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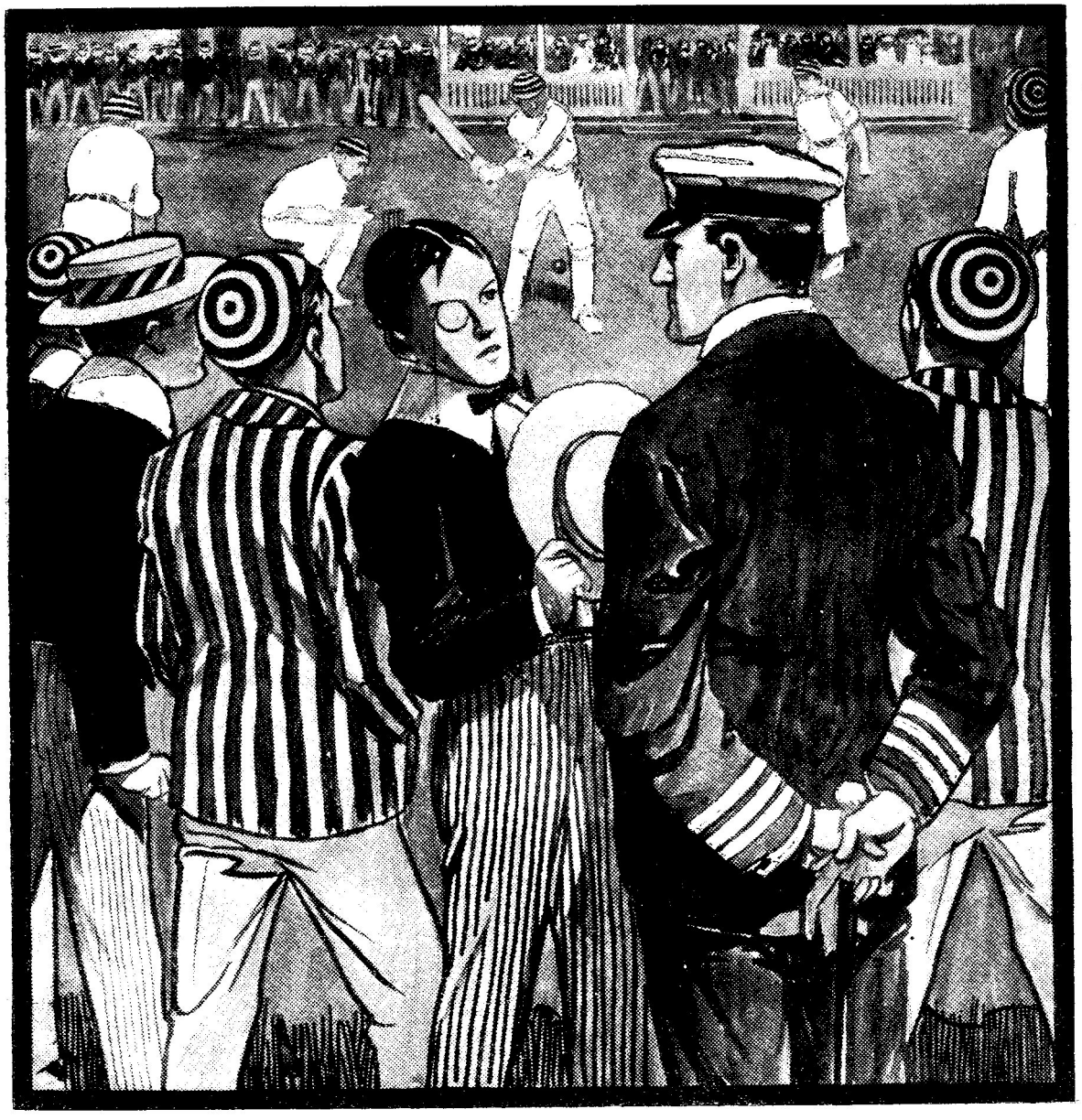
CARDEW'S CHUM!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



D'ARCY AND THE COMMANDER!

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CARDEW'S CHUM!

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

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.
The Polite Thing.

"YOU'RE coming, Cardew?" asked Tom Merry.

Cardew of the Fourth had stopped at the door of Crooke's study in the Shell passage just as Tom Merry & Co. came along.

Tom Merry halted as he saw him, and Cardew dropped his hand, which was raised to tap at the door.

"Comin' where?" he asked, looking round at the captain of the Shell.

"I suppose you know there's a senior House match this afternoon?" answered Tom, rather sharply.

"Is there?" yawned Cardew.

"Yes. Kildare will be opening the innings for the School House, and Monteith is sure to bowl against him," said Tom. "It will be worth watching."

Cardew smiled.

Manners and Lowther exchanged a glance, and smiled, too.

Tom Merry of the Shell had little enough to do with Cardew as a rule, and really it did not matter much to him how the Fourth-Former spent the afternoon.

It was the fact that Cardew was at Crooke's door that caused Tom to stop and speak to him.

Racke and Crooke were in that study, and Tom could guess how the two black sheep intended to spend their afternoon. Cardew, who sometimes dabbled in Racke's shady pursuits, was there to join them, doubtless in a "little game." It was rather from a kind of lazy carelessness than from viciousness that Cardew sometimes joined Racke & Co., and Tom Merry thought it was worth a few minutes to induce him to alter his mind.

"You're awf'ly good," said Cardew, in his drawling tones. "I dare say I shall give the match a look in later. I shall have to, in fact, as my merry old uncle is comin' this afternoon, an' he's keen on cricket. Just at present I'm goin' in for some gentle relaxation."

"Playing banker, I suppose you mean?" said Tom Merry abruptly.

"Or nap!" said Cardew, with a nod.

"You're keen on getting hold of some of Racke's war-profits?" said Monty Lowther.

"Not at all, dear boy; just for the excitement," said Cardew calmly. "Besides, I like watchin' Racke's face when he loses. It's entertainin'!"

"Come and watch Kildare batting, and don't play the fool!" said Tom Merry. "You are really too decent for that kind of shady rot, Cardew."

"Thanks!"

"Well, I mean it," said Tom.

"Levison and Clive have been tellin' me the same," smiled Cardew. "They're quite concerned—my merry study-mates. I've had to do some dodgin' to get here without their seein' me. If they ask you after me, tell them I've gone to the station to meet my uncle, the cheery old commander."

"What?"

"Or tell 'em I'm ill, and lyin' up," said Cardew. "Or you can mention that I'm dead an' buried, if you think they'll take it in. Any old thing, so long as they don't come worryin'."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Tom. "If you won't come, you won't, and you can go and eat coke!"

And Tom, frowning a little, strode on down the passage with his chums, leaving Ralph Reckness Cardew to his own devices. On the stairs they came upon Blake & Co., of Study No. 6, bound for the same destination.

"Buck up, you slackers!" Blake called. "The New House bounders will bag the best places if we let 'em, and we shall have to shift them."

"Yaas, wathah!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "And there may be a wow if we have a wag with the New House wottahs on the cwicket-gwound. Pway don't dwag at my arm, Hewwies!"

"Are you coming?" demanded Herries.

"Yaas; but——"

"Oh, come on!" said Digby. "What are you going upstairs for, ass? The cricket-ground hasn't been shifted indoors!"

"I'm goin' to call for Lauwenz, Dig."

"Bother Laurenz!"

"Wats!"

"Get a move on!" exclaimed Blake.

"Pway come with me to call on Lauwenz, deah boys. We want him to see the game, you know!"

"I suppose Laurenz can walk down to the cricket-ground alone?" roared Herries. "Do you want us to carry him?"

"Wats! I appeal to you fellows," said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass on the Terrible Three. "Poor old Laurenz, havin' the feahful misfortune to be a German, is stickin' in his study instead of joinin' the fellows. Now, the poor chap can't help bein' born a Hun, and he is wathah sensitive about it—of course, it's an awful thing to happen to anybody——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What rot!" said Manners. "Everybody's civil to him."

"Yaas, with a few exceptions, such as Wacke and Cwooke and some othah wottahs. But he wathah feels bein' a Hun, and I know he is not comin' down to the gwound this afternoon."

"How do you know?"

"Lumley-Lumley said so; and he's his study-mate. Now, I wathah think it is up to us to call on the chap, and take him down there with us, just out of good mannahs, you know!"

"Blow your good manners!" exclaimed Blake, exasperated. "We shall have to shift Figgins & Co. to get near the cricket."

"Wats! Pway come with me, and we will take Lauwenz along," said Arthur Augustus. "If we have to fight the New House boundahs, Lauwenz can lend a hand. He is wathah a good fightin'-man; you remember he licked Gwunday of the Shell. Come on!"

"May as well," said Tom Merry, good-naturedly. "If the chap feels a bit diffident, Gussy's beautiful manners will put him at his ease. Let's go and watch Gussy perform."

"Bai Jove! I am weally not goin' thwough a performance, Tom Mewwy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats! Follow me, deah boys, and mind you do not betway any signs of impatience, or the chap's feelin's may be hurt!"

"Bother his feelings!" grunted Herries.

However, the juniors followed the noble Gussy to Study No. 8 in the Fourth. In spite of the fact that Paul Laurenz, the new boy in the Fourth, was of German origin, the fellows rather liked him. Indeed, Grundy of the Shell maintained that he was so decent that he couldn't be a Hun, and actually averred that Laurenz himself was mistaken on the point.

Arthur Augustus tapped at the door and opened it.

Paul Laurenz was seated at the table at work.

He glanced up, with a smile on his handsome, fair face, as the juniors looked in.

"Busy, dear boy?" asked D'Arcy.

"Yes, a little."

"Wats! Pway don't think of swottin' on a half-holiday," said the swell of St. Jim's. "Put that wubbish away! We're goin' down to the cwicket match, and you are comin' with us."

"We've called for you," said Manners solemnly.

"In state!" added Monty Lowther.

"Please come!" grinned Blake.

"Oh, do!" murmured Herries and Dig together.

And Arthur Augustus smiled approval, while Paul Laurenz looked a little puzzled.

"I'd like to come," he said. "I hope I shall be finished in time to see something of the match. But I can't come now. I've got a big impot to do for Herr Schneider."

"Oh!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, and his companions chuckled. It was not diffidence that was keeping the German junior indoors, after all, it was circumstances over which he had no control.

"Herr Schneider is rather down on me," explained Laurenz. "It seems to annoy him, somehow, my not knowing German well, although I am a German. He's set me a lot of conjugations to work through this afternoon. And—and I offended him the other day——"

"We know how you offended him!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "The old bounder wanted you to spy on the fellows, the rascally old Hun—ahem!—excuse me!" added Tom, colouring, as he remembered that Laurenz was a Hun, too.

Laurenz smiled faintly.

"Well, that's how it is," he said. "I shall be hard at work for an hour, at least. I'd like to come, like anything."

"Bai Jove! Undah the circs, there doesn't seem to be any help for it," remarked Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

"I wegard Herr Schneidah as a wotten wottah! Get thwough as soon as you can, deah boy, and come along!"

"Yes, rather! Thank you very much for calling for me," said Laurenz.

"Don't mench, deah boy!"

Laurenz settled down to his task again as Tom Merry & Co. departed. The juniors hurried downstairs and into the quad, and there they met Levison and Clive of the Fourth.

"Seen that ass Cardew?" exclaimed Levison.

"Seen that silly chump Cardew?" asked Sidney Clive at the same time.

"Certainly," said Monty Lowther. "He's dead and buried!"

"What?"

"At least, he said so, and I suppose he ought to know. Buck up, you chaps, or we shall be 'also rans.'"

The juniors scudded off to Big Side, leaving Levison and Clive staring after them.

CHAPTER 2.
A Little Flutter.

"COME in!" said Aubrey Racke.

Ralph Reckness Cardew opened the door and looked in lazily.

Racke and Crooke were there. Aubrey Racke was opening a silver case that contained playing-cards, and George Gerald Crooke was selecting a gold-tipped cigarette from a box on the table. Cardew smiled as he observed them. He had not been mistaken about the occupation of the black sheep that afternoon.

"Oh, you!" said Racke.

"Expectin' somebody else, dear man?" asked Cardew.

"I thought Scrope might be comin' in," said Racke. "Still, trot in, if you're after a little flutter. Good opportunity this afternoon. All the prefects will be on Big Side, and nobody will come nosin' along the passage. Have Clive and Levison let you come, though?" added Racke sarcastically.

"I've dodged 'em," said Cardew. "I think they'll conclude that I've gone to the station to meet my uncle. I may have let drop somethin' to help 'em to suppose so. It's an untruthful world."

"Ain't you your own master?" demanded Crooke.

Cardew shook his head.

"Not a bit of it. Levison, since he reformed, is bent on reformin' everybody else, and Clive has brought fearfully high moral ideas from South Africa. I live under a reign of terror. If I have a cigarette-box in the study I have to camouflage it as an inkstand, or something. I never dare to whisper that I know what a playin'-card is, and I speak of gee-gees with bated breath. It's quite a relief to get in here for a bit."

"Well, you're welcome," said Racke graciously. "Shut the door, old chap. Did you say your uncle was comin'?"

"Oh, yaas!"

Racke was all geniality now.

Cardew had a most provoking way of sometimes taking up the heir of the war-profiteers, and sometimes dropping him; but, as the grandson of a belted earl, Cardew was a fellow to be borne with patiently—by Racke, at least.

Messrs. Racke & Hacke had made huge sums out of the war, and Aubrey was rolling in money; and one reason why he had been sent to St. Jim's was so that he could, as his father expressed it, "get in with the nobs."

He had tried hard to get in with the Hon. Augustus D'Arcy, who was an undoubted nob; but the noble Gussy was not taking any. Cardew was a little easier, though somewhat unreliable.

Certainly he was not so particular as D'Arcy.

One of his uncles, at least, was titled, and direct heir of Lord Reckness, Cardew being the son of a younger son, who was merely Honourable.

If Cardew's titled uncle was coming that afternoon, Racke meant to get an introduction to him.

Hence his geniality.

Cardew smiled as he noted it. With all his laziness, he was keen enough. He dropped into the chair that Racke pulled out for him.

"You're not goin' to meet your uncle?" asked Crooke.

"Too much fag, dear boy. He can hustle along to St. Jim's without my guidance. He's an energetic old sport. He would tire me out."

"But won't he be ratty?" asked Racke. "I should think he was worth being civil to. I tell you what, Cardew, if you'd rather go and meet him, we don't mind chuckin' the game, an' we'll come with you."

Cadet Notes.

One of the most striking results of the war has been the growth and expansion of the Cadet Movement. It is estimated that since the war broke out the number of members of various forms of Cadet Corps has nearly doubled. Before the war not more than about 60,000 boys belonged to Cadet Corps altogether, and it is now stated that the present strength of the Movement is about 120,000. This is very good so far as it goes, but there is still plenty of room for further expansion. Out of the million and a half lads in the country of suitable age for the Cadet Movement, at least half a million ought to be enrolled in the corps.

Every boy between fourteen and eighteen years of age ought to belong to some recognised Cadet Corps. In such times as these it is necessary that all should prepare for the possibilities of the future. Nor need it be supposed that the membership of the Movement involves nothing more than tiresome and monotonous exercise in military drill, etc. The Movement provides all kinds of other relaxation, and this side of its work will be enormously extended in the near future. All our readers should join the Cadet Force, and any desiring to do so should apply to the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments, Judges' Quadrangle, Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London, W.C. 2, who will send them full particulars of the nearest corps, etc.

"You're awf'ly good, Racke!" answered Cardew, with a faint inflection of sarcasm in his tones. "But it's too much fag, really. Besides, I've come here to play the giddy goat. I can't always dodge Clive an' Levison. Let's pile in an' paint the study red!"

"Oh, all right! When's your uncle comin'?"

"I fancy he will drop in about four. I shall have to tell him I had a pressin' engagement. So I have. This is a pressin' engagement, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha!"

"Banker?" asked Cardew. "Good man! I hope you chaps are well heeled this afternoon. I'm goin' to play deep."

"You won't play too deep for me," said Racke boastfully.

"Rollin' in it—what?" smiled Cardew. "Dear old war! How comfortin' to think that it benefits somebody!"

Racke knitted his brows. He did not like allusions to the war-profits. But his face cleared again as he shuffled the cards.

"I've had some news from my father," he remarked.

"Contracts still goin' strong?"

"Oh, don't be an ass! I don't know anythin' about the business, of course," snapped Racke. "The pater's goin' to be honoured for his services to the country durin' the war."

"My hat! I didn't know your pater had been in the trenches, Racke!" said Cardew, in surprise.

"He hasn't, you ass! Services as a captain of industry, an' all that," said Racke. "Helpin' in solvin' labour problems, and things of that sort—supplyin' all kinds of things, and so on. He's goin' to be knighted."

"Congrats, old boy!" said Cardew amiably. "That will sound rippin'—Sir Jehoshaphat Racke——"

"Sir Jonas!" snapped Aubrey.

"My mistake. But why didn't he make it a baronetcy?" asked Cardew. "It's more expensive, I believe; but your pater can afford anythin' he likes."

Crooke grinned, and Racke appeared deaf to the question, which Cardew asked with a very innocent air.

Without further discussing the forthcoming honouring of Jonas Racke, the three young rascals began their game.

Cardew played carelessly, and evidently did not mind much whether he won or lost; but luck favoured him.

Crooke and Racke were not favoured by fortune.

Whether Cardew held the bank or played against it the result was much the same; and, as he played deeply, he was soon collecting quite a handsome sum from the two Shell fellows.

Crooke's face gradually grew more and more disagreeable. He was a bad loser, though he had plenty of money.

Racke's eyes began to glitter. But the thought of Cardew's titled uncle kept him from looking as disagreeable as Crooke. In fact, Aubrey would willingly have lost ten pounds for an introduction to a lord.

Cardew's utter indifference to the money that was piling up beside him added to the annoyance of the two losers.

They began with silver, and progressed with currency notes; and, after a time, rustling fivers appeared on the table.

There was more money on the table then than a fellow like Tom Merry spent in a whole term. It was another proof that money does not make happiness, for certainly Tom Merry had a better time than either Racke or Crooke. George Gerald Crooke withdrew from the game when he had lost eight pounds, and stood by the mantelpiece smoking and scowling. His code of manners apparently did not require that he should take his losses smilingly.

Racke was growing more and more unpleasant.

Cardew did not appear to observe it. As a matter of fact, he did observe it, and he was quietly enjoying Racke's expression, as he had told Tom Merry he would. And, careless as he seemed, he was on his guard, as he showed when Racke attempted to assist fortune.

"Wrong card," said Cardew, as Racke turned up the pack, being banker. "Only a mistake, of course, but that king slipped out of your sleeve, Racke. Queer it should wedge into the pack like that!"

Crooke gave a chortle over his cigarette.

Racke's face grew crimson.

"I—I didn't see——" he stammered. "The—the card was dropped. It—it was——"

"Exactly!" yawned Cardew. "Simply an error. I think I take this little lot. Thanks!" He looked at his watch. "By gad, I must be tearin' myself away, deah

boys, or my uncle will be here lookin' for me!"

Racke rose to his feet with a smothered curse. The heir of the profiteer hardly missed the twelve pounds he left on the table; but Racke, rich as he was, did not like parting with money.

Cardew crumpled the money indifferently and slipped it into a pocket.

"One more fag before I go," he remarked. "Open to give you your revenge at any time, dear men. Pass the fags, Crooke, old bean!"

He lighted a cigarette with cool nonchalance, seemingly oblivious to the dark looks of the two Shell fellows.

Racke strove to keep down his ill-temper.

"Gettin' a bit thick in here," he remarked. "Let's go for a stroll. I dare say your uncle's here by this time, Cardew."

"Very likely," assented Cardew. "What a joke if he looked in here! He's an awf'ly prim old gent—not much like his dutiful nephew. They get queer ideas at sea, these sailormen."

Racke started.

"I didn't know your uncle was a naval officer!" he said. "I thought——"

"Perhaps you were thinkin' of the wrong uncle," suggested Cardew calmly. "I've several uncles—lots, in fact; I don't believe I've counted 'em, but I try to remember their names when I see 'em. This one is the sailorman."

"Oh! Not Lord Reckness' son?" asked Rack.

"Not at all. The other side of the family," yawned Cardew. "Merely a sailor."

"What do you mean? Not a common sailor?" ejaculated Racke.

"I don't know anythin' uncommon about him," answered Cardew.

Racke and Crooke both stared at him. For the first time it occurred to them that Cardew's connection on the "other side" of his family might not be so nobby as those on the Reckness side.

"Look here, Cardew! Don't be an ass! Do you seriously mean to tell us that your uncle is a common sailor?" exclaimed Racke.

"Why not?"

"A—a—a lower-deck hand!" exclaimed Crooke.

"I've never asked him which deck he was on; but I know he's a sailorman," said Cardew. "Socially, I believe, he's not up to the level of the other side—no titles on that side of the family."

"My hat! Is he poor?"

"My dear man, if he were rich, shouldn't I have gone to meet him at the station? Wouldn't you?"

"Of course!"

"Of course," assented Cardew.

"But—but—but——" Racke was both astonished and enraged. "He can't be a common Jack Tar, your uncle. It's impossible."

"Nothin's impossible in this world, dear boy, except gettin' through a day without bein' bored."

"And he's comin' here to see you—a common tarry Jack!" exclaimed Crooke. "He's got cool cheek to come!"

"Why not?" said Cardew imperturbably. "Redfern's brother is a tarry Jack, as you so elegantly express it, and he's been here. The fellows don't seem to think any the worse of Reddy. It surprised me at first, when I came here—I'm a bit of a snob, you know. But I've got over it."

"You—you spoofin' cad!" exclaimed Racke.

"After all your side and swank, it comes out that you've got an uncle on the lower deck! You—you—— Why, you—you"—Racke fairly stuttered—"you've got an uncle like Redfern's brother!"

"Yaas. Awful, ain't it?" said Cardew pathetically. "But you fellows are goin' to stand by me, ain't you, and entertain him a bit? You won't mind his manners bein' a bit rough, I'm sure—old sea-dog, you know."

"Catch me speakin' to the old ruffian!" exclaimed Racke furiously. "I fancy your other relations don't speak to him."

"I believe Lord Reckness doesn't like him very much," admitted Cardew. They don't seem to pull, somehow."

"And you want us to talk to tarry-breeks, do you?" said Crooke. You'll jolly well be disappointed, then!"

"Like your confounded cheek to ask us," said Racke, giving full rein to his bad temper now. "After all your swank, to trot out a relation like that before all the school!"

"I didn't ask him to come!" pleaded Cardew.

"I can guess that—you'd like to keep him dark if you could!" sneered Racke. "Well, if you want to know my opinion of you, your're a swankin' cad, Cardew, an' a spoofin' humbug!"

"Same from me!" said Crooke with a sneer.

Cardew still smiled, but his eyes were gleaming.

"I don't know that I specially want your opinion," he said, "but now I've got it, it's not gratifyin'. When a fellow calls me names, I generally punch his nose—like that!"

Crash!

Aubrey went down on his back, and Crooke dodged as Cardew turned towards him. The dandy of the Fourth dragged a handful of notes from his pocket—his winnings that afternoon.

"You're a bit wild about losin' this rubbish," he remarked. "As I don't really want to soil my fingers with your dirty money, here it is!"

He flung the notes in Crooke's face, and turned to the door. Racke scrambled furiously to his feet.

"Collar him, Crooke! Smash him! Help me!"

He grabbed up a heavy ruler from his desk and rushed at Cardew. Crooke followed him, catching up a stump. Even two to one, the cads of the Shell did not think of relying on their fists.

Cardew stepped quickly out of the study, and slammed the door after him, and the ruler struck the door with a crash. Racke dragged at the door, but it was held outside.

"Help me, Crooke!" he panted. "I'll smash him! I'll—I'll——"

The two Shell fellows dragged at the door-handle fiercely. For a moment the door was fast, and they exerted all their strength. Then suddenly it opened, with the natural result that Racke and Crooke went tumbling over one another on the floor.

They roared as they rolled over. But Racke was up in a few moments, and he picked up the ruler and ran into the passage. But the passage was empty, and though he ran furiously as far as the stairs, with Crooke at his heels, he saw no sign of Ralph Reckness Cardew.

CHAPTER 3.
A Temporary Pal.

PAUL LAURENZ laid down his pen and sighed.

He had finished the work which had kept him indoors on that bright, sunny, summer's afternoon.

Through the open window of the study he could hear the shouts from the cricket-field, and he was eager to be out in the open air and the bright sunshine.

But Herr Schneider had taken care that his half-holiday should be spoiled. Herr Schneider had been disposed to be kind to Paul when he came to St. Jim's; he had even spoken to Tom Merry & Co. and asked them to be considerate towards Laurenz in spite of his Teutonic origin. But the new boy had not kept in the Herr's good graces. The German master had taken it for granted that his compatriot would be willing to act as a spy and a tale-bearer in the school, and Paul's scornful refusal had earned his bitter dislike. The Herr lost few occasions of making his dislike felt.

Most of the fellows had expected that they would dislike the "Hun" of the Fourth; but they had come rather to like him. He had no enemies save his own countryman, the German master, which was curious enough.

Laurenz stepped to the open window, and looked out on the green old quad.

His face was sad.

He had met more kindness at St Jim's than he had expected; but he felt his position keenly.

He turned from the window as the door opened suddenly without a knock.

Ralph Reckness Cardew stepped in, and closed the door behind him, and chuckled softly.

Laurenz stared at him.

Cardew did not observe him for a moment. He had supposed the study to be empty, like most of the others that sunny afternoon. He was listening, and he grinned as he heard racing footsteps pass the door, and then return. Racke and Crooke were looking for him up and down the passages.

"Well?" said Laurenz, breaking the silence.

Cardew started, and spun round towards him.

"Hallo! I didn't know you were at home," he exclaimed, colouring. "Everybody's out of doors, and I thought—— Excuse me for rushin' into your room without knockin'."

"It doesn't matter," said Laurenz, with a smile. "What is the matter—a rag?"

"Yes," Cardew grinned. "I've been having a little dispute with Racke an' Crooke, an' they're after me with a ruler an' a stump. Rulers an' stumps at close quarters don't agree with my constitution. Do you mind if I stay here for a few minutes?"

"Not at all."

"I hope I haven't interrupted the merry swottin'," said Cardew, with a glance at the papers on the table. "What's all that—keepin' a diary in your native language—what?"

Paul shook his head.

"I don't know German well enough to keep a diary in it," he answered. "That's work for Herr Schneider."

"You don't know German well?"

"No."

"It's your own lingo, isn't it?"

"I suppose so. I never took to it, however—somehow. I—I don't like it. I learned French easily enough, and English, but German always beat me."

"That's jolly queer!"

"Yes."

Cardew listened at the door again. Racke and Crooke could be heard at a distance up the corridor.

The dandy of the Fourth put his hands in his pockets, and regarded Laurenz with a curious look.

"So you've been workin'?" he said.

"Yes; I had to."

"Goin' out now?"

"Yes."

"I wonder whether you'd let me inflict my company upon you for a bit?" said Cardew. "From the way you punched Grundy the other day I think you're the chap I want if I meet those two ragin' Huns in the passage."

Laurenz laughed.

"Let's go together," he said

"Good man!" said Cardew. "Come on!"

He opened the study door, and Laurenz picked up his cap to follow. There was a shout up the passage.

"Here's the cad! He's been hidin' in a study."

Racke and Crooke came dashing up.

They paused, however, as they saw Laurenz with Cardew. They had not forgotten his encounter with the great Grundy, and they did not want to quarrel with him.

"Been lookin' for me, dear men?" smiled Cardew. "Well, here I am. Chuck away those deadly weapons, an' come on, two to two!"

"You clear off, Laurenz!" said Racke.

"So that you can tackle Cardew two to one!" said Laurenz. "No fear!"

"It's not your business, you rotten Hun!" shouted Crooke. "Clear off while you're safe!"

"I'm safe enough here, if you come to that!" answered Paul.

"Oh, go for him, and not so much jaw!" said Racke. "If the dirty German chips in give him some, too!"

And the Shell fellows rushed at the two Fourth-Formers.

Cardew dodged the ruler, and closed with Racke, and they wrestled fiercely. Laurenz received a slash from the cricket-stump as he engaged Crooke, but the next moment Crooke was on his back, yelling. The new junior caught up the stump, and sent it whirling along the corridor.

"Get up and use your fists, you cad!" he exclaimed.

Crooke preferred to remain where he was. Laurenz rubbed his shoulder where the stump had struck. He was hurt.

Crash!

Racke went down, with Cardew over him. The dandy of the Fourth planted a knee on his chest.

"My game!" said Cardew calmly. "Help me to turn him over, Laurenz, and we'll give him some of his own ruler."

"Oh, never mind him," said Paul. "He's not worth it."

"Just as you like." Cardew released the cad of the Shell, who rose to his feet, crimson and furious. He picked up the ruler, and Racke dodged back. "I give you two a second to clear. Then I begin on you!"

Racke and Crooke hardly required more than the second. They cleared. Cardew pitched the ruler away, and laughed.

"Jevver see such a pair of merry heroes?" he said. "Hallo! Is your shoulder hurt, Laurenz?"

"Only a bruise. Crooke hit me there with the stump."

"The rotter!" said Cardew. "I suppose it hurts?"

"Only a trifle," said Paul, smiling.

"I say, it's awfully decent of you to stand by me like this," said Cardew. "I'm much obliged. I should have got a regular raggin' from those two with my friends out of doors."

"I'm glad I was here, then."

"Let's go after them and mop them up!" suggested Cardew. "They'd be all the better for a good lickin'."

"Let's go and see the cricket," answered Laurenz.

"Well, perhaps you're right. Anythin' for a quiet life. But I sha'n't see much of the cricket. I've got a merry old uncle to steer around this afternoon," groaned Cardew. "Levison an' Clive won't be able to help me. I'll bet they're glued to the cricket six deep. You specially keen on the match?"

"I'd like to see it," answered Laurenz. "I haven't been here long, you know, and I've not seen a First Eleven match yet."

The Fight in the Passage!
(See Chapter 5.)

They were going downstairs as they were speaking.

"You don't feel inclined to stick to me an' help me stand my uncle?" asked Cardew.

He was a little surprised, in point of fact. Evidently Laurenz did not share Racke's regard for his nobby relations.

"If you want me, certainly," answered Paul. "But your own friends——"

"They're up to the neck in the cricket, you see, an' I should have to dig 'em out, an' then they wouldn't come."

Paul laughed.

"Stick to me!" said Cardew. "I can't stand uncle alone. You've got no prejudices against a sailorman, I suppose?"

"Why should I have?"

"Racke seems to cry off a bit when he found that my uncle was a common sailorman."

"Racke would!" said Laurenz, with a curl of the lip.

"An' the curious thing," drawled Cardew, "is that Racke was jumpin' to a conclusion in too great a hurry, you know. Somehow he seemed to gather from my remarks that my uncle was a lower-deck man with tarry breeches. Perhaps I was pullin' his leg a little," added Cardew reflectively. "It's rather amusin' to pull a silly snob's leg, isn't it? I shouldn't wonder if Racke's annoyed when he finds that nunky is a commander—quite a terrific old gent. For Racke's sake, I'd rather he was an admiral. Will you stick to me an' help me bear him patiently? He's rather a corker. He snorts at a fellow. He's bound to come an' see the cricket, and that's where you come in."

Laurenz laughed. He hardly knew quite what to make of the whimsical fellow, but he was willing to be obliging.

"I'll stick to you if you want me," he said.

"Kind old bean!" said Cardew affectionately. "Come on, then, and let's see whether nunky has drifted in."

And the two juniors left the School House together.

CHAPTER 4.
The Commander.

"WELL caught, Kildare!"

"Good man!"

"Oh, well caught, sir!"

"Bwavo! Bwavo! Bwavo, deah boy!"

Tom Merry & Co. were letting themselves go.

There was a big crowd round the cricket-ground for the senior House match.

School House were all out for 60, and Kildare and his merry men were in the field now, with Monteith and Baker of the New House at the wickets.

Langton was bowling, and Kildare had made a first-rate catch, leaving Monteith, who was caught, looking rather blue.

The Terrible Three roared, and Study No. 6 roared, and Levison and Clive yelled, and the rest of the School House juniors added their voices to the din.

"Hard cheese!" remarked Figgins of the New House to his chums, Kerr and Wynn. "Monteith was putting up a good show. Never mind; we'll win yet."

"In about a dog's age, old top!" said Blake. "Not this side of Christmas!"

"Rats!"

"Same to you!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Kildare!"

Webb of the New House came in to take Monteith's place. The crowd looked on with keen interest. Tom Merry & Co. admitted that the match was well worthy of their patronage. On such occasions the juniors identified themselves with the seniors.

There were members of St. Jim's First in both teams, and they were mighty

men of their hands. Even Cutts of the Fifth was playing up well for the School House, and his chum St. Leger had done well in the innings.

Kildare's team was in great form, and Monteith was not far behind. It was worth missing the cinema to see the match, as Monty Lowther remarked.

The crowd was thick, and it was warm. Arthur Augustus fanned himself with his straw hat, while the celebrated eyeglass was riveted on the game.

"That was a wippin' catch of old Kildare's!" the swell of St. Jim's remarked oracularly. "I weally could not have done bettah myself."

"Go hon!" said Blake.

"I am quite sewious, deah boy. Bai Jove, it's about time that chap Lauwenz awwived if he is goin' to see the game! Suppose you wun in and fetch him, Blake?"

"Rats!"

"Suppose you wun in, Dig?"

"More rats!" said Robert Arthur Digby cheerfully. "I say, Webb's shaping pretty well at the wicket for a New House bounder."

"Suppose you wun in, Hewwies?"

"Fathead!" said Herries. "Run in yourself if you want the fellow fetched."

"But I would miss seein' the game!" said Arthur Augustus innocently.

"Shouldn't I miss it?" roared Herries.

"I nevah thought of that, deah boy."

"Br-r-r-r-r!" said Herries.

"Tom Mewwy!" called out Arthur Augustus.

The Terrible Three were at a little distance in the throng.

"Hallo?" responded the captain of the Shell, without looking round.

"Lauwenz hasn't come along yet."

"Bother Laurenz!"

"Suppose you wun in and wemind him——"

"Suppose you talk sense, old chap!"

"Couldn't be done!" said Manners, shaking his head.

"The age of miracles is past!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove! Levison, deah boy——"

"No fear!" said Levison of the Fourth, laughing. "Don't bother."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave it up. He fanned himself with his straw, and watched the game, and Laurenz was left to take his chance.

"How does the game stand now, my boy?"

That question was asked in a deep, powerful voice, and Arthur Augustus looked round quickly. A tall, powerfully-built officer in naval uniform was standing just behind him, looking over his head at the cricket. It was a new arrival on the ground. D'Arcy had not seen him before. The naval man had somewhat rugged features, deeply bronzed by sun and wind, and his clear blue eyes were very keen and alert. Arthur Augustus raised his straw hat respectfully. He supposed that the naval officer was some stranger who had strolled in to see the cricket, as strangers sometimes did.

"School House all down for sixty, sir," replied Arthur Augustus. "New House twenty for three wickets. Webb and Gway are battin' now, and that chap goin' on to bowl is Dawwel of the Sixth."

"Thank you!"

"School House are goin' to win," Arthur Augustus further confided to the naval gentleman. "School House genewally win the matches."

"Bow-wow!" came a voice that sounded like Figgins'.

"Weally, you know——"

The naval gentleman smiled. His face was rather stern in expression, but when he smiled it was very pleasant to look upon.

"So School House generally win, do they?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Don't take the stranger in, D'Arcy," came a voice again. "He's pulling your leg, sir. School House are always a bad second."

"Bai Jove, Figgins——"

"Stick to the facts, Gussy!"

"I'm stickin' to the facts, you uttah ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "I appeal to evewyone pwesent."

"Right as rain!" said Jack Blake.

"Yes, rather!"

"Rats!"

"Come off!"

School House and New House juniors had different opinions on the point, as they had upon many points.

"You belong to the School House, my boy?" asked the naval gentleman, addressing D'Arcy, but with on eye on the cricket. It could be easily seen that he was an old cricketer.

"Bai Jove! How did you guess that, sir?" asked Arthur Augustus.

The bronzed gentleman smiled again.

"Perhaps you know my nephew?" he went on.

"Pwobably, sir, if he's in the School House," said Arthur Augustus. "If you would tell me his name——"

"Cardew. He is in the Fourth Form."

"Bai Jove! You are Cardew's uncle!" said Arthur Augustus, rather surprised. He had not expected to see a bronzed naval man turn up as a relation of Cardew's. He would rather have expected to see some fashionably-dressed man with a lackadaisical manner. "Cardew must be somewhah about."

"I cannot see him here." The big naval man could see over all the heads present. "Detained, perhaps—what?"

"I think not, sir—I don't think any of the Fourth are detained, exceptin' poor old Lauwenz with his impot. Would you like me to find him, sir?" added Arthur Augustus, with really heroic self-sacrifice. "He cannot know that you have awwived."

"Here he comes!" said Blake.

"Oh, good! Heah is your nephew, sir, with Lauwenz."

The Commander looked round. Ralph Cardew and Paul Laurenz were coming down towards the cricket-ground, chatting as they came. They had not observed the naval officer yet.

Arthur Augustus' glance was curious as it rested on the two. He had never noticed Laurenz and Cardew together before. Now that they walked side by side he was struck by a curious likeness between them. In manner and expression they were totally different, and in complexion also; but in features and in build they had a strange resemblance.

The commander evidently observed it, too, for he started a little, and his eyes became fixed on them.

"Who is that boy with my nephew?" he exclaimed sharply.

"That's Lauwenz, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "A new chap here, in our Form, sir. A wathah decent chap."

"A German!" struck in Trimble of the Fourth, anxious to have something to say, and something disagreeable, if possible.

"A what?" exclaimed the commander.

"A Hun, sir!" grinned Trimble. "Not quite the thing to have Huns at this school, is it, sir?"

"The boy does not look German," said the officer, addressing D'Arcy.

"He weally isn't a Hun, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "It appeahs to be the fact that he was unfortunately born a German, but otherwise he is quite decent. We all wathah like him."

"He is strangely like my nephew in appearance," said the commander, half to himself.

"Yaas, I've noticed that. Might be welations fwom their looks, sir—it's weally wemarkable."

"Ralph!"

Cardew started at the sound of his uncle's voice. He came quickly towards the commander.

"It's old Durrance!" he murmured to Laurenz. "Back me up!"

Paul smiled, and followed him.

"How do you do, uncle?" said Cardew sweetly, as he shook hands with the commander. "I didn't know you'd arrived. I've just been down to the gates——"

"I expected to see you at the station, Ralph."

"I was comin' there, sir," said Cardew meekly. "But, as it happened, my pal Laurenz was detained to do impots for the German master. Under the circs—ahem——"

Laurenz gave him a stare.

Cardew's statement was strictly accurate; but it certainly gave Commander Durrance a false impression.

Arthur Augustus turned away towards the cricket, his lips setting a little. He knew very well that Laurenz was not Cardew's pal, unless he had suddenly become his pal that afternoon, and that Cardew had not stayed in because Laurenz was detained.

"Well, well, if you stayed in with your friend, that was very kind of you, and so never mind," said the unsuspicious sailorman. "Is this Laurenz?"

"Yes, uncle," said Cardew, unabashed. "One of the best—Paul Laurenz of the Fourth Form; my uncle, Commander Durrance."

The commander shook hands with the boy. It was strange enough for him to be shaking hands with a German, when he was fresh home from sinking Germans in the North Sea. But Laurenz did not impress him as a German; there was no fellow at St. Jim's more thoroughly English in appearance. He looked earnestly at the boy's handsome face.

"Watchin' the cricket, uncle?" said Cardew. "I thought you'd be interested. It's a First Eleven match, St. Jim's against—— Who's it against, D'Arcy?"

"It's a House match, Cardew, between two senior elevens of St. Jim's," said Arthur Augustus freezingly. Whether it was affectation on Cardew's part or not, his ignorance of that fact was annoying.

"Yes, my mistake," said Cardew, not in the least abashed. "Come round to the pavilion, uncle, and I'll find you a seat. There's room for a distinguished guest."

"Very well, Ralph. Bring your friend with you," said the commander.

"Eh? Levison——"

"Your friend Laurenz," said the commander.

"Oh, Laurenz!" said Cardew. "Certainly! Come along to the pav, Laurenz, will you? You'll see just as well from there."

Laurenz followed them silently. He had begun to feel very friendly towards Cardew; but in that moment Cardew had betrayed quite plainly that he had almost forgotten his existence. Cardew's volatile nature was not easily susceptible of friendship; and the new junior drew in his horns, so to speak. But Ralph Cardew's manner was very agreeable now. He found his uncle a seat, and stood near him with Paul. He summoned all his fortitude to endure a jaw from his sailor uncle, mainly about cricket. But to his surprise Commander Durrance did not jaw him. He sat silent for the most part, with his eyes on the game,

but Cardew suspected that he did not really see much of the cricket—he seemed to be a prey of deep reflections, not wholly pleasant. When his glance wandered from the game, it was upon Paul Laurenz it rested, not upon Cardew.

Cardew was more and more surprised.

He had taken Laurenz up idly for the afternoon, partly from gratitude, perhaps, for his assistance in the row with Racke and Crooke, partly because his friends were not with him, and he hated solitude; partly, perhaps, from a curiosity to talk to the "Hun" and see what the fellow was like. On the morrow, probably, he would have regarded Laurenz as more or less a stranger again—a course of conduct that would have puzzled the more serious and thoughtful Laurenz. Why his uncle should take an interest in the boy was a problem Cardew did not even attempt to solve. But it astonished him.

After half an hour Cardew was so inexpressibly bored by the cricket and his uncle combined that he was scarcely able to stifle a yawn.

"By gad!" he remarked at last. "I had to see a chap—— Do you mind if I cut off a few minutes, uncle?"

"Not at all, Ralph."

Cardew had dropped into a vacant chair beside the commander, and he now rose with alacrity.

"Comin' along, Laurenz?" he asked.

"I'd rather see the game out," said Laurenz.

"Oh, gad!"

"You are not tired of the game, my boy?" asked the commander with a smile, looking at Laurenz.

It struck Cardew with a little shock that the sailorman was a little keener than he had supposed, and that he knew the dandy of the Fourth wanted to get away before he was bored.

"No, sir," answered Laurenz.

"Sit down here, then."

With an almost affectionate gesture the commander drew Paul into the seat his nephew had vacated beside him. Paul, surprised and pleased by the kind manner of the stranger, sat down, his face very bright.

Ralph Reckness Cardew strolled away with an expression of great astonishment on his face. The chap he had to see was apparently Dame Taggles in the school shop, for it was thither that he wended his way.

"Ginger-pop, please!" said Cardew. "It's a warm afternoon, Mrs. Taggles, and though the result of the war may depend on the last glass of fizz, I'm goin' to plunge in and have some!"

"Yes, Master Cardew," said Mrs. Taggles, without troubling to understand what Cardew said.

"It's jolly queer, isn't it?" said Cardew, gazing meditatively at Dame Taggles as he sipped his ginger-beer.

"What is, Master Cardew?"

"A dry old gent, who often comes down on a fellow like a ton of bricks," said Cardew cheerfully, confiding his thoughts to the astonished dame. "A regular old martinet, who cuts a fellow up short, you know, and snorts at him. Well, suppose a fellow was expectin' to be bored to the depths of human woe by that crusty old gent, Dame Taggles?"

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Taggles.

"And suppose, instead of askin' a fellow questions about how he's gettin' on, an' workin', and learnin', and beastly things like that, an' cricket, and such crass rot, Mrs. Taggles—suppose the crusty old walrus took hardly any notice of a fellow at all, and concentrated his fire, so to speak, on a chap who's a perfect stranger to him, and a Hun to boot?"

"Lor' bless me!" said Mrs. Taggles.

"It would be a terrific relief," said Cardew. "No end of a buck-up. But what does it mean, ma'am?"

"Bless me, how you do talk, Master Cardew!"

"That's what beats me, and knocks me into a cocked hat," said Cardew. "What does it mean? An old rhinoceros who never looks at a fellow, practically speakin', snorts at a chap—even a nice, distinguished sort of chap like me, Mrs. Taggles—all of a sudden he becomes as good-tempered as a cooing dove, doesn't snort at all, and takes up a perfect stranger, and is glad to see his dutiful nephew bunk so that the young Hun can sit beside him and hear him jaw! If you can find a solution to that riddle, Mrs. Taggles, I'll stand you a glass of your own ginger-pop at war prices!"

Mrs. Taggles only smiled, not understanding in the least. Cardew finished his ginger-beer, and sauntered out of the tuckshop.

The awful boredom he had feared for that afternoon was not coming off, that was clear. He was free to take himself off, if he liked, and his uncle would not miss him. It was a relief, undoubtedly, and Cardew was pleased to that extent; but, somehow, he was not wholly pleased. And he was puzzled enormously.

CHAPTER 5.
Racke is Not Pleased.

"ALL down for fifty-two!" said Paul Laurenz. "School House is ahead."

"Eh?"

Commander Durrance seemed to wake up from a brown study, and his glance turned inquiringly upon the junior at his side.

Keen as he had seemed on the cricket at first, it was clear that he had not even noticed the close of the New House innings.

"New House are out, sir," said Paul.

"Oh, yes, yes!"

There was a considerable pause before the School House took their second innings. Mr. Railton, who had come to see the innings, came over to the commander, and stood chatting with him a few minutes. Paul rose for the House-master to take his seat.

"Thank you, my boy!" said Mr. Railton, with a smile. "I will sit down for a few minutes; but you may have your chair again presently."

"Come back presently, Laurenz," said the commander.

"Certainly, sir, if you wish," said Paul, puzzled to know what the big naval gentleman wanted him to come back for. He receded from view, and joined the crowd of juniors.

"A good match, commander," remarked Mr. Railton.

"Ay, ay! It's a pleasure to see a game on the old ground again," said the commander. "Many a long year since I handled the willow on this ground, Mr. Railton—when you were a boy at school, begad! How is your fin?"

Mr. Railton glanced down at his arm, almost useless to him since the wound he had received at the Front.

"It gives me no pain now," he said, "or very little. I came through very luckily, considering. My cricket days are over, I fear; but it is a pleasure to watch a game."

The commander puckered his brows.

"That lad who was here—he is a new boy in the school, isn't he?"

"Laurenz? Yes."

"In your House, I think?"

"That is so."

"It is a fact that he is a German?"

"It appears so. That is not the poor lad's fault, of course," said Mr. Railton. "He has been trained in England, and his ways are quite English."

"He does not look in the least like a German."

"No. Everyone has noticed that."

"And his name is Laurenz?"

"Yes."

"You know anything of his people?"

"Very little," said Mr. Railton, somewhat surprised at the questioning. "His uncle, I understand, who sends him here, is a naturalised German, and the boy is an orphan. The uncle is connected with a financial house in London. The Head, naturally, satisfied himself with regard to the people before Laurenz was admitted here."

Commander Durrance nodded.

"Ay, ay! It is very odd that the boy, a German, as you say, should bear a striking resemblance to my nephew."

"I have heard that remarked upon," assented Mr. Railton. "Naturally, Cardew has no German relations."

"Certainly not."

"Such resemblances do occur," said Mr. Railton, rather puzzled by the commander's evidently deep interest in the matter. "Ah, they're coming out again!"

Mr. Railton sat and watched the second innings of the School House for some time, and then walked back to the School House, where he had duties to attend to. The commander looked round. He caught sight of Paul Laurenz in the distance, and beckoned to him.

The new junior came back to his seat.

When Cardew turned up, more than an hour later, he found him there with the commander, and Paul gave him the chair at once. Cardew, quite aware that the change was not agreeable to his uncle, sat down coolly, and Paul disappeared in the crowd again.

"That lad is a friend of yours, Ralph?" asked the commander.

As Cardew had referred to Laurenz as a pal, he could not very well deny it, though he was inclined to do so.

"We're friendly," he answered.

"He seems a very fine lad."

"By gad! Does he?"

"I like his looks."

"I didn't know you were fond of Germans, uncle!" remarked Cardew, with a touch of sarcasm.

"He does not seem to me like a German," said the commander, without noticing his nephew's tone. "He is very like you, Ralph."

"Some of the fellows have said so. I don't see it myself."

"It is quite striking."

"Really!" murmured Cardew.

He was fed up with the subject of Laurenz. Fortunately, the commander let it drop at that.

There came a roar from the crowd a little later.

"Hurrah! School House wins! Hurrah!"

"Bwavo, School House!"

"Good old Kildare!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy waved his eyeglass in great excitement.

"Huwwah! What do you New House boundahs say now? Huwwah!"

"Bow-wow!" was what George Figgins said.

The crowd broke up. School House had won by three runs, and it had been a great game. The commander rose, and Cardew gladly followed his example.

"I suppose you're goin' to dine with the Head, uncle?" he remarked, fervently hoping that 'he sailorman had no fancy for tea in the study because St. Jim's was his old school.

"Yes," said Commander Durrance. "Let me see—I am really very much to blame for not having paid my respects to the Head before this—after I have seen him, Ralph, I will visit you in your study, and see your quarters."

"How good of you, uncle!" murmured Cardew, suppressing a groan.

"Is Laurenz your study-mate?"

"No fear! I—I mean, Levison and Clive are my study-mates," said Cardew. He almost added that he hardly knew Laurenz, but stopped himself in time.

"Ask Laurenz into your study, as he is your chum," said the commander. "I should like to have a talk with the lad."

"Oh, my hat!"

"What?"

"I—I mean certainly, as—as he's my chum," stammered Cardew. "I—I'm glad you like my—my chum, uncle!"

He dutifully walked to the School House with his uncle, and then left him. Levison and Clive joined their study-mate, as the juniors came in.

"Well, how are you getting on with uncle?" asked Levison.

"He's gone mad!"

"What?"

"Mad as a hatter!" said Cardew. "It's unfortunate, but true. He was always rather a corker. Now he's raving!"

"What on earth do you mean?" exclaimed Clive in astonishment.

"What I say. He's taken a sudden fancy to—whom do you think?"

"Laurenz?" asked Levison. "I saw them together."

"Yes! That merry young Hun! He says the fellow is like me."

"He is, to look at. A bit more respectable, that's all."

"Thanks. I didn't want to amble along to the station, an' I let the cheery old boy suppose Laurenz was my chum, an' I stayed in because he was detained——"

"Cardew!" exclaimed Clive.

"Don't preach!" groaned Cardew. "I'm being punished for departin' from the strict line of veracity. The Hun's quite cut me out with nunky. He wants me to have him in the study for a jaw. He's no end taken with him. Of course, he must have gone potty. That's the only explanation. Help me to put up with my mad uncle till he goes, you fellows!"

Racke and Crooke were on the steps, and they were listening to Cardew. Racke came down a step.

"Is that your uncle, Cardew?" he asked quite civilly, apparently forgetful of having chased Cardew with a ruler earlier in the afternoon.

"That's the jolly old rhinoceros," answered Cardew.

"You told us he was a lower-deck hand!" exclaimed Racke.

"Did I? What a pity I wasn't brought up in the home of a war profiteer, Racke, and taught to tell the frozen truth every time!" smiled Cardew.

"He's a commander," said Crooke, evidently impressed. "That's awfully decent, in the Royal Navy."

"I believe he's respectable," yawned Cardew. "Quite unlike his nephew."

"He doesn't look poor, either."

"Nearly starvin'," replied Cardew seriously. "I don't believe he has more than four thousand a year at the most."

"You silly ass!" roared Racke.

"Hallo! What's bitin' you now?"

The two black sheep of the Shell looked savage. They realised that Cardew had deliberately taken them in in order to get out of having to present them to a high-class uncle as friends of his. Levison and Clive burst into a chuckle.

Racke scowled after the chums of No. 9 as they went into the house. He was feeling very sore.

"The spoofin' rotter!" muttered Crooke. "He didn't want us to meet his uncle!"

"He thinks we're not good enough, I suppose!" said Racke savagely.

Crooke grunted.

"He might think that about you!" he replied.

"He shook you off, anyhow," snarled Racke. "Don't give me any of your cheek, Crooke!"

"Oh cheese it!" said Crooke, equally savagely. "I don't blame him, either, if you come to that. He couldn't introduce a war-profiteer merchant to a R.N. man. His uncle would have felt insulted."

Racke clenched his hand.

"Hallo, trouble in the merry family?" asked Monty Lowther, as the Terrible Three came in. "Which of you has been swindling the other?"

Lowther passed on with his chums without waiting for a reply to that question. Racke and Crooke exchanged scowls, and Aubrey turned away.

"Goin' out?" asked Crooke, a little more civilly.

"Yes, hang you!"

"Goin' to meet the man you were speakin' of?"

Crooke joined his chum, and walked along to the gates with him. "It's gettin' near lockin'-up."

"Hang lockin'-up, and hang you!"

"Oh, don't let's row," said Crooke amicably. "I'm rather curious to see your new man, Racke. Rely on me—I shan't mention him."

"I don't care if you do!" snapped Racke. "I'm my own master, I suppose."

Crooke laughed.

"When you had your man Berrymore in the village, supplyin' you with grub, the fellows interfered," he said. "They gave Berrymore the boot. They'd do the same to your new man if they heard of him. Mum's the word, old chap!"

Racke did not answer, and the two black sheep went out at the gates together.

CHAPTER 6.
Bitter Blood.

"TOM MERRY!"

"Hallo?" said Tom, looking round.

The Terrible Three were at a rather late tea when Cardew looked into their study.

"Had your little game?" asked Manners sarcastically.

"Yes, thanks," answered Cardew. "Long ago. I stuck Racke and Crooke for twenty quid. Congratulate me!"

"Twenty pounds!" exclaimed Tom, in astonishment.

"Yaas."

"Well, I don't congratulate you."

"I don't suppose you would," agreed Cardew. "Still, twenty pounds is a lot of money, isn't it?"

"Not specially nice, though, with the war-profit taint on it," said Monty Lowther.

"That's only Racke's," answered Cardew calmly. "Crooke's money isn't made out of war-profits I believe Crooke senior makes his money by promotin' swindlin' companies in the City, or somethin' of that sort. It's rather disgraceful to be rich in these days. Still, it's a lot of money, and really I was an ass to chuck it at Crooke."

"You chucked it at Crooke?"

"Yaas."

"What for?"

"They cut up rusty for some reason. So I chucked it at them," yawned Cardew. "I really didn't want their filthy lucre. If I still had the horrid profits of gamblin' about me, dear boys, I shouldn't dare to put my nose into this highly moral study. I should blush to do it!"

Tom Merry went on cutting the war-bread without replying. He hardly understood a fellow like Cardew, and he did not always think him worth the trouble of trying to understand. A peculiar character like Cardew's was a puzzle to a straightforward fellow like Tom—a puzzle that was doubtfully worth solving.

"But I didn't come here to brag about my success as a gay dog an' a merry gambler," continued Cardew. "I was goin' to ask you fellows if you would mind kidnappin' me?"

"Wha-at?"

"You kidnapped Figgins once, I believe, for a joke on the New House. Could you kidnap me, an' hide me away somewhere, for a joke on Study No. 9?"

"What on earth are you driving at?" exclaimed Manners.

"My uncle's in my study," groaned Cardew. "He's got that new kid there—young Fritz-Laurenz of the Fourth, you

know. For some reason that beats me, the cheery old hippopotamus is no end taken with Jerry. He's jawing to him nineteen to the dozen, and he hardly even utters a word, as a rule—he's as mum as a dogfish generally. But young Wilhelm has set him goin'. Can you fellows account for it?"

"Laurenz seems a decent chap," said Tom. "I think Grundy must be right, and Laurenz is mistaken about being a Hun. Perhaps he got mixed up with somebody else," added Tom, laughing.

"Nunky is babbling away like a runnin' brook, or a politician in the House of Commons," said Cardew. "You'd think he was a great statesman by the way his tongue is runnin' on without a rest. I'm really afraid he'll get a pain in the lower jaw, if he doesn't stop. He never even noticed that I slouched out of the study. Fancy that!"

"Did he know Laurenz before the kid came here?" asked Manners curiously.

"Never seen hide or hair of him before. It's amazin'. Of course, the old boy's potty," said Cardew. "He had misfortunes in early life, an' I dare say they turned his brain a bit, and now it's comin' out strong."

"What rot!" said Tom. "I noticed him on the cricket-ground. He's a man any chap might be proud of for an uncle."

"I'm proud of him, no end," said Cardew. "He's been sinkin' dirty Huns in the North Sea, an' I felt bound to give up an afternoon an' bear him patiently. But now I've got to walk to the station with him, after he's done jawin' to Laurenz, an' dinin' with the Head."

"Well?"

"I can't walk to the station," said Cardew pathetically. "I'm too young for such exertions. It's different with a man like nunky. He's used to the strenuous life. So if you kidnap me an' hide me away somewhere, I'd take it as a real favour."

"Rats!" answered Tom.

"You won't do it?" sighed Cardew.

"No, ass!"

Cardew sighed again, and left the study. He looked in at No. 6 in the Fourth, where Blake & Co. were discussing the cricket-match of the afternoon.

"You chaps busy?" asked Cardew.

"Yaas, wathah! We're goin' to have tea," replied Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, rather stiffly.

"I want somebody to kidnap me, an' hide me away from my uncle. He's goin' to make me walk to the station with him."

"Wats! I wegard you as a wank outsidah, Cardew!" said Arthur Augustus sternly. "You were speakin' untwuthfully to your uncle this aftahnoon!"

"By gad, was I?"

"Yaas, you were! You miswepwesented to him that Lauwenz was your chum, in ordah to excuse your wotten slackness in not goin' to the station to meet him. I wegard such conduct as extwemely wepwehensible!"

"Good heavens!" said Cardew. "Do you? Are you shocked at me?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You regard me with disdain?"

"Yaas!"

"And you don't approve of me?"

"I do not!"

Cardew sobbed, and made big play with his handkerchief.

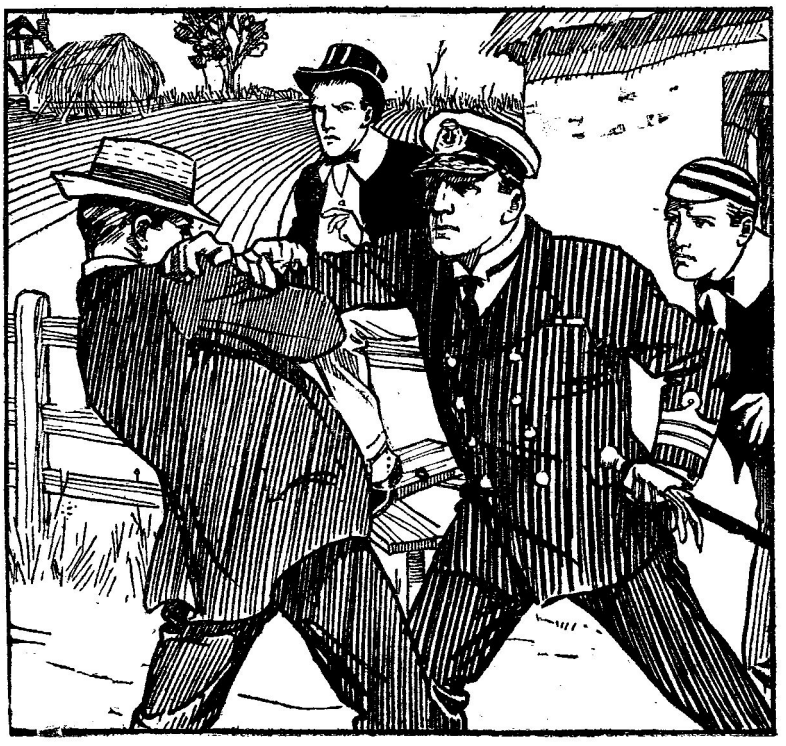
Blake and Herries and Digby grinned, and Arthur Augustus frowned.

"Weally, Cardew——" he began hotly.

"Have you fellows got anythin' I can weep into?" asked Cardew brokenly. "I don't want to cry on the floor an' spoil the carpet. If you've got an old jam-jar, f'rinstance——"

"You uttah ass!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Boo-hoo!"



Recognised!
(See Chapter 9.)

D'Arcy's eye gleamed behind his eyeglass. Blake & Co. roared.

"If you are making fun of me, Cardew——"

"Boo-hoo!"

The swell of St. Jim's made a rush across the study. Cardew ceased weeping, and stepped out into the passage, and walked away.

Arthur Augustus turned a wrathful eye upon his comrades.

"Bai Jove! I've a gweat mind to go aftah that uttah wottah and give him a feahful thwashin'!" he exclaimed. "I see nothin' whatevah to gwin at, you uttah duffahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats!"

Cardew strolled along the passage, and met Paul Laurenz. He halted.

"Hallo, jaw slacked down?" he asked.

"Your uncle has gone to the Head's house," said Laurenz. "He wondered where you were."

"By gad! I didn't think he would notice I wasn't there," said Cardew, with something like a sneer. "Did he bore you very much?"

"Not in the least," said Paul quietly. "Your uncle is a splendid man, Cardew. I've never met a man I liked so much."

"You like him—after he's been sinkin' your cheery countrymen in the North Sea?" said Cardew—some restive resentment in his breast prompting the ungenerous words.

Laurenz flushed crimson.

"I—I suppose I ought not to," he said. "I—I suppose—— But—but I do not feel like a German. I suppose it is wrong of me, but I cannot help it. I—I blame myself for not being patriotic, but—but all my feelings are on the British side of the war. I can't help it."

"Most Huns in England say that!" sneered Cardew.

Paul Laurenz looked at him quickly. The mocking expression on Cardew's face was a surprise to him. He did not comprehend that Cardew, indifferent as he was towards his uncle, was resentful at being cut out with the man from the North Sea.

"Have I offended you by making friends with your uncle?" asked Paul quietly.

"Not at all, dear boy! I'm much obliged to you for takin' him off my hands."

"I suppose you do not mean that," said Paul. "But I am not to blame. You represented me to your uncle as your chum, and he naturally spoke to me. I did not ask you to do so, and I was—was surprised——"

"An' shocked?" jeered Cardew.

"Well, yes. I did not like to hear you telling a lie to a fine man like Commander Durrance," said Paul candidly.

"I didn't know Huns were so particular about the truth!"

Paul set his lips.

"We had better not speak any further," he said. "I do not want to quarrel with you. Your uncle was civil to me because he supposed me to be your pal, on your own statement. It is childish of you to resent it."

"Oh, gad! I don't resent it—as if I care twopence either way!" yawned Cardew. "I'm glad to get out of standin' his jaw. All the same, I don't quite see your point in suckin' up to him."

"You have no right to say that! I was bound to be respectful to him. Do you think I was currying favour with a man I've never seen before, and shall never see again?" exclaimed Paul hotly.

Cardew nodded coolly.

"Yaas, it looks to me like that!" he said deliberately.

"Very well! I shall not speak to your uncle again; and please do not speak to me again," said Laurenz. You are a cad, Cardew!"

Ralph Reckless Cardew had an uncomfortable feeling that Laurenz was right on that point. But he was unreasonably resentful, and in a malicious mood. He

stepped towards Laurenz with a glitter in his eyes.

"I don't allow anybody to call me names!" he said.

"You should not provoke them then," answered Paul.

"I'm waitin' for you to take that back, an' apologise!"

"You will have a long time to wait!" said the new junior disdainfully. "I spoke what I thought, and I cannot change my thoughts."

"You will oblige me by puttin' up your hands, then," said Cardew.

"I shall do nothing of the kind!"

"Dear me!" said Cardew. "From the way you tackled Grundy the other day, I shouldn't have guessed you were a funk. But I believe every Hun is a bit of a funk. Isn't that so?"

Paul turned away without replying. Cardew caught him by the shoulder, stung to the quick by the scorn in his look.

"Let go my shoulder!" said Paul, breathing hard.

Cardew laughed, and tightened his grip. Paul Laurenz turned on him, and the next moment they were fighting.

CHAPTER 7.
Racke's New Man.

"IT'S past lockin'-up!" grunted Gerald Crooke.

"You can go in if you like."

"Well, it means lines."

"Let it!"

Racke of the Shell was lounging against the stile in Rylcombe Lane in the gathering dusk. The dusk was thickening, and Racke felt that it was safe to light a cigarette, and he did.

Crooke was feeling uneasy. It meant lines, to miss call-over, and the man Racke was waiting for had not yet turned up.

But Aubrey Racke was obstinate. He had come there to meet the man, and he was going to meet him. Racke, who was rolling in money, had wanted to take a valet to St. Jim's with him, but that had not been possible; and Racke had brought his man to Rylcombe, where Mr. Berrymore's duties had chiefly been to supply the rich son of the profiteer with forbidden food.

Tom Merry & Co. had cleared off Racke's man in the most drastic way; food-hogs not being popular at St. Jim's. The festive Aubrey, not to be beaten, had looked out for another man, not being in the least inclined to drop his food-hogging propensities. But he knew that he had to keep it very dark. Form-raggings were not to his taste.

"We shall be jolly late!" murmured Crooke again.

Racke uttered an impatient exclamation.

"Look here, Crooke, I meant to be late! It's safer to meet the man after locking-up, when all the fellows are indoors. I don't want those cads to get on the track again."

"That's all right, of course; but it means lines. Look here, you can meet him by yourself then," said Crooke sulkily. "I'm off!"

"Get off, then, and be dashed to you!"

Gerald Crooke walked away quickly. He was curious to see Racke's man, and he was keenly interested in the food-smuggling project; but he did not want to miss call-over.

Racke sat on the stile and smoked while he waited. He was prepared to take lines rather than miss his appointment; he had no doubt that he could get some fellow to do them for him for a bribe. He was more uneasy about Tom Merry & Co. than about his House-master; but a meeting out of gates after locking-up was certain not to be interrupted by the juniors, even if they were keeping an eye on him generally.

In the deepening summer dusk he sat and smoked cigarette after cigarette, till the grass round the stile was littered with stumps. A figure loomed up in the dusk at last from the direction of the village.

"Is that you, Scaife?" asked Racke.

"Yes, Master Racke."

The man was a slim, neatly-dressed fellow of middle age, with a smooth face, clean shaven. He had only one working eye, the other being of glass, which gave him a slightly odd expression. His right eye was very keen, very bright, and very alert, and contrasted strangely with the fixed stare of the other.

"You've kept me waitin'!" said Racke, in a bullying tone.

"I only came down by the eight train, sir," answered Mr. Scaife, softly and civilly. "You said eight-thirty, sir. It's only just turned."

"Oh, all right!" grunted Racke.

He looked at the man sharply.

"You were recommended to me by Algy Gadsby," he said. "You understand just what's wanted?"

"I think so, sir," smiled Mr. Scaife.

"You seemed to me a pretty useful man when I saw you at Gadsby's place last vac," said Racke.

"I hope to be useful to you, sir."

"You'll have to be," said Racke. "We sha'n't quarrel about money, if you're useful. I suppose Gaddy told you what's wanted—about gettin' me somethin' to eat in a quiet place near the school where I can come an' bring along a few friends if I like? How you do it is your bizney—I sha'n't ask any questions. All I do is to find the tin, an' you do the rest."

"I understand, sir."

"You hadn't been with Gadsby long, I believe?" asked Racke, watching him.

"About a year, sir."

"And before that?"

"I was in other service, sir."

"I shouldn't have taken you for a man-servant," said Racke. "But never mind that, so long as you know your duties. I shall want you to take messages for me sometimes, an' see to things—in connection with racin'."

"Quite so, sir."

"Of course, mum's the word. You've got to be specially careful to keep out of sight of anybody at the school. Some of the fellows there might interfere—there's a lot of meddlin' fools there. Nobody's to know that you're my man."

"I will be careful, sir."

"It will be a good thing for you if you make yourself useful. You've seen my pater?"

"Yes, sir, and have his instructions. He has placed a sum of money in my hands," smiled Mr. Scaife.

Racke scanned him again. There was a curious slyness about Mr. Scaife; but, after all, that was what was wanted. An honest man could scarcely have undertaken the task that was required of Mr. Scaife. It was in his power to give away both Aubrey Racke and his millionaire father, and for that reason he had to be allowed to make a good thing out of his employment. But money was little to the Racke family. A gentleman who made his profits by tens of thousands of pounds could afford to be liberal. Mr. Racke did not believe in denying himself or his hopeful son anything that was wanted—a view that might have been expected of a war-profiteer.

"Well, you'll let me know as soon as you've got things in order," continued Racke. "Don't lose time about it. I'll see you again to-morrow; but it had better be at a distance. I'll bike out after lessons, and see you, say, at the old footbridge on the moor. You'll easily find the place. Have somethin' in the grub line for me to take back to the school."

"I will not fail you, sir."

"Above all, don't be seen near the school. I——"

Racke broke off suddenly.

Footsteps came along the dusky lane from the direction of the school. It was too late for either of the two to get out of sight, and Racke flung his cigarette behind him, fervently hoping that the new-comers did not belong to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 8.
A Fight to a Finish.

TRAMP, tramp, tramp!

Ralph Reckness Cardew and Paul Laurenz were fighting furiously in the Fourth Form passage.

Doors opened, and feet sounded on all sides. The juniors came swarming out of the studies to see what was going on.

"Bai Jove! It's Cardew and Lauwenz!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Two to one on the Hun!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Laurenz's handsome face was flushed, and Cardew was crimson. The dandy of the Fourth had completely lost his uncertain temper, and he was fighting savagely. Paul was angry, too, and he gave blow for blow with great vim.

"Hallo!" Grundy of the Shell came up with Wilkins and Gunn. "Go it, Laurenz! Go it, old boy!"

Grundy of the Shell had been licked by Laurenz, and it had inspired the great Grundy with much respect and regard for the new junior.

Levison and Clive ran up, shoving a way through the crowd.

"Stop it!" shouted Clive. "Cardew—Laurenz——"

"What on earth's the trouble?" exclaimed Levison. "Those two silly asses were quite chummy this afternoon."

"He, he, he!" came from Baggy Trimble.

"Do you know what it's about, Peeping Tom?" asked Tom Merry.

"He, he, he! I heard 'em ragging," grinned Trimble, who generally heard nearly everything. "The Hun's been cutting Cardew out with his uncle. He, he, he! Cardew doesn't like it."

"What rot!" said Tom sharply.

"Shut up, Trimble, you fat fool!" snapped Levison.

"It's honest Injun!" grinned Trimble. "Go it, Cardew! Give the Hun beans!"

"Pile in, both!" said Blake. "My hat! They're going it! Keep an eye open for a prefect, somebody!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

"For goodness' sake, chuck it!" exclaimed Talbot of the Shell. "You'll have Railton or Kildare up here in a minute!"

Crash!

Cardew went down on his back, and Paul stood panting. The dandy of the Fourth lay dazed, and Levison hurried to pick him up.

Cardew leaned panting on his study-mate's arm.

"Hold on!" said Levison. "What are you fighting Laurenz for? Chuck it, Cardew!"

"Rats!"

Cardew made a move forward, but Levison held him back.

"Don't be an ass!" he said. "What's it about?"

"I don't like sneakin' Germans, you know," said Cardew coolly. "When I see a Boche nose I feel inclined to punch it!"

"Let him come on!" exclaimed Laurenz angrily.

Cardew did not need urging. He dragged himself loose from Levison, and came on with a rush, and the fight went on again.

Cardew's words would have found an echo in most breasts there, had it been any other German he was quarrelling with. But Laurenz, whether he was a German or not, was not a Hun, and his quiet temper was well known, while Ralph Cardew's extremely uncertain temper was equally well known. The juniors, in fact, did not need telling that Cardew was in the wrong. Sympathy was therefore on Paul's side, and even Cardew's own chums were uneasy and silent.

Cardew was fighting hard, all the more because he knew that Laurenz was the better man of the two.

The fight was hard and bitter.

There were many marks on Laurenz's handsome face, when Cardew went down once more with a heavy crash.

He lay and gasped.

Twice he tried to rise, and sank back again, panting. He was exhausted, and he was licked. There was no doubt about that.

Sidney Clive helped him to his feet at last.

"You're done," said the South African junior quietly. "Come away!"

Cardew's eyes flamed. All the evil in his nature—and there was a good deal—was roused by his defeat.

"I'm not done!" he muttered thickly. "Let me go! I'm goin' to lick that sneakin' Hun, or else let him kill me! Let me go!"

"You can't lick him, and you're done! Chuck it!" snapped Levison.

"I won't! I tell you——"

"Take his other arm!" said Clive.

Levison took it.

"Will you let me go?" panted Cardew furiously. "I tell you I can lick the cad, an' I'm goin' to lick him! Hang you!"

Without heeding, his chums walked him away up the passage between them—not a difficult task, for Cardew was quite exhausted.

Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth touched Laurenz on the shoulder. He rather liked his study-mate, in spite of his race.

"Come and get your nose bathed, old chap," he said. "I guess it needs it."

Laurenz smiled faintly, and went with him.

They went to the Fourth-Form dormitory, and the crowd in the study passage broke up, discussing the fight, and generally feeling that Ralph Reckness Cardew had probably only got what he had asked for.

Cardew sank down in an armchair in his study, planted there by Levison and Clive. They were his friends, but they were angry with him, and they did not conceal it.

"Get a basin from somewhere, Clive," said Levison. "I'll keep an eye on the silly fool!"

"I'm not stayin' here!" shouted Cardew.

"You are!" answered Levison, pushing him back into the chair as he would have risen. "Enough of your rot, Cardew! Hallo, Frank!"

Levison minor looked in, with a book under his arm. He stared at Cardew's disfigured face in surprise.

"Cut off and get a basin of water and a sponge, young 'un," said Clive, thinking he had better remain with Levison.

"Right-ho!" said the fag at once.

He hurried away.

Cardew rose to his feet again, and his two chums pushed him back, and stood over him. His look was one almost of hatred just then. Under his drawling nonchalance Cardew had a passionate nature, and it was not all good.

"You rotters!" he said, between his teeth. "Is this how you stand by a pal who's got damaged?"

"Exactly," said Levison coolly. "You're damaged enough without going out to get more."

"I'm not licked, you fool!"

"You are licked, and you know it!"

"Oh, you rotters!" groaned Cardew. "If I felt better I'd mop up the study with the pair of you!"

"Rubbish!" said Clive tersely.

"You rotters!" repeated Cardew. "You think I was in the wrong, an' a quarrelsome beast! I can see it in your faces, confound you!"

"Well, I don't see why you were rowing with Laurenz."

"He's a rotten Hun!"

"Hun or not, he's not quarrelsome. Don't talk rot, Cardew. He wouldn't have fought you if you hadn't driven him into it, and we know it! Why can't you let a quiet fellow alone?" growled Clive.

"Because I don't choose!"

"Oh, rats!"

Frank Levison came in with the basin and sponge, and Cardew, refusing help from his chums, bathed his injured face. He muttered something that made Frank colour as he looked at his disfigured reflection in the glass.

"Cut off, Frank!" said Levison, knitting his brows. "I'll come with you if you want help with your work."

"No. I'll look in later," said Frank, and he went out of the study. Levison gave Cardew a grim look, but he did not speak. With all Cardew's reckless taint of blackguardism, Levison had never heard him swear before, and he was bitterly angry that his minor should have heard it.

Cardew was, perhaps, a little ashamed of himself. He was silent as he bathed his face and towelled it. But he could not remove the traces of the conflict; that was impossible. One of his eyes had a dark shade round it, and his nose was red and swollen. He did not look handsome now.

Marks like that could not be concealed, much as Cardew laboured at it. He was rather fastidious about his appearance, and his disfigured looks made him savagely bitter.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy put his head into the study later.

"Commander Duwwance is askin' for you, Cardew," he said.

"Oh, gad!" muttered Cardew.

"He is waiting in the hall," said D'Arcy. "He wequested me to tell you so." And the swell of St. Jim's walked away.

Cardew took another look in the glass, and dabbed powder under his eye and on his nose.

"I've got to let him see me!" he muttered. "Oh, hang that rotten German! Hang him!"

Without a look at Levison or Clive, he stamped out of the study. The chums of No. 9 sat down to their work in silence.

CHAPTER 9.
A Strange Meeting.

COMMANDER DURRANCE fixed his eyes upon his nephew as the latter joined him in the well-lighted hall downstairs. The naval gentleman had obtained permission for Cardew to walk down to the station with him after gates were closed. In spite of the boredom experienced in his uncle's company, he would have been glad of the permission, as it let him off prep. But he was nervous and ashamed now as he let his uncle see his disfigured face. His uncle gave him a look, but made no remark on Cardew's appearance.

"I am waiting for you, my boy," he said.

"I'm ready, uncle."

The commander gave a glance about him, perhaps thinking that he would like to say good-bye to the new junior who had made so powerful an impression on him. But Paul Laurenz was not to be seen. After Cardew's words, and the fight, Paul was very careful to keep away from Cardew's uncle. Uncle and nephew left the School House together in the dusky summer evening.

They crossed the quadrangle in silence, and Taggles let them out at the gates. Cardew could see that his uncle was in a thoughtful mood as they walked down the shadowy lane.

"You have been fighting, Ralph," said the commander at last.

"Yaas, just a little scrap," said Cardew carelessly. "Sorry I have to show you a phiz like this. A sneakin' cad rowed with me."

"Well, well, I suppose boys will be boys," said his uncle. "I am very much interested in your friend Laurenz, Ralph."

Cardew set his teeth. At that moment he felt that he hated Laurenz.

"I had a talk with the boy in your study," continued the commander, quite oblivious of Cardew's feelings. "He seems a very frank, well-spoken lad, and not at all German in his ways or thoughts. I am very glad you have made friends with him."

No answer.

"You should keep up that friendship, Ralph."

"Do you think so, sir?" said Cardew sarcastically.

"Certainly. A steady, quiet lad like that will be a good friend for you. And I fear, Ralph, that you are somewhat given to waywardness, and"—the commander hesitated—"you are a little fickle, Ralph. But I hope you will keep Laurenz as a friend."

"I shall remember your advice, uncle," said Cardew, rubbing his eye.

"The boy is strangely like you, Ralph, in looks. He is like"—Commander Durrance paused—"like what my own son would have been if he had lived. It came strangely into my thoughts to-day that my own son would have been exactly like that boy if it had pleased Heaven to spare him to me. That made me very interested in him."

"Oh!" muttered Cardew.

His heart smote him.

He had heard of that shadow that had fallen upon his uncle's life many years before; but it had never occurred to him that the grim, bronzed sailorman had a tender memory of the boy he had lost. He understood now—what he might have understood before had his nature been more sympathetic—why the commander had been so strangely taken with Paul Laurenz.

Ralph Cardew had his decent side, and he felt remorseful.

"I—I'll make friends with the chap, sir, certainly, if you like!" he muttered. "I—I think he's a good sort."

"But he is your friend already, I understood."

"I—I mean, I'll keep it up, sir," said Cardew. "Friendships don't always last, you know, uncle."

"Not with you, I fear, my boy," answered his uncle sadly. "But I should be very glad to know that this boy remained your friend."

"Rely on it, sir! I mean it!"

The commander nodded, and they walked on in silence. From the dusk ahead a red spot glowed into sight. It was the burning end of a cigarette in the mouth of Racke of the Shell sitting on the stile.

Cardew glanced at the two figures, one

sitting on the stile, the other standing by it.

"Cheer-ho, Racke!" he grinned.

The commander glanced at them, too. He did not look at Racke. His keen, steady eyes rested on the clean-shaven man with the glass eye. Dusk as it was, the commander seemed to recognise the man, and, instead of passing on, he halted suddenly.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated.

The one-eyed man stared at him with a sudden start as he heard his voice. The calm, suave manner he had shown in speaking to Racke vanished in an instant. He backed away hurriedly.

"You!" he stammered.

Commander Durrance strode straight at him.

"I am not mistaken!" he exclaimed. "You are Luke Clancy! You scoundrel, after all these years——"

His hand was dropped on the man's shoulder.

Racke and Cardew looked on in utter astonishment.

The scene astounded them.

Scaife, or Clancy, seemed too taken aback for a moment to move, but as the strong graps of the sailor closed on him he wrenched himself fiercely away. As the commander rushed on him he dodged back, whipped across the road, and plunged through a gap in the hedge.

"Stop!" shouted Durrance.

He dashed as far as the hedge. But the fleeing figure was swallowed up in the darkness of the fields, and the commander turned back, gritting his teeth.

Cardew fairly gasped at him.

"D-d-do you know the man, uncle?" he stammered.

"I have not seen him for ten years, but I know him—yes." The commander fixed his eyes upon the astonished Racke. "You are a St. Jim's boy, I think?"

"Yes," stammered Racke.

"What have you to do with such a man as that, then?" exclaimed the commander sternly.

Racke recovered himself.

"Nothin' at all, sir."

"You were speaking to him?"

"He was askin' me the way to Abbotsford," answered Racke calmly.

"Oh! You do not know the man, then?"

"Not from Adam. Never seen him before," said Racke.

Cardew winked into space.

The commander gave Racke a searching look. Aubrey did not impress the keen-eyed sailor as a very trustworthy person.

"Very well," he said. "Bear in mind, my boy, that that man is a thorough rascal; if you should see him again—a scoundrel who has had dealings with his country's enemies! Twelve years ago he was sent to prison for treachery. He is of German descent, and a criminal!"

"Good gad!" gasped Racke.

"Come, Ralph!"

The commander strode on with his nephew. Aubrey Racke slipped from the stile, and walked away to St. Jim's. He hardly knew what to make of the naval man's statement; but the flight of Scaife seemed to bear out the words. Racke shrugged his shoulders as he thought of it. After all, it was a rascal he needed to serve him, and he could not afford to be particular in his rascals. Racke arrived late at St. Jim's, and was given a hundred lines by Mr. Railton for missing call-over, which he did not mind in the least. Mellish of the Fourth did his lines at five shillings the hundred.

Cardew walked on with his uncle in a state of great surprise. The commander made no further allusion to the scene in the lane. Cardew waited with him till his train came in, and said good-bye to him on the platform.

"This has been a jolly queer day!" murmured Cardew, as he sauntered homeward down the dusky lane. "Who the thump is Luke Clancy, and what on earth's Racke doin' in his company, if he's a merry criminal? Birds of a feather, I suppose." Cardew chuckled. "My hat! Fancy, poor old tin-ribs mournin' all this time over a kid he lost a dozen years ago, and jawin' Laurenz because he reminded him of the chap! I might have guessed it was somethin' of the kind, the Hun bein' so like me to look at." Cardew yawned. "Queer old beggar! Lucky I didn't mention that it was Laurenz who'd been adornin' my features."

He laughed.

"But about makin' friends with him"—Cardew made a wry face, and rubbed his darkening eye—"oh, my hat! That's a big order! Oh, these uncles!"

CHAPTER 10.
Chums!

TOM MERRY & CO. were chatting in the Common-room when Ralph Reckness Cardew strolled in.

He gave the Terrible Three a cheery nod.

"Have you managed to survive walking to the station with your uncle?" asked Monty Lowther sarcastically.

"Just!" replied Cardew. "Hallo, Gussy! What are you blinking at with your glass eye, old bird?"

"I was wegardin' you with scorn, Cardew, if you are vewy particulah to know," he answered.

"Oh! You're not practisin' lookin' like a gargoyle?"

"Certainly not, you uttah ass!"

"My mistake! I thought you were. With your features, old bean, you'd find it an easy job!"

Cardew strolled away before the Hon. Arthur Augustus could think of an adequate reply to that.

He joined Levison and Clive, who had just finished a game of chess. Both of them looked at him grimly. Cardew did not seem to notice it. He had apparently returned from his walk in high good-humour. With his volatile nature, one mood seldom lasted for long.

"Been quarrellin' over the chess?" he asked.

"Of course not!" growled Clive.

"Then what are you lookin' like a boiled owl for?"

"Rats!"

"May I address the same respectful question to you, Levison?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Levison testily.

Cardew sighed.

"This is rather hard cheese on an unhappy youth who's barely survived an afternoon with a terrific old naval gent," he said. "I've come to you to be petted and comforted."

"Ass!"

"I don't call that pally. I'll try Racke. Hallo, Racke!"

Racke of the Shell looked round.

"Who was your friend in the lane, Racke, old top?"

Aubrey scowled blackly.

"The man stopped to speak to me," he said. "You heard me tell your uncle so, didn't you?"

"My dear man, I've heard you tell whoppers galore at various times!" answered Cardew, laughing. "Tell us the merry secret, Racke. Was he a bookie, or a billiard-sharp, of a new gentleman's gentleman in the place of the late lamented Berrymore?"

"Mind your own business!"

"Bai Jove! If you are beginnin' your food-hoggin' twicks again, Wacke——".

Tom Merry gave the cad of the Shell a stern glance. Aubrey Racke walked out of the Common-room, his lips set. It was sheer ill-luck that Cardew had come upon him talking with Scaife; but "The best-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley." It was just like the keen-witted Cardew, too, to guess what the man was.

"What are you babbling about, Cardew?" asked Blake. "Racke hasn't laid in a new valet, has he?"

"Bai Jove! If he has, we shall deal with him in a wathah dwastic mannah!" said Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

"Blessed if I know!" yawned Cardew. "Racke was out of gates, and we came on him talking to a man with a glass eye. He told my uncle whoppers, so I suppose he had somethin' to hide. Nunky recognised the man as an old gaolbird, and he bunked. Interestin' story—what? I'm tellin' you, fellows this because Racke chased me with a ruler this afternoon. I don't like rulers."

Cardew yawned.

"Where's Laurenz, you chaps?" he asked.

"What do you want with Laurenz?" growled Levison.

"Only a few chummy words."

"You're not going to row with Laurenz again!" said Sidney Clive angrily. "Let the chap alone!"

"Are you growin' fond of Boches?"

"And you're not going to call him a Boche, either!" said Clive, his eyes sparkling. "Let him alone, I say! He's decent, and he can't help having been born of Hun parents. It's mean to taunt him with it."

"So you think I've acted meanly?"

"Yes, I do."

"You the same, Levison?"

"Yes," answered Ernest Levison, without hesitation.

"Considerin' that we share the same study, isn't it lucky that we agree in everythin' like this?" said Cardew calmly. "I've come to the same conclusion myself. It must be a case of great minds runnin' in grooves, mustn't it?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Levison and Clive together, somewhat taken aback.

The Terrible Three laughed. They found Cardew's whimsical ways amusing.

"Bai Jove! If you own up that you have tweated Lauwenz wottenly, Cardew, I wegard that as decent!" said Arthur Augustus.

"And you won't any longer regard me with scorn?" asked Cardew gravely.

"No, dear boy."

"Thanks! I breathe again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Cardew, you ass——"

"My dear man, you have set my mind at rest. I've been worryin' about it no end."

Arthur Augustus gave a sniff.

"What did you row with Laurenz about, then, after all?" asked Sidney Clive, no longer looking grim.

"Jealousy."

"What?"

"The green-eyed monster!" explained Cardew, with perfect coolness. "I jumped at the chance of plantin' my uncle on him this afternoon, because the jolly old rhinoceros bores me to tears."

"That is a diswespectful wemark, Cardew!"

"Yes, isn't it?" agreed Cardew cheerfully. "Well, the jolly old rhinoceros ——"

"I wefuse to heah a naval officah alluded to as a whinocewos!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly.

"I dare say you're right," said Cardew. "The jolly old hippopotamus, then!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are a diswespectful and ill-mannahed boundah, Cardew!" said Arthur Augustus, and he walked across the room.

"That chap's gettin' to know me awf'ly well, isn't he?" remarked Cardew. "Well, as I was sayin', the cheery old elephant took a fancy to young Laurenz, and quite relieved me of his company, stickin' to the Hun-bird instead. Kind of him, wasn't it? And then I got ratty at bein' neglected, and picked a quarrel with Laurenz for cuttin' me out with nunky. I said several things I knew to be lies, and got his back up."

"Just like you!" commented Levison, half laughing.

"If there's anythin' I value in a pal it's frankness," said Cardew. "I get a lot of it in Study No. 9, an' enjoy it. Some day I shall grow quite frank myself, and then I shall tell you that you have a face like a Persian carpet, old bean, and Clive that he has the manners of a Hottentot. But at present I won't mention these painful facts——"

"You silly ass!"

"And that's why you fought with Laurenz?" exclaimed Tom Merry, who was looking at Cardew in incredulous wonder mingled with disgust.

Cardew nodded.

"That's why. I'm glad Gussy has drifted off, or he'd be lookin' at me with fearful scorn again, and his face is enough to stand without that merry expression on it. But, of course, I shouldn't be ownin' up like this if I hadn't repented. In me you behold the Prodigal Son at the sackcloth and ashes stage of his career."

"Blessed if I half know what to make of you!" said Tom Merry. "I believe you're acting half the time, and don't know yourself when you're serious."

"You've hit it," assented Cardew. "That shows how a chap's intelligence brightens up when he gets into the Shell. Some day I hope to shine among those lofty intellects. You've hit it exactly, Thomas; but I believe I am about two thirds serious now, so I'm goin' to apologise to Laurenz if he comes in soon. Too much fag to go up to his study."

"Here he comes!" said Levison quietly.

Paul Laurenz came into the Common-room.

He did not glance towards Cardew. His handsome face was a little clouded, and it was a good deal marked from the fight with Cardew in the Fourth Form passage.

"Hallo, old bean!" shouted Cardew across the room.

Laurenz did not look round. After his last meeting with Ralph Cardew he certainly did not expect to hear the dandy of the Fourth address him as "old bean."

"Cardew's calling you, Laurenz!" said Jack Blake, laughing.

"Oh!" said Paul, with a start, and he looked round then.

Cardew gave him a pleasant nod, apparently not observing the surprise in his face.

"How's your eye?" he asked.

"Not improved by your knuckles!" answered Paul.

"Same with mine. Look at it!" Cardew rubbed his eye. "I've got a prize nose in addition, though, so you needn't nurse a grudge on that account."

"I don't," answered Laurenz.

"I owe you an apology," went on Cardew, seemingly unconscious of the fact that nearly every eye in the Common-room was upon him. "It was only my beastly temper made me row with you. It's rather a handicap havin' a temper like mine. It gets a fellow into no end of trouble. Next time I feel impelled to row with a fellow I shall try it on Levison, as he's a pal, and I can lick him."

"That might turn out to be a mistake, too," remarked Levison.

"Wait an' see!" answered Cardew. "Laurenz, old top, I'm sorry. I accused you of suckin' up to my merry old uncle. It was a mean thing to say, an' I knew it was untrue. I do these things, you know. I couldn't understand why the old rhinoceros—I mean, hippopotamus—was so taken with you. It turns out that you remind him of his own boy, whom he lost years ago."

Cardew was grave now, and his tone was no longer mocking. Paul started.

"I should never have thought of that," he said. "I wondered a little why he was so kind to me, a stranger."

"Well, that's how it was," said Cardew. "His son was drowned at sea when I was a nipper, and you're so like him—really, I'm not flatterin' you—it put it into his head about his son. You reminded him of the poor kid. If I'd guessed that I should have been sympathetic. I'm really a very sympathetic chap when I think of it. The dear old boy wants us to continue the strong and trusty friendship he noticed between us to-day——"

"Not in the Fourth Form passage!" said Laurenz, with a smile.

"Ha, ha! No. But next time he comes along he will expect to find us pally, and if he doesn't he will jaw me. For that reason I'm goin' to be your friend, whether you like it or not. From this day forth you can regard yourself as my long-lost brother, and if you don't I shall!"

Paul laughed.

"I'd rather we were friends than enemies," he said. "But——"

"Leave out the 'buts,'" implored Cardew. "No good ever came of buttin' in. I'm quite serious. I'm rather a valuable friend. I'm rollin' in money, an' I've got rich an' titled relations. Crooke, f'rinstance, would give anythin' to be my friend."

"You cheeky fool!" roared Crooke, looking round from his armchair.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"An' Trimble would crawl on his knees if I asked him to—wouldn't you, Baggy, old boy?"

"Yah!" was Baggy's reply.

"But, passing over these attractive persons, I'm goin' to deal with you," said Cardew. "Don't say 'No,' or I shall be under the painful necessity of chasin' you as Crooke does me——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a lie!" roared Crooke furiously. "You're a cad, and I wouldn't be your pal at any price!"

"You wouldn't," agreed Cardew. "I'm jolly glad nunky hasn't taken a fancy to you, Crooke. I couldn't go that length. Well, what do you say, Laurenz? Are we goin' to be friends?"

"Yes, if you like," said Paul, laughing.

"Shake on it!" said Cardew.

And they shook on it, both smiling.

And, whimsical as that strange beginning of a friendship was, Paul Laurenz of the Fourth was destined to remain Cardew's chum.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's —"THE SON OF A SAILOR!"—by Martin Clifford.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"THE SON OF A SAILOR!"

By Martin Clifford.

This story, like the two which have preceded it, has Paul Laurenz has its central figure. There is a mystery about Laurenz. It seems more than queer that a fellow so English in appearance and in feeling should have a German name and a German uncle. The mystery is cleared up in this third story. Another interesting feature of the yarn is the tracking of Racke, and what followed that tracking. Cardew began the game, but others joined up, and the sequel was great value.

Look out for a cover with Racke playing the part of waiter, napkin over arm, to quite a crowd of his schoolfellows!

LIST OF TOM MERRY STORIES IN THE "GEM"—(*continued*).

472.—"Hard Lines for Levison!"
473.—"Down on His Luck."
474.—"Parker the Prodigal."
475.—"Cardew of the Fourth."
476.—"A Puzzle for St. Jim's."
477.—"Facing the Music."
478.—"Rough on Railton!"
479.—"Breakers of Bounds."
480.—"The Chums of Number Nine.
481.—"Trimble's Triumph."
482.—"Grundy's Secret Society."
483.—"Grundy, Grand Master."
484.—"Looking for Trouble."
485.—"D'Arcy Minor's Bolt."
486.—"Lacy of the Grammar School."
487.—"The Finger of Scorn."
488.—"Sticking it Out."
489.—"The Outcast's Luck." [cate."
490.—"The St. Jim's Competition Syndi-
491.—"The Great Grundy."
482.—"A Disgrace to the Study."
493.—"Kildare of the Great Heart."
494.—"His Brother's Keeper."
495.—"A Son's Sacrifice."
496.—"Backing Up Manners."
497.—"D'Arcy's Deal."
498.—"Bonny Lad's Race."
499.—"Walker!"
500.—"A Queer Bargain."
501.—"Trouble in the Third."
502.—"Levison's Sister."
503.—"The Tribulations of Trimble."
504.—"Clampe's Cousin."
505.—"Mr. Selby's Dilemma."
506.—"The St. Jim's Parliament."
507.—"Grundy the Patriot."
508.—"Pepper's Gold."
509.—"The St. Jim's Pacifist."
510.—"The Shadow of the Past."
511.—"Ratty's Legacy."
512.—"The Schemer of the Shell."
513.—"Tom Merry's Brag."
514.—"Jack Blake's Hun."
515.—"Rivals in Sport."
516.—"No. 9 on the War-path."
517.—"The St. Jim's Cadets."
518.—"Manners' Vendetta."
519.—"Racke's Revenge."
520.—"The Man of Mystery."
521.—"Foes of the School House."
522.—"From Foe to Friend."
523.—"The Fourth Form Detectives."
524.—"The St. Jim's Bolo-Hunters."
525.—"Grundy's Luck."
526.—"The St. Jim's Ruins."
527.—"Rival Forms."
528.—"Shell v. Fourth."

Your Editor

THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA.

FOR NEW READERS.

The twins are Philip Derwent, of Highcliffe, and his sister Philippa, of Cliff House. They have a cockatoo, named Cocky, which has been until recently with Flip (Philip) at Highcliffe, but is now at Cliff House. Flip has made an enemy of Gadsby, who is plotting against him with Vavasour. His best chums, Merton and Tunstall, are away from the school for a time, owing to a serious accident to one of Merton's eyes in a fight with Ponsonby. In their absence Flip gets too friendly with Pon and the rest of the nuts, and, without any real taste for it at the outset, takes to gambling. He goes with the nuts to a gambling den at Courtfield, quarrels with Pon, and is knocked senseless just as the warning "Police!" is heard. Flip comes to himself in a cellar, bound hand and foot. He is let out, however. He makes up his mind that the only thing for him to do is to run away, as returning to Highcliffe means certain expulsion. Then he meets Peter Hazeldene, who has run away from Greyfriars. Goggs of Franklingham comes to Highcliffe. Flip and Hazel go to London, and after many exciting adventures make for Wayland. They tramp for some time, and eventually lose their way. Suddenly Hazel disappears from view, and Flip, moving forward, pulls himself up in the nick of time on the edge of a steep downfall. By a trick Pon, Gadsby, and Vavasour are sent to the Head, and Vavasour confesses. Flip and Hazel are found, in an exhausted state, by St. Jim's fellows. Ponsonby stops Flap and Marjorie.

Flap's Knight (continued).

A sullen flush of anger spread over Cecil Ponsonby's aristocratic face. Flap's undisguised contempt hit him hard.

"Let us turn back, Flap!" pleaded Marjorie in a low, trembling voice.

"No!" Flap's tones rang with the warrior spirit. "Turn back for—for that? I should feel ashamed of myself if I did!"

Next moment Cecil Ponsonby's arm was flung round her waist. His face came close to hers. She flung her head back, and threw up her right arm so that it caught him under the chin, and forced his head back, too.

"You coward!" she panted.

"Oh, you coward!" echoed Marjorie; and she also lent what strength she had to aid her chum.

"I'll have a kiss at least, by gad!" breathed Pon, a wild, evil light in his dark eyes. "It will be the first—it will be the last, I suppose; but one I will have, whatever chances!"

"You'll not! If you dare—— Oh!"

But just as the young scoundrel's lips neared the fair, flushed face, just as she felt his hot breath upon her, a stronger grasp than Flap's or Marjorie's seized Cecil Ponsonby, and he staggered back with an oath upon his lips.

"This, I think, is where I come in!" spoke the voice of Johnny Goggs.

"Flap's knight!" murmured Marjorie, scarcely knowing what she said, yet saying well.

For not the truest-hearted and bravest knight of the brave old days could have been more utterly devoted to his liege lady than was that quiet fellow, Goggs of Franklingham, to Philippa Derwent.

And there was the essential spirit of chivalry in Goggs, too. He would have done just as he was doing had Flap and Marjorie been complete strangers to him.

But in that case his heart would not have leaped so with joy at the chance to do it, and there might not have been in him quite the fierce delight he felt at such an opportunity to give Pon what Pon so thoroughly deserved.

The Victorious Knight.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! What's all this mean?"

It was Bob Cherry who spoke those words, and with Bob were his comrades of the Famous Five—Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh—besides Peter Todd, Herbert Vernon-Smith, and the three Colonials—Sampson Field, Tom Brown and Piet Delarey.

They were all attired in running-shorts and sweaters, and were nearing the end of a seven-mile trot when they came thus upon the leader of the Highcliffe nuts struggling in the grasp of Johnny Goggs, while Flap and Marjorie clung together near, with faces that showed plainly that they were playing parts in the drama.

"Marjorie, has that cad——"

"I'll thrash him till he can't stand if——"

Harry Wharton's voice was broken with rage, and Bob's was hoarse with it. To them an insult to Marjorie was a thing not to be borne—to be avenged as swiftly and as drastically as possible.

But so, in a less degree, felt every fellow there. Perhaps the Bounder's rage was as deep as theirs, though he had greater command over his feelings. The Bounder almost worshipped Marjorie. Peter Todd's face was full of wrath, and his hands were clenched hard. He, too, held that Marjorie had no peer among girls. Honest Johnny Bull growled deep in his throat, like an angry mastiff. Inky's dark eyes shot fire. Frank Nugent's girlish face took on a grim and fighting look. Squiff, Tom Brown, Delarey, all awaited but the word. The feeling among the half-score of Greyfriars juniors was so intense that the lynching of Ponsonby might have been the outcome of it.

Neither Marjorie nor Flap would lack true knights while these fellows were near.

It was Flap who answered, not Marjorie. Marjorie could not answer.

"He insulted me!" Flap said, in ringing tones of scorn.

Squiff pressed forward. The Greyfriars juniors knew little of Goggs.

"My word, it's up to me, then!" said Squiff. "You'll let me deal with him, won't you, Miss Derwent? We're both Australians, you know, you and I!"

"Pardon me, but I cannot allow anyone else to take on what I regard as my task—and my privilege," said Goggs politely.

Squiff darted at Flap a glance almost imploring. But the girl shook her head. Goggs was her knight. Squiff saw that he was not needed, and he drew back.

Goggs had released Ponsonby. There was no chance of his escaping from that keen Greyfriars crowd.

But Pon had no notion of bolting. He looked around him with a sneer upon his face.

"Here's a dashed fuss about a little thing, by gad!" he scoffed. "Did none of you ever try to kiss a pretty girl who pretended not to be willing?"

"Pretended!" flashed Flap indignantly.

"We're not such cads!" snapped Bob Cherry.

"No, by gad! You're a set of mealy-mouthed prigs, who haven't yet begun learnin' what it means to live!" sneered the Highcliffe fellow. "But I'm glad you're here. I suppose there's some notion of fair play among you. Let this sheep-faced imbecile keep his dashed ju-jitsu out of it, an' I'll undertake to give him the best thrashin' of his life!"

"I have no intention whatever of employing any methods but those of the fist," said Goggs in his most precise manner. "But I have very considerable doubts as to whether you will be able to carry out your threat, Ponsonby."

To the Greyfriars juniors it certainly looked as though Pon ought to be able to do so. Nut though he was, a slacker, and none too fit at best, Cecil Ponsonby did not look weedy. He might have been an all-round athlete, but was not. Goggs did not look one, but Goggs was.

"It's a pity if that goggle-eyed chap gets whacked, Harry," said Bob Cherry aside. "He's a decent sort."

Harry Wharton nodded. He was resolved that the defeat of Goggs should not save Ponsonby from a licking in any case.

"Are we waiting for anything in particular?" asked Pon unpleasantly.

As a matter of fact, some of the Greyfriars fellows were rather hoping that the girls would clear off before the fight began. But Flap had evidently no intention of doing so, and even Marjorie wanted to see their enemy thrashed.

"Someone must second you," Tom Brown said.

"Don't all speak at once!" retorted the Highcliffe fellow, with a harsh laugh.

He looked around him at the ring of hostile faces. No one there wanted to second him, he was sure of that. Some would refuse, in any case—Wharton, Cherry, Bull, Todd.

It was Tom Brown, the good-natured New Zealander, who volunteered.

"I bar you as much as any chap here, Ponsonby," he said; "but I suppose it's up to someone."

"Won't you take it on for an old pal, Smithy?" jeered Pon.

"I'm hanged if I will!" snapped the Bounder.

"Perhaps you'll act as ref., Smithy?" Wharton said.

"I don't mind that. Pon will probably want pullin' up for shady tricks, and I sha'n't hesitate to pull him up."

"We fight here?" asked Goggs.

"Do you want to adjourn to the gym an' get gloves?" gibed Pon.

It was not of anything like that Goggs had thought. He had no wish for gloves. He did not fear being hurt, and his most ardent wish just then was to hurt Ponsonby as often and as much as possible.

But the road, though far from being busy, was a public one, and the presence of the two girls complicated matters. More than one there rather dreaded what Miss Penelope Primrose might say if she happened along in the midst of the conflict.

The fields, held fast in the grip of frost, were as hard as the road itself, however, and the bare hedges offered no cover. There was little to be gained by an adjournment elsewhere, and in twenty minutes or so it would be dusk, if not dark.

"I am ready," said Goggs gravely.

He had taken off his Eton jacket. He now removed his big glasses, and handed them to Squiff, who had elected himself the stranger's second. No one there failed to observe how marked a difference the removal of those disfiguring glasses made.

"Three-minute rounds, one-minute intervals, suit you, Ponsonby?" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"Anythin' you fancy, Smithy. I don't think there will be much occasion for rounds, by gad, though, an' it's gettin' dark!"

"I think the light left will serve our turn," said Goggs. "As to rounds, I am completely indifferent."

"You'd prefer to do without rounds, Ponsonby?" the Bounder asked.

"Yaas—no, I mean!"

At the last moment, perhaps, Pon felt just the least doubt of victory. Goggs, for all his angularity and oddness, looked very like business.

"Time!" called Peter Todd, with a careful eye to the minute-hand of his watch.

There was no clasping of hands. It was not likely that the moment when Cecil Ponsonby and Johnny Goggs felt like clasping hands would ever arrive.

Goggs stepped forward briskly, his guarding-arm held high and square.

Pon hung back watchfully.

Goggs feinted for Pon's chin with his left.

Pon's guard was drawn, and the right fist of his opponent smote him full and forcibly in the chest. He staggered before the blow, and all but crashed down.

"Oh!" ejaculated Flap. And Marjorie clutched her chum's arm in a nervous grip.

"My hat! That merchant puts some powder behind it, Bull!" said Piet Delarey.

But Pon had not quite gone down. Now he leaped tigerlike at his enemy.

He was no duffer, and his blood was hot. Far less than usual did he take heed as to whether he got hurt. That he could stand,

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if only he might thrash the presumptuous Goggs.

And surely he was capable of that?

It hardly looked like it!

Goggs met his furious attack with a defence that had no holes in it.

The lean, hard arm that guarded face and chest was quick and deft. The feet were as sure as the feet of a cat. The plain face was not nearly as good a mark as Pon had thought it, for somehow, when he hit straight at it, something happened, and it was not there!

"He doesn't look like it!" murmured Peter Todd to the Bounder. "Anyway, he didn't look it before he started in. And you wouldn't say he had the build for it. But that chap's an A1 boxer, and don't you forget it, Smithy!"

"Our friend with the queerful namefulness has sanguinefully drawn the firstful blood," remarked Inky.

It was even so. In the midst of Pon's fury of attack and Goggs' skill of defence, somehow it had chanced that it was Pon, and not Goggs, who had got hurt.

The two girls could not understand it at all. They stood a little apart from the crowd, and to them it had seemed that Pon was doing all the punching. But it was the enemy who was hurt, not Flap's knight of the homely countenance.

The aquiline nose of Cecil Ponsonby had run up against the bony fist of Johnny Goggs, and the red, red blood flowed, and, unlike a well-known public idol, Pon did not need to ask why it was flowing.

The round ended with Goggs scarcely touched and quite unbreathed.

But Pon was blowing hard, and the ruby drops fell from his nostrils.

Tom Brown did what he could to stanch the flow. He was not thanked.

Squiff's duties as second did not look like being heavy or troublesome. At the end of the round he patted his principal on the back, and said:

"Bonza, old scout!"

That may not have been necessary; but Goggs seemed to appreciate it; and certainly nothing else was necessary.

As the two faced one another again, after the brief breathing space, the disparity between them seemed as great as ever, with the advantage all on Pon's side.

Pon looked the athlete he might have been had he cared to be. Goggs looked the weed that he might have been had he slacked after Pon's fashion.

But the athlete of those two was Goggs, not Ponsonby. Though the muscles of Goggs were not bulky, they were like finely-tempered steel, fit for any strain. And there was steel in the fellow in other ways.

Then his footwork—so important a matter in boxing—was wonderfully good. The dancer must be deft of foot as the boxer; and the really good batsman must be as active and sure as either. Goggs was boxer and dancer and batsman rolled into one.

Pon opened the second round with another savage attack.

Goggs guarded, ducked, side-stepped, did all that a fellow needs to do to ward off a hot assault and remain unhurt through it. But the crowd noticed that he gave ground hardly at all. And when he did go back a foot or two he came forward again very speedily. He only hit out once where Pon hit half a score of times. But when Goggs hit Pon felt it.

The round neared its end. The fury of Pon's onset had been broken as a wave is broken upon the iron-bound cliff. Now the leader of the nuts was being pressed back on the defensive, gasping, taking every now and then a nasty knock.

But Goggs was not doing to him all that he might have done. He had no desire to administer a knock-out blow as yet. He intended that when he had finished Pon's face should smart and ache, and his body should be bruised and battered.

In short, Goggs was vengeful. He had not forgotten what Tunstall had told him as to Pon's annoying Flap before that day.

Now there appeared upon the scene four Highcliffe fellows. They did not arrive together. Frank Courtenay, the Caterpillar, and Tunstall came in company; but Monson minor caught them up only just as they joined the crowd.

"Oh, well punched, Goggs! Jolly well punched!" roared Bob Cherry.

Within five seconds of the round's end Pon had felt the frozen earth rise up and smite him.

So it seemed. The jar was a nasty one. But to the spectators—and even to Pon next moment—it was evident that the fist of Goggs had had more to do with it than Mother Earth. A swinging right-hander, taken fairly under the chin, had lifted Pon off his feet, then dropped him ungently.

"One—two—three——" counted Peter Todd, in indifferent tones.

Peter knew that Pon could not be counted out. The call of time would hinder that. Peter rather thought that Goggs knew this, too.

And he approved. Peter was not too mercifully disposed towards enemies. He could forgive them after they had been put through the mill. But he wanted to see them put through the mill first. He was sure that Goggs shared his sentiments on that point.

"Time!" said Peter, with the suspicion of a grin.

Tom Brown knelt down by Pon. He detested the fellow, but it was up to him to do his best for him.

But Pon had already begun to scramble up. The thought of defeat before Flap Derwent was as gall and wormwood to his haughty pride.

"Pon, you silly, dashed idiot!" panted Monson. "There's goin' to be no end of a row, by gad! What in the world did you cut out for?"

Ponsonby sat up, regarding Monson in scowling wise. Monson did not deserve that. It was really loyalty to Pon which had brought him upon the scene. The nuts were not great on loyalty to one another; but Pon did matter a bit to Mid Monson.

The others stood around, the remaining three Highcliffians merely exchanging nods with the Greyfriars fellows, and raising their caps to the girls. Pon and Monson held the centre of the stage. It was plain that something was up.

Goggs spoke a word to Peter Todd, and Peter lifted his eyes from his watch. It was scarcely likely that the one-minute interval would allow of the explanations that seemed impending.

"Oh, hang all that!" snarled Pon. "There can't be a bigger row than there has been, by gad! And I'm booked, anyway!"

"I don't believe it!" replied Monson. "At least, you wouldn't have been but for this dashed silly trick. Mobby's doin' all he knows how to save you from the sack. An' he says the old bird's comin' round. He's lookin' for you now."

"Who is, you dashed idiot? The Head?"

"No. Mobby."

Ponsonby said something about Mr. Mobbs that would have been better left unsaid in the presence of ladies. Then he got to his feet.

"Time we went on!" he said.

"Time you—— Oh, I say, Pon, you're never goin' to be such a dashed silly fool as——"

"If you think I'm goin' away from here without lickin' this rotter you're confoundedly mistaken, Monson!"

"An' if Pon really thinks he can lick the dear Goggs, he's confoundedly mistaken!" murmured the Caterpillar to Courtenay.

"I don't like this," said Frank. "The girls—what are they doing here? If Mobbs does come on the scene there will be a lot of wretched fuss; and their being here won't improve matters."

"What's Monson mean?" asked Harry Wharton. "As for the girls, all this is through that cad Ponsonby's insulting them. We all wanted the chance to go for him; but Goggs was first. And I don't see that any of us could be better—not even old Bob!"

"True, O king! Goggs is the positive limit in sheer capability," answered the Caterpillar, disregarding Harry's question after his customary way. "What Goggs cannot do—— But that doubt hardly matters. For quite certainly he is goin' to lick Pon, by gad!"

"There's been an upset, Wharton," explained Frank Courtenay. "It's too long a story to tell in full; but Vavasour turned King's evidence, as one might say, and he and Gadsby and Ponsonby were shut up—to wait for the order of the boot, it was generally supposed. But I had my doubts about that."

"It's the Derwent affair, old top," said the Caterpillar, seeing that Harry had not fully grasped the situation even yet. "Those three were all in it, but didn't let on. Derwent was the scapegoat, an' he bolted into the wilderness loaded with their sins, like the luckless animal we read of in the Scripture. Dash it all! It was hard cheese for the Hebrews' scapegoat, an' it was hard cheese for Derwent!"

"If your Head lets off them——"

"He can hardly be rough on Derwent—eh, Wharton?" broke in the Caterpillar. "It would seem not; an' yet one never knows. However, at present he hasn't the opportunity, for Derwent is out of his reach."

"An' may never come back!" added Tunstall gloomily.

The combat was being continued while they talked, but without any notable feature. Pon did the attacking, and Goggs did what damage was done. Pon saw red, and Goggs was cool—that made no end of difference; and, seeing that Goggs was far cleverer than his opponent, there could be but one end to the fray, bar accidents.

Perhaps Cecil Ponsonby had realised that. But he showed no sign of having done so, and it was evident that he would not throw up the sponge as long as he could struggle on.

"Had that Australian officer anything to do with it?" asked Harry.

"I haven't the pleasure of his acquaintance," replied the Caterpillar. "Friend of yours, Wharton?"

"Bravo, Goggs! Do that again, old top!" shouted Tunstall.

"Let's go, Flap!" pleaded Marjorie. "We ought not to stay, I'm sure."

Flap did not answer. She did not move. With lips slightly parted, and eyes that never left the combatants, she stood as if spellbound. There was no one there who desired more ardently than Flap that Pon should get the licking he deserved. Perhaps there was no one there who cared half as much that Goggs should have the victory, though the Caterpillar and Tunstall were keen enough on that.

Harry Wharton answered the Caterpillar.

"No. I only know his name—Leith," he said. "Bunter told us about him. It seems that he met Derwent and Hazel in town somewhere. They were all right then; but they gave him the slip."

"That," murmured the Caterpillar, "was rather a pity, considerin' the present conjunction of affairs. Derwent ought to be on the spot. Our Head, though not exactly a modern Aristides the Just, could hardly let off Pon & Co. an' sack him, by gad!"

"Time!" called Peter Todd, as Pon reeled back, bruised and panting and savage.

Goggs glanced around him. Only a faint red tinge remained in the west, and dusk was drawing in. He sighed. He would have liked to play with Pon for another half-hour or so, but the light would not allow of that.

In the last minute of that round Pon had suffered very heavily indeed. His defence had been broken down, and Goggs had hit him when and where he liked. Pon's right eye was all but closed, and his left wore a shade of mourning already. His lips were swollen, and the knuckles of Goggs were cut. Pon had little breath left, but Goggs was not in the least puffed, and Squiff again found his office a sinecure.

Goggs said nothing; but somehow everyone, with the possible exception of Pon, realised that the next round was going to be the last.

"Time!" said Peter. And now it was not Pon who attacked.

"Goggs goes into action," murmured the Caterpillar. "Franky, dear boy, I wouldn't have missed this for anythin'!"

"Same here, by Jupiter!" said Tunstall exultantly.

Pon was getting it hot. Goggs fairly went for him now. So quick were his punches that, in the dim light, it was almost impossible to follow them. But all saw them get home, one after another, with a cumulative effect disastrous to Pon.

That warrior was reduced to feeble guarding, to retreat, but not to absolute surrender. Young scoundrel though Ponsonby was, there was within him courage that could endure at a pinch. Nothing but a knock-out blow would settle him.

It came!

One desperate punch Pon got in upon Goggs' left ear. It was the first real hurt the Franklingham junior had taken. And next moment it was avenged.

Right on the point of the jaw Ponsonby got a blow that seemed to have the force of a horse's kick behind it; and he collapsed, flinging up his arms, and smiting the frozen ground with a great concussion.

Flap's knight was the victor!

Two to Sanny!

THE other St. Jim's fellows came clambering up, Grundy, as usual, taking command.

"My hat!" said the great George Alfred. "This is a pretty state of affairs, I must say! What have you three silly asses been doing with these chaps? Why, they look half dead!"

"Idiot!" snapped Tom Merry. "We haven't been doing anything with them, of course. They've fallen from the top there, and, as far as I can make out, they've been here all night, and all day, too."

"Why, that's Hazeldene of Greyfriars!" said Kangaroo.

"And the other chap's from Highcliffe," Manners said. "They've done a bunk."

Neither Hazel nor Flip heard. The Greyfriars junior had also collapsed now.

"Awful rot!" said Grundy. "They'll have to go back. My position won't allow me to——"

"Oh, your position be eternally jiggered!" snapped Lowther. "The thing we have to think about is to manage so that these two don't kick the bucket. If they had another night out like this they'd do that, for a dead cert!"

"All the same——"

"Oh, shut up, Grundy!" said Kangaroo roughly. "You're a bearer in this act; you haven't a speaking part at all."

"Anything I can do, of course—— But you'd better let me settle how it's to be done. You fellows lose your heads in an emergency."

"It's a pity you can't lose yours!" growled Manners. "There's nothing ornamental about it, and nothing inside it!"

"Still, Grundy can be useful," Talbot said. "It's going to be a job getting them down, and he's the strongest of the lot of us."

Grundy beamed upon Talbot.

"And the clumsiest," added Glyn.

Grundy did not beam upon Glyn.

"Hazeldene will want careful handling," Talbot. "He's hurt. There's nothing broken, I feel sure, but there's a sprain."

"I can carry him down in my arms," Grundy said.

His will to do that—or anything—was good enough, but it was too big a task even for the strength of George Alfred Grundy. The descent was steep, though not sheer, like the part down which Flip had followed Hazel.

"No, you take the Highcliffe fellow, Tom Merry said. "Manners and Lowther will help you, and hold on so that you don't tumble with him. We'll have to fix up Hazeldene some way or other in our sweaters; he mustn't risk a bad jar."

Grundy was mollified. To have Lowther and Manners placed under his command, as it were, was something.

He took Flip up in his sturdy arms. Kangaroo was the only other fellow there who could have lifted him like that, for Flip was not exactly a trifle in the way of weight.

He started off, growling at Manners and Lowther when they suggested hanging on to him to steady him down the slope. Grundy was quite sure that he could carry his burden all the way down without help.

Though he did not manage that, yet he did well. When at last he had to stop, two-thirds of the descent had been accomplished. He wanted to rest a minute or two and then go on; but Lowther and Manners would not have that. They took Flip between them, and got him down to level ground. By the time they reached the path they were wondering how old Grundy had done what he did, and had a decidedly increased respect for their stalwart Form-fellow.

Up above, the five left tied their sweaters together, and made of them a kind of sling, in which it was possible to carry Hazel. The sweaters were not likely to be of much use after it was all over, but no one thought of that.

Then, slowly and carefully, they got Hazel down. The first few yards were distinctly difficult, but after that it was comparatively easy going.

They found Grundy, Lowther, and Manners waiting for them. Flip, still unconscious, lay on one sweater, with two others over him. The three were shivering. Grundy denied that he was doing anything of the sort, but his teeth were chattering.

"There's a farm half a mile or so away where we can get a trap, I feel sure," said Tom Merry. "And they'll do all they can for these two before we start. But we can't leave them there. The only thing to be done is to take them along to St. Jim's and get them into sanny."

Kangaroo glanced round.

"I spy some hurdles," he said. "A heap over there. Nobody could grudge us the use of a couple of them in a case like this, and we needn't mind if they are grudged."

Within five minutes Flip and Hazel, both well wrapped up, were being carried at a good pace to the farmhouse at the end of the valley. The Terrible Three and Talbot took Hazel, while Grundy, Kangaroo, Dane, and Glyn bore Flip.

At the farm they found ready sympathy, roaring fires, food, drink—all that they could want.

The farmer's wife suggested that the two should be left there and a doctor sent to them. But Tom Merry, Talbot, and Kangaroo—after a consultation, which Grundy insisted upon joining and attempted to rule—decided that it would be better to get them to St. Jim's and into the sanatorium.

"They've done a bunk," Tom said. "That isn't exactly our bizney, of course——"

"But it is, a bit, now that we've come upon them in this plight," struck in Talbot.

"Well, yes, in a way. I was going to say that they aren't in any sort of state to bunk farther."

"I shouldn't allow them to if they were!" said George Alfred Grundy authoritatively.

"Pity you can't tell 'em so!" remarked Harry Noble, with a touch of sarcasm. "That would settle it, of course. But I think they're pretty well settled now. Hazeldene won't be able to put foot to the ground for the next few days, and the other chap's in for a pretty rotten bad time of it, if you ask me!"

"He's a silly ass!" said Grundy. "He ought to have moved and got help. Any fellow with a scrap of sense could have seen that!"

"Should you?" asked Kangaroo.

"Me? Of course I should! Haven't I——"

"A scrap of sense? Well, yes—a very little scrap. Hardly worth talking about; but still, if——"

"Oh, Grundy's all serene, Kangy!" said Tom. "The very fellow for a job of this sort. You think they ought to go to St. Jim's and to sanny, Grundy?"

"Certainly I do! In fact, I insist——"

"That settles it!" said Tom, winking at Talbot and Noble. "After that, there simply isn't another word to be said."

The idea was undoubtedly the best one. If the two fugitives were going to be really ill—as seemed probable—it was far better that they should be ill in sanny at St. Jim's than at this lonely farmhouse, well off the beat of the overworked local doctor.

Then, too, Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, would be sure to feel that he owed a duty to Dr. Locke of Greyfriars and Dr. Voysey of Highcliffe, and that that duty would be best performed by keeping the runaways under his eye, so to speak, until the authorities of their respective schools at least knew where they were, and had time to decide their fates.

A light dogcart and a heavier and more roomy market-cart were got ready.

The farmer drove the first. Tom Merry sat by his side, and Clifton Dane, Lowther, and Manners squeezed themselves in on the back seat. It was well that a detachment of the rescue-party should go ahead to prepare the way.

On the floor of the market-cart a mattress was laid, and Hazel and Flip, well covered up and both dozing, after a brief spell of consciousness, were laid upon that. An aged labourer drove the powerful grey horse, and Kangaroo, Talbot, Glyn, and Grundy did what they could to take up as little room as possible inside.

The drive to St. Jim's was not a short one. Several miles had to be covered. Before they had been ten minutes on the way Hazeldene woke up.

He could not get on to what had happened or where he was at first.

When he was made to understand—when he knew that he and his comrade were rescued, but must submit to counting this the end of their flight—he shed weak tears in the darkness.

The four St. Jim's juniors could not see his face. They heard his sobs; but none of them felt inclined to despise him too much. After all, the fellow had been through a very rough time of it.

"I should have croaked if it hadn't been for him!" he gasped at length.

"You'd better not talk!" said Grundy authoritatively. "You ain't strong enough!"

"I don't care whether I am or not. I'm going to talk! I'm not jolly well going to kick the bucket——"

"Of course, you're not, old chap!" said Talbot soothingly.

"Not so blessed sure of that! But I'm not going to do it before somebody knows all that Flip—that Derwent there—has done for me! There never was a fellow like him—at least, I never knew one. And the Highcliffe people ought to know. Perhaps they'll take him back there when I'm dead!"

"You reckon he saved your life?" said Glyn.

"I'm sure of it!"

"Best not turn up your toes yet, then, or it will look as if he had only done it by halves—see?"

Hazel gave a restless, ill-tempered movement under the pile of coverings that kept him warm. He was in pain; and though his heart was full to overflowing with gratitude to Flip, he had very little patience for anyone else.

"I don't care much whether I die or not!" he said peevishly. "No one's going to miss me a fat lot, anyway!"

"Chaps don't die of a sprained ankle," Grundy remarked.

"It's a thing that simply isn't done," said Kangaroo. "Of course, you've had a rough time of it, Hazeldene; it isn't only the ankle. But you're not booked—I'm jolly sure of that!"

"I don't care whether I am or not! I think I'd just as soon be, come to that! But I want it known first what Derwent's done for me, and what a jolly fine chap he is!"

"Let him talk," whispered Bernard Glyn to Kangaroo. "It can't do him any real harm, and perhaps he'll feel better when he's got it off his chest."

So they let Hazel talk. He lay with his head on Talbot's knee, and he talked quickly, excitedly, feverishly at times. Nevertheless, he told a true story; and they heard with keen interest the story of those wanderings.

Hazel did not spare himself. He was in no mood to do that. It was for him an hour of self-revelation and self-searching. If only its effects could have been permanent it would have been well for him!

* * *

But Peter Hazeldene was sealed of the tribe of Reuben. "Unstable as water," there was not in him the backbone to hold long to one course. He could never be wholly bad—so much of good was in him as that. But to the end he would be selfish, dependent upon others, undependable, easily led astray, and sulky. No more than Harry Wharton, for all his striving, could Philip Derwent "make a man" of Peter Hazeldene!

He told his story none so badly. Gradually, as it progressed, even Grundy, dullest of the four who listened, found his mind busy with a picture of Flip Derwent that did the original at least justice—Flip would have said more than justice.

Flip's cheeriness and resource, his courage and devotedness, ran like threads of gold through that story of Hazel's; and not one of the hearers but thought that, were it his fate to take the road of chance, he would ask no better comrade than this almost unknown "Flip," as Hazel called him.

None of them would have leaned upon Flip as Hazel had done. Grundy would have tried to boss him; any of the other three would have been good comrade with good comrade. But the feeling all four had, before the story ended, was a feeling of warm admiration and real friendliness for the fellow who lay asleep by Hazel's side.

"Australian, is he?" said Harry Noble. "My word, I'm glad to hear that!"

"You were all wrong to keep him there with you, Hazeldene," said Grundy. "A silly fool bizney, I call that!"

"You needn't rub it in!" said Hazel irritably. "I know I was wrong—I always am wrong, seems to me!"

"You do appear to have taken some trouble never to be right since you made up your mind to break from Greyfriars," answered Talbot frankly.

"Oh, I dare say! I'm not pretending to be a perfect character. It would be a heap better if I died. I did think of doing for myself. I told Flip so several times."

"My word! A nice little bit of jam to add to all the trouble you gave him—keeping on the look-out to see that you didn't do that!" gasped Glyn.

"I don't see why he should have minded. He'd have been rid of me, and I was only a nuisance to him!" Hazel replied moroselv. "I'm only a nuisance to everybody! If I do kick the bucket, and if I had a tombstone put I don't see why anyone should want to give me one—they can put on it 'His friends despised him, and he deserved it,' instead of the sort of rot they generally put on. I've had good friends, I know; but I've always been a rotten drag on them! There was Wharton——"

His speech, a moment before clear enough, trailed off into a mutter. The four heard the name of "Marjorie"; and several times he murmured Wharton's name. Vernon-Smith's was mentioned, too, and Tom Brown's. But Flip's came most often.

(To be continued.)