jam tarts, and determined that he, at all events, wouldn't be a snob, and he started on the tarts with quite a glow of self-appreciation.

Hammond had finished eating by this time, but he watched Fatty Wynn with wonder and admiration as the fat Fourth-Former kept on.

Cakes and tarts and doughnuts vanished fast. But at last even Fatty Wynn had to cry halt.

He had a somewhat shiny look upon his plump face, his eyes had assumed a fishy glimmer, and he had a most uncomfortable feeling of tightness in the region of the waist. He clambered down off the stool with some difficulty.

"Not taking any more?" asked Hammond.

"No, thanks!" gasped Fatty. "I say, you've done me down jolly well, and I'm much obliged to you. I haven't had such a jolly good feed for a long time."

"I 'ope you'll come and 'ave tea in my study when you feel inclined," said Hammond. "No. 5 in the School House."

"Thanks, awfully! I say, I'll walk round with you, if you like, and show you about the school!" said Fatty generously.

"Here, Wynn, I've been looking for you!" exclaimed Redfern of the Fourth, a New House fellow, entering the tuckshop. "Come on, you bounder!"

"Hold on, Reddy!"

"Rats! You're wanted! Rehearsal of 'King John!'"

"Oh, you'll excuse me, Hammond, won't you?"

And Fatty Wynn rolled out of the tuckshop with Redfern.

Harry Hammond was left alone. He sighed a little. It had not occurred to Redfern that the new boy would like to witness the rehearsal for the sake of company—indeed, he had hardly looked at Hammond at all. He marched Fatty Wynn off to the New House, and Hammond could not help sighing a little as his only friend vanished.

"'Ow much?" he asked Mrs. Taggles.

"Three pounds twelve shillings and threepence-halfpenny," said Dame Taggles with great exactness.

"Oh! That's a bit of a chynge from fried fish and taters for tuppence in Bethnal Green Rowd!" said Hammond. "Orlright; 'and us the chynge."

And Harry Hammond put his change in his pocket and strolled out of the tuckshop, wondering what kind of life he was going to lead at St. Jim's, and whether he would ever make any friends there.

CHAPTER 6.
Top Dog.

STUDY No. 5 was occupied when Harry Hammond returned to it.

Bates and Smith minor of the Fourth Form were there having tea, and they stared at Hammond as the Cockney schoolboy came in.

"Hallo, young shaver! What do you want?" Smith minor inquired.

"This 'ere is my room," Hammond explained. "These 'ere is my books. I jest put them in 'ere, you know."

"You're making a little mistake," said Smith minor pleasantly. "This isn't your study. The proper place for your sort is the boot-room, and I dare say Lynn and Toby will be very pleased to see you. It's at the bottom of the kitchen stairs. Good-bye!"

Hammond grinned.

"I'm stayin' 'ere!" he remarked.

Both Smith minor and Bates rose to their feet. They hadn't any intention of having this queer boy "planted" on them if they could possibly help it. They had heard all about him, and they did not want him in their study.

"Now, I don't want to hurt you," said Smith minor generously. "I'm a good-natured chap. I give you two seconds to get on the other side of the door."

"And I give you one!" said Bates.

"But this 'ere is my study!" objected Hammond. "I ain't wanting to shove meself in where I ain't welcome, but there you are! Mr. Railton 'ave put me in 'ere."

"There's an empty study up the passage," said Bates. "It's rather a hole, and it's not used, and you can have it for the asking."

"If it's rather a 'ole, I'm certainly not goin' to arsk for it!" said Hammond. "I 'ope you ain't goin' to cut up rusty, but 'ere I stay."

"You take one end of him, Smithy, and I'll take the other," said Bates.

"Right-ho!" said Smith minor.

They started towards the Cockney schoolboy. Harry Hammond was still grinning. They were two to one, but he was not afraid. His early youth in the Bethnal Green Road had been varied by many a desperate encounter, and he had learned to fight almost as soon as he could walk. His private opinion of the St. Jim's juniors was that they were a "soft lot." He was as hard as nails himself, as the juniors were destined to discover.

"Now, you let me alone!" said Hammond. "I'm a peaceable chap, I am. I don't want to scrap with nobody. You keep your 'ands off!"

"Out you go!" said Bates.

And they seized him.

Then an earthquake happened—at all events, it seemed to Bates and Smith minor that it was an earthquake, or at least a cyclone. The Cockney grasped them both at once, and Bates was whirled over, and went sprawling on the carpet, and Smith minor was swung bodily into the air, and brought down with a bump on the tea-table.

There was a terrific crash.

Harry Hammond stepped back and surveyed his handiwork with a grin.

Bates sat up on the carpet, blinking; Smith minor sat amid the smashed tea-things on the table, with tea and milk and treacle flowing round him.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bates.

"Oh, my hat!" stuttered Smith minor.

"Want any more?" inquired the Cockney. "Lots more if you're a-looking fur trouble. But I 'ope you'll 'ave more sense."

"Why, you—you hooligan!" roared Smith minor. "You've smashed up our tea-things!"

"Kick him out!" gasped Bates.

"Come on!" said Hammond. "I'm ready!"

Bates rose to his feet, and Smith minor slid off the table. Treacle was clinging to him, that delicacy having been provided by the juniors for their tea. Bits of broken cups and saucers stuck in the treacle that was lathered over Smith minor's trousers. The two owners of Study No. 5 glared at Hammond as if they would eat him. But they felt a certain amount of hesitation in tackling him again. He seemed to be altogether too dangerous a customer.

"Look here," roared Smith, "we're not having you in our study, you ruffian! You've smashed our crocks!"

"I warned you to keep your 'ands off, didn't I?"

"Get out!"

"Rats!"

"You'll be chucked out if you don't go!"

"Bosh!"

Smith minor and his study-mate exchanged glances. It was simply impossible to allow a new kid to handle them like that and remain to gloat over his victory. And they made a rush at him together.

The next moment there was a wild and whirling struggle in the study.

Smith minor and Bates grasped the new boy together, and exerted all their strength. They knew how tough he was now, and they did their best.

But even for the two of them Hammond was no mean match. The three, looking as if they were tied in a knot together, staggered to and fro in the study. They rolled heavily against the tea-table, and sent it flying into the grate, and there was a crash of tea-things and other things. They bumped on the bookshelf, and brought it down with a shower of books. And still the new boy was no nearer the door.

They came down in a heap at last, and rolled on the floor, and then Bates found himself undermost, with Smith minor sprawling across him face downwards, and Harry Hammond sitting on Smith minor's shoulders, keeping him there.

The two undermost juniors struggled frantically and roared.

"Gerroff!"

"Lemme gerrup!"

"You're squashing me!"

"Ow—ow—ow!"

Hammond chuckled.

"You ain't gettin' up till you've promised to be'ave," he said, "and if you wriggle I'll bump your silly 'eads on the floor!"

"Oh, you beast!"

"Oh, you rotter!"

The study door opened, and a senior—a fellow with clear-cut features and keen eyes, and very well dressed—looked in. It was Cutts of the Fifth.

"Hallo, what's this rumpus?" said Cutts, bursting into a laugh. "Are you ragging the new kid, you young rascals?"

"Looks like it, don't it?" grinned Hammond. "Want to pitch me outer my own study—wot? But they've woke up the wrong passenger."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Cutts. "Look here, Knox!"

Knox of the Sixth, a prefect of the School House, was behind Cutts. He grinned as he looked into the study. Bates and Smith minor were crimson with fury. It was

"This 'ere is St. Jim's, eh?" said the newcomer. "And this 'ere 'ouse is the School 'Ouse—wot?" "It are!" replied Lowther solemnly. "This 'ouse is the School 'Ouse, and this is the 'all where you 'ang your 'at!" There was a chuckle from the other fellows. (See Chapter 1.)

bitterly humiliating to them to be caught in such a position. And they were helpless to escape from it—the Cockney had them down, and was keeping them there—and they struggled and wriggled and squirmed in vain.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Knox. "You'd better let that new kid alone, you young sweeps. He's too much for you."

"Make him gerroff!" mumbled Bates. "I'm being squashed!"

"Get up, Hammond. It's all right. They sha'n't touch you again," said Knox. "I'm a prefect. I came here to see if there was any ragging going on."

Hammond rose to his feet, and Smith minor and Bates wriggled up, very dishevelled and dusty. They gave the Cockney furious glances. They had had the worst of the tussle, but they would have renewed it instantly if the prefect had not been there.

"I didn't want no row," said Hammond. "They set on me. This 'ere is my study, ain't it?"

"Of course it is!" said Knox genially. "Now, look here, Bates and Smith! I've got my eye on you. The new kid is not to be ragged. Do you hear. I'm not going to permit anything of the kind."

Bates and Smith minor blinked at Knox, almost forgetting their rage in their astonishment. Kildare or Darrel of the Sixth might have spoken like that without exciting surprise. But Knox—the bully of the Sixth, the black sheep of St. Jim's—what did he mean by it? Knox was just the fellow to take the lead in ragging a new kid, and especially in starting a snobbish set against a fellow like Hammond. No junior at St. Jim's had ever been able to discover any good qualities in Knox of the Sixth. To see him posing as the champion of the oppressed was simply astounding!

And Cutts, too, the blackguard of the Fifth—the fellow who had done rascalities enough to be expelled for ten times over, if the Head had known! What did he mean by standing up for such a rank outsider as this bounder from Bethnal Green?

Smith minor and Bates simply stared at the two seniors—the Sixth-Former and the Fifth-Former. They could not understand it at all, unless both Knox and Cutts had suddenly gone absolutely "potty."

"You hear me?" rapped out Knox.

"Oh!" gasped Bates.

"If they worry you any more, you come and tell me at once, Hammond," said Knox. "I'm a prefect, and have to keep order among the juniors, you know."

Hammond did not know what a prefect was, but he realised that he was a person of some authority. He nodded.

"Thanky kindly," he said. "But I reckon I can look arter myself. I could 'andle these two blokes as easy as rollin' off a log."

"Could you?" muttered Bates between his teeth. "You wait, you bounder—you wait till—— Ow, ow! Yow!" Bates finished with a wail of anguish as Knox's finger and thumb closed like a vice upon his ear. "Ow, ow! Leggo! Yow!"

"Are you going to let the new kid alone?" asked Knox pleasantly, compressing his grip till Bates writhed with anguish.

"Ow, ow! Yes! Ow! Yes!" wailed Bates.

"Good enough. You too, Smith minor?"

"Yes, certainly!" said Smith minor hastily. He did not desire his ear to be compressed in the vice like his chum's.

"Remember that I shall keep an eye on this study," said Knox threateningly. "If there's any more ragging, you'll hear from me. Hammond is not going to be badly treated."

Smith minor and Bates looked whole volumes of fury, but they said nothing. Knox was not the kind of fellow to be argued with.

"I—I sye," faltered Hammond, "you're werry kind, sir. I don't know wot you should take this 'ere trouble about me for. The other blokes don't seem to."

"I'm doing my duty as a prefect," said Knox loftily. "Besides, I think you're a fine little chap, and I like you. You come to me if you're in trouble at any time, and I'll set you right."

"Thank you, sir."

"You needn't call me sir—my name's Knox. If you like to run along to my study now, I'll give you some tips about your work, and about doing your preparation."

"I'm much obliged, sir—I mean, Knox."

And Hammond gladly followed the two seniors from the study. A swift look passed between Knox and Cutts as the latter closed the study door.

"By the way, young 'un," said Cutts smoothly, "perhaps you'd like to drop into my study this evening?—No. 1 in the Fifth-Form passage. You won't find things very cheery in your own quarters—and I'm going to have a bit of a supper, and some fellows you'd like to meet. Would you care to come?"

Hammond's pleasure and gratitude were only too visible in his face.

"Jest what I should like," he said. "I'll come, with pleasure, sir."

"Call me Cutts," said the Fifth-Former.

"Yes, Cutts."

Cutts nodded pleasantly and walked away, and Hammond gazed after him. The good-looking, well-groomed Fifth-Former was an imposing personage to Hammond's eyes. He did not know that Gerald Cutts was the most unscrupulous black sheep that could have been found at St. Jim's or any other public school.

Cutts represented everything that Harry Hammond lacked, and he admired him with an awed admiration. That such a demigod should have condescended to be kind to him was a miracle, for which Hammond felt that he could not be sufficiently grateful. That handsome, elegantly-dressed, splendid chap had asked him to his study, to meet some friends—and just after a pair of grubby juniors had tried to pitch him out of his own study, because they did not consider him good enough company for them! No wonder Hammond was elated as he followed Knox the prefect to his study—there to receive much inexplicable kindness at the hands of the bully of the Sixth!

CHAPTER 7.
A Friend in Need.

TOM MERRY came along the passage, and paused outside Study No. 5.

The door was open, and he could see into the study, and he saw a scene of devastation.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, coming from the opposite direction, stopped, too, surprised by the scene of wreckage.

"Bai Jove, they've been havin' a wuff time here!" Arthur Augustus remarked, turning his eyeglass upon the interior of the study.

"Looks like it," grinned Tom Merry. "What was it, Bates—an earthquake or a tornado?"

Bates looked ferocious.

"It was that blessed Cockney!" he growled.

"That bounder from Bethnal Green!" snorted Smith minor.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass round the study. "You don't mean to say that that young wottah has mucked up your studay like this?"

"Do you think we did it ourselves, for the pleasure of cleaning it up?" demanded Smith minor rudely.

"But why didn't you stop him, deah boy?"

Smith minor and Bates looked a little sheepish. They did not like to confess that the Cockney, single-handed, had been too much for them.

"You didn't stand by and watch him doing it, surely?" said Tom Merry.

"No, we didn't!" growled Bates.

"I should certainly have ejected him fwom the studay if I had been in your place, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head.

Bates snorted.

"Perhaps you could do it, and perhaps you couldn't, you fathead. We tried to, and we couldn't. He's as tough as anything."

"Bai Jove! You didn't let him handle both of you?"

"How could we help it?" roared Bates. "We did our best. As for you, the Cockney could knock you into a cocked hat with his little finger."

"Wats! If he had made a disturbance in my studay, I should certainly have given him a feahful thwashin'."

"The blighter ought to be sent back to Bethnal Green!" growled Smith minor. "We're not going to have him in our study."

"Bethnal Green seems to have been a bit too much for you, though," grinned Tom Merry. "Why can't you let him alone? He seems a decent kid enough, and quite inoffensive if he's let alone. And Railton put him in this study, you know."

"And we're going to boot him out. We should simply have smashed him if Knox and Cutts hadn't interfered"

"Knox and Cutts!" exclaimed Tom, in astonishment. "Rather a new dodge for them to be standing up for a kid like Hammond! I should have thought Cutts, at least, would be down on him more than anybody else—he's that sort."

"Well, I'd have thought so, too; but he isn't," said Bates. "He's asked him to supper in his study this evening—I heard him through the door."

"Cutts has asked that outsidah to suppah!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"Yes. And Knox has taken him to his room now, to give him some tips about his school work," said Smith minor, with a sniff.

"My hat! They must be rather less rotten than we've always believed, to take all that trouble about a new kid," said Tom Merry, in great surprise. "Of course, it's Knox's duty as a prefect to stop ragging, and to help a kid if he needs it, but I've never noticed Knox breaking his neck to do his duty before."

"Wathah not!"

"Perhaps he's turning over a new leaf, and taking up duty instead of playing nap at the Green Man," said Tom, laughing. "It would be a big change for Knox. Anyway, he did quite right to stand up for the kid if you were ragging him—though, to judge by the state of the study, the kid can look after himself."

"Oh, rats!" said Bates. "We'll tackle him again when Knox isn't hanging about. We're not going to have that rotten outsider here!"

"Rot!" said Tom emphatically. "You've got to have him here, and it would be only decent to show him a bit of civility."

"You mind your own business, you Shell rotter!" said Bates. "I jolly well wish you had him in the Shell. You might like him in your own study."

"Well, I should be civil to him."

"You can be civil to him now if you like, but I'm not going to be. I'm going to make him sit up."

"Yaas," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "It made me shuddah, Tom Mewwy, to think that that feahful outsidah might be put in my studay. How can a fellow be expected to stand a chap with a waistcoat like that, and with such a dweadful mode of speech. Weally, I sympathise entirely with Bates."

"Yes; you always were an ass!" agreed Tom Merry.

"Weally, you wottah——"

Tom Merry smiled and walked away. The new kid was nothing to him, of course; was not even in the same Form; but Tom's kind heart had been touched by the thought of the new-comer's loneliness in the big school. He would have gone out of his way to show some little kindness to Hammond, if the opportunity occurred; and he had already made up his mind to nip in the bud some schemes that Gore and Crooke were laying for ragging the Cockney.

Arthur Augustus, whose sympathetic heart was always easily moved by any kind of distress, might have been expected to take the part of the new kid. But the Cockney had got on the noble nerves of the swell of St. Jim's, and D'Arcy felt that he could not stand him, so Hammond had no help to expect from that quarter.

Tom Merry came into his study in the Shell passage, and found Manners and Lowther there, at work at their preparation. Lowther looked up.

"I hear there's been a row in the Cockney's study," he remarked.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes. I've just looked in; the place is wrecked. That kid grew up pretty tough in the hat-shop. Bates and Smith minor tried to chuck him out, and they look as if they'd been wrestling with a lawn-mower."

"He will have a hard row to hoe," said Manners thoughtfully. "This really isn't the place for him. It's too sudden a change after Bethnal Green. Bates and young Smith are

only the same as the others—nobody will want to have anything to do with him."

"Off-side!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"How do you mean? I'll bet you he doesn't make a friend in the House, and I'm sorry for it, too; he's a good kid in some ways, I think."

"He's had an invitation to tea in a Fifth Form study already."

"Gammon!"

"Fact!" said Tom Merry.

"Who is it, then?"

"Cutts."

"Oh, Cutts! Has the new kid got money?" asked Manners—that being the most natural question in the world on hearing that Cutts had taken notice of a new kid.

"Rolling in it, I believe," said Tom Merry. "It seems that Hammond's pater has made a pile of tin out of 'Ammond's 'Igh-class 'Ats, all at one price—three-and-nine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, Cutts will help him to spend it," said Lowther, with a curl of the lip. "I know the little game. He tried to get D'Arcy into it in the same way—a little game of nap in the study—sixpenny points—a nice evening with Cutts & Co., and nothing in your pocket when you say good-bye. I know the rotter."

Tom Merry looked very grave.

"I suppose that's it, when you come to think of it," he said.

"Of course it is, fathead! Do you think Cutts, the noble dandy of the Fifth, is pining for society from the Bethnal Green Road?" demanded Lowther.

"I suppose not. But I say, it's rotten if Cutts is allowed to take that kid in, and welsh him," said Tom seriously. "He welshed me once, and he's done it on lots of kids that had plenty of tin. He ought to be stopped."

"He won't be stopped unless the Head finds him out, and Cutts is too jolly careful for that," said Manners. "Even if a fellow sneaked, there's no proof. It would be his word against Cutts's, and Cutts knows how to keep in the masters' good graces. He does hardly any work, but he's so jolly clever that he's always top of the class, and he makes the masters believe he's a swot. Whereas, really, if they only knew!"

"Lucky for Cutts they don't; but look here. If that inexperienced kid is going to be taken in, isn't it up to us to give him a tip?" said Tom Merry uneasily. "Blessed if I like to see him being led like a lamb to the slaughter."

"Better mind our own business. Besides, if he loses his money it'll be a lesson to him, and I dare say there's lots more in 'Ammond's 'Igh-class 'Ats!"

"Yes, but——"

"Besides, he wouldn't listen to you——"

"He seems a sensible little chap," said Tom. "He might. Anyway, I'm jolly well going to speak to him—it would only be decent. He's all alone here, and it's up to somebody to give him a word of advice about things."

"Always a giddy good Samaritan!" groaned Lowther. "Have you got any tracts in your trousers-pockets to give him?"

"Oh, rats!"

"You've got your prep. to do," said Manners, as Tom Merry turned towards the door.

"Blow the prep.!"

And Tom quitted the study.

CHAPTER 8.

Tom Merry Means Well.

HARRY HAMMOND came away from Knox's study feeling very cheerful.

He was of a cheerful nature, and he had not allowed his uncomfortable reception at St. Jim's to affect his spirits. But even if that had been the case, the kindness he had received from the seniors would have cheered him. Knox did not look like a kind-hearted fellow certainly; but he had treated Hammond very well, and given him many valuable tips that would be useful to a new boy. Also, by his authority as prefect, he made it possible for Hammond to live a quiet life in his own study. For however much Bates and Smith minor might bluster and threaten, they would not really venture to act in opposition to a prefect's orders, when they knew that the prefect's eye was upon them.

And Cutts, too—the magnificent Cutts—he had taken notice of the Cockney, and had been kindness itself. Hammond's opinion of the St. Jim's fellows was rising. All of them, evidently, were not snobs or bullies. Fatty Wynn had been kind to him, but he could not help suspecting that the feed had had something to do with that. But he could not possibly see any ulterior motives for the kindness of Cutts and Knox, and so he was cheered by it, and was duly grateful.

"Hallo, kid, I was looking for you!"

It was Tom Merry's cheerful voice, as Hammond passed the window-seat in the passage. The captain of the Shell gave him a pleasant nod.

"'Allo!" said Hammond, stopping. "Lookin' for me, was you?"

"Yes," said Tom.

Hammond laid down his books on the window-seat, and pushed back his cuffs.

"Well, I'm ready," he said. "Come on! I dessay I can give you a wipe round the kisser the same as I 'ave to the other blokes.

"Wha-a-at!"

"Put up yer dukes," continued Hammond. "I tell yer I'm ready. Wotcher waiting for?"

Tom Merry burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hammond eyed him suspiciously.

"Wot's the gime?" he asked. "P'r'aps if you'll tell me the joke, I'll larf, too. And p'r'aps I'll dot yer on the smeller. Now, then."

"I wasn't looking for you to fight you," Tom Merry explained amicably. "I wanted to speak to you."

"Ho!" said Hammond. "That's different. Sorry I was mistooken. I ain't the bloke to cut up rusty over nothin', nohow. Wot is it, then?"

Tom Merry waved his hand to the window-seat.

"Squat down," he said. "I want to talk to you, Hammond."

Hammond sat down.

"I'm Tom Merry, of the Shell!" the junior explained. "I don't know you, but as you're a new kid, I thought I'd speak to you——"

"Werry kind of you, I'm sure," said Hammond. "But wot's the matter? You ain't called me a Cockney, or a blighter, or a outsider yet."

"And I'm not going to," said Tom Merry quietly. "I want to speak to you in a friendly way, and tell you something, as you don't know the ropes here."

"Thanky!"

"You're going to supper in Cutts's study?"

"Yes. Splendid chap, ain't he," said Hammond enthusiastically. "He's arsked me, jest as if I was as good as 'e is, and I ain't."

"I fancy you're a good deal better, as a matter of fact," said Tom Merry drily.

Hammond chuckled.

"Gammon!" he said tersely.

"I hardly know how to begin," said Tom Merry. "It sounds like speaking of a chap behind his back, which is always rotten; but if Cutts were here I'd say just the same—in fact, I'm quite willing to come into his study, and say it before him, if you like."

Hammond rose to his feet.

"You goin' to say anythin' agin Cutts?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then I don't want to 'ear it! 'E's a good sort."

"Look here," said Tom impressively, "there are some things that are not allowed in this school, but are done under the rose by fellows who ought to be sacked. Smoking is one of them, and playing cards for money is another. I want to warn you, if you go to Cutts's study, not to be drawn into playing nap for money stakes. Any fellow found doing it would be kicked out of the school, to say nothing of the thing being wrong in itself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you laughing at, you ass?" demanded Tom Merry, somewhat nettled.

"Oh, my 'at! W'y, I've played nap ever since I could walk and talk," said Hammond. "Played it fur cherry-stones when I 'adn't any spondulics, and played it fur money when I had any. Growed up on nap and banker and shove-'apenny, I did."

"But it isn't right," said Tom Merry, somewhat taken aback.

"W'y isn't it?"

"Gambling is wrong and rotten and no class," said Tom Merry warmly. "Decent people don't gamble. It's bad form. Besides, it's forbidden here, and, as I said, any fellow gambling would be sent away from the school at once if he were found out."

"But they ain't always found out, I s'pose?"

"No; some are too clever, like Cutts."

"Wot's good enough for Cutts is good enough for me, I reckon," said Hammond. "I don't see nothin' wrong in it. We 'ave different ideas in Bethnal Green, I s'pose. You young gents 'ere don't see nothin' wrong in jumpin' on a new-comer, simply 'cause he ain't quite like yourselves, and tryin' to down him, two to one. The lads in Bethnal Green would call that no class. You see, we're different."

"Well, I thought I ought to give you the tip, that's all," said Tom Merry awkwardly. "I suppose it won't do any

good, but there you are. I felt I ought to do it. Cutts swindled me once, and that's my reason."

"I reckon that's a lie," said Hammond.

Tom Merry flushed crimson.

"What—what did you say?"

"Cutts is a gentleman, and I don't believe he would swindle nobody," said Hammond. "I know he's been werry kind to me, when the other blokes are all down on a poor chap for no fault of his own, and I won't 'ear nothin' said agin Cutts, so there."

Tom Merry controlled his temper with difficulty.

"You had better choose your language a bit more carefully, or I shall be down on you, as well as the other fellows," he said.

"I don't care! I'm ready for a scrap, if you're lookin' for trouble," said the Cockney schoolboy independently. "I dessay you mean well, and I dessay agin that you're a-tryin' to pull my leg. How'd I know? But I know one thing dead certain—that I ain't 'earin' nothin' said agin Cutts."

"Well, you're a young ass, and I suppose it was no use speaking to you," said Tom Merry. "You'll find out for yourself before long—when your money is in Cutts's pocket."

"I tell you I ain't 'earin' nothin' agin Cutts!" exclaimed Hammond fiercely. "And if you says another word I'll pull your nose!"

"Why, you cheeky little rotter——" Tom Merry broke out indignantly.

"Cheeky rotter yourself!"

"I've a good mind to——"

"Rats!"

Tom Merry clenched his hands. He was very angry now, but he held himself in check. Harry Hammond had enough troubles in store without a licking from the captain of the Shell to start with. But Hammond mistook his intentions, as was natural enough, and he rushed in at once, hitting out. Tom Merry caught a set of knuckles that seemed as hard as iron, and he caught them with his nose, and he staggered back and sat down violently on the seat.

He was up again in a moment, springing at Hammond. In a second they were going it hammer and tongs, punching and pommelling with all their hearts.

"Hallo! What's the row?" shouted Monty Lowther, stepping out of the study. "Tommy! Why—what—my hat! Lend a hand here, Manners!"

The chums of the Shell rushed to interfere. Lowther grasped Tom Merry, and Manners laid hold of the Cockney, and they were dragged forcibly apart. Hammond was panting, as he clasped his hand to his nose, and Tom Merry put up his fingers to his eye, which felt as if it had been knocked right into his head.

"Now, cheese it!" said Lowther soothingly. "Is this the way you befriend a new kid, Tommy? I'm surprised at you!"

"Well, he checked me," said Tom, cooling down a little. "But——"

"Want some more, cocky?" asked Hammond. "There's lots more where that come from. We know how to scrap in the Bethnal Green Rowd, I promise yer."

Tom Merry walked away without replying. He was sorry that he had quarrelled with the new boy, and he did not want it to go any farther. If Hammond had shown any sign of "crowing," the Shell fellow would have started again; but the Cockney only gave a good-natured grin, and sauntered away. Lowther and Manners marched Tom into the study.

"Didn't I tell you to mind your own bizney?" Lowther demanded severely.

Tom Merry grinned ruefully.

"Well, you did, and I wish I'd done it now—but I meant well!"

"Never mean well, my son; it's a dangerous habit," said Lowther solemnly. "You'd better get a beefsteak for your eye, or you'll have a purple glory by to-morrow morning. And leave the giddy Cockney alone."

And Tom Merry decided that he would.

CHAPTER 9.

A Little Game.

CUTTS of the Fifth was sitting at his table, in his study, when Knox came in, later in the evening. The Sixth-Former glanced round the room.

"Our guttersnipe friend not arrived yet?" he asked.

"Not yet," grinned Cutts.

"Who's coming besides?"

"Prye of the Fifth."

"Good—quite a nice little party," said Knox. "What's it going to be?"

"Nap!"

"Quite sure about the tin?" asked Knox a little anxiously. "The fellow is simply a frightful outsider—a regular little rat of the slums. I've been talking to him in my study—he talks horribly—blessed if I feel I can quite stand him, even if he is gilt-edged. But are you quite certain about the gilt edge?"

"Do you think I should have spoken to the little cad if I hadn't been?" said Cutts contemptuously. "I know all about him—as soon as I heard that he was coming to St. Jim's I counted on him to make up what I've lost on the steeplechases this season. He's simply rolling in money. His father gave ten thousand quid to Sir John Tressady's charity scheme in Bethnal Green—that's how he got admitted here. Hammond's High-Class Hats is a limited company now, worth millions. The brat changed a fiver at the school shop this afternoon, and spent nearly all of it there. He's rolling in money—we may make ten or fifteen pounds out of him this evening."

Knox's eyes glistened.

"My hat! That's worth while!"

"I should say so!" said Cutts. "When we've squeezed the little cad dry, we can drop him fast enough, and anyway we needn't recognise him at any time when we don't want to. If he has a constant supply of cash from home, it will be a regular income for us."

"I'll have the little beast to tea in my study," said Knox.

Cutts shook his head.

"No, you won't," he said coolly. "I've taken you into this game, and it's got to be played fair and square. No skinning the pigeon for your own benefit. Prye and I have got to be present every time and take our whack, and we'll do the same by you. That's fair."

Knox chuckled.

"I'm agreeable. I suppose it will be easy enough; he won't be up to our form."

"A guttersnipe like that!" said Cutts contemptuously. "Of course not."

Prye came into the study, followed by Harry Hammond. They had encountered in the passage.

"Here's our young friend!" said Prye genially. "I met him in the passage and introduced myself."

"Come in, Hammond!" said Cutts. "Make yourself at home, my boy!"

"Thanky, Master Cutts!" said Hammond.

"Not Master Cutts—I'm Cutts to my friends!" said the Fifth-Former, "and I hope we're going to be friends, Hammond!"

Hammond flushed with pleasure.

"I 'ope so, Cutts," he said. "I know I'd like it well enough. I don't know 'ow to thank you for bein' so sportin' to me!"

"I've taken a fancy to you," said Cutts. "I like your looks. Now, lock the door, Prye, old man, in case any inquisitive beast should poke his nose in. You see, Hammond, we have to do some things under the rose here—Head's a strict old beak—but we manage to amuse ourselves all the same."

"I see," said Hammond.

"Ever played cards before?"

"Wot-'o!"

"Know how to play nap?"

"Played it ever since I was born," said Hammond—"and shove-'apenny, too!"

"I'm afraid I am not acquainted with the game of shove-halfpenny," said Cutts, with elaborate politeness. "But we'll have a little game of nap, if you care for it."

"Like a bird."

Cutts produced the cards from a drawer of the table, and a box of cigarettes.

"Smoke?" he inquired, as the three seniors helped themselves.

Hammond hesitated. He had fallen into the habit of smoking cigarettes in his early home, but since learning that it was against the rules at St. Jim's, he had manfully made up his mind to smoke no more. But he did not wish to appear standoffish, as he would have called it, nor would he appear to reprove the admired Cutts by declining to do as Cutts did.

"Thanks!" he said; and accepted the cigarette, and Cutts gave him a light. Then they sat down to the cards.

"Of course, a junior kid won't have much tin to lose," said Cutts pleasantly. "We understand that. We usually play for small points ourselves, just to make the game interesting, but if you'd prefer to play for—for counters——"

"No fear!" said Hammond. "I've got lots of money!"

"Oh, but we shouldn't like to win your few shillings, you know——"

"My guv'nor gives me all the money I want," said Hammond, blissfully unconscious of the fact that the Fifth-Former was leading him on. "I've got fifteen quid in me pockets now, and I can 'ave all I choose to arsk for."

"Not really!" exclaimed Cutts, with a look of astonishment.

"Look 'ere!"

And Hammond took out three five-pound notes, several sovereigns, and a heap of silver with some half-sovereigns in it. The three seniors caught their breath. They had expected that the rich hat-maker's son would be a pigeon worth plucking, but they had hardly anticipated such a prize as this. They exchanged involuntary glances of satisfaction and greed.

"Oh, that alters the case!" said Cutts airily. "You can afford to pay up if you lose."

"Wot-'o!"

"Better than we can, I dare say," said Knox genially. "I dare say young Hammond will get out with all our cash in his pockets."

And the three seniors laughed heartily—that suggestion, the exact reverse of what they intended, struck them as comical.

"Well, let's get to business," said Cutts, shuffling the cards. "Shall we make it sixpenny points—or a shilling?"

"Jest as you like, fur as I'm concerned," said Hammond.

"A shilling a time, then," said Cutts.

And they proceeded to play.

Three fellows, much older than their intended victim, and acting in collusion with utter unscrupulousness, had no doubt whatever about their ability to "skin" the unfortunate pigeon. They regarded the result of that little game as a foregone conclusion. It was only a matter of an hour or so before all the heap of wealth in front of Hammond was transferred to their pockets.

But they reckoned without their guest.

Young as Hammond was, he had all a Cockney's almost miraculous keenness of wit, and he was, as a matter of fact, much sharper than the sharp and unscrupulous Cutts himself. And in his peculiar early life, he had played cards for money very often, and he knew the game much better than the black sheep of St. Jim's, though they prided themselves very much upon their knowledge of what was what.

To the surprise of his kind hosts Hammond won.

They had allowed him to score in the first few rounds, to encourage him, but after that, thinking that it was time for the skinning process to commence, they set to work in earnest.

But the Cockney schoolboy continued to win.

He lost sometimes, and when he lost he paid up with cheerful alacrity; but his luck was good most of the time, and the faces of his entertainers became more and more serious as the game progressed.

Cutts & Co. began to exchange very curious glances.

Hammond was quite unconscious of the feelings of the rest of the party. He was enjoying himself. He sipped Cutts's lemonade, smoked Cutts's cigarettes, and won Cutts's money with great cheerfulness.

Longer and longer grew the faces of the three young rascals.

The hawks had invited the pigeon into their study to pluck him; and the hawks were undergoing the plucking instead of the pigeon. It was a complete reversal of the intended programme.

Prye rose from the table at last—stony. His cash was mostly in the pile before Hammond.

"Not done?" asked Cutts.

"Yes," said Prye, with a scowl, which he vainly tried to repress; "I'll smoke a bit, and look on."

Prye smoked and looked on—behind Hammond's chair. But the signals he had intended to convey concerning Hammond's cards were not conveyed. For Hammond—though he did not suspect Prye's intention—was cautious by nature, and it was not possible for Prye to see the cards over his shoulder.

Cutts was growing desperate by this time.

He had not added cheating at cards to his other accomplishments so far; but at that moment he bitterly anathematised his carelessness in not having provided himself with a pack of marked cards for the entertainment of the Cockney schoolboy.

By acting in collusion, the three rascals had not the slightest doubt that they would succeed in "skinning" a raw and ignorant lad.

But it was only too clear that they had met more than their match in this cheerful denizen of the Bethnal Green Road.

Knox rose from the table in a state of exasperation he could hardly conceal. Cutts continued the "little game" with Hammond alone.

The black sheep of the Fifth was growing reckless now. In the hope of getting back the cash that had flowed freely over to Hammond's side of the table, he doubled the stakes, Hammond cheerfully consenting. He had a little luck, and his spirits rose—but it changed again—and his recklessness threw away his chances. He suggested five-shilling points, and Hammond agreed, and almost immediately won on nap, which meant that Cutts had to hand him twenty-five shillings. Which cleared Cutts out to the last sixpence.

Cutts rose to his feet.

"Finished?" asked Hammond, rising too.

"Yes," said the Fifth-Former, between his teeth.

Hammond glanced at him in surprise. He had been too interested in the game to notice Cutts's expression before. Now he could not fail to note the sullen anger and resentment in the Fifth-Former's looks. He felt uneas yat once.

"I sye, I've 'ad all the luck!" he remarked. "I dessay it'll turn round another time, you know."

Cutts glanced at his companions. They had lost six or seven pounds among them, as well as several I O U's that Knox and Prye had added before they retired from the game. And to let Hammond depart with their money was a thing they never dreamed of. He had come there to be skinned, and at all events he should not depart from the study with their cash in his pocket.

Hammond was already stowing the money away.

"Not quite so fast with that cash," said Cutts grimly.

Hammond started.

"Wotcher mean?" he asked.

"I mean," said Cutts deliberately, "that you've cheated in the game, and that you're going to hand back that cash."

And Knox and Prye, taking their cue from their leader, chimed in:

"Yes, rather!"

CHAPTER 10.

Shown Up!

HAMMOND turned crimson.

Knox had stepped between him and the door instinctively.

There was no escape for the junior, if he had thought of it. But he was not thinking of that.

He was beginning to understand now, as he looked at the angry, scowling faces of the three seniors. He remembered Tom Merry's warning. He had refused to listen to a word against Cutts. And if he had lost his money, Cutts would have remained as genial as ever, and the Cockney's admiration for him would have continued unimpaired. But Cutts a winner, and Cutts a loser were two very different persons. Without the slightest scruple the blackguard of the Fifth intended to take back the money he had lost.

"Cheated!" repeated Hammond.

"Yes!"

"That's a lie!"

Cutts made a threatening gesture.

"Don't give me any of your cheek, you guttersnipe. Hand back that money at once, and get out of my study."

"I'll get outer yer study fast enough," said Hammond angrily. "But if you say I didn't play the game fair, yer a liar!"

"Give him a larruping!" said Prye.

"Knock his cheeky head off!" growled Knox—"the low-down, low-bred guttersnipe! He's hardly fit for a decent fellow to touch, though."

"There ain't any decent fellers 'ere to touch me," said Hammond, defiantly.

"Are you going to hand back that money?" exclaimed Cutts furiously, striding towards the junior.

Hammond glanced quickly round. Then he made a spring towards the fender, grasped the heavy, iron poker, and swung it in the air. His teeth had come hard together, and there was a fierce gleam in his eyes.

"'Ands off!" he said.

Cutts halted in spite of himself. Blackguard as he was, he was no coward; but he did not want his skull fractured. And the desperate look of the Cockney schoolboy showed that he would hit, and hit hard.

"Put down that poker!" said Cutts, in a suppressed voice, trembling with rage.

"Rats!"

"You guttersnipe——"

"You East-End rotter!" said Knox.

Hammond laughed.

"You're calling me some pretty names," he said. "I'll tell yer wot I think of you, too. You're a gang of sharpers, that's wot you are."

"You—you——"

"I was warned afore I come 'ere," said Hammond fearlessly. "I wouldn't 'ear a word agin you, Cutts, and I punched the feller wot tried to give me the office. I thought that much of you. Now I know wot you are—a sharper. You 'ad me 'ere to win my money, and you're cuttin' up rusty 'cause you ain't collared the boodle. That's you!"

Cutts ground his teeth with rage. It was true enough, but that did not make it any the more pleasant to be slanged by this unspeakable outsider.

"I don't want to bandy words with you," said Cutts. "Hand over the money, and go!"

"I ain't 'andin' it over," said Hammond coolly. "I've won it in a fair gime—fair as fur as I was concerned, anywye. I don't want yer money. I got lots of my own. I reckon 'Ammond's 'Igh-Class 'Ats could buy up the lot of yer. You can 'ave your money back—if you beg my pardon for callin' me a cheat. I'm not standin' that."

Cutts hesitated.

Rascal as he was, he had felt that it was impossible to demand his money back without giving some reason, and therefore he had made the accusation. But after all, words cost him little, and he was anxious to get rid of his truculent guest without a disturbance. A struggle in the study would bring very inconvenient attention in that direction.

"Very well," said Cutts. "I withdraw what I said, on condition that you lay our money on the table, and clear out."

"I'll do that," said Hammond. "I don't want your dirty money. I reckon you can't afford to lose a few quid, anywye."

And he counted out the money, and laid it on the table.

Cutts unlocked the door, and Hammond tossed the poker into the grate, and walked out of the study.

The door was closed after him. Then the three rascals looked at one another.

"Well, this is a go!" murmured Prye.

"That's the pigeon you were so sure of plucking, Cutts," said Knox, with a sneer. "We've given ourselves right away with him; and what have we got for our trouble?"

"How was I to know he was above our weight?" snarled Cutts.

"It was a bit thick, taking the money back," muttered Prye. "He won it fairly enough."

"You needn't take yours, if you don't want to," sneered Cutts.

But Prye's scruples did not extend so far as that. The trio sorted out their money, and pocketed it, and parted in the worst of tempers. Gerald Cutts's scheme for making an income out of the Cockney was completely knocked on the head now, and it was a bitter disappointment for the three sharpers.

Hammond's face was clouded as he went down the passage. For the money he cared nothing; he had more than he wanted of that. But his ideal had been shattered. His admiration of Cutts had been deep and sincere, and it was quite gone now. The splendid, imposing senior who had been so kind and cordial to him—he knew him for what he was worth now—a common sharper, who had made friendly overtures to a fellow he despised at heart, for the sake of getting his money. Hammond, owing to his peculiar training, had a knowledge of the world much greater than usually fell to boys of his age; but this discovery was a shock to him. And his opinion of St. Jim's was at the lowest ebb.

Fellows who affected to regard him with contempt and disgust, were not above being friendly with him for the sake of his money, and were not at all scrupulous about the way they laid hands on it. That was what Hammond was thinking.

"I ain't been 'ere a 'ole day yet, and I'm fed up with the place," he muttered. "Snobs and bullies and swindlers, that's wot they are!"

He met the Shell fellows in the passage, going up to their dormitory. He grinned a little as he noted that Tom Merry's eye had assumed a purple hue.

He came directly up to the captain of the Shell, who looked at him very grimly. Monty Lowther made a warning sign to him.

"You clear off, young Sikes. You are superfluous."

"I dunno wot that means," said Hammond; "but I ain't lookin' for trouble. I want to beg your pardon for punchin' your eye, Merry."

"Oh!" said Tom.

"You was right," said Hammond; "they was a gang of swindlers, and they 'ave give themselves away. I'm sorry I cut up so rusty, that's all."

And Hammond walked away before Tom Merry could reply.

"Not a bad sort, after all," said Tom, as the Shell fellows went into their dormitory. "It was decent of him to own up. But that won't mend my eye, the silly young ass!"

CHAPTER 11.

Fist to Fist!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY came up the stairs of the Fourth on his way to the dormitory. He was a little late for bed, and was in a hurry; and he was passing Hammond without glancing at him, when Hammond jerked him by the sleeve. The swell of St. Jim's drew back quickly.

"Pway don't gwab me like that!" he said.

"S'pose I ain't good enough to touch you!" sneered Hammond resentfully.

"Well, if you choose to put it that way, you are quite wight," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I should not have said so, but it is the fact."

"I was goin' to ask you the wye to my dormitory," said Hammond.

"I am goin' there, and you are at liberty to follah me," said Arthur Augustus.

"Thanky kindly, me lord."

Arthur Augustus frowned and walked on majestically. Harry Hammond grinned his huge grin, and fell into step behind him, imitating his lordly gait as he marched up the dormitory passage. Arthur Augustus did not look back, and he was quite unaware of the little joke, till a roar of laughter from the open doorway of the dormitory warned him. Blake and Herries and Digby were looking out for him, and they saw him marching up the passage with Hammond strutting after him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy was puzzled for a moment, and then he turned his head, and caught the Cockney in the act. His face went crimson with anger.

"You cheeky wascal!" he exclaimed wrathfully.

"Wot's the matter?" asked Hammond innocently. "I s'pose I can walk up the passage if I likes, can't I?"

"You were pokin' fun at me, you feahful wottah!"

"It's up to me to imitate a gent like you," said Hammond. "I'm only a common Cockney from Bethnal Green Rowd, and I'm tryin' to learn."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus crossly. "There is no occasion whatever for mewwiment. I wegard this person as a cheekay cad!"

"Same to you, and many of 'em!" said Hammond cheerfully.

"You uttah wottah!"

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, you outsidah, I shall have no wesource but to administah a feahful thwashin'. I wathah think that's what you want."

"Rats!" said Hammond calmly.

Arthur Augustus was pushing back his cuffs, as a preliminary to administering the fearful thrashing, when Kildare of the Sixth looked out of the dorm. Kildare was there to see lights out, and he

Just at the finish Hammond's left came out, and Arthur Augustus was fairly swept off his feet, and landed on the floor with a crash. "That's the Bethnal Green left!" said the Cockney schoolboy coolly. (*See Chapter* 12.)

was not disposed to await the convenience of Arthur Augustus.

"Come in!" he said sharply. "If you start rowing in the passage you'll be licked."

"Weally, Kildare——"

"Sharp's the word."

Arthur Augustus relinquished his warlike intentions, and went into the dormitory. Harry Hammond followed him in. The Fourth-Formers went to bed, and Kildare put out the light and left the dormitory.

Arthur Augustus was in a wrathful mood. He had tried nobly to overcome his prejudice against Hammond, for he had a horror of being anything that could be called snobbish. But he simply could not help it. Hammond worried his nerves, as he confided pathetically to Blake; he simply could not stand the chap. And to be checked by him was having insult added to injury. But D'Arcy was not quarrelsome, and he would have allowed the matter to drop, if a mischief-maker had not been keen to make the trouble worse. It was a chance for Levison of the Fourth, and Levison did not let it slip.

"You getting up, D'Arcy?" he called out.

"I am not gettin' up, Levison."

"That's right—stay where you are!" chuckled Levison. "You're safer in bed."

"I fail to compwehend you, Levison."

"That new chap is a regular prizefighter," explained Levison. "He licked Smith minor and Bates, the two together, in their study. He would simply wipe up the dormitory with you if you tackled him."

"He didn't!" howled Smith minor and Bates simultaneously.

"He jolly well did, and wrecked the study, too, when you tried to turn him out," said Levison. "I should like to see him handle Gussy. There wouldn't be much left of Gussy!"

"Weally, Levison——"

"You stay in bed while you're safe, Adolphus!" said the cad of the Fourth tauntingly.

"If you mean to imply, Levison, that I am afwaid of that wottah——"

"Rotter yourself!" said Hammond cheerily. "Don't you call me nimes, or I'll get up and thump you anywye."

"You wank outsidah——"

"I've told you to shut up!" said Hammond grimly. "You call me nimes jest once more, and I'll have you out on the floor afore you can say 'Crikey!'"

"I am not likely to say such a thing as crikey, you uttah wottah! My tongue would be incapable of pwonouncin' such a howwibly vulgah expwession as crikey. I could not possibly uttah it, you feahful outsidah—yawoooh!"

Hammond had kept his word.

He had jumped out of bed, and now his grasp was upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and the swell of St. Jim's found himself rolling in his bedclothes on the floor of the dormitory.

"Bai Jove, you feahful beast! Yow!" roared D'Arcy, as he bumped on the floor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus struggled wildly out of the bedclothes. His wrath was flowing over now. It was impossible to forgive the outrage of having the Cockney's hands actually laid upon him.

The swell of St. Jim's scrambled wildly to his feet, panting with wrath.

"You feahful wottah!" he yelled. "Where are you? I'm goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Kim on, then!" said Hammond coolly.

"Shut up, Gussy!" said Blake, slipping out of bed. "You hadn't any right to call him names. Don't start scrapping now."

"I am goin' to thwash him. Where are you, you wottah?" howled D'Arcy.

He made a blind rush in the darkness in search of Hammond. He collided with somebody, and grasped him at once, and began to pommel furiously.

"Take that, you wottah! Take that—and that—and—— Bai Jove, is that you, Blake?"

"You silly idiot!" shrieked Blake. "Leggo! I—I'll smash you! I——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Levison.

"I—I'm awf'ly sowwy, deah boy!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I took you for that feahful wottah in the dark. Where is the beast hidin' himself?"

"I ain't 'idin'," said Hammond. "I'm waiting for yer. If anybody'll get a light, I'll wipe up the floor with yer in two shikes."

Several fellows were scrambling out of bed to get matches and candle-ends. Light glimmered in the dormitory. The juniors were all excited now, and not at all averse to seeing a "scrap" between the swell of St. Jim's and the obnoxious Cockney. Arthur Augustus, in spite of his elegant manners and customs, was a great fighting-man when his temper was roused, and it certainly was roused now to boiling-point. The juniors had little doubt that the Cockney would be knocked into a cocked hat, with the exception of Smith minor and Bates, who had some doubts on the subject.

"Light the giddy candles," said Kerruish. "Don't make too much row, or we shall have the prefects here."

"Sure, and we don't want the illigant scrap interrupted," said Reilly. "Shove a bolster along the door, so they won't see the light from the passage."

Blake and Digby were trying in vain to pacify their chum. D'Arcy refused to listen to the counsels of peace. He declined to put off the matter till the morning. Nothing but immediate satisfaction was of any use to the swell of St. Jim's.

"I'm goin' to thwash him, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus obstinately. "I have twied to beah with him, but now he has laid his wascally hands on me, there is nothin' to do but to give him a feahful thwashin'."

"Or to take one!" grinned Levison.

"You shut up, you rotter!" growled Blake. "I'd wipe up the floor with you for two pins, and I will anyway, if you don't dry up!"

"I'm ready," announced Hammond. "If the gent ain't comin' up to the scratch, I'll get back to bed. It's cold waitin' 'ere."

"I am weady, you wottah!"

"Then walk up, and not so much of your chin-wag!" said Hammond.

Arthur Augustus rushed at him.

It seemed a foregone conclusion that the Cockney from Bethnal Green was bound to crumple up under the assault of a scion of the noble house of D'Arcy—at least, it seemed so to Arthur Augustus.

But it did not happen.

D'Arcy's lashing fists were swept into the air, and the Cockney's right came out like a hammer, catching the swell of St. Jim's right upon the point of the chin.

Arthur Augustus went over backwards, his feet going clear of the floor, and he came down with a terrific bump.

"Ow!"

"My hat," murmured Blake, "that chap can hit! Gussy has woke up the wrong passenger."

"Sure and he has," said Reilly; "but he's not beaten yet. Get up, Gussy darling, and pile in! Never say die!"

Arthur Augustus sat up dazedly on the floor. His hand was to his chin, feeling whether it was still there. It felt as if it wasn't.

"Bai Jove!" he muttered. "What a fearful whack! Howevah, I shall thwash him!"

And he staggered to his feet.

"Hold on!" said Blake. "If this is going on, we'll have it in order—rounds and rests, according to rules. Hold on, Gussy!"

"Yaas, deah boy."

Blake sorted out his watch from under his pillow. The eager juniors formed a wide ring, and the two combatants occupied the centre of it.

Digby constituted himself D'Arcy's second. Hammond glanced round the dormitory. Was there any fellow in all that crowd who would care to act for him? He did not think so. But he was mistaken. Levison came forward—he had his own reasons.

"I'm your second, kid," he said affably.

"Thanky," said Hammond.

"Ready?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm waitin'."

"Time!"

CHAPTER 12.

A Good Plucked One!

"TIME!"

Arthur Augustus started at once.

He was anxious to get the combat over, to get the cheeky Cockney well thrashed, in order partly to convince the fellows that he could do it, and in order partly, perhaps, to convince himself.

Hammond was a tougher customer than he had anticipated; but the swell of St. Jim's was as brave as a lion, and he would never have dreamed of backing out, even if he had been certain of defeat.

And D'Arcy was sturdy, and he was a good boxer. In the first round, at least, he fully held his own.

A good many heavy blows came home on Hammond's face and chest, but the Cockney bore his punishment without the slightest murmur. It was evident that he was "hard" all through.

They rested for a minute after the round, Blake timing them.

Arthur Augustus was breathing very heavily as he sat on the edge of the bed. It was a cold, cold night, but exertion had made him warm, and he was crimson. Digby fanned him with a slipper.

"Time!"

D'Arcy jumped up at once and stepped into the ring. The Cockney was equally prompt. In the second round, Arthur Augustus had the advantage most of the time, driving the Cockney round the ring under a shower of blows. But just at the finish Hammond's left came out, and Arthur Augustus was fairly swept off his feet, and he landed on the floor with a crash.

"Oh, my eye!" murmured Blake.

"Poor old Gussy!" groaned Digby.

"Time!"

"That's the Bethnal Green left," said Hammond coolly.

Digby picked Arthur Augustus up. The swell of St. Jim's was quite dazed. He had had several fights on his hands during his career at St. Jim's, but he had never received so terrific a drive before. Apparently the youths in the Bethnal Green Road were trained to be hard hitters.

"Feel pretty bad, old chap?" murmured Digby sympathetically.

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped D'Arcy. "That was a weally tewwific dwive, deah boy. I should nevah weally have thought that wottah had it in him."

"Better chuck it—what?"

"Wats!"

"He's awfully tough!" hinted Digby.

"He is a wathah tough customah, I am awah," said Arthur Augustus. "But I weally think I can thwash him. Anyway, I am goin' to twy. I sha'n't leave off so long as I can stand upwight, deah boy."

"Time!"

The third round was very rough on D'Arcy. After that knock-out blow, he was very groggy; and it was only his indomitable pluck that kept him going. He stood up bravely to the Cockney, and he was knocked all round the ring. Before the third round ended, it was evident to all—except D'Arcy—that he was beaten. But the swell of St. Jim's refused to recognise the fact. He kept on till the call of time, and then Digby had to support him to the nearest bed to rest.

"Call it off now," whispered Dig.

"Wats!"

"Now, look here, Gussy——" urged his chum.

"I wefuse to call it off," said Arthur Augustus, in a tone

of finality. And he reeled into the ring at the call of time.

His friends were watching him anxiously now. They did not like to see their elegant chum handled in this way; but they could not, of course, interfere. So long as Arthur Augustus chose to continue, so long must his punishment go on.

If the Cockney had chosen, he could have damaged his opponent terribly, as the fight was taking place without gloves. But the juniors observed that in the fourth round he was content with defending himself, and did not hit out. Several opportunities occurred of knocking out the swell of St. Jim's, but the "Bethnal Green left" did not come into play again.

"Pile in, Hammond!" exclaimed Levison. "You're not half licking him."

But Hammond took no notice of his second's advice.

The round was nearly over when Arthur Augustus made a fierce effort and attacked hotly. Then Hammond had to hit out, and the swell of St. Jim's rolled on the floor, with a gasp. And at the same moment the door was thrown open, and Kildare of the Sixth strode in, with a cane in his hand, and a dark frown upon his face.

There was no time for the Fourth-Formers to dodge back into bed. In the excitement of the fight they had forgotten prefects and everything else. They were fairly caught in the act. Not a fellow there was in bed. Candle-ends were glimmering alight on all sides. The juniors started, as the door opened. And they stared grimly at the captain of the school, who stared grimly at them.

"Well," said Kildare, in measured tones, "what does this mean?"

"Gwooh!"

"Get up, D'Arcy!"

"He can't!" said Levison maliciously. "He's been licked.

Blake drove his elbow into the ribs of the cad of the Fourth, and Levison yelped. Then Blake and Digby raised D'Arcy up.

Kildare looked at his bruised face frowningly.

"You have been fighting, of course, he said, "and without gloves. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves."

"We hadn't any gloves here," said Blake awkwardly.

"Fighting in the dormitory—after lights out!" said Kildare. "Who's the other? I can see that D'Arcy is one."

"I'm t'other," said Hammond cheerfully. "I'm sorry I've 'it 'im so 'ard, but I 'ad to; he came for me, you know."

"Hold out your hand, Hammond."

Hammond eyed him.

"Wot for?" he demanded.

"I'm going to cane you and D'Arcy for fighting in the dormitory after lights out," said Kildare sternly.

"Agin the rules is it?" said Hammond.

"You must know that it is. Hold out your hand at once."

"No 'urry, cocky," said Hammond coolly. "You ain't a master, I s'pose? Does the boys cane one another at this 'ere school?"

"I am a prefect," said Kildare; "the head prefect of the House. If you don't know our ways, it is time you learned them. This caning will help you learn. Hold out your hand a once, or I shall thrash you over the shoulders."

"My 'at!"

"Do you hear me?"

"Keep yer wool on, cocky! If you've got the right to cane me, accordin' to the rules, I ain't kickin' agin it," said Hammond. "I only wanted to know. There's my 'and!"

He held out his hand, and the cane came down with a swish. Hammond made a grimace, but he uttered no cry.

"Now the other!" said Kildare sternly.

Swish again!

Then the captain of St. Jim's turned to D'Arcy. The latter was sitting on the edge of the bed, gasping for breath, and evidently utterly exhausted. One of his eyes was closed, his nose was swollen, and his mouth looked a little sideways. Kildare hesitated. D'Arcy, of course, deserved a caning as much as his antagonist, and as Hammond had been caned, Kildare could not very well let D'Arcy off. But it went against the grain to cane him in his present state.

"I'm weady, Kildare," murmured Arthur Augustus faintly.

"Well, I must cane you," said Kildare; "you look as if you'd had punishment enough already, you young ass. But I've caned Hammond, and fair's fair. Hold out your hand."

"Oh, don't mind me!" grinned Hammond. "Let 'im orf, and give me a couple more—I can stand 'em better than 'e can."

Kildare stared at him.

"Don't be funny with me!" he exclaimed sharply.

"I ain't bein' funny," said Hammond. "Let 'im alone, and give me some more, and call it square, if you're bound to cane somebody."

The Cockney was evidently in earnest.

Kildare looked at him hard.

"Very well—hold out your hand!" he said abruptly.

Hammond promptly held out his hand, and the cane swished in the air. But it did not descend upon the outstretched hand. Kildare smiled instead.

"You're a good plucked one," he said. "Get into bed you young rascal. Every boy in this dormitory will take hundred lines for taking part in this row, and will write the out in the Form-room to-morrow afternoon. Now, turn in!"

And the Fourth-Formers turned in.

"If there's any more disturbance here to-night, I shall report it to the Housemaster," said Kildare, as a final warning.

And he turned out the light and departed.

But there was no more disturbance in the Fourth-Form dormitory that night. Arthur Augustus was finished. He knew that he was licked, and, bitter as that knowledge was, it was useless to dispute a self-evident fact. But it was long before the swell of St. Jim's slept. The effects of the "Bethnal Green left" were painful in the extreme, and the junior lay awake for long hours, aching, before sleep at last sealed his eyes.

CHAPTER 13.

Levison's Friendship!

MR. LATHOM, the master of the Fourth, looked very curiously at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at the breakfast-table the next morning. The aristocratic countenance of the swell of St. Jim's was shocking to look upon. One of his eyes was black, and the other was purple, his nose was swollen, and his lip was cut. Seldom or never had the swell of St. Jim's been seen in so parlous a state, even after the most terrific rags with the New House fellows. But the Form-master made no reference to the matter. Kildare had reported it to him, with the fact that the combatants had been duly punished, and Mr. Lathom let it pass.

But the results of that fight in the dormitory were very uncomfortable for all concerned. Kildare had imposed a long imposition which was to be written out that afternoon, a half-holiday. As usual, there was a football-match on in the afternoon, and the impot interfered with it very considerably. Darkness set in so early in the mid-winter days that the matches had to be started as early as possible, and now there was an imposition to be ground off before the fellows were free.

The match that afternoon was between the Shell and the Fourth, a Form match, and Blake, Herries, Digby, D'Arcy, Reilly, were in the Fourth Form team, the rest being made up of New House fellows—Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen. The latter six were not concerned in the detention, as they had not, of course, been mixed up in the row in the School House dormitory overnight.

Figgins & Co. grinned when they saw D'Arcy in the Form-room in the morning, for lessons; but Figgins looked serious when he learned of the detention.

"All through that blessed outsider!" growled Herries, rather unreasonably. "What the dooce did he want to come to St. Jim's far?"

"Did he begin it?" asked Figgins.

"Well, no; Gussy began it, I suppose," said Herries reflectively. "Still, it wouldn't have happened if he hadn't come here bothering us."

"Seems to me a very decent chap," said Fatty Wynn.

"Good enough for the New House, I dare say," grunted Herries.

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins promptly. "If he isn't good enough for the School House we wouldn't have him as a boot-boy on our side."

"Well, I think he's all right," said Fatty Wynn loyally. "I made his acquaintance yesterday, and I liked him all right. What does it matter if he does drop his h's, and turn his a's into i's? He's all right."

"Stood you a feed, I suppose?" jeered Levison.

Fatty Wynn coloured a little.

"Suppose he did?" he demanded. "Have you got anything to say about it? Looking for a pair of eyes to match Gussy's?"

And Levison did not rejoin, having a very wholesome respect for Fatty Wynn's hitting powers.

Unreasonably, but perhaps not unnaturally, the School House juniors agreed that it was all Hammond's fault that they were detained.

After dinner the School House portion of the Fourth Form had come into the Form-room again, to grind out lines.

Tom Merry looked in on them while they were so engaged.

"Buck up with that rot!" Tom Merry urged. "It'll be dark before we finish if we don't begin pretty soon."

"Faith, and we're bucking up," said Reilly dismally. "Sure, Kildare is a baste intirely."

Tom Merry laughed.

"You were kicking up an awful row last night," he said. "We heard you from the Shell dorm. Why couldn't you leave the scrap till the morning, and have it out in the gym?"

"Gussy was too keen on it!" growled Blake.

"He's not quite so keen now," remarked Levison. "Did you ever see a chivvy like that outside the New Cut on a Saturday night?"

Some of the juniors chuckled, and D'Arcy's discoloured face grew red. He rose, and put up his eyeglass, but it dropped again—his eye was too swollen to receive and retain that favourite adornment.

"Levison," he said very quietly, "I do not appwove of jokes about a chap's personal appeawance. It is quite twue that Hammond has licked me, but if I cannot thwash him I can thwash you quite easily, and I shall immediately pwoceed to do so if I have any of your impertinence."

"Bravo!" said Tom Merry. "Or if Levison's looking for trouble, I'll wallop him while you do your lines. Are you looking for trouble, Levison?"

"Go and eat coke!" growled Levison.

"You let Levison alone," said Hammond, looking up from his lines. "Levison ain't 'arf such a cad as the rest of you. You let 'im alone."

"Hallo! Are you chumming up with our inestimable Levison, young Sikes?" asked Monty Lowther, who was looking in at the door. "I wish you joy of him—quite an improvement on Cutts of the Fifth."

"If you call me Sikes again I'll come over to yer," said Hammond.

"Sikes!" said Lowther politely.

Hammond jumped up, but just then Kildare came along.

"Out of the Form-room at once, you Shell kids, unless you want to do lines, too!" he exclaimed. "You know you should not talk to a detention class."

"Right-ho! Keep your wool on!" murmured Lowther, and Tom Merry & Co. departed, leaving the hapless Fourth-Formers to their work.

It was done at last, and the juniors were free to depart. The other fellows were waiting for them on the football-ground impatiently.

"I shall have to ask you to excuse me this aftahnoon, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, with as much dignity as was possible with two black eyes, a swollen nose, and a thick ear. "I do not feel quite up to playin'."

"My hat! You don't look quite up to it, either," said Kerr.

"Wats, deah boy!"

"I'll play young Rook," said Blake, who was skipper of the Fourth Form team. "Somebody find him, and bring him here. You'd better take a rest, Gussy."

"Lookin' for a footballer?" asked Hammond, who had come down to the ground in company with Levison.

Blake stared at him.

"I've got all I want," he said.

"I kin play, you know."

"First rate style, I don't doubt," said Blake sarcastically. "Bethnal Green Ramblers, I suppose, or New Cut Wanderers, eh?"

"You ain't got no call to sneer at the place I come from," said Hammond. "I couldn't 'elp bein' born in Bethnal Green, I s'pose, and I wouldn't if I could. There are better fellers in Bethnal Green than I've seed 'ere."

"Sorry!" said Blake impulsively. "I didn't mean to sneer—not a bit of it. But I don't want a new kid in the team—see?"

"Orlright; I'll watch."

And Hammond took a place by the ropes to watch the match. Levison remained with him, showing the new junior a friendliness that puzzled those who observed it. Levison was just the fellow to be more snobbish than any other boy in the house, and he had a malicious nature that led him to join in any scheme of persecution. But he was certainly very chummy with Hammond. And the Cockney schoolboy, who remembered that Levison had offered to be his second in the fight in the dormitory, was grateful for his kindness. Cool and courageous and determined as he was, the new-comer was beginning to feel very lonely and out in the cold at St. Jim's. Most of the fellows were utterly indifferent to him, some disliked him, nearly all despised him. More than once, already, the new boy had wished that he was back among his own people in his native quarter of London—people a little rough and ready, perhaps, but with kinder hearts and more generous natures than he had hitherto discovered at the big public school.

After his experience with Cutts of the Fifth, however, Hammond could not help feeling a little suspicious, and he was quite prepared for Levison to show the cloven hoof at any moment. But for the present Levison was all cordiality. As they watched the Form match, he favoured Hammond with his opinion of the game and the players, and he had not a single good word to say for anybody. Hammond grew a little tired of hearing the endless list of bad qualities that, according to Levison, belonged to Tom Merry & Co. and to the New House fellows as well. But he listened patiently. He was too lonely to wish to part with his only friend. The only other fellow who had shown him kindness, Fatty Wynn, was in the other House at St. Jim's, and he had his own friends, too, and was not likely to want to have anything to do with the Cockney.

At half-time Levison proposed an adjournment to the tuckshop, and Hammond, though he would gladly have watched the match out, consented, and they sauntered away to Dame Taggles's little establishment.

Hammond cheerfully undertook to stand a feed, and Levison "did himself down" remarkably well at the expense of the outsider.

He paused as they were leaving the tuckshop, and lowered his voice to a confidential tone.

"I suppose you couldn't lend me a couple of quid, old chap?" he asked.

Hammond felt a sinking of the heart. He had expected it, and now it had come. Levison's face was not one that inspired confidence, but Hammond had hoped for the best. But he knew now that the junior simply wanted his money.

"Till when?"

"Oh, a week or two—or three," said Levison airily. "I suppose it's all the same to you; you're rolling in money."

"'Tain't all the same!" said Hammond moodily.

Levison's eyes glittered a little, and his anger rose as it came into his mind that he had perhaps taken so much trouble over this rank outsider for nothing. The cad ought to be willing to pay for being taken notice of by a decent fellow—that was how Levison of the Fourth looked at it.

"Look here, you've got plenty of tin," he said sullenly. "Your pater's made it out of—what did you say it was—boots?"

"'Ats!" said Hammond. "'Ammond's 'Igh-class 'Ats!"

"Yes, hats," agreed Levison. "Well, lend me the price of a few high-class hats, can't you?"

"No," said Hammond, "I can't."

"You mean you won't?" said Levison angrily.

"Jest as you like to put it."

Hammond would gladly have bestowed his useless fivers upon any fellow who had shown him any real regard; but he was not at all inclined to part with money to a sponger who was otherwise quite indifferent to him. He waited to see how Levison would take his refusal, in order to be quite sure of the junior's motives. He was not left in doubt for many seconds.

"Then you can clear off," said Levison, with a bitter sneer. "I don't want to be seen with you. You rank outsider—there's nothing decent about you but your filthy money, and you don't even know how to spend that. I don't want your company, I can assure you!"

"No; you want my money," said Hammond, with a nod. "I knowed that, though I tried not to think so. You're a dirty cad, Levison!"

"If you call me names, you guttersnipe——"

"Ten minutes ago I was old chap and old fellow," said Hammond. "Now I'm a guttersnipe! There ain't a corner-boy in Bethnal Green wot's as mean and rotten as wot you are!"

Levison clenched his fists—and so did Hammond. Levison remembered in time how Arthur Augustus had fared at the hands of the Cockney, and he unclenched his fists again.

"Don't talk to me," he said. "It's a disgrace to be seen with a fellow of your kind. Keep out of my way, that's all!"

And Levison walked off with a lofty air of contempt.

Hammond, with a dispirited look, made his way back to the football-ground. He watched the finish of the match, and listened to the roar of cheering when the Fourth-Formers proved the victors. He watched the fellows come off the field, chatting and talking—but no one chatted to him, no one cast a glance at the lonely boy standing there with his hands driven deep into his pockets.

He was an outcast—a pariah—lonely in the midst of a happy crowd as Robinson Crusoe upon his desert island. With a heavy heart the Cockney schoolboy turned his solitary steps in the direction of the School House.

CHAPTER 14.
Tea with Figgins & Co.

BUMP!

Hammond almost fell as someone, running into him behind, collided with him with sudden force. He recovered himself and swung round angrily.

It was Levison. Hammond's eyes blazed as he looked at the cad of the Fourth.

"Did you do that on purpose?" he demanded.

"Sorry!" said Levison, backing away. "Quite an accident, I assure you. I assure you I shouldn't touch you if I could help it!"

"Well, jest you be more careful where you're runnin' to, my cove!" said Hammond; and he turned away towards the House again.

Levison chuckled, and several fellows near at hand chuckled, too. In the moment of collision, Levison had hooked a card upon the back of Hammond's jacket. The card bore the inscription in large letters:

"IN THIS STYLE.
THREE-AND-NINE!"

Quite unconscious of the placard adorning his back, Hammond walked on, puzzled by the shouts of laughter that rose from the fellows he passed.

He swung round angrily as a group of fellows at the foot of the School House steps burst into a roar. Hammond glowered down upon them from the steps.

"What's the matter wiv you?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quite appropriate!" grinned Gore of the Shell. "Three-and-ninepence! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not worth it!" said Crooke.

"Looking for another thick ear, you Crooke?" demanded Hammond.

"In that style!" grinned Mellish. "Oh, my hat!"

"Quite 'igh-class!" said Kerruish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hammond looked for a moment as though he would charge into the crowd of them, but he changed him mind and turned away, and went into the House, followed by a yell of laughter. The Terrible Three were chatting in the hall, and they chuckled as Hammond passed them. Blake & Co were in the passage, and they, too, chuckled when they saw the placard on Hammond's back.

"Look 'ere!" exclaimed Hammond, exasperated, swinging round upon them. "I'm fed up with this 'ere!"

"Go hon!" murmured Digby.

"Wot's the cackle about?"

"You!" said Blake politely.

"I'll make you cackle t'other side of your mouth if you don't shut up!" said Hammond. "I can lick the rest of you quite as easy as 'im!"

Arthur Augustus flushed.

"Weally, you wottah——" he began

"You beginnin' agin!" exclaimed Hammond. "Didn't you 'ave enough last night—wot? Fur two pins I'd wipe up the floor wiv yer."

Arthur Augustus was already pushing back his cuffs, when his chums dragged him away. They did not intend to allow him any further scrapping with the formidable youth from Bethnal Green.

Hammond went into the junior common-room, and a general chuckle greeted his appearance.

"Three-and-nine!"

"In that style!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hammond swung out of the room. But wherever he went the same chuckles greeted him, and he tramped up to his study to be at peace. As he sat down there he felt the card on his back, and put his hand round and pulled it off. He grinned as he saw the inscription on it, as he understood the cause of the laughter that had followed him wherever he went.

He tossed the card into the fire, and sat down to his lonely tea. Smith minor and Bates were having their tea in hall, in order to escape the forced company of the unwelcome addition to their study.

There was a knock at the door, and Fatty Wynn came in. Hammond glanced at him without a smile. He wondered what the fat Fourth-Former wanted to get out of him—he had already learned not to expect friendly overtures without an ulterior motive behind them. Fatty Wynn nodded to him pleasantly.

"Having tea?" he asked.

Hammond nodded. So that was it, he reflected—the fat "bloke" wanted another free feed. For the sake of company Hammond was ready to give him one.

"Yes; sit down and jine in," he said.

But Fatty Wynn unexpectedly shook his head.

"No; I want you to come over to the New House to tea," he said.

Hammond stared at him incredulously.

"You want me?" he said.

"Yes."

"You don't want me to stand you a feed?"

"No."

"You don't want to borrer any money?"

Fatty Wynn stared.

"Of course I don't," he said. "What on earth are you driving at?"

"Skuse me!" said Hammond. "Seems to me that the only fellers 'ere who're willin' to speak to me want my money, that's all. If 'tain't the same with you, I'm jolly glad. I'll come with pleasure if you want me."

"Oh, come on!" said Fatty.

Fatty Wynn did not specially want him, as a matter of fact; but he felt that he was bound to show the Cockney some attention in return for the magnificent feed of the day before. Figgins and Kerr were indifferent on the subject, so Fatty Wynn had had his way. The two juniors went downstairs together, followed by a good many curious glances, and crossed the quadrangle in the winter dusk to the New House.

Figgins and Kerr received the visitor with elaborate politeness. There was a good spread on the study table, and the fire burned cheerfully. Hammond felt a sense of comfort for the first time since he had been at St. Jim's.

Figgins & Co. chatted cheerfully with him over tea. They talked football chiefly, and they found that the new fellow was quite well up in that subject. They tried not to smile at his extraordinary pronunciation, and Hammond felt that he was getting on famously. Here were three fellows, at all events, who were civil to him, without caring whether he was rich or poor, insider or outsider. It occurred to him that he would have found his lines cast in pleasanter places if he had been put in the New House instead of the School House.

And then immediately the idea came into his head—it might be possible to change. It would be ripping to be in the same House with those three agreeable fellows. And the idea was no sooner in his mind than he uttered it.

"I wish I'd been put into this 'ere 'Ouse, instead of the other!" he said.

Figgins nodded cordially. He was very proud of his House, and, of course, it was only right and proper that a new fellow should wish that he belonged to it.

"We're the cock-House of St. Jim's, you know," said Figgins modestly. "Rather rotten luck to be shoved into that old casual ward over the way."

"Jest wot I was thinkin'," said Hammond eagerly. "But I s'pose a feller could chynge over if he wanted to."

"Eh?"

"I'd like to chynge into this 'Ouse," said Hammond.

"Ahem!"

"I'd git on with you fellers much better than with the blokes in the other 'Ouse," went on Hammond. "What do you sye?"

Figgins & Co. exchanged hopeless glances. They did not mind being kind to the new fellow, out of good nature. But they did not want him in their House, and, above all, not in their study.

"Fellows never change their Houses," said Kerr, at length, "or hardly ever. Better stick to your show, and make the best of it. You'll find things will come out all right in the long run."

Hammond gave him one quick, keen look, and dropped the subject. He understood. He was not wanted in the New House any more than in the School House. Figgins & Co. were kind to him because they were good-natured fellows, and Fatty Wynn had a debt to pay. That was all. Apart from having him to tea on that occasion, they did not want to have anything to do with him.

Hammond understood, and the brightness died out of his face. He hesitated a few minutes, and then rose to his feet.

"Not going yet!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "You haven't had half a feed."

"I think I'd better be gettin' along," said Hammond. "Thanky for the tea!"

And he left the study without another word.

Figgins & Co. exchanged rather uneasy glances. They knew that the boy was wounded; but they could not help it. They did not want him, and it would have been hypocrisy to pretend that they did.

"Poor kid!" said Figgins. "He's out of place here. Look here, if he were in this House I'd look after him a bit. But—but—but we don't want to get him changed over. We're not called upon to do that."

"Not at all!" said Kerr.

"I think the School House chaps might be a bit decent to

him," said Figgins. "Gussy or Tom Merry might show him some—well, some kindness."

"They've both fought with him already," said Kerr, with a grin.

"It's rather rotten!" said Figgins.

And the Co. agreed that it was rather rotten, but decided that they couldn't help it, and finished their tea cheerfully enough.

"But he's a decent kid, in some ways," declared Fatty Wynn, as he negotiated the last tart. "I don't see why he should be put on. I'm jolly well going to look him out, and talk to him a bit, you know."

And Fatty Wynn fully intended to do so. But somehow or another it did not come off.

Being in a different House it made it rather difficult, and the Cockney showed an unexpected and unsuspected vein of pride, and would not seek for company where he felt that he was not really wanted, and so Fatty Wynn was not able to carry out his kind intentions.

CHAPTER 15.

The Sad Plight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was in a state of sad distress.

Saturday had come round, and Saturday afternoon was a half-holiday.

There was a football match on—this time the School House juniors against the New House—but D'Arcy was not thinking of that. He had another engagement that afternoon. His Cousin Ethel was coming down to St. Jim's.

Cousin Ethel's rare visits to the school were always looked for eagerly by the juniors who had the pleasure of her acquaintance, and most of all by Arthur Augustus himself, who was a great squire of dames.

But on the present occasion his feelings were far from joyful. He was not in a state to be seen by any lady. The days that had elapsed since the fight in the dormitory had removed, by the process of time, some of the traces of that terrific encounter. D'Arcy's aristocratic nose had resumed its normal shape, and his mouth had ceased to look as if it were trying to travel up his right cheek. But his eyes were still of the deepest purple, shot with shades of blue and pink, almost all the colours of the rainbow, in fact.

To let Cousin Ethel see him with two eyes like that was simply anguish to the swell of St. Jim's.

He had hoped against hope that the dark shades would disappear before Saturday. But they did not disappear.

The elegant junior had ventured outside the school gates only once since the fight. Then he had been chipped by the village youths to such an extent that he had resolved to remain within gates till his eyes had resumed their normal hue. He had originally intended to meet Cousin Ethel at the station, and escort her to St. Jim's. That was impossible now. But to meet her when she arrived at the school, and allow her to see him in such a state, appeared almost as impossible, and it could not be avoided.

Arthur Augustus was in great distress. Tom Merry & Co. were going over to the Grammar School to play Gordon Gay & Co. Miss Cleveland would arrive before they returned. Arthur Augustus had promised himself a very pleasant afternoon with Ethel, especially as Figgins would be away—Figgins generally contriving somehow to monopolise Cousin Ethel when he was present.

But instead of the pleasant afternoon he had anticipated, D'Arcy was destined to a time of discomfort amounting to anguish.

As a result, his feelings towards the Cockney schoolboy were bitter in the extreme, though bitterness was, as a rule, quite foreign to his kind nature.

He stood at the gates of St. Jim's, and watched the brake depart, bearing off Tom Merry & Co. to Rylcombe Grammar School. Monty Lowther's parting advice to him was to borrow Taggles's whitewash brush, and give his optics a coat of whitewash, humorous advice that Arthur Augustus had no intention of following.

Hammond was at the gates, too, looking after the brake. Hammond would have been glad of a chance to join the footballers, even as a spectator. But he knew he was not wanted. He sighed a little as the brake disappeared down the road with the team.

Arthur Augustus looked at him, and his purple eyes gleamed. Hammond was unconsciously standing in the attitude that was so offensive to the fastidious eyes of the swell of St. Jim's, with his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat. Upon a hint from his Housemaster, Hammond had adopted a waistcoat of less gaudy hues than the offensive garment in which he had arrived at St. Jim's. In fact, he had toned down in many ways during the few days he had been at the school. But he could not learn everything at once, willing and eager as he was to learn.

The scorn that flashed from D'Arcy's eyes brought a gleam into Hammond's. During the last few days his temper had been sorely tried, and he seemed to have lost most of the overflowing good-nature he had brought to the school with him.

"Well, wot's the matter with you?" he demanded.

Arthur Augustus drew back a pace, and surveyed him haughtily.

"I do not want to have anythin' to say to you, Hammond," he said stiffly.

"You'll 'ave somethin' to sye, if you turn up your nose at me, you tailor's dummy!" said Hammond. "Wot 'ave I done? I ain't done no 'arm to anybody since I came to this 'ere school, and you're all down on me."

"I have nothin' to say to you. Pway let me pass."

"W'y can't you treat a bloke civil and decent?" demanded Hammond. "W'y, if a strynger came into the Bethnal Green Rowd, like I come 'ere, the lads wouldn't be down on 'im like you are on me. And I kin tell yer you'd be jest as queer in the Bethnal Green Rowd as I am 'ere."

"I haven't the slightest doubt of that!" said D'Arcy drily.

"You're a snob, that's wot you are!" said Hammond contemptuously. "I'm goin' to ask the guv'nor to tike me away from 'ere, cause w'y—you ain't good enough for me! That's wot the matter is! Spongers and swindlers, some of yer, wot puts on all sorts of airs, and the rest of yer snobs. That's my opinion."

"You are welcome to your opinion, Hammond," said D'Arcy, with frigid politeness. "But I twust you will not persist in acquaintin' me with it. I have alweady wemarked that I have no desire for conversation with you."

"Mighty civil, too, ain't yer?" said Hammond. "You'd pitch into me this minnit, if you thort you could lick me; you know you would."

D'Arcy bit his lip. He felt that that was true.

"Very well," he said. "I cannot lick you, Hammond. I have twied once, and it was no good. Pewwaps I shall twy again; but not now. I am expectin' a lady visitah, and I do not want to look worse than I do now. You have injahed me enough, I think. I nevah felt so ashamed of myself in my life."

Hammond's expression changed at once. D'Arcy fully expected the rank outsider to pick a quarrel with him on the spot; but he misjudged the Cockney. Hammond's face was very contrite.

"I sye, I'm sorry," he said eagerly. "I didn't mean to 'it you so 'ard, you know, but we do 'it 'ard in the Bethnal Green Rowd when we scraps there. And you 'it me pretty 'ard, too. You tried to lick me, didn't you?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But I'm sorry you're such a figger now, s'elp me!" said Hammond earnestly, and unconscious of the fact that his expressions and the raucous tone of his voice grated on every nerve in D'Arcy's body. "If I could do anythin——"

"You cannot do anythin', exceptin' welieve me of your company," said Arthur Augustus stiffly. "I have alweady wemarked that I wish to pass, and that you are standin' in my way."

Hammond stepped aside without another word, and the swell of St. Jim's walked slowly away towards the School House.

The Cockney schoolboy drove his hands deep into his pockets, and tramped out of the gates. He had hoped that D'Arcy would relent, and show him some slight sign of kindness; but the elegant junior had been cold and hard as steel. Of all the juniors at St. Jim's, the Cockney felt the greatest admiration for Arthur Augustus. D'Arcy's elegant and fastidious ways impressed him, and he had keenness enough to see that, with all his faults, D'Arcy was a decent and generous lad. If he could have made a friend like that, life would have been very different for the Cockney at St. Jim's. But it was hopeless to think of it. Indeed, that desire on his part would probably have been regarded by D'Arcy as an impertinence, if he had known of it.

Hammond walked aimlessly down the lane, tramping through the dead leaves. There was nothing for him to do at St. Jim's, nobody to speak to. Even fellows who were good-natured enough to speak to him civilly, had occupations in which Hammond had no part. He might have had Levison's company by paying for it, or Mellish's; but Hammond did not want company on those terms.

With his hands in his pockets, and his brow moody, he turned from the lane into a footpath through the fields, and came out on the path beside the Ryll. His path was stopped by a stream that ran into the Ryll at this point. He did not know the country round St. Jim's yet, and he looked round him for a way to cross the stream.

Some distance up the stream was a plank bridge, and Hammond turned up the stream to walk towards it. In

summer time, the plank was raised well above the water—but recent rains had swollen the stream, and now the water was racing along at a great speed towards the river, and lapping over the edges of the wet plank.

"Not so jolly safe, that there!" Hammond remarked to himself. He could see that the earth where the end of the plank rested was sapped by the water, and that the plank itself shook as the current beat on it.

He leaned against a tree, and looked over the surrounding country—leafless trees, and wet fields, and the angry, swollen stream. His thoughts were dark and bitter.

"This 'ere ain't no plyce for me!" his reflections ran. "I'm like a fish outer water 'ere, that's wot I'm like. I'd 'ave chucked it up at once, if it wasn't for the guv'nor——" And the boy's lips trembled a little. "The poor ole guv'nor. He thinks I'll get on orlright 'ere—and become a toff, as he calls it. 'Tain't likely—and I dunno that I'd care to be a toff, either, if bein' a toff is bein' 'ard on a bloke wot 'asn't 'ad any chances. I ain't wanted 'ere—but I've got pals of me own in Bethnal Green—leastways, I 'ad, afore the guv'nor made 'is pile!"

And the shade upon his brow grew darker. The Hammond fortune had not brought very much happiness to its possessors so far.

"If it wasn't fur the guv'nor!" the boy muttered restlessly. "'E wants me to stay 'ere—and 'ow can I go 'ome and tell 'im it's no good? 'E's done a lot for me, and I s'pose I can stick it out fur his sake—I suppose I ought to, but it's 'ard—werry 'ard!"

His gloomy reflections were interrupted. A graceful girl came down to the plank bridge from the other side of the stream. Hammond's eyes rested upon her with pleasure, so bright and graceful she looked. He wondered whether she was the "lady visitor" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was expecting, taking a short cut across the fields to the school.

He started as he saw her place her foot upon the plank to cross, after an uneasy glance at the swollen water.

"'Ere, you look out, miss," Hammond called out, "that 'ere ain't safe!"

Cousin Ethel—for it was she—glanced across at him—but she was already upon the plank. She had crossed it many times before, and knew the way well. But before she had reached the middle of the plank she understood that the Cockney schoolboy's warning was well-founded. The plank slid under her weight, and she felt it tremble, and stopped in alarm.

Hammond ran down to the water's edge.

"That ain't safe, that 'ere ain't, miss!" he repeated.

Ethel's face was pale now.

"I cannot go back!" she exclaimed. And, indeed, she dared not move, either to advance or to recede, fearful that the least movement would cause the loose plank to turn and precipitate her into the water.

"No, you can't turn back," said Hammond. "Come on gently—and I'll stand ready to catch yer this end, miss. I can't come on the plank—it wouldn't bear two!"

He stood in the wet rushes, holding out his hand to catch Ethel's as soon as she was within reach. He had forgotten his troubles now—his only thought was to save the girl from the danger she had unwittingly walked into.

Cousin Ethel hesitated a few moments; but it was evidently the only thing to be done. Treading very cautiously, she advanced along the plank.

A sudden cry left her lips.

The plank tilted a little, and her foot slipped on the wet wood. She made a great effort to recover her balance, but in vain. Her sudden movement finished the tilting of the plank, and she slipped from it—and there was a heavy splash in the water.

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Hammond.

He caught a glimpse of a white, terrified face, and of loose golden hair floating as the girl was swept away—away in the fierce current towards the broad river. And in another second there was another splash—and Harry Hammond was in the water, fighting his way desperately to reach the girl before she was swept out into the river—to certain death!

CHAPTER 16.

The Hero!

COUSIN ETHEL felt a strong grasp close upon her as she was whirled in the rushing water—and her face came up over the surface. Hammond, holding her, and swimming desperately, fought against the current.

"'Old on to me!" he muttered. "'Old on, so's I kin use both 'ands!"

Ethel understood. The danger had not taken away her presence of mind. She clung to the boy she did not know, who was risking his life for a stranger. If he had been a powerful swimmer, like Tom Merry or Figgins, he might have won to the shore before the river was reached. But though he could swim, he was far from being a good swimmer, and the weight of the girl dragged him down. The current of the stream rushed them on, and already close at hand rolled the wide and angry Ryll—and once out in the broad waters it was death to them—death without hope.

Once, for a moment, Hammond was near enough to clutch at the bank—but a handful of reeds came out in his grasp, and he was swept on. Even then, if he released the girl, he could have saved himself. But the Cockney, the bounder, the rank outsider, did not think of that for a single instant. It was both or neither—sink or swim together!

At the point where the stream rushed into the broad river, a willow-tree grew, with wide-extending branches drooping out over the water. The outmost twigs dipped into the swollen river racing below. Hammond's eye marked it—he had one chance left. He struggled to sweep under the tree—and as he was swept under, he flung up a desperate hand, and caught a drooping branch.

His onward rush was checked.

He swung half out of the water, one hand grasping the drooping bough, the other fastened upon Cousin Ethel. The girl was still conscious, but so overcome by the bitter cold of the water that she could not help herself.

"Syfe—fur a minnit!" muttered Hammond, through his chattering teeth. "'Old on, young lydy—we'll get out some'ow!"

Ethel did not speak—with all her remaining strength she was clinging to her rescuer. Hammond's arm was aching, almost cracking with the strain. The hungry current was tearing at him. And under his weight the feeble branch of the willow drooped lower and lower into the water, and he heard an ominous crack above.

The branch would not have supported his weight, if he could have climbed—and with the helpless girl's weight to bear, that would have been impossible. And the trunk of the tree, with the water laving round its roots, was a dozen feet from him—a dozen feet of deep and rushing water. To let go his hold for a single instant, was to be swept away to death—and without letting go, there was no possibility of getting to the shore. And the branch was yielding under his weight.

Lower and lower it came, and there was another loud crack.

Ethel understood.

The brave girl's lips moved.

"Save yourself!"

Hammond barely heard the faintly whispered words. He understood—both could not be saved, and it was useless for two to die. He had but to let her go, and struggle along the branch by himself—why should he throw away his life? Did he feel tempted in that fearful moment to abandon her, even as she said? If so, it did not make any difference to him—his grasp upon the girl tightened.

"It is useless," the girl murmured faintly, "save yourself!"

"'Old on!" said Hammond, and that was all.

Crack!

"'Elp!" shouted Hammond, with all his remaining strength. "'Elp!"

Did he hear an answering shout from the shore?

"'Elp!"

"Hold on!"

Crack! went the branch again. It would not last many minutes now—even if the exhausted boy's strength lasted so long.

"Hold on! My hat—it's Cousin Ethel—and Hammond! Hold on, for Heaven's sake!"

It was from the river that the shout came. A boat was pulling towards him, with four or five juniors in it. Hammond's glance went dizzily towards them—he recognised Kerruish and Smith minor, who were looking towards him with white faces—the other three fellows were pulling, and he could only see their backs.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Kerruish. "Hold on, Hammond, we'll have you in a minute! For Heaven's sake, hold on!"

The boat shot under the willow. The juniors dragged in the oars. Kerruish grasped Hammond by the collar as the boat shot by, and he was dragged against the gunwale. He let go the branch, and caught the boat's gunwale in his hand. Smith minor leaned over and caught hold of Cousin Ethel.

"Get the lydy in!" panted Hammond.

The juniors lifted the fainting girl into the boat. Then they seized Hammond, and helped him in—he was too exhausted and frozen to climb in by himself. The boy sank in the bottom of the boat, panting.

"Pull for St. Jim's!" said Kerruish. "Quick!"

The boat rocked out into the river again, and the juniors pulled as if for their lives.

Hammond sat up, his teeth chattering.

"Put yer coat round the lydy," he gasped. "she's nigh froze!"

"Good egg!" said Kerruish.

He stripped off his coat and wrapped it round Cousin Ethel, and Smith minor added his muffler. Ethel thanked them with a look—she could not speak. The boat sped along, and bumped against the landing-raft at the St. Jim's boat-house.

"You know the lydy, you fellers?" Hammond asked.

"It's Cousin Ethel!" said Kerruish. "D'Arcy's cousin, you know!"

"D'Arcy's cousin?" muttered Hammond. "Oh, my 'at!"

Kerruish helped Cousin Ethel ashore. The girl was almost unconscious. A crowd of fellows came dashing down to the raft at sight of her, and many willing hands raised the girl and carried her up to the school.

The fellows would have helped the Cockney, too, willingly; but Harry Hammond did not want their help.

He had recovered sufficiently to help himself, and he jumped lightly out of the boat on the raft. He gave his rescuers a grim look.

"I'm much obliged to yer," he remarked. "I s'pose you 'ave saved my life, pickin' me up; and I s'pose you think it wasn't worth the trouble—wot?"

"Don't put it like that," said Kerruish awkwardly. "You did a jolly plucky thing in going in for Cousin Ethel; and you'd have been drowned if we hadn't happened to be out for a pull this afternoon. It was jolly lucky we came by. Hammond, old son, you're one of the best, and I'm sorry I said anything about your coming into my study—I am, really."

"And—and you're welcome in No. 5, after this," said Smith minor, with an effort.

The Cockney sniffed. That grudging recognition was not particularly gratifying to him.

"I reckon I shall stick there, welcome or not," he grunted. "It's my study, ain't it? You can go and eat coke!"

"And you had better go and change your clothes, kid," broke in Gore of the Shell, quite gently for him. "You'll catch cold if you don't."

"Wot-'o!" said Hammond. And he walked away towards the school.

CHAPTER 17.

Gussy Comes Round!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was sauntering in the quadrangle, thinking about Cousin Ethel and his two purple eyes, when a crowd came in at the gates. It was time for Cousin Ethel to arrive, even if she had walked from the station, and Arthur Augustus's uneasiness and self-consciousness on the subject of his purple eyes was reaching the point of actual anguish.

The crowd of fellows pouring in at the gates attracted his attention. They were carrying something in their midst, and in a minute more D'Arcy knew what it was.

"Ethel!" he shouted.

He forgot his black eyes now, as he gazed upon the white, unconscious face of the girl.

"Bai Jove! What's happened? Ethel!" panted D'Arcy.

"She's all right; only fainted," said Thompson of the Shell. "We want to get her in quick. Gerrout of the way!"

And Cousin Ethel was carried into the Head's house, where she was placed in the kind hands of Mrs Holmes.

Arthur Augustus hung about the house in a state of terrible anxiety. Hitherto he had carefully avoided allowing the Head's wife to see his black eyes, but now he simply paraded them, so to speak—haunting the house for news of Cousin Ethel.

And a little later there were other eager inquirers. The football team had returned from the Grammar School. They had come home elated with a victory over the Grammarians, but their joy was turned to consternation at the news of Cousin Ethel's accident. Figgins was looking like a ghost when he joined D'Arcy in the hall in the Head's house, and the other fellows looked very anxious. But Mrs. Holmes came down at last with reassuring news.

"Miss Cleveland is quite well," the good lady said. "It was only the shock and the coldness of the water that overcame her. She will not come down again to-day, but to-morrow morning I think she will be quite restored. I hope the brave boy who rescued her has not suffered."

"We don't know anything about it yet, ma'am," said Tom Merry. "Did Ethel fall into the river?"

"The plank bridge gave way when she was crossing it, and she fell into the stream, and the current carried her away towards the Ryll," Mrs. Holmes explained. "A boy plunged in and saved her—hoding on to a branch, I understand, till they were picked up."

"Must have been a good plucked 'un to go in just there," said Fatty Wynn. "Was it a St. Jim's chap, ma'am?"

"Yes. Ethel says he was wearing a School cap, but she had never seen him before. A junior boy—perhaps the new boy."

"Bai Jove! Let's find out who it was."

They found out. Kerruish was full of information, and of admiration, too, for the boy whose devoted courage had saved Cousin Ethel's life. He gave a graphic account of how Hammond had held on to the yielding branch, and held on to Cousin Ethel, while death stared him in the face. The juniors listened in wonder, and Arthur Augustus was strangely silent. He spoke at last.

"I—I want to be kicked—hard," faltered Arthur Augustus. "I have been a fwightful snob. I have been an awful beast. I have been a wank wottah!"

"Well, you're calling yourself some pretty names," said Tom Merry "What's the matter now?"

"I have tweated that new kid wottenly. Just because he came from Bethnal Gween, and because he does not speak good English, I have had a wotten pwejudice against him. I have called him wotten names, and even twied to give him a feahful thwashin'. I have nevah felt so howwibly ashamed of myself befoah!" said Arthur Augustus, in great distress. "I have been a snobbish beast! He has wepaid my wotten conduct by wiskin' his life to save my cousin. Coals of fiah on my sillay head! I wish somebody would kick me. Yawooh! Hewwies, you silly ass, you need not kick me so hard, you fwightful duffah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where is the chap now, Kewwuish?" asked D'Arcy, backing away from the obliging Herries, with a look that was far from grateful.

"In the dorm., changing."

Arthur Augustus ran into the house. He dashed at top speed up to the Fourth-Form dormitory.

Harry Hammond was there. He had towelled himself down, and changed into dry clothes, and looked none the worse for his narrow escape. He was brushing his obstinate sandy hair as smooth as possible when D'Arcy dashed in.

"'Allo!" said Hammond.

"Give me your fin, deah boy!" Arthur Augustus grasped the astonished Cockney's hand, and shook it again and again, apparently regarding it as a pump-handle. "I am sowwy! I apologise! I have been a wottah to you, Hammond, and I beg your pardon!"

"My heye!" said Hammond. "Wot's the gime?"

"You are a weally wippin' chap!" said Arthur Augustus, manfully struggling not to wince at Hammond's ejaculation. "I have tweated you vewy wottenly, but I twust you will forgive me. If you would be willin' to gwant me the honah of your fwiendship, I will twy to make up for my weally ungentlemanly conduct."

Hammond stared.

"Not kiddin'?" he asked.

"I am not wottin'," said Arthur Augustus. "I should be vewy pwoud to call myself your fwiend."

"Well, strike me pink!" said Hammond. "There ain't anythin' I'd like better nor that, Master D'Arcy, if you mean it."

"I will pwove to you that I mean it, deah boy."

The School House simply stared when Arthur Augustus came downstairs with his noble arm linked in that of the Cockney. And on the morrow, when Cousin Ethel was quite restored, and there was a little celebration in Tom Merry's study, the guest of honour—beside Cousin Ethel—was the lad who had been regarded as a rank outsider—the Cockney Schoolboy.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of TOM MERRY & CO. next Wednesday, entitled "PARTED CHUMS," by Martin Clifford. Also our grand new serial, "SECRET SERVICE," by Agent 55. Order next week's "GEM" in Advance. Price One Penny.)

Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE!

QUICK WORK.

One day a Yankee and an Irishman were arguing as to which of their respective countries held the record for smartness in building.

"We have a church in New York," said the Yank, "in which the foundation was laid at eight o'clock in the morning, and at eight o'clock the same night the minister held a service in it."

"Oh, that's nothing!" replied the Irishman. "One day as I was going to work in the morning the builders were just commencing on a row of houses, and when I returned home at night the landlord was ejecting the tenants for back rent!"—Sent in by G. Turner, Hull.

LOVE'S ARITHMETIC.

He was teaching her arithmetic.
He said that was his mission.
He kissed her once, he kissed her twice—
He said, "Now that's addition."

And so he added smack to smack
In silent satisfaction,
Till timidly she gave him one back,
And whispered, "That's substraction."

But pa appeared, he raised his foot,
And snorted with decision.
He kicked poor John ten yards away,
And said, "That's long division!"

—Sent in by W. H. Godfrey, East Budleigh, Devon.

MUST NOT INDULGE.

Rector: "I wish I could persuade you to drink nothing but water for six months."

Reprobate: "Water, sir! I daren't touch it, 'cos the doctor told me I 'ad an iron constitution, and I am afeared that if I touch water it will rust it."—Sent in by F. A. Clarke, Dublin.

HE KNEW ONE.

Scene: Little country railway-station.

Old Gent (to porter lying on a seat): "Here, my man, where will I get the train to Sloptown?"

Porter (pointing with his foot): "Over there."

Old Gent (greatly amused): "If you can show me a lazier action than that I'll give you half-a-crown."

Porter: "Put it in my pocket!"—Sent in by H. Brown, junior, Glasgow.

PUTTING HIM RIGHT.

At target-practice of a company of Territorials the captain swaggered up to the latest recruit, and proceeded to give him some instruction as to how to handle a rifle.

"See here, my man, this thing is a rifle. Here is the barrel, there's the stock. You slip the cartridge in here. Now you put the weapon on your shoulder. These little things on the barrel are the sights. When you have taken aim, pull this thing, which is the trigger. Now, remember what I have told you. Smarten up! By the way, what is your trade? A clerk, I suppose?"

"No, sir," was the quiet reply. "I'm a gunsmith."—Sent in by L. Hughes, Mackmilleth.

TRIAL TRIALS.

The trial for which he had so long and ardently lain in wait had come at last. But now he was inclined to wish that it had never come at all. Time after time he had failed at an absolutely open goal, and the crowd was growing caustic in its comments.

Once more he saw his opportunity. Like a policeman chased by a bold Suffragette, he dashed up the field, came abreast of the ball, and made a desperate effort to shoot while on the run. The shot went wide—very wide—and the corner flagpost was struck by the bounding ball, and fell like a ninepin.

"Well 'it, sir!" roared a sarcastic enthusiast. "Well 'it! What will you have—cigar or cokernut?"—Sent in by J. Stern, Dalston.

TOO MUCH FOR PAT.

A farmer who took an Irishman on trial sent him to plough a field. Later on the farmer went to see how he was going on. To his disgust, Pat had the plough yoked wrong.

"Didn't you tell me," cried the farmer angrily, "you could hold a plough?"

"Arrah, be aisy, now!" said Pat. "How could I hould it, and two horses pulling it away from me? But gie it to me in a barn, and, bejabers, I'll hould it with any man in the world!"—Sent in by Mrs. Poole, Littleborough.

ONLY FAIR.

A train in Arizona was boarded by robbers, who went through the pockets of the luckless passengers. One of them was a moneylender from New York, who, when his turn came, very reluctantly fished out two hundred dollars, but rapidly took out four dollars from the pile and placed in his vest pocket.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the robber, as he toyed with his revolver.

Hurriedly came the answer:

"Mine friend, you surely would not refuse me two per cent. discount on a strictly cash transaction like dis?"—Sent in by W. H. Wilson, Manchester.

SURPRISED HIM!

An Irishman who was visiting a friend in Glasgow was walking with him through one of the big crowded streets. At a corner there was one of the familiar hot potato machines drawn by a donkey. The son of Erin gazed at it in surprise, and then blurted out:

"Begorra, I've seen many a pore baste having an easy time of ut, but I've niver seen a man wid an ingine to push ut."—Sent in by R. G. Cossar, Edinburgh.

TOO MUCH AT STAKE.

For half an hour they had lingered over their good-bye. But at last Robert rose to go, and this time he meant it.

"So soon, Bobby dear?" sighed Mollie. "Couldn't you stay a little longer?"

"I must go, my darling," he replied. "Though I would give ten years of my life, or sacrifice everything to stay one short hour with you!"

"But why are you going so early to-night?"

"Because," he said, sadly but resolutely, "it is our Union meeting to-night, and if I don't go now I shall be fined twopence."—Sent in by S. Crowder, Chester.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED!

Readers are invited to send **ON A POSTCARD** Storyettes or Short, Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the senders will receive a Money Prize.

ALL POSTCARDS MUST BE ADDRESSED
The Editor, "The Gem" Library, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

THIS OFFER IS OPEN TO READERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

No correspondence can be entered into with regard to this Competition, and all contributions enclosed in letters, or sent in otherwise than on postcards, will be disregarded.

"SECRET SERVICE!" A NEW SERIAL STORY, By AGENT No. 55. STARTS NEXT WEEK.

THE CORINTHIAN.

A Magnificent Story of the Old-Time Prize-Ring.

By BRIAN KINGSTON.

READ THIS FIRST.

Hilary Bevan, a sturdy young Britisher of gentle birth, who has been living in the country, walks to London to see his father, Sir Patrick Bevan, whom he has not met for three years. Arriving at his father's house, Hil learns that the latter has been absent for three days at the house of Sir Vincent Brookes, one of the leading bucks of the time. He also learns that Sir Patrick has earned the nickname of

"PLUNGER" BEVAN,

and is heavily in debt, having dissipated his fortune.

Bending his steps to Sir Vincent Brookes' house in Grosvenor Street, Hilary finds his father at the gaming-tables, where he has been for three days and nights.

Sir Patrick rises from the table an utterly ruined man. Hilary's next act is to accept a challenge offered in the prize-ring at Moulsey Hurst. Hil, fighting under the name of Harley, wins his battle and awakens the interest of a young Corinthian named D'Arcy Vavasour.

HIL DECIDES TO ADOPT THE PRIZE-RING AS A CAREER,

and at a supper which is attended by the leading patrons of "The Fancy," Vavasour matches him for a thousand guineas against any boxer that Sir Vincent Brookes may select.

The fight takes place at No Man's Land, in Hertfordshire, and after a terrific mill, Hil is victorious.

Sir Vincent, hard hit by his losses, vows vengeance on Hil. He seeks out Sir Patrick Bevan, and, posing as his friend, persuades him to come forth from his retirement.

Egged on by Brookes, Sir Patrick plunges once more. He matches a pugilist named Bully Power for five thousand pounds against Ned Harley, who is backed by "Sky Blue" Brayne. Sir Patrick has never seen Harley, and is thus quite unaware that the rising young boxer is none other than his own son.

On arrival at the ringside, Sir Patrick approaches Mr. Brayne's party courteously.

"A good fight and a fair fight, no man can ask more," he says, "and I believe this awaits us!" So far he has not noticed Hil.

(Now go on with the story.)

Mr. Brayne is Surprised.

Mr. Brayne, who looked anxious and worried, contrived a reply, and named Captain Barclay as umpire for his man.

"I am delighted," said Sir Patrick. "Sir Thomas Apreece has kindly agreed to act for mine. As referee, Mr. Brayne, would Mr. Craven be acceptable? If, of course, he will act."

The gentleman named, who was of the party, signified his willingness, and "Sky Blue" Brayne muttered his agreement. Sir Patrick bowed again.

"Only the battle now remains, then," he observed.

And then he suddenly started, frowned slightly, and a look of perplexity came into his eyes.

"Why, I had no idea, Mr. Brayne, my son had the honour of your acquaintance," he said. "The young rascal! Why, I have—— Hilary, what have you been doing with yourself since you took French leave of Coldharbour? How came you to trouble Mr. Brayne with yourself?"

"Your son!" Brayne's saucer-eyes opened widely. He was obviously surprised, and spoke loudly. "Why, I don't know your son! Never heard of him!" he blurted.

Hil did not move, but a flush was rising in his cheeks. His father glanced at Brayne.

"Then he is not with you, Mr. Brayne? Pray accept my apologies. I was hasty," he said.

"I have never seen your son in my life. Where is he?" Brayne cried, turning about and staring around him.

"This young man, I have the honour to be his father," said Sir Patrick. And, stepping forward, he touched Hil lightly on the chest.

And then there fell a silence upon the group.

However greatly amazed were Mr. Craven, Methuen, and the others, force of habit and breeding enabled them to refrain from giving utterance to their surprise or permitting it to show too plainly in their features. They looked from Hil to his father with a slight wonder. But Sky Blue Brayne, however anxiously he attempted to ape the ways of the aristocratic world into which his wealth had gained him

a position, had not their advantages. He stared frankly at Sir Patrick for fully half a minute, and then exploded into an outburst of violent laughter.

"Have I said something very ludicrous?" asked Bevan.

And Brayne answered him:

"Your son! Why, that isn't your son! You're making a mistake! He's the prizefighter, Ned Harley, who's going to lick your man!"

"Ned Harley, the prizefighter, is my son Hilary," repeated Sir Patrick very distinctly, looking at Hil with wide eyes.

"He's Ned Harley right enough. If he is your son——"

He was interrupted. A cry broke from Sir Patrick, and he staggered. D'Arcy Vavasour made a movement, but Hil was before him and received his father's falling body in his arms.

Hilary Bevan versus Bully Power.

At one corner of the outer ropes of the twenty-four foot enclosure of short, crisp turf, two gentlemen were engaged in a conversation, animated on one side, curt and abrupt on the other. Behind them and on each of the other sides of the ring was packed with a dense throng of eager and expectant humanity, wedged together in an uncomfortable tightness, but not to the loss of good temper. Behind the close ranks were ranged a double line of carriages, coaches, and waggons, all crowded with spectators.

They were awaiting the commencement of the fight.

"You're sure the fight will take place?" queried the eager one.

"Why not?"

The questioner was the Hon. Paul Methuen, one of the finest shots in England and a staunch supporter of the Fancy.

"Why, sir, I was told there had been a most extraordinary happening—something so amazing as to be incredible—sufficient to put a stop to the fight.

No reply.

"It has been said that—it is so vastly absurd I would not mention it but for the high position of my informant—that Sir Patrick Bevan has discovered that Ned Harley is actually his own son."

"That is correct."

"You mean to say that Bevan has admitted as much?"

"He did."

"And you still assert the fight will take place?"

"Why should it not?"

"Why not? Why, when has so amazing an incident occurred? The backer of a pugilist discovers that the opponent his man has to meet is actually his own son!"

"You state the facts correctly, sir."

"And you mean to say, sir"—the speaker was growing warm—"that in the face of such an astounding discovery Sir Patrick Bevan will permit the fight to take place?"

"As a man of honour Sir Patrick could do no less."

"And permit his son to fight in the prize-ring!"

"Sir Patrick's code of honour—I think every gentleman will agree with him—requires that the engagement into which he has entered shall be fulfilled. Besides, please remember that it is Mr. Brayne who has backed and produced Ned Harley."

Silence on the questioner's part, while the crowd shouts impatiently. Then——

"I imagine after this Sir Patrick will shoot himself."

"I cannot see why."

And then a roar rises from the crowd as a giant of a man drives through the ranks, and a hat is chucked into the air, to fall within the inner ring. It is followed by the owner, Bully Power. He walks to his corner, and his second, Jones, ties his colours—bright green—to the central post.

Half a minute later comes a second deafening round of applause. "There he is!" yell a thousand voices as Hil, leaning across the rope, quietly tosses his white hat upon the turf. He climbs into the ring, goes to his corner where are his seconds, and slips off the long coat enveloping him.

Fine and fit he looks, his body and arms shining pure white in the sunshine. He is dressed in white knee-breeches, white silk stockings, and low shoes. He looks the personification of welded grace and youthful muscular force. His face is pale.

And it need be. Through a repetition of the past half-hour he would not go for a thousand guineas. Not readily will he forget the expression upon his father's face when he fully realised the position in which stood his son.

Nor will he forget, and for ever will he admire, the manner in which Sir Patrick bore the shock of the discovery. With livid face but perfect command of his voice, his father had faced Brayne and the rest and apologised for his temporary embarrassment.

"I find myself in a situation a little unusual," he had said. "Mr. Brayne, at what hour will it be convenient for you to bring your man into the ring?"

And Brayne, numbed by surprise, had stammered:

"You'll go on with the fight?"

"Go on, sir! And why not, pray? This matter of my son is one wholly private, and with no bearing upon the very public matter of the fight."

And then he had bowed his farewell, and Hil had been at no loss to read the approbation written upon the faces of the gentlemen present.

Now from his corner Hil could see his father, still pallid, but entirely calm, seated by the outer rope near Power's corner, and talking quietly to D'Arcy Vavasour. Whatever his feelings, the baronet hid them with success.

From his corner came Power, and offered his hand. The man was grinning broadly. He had looked boldly towards his backer, and it was with a wink he received Hil's hand.

"'Tis all right, me lad," he said in a loud whisper, and winked again. "Don't ye be afther worryin'. I know what to do."

Hil did not answer. The fellow's meaning was beyond him.

The watch was in the hands of Colonel Berkeley, and at the call of "Time!" both men rose briskly from their second's knee and came to the scratch.

"A horse to a hen on the big 'un!" declared those who had not seen Ned Harley fight. And so great was the disparity between the physique of the two there seemed good warrant for such belief. Beside the immense, huge, muscular bulk of the Irishman Ned Harley looked little but a well-grown boy. He was two inches less in height, and in width of shoulder, girth of chest, and dimensions of limbs, most noticeaby inferior. His sole advantage appeared to lie in condition.

But ten seconds had not elapsed before he gave proof that he also possessed an activity in which his gigantic adversary was wanting. With hands raised, the fighters eyed each other, well out of distance. Suddenly Hil feinted with his left hand, stepped in, lowered his head, took a swift step to the right, and was half round Power before the latter had realised the change of position.

Smack—smack—smack! Twice went Hil's left fist in a damaging one-two, and once his right hand full on the side of Bully Power's head, and the giant staggered sideways. Before he could recover himself, Hil was up on him, driving right-hand blows among his ribs. When he pulled himself together, mechanically shooting out a blow, Hil was yards out of reach, coolly fronting him again.

Loudly did the crowd cheer and howl, and there was laughter mixed with the shouting, so easily did it seem had Power been tricked.

And then it was seen that old Tom Owen had risen in his corner and was shouting, his fingers pointing at Power's head. Others took up the old man's cry.

The claim was allowed, a slight red trickle being noticeable below Power's left ear. "First blood" to Ned Harley, to the delight of his seconds and those who had betted money upon his gaining this trivial point.

And then Hil was engaged in stopping a rush, taking Power's chopping blows upon his forearms, or evading them by a dexterous movement of the body. At length Power slipped on the dry grass, and the round ended.

Hil walked to his corner, a puzzled look on his face. He could not understand how it came about that so big and strong a man as Bully Power should hit so lightly.

He had no notion that the man was "honestly" trying to earn the money paid him by Sir Vincent Brookes. He had been paid to lose because his opponent was the son of the gentleman backing him; not only would he do that, but he would play lightly as, surely, his backer wished him.

So six rounds were fought, and discontent grew among the crowd. This was not the kind of fight they had gathered to see. The big man was doing nothing. He had not struck

one really good blow; his opponent was unmarked. Each time Power had gone down; when it came to a wrestle, he had been thrown with an ease that at last bred suspicion among the onlookers.

"Arrah, th' man's a coward, an' no thrue Oirishman at all!" indignantly yelled one son of Erin.

Similar taunts reached his ears, angry cries for him to "fight like a man," and still Power, believing he was doing what was wanted of him, took no heed. A heavy body-blow in the fifth round, hit him off his feet—at least, he went down, and the referee gave Ned Harley the point.

The patience of the crowd grew thinner; its disgust increased, cries of "Cross, cross!" were being freely shouted, when came a diversion.

Down one of the surrounding heights, a scout came running, and presently there rode straight upon the crowd a gentleman on horseback, loudly shouting for the combatants to desist in the name of the law.

Immediately all was confusion. The rougher portion of the onlookers were now convinced that the fight had been sold, that the interference of the magistrate—as the horseman declared himself—had been prearranged. Ugly shouts were raised. In their corners, the fighters awaited developments, Power smiling impudently back at those who taunted and execrated him.

Presently the officials, who had been conferring, came to a decision. The magistrate was not to be persuaded; but did the meeting disperse in an orderly manner, he would take no further action. And then Gentleman Jackson entered the ring, and in his magnificent voice that none could fail to hear, announced that the ground would be shifted, and the fight continued at the nearest place available in another county—Hayes Common

Then ensued a mad stampede, and in wildly hurrying streams the pedestrians made their way across the field, pointing for the Croydon road, anxious to get a start of the vehicles. Angry and disappointed as they were, they had no fear of being deceived by Mr. Jackson; that which he told them was to be relied upon.

(This splendid serial will be concluded next Wednesday, when our Grand NEW Serial will commence. It is entitled, "SECRET SERVICE," and if you take your Editor's advice you will ORDER NOW!)

A NEW FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns are those of readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl; English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons, one taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. *Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.*

Readers wishing to *reply* to advertisements appearing in this column *must write to the advertisers direct.* No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C."

G. Totten, George Street, Bundaberg, Queensland, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers, age 13-14.

R. Morris, c.o. Thebarton Post Office, South Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in England and Scotland, and South Australia, above the age of 17.

C. P. Horne, 117, Albert street, Ballarat, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Scotland or Wales, age 12.

D. C. Maltby, 400, Miller Street, Hastings, Hawkes Bay, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in Ireland or England, age 16.

Miss L. Carlquist, Northcote, Auckland, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a boy reader living in the British Isles, age 15-16.

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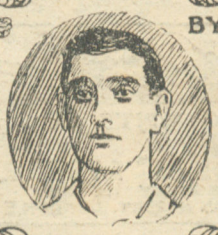
Miss K. Hoald, 8, Selwyn Street, Ponsonby, Auckland, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a boy reader living in England or Canada, age 14-15.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

GRAND NEW SERIES OF FOOTBALL ARTICLES!

FOOTBALL AS A PROFESSION

BY



T. BOYLE
CAPTAIN OF BURNLEY

I suppose the glamour of professional football will ever make its appeal to the young player who is showing more than average ability. The life has phases which are difficult to resist. In the first place there is the knowledge that what the big footballer does is done in the limelight, and the applause of the crowd will be considered by many a reward worth striving for. Now, I am not the one to say that the life of a professional footballer has not his charms. On the other hand I must, if I do my duty, point out that it is not all sweet—there is the other side of the game just as there are two sides to everything else.

Before proceeding further, therefore, I should like to warn the young footballer to pause and think carefully ere he decides to go into football for a living. In the first place the fact that a player shows promise in his early career does not necessarily mean that he will be an unqualified success when he gets the chance to shine in first-class company.

Again, the liability to injury is one of the things which is to be taken into consideration. Many a young footballer with splendid prospects before him has had his career brought to an untimely end by a nasty accident right at the commencement of it.

Another thing to be remembered, too, is the shortness of the average footballer's career in the front rank. I have been told by people who have gone to the trouble of working it out, that the average run of a footballer in the first class is not more than eight or nine years. There are brilliant exceptions, of course. We have men like Steve Bloomer and Meredith, who have been at it about twenty years. But, as I say, the average is much smaller than that, and if the footballer does manage to go anything like the length of time then he is a lucky player.

The fact that his career will, in the ordinary course of things prove so comparatively short, must be taken into consideration. The four pounds a week seems all right, and the big benefit which many players get at the end of five years is not to be despised, but the limitations should be pointed out.

Having drawn this picture, however, and duly warned the young player that careful thought is necessary, we can go ahead and tell him how he can get on, should he finally make up his mind that to be a footballer will be worth his while.

That the demand for really good footballers is to-day greater than the supply is the experience of almost all the managers of our good teams. There are plenty of managements who would be only too willing to sign on a few promising youngsters if they could only find the right sort of material. And so long as the interest in football is on the increase there will be plenty of demand for young players.

Such being the case, it stands to reason that there should not be much difficulty for a youngster who shows promise above the average, to get the opportunity of having his skill tried with a better side than that with which he is engaged at the moment. Most of our big clubs have agents up and down the country, and the young player who can show that he possesses ability should get into touch with one of these agents.

He will be ready enough to see the youngster play if given sufficient evidence that there is a possibility of finding a diamond in the rough. It is the agent's business to find these young players, and to introduce them to better company. Even provided the young player fails to get in touch with one of them, he has by no means exhausted his chance of getting recognition with a good club.

Our big teams run reserve elevens, and one of the purposes of these games is to give youngsters a chance of showing what they can do.

Until the chance comes, the young player must just go on improving his game, striving ever to find a place in a side where the average run of players is a bit better than he is himself. About the very worst thing a young player can do is to stick in a team when he is far better than any of his colleagues or the players he is likely to come up against. That is the way development is hindered.

When the trial comes to the young player, what is the best way to go about making the most of it? There is only one thing which I can recommend, and that is for the young player to try as well as he knows how to forget that he has such things as nerves, and to strive all he knows to play his natural game. After all, if you have the confidence to think that you are worthy of a trial, you should also have the confidence to think that your ability will stand the test. If the trial is successful, what then?

The young footballer will probably be asked to sign a professional form. I have already advised him to give the matter careful thought before he does so. Personally, I do not think it is wise for the young player to turn professional too soon—that is, if the turning professional means giving up the job he is at—as it does, in most cases.

Moreover, experience is a valuable thing on the football field, and many a player full of promise has been spoilt by early success. He has been introduced into a good League team at an early age, and has straightway "made good," as the Americans say; but it would have been better for him if he had not done so well, for the success which has been his portion has also turned his head at the same time—he has come to the conclusion that he is a sort of greatest footballer who ever lived; that he has no more to learn from anybody.

Now, as a matter of fact, football is a game about which one can always be adding something new; it is never too old to learn tricks from colleagues or opponents, and swelled head is a fatal failing in a footballer.

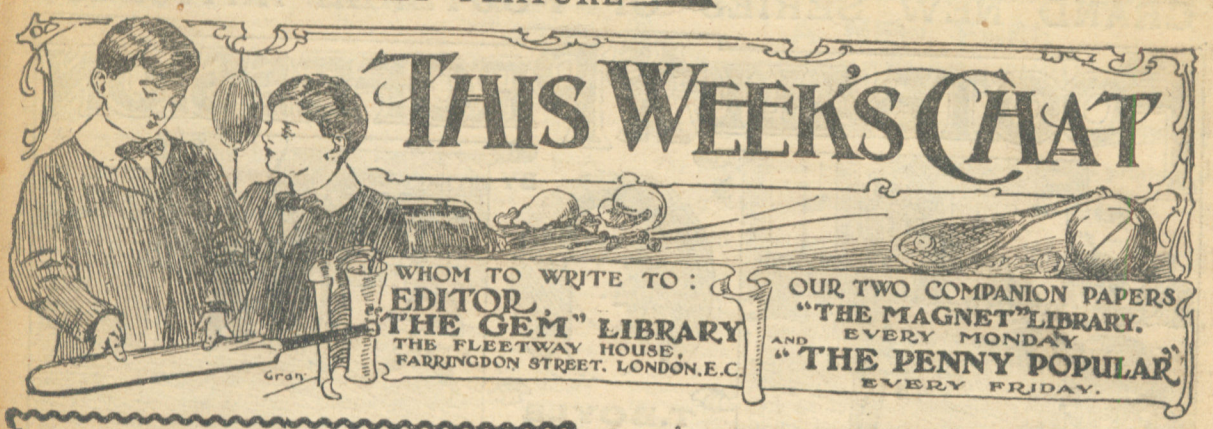
The young player should remember this—that only while he is successful will the man in the crowd applause. As soon as his powers show signs of waning, those spectators who previously came to cheer will remain to jeer. So when you have your chance keep your head screwed on the right way. Don't let it be turned by flattery.

I had meant to say something about players who have come to the front at an early age, but my space is gone. However, as showing what can be done I need only state that footballers have played for their country at the age of seventeen—at least one Irishman has done this—while both Brown, then of Sheffield United, and Shepherd, of Bolton Wanderers, each led their country's forward line while they were still in their teens.

T. Boyle

NEXT WEDNESDAY:
HINTS TO YOUNG REFEREES,
By Mr. J. HARWOOD LEE.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE—



For Next Wednesday.

"PARTED CHUMS!"
By Martin Clifford.

In this grand, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, Levison, of the Fourth Form, profiting nothing by his previous lessons, once more turns his peculiar talents to base uses. By a malicious trick he succeeds in making trouble between Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and 'Arry 'Ammond, the new boy from Bethnal Green, whose queer friendship causes so much comment at St. Jim's. For a time the cad's triumph is complete, and the poor Cockney, left friendless, has a bad time to go through. But thanks to Cousin Ethel, who takes the matter in hand exactly at the right moment, the situation is saved. The breach is healed, and the

"PARTED CHUMS"

are once more united in friendship.

"SECRET SERVICE!"

Next Wednesday a grand new serial will start in the "Gem" Library, dealing with the mysterious and thrilling adventures which fall to the lot of the dauntless men who guard the secrets of Britain's might from the sleuth hounds of a foreign Power. The title of this wonderful and thrilling story is

"SECRET SERVICE!"

but the author has, for obvious reasons, to conceal his real identity under the pen-name of "Agent No. 55." Concerning his position, I am allowed to say no more than this; that if his real name was revealed it would cause something like consternation in Diplomatic and Secret Service circles! Look out for the opening chapters of

"SECRET SERVICE!"

—the new serial that will cause a sensation—in next Wednesday's "Gem" Library!

Next Monday will be marked by the issue of the

GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,

which will this year be better than ever! The cover will consist of a

SPLENDID COLOURED PLATE

in the most beautiful tints, depicting the Greyfriars boys, amid a scene of cheery bustle, going off for the Christmas holidays. Our great "star" author, Frank Richards, has scored a bullseye with

"THE FOUR HEROES!"

a wonderful 50,000-word long school story, dealing, of course, with our favourite, Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars School.

"THE FOUR HEROES!"

is an exceptionally fine yarn, which will be thoroughly appreciated by all.

The next item is a splendid Greyfriars School Play, entitled:

"THE SPECTRE OF No. 1 STUDY!"

This cleverly-written playlet introduces seven of the most prominent characters in the Greyfriars Remove, and, being written in rhyming verse, lends itself admirably to the purpose of amateur actors for home theatricals, besides being very entertaining reading.

"THE SPECTRE OF No. 1 STUDY!"

was specially written for this Grand Christmas Issue, and is something quite new, which is bound to make a great hit.

"BY SHEER GRIT!"

is another splendid, long, complete story of a British boy's amazing adventures in the great world. The author, Frank Witty, has himself had many thrilling experiences in foreign parts in the course of his world-wide travels, and the chief incidents of his absorbing story

"BY SHEER GRIT!"

are founded upon his own adventures. Interest, incident, and excitement are the keynotes of this grand story, which never flag a moment from start to finish.

The usual popular features,

"MYSTERIA!"

our grand Ferrers Lord serial, completes this Great Christmas Number, which will be easily distinguishable on every bookstall and in every newsagent's shop by its bright and attractive coloured cover. The price will be twopence, and the value better than ever!

ANIMAL CINEMA ACTORS.—No. 4.

A big-game hunter scarcely ever goes upon a hunting expedition now without taking a cinema camera with him for the purpose of filming wild life in its various forms. The very best films taken in this way are those of wild animals in their natural state—leading their everyday jungle life. Some time ago, Major Hans Schomburg, a well-known explorer and big-game hunter, set out for Liberia in East Africa, on a hunting expedition. He took with him a moving-picture camera. But the heat in some parts was so great that the films were nearly melted. Thanks to a special cooling case in which they were stored, wrapped round with banana leaves, however, this calamity was averted. The greatest difficulty he experienced was in persuading the natives—who were terrified at the camera with the revolving handle—to assist him. Most of these would persist in believing that this camera was some strange mechanism constructed to destroy them; and nothing would persuade them to get anywhere near whilst films were being taken.

How the Major Got Moving Pictures of the Famous Sugary Alligators.

"A huge alligator—looked upon by the natives as a baby god—seemed to me to be an excellent subject for a cinema film," said Major Schomburg. And so he set about to persuade the natives to let him film the slimy monster. He lived all alone in a stagnant pool, and seldom came to the bank when strangers were about. The major, however, succeeded in persuading some of the natives to coax the alligator out on to the bank. No sooner was this done, than the camera man devoutly wished that he had never seen it before, for the reptile made a sudden rush at the camera, his jaws agape, as if he intended to swallow both it and the operator. Luckily for the major, the guide flung a couple of chickens before the hungry beast which stopped its rush. The camera man was daring enough to take a film, showing the alligator devouring the "life-saving chickens."

(Another interesting Cinema article next Wednesday.)

The Editor

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