838

"THE SHADOW OF A SECRET!" A MAGNIFICENT LONG COMPLETE STORY OF THE WORLD-FAMOUS TOM MERRY & CO. AT ST. JIM'S.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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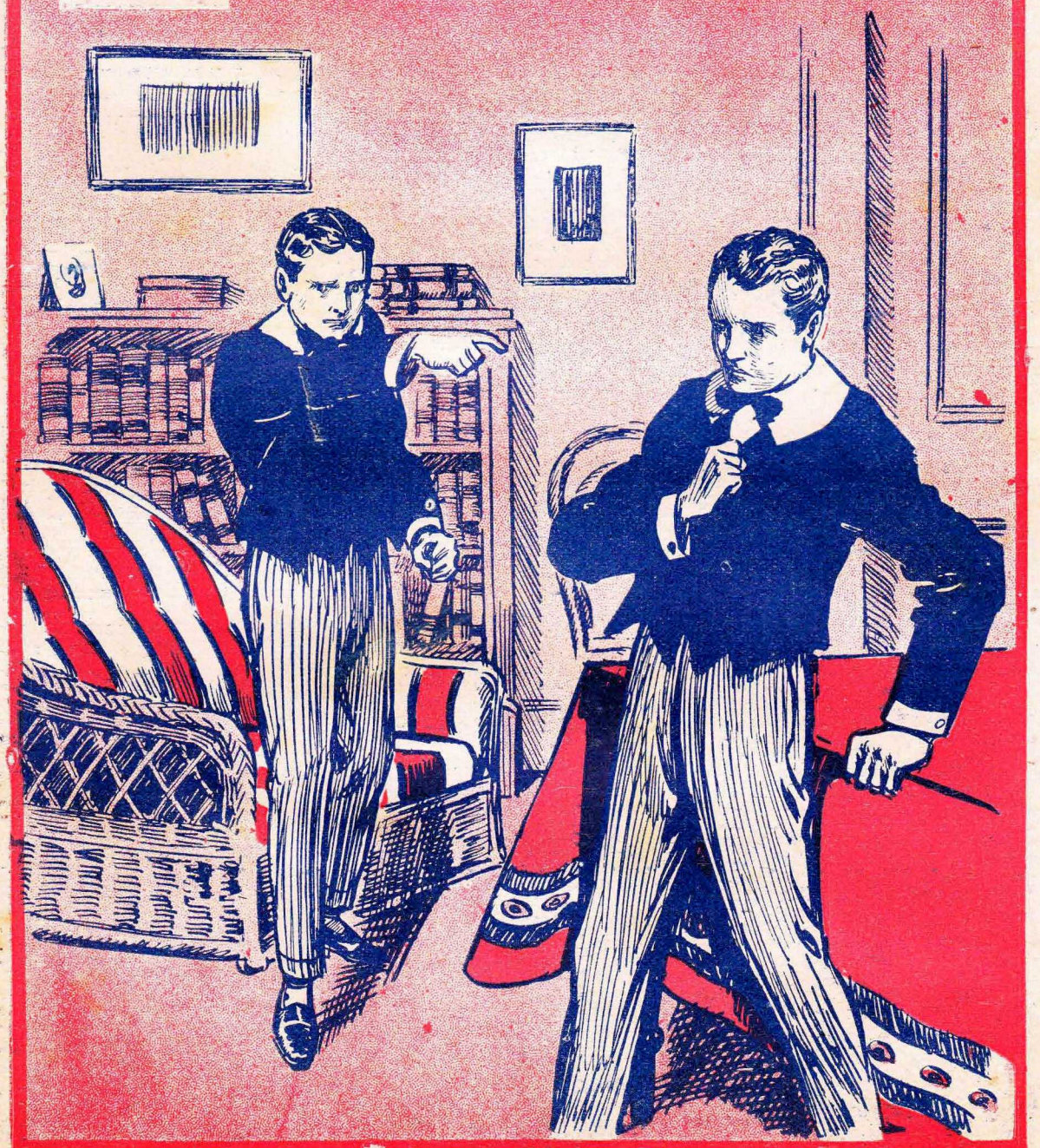


"THINK, BEFORE A POLICEMAN'S HAND DROPS ON YOUR SHOULDER!"

(A Dramatic Incident from the Magnificent School Story Inside.)

Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

MY DEAR CHUMS, — One eminently cheery fact becomes plainer with each issue of the GEM. It is that the yarns in the famous Wednesday story paper are remembered. Keen supporters write to me whole long screeds about the triumphant successes we have had in the past. There is another significant point, too, to be taken into account. I refer to the immense popularity of the linked together stories of St. Jim's. Martin Clifford has been scoring in this way again.

"FOR HONOUR'S SAKE!"
By Martin Clifford.

Take the next tale of St. Jim's which will appear in the next issue of the GEM. It bears the above title, and carries forward the splendid interest attaching to the adventures of young Len Lee. No author who ever lived could have given the history of Len in one single yarn. It would have been impossible to condense the wonderful narrative. We have some big surprises in the grand wind-up tale. Be sure you get it.

CARDEW'S WIN.

One additional word about this truly stupendous story. Len Lee passes through the worst time imaginable. He has an inveterate foe, and Claude Pomfret is his name. But there are higher destinies awaiting the one-time waif whose advent caused so much sensation, and a peck of mystery. But it is open to doubt whether things could conceivably have panned out as they do had it not been for the adroit handling of a problem by Cardew. Good old Cardew!

THE "ST. JIM'S" NEWS."

Next week's issue of the supplement is a gilt-edged inspiration. Tom Merry, as organiser in chief, has devoted the new number to theatrical enterprise, and it would have been impossible for the stalwart Shell leader to have selected a more promising theme. The theatre and music are in close association, and harmony comes in for dexterous treatment. There is tons of musical talent at St. Jim's, lots of fellows at the school can strike the lyre. Others are great at facing the music.

THE FOOTBALL COMPETITION.

Coming very soon! That is the answer to a query from "A Reader," who says he has taken part in the Footballers' Names Competition. Because results have not been published yet, this reader is uneasy about it. I counsel him to possess his soul in patience. All in good time. The work of judging has been tremendous.

"FEX!"

Among the right excellent attractions for the coming number of the GEM is a yarn about the theatre world in London. It is a promising subject, and everybody will be keen over the extraordinary success which attends the work of a smart young stage hand. Difficulties vanish like smoke in a high wind when he is around. He is such a dab at stage effects that his pals give him the nickname which heads this paragraph. Of course, success breeds enmity in mean souls. Sad, but true. Young "Fex" only escapes the dire consequences of a horrible plot by the skin of his teeth. Read about this. The author has delivered the goods with a vengeance. You can glimpse the inner workings of theatredom, and it is all jolly fascinating.

A PICTURE TOUR OF THE WORLD.

Have you seen "Countries of the World" yet? This new fortnightly part publication, which takes you on a wonderful picture world tour for 1d. a day is proving a very big success. Part 1 sold out very rapidly, and there will be an equally large demand for Part 2, on sale to-day, which contains a host of splendid photographs, including eight full-colour plates of Andalusia in Sunny Spain.

The complete work will contain 5,000 photographs altogether, and nearly 400 of these will be full-page plates in colour. Every country, city, town, or village of interest throughout the world will be pictured in the pages of "Countries of the World," to which vivid pen descriptions will be contributed by 130 of the leading travel writers and explorers of the day.

The fortnightly parts cost 1s. 3d. each, and readers anxious to make certain of each one as it is published should give their nearest newsagent a regular order.

"TOM OF THE AJAX!"

Another striking part of our serial will be found safe as houses in the coming issue. Tom Gale goes through it again, but he has the splendid spirit of a chap who does not recognise defeat, and, consequently, always comes up smiling again, which is just as it should be.

YOUR EDITOR.

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"

OUR TUCK HAMPERS ARE PRIME!

Remember, boys and girls, we award a delicious Tuck Hamper for the best storyette sent us each week—also half-a-crown is paid for each other contribution accepted. Cut out the coupon on this page, and send it, together with your joke to me.

TUCK FOR STAFFORDSHIRE!

A NEW DISEASE!

A workman in a factory had been absenting himself from work rather frequently, and the manager spoke to him and said that he would dismiss him if it happened again unless he brought up a doctor's certificate. However, the workman stayed away again, and, knowing that he must get a doctor's note, went to the medical man. This gentleman could not find anything the matter with him, so he just drew a line on the note where the nature of the disease is put. The man went to work, and shortly afterwards the manager approached him and demanded the note. This was handed over. The manager eyed it critically, but could not make it out, so, handing it back to the man, he asked: "Can you read it?" The man looked at the certificate, and then said triumphantly: "Yes, sir. Can't you see I'm suffering from a stroke?"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious tuck, has been awarded to J. Davies, Dorsett Road, Darlaston, Staffs.

FURIOUS DRIVING!

An express on a delapidated railway was tearing along at a wild, awe-inspiring rate of six miles per hour, when all of a sudden it stopped altogether. Most of the passengers did not notice the difference, but one of them happened to be somewhat anxious to reach his destination before old age claimed him for its own. He put his head through the window, to find that the cause of the stop was a cow on the track. After a while they continued the journey for half an hour or so—and then another stop. "What's wrong now?" asked the impatient passenger of the guard. "A cow on the track," came the answer. "But I thought you drove it off." "So we did," said the guard, "but we caught up with it again!" Half-a-crown has been awarded to: Clifford Bill, 123, Dudley Road, Brierley Hill, Staffs.

All attempts in this Competition should be addressed to: The GEM, "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

THE GEM LIBRARY.
No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.

Everybody's curiosity has been aroused by the mysterious stranger, Leonard Pomfret, but the climax comes when Ralph Reckness Cardew gets on the track of a very curious and baffling mystery and warns Len of his danger!

THE SHADOW OF A SECRET!

A Splendid New, Extra Long Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's, written by the greatest of boy's authors,

MARTIN CLIFFORD

CHAPTER 1.
Perplexing!

"YOU fellows believe in ghosts?"

Ralph Reckness Cardew asked that question, in Study No. 9 in the Fourth, with an air of great seriousness.

He sat on the corner of the study table, swinging his elegant legs, and watching Levison and Clive, who were baking chestnuts at the fire. Levison and Clive were busy; and Cardew, as usual, was idle—but he was looking more thoughtful than was his wont.

Sidney Clive turned a ruddy face from the fire.

"Believe in what?" he ejaculated.

"Ghosts!"

"Fathead!" said Clive politely, and he turned to the fire again.

"I've seen one," said Cardew.

"You've seen what?" asked Levison, looking round in his turn.

"A giddy ghost."

"Ass!"

Cardew laughed.

"But I'm quite serious," he said. "A fellow can't be in two places at once, can he?"

"No, ass!"

"Then, if you see a fellow in one place, and you know that he's in another, what can he be but a jolly old spook?" argued Cardew.

"Is that a conundrum? Have some of these chestnuts, and chuck talking rot," suggested Levison.

"You fellows know that I was at Wodehouse School, in the North, before I came to St. Jim's?" pursued Cardew.

"You've told us so about a hundred times."

"I knew a fellow there—a fellow named Lee. I dare say I've mentioned him to you—a terrific footballer and boxer, no end of a johnny at games and things. He and his pals ragged me in my study once for slacking."

"Serve you right, I dare say."

"Very likely," assented Cardew. "I didn't know the chap well, but I rather admired him in a way—he was so different from me, you know. Now, so far as I know, this chap, Leonard Lee, is still at Wodehouse; no reason why he shouldn't be, so far as I can see."

"Well, what about it?" asked Levison.

"Well, I've seen him at St. Jim's."

"What?"

"I've seen him—here."

"When?"

"This evenin'."

"Is that a joke?" asked Levison, staring at Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"Not in the least—it's a fact. That's why I asked you whether you believe in ghosts," said Cardew. "There isn't any fellow named Lee at St. Jim's, is there?"

"Not that I've heard of. The new chap who came to-day is named Pomfret," said Levison.

Cardew smiled in a rather peculiar way.

"That's so—Pomfret," he assented. "There was a row in Study No. 4 half an hour ago, and we went along and found the new chap, Pomfret, fightin' Mulvaney minor, and lickin' him, and jolly old Tompkins keepin' time and lookin' as pleased as Punch. And it was in that study that I saw the ghost."

"What on earth do you mean, if you mean anything?" asked Levison testily.

"I mean what I say, neither more nor less. When I looked into Study No. 4 to see the fight, I saw Len Lee of Wodehouse."

"You utter ass, how could you, when he's not at St. Jim's?" exclaimed Sidney Clive.

"There were only four fellows in the study," said Levison, "Pomfret, and Tompkins, and Mulvaney—and D'Arcy, sitting on the table."

"That's so," assented Cardew.

"Then how could you have seen a Wodehouse chap there?"

"That, as jolly old Hamlet remarked, is the question. I saw him, as large as life. It looks like a matter for the Psychical Research Society, doesn't it?" smiled Cardew. "I've been wonderin' whether I ought to look into the matter. It's no business of mine, so, naturally, I feel rather interested."

Levison and Clive stared hard at Cardew. It was not uncommon for that airy youth to talk in a strain that his study-mates found it difficult to understand. But on this occasion they really began to wonder whether Cardew was wandering in his mind.

"I suppose you're trying to pull our leg, somehow," said Clive at last. "If it's a joke, explain it."

"It isn't a joke."

"Then chuck it, and bag some of these chestnuts before the prefects clear us off to dorm."

"You're not interested in ghosts?" asked Cardew, slipping from the table. "I am, and I'm goin' to investigate. Let's see—Mulvaney has gone off to wash his giddy wounds, I think—and I think you fellows might ask Tompkins here to have some of these ripping chestnuts. I'll ask that new chap, Pomfret, to help me look for the ghost."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Cut along and ask Tompkins, one of you!" urged Cardew. "I really mean it. Tompkins is really a nice fellow, and good company. You ought to like Tompkins, Clivey."

"Eh; why?" asked Clive.

"Because so long as he's here, you're not the biggest ass at St. Jim's, old fellow."

"You silly owl!" said Clive, laughing.

"Well, go and fetch him," said Cardew. "Clarence York Tompkins is worth cultivatin'. A fellow with a name like that would make life brighter in any study. I'd really like him to have some of these chestnuts."

"I'll fetch him if you like," said the puzzled Clive.

"Do, old chap."

Sidney Clive left the study. He had no objection to being kind to Tompkins of the Fourth, an inoffensive youth whom nobody disliked, and who had rather a hard time of it in Study No. 4 with his obstreperous study-mate, Mick Mulvaney. Ernest Levison looked long and hard at Cardew.

"You want to see Pomfret, the new chap, by himself?" he asked.

"You've got it."

"You don't know him?"

"Never met anybody named Pomfret in my life."

"Then what on earth's your interest in him?"

"We're going ghost-hunting together."

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Levison impatiently. "What the dickens are you driving at?"

"Dear old man, here comes Clivey with our honoured guest—and I'll leave you to enjoy the chestnuts, and his company."

And Ralph Reckness Cardew strolled out of Study No. 9, leaving Levison of the Fourth puzzled and perplexed, and a little exasperated.

CHAPTER 2.

Cardew Wants to Know!

"POMFRET, old man, I'm jolly glad you came to St. Jim's."

Clarence York Tompkins of the Fourth Form spoke with deep sincerity, and Len smiled.

The new junior was in Study No. 4 with Tompkins, arranging his books on a shelf. His handsome face showed few signs of his late strenuous combat with Mulvaney minor. The hapless Mulvaney had gone up to the dormitory to bathe his damages—which were numerous and painful.

"Blessed if you look such a fighting man, Pomfret," went on Tompkins. "Why, I shouldn't wonder if you could stand up to Tom Merry, after the way you handled Mulvaney."

"That will never be put to the test," said Len. "I hope I shall be friends with Tom Merry."

"It will be a bit different in the study now you're here," went on Tompkins. "Mulvaney will have to sing rather small after this. Will you punch him next time he wants to sell any of my books along the passage?"

"Certainly," said Len, laughing.

Tompkins grinned with satisfaction. He had had many trials with Mulvaney minor, and with the coming of Len Pomfret it seemed to him that the worst of his trials would be over. In Tompkins' opinion, a good licking was what Mick Mulvaney had wanted for a long time; and he had had one now, there was no mistake about that.

"Where did you learn to box so jolly well?" asked Tompkins.

"At school."

"Do they box much in Switzerland?"

"In—in Switzerland?"

"Yes. You were at school in Switzerland, I've heard."

Len compressed his lips a little. He wondered whether he would ever cease to receive painful reminders of the fact that he was playing a part at St. Jim's. There was no harm in the part he was playing—at all events, his guardian, Mr. Pomfret, had assured him so. But every reference to the fellow whose name he had taken jarred on him.

There was a knock at the door, and Sidney Clive looked into the study.

"Busy, Tompkins?" he asked.

"No."

"Cardew wants you in our study, if you'll come."

"Right-ho!" said Tompkins at once, looking quite pleased. It was the first time that the grandson of Lord Reckness had asked Tompkins to his study, and Clarence York felt the honour of the invitation. He was rather pleased, too, to let Pomfret see that he had distinguished acquaintances—all the more because poor Tompkins was on intimate terms with nobody in the House.

He gave Pomfret a nod and left the study with Clive.

"Anything on?" he asked, as they walked up the Fourth Form passage together.

"Only baked chestnuts," said Clive, with a smile. "Hallo, here's Cardew!"

Cardew came out of Study No. 9 as they approached. He nodded to Tompkins very genially.

"Levison's waitin' for you, old bean," he said. "Yearnin' for your company, in fact. Trot in!"

Tompkins trotted in, and Clive followed him into Study No. 9.

"Aren't you staying, Cardew?" asked Tompkins.

Cardew shook his head.

"No," he said gravely. "I've got to see a man about a ghost."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Look after my friend Tompkins, you fellows," said Cardew. "I leave him in your hands."

And Cardew walked down the passage, leaving Clarence York Tompkins in a state of considerable astonishment.

Cardew stopped at the door of Study No. 4, which was half open.

He looked in, without entering immediately.

Pomfret, the new junior, was standing at the bookshelf, with his back partly turned to the door, and he did not see Cardew for the moment.

Cardew watched him, with a strange smile on his face. He could see Len's profile, and he saw that the new junior had a very thoughtful look. As a matter of fact, Clive's mention of Cardew's name had given Len a start. He remembered that there had been a fellow of that name at Wodehouse, who had left. But, after all, it was not a very uncommon name, and Len was not feeling uneasy on that score.

But he was realising that the part he had to play at St. Jim's was more difficult than he had anticipated.

Why could not Mr. Pomfret have stated the facts, or at least allowed him to state them.

There was nothing underhand, nothing to be ashamed of, in the fact that the stockbroker had adopted Len Lee, the outcast, in the place of his nephew, Leonard Pomfret, who had been drowned in the Lake of Geneva. It was natural that, adopting him as his nephew, he should desire him to take his own name.

But why the secrecy—why was Len bound to keep it up that he was Len Pomfret in actual fact, instead of by adoption? Mr. Pomfret had told him that this was their own business, and no concern of anybody else. That was doubtless true. There was no deception—Claude Pomfret had a right to adopt a homeless orphan and give him his lost nephew's name and place. He had told Len so, and it seemed reasonable enough to the boy. It had seemed very unlikely that Len would meet, at St. Jim's, any fellow who had known him before. Yet, on the very first day, he had met Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, who knew his story, and knew that he could not be what he appeared to be.

If only Mr. Pomfret had made no secret of the matter! And there was, so far as Len could see, no occasion for secrecy.

Unless—but he drove that thought from his mind. Mr. Pomfret had been generosity itself—and it seemed like the blackest ingratitude to suspect that he could have had any ulterior motive in giving his lost nephew's name to Len Lee.

What motive could he have had, save kindness to a homeless outcast, and some regard for the boy who had saved his life!

If some lingering doubt rose in Len's troubled mind, he drove it away with horror.

Unconscious of the fact that Cardew of the Fourth was watching him from the doorway, Len went on arranging his books.

Cardew did not move or speak; he waited for Len to see him. A mocking smile lurked on Cardew's face.

Len turned at last; and then, suddenly, he saw Cardew.

His face became fixed on the face of the dandy of the Fourth, and he stood quite still.

Cardew stepped into the study.

"Excuse my buttin' in, dear boy," said Cardew, "I'm lookin' for a ghost."

Len did not speak.

"The ghost of a chap I knew at my old school," continued Cardew airily. "As the chap's at Wodehouse, of course he can't be here! I suppose my eyesight must be playin' me false, for, believe me, I've seen the chap in this study—in fact, I'm seein' him now."

Not a word from Len.

He knew that he was known, and that Cardew, whose mocking, ironical ways he remembered of old, was tormenting him, a good deal like a cat playing with a mouse.

"Do you believe in ghosts, old bean?" asked Cardew.

No answer.

"Because, if it isn't a case of ghosts, the jolly old apparition must be real," said Cardew. "And if it's real, a fellow wants to know, you know. A fellow's bound to know, in the circumstances. Don't you think so?"

Len's lip quivered, but he did not speak. Cardew dropped his airy, mocking manner suddenly, and came a step nearer to the new junior, his eyes fixed on him.

"Len Lee, I want to know what you're doing at St. Jim's under a false name!"

"Excuse me buttin' in, dear boy," said Cardew, stepping into the study. "I'm lookin' for a ghost, the ghost of a chap I knew at Wodehouse." Len did not speak. "I suppose my eyesight must be playing me false," continued Cardew, "for, believe me, I've seen the chap in this study, in fact, I'm seein' him now!" (*See page 4.*)

CHAPTER 3.
Under His Thumb!

LEN drew a deep, deep breath.

The game was up now; he felt that.

Tom Merry and his chums knew; but they were fellows very different from Cardew. They had agreed to wait till the Saturday half-holiday, when Len was to take them to Pomfret Lodge to see his guardian, and to hear from the stockbroker himself that Len was no cheat or impostor. They wanted to trust him, and were glad to give him a chance. They were fellows of whom he could ask consideration—even a favour.

It was different with Cardew. Not to save his place at St. Jim's—not to save his life—would Len have asked anything at the hands of that mocking fellow. Nor did he think, for one moment, that Cardew was a fellow to give him a chance. They had known little of each other at Wodehouse; but so far as they had known one another, it had been on unfriendly terms. Cardew, the dandy and slacker and sportsman, had never had anything in common with Len Lee, the scholar and footballer.

He did not answer Cardew.

Cardew waited, but nothing came. The mocking look returned to Cardew's face. The silence was broken by a footstep in the passage, and the celebrated eyeglass of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gleamed into the study.

"Pomfwet, deah boy, are you comin' down?"

Cardew smiled cheerily at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Pomfret's havin' a little chat with me just now, D'Arcy. You're interruptin', old bean."

"Sowwy!" said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"Oh, don't mench! Shut the door after you."

"Wats! Come along to Study No. 6 when you've finished, Pomfwet," said Arthur Augustus, and he faded away.

Cardew shut the study door.

"You've made friends with the one and only Gussy already," he remarked. "Does he know your name?"

Len clenched his hands and unclenched them again. Cardew grinned as he noted the action.

"Remember the time you ragged me at Wodehouse?" he asked. "You'd like to handle me now, wouldn't you, Lee?"

"I shall handle you if you stay in my study," said Len, breaking his silence at last.

"Don't get waxy, old man. You used to be a good-tempered chap at Wodehouse," grinned Cardew. "Besides, you can surely see that I'm within my rights in askin' you what this swindle means?"

"This—this what?"

"Isn't it a sort of swindle to pass yourself off on the school in a false name?"

"It is not a false name."

"Can a fellow have two names, then? Your name was Lee when you were in the Wodehouse Fourth," said Cardew. "Is your name Pomfret now?"

"Yes."

"You've changed it?"

"Yes."

"Does the Head know?"

No answer.

"He doesn't," smiled Cardew. "I thought not. I've heard of fellows takin' some relative's name on inheritin' their property, and things of that sort. That isn't it, is it?"

"No."

"No," said Cardew. "Shall I give a guess at the state of affairs? You must have gone a bit over the limit at Wodehouse, somehow, and got yourself expelled. As that finished you for any decent school, your people have planted you on St. Jim's in another name. It sounds rather thick—but I suppose that's it."

"Find out."

"You won't tell me?"

"I will tell you nothing."

"Yet you weren't the sort of fellow to be sacked, either," said Cardew musingly. "That was really more in my line than yours."

"I was not sacked from my old school," said Len contemptuously. "If I'd followed your example I might have been, I dare say. But I never was a blackguard."

"And I was," smiled Cardew, "and should be still, no doubt, but for the moral uplift I get in Study No. 9. You weren't kicked out?"

"No."

"But you left?"

"You can see that for yourself, I suppose."

"I dare say I could learn why, by dropping a line to some fellow I know at Wodehouse."

"Very likely; but you needn't take the trouble. I left because my grandfather died, and I was left penniless," said Len quietly. "I had to clear at the end of the Christmas term, and I couldn't go back."

Cardew whistled.

"Then you were left right on the rocks?"

"Yes."

"You don't look now like a fellow who's on the rocks. You've come here as the nephew of a wealthy stockbroker—I hear that you came in a whacking car. How's that?"

"Find out."

"You don't mean to tell me?"

"No."

"And you expect me to keep my mouth shut, and let you go on deceiving the Head, and the Housemaster, and everybody in general?"

"I expect nothing from you, and I ask nothing," said Len scornfully. "I know you, Cardew—and I haven't forgotten what you were like at Wodehouse. Do as you choose."

"That is, go to the Housemaster, and tell him that the new fellow here, Pomfret, is a cheat?" grinned Cardew.

"You can tell him what you like," said Len. "But you won't call me names in my own study, I warn you."

"What do you call yourself, then?"

"That's my business." Len crossed to the door and threw it wide open. "Get out!"

Cardew's eyes gleamed.

"You're game," he said. "You always were game, I remember, Lee. You don't even ask me to keep my mouth shut?"

"I ask you nothing—except to get out of my study. After that you can do as you please."

"A game bird and no mistake," said Cardew admiringly. "I suppose you know you'll be booted out of the school as soon as it's known that you came here in a false name?"

Len pointed to the passage.

Cardew bit his lip. He measured Len with his eye, but abandoned at once the thought of a contest of strength. He crossed to the door and stepped into the passage.

"Look out for squalls, Master Pomfret-Lee," he said. "You ragged me at Wodehouse, you remember. Perhaps you don't; but I've got a good memory—quite a good memory. Even now you won't ask me civilly to hold my tongue?"

"No."

Cardew laughed.

"Then you must naturally expect the tongue to wag," he said. "Ta-ta, dear man—and pleasant thoughts of your forthcoming interview with the Head!"

And Cardew walked away with a smile on his face. Len closed the study door.

He threw himself into a chair, and stared with a moody brow at the dying fire.

It was all up now!

If Cardew told what he knew, the story would be the talk of St. Jim's—it would be the one topic discussed in the dormitories that night. In the morning he would be called to account. He would be called before the Head—and what view was the Head likely to take? Had Mr. Pomfret stated the facts in the first place, the headmaster would have been satisfied. Now he would feel that he had been deceived; and could he fail to suspect some subterfuge, some underhand motive, behind that deception? And again that black doubt rose in Len's own mind—was there, after all, some unknown scheming behind what Mr. Pomfret had done? Was he, unsuspecting, being used as a pawn in some shady game of which he had no knowledge?

He shivered.

"Hallo, Pomfret!"

Tompkins came cheerily into the study.

Len started from his dark reverie.

"Dorm!" said Tompkins. "Come on! It's bedtime."

And he led his new study-mate away—silent. In the Fourth Form dormitory the first face that Len saw was the mocking face of Ralph Reckness Cardew. Cardew smiled at him ironically; but the other fellows took no special heed of him, save for a friendly word or nod here and there.

Cardew had not spoken yet.

CHAPTER 4.
Peace in Study No. 4!

LEN took his place in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's the following day.

Since the talk with Cardew in his study he had not expected to take his place there. But still Cardew had not spoken. At breakfast Len had glanced at him, but Cardew had not met his glance—he had seemed unconscious of Len's existence. When the hour came for class, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy joined Len, and marched him into the Form-room. And Len went with the swell of St. Jim's.

Cardew was seated not far from him, and twice or thrice during the morning Len looked at him. Cardew maintained his attitude of unconsciousness.

When the Fourth were dismissed Cardew walked out into the quad with Levison and Clive, heedless of Len.

The new junior walked away by himself, his brow set, with wonder in his mind and deep resentment in his heart.

Was Cardew purposely keeping him on tenterhooks—playing with him after the fashion of cat and mouse?

It looked like it.

Was he to go on from hour to hour, perhaps from day to day, knowing that the blow might fall at any moment, and never knowing when it was to fall?

Was that Cardew's game—in revenge for a forgotten quarrel long ago at Wodehouse?

If that was the game, Len was not the fellow to stand it. He walked under the leafless elms in the quad, thinking the matter out. If betrayal was to come, it was better to speak out himself than to wait on Cardew's pleasure.

There he was checked by his pledge to Claude Pomfret; without his guardian's permission he could not speak. And he could not see Mr. Pomfret again, at the earliest, till Saturday. It was only the week-ends that Pomfret spent in his country home in Sussex; during the week he was in the City.

He could not go on till Saturday with the sword of Damocles suspended over his head in this way, expecting hourly a summons to the Head's study. Cardew had said that he would speak; and he must speak at once if that was his intention. Len's handsome face set grimly and blackly at the thought of it.

At dinner he again tried to catch Cardew's eye, and again failed. When the juniors came out of the dining-hall, Len hurried after Cardew and tapped him on the shoulder. Cardew looked round in surprise.

"Hands off, please!" he said curtly. "I don't like familiarity."

"I want a word with you."

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"That's more than I want with you. Leave me alone."

"I tell you——"

"Hallo, you two fellows rowing?" broke in Clive, coming up with Levison. "What the thump have you to row about?"

"Nothin'," said Cardew lightly. "This new kid insists upon talkin' to me, though I've asked him to keep his distance. Let's get out."

Levison and Clive looked rather curiously at Len's flushed face. Cardew walked away with them, leaving Len breathing hard. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came along the passage, and Tom called to the new junior.

"Come and help us punt a footer about, kid."

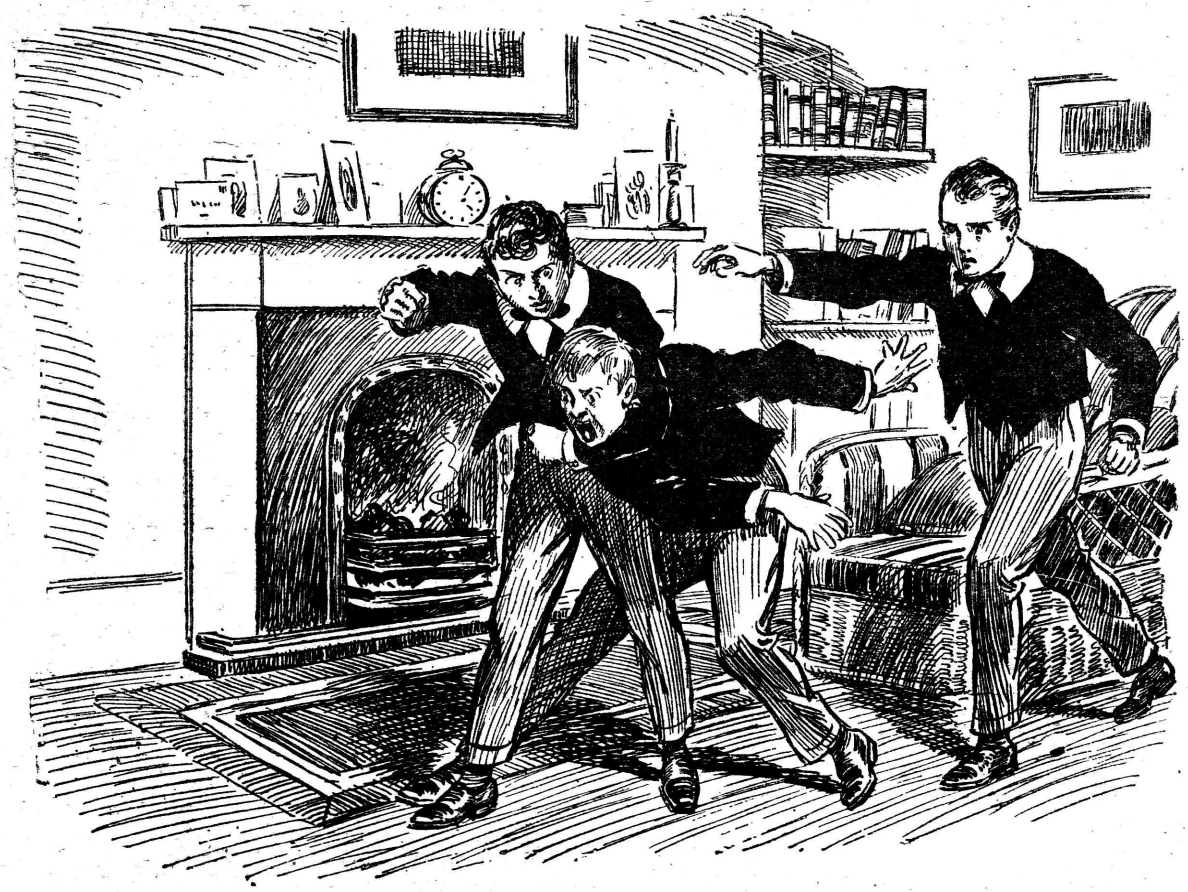
Len's shadowed face lightened.

"Yes, rather!" he said.

He went out of the School House with the Terrible Three, and was soon happy and cheery enough with a crowd of juniors. Len's face was bright when he came in to class again with the Fourth. In the Form-room Cardew's glance dwelt upon him for a moment mockingly, and the brightness faded out of Len's face. He did not pay very much attention to Mr. Lathom that afternoon. Black care was at his heart, with a growing bitterness and anger towards the fellow who was tormenting him.

Tompkins marched him off to tea in Study No. 4 after classes, and Mulvaney minor turned up to tea. Mick Mulvaney was looking something of a wreck; he blinked at Len with swollen eyes. Mulvaney was no longer cock of the walk in Study No. 4, though, as yet, he did not seem wholly to realise the fact.

Tompkins had laid in supplies for tea, he and his new study-mate standing equal "whacks." Mulvaney, as usual, had contributed nothing—and, as usual, he came in to tea



Mulvaney minor made a rush at Tompkins, and in a twinkling had that unfortunate youth's head in chancery. There was a loud roar from Clarence York, as Mulvaney began to punch. "Ow ! Wow ! Yow ! Help ! " "Stop that ! " shouted Len, grasping Mulvaney by the collar and dragging him back. "Arrah, get away wid ye ! " snapped Mulvaney, continuing to punch. (*See this page.*)

in the study. He had been accustomed to overbearing Tompkins and imposing on that sheepish youth, and he saw, as yet, no reason for changing his manners and customs; but in that matter he did not see eye to eye with Clarence York Tompkins. Under the wing of the new fellow, Tompkins was quite resolved to assert his rights.

"What do you want?" he asked, as Mulvaney came into the study.

"Eh? Tay, of course," answered Mulvaney.

"You'd better go down to Hall."

"I fancy not," said Mulvaney, pulling a chair to the table. "Hallo, you've got a good feed here! Lucky I'm hungry."

"Leave it alone!" said Tompkins.

"Lave it alone?" repeated Mulvaney, in surprise.

Tompkins faltered a little under the glare Mulvaney turned upon him. But the sight of Mulvaney's swollen eyes and crimson nose reassured him.

"Yes, leave it alone," he said. "You're not teaing in this study any more unless you stand your whack, Mulvaney."

"Phwat?"

"I mean it," said Tompkins.

"It's asking for a batting ye are," said Mulvaney. "Pass the ham this way, and shut up!"

"Shut up yourself!" retorted Tompkins.

"Phwat?" roared Mick.

"Shut up yourself! And I sha'n't pass you any ham! You're not going to touch any of this tuck—is he, Pomfret?"

"Not unless you choose, Tompkins," said Len, with a smile.

"Oh, so that's how it is, is it?" said Mulvaney, realising how matters stood. "But you remimber, Tompkins, though I can't lick the new chap, I can lick you with one hand and my eyes shut. And if you give me any more back-chat, I'll do it now—see?"

"You won't!" said Tompkins.

"And why won't I, intirely?"

"Pomfret won't let you."

Mulvaney glared at Len.

"Are you chumming with that booby Tompkins?" he demanded.

"I don't know about that," said Len. "But I'm seeing fair play in the study. You're going to let Tompkins' things alone."

"I'll punch his cheeky head!" roared Mulvaney.

"Do! And I'll punch yours!" said Len, laughing.

"Faith, and we'll see!"

Mulvaney made a rush at Tompkins, and in twinkling had that unfortunate youth's head in "chancery." There was a loud roar from Clarence York as Mulvaney began to punch.

"Ow! Wow! Yow! Help!"

"Stop that!" shouted Len, jumping up.

"Arrah, get away wid ye!" snapped Mulvaney, and he continued to punch.

Len grasped him by the collar and dragged him back. Mulvaney had to let Tompkins go then. Tompkins dropped into a chair, gasping for breath. Mulvaney turned on Len like a tiger, and in a second they were fighting fiercely.

For a couple of minutes there was panting and trampling in the study. Then a staggering form went through the doorway, to collapse in the passage outside.

Len closed the door on Mulvaney minor.

"Now we'll have tea," he remarked, and he sat down again.

"Good!" grinned Tompkins.

The door opened. Mulvaney minor looked in, flushed and crimson, but with a grin on his face.

"Sure, you're one too many for me, Pomfret," he said. "It's a broth of a boy ye are, and I admire you immensely. Won't you ask me to tea, and me stony-broke, intirely?"

Len laughed.

"I don't mind, if Tompkins doesn't," he said.

"Sure, Tompkins is a broth of a boy, too, and I'll never kick him again. When I feel like kicking somebody, I'll go and kick Trimble," said Mulvaney. "Is it a go, Tompkins dear?"

Tompkins waved a lofty hand.

"You can stay to tea, Mulvaney minor!" he said. "Now you're civil."

"Thanks."

And Mick Mulvaney sat down to tea, quite cheerily. He understood now with great clearness that he was not cock of the walk in Study No. 4, and that his domination of that study—and of Tompkins—was a thing of the past. But apparently he found solace in a solid spread. After he had finished, and strolled away, Tompkins looked at Len with a cheery grin.

"I'm jolly glad you came to St. Jim's, Pomfret! We'll get some peace in the study now."

Len nodded with a smile—but he was wondering inwardly how long Tompkins' satisfaction was destined to last. That depended on Ralph Reckness Cardew.

CHAPTER 5.
Trouble In No. 9!

"PREP!" said Levison of the Fourth.

Cardew yawned deeply.

"I'd like to meet the schoolmaster who invented evening prep," he remarked. "I could boil him in oil, with pleasure."

"Ass!" said Clive. "Get the Latin dick and help."

"I'll watch you fellows for a bit," said Cardew, yawning again. "Besides, you can give me some tips when you've finished, and I shall be able to scrape through with Lathom in the mornin'."

"What's the good of slacking?" grunted Clive.

"Lots! Besides, I've got a problem to think out."

"What rot!"

"Honest Injun! I don't quite know what to do about the ghost I saw in Study No. 4 yesterday evenin'."

Clive gave an impatient grunt, and settled down to work. Ernest Levison fixed his eyes on Cardew.

"What's up between you and the new fellow Pomfret?" he asked.

"Is anythin' up?"

"Yes; I think anybody can see that. He looks to me a pleasant fellow enough, and I don't see what you want to quarrel with him for."

"The quarrel's of rather old standin', you see."

"You never saw him before he came to St. Jim's."

"Didn't I?" yawned Cardew.

"How could you, when he was at school in Switzerland?" exclaimed Levison impatiently.

"By gad, was he?"

"Yes, he was. He's only recently come back to England—at least, that's what I've heard."

"One hears such a lot of things, mostly untrue," smiled Cardew. "Still, I've had a vac in Switerland, you know, and I might have met him there."

"Well, did you?"

"No, I didn't, as a matter of fact," Cardew laughed. "But I've seen him before, all the same."

"I don't see how you could have."

"Lots of things you don't see, Ernest, old bean, keen as you are. Get on with your prep while I think out my giddy problem."

"Is Pomfret the problem?" asked Levison, more and more perplexed.

"Exactly."

"I suppose you're talking out of your hat. You can't know anything about the fellow. Hallo, here he is."

Len knocked at the door of Study No. 9, and stepped in. There was a set, grim expression on his face. All three of the juniors looked at him, Cardew with a mocking light in his eyes.

"We're doing prep, Pomfret," remarked Levison, as a slight hint that visitors were not wanted in the study just then.

"I know! I've come to speak to Cardew."

"Won't it keep?" asked Cardew.

"No; I'd rather see you alone, but you've been keeping out of my way," said Len quietly.

"You bore me, you know."

"I want to know what you intend to do," said Len, still quiet, but with a dangerous gleam in his eyes.

Levison and Clive, forgetful of prep, looked on in astonishment. It was clear enough now that there was something between Cardew and the new fellow—supposed to be a stranger to him. How they could be anything but strangers was a mystery to Levison and Clive.

But their looks, as their eyes met, showed that they were certainly not strangers to one another.

Cardew leaned back in the armchair, crossing one elegant leg over the other, and regarded the new junior mockingly.

"What I'm goin' to do?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"I'm goin' to do my prep——"

"I don't mean that——"

"I do—that is, if I can find energy enough. If not, I'm goin' to chance it with Lathom in the mornin'."

Len breathed hard.

"About me?" he said.

"Nothin' about you."

"Do you think I shall stand this?"

"Dear man, I don't think about you at all!" said Cardew airily. "You're not worth the trouble."

"Are you going to speak?" asked Len, in a suppressed voice.

"I'm speakin' now."

"You know what I mean."

"Possibly! Why not explain what you mean, for the benefit of those fellows, who are simply gapin' their heads off with curiosity."

"Rubbish!" grunted Clive. "I don't know what you two fellows are talking about, but I'm not interested, for one."

Levison did not speak.

"I have my reasons," said Len. "I'm not bound to tell them to you, Cardew. But you can have no reason for keeping me in suspense like this. It's taking a cowardly advantage."

"You think so?" smiled Cardew.

"I've said so."

"So glad to hear your opinion," said Cardew affably. "Shut the door after you, will you? There's a bit of a draught from the passage."

Len clenched his hands.

"So you want to keep up this game, and keep me in a state of uncertainty, not knowing what to expect from one minute to another?" he exclaimed.

"Whose fault is that? I never asked you to come to St. Jim's, did I? If you don't like the position, you've got the remedy in your own hands," said Cardew coolly. "I suppose you know your way to the Head's study. If not, one of these fellows will show you. Ask Clive—he's an awfully obliging chap."

"I don't choose to go to the Head."

"Precisely my position," rejoined Cardew. "I don't choose, either—not yet, at all events."

"And so this is to go on?"

"Looks like it!" said Cardew, with a nod.

"How long?"

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"You knew me long ago," said Len Lee quietly. "Do you remember me as the kind of fellow to be played with like this?"

"I hardly remember you at all, dear man. I don't burden my memory with trifles."

"That's false," said Len coolly, "and whether you remember it or not, I'm not the sort of fellow to be played with. I want to know what your intentions are, and at once."

"Dear man, I'm afraid I must send you empty away. Believe me, I don't even know my own intentions. I seldom do. Shut the door after you—as I've already requested."

"That's all you've got to say?"

"That's the lot, I think. I believe I've already mentioned that you bore me."

Len stood for a moment or two quite still, Cardew watching him mockingly. Then he came over towards the armchair in which the dandy of the Fourth reclined.

"Get up!" he said.

"I'm quite comfy here, thanks."

"Get up, unless you want me to pitch you out of the chair!" said Len, between his teeth.

"And why am I to get up?" yawned Cardew.

"You're going to put up your hands."

Cardew burst into a laugh.

"Is that your way of tryin' to make me hold my tongue!" he exclaimed.

"No; it's my way of making you stop playing with me like a cat with a mouse," said Len. "Are you getting up, Cardew?"

"Oh, no!"

Len made no rejoinder, but he grasped the back of the armchair, and with a swing of his powerful hands tilted it over. There was a crash, and a yell from Cardew, as the dandy of the Fourth rolled out on the hearth-rug.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Levison. Clive stared on blankly.

Cardew sprang to his feet; his cool nonchalance gone now, and his eyes gleaming with rage.

"You cheeky cad! I'll——"

"Come on, then."

Cardew came on with a rush. Levison sprang to his feet.

"Look here, stop that——"

Neither of the angry juniors heeded. Cardew of the Fourth and Len Lee were fighting furiously.

CHAPTER 6.
The Fight!

"A FIGHT!" yelled Baggy Trimble, along the Fourth Form passage.

"Scrapping in Study No. 9!" called out Blake.

"It's that new chap!"

"Pomfret!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "That chap seems a whale on scwappin'. He was fightin' Mulvaney minah last evenin'. Who's the happay man now?"

"Cardew!" chuckled Trimble.

"Bai Jove!"

There was a crowding of juniors along to Study No. 9. The study door stood wide open, and loud trampling and panting, and the scuffling of feet could be heard. It brought fellows along from the Fourth and the Shell—among the latter, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther. In Study No. 9, Levison and Clive had dragged table and chairs out of the way, after a vain attempt to separate the combatants. Prep was left over for the time—there was no help for that. Cardew was thoroughly angry, and Len was in a grim, determined mood.

"They're goin' it, bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus, turning his celebrated eyeglass on the exciting scene. "Cardew is a wathah toughah nut than Mulvaney, but I wathah think my fwiend Pomfwet will pull it off."

"What on earth's the row about?" asked Talbot of the Shell.

"Goodness knows, deah boy! What's the wow about, Levison?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Levison of the Fourth, shrugging his shoulders. "Pomfret came here looking for trouble, that's all I know."

"And he's found it!" chortled Baggy Trimble.

"That new chap seems a bit inclined to hunt for trouble, I must say," remarked Blake.

"Pwobably Cardew is to blame, Blake! Cardew genewally is to blame, you know."

Crash!

Cardew was down on the study carpet. His nose was streaming crimson. Len stood panting.

"Look here!" exclaimed Levison, coming between them. "If this is going on, you'd better have the gloves on!"

"I don't mind," said Len.

Cardew staggered to his feet.

"Hang the gloves! Let me get at the cad!"

"Look here, Cardew——" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Oh, shut up! No bizney of yours!"

"Cardew——" urged Levison.

"Stand aside!" roared Cardew.

And as Levison hesitated, Cardew shoved him roughly to one side and rushed at Len again.

Len met him half-way, with gleaming eyes and ready fists. It was hammer and tongs again in a moment.

Tom Merry knitted his brows as he looked on, and Manners and Lowther exchanged glances. The Terrible Three could guess the cause of the trouble, though the other fellows could not; they knew that Cardew must have recognised Pomfret of the Fourth as Len Lee, once of his old school, Wodehouse. That was doubtless the cause of the trouble; though why it should lead to a fight they did not know. Cardew, obviously, had not given Lee away, or the matter would have been the talk of the school.

Crash!

Len went staggering against the study table, under the impact of a heavy drive that caught him on the chin.

Papers and an inkpot shot off the table, as it lurched. Len staggered helplessly for the moment, and Cardew, at that moment when his guard was lost, could have knocked him out; but instead of following up his attack with right and left, he dropped his hands and stepped back.

Len recovered his balance in a moment more.

"Come on, old scout!" said Cardew.

Len paused a moment. Cardew had spared him, when an accident placed all the advantage in his hands. That was not what Len had expected of Cardew.

He hesitated for the moment to continue, for he knew that he was, as a matter of fact, the better man of the two—Cardew's superior both in strength and in boxing science. Barring accidents, his victory was only a question of minutes.

But as he hesitated, Cardew came on again, and Len's hands went up in defence.

The fight went on fiercely from that moment.

"Good men both!" remarked Kangaroo of the Shell. "But I fancy the new kid is coming out ahead!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Two to one on Pomfret!" chortled Tompkins of the Fourth. "I say, he's no end of a slogger, isn't he?"

"A bit too much of a slogger, I think," said Talbot dryly. "A scrap every day is a rather large allowance."

"Wats, deah boy! I'm suah Cardew asked for it," said Arthur Augustus. "Isn't Cardew always askin' for twouble?"

"He's got it, if he asked for it!" grinned Grundy of the Shell. "There he goes!"

Cardew went heavily to the floor. He made an attempt to rise, but sank back again. At the same moment there was a shout from a junior along the passage.

"Cave! Form-master!"

"Phew! It's Lathom!"

"Look out, you chaps!"

Little Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, came whisking along the passage. His brows were knitted over his spectacles. Some of the juniors scuttled off, others stood back to allow the Form master room to pass. Mr. Lathom stared into Study No. 9. Ralph Reckness Cardew was still on his back, and Len stood panting.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, really shocked by the scene.

Scrapping with the gloves on was not at all uncommon in the Lower Forms at St. Jim's; but a fight with the bare knuckles was severely frowned upon—and both the combatants in Study No. 9 looked very much the worse for wear.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Lathom sternly. He fixed his eyes on Len.

"We—we've been fighting, sir!" stammered Len.

"I can see that, Pomfret! Both of you look as if you had been engaged in a prize-fight!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom sternly. "Cardew, get on your feet at once!"

Levison helped Cardew to rise. The dandy of the Fourth stood unsteadily, leaning heavily on Levison.

"Now, I must inquire into this," said Mr. Lathom. "Both of you will be punished; but one, I presume, is more to blame than the other. Did you come to Cardew's study with the intention of quarrelling with him, Pomfret?"

"Yes, sir!" answered Len quietly.

"Bless my soul! And for what reason, Pomfret, did you, a new boy in the school, deliberately seek a quarrel with Cardew?"

Len did not answer.

"Do you hear me, Pomfret?" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, raising his voice a little.

"Yes, sir."

"Then answer me at once!"

"Cardew can tell you better than I, sir," said Len.

"Indeed! Then you may tell me, Cardew," said Mr. Lathom, with a severe blink at the battered face of the dandy of the Fourth.

Cardew drew a deep, quivering breath.

He had been licked, and he was hurt. He well knew that, had not Mr. Lathom's arrival put a stop to the fight, he could not have gone on. He was licked to the wide—by the fellow he had disliked at his old school, and whom he still disliked. And that fellow's fate was in his hands.

Len waited quietly.

He expected Cardew to speak out now—to tell Mr. Lathom that he, Len Lee, was an impostor, passing at St. Jim's under a false name. There was no reason why Cardew should keep his secret—and there was ample reason why he should betray him.

Cardew understood the quiet, tense look on the new junior's face. He knew what Len was expecting.

"Certainly, sir!" said Cardew. "Pomfret came to this study to row with me, because——" He paused.

"Well?" snapped Mr. Lathom.

"Because I provoked him, sir."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I've been rather chippin' him, sir," said Cardew coolly. "I found it rather amusin' to pull his leg, sir!"

"Bless my soul! Cardew!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "Really——"

"You asked me, sir!" said Cardew.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom, while Len stared blankly at Cardew. "You are certainly very frank, Cardew. It is very thoughtless of you to chip, as you call it, a new boy in the school, a stranger among us. You are very much to blame."

"Yes, sir," said Cardew meekly.

"That does not, however, excuse Pomfret," said Mr. Lathom severely. "You appear equally to blame. You will each take an imposition of five hundred lines of Virgil. And I require you both to promise that this quarrel shall go no farther."

"Certainly, sir!"

Len hesitated.

"You hear me, Pomfret?"

"Yes, sir," said Len. "I—I promise."

"Very good. I shall expect your lines on Saturday."

And with a frowning brow, Mr. Lathom rustled away.

Len gave Cardew a searching look, which was met by a mocking smile from the dandy of the Fourth. Then he quietly left the study—wondering. He could not understand Cardew or his motives; but in that respect he was in the same position as most fellows at St. Jim's. Ralph Reckness Cardew was not an easy fellow to understand.

CHAPTER 7.
Cardew, Too!

"I'LL help you, if you like, Pomfret!"

Len shook his head with a smile as Tompkins spoke.

It was Saturday afternoon; Len's first half-holiday since he had been at St. Jim's. On that afternoon he had arranged to take Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther with him to Pomfret Lodge, to call on his guardian. But before he could leave the school he had to finish his imposition for Mr. Lathom; and he was grinding away at the last hundred lines in Study No. 4.

"I could make my fist like enough to yours, for old Lathom," said Tompkins generously. "I'll finish the lot for you, if you want to get out. I've done lots of lines for Mulvaney, and Lathom never noticed. Mulvaney used to kick me if I wouldn't."

Len laughed.

"I mean it, you know," said Clarence York.

"It's all right, old chap," said Len. "I shall be finished soon. Better leave me to it."

"Well, I've offered!" said Tompkins, and he left the study.

Len went on with his lines. He was getting to the end of his heavy task. The Terrible Three were waiting for him downstairs, and Len was putting on all the speed he could.

"Busy?"

It was the voice of Ralph Reckness Cardew in the doorway. Cardew was not looking quite his usual self. His handsome face was considerably marred by the damage he had received in the fight in Study No. 9.

Len looked up with a frown.

"Yes," he said briefly.

"Old Lathom's impot?"

"Yes. I'm nearly done."

"Industrious youth!" grinned Cardew. "I haven't touched mine yet. And they've got to be handed in to-day! What a life!"

"Then the sooner you get on with them the better," said Len. "And I want to get finished."

"Which means that I'd better clear?"

"Yes."

"I'll wait! Get on with it."

Len frowned again, but he resumed his lines, while Cardew strolled into the study and stood leaning against the mantelpiece, watching him. With a sigh, at last Len threw down the pen and rose from the table.

"Finished?"

"Yes."

Len began to gather up the sheets.

"In a hurry?" asked Cardew.

"Yes."

"Not even a minute to spare?"

Len made an impatient movement.

"What do you want?" he demanded. "Have you come here to torment me? You're safe to do it, after my promise to Mr. Lathom."

"Not at all," said Cardew, his face flushing a little. "I haven't said a word about you so far, Lee."

"I know that. You're keeping it over my head; you like to have a fellow under your thumb," said Len bitterly. "Well, keep it up, if you choose; it won't last over to-day."

"Eh? How's that?"

"Because I'm seeing my guardian to-day, and I'm going to get his permission to speak out to the Head," answered Len. "If you want to betray me, it's your last chance this afternoon. Make the most of it!"

The bitter scorn in his voice caused the colour to deepen in Cardew's face. He was silent for a moment or two, while Len went on gathering up the scattered sheets of his imposition.

"It doesn't occur to you that you're doin' me an injustice?" asked Cardew, at last. "I assure you I wasn't playin' at cat-and-mouse—not exactly. The fact is, I haven't made up my mind. I knew you were a straight fellow at Wodehouse, though I never liked you, and I can't believe that you're in a swindle—of your own accord. If there's a swindle on, it's not your doin'—you're a catspaw. I've been thinkin' it out, and that's the conclusion I've come to."

Len bit his lip. Cardew's words chimed in with the lurking suspicion at the back of his own mind, the suspicion he sternly repressed, but which would not wholly leave him. Was he a catspaw? Was he a pawn in some secret, shady scheme of Claude Pomfret's?

"That hits you, does it?" said Cardew, watching his face keenly. "You've got the same idea in your own mind."

"No," said Len resolutely. "I own up that I don't quite understand why Mr. Pomfret has done so much for me. But I can never believe that his motives were anything but good. I've said that I ask nothing at your hands, Cardew. I can't go to the Head myself, but you are free to go and tell him all you know. I've tried to make you——"

Cardew rubbed his nose ruefully.

"I wish you'd tried some other method," he said. "I suppose most fellows would have blurted out the facts to Mr. Lathom that time. But I've got my reasons. I know you're straight personally—from what I knew of you at Wodehouse. But there's a swindle somewhere."

"There isn't!" snapped Len angrily.

"You mean you're determined not to see it," grinned Cardew.

"I don't mean anything of the kind!" Len spoke energetically, but perhaps rather to convince himself than to convince Cardew. "If I could tell you the whole story you'd understand, perhaps."

"Then why not tell it?"

"I'm bound not to. But——" Len paused a moment. "There are three other fellows here who know my true name. I'm taking them with me to-day to see my guardian, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther."

Cardew whistled.

"I never knew that. How the deuce——"

"Never mind how—they know, and they've treated me very differently from your style," said Len bitterly. "But—if you mean what you said just now—if you like, you can come with us and see Mr. Pomfret at the same time. If he satisfies them, I suppose he can satisfy you, and then you can use your own judgment about going to the Head or holding your tongue."

"Done!" said Cardew at once.

"Very well. We're going on our bikes, when I've taken in these lines to Mr. Lathom."

"I'll get my machine out."

"Right-ho!" Len hesitated. "Look here, Cardew, I'm not asking any favours at your hands, and you know it!"

"I know it!" assented Cardew.

"All the same, I think now that I have misjudged you a little," said Len frankly, "and if that's so, I'm sorry for it. I thought you were holding the secret over my head simply to torment me, but if you were only waiting for time to think it out——"

"A little of both, perhaps!" said Cardew coolly.

"Oh!" said Len, taken aback.

Cardew laughed.

"I'll get my machine out," he said. "Anyhow, I can tell you this: I'm not keen on playing the part of an informer, and I believe that you personally are as straight as a die. If your guardian, as you call him, seems to me to be the same, you've nothing to fear from me. It doesn't matter twopence to me whether you call yourself Smith or Jones or Robinson, so long as there isn't a swindle in it. If there is, you'll be glad to get clear of it, I fancy."

"Certainly, but there isn't."

"Leave it at that, then," said Cardew.

And he left the study.

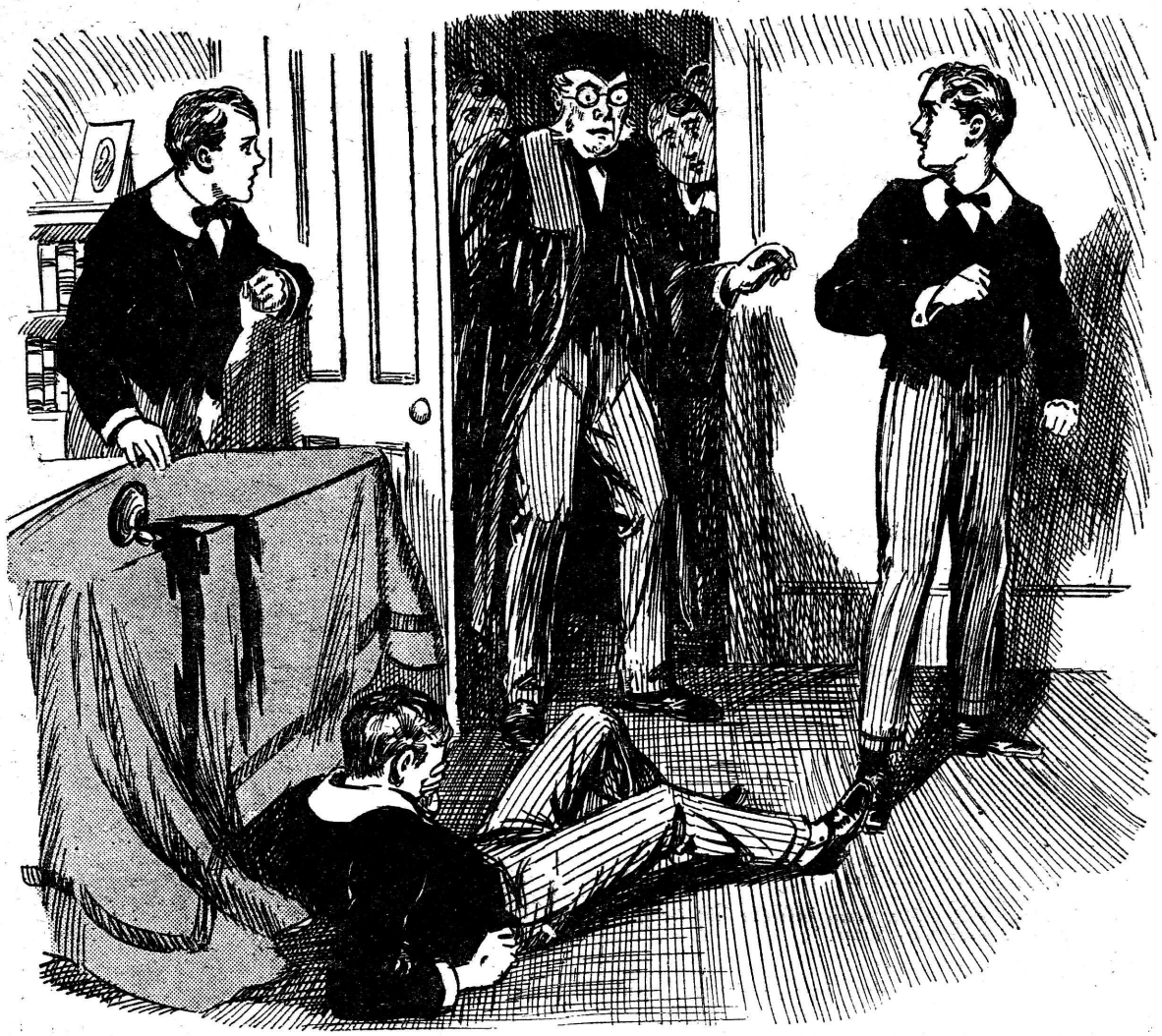
Ten minutes later five juniors were cycling together from St. Jim's, on the road to Pomfret Lodge.

CHAPTER 8.
A Shock for Mr. Pomfret!

TOM MERRY & CO. pedalled along cheerily in the clear, cold afternoon. The Terrible Three had been rather surprised when Cardew joined the party; but they had, of course, guessed the reason at once. Four St. Jim's fellows knew that Pomfret's real name was Lee, and wanted to be satisfied that all was above-board before they could agree to keep silence on the subject. But there was a difference in their ways of looking at the matter. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were fairly well convinced that Lee was "straight," and by this time they had come to look on the interview with Mr. Pomfret as very much a matter of form. Cardew, who knew Len Lee better than they did, was also convinced that he was "straight"; but he was convinced, too, that there was something deeper in the affair than Len himself could guess. He was, for one thing, more distrustful by nature, and more apt, perhaps, to look for a bad motive than for a good one. But, in any case, the affair was suspicious—it was difficult to believe that a false name was used for a good motive.

But what motive Mr. Claude Pomfret could have for sending Lee to St. Jim's in a false name Cardew was puzzled to guess. He felt that the matter would become clearer when he had seen and spoken to Mr. Pomfret, and "sized up" the kind of man he was.

Pomfret Lodge was a good many miles from St. Jim's,



Thud ! Pomfret's right flashed out and caught Cardew on the point of the jaw, sending him toppling backwards to the floor with a crash. At the same moment there was a shout from along the passage. "Cave ! Form master ! Look out, you chaps !" Mr. Lathom came whisking along the passage and stared into the study. "Bless my soul !" he exclaimed. "What does this mean ?" *(See page 9.)*

but the cyclists covered the ground quickly. It was still early in the afternoon when they arrived.

"I suppose Mr. Pomfret's expecting us?" remarked Tom Merry, as the juniors dismounted at the wide wooden gate that gave admission to the drive up to the house.

Len opened the gate.

"Yes," he answered. "I telephoned this morning that I was coming over with some fellows. We needn't stay long, of course. This way!"

The juniors left their bicycles at a little lodge by the gates, and walked up to the house. It was an old-fashioned country house of moderate size, with a newly-built garage attached. Two or three men were lounging by the garage, where a chauffeur was cleaning down a big car, and they looked across at the juniors carelessly. From their appearance they were of the sporting type of City men, probably friends of Mr. Pomfret's who had come down for the week-end.

"Mr. Pomfret is in?" asked Len, of the servant who admitted the juniors.

"Yes, Master Leonard; he's in the library."

Len turned to his companions.

"Will you fellows wait a few minutes while I speak to my guardian?"

"Go ahead!" said Tom.

And the Terrible Three and Cardew gathered round the big log fire that blazed in the hall, while Len went on to the library. There he found Mr. Claude Pomfret.

The hard-faced City man was alone, smoking a cigar by the fire. He half-rose, with an irritated look, as Len came in.

"I've been waiting for you!" he snapped.

"I came as quickly as I could, sir," said Len.

"I've told you to call me uncle!" said Mr. Pomfret.

"Very well—uncle!"

"Shut the door! Now, what does this mean?" asked Mr. Pomfret, with his sharp eyes fixed on the junior. "You're my nephew—my favourite nephew—and I am your indulgent uncle. That's understood. I shall see that you are looked after in the holidays, here or elsewhere. But I cannot have you running over to the house every half-holiday simply because it's within cycling distance of the school."

"I don't want——"

"I've got some friends down here for the week-end—and not the kind of friends for a schoolboy," said Mr. Pomfret irritably. "What have you come for?"

"I told you on the telephone this morning that I had something to tell you—something important."

"I know that—that's why I've let you come!" snapped Mr. Pomfret. "Now, what is this important matter? Have you run out of pocket-money?"

"No."

"Don't you like your new school?"

"I like it very much."

"Then what——" Mr. Pomfret broke off. "You haven't been fool enough to chatter about things I told you were not to be spoken of?" His brow became dark and threatening as he asked the question.

"I am not a chatterer," said Len quietly. "I told you I should say nothing, and I am a fellow of my word."

"Then what's the matter?"

"You know I was at Wodehouse——"

"Well?"

"Another fellow who used to be at Wodehouse is at St. Jim's."

Mr. Pomfret started violently. He made a quick stride towards the junior.

"He knows you?"

"Yes."

"Good heavens!"

The hard-faced man staggered back a pace or two and dropped into his chair. His face was white.

Len started forward in alarm.

"Mr. Pomfret—you are ill——"

The stockbroker waved him back.

Len stood silent and irresolute, wondering and alarmed. The shock his news had given Mr. Pomfret was evidently a sharp one. The colour had left the stockbroker's face, and he breathed hard and pantingly as he sat.

"Good heavens!" repeated Claude Pomfret at last. "What luck—what rotten luck! A thing that could not possibly be foreseen!"

"What does it matter?" asked Len timidly.

"Matter? You young fool!"

Claude Pomfret rose and went to a sideboard. He stood with his back to the junior, but Len heard the clink of bottle and glass. When Mr. Pomfret came back to him he looked more like his former self. He motioned Len to sit down.

"Now, tell me about this," he said. "You did right to let me know as soon as possible. What is this boy's name?"

"Cardew."

"Who is he?"

"He is in the Fourth Form—my Form. He is a grandson of a peer—Lord Reckness."

"And he knew you at Wodehouse?"

"He was in the same Form with me there."

"Were you friends?"

"No."

"Has he spoken out?"

"Not yet."

"Good! He must be kept silent."

"I haven't told you all yet," said Len. "There are three other fellows who know that my name is Lee. They met me when I was an outcast, on the tramp, and I told them my story—before I met you that night on the Wayland road. It turns out that they are St. Jim's fellows."

The stockbroker muttered a curse between his teeth.

"Then there are four who know?"

"Yes."

"What have you told them?"

"Nothing! I have brought them here to see you," said Len. "I want you to explain to them how it was that you came to adopt me as your nephew and to give me Leonard Pomfret's name. Unless they are satisfied that all is above-board I cannot expect them to keep silent."

The stockbroker looked at him sharply.

"You think they will keep silent if they are satisfied?"

"Yes, I think so. I am sure of three of them, at least. But—but——" He hesitated.

"But what?" asked Mr. Pomfret sharply.

"Ought not the headmaster of St. Jim's to be told of the facts?" asked Len, in a pleading voice. "I—I know there's no harm in this, sir, but—I feel like a cheat. The Head has a right to know. Why should he not be told? It was kind, generous of you to adopt a homeless orphan—why should a mystery be made of it?"

"Fool!"

"If it comes out it will look as if something is behind it—something underhand," said Len, in deep distress. "Why should it be kept secret if there is nothing to hide—nothing wrong?"

"That is enough! I have my reasons—good reasons," said Pomfret. "This is a stroke of rotten luck, that is all. You had to go to St. Jim's—it was in Captain Pomfret's will; there are those who would make trouble if I neglected to carry out the conditions of the will. But, after all, you need not remain there."

"Need not remain?" repeated Len.

"If you do not like the school—if your health should suffer—any reason, in fact." Mr. Pomfret was pursuing his own thoughts, hardly heeding the boy before him. "Sussex may not agree with you—it is easy enough to get a medical man to say so, at least—and you can be sent to another school at the end of the term. I think that can be arranged—with care. But you must stay at St. Jim's at least a term—something must be done for appearances. If these boys can be induced to hold their tongues for a few weeks——"

"Mr. Pomfret! You—you make me doubt——"

"What—what?"

Len's lip quivered.

"It would be ungrateful to doubt you, sir, but—but—what is there behind all this? There must be something."

"Do you want to go back to rags and beggary?" said the stockbroker, in a menacing tone. "It is as easy for me to throw you over as it was to take you up, Len Lee."

Len crimsoned.

"If there is anything underhand in this, I want you to throw me over!" he exclaimed vehemently. "I'm not afraid of that! I'd rather face hunger than—than——"

"Than what?"

"Than be a party to any scheme that was not honourable," said Len fearlessly. "I'm ready to leave St. Jim's to-day, and go back to my rags, if it comes to that."

The stockbroker seemed on the verge of an angry outbreak; but he checked himself. He took a turn up and down the room before he spoke again. Then he came back to the troubled schoolboy.

"Len," he said at last, in a subdued voice, "you must trust me. I have reasons—good reasons—which you would not understand. Haven't I been a good friend to you?"

"A kind and generous friend," said Len.

"Well, then, trust me—let me continue to be your friend," said Claude Pomfret. "It's not asking much, I think. You are Leonard Pomfret now—and you never were anything else. For the remainder of this term, at least, you must remain at St. Jim's—that cannot be avoided. Let me see those boys; I shall satisfy them."

"But the Head——"

"Never mind the Head. If I consider it good to explain to him, I shall do so in my own good time. These boys must hold their tongues. Bring them in now."

Len, in silence, went back to the hall to fetch Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 9.
Tom Merry is Satisfied!

"Bai Jove! You fellows are late."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that observation as Tom Merry & Co. came into the School House at St. Jim's. The winter dusk was thickening over the old quadrangle, and lights glimmered in the windows.

"Just in time for call-over," said Tom Merry.

"I've been lookin' for you, Pomfwet," remarked Arthur Augustus. "I wanted you to come to tea in Study No. 6."

"Sorry, old scout! I've had tea at my guardian's house," answered Len cheerily.

"And a rippin' tea," said Cardew. "If you ever want a first-class entertainment, Gussy, get Pomfret to take you to see his guardian. He knows how to make a fellow welcome. Didn't you fellows think so?" added Cardew, looking at the Terrible Three.

"Mr. Pomfret was very hospitable," said Tom. "Come on, you chaps, or we shall be late for Hall!"

The chums of the Shell joined the stream of fellows making for Big Hall for calling-over. Cardew joined Levison and Clive, and Arthur Augustus trotted along with Len. He turned his eyeglass rather curiously on the new junior.

"You've been home this aftahnoon, deah boy?"

"Yes," said Len.

"Takin' Cardew with you?"

"That's so."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus said no more, but he could not help thinking it curious. After the almost savage fight between Cardew and Len in Study No. 9, it was rather unexpected for Len to take the dandy of the Fourth home with him on a half-holiday. Len coloured a little, and was glad to lose himself in the throng of fellows going into Hall. Levison and Clive were both rather curious on the same subject; and when they came out of Hall they questioned Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"I hear you've been home with Pomfret?" said Levison.

"He was kind enough to ask me," assented Cardew.

"You were fighting him the day before yesterday," growled Clive.

"I've still got a reminder of it on my nose, dear man."

"And now you've made friends?"

"Not at all. Oil and water don't mix, you know," drawled Cardew. "I've been with him to see his giddy guardian. Now I've seen him, I think the same as I did before, only more so."

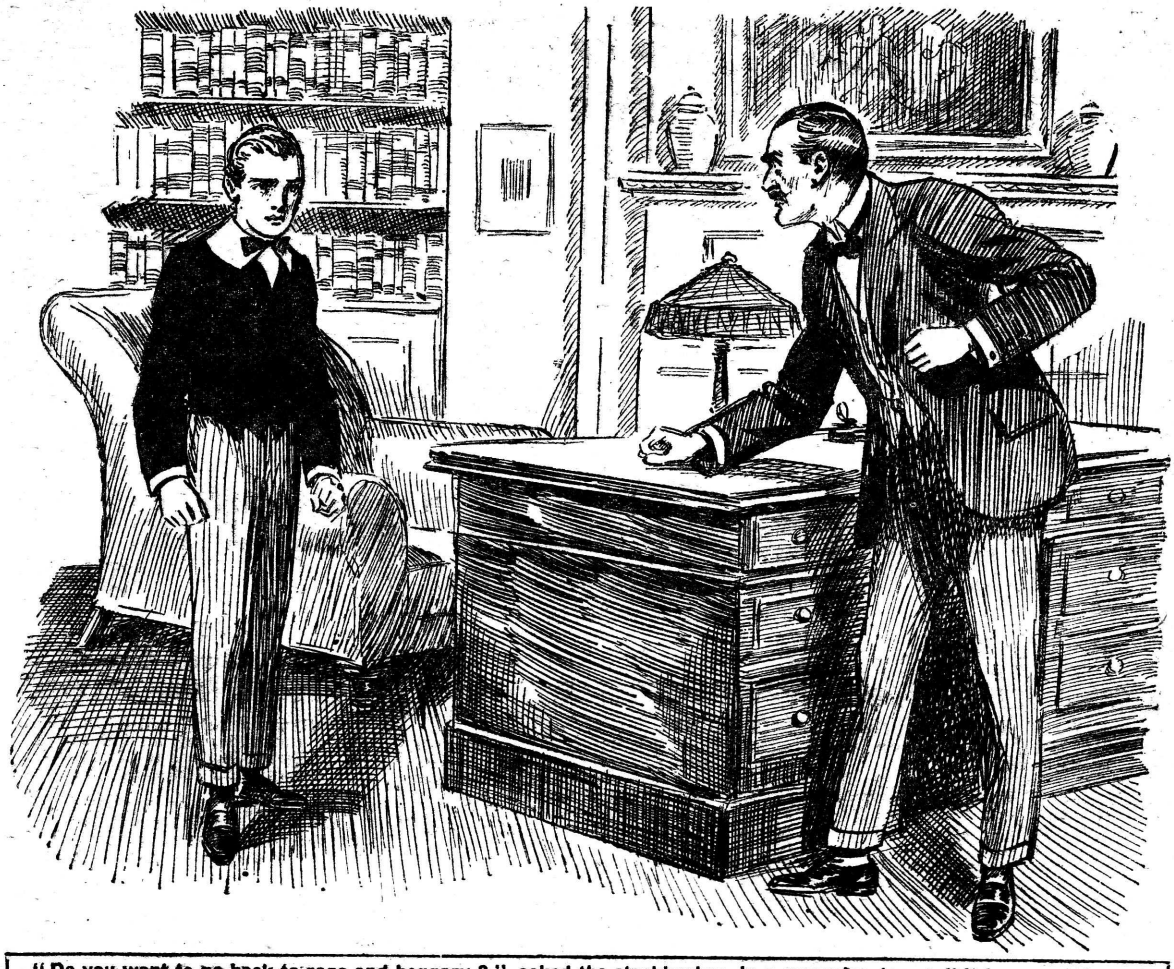
"I haven't the least idea of what you're talking about," said Levison.

"If you had, dear boy, I shouldn't be talkin'," said Cardew cheerfully.

"What are you trying to mystify us for?" asked Clive rather gruffly.

"Only my little way. It's rather amusin' to pull your leg."

"Oh, rats!" grunted Clive.



"Do you want to go back to rags and beggary?" asked the stockbroker, in a menacing tone. "It is as easy for me to throw you over as it was to take you up, Len Lee." Len crimsoned. "If there is anything underhand in this, I want you to throw me over. I'd rather face hunger than be a party to any scheme that was not honourable! I'm ready to leave St. Jim's to-day and go back to my rags!" (*See page* 12.)

Cardew laughed, and went up the staircase. He headed for the Shell passage, and stopped at Study No. 10. He found Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther there.

The Terrible Three seemed in good spirits after their ride and the visit to Pomfret Lodge. Cardew scanned their faces curiously, and took a seat on the corner of the study table.

"What do you fellows think of Mr. Pomfret?" asked the dandy of the Fourth.

"A good sort, I should think," said Tom cheerily. "I must say he looks rather a hard case. But the way he stood by Lee shows that his heart is in the right place."

"You think so?"

"Don't you?" asked Tom, with a stare.

"I haven't quite made up my mind yet. But I want to know your opinion," said Cardew. "What are you fellows going to do?"

"Nothing," answered Tom, at once. "I think it was our duty to see Pomfret's guardian and get proof that all was square. Having done that, we've nothing more to do with the matter that I can see."

"You're sure now that all's square? I'm only askin'."

"Well, yes. It was a bit of a shock when Pomfret came here, and we knew his name was Lee," said Tom. "But that's all explained now. Mr. Pomfret explained it all to us."

"Of course, a chap had to know," said Manners, with a nod. "It did look like some sort of an imposition on Mr. Pomfret—though I didn't like to think anything of the kind of Len. But he's told us how it was—his nephew died, and he adopted Len in his place and gave him his nephew's name. A jolly kind action and a stroke of luck for Lee."

"I'm jolly glad of it," said Monty Lowther heartily. "What are you thinking of, Cardew? It's all plain now—and Len Lee could have told us all about it himself, only he had been warned not to by his guardian. Now it's all right."

"You think that Mr. Claude Pomfret told us all?"

"All that we needed to know, anyhow," said Tom, puzzled.

"He seems to have acted like a good and generous man. He must have been fond of his nephew, I suppose, and felt it when the kid died."

"Possibly," assented Cardew. "Natural enough to give Lee his nephew's name, in adopting him in the kid's place. Of course, that can be done legally—there are legal ways for a chap to change his name. Mr. Pomfret didn't mention that that had been done."

"I don't see that it matters to us."

"You think it's all fair and square?"

"Certainly," said Tom.

"Don't you?" demanded Lowther.

Cardew slipped from the table.

"My thoughts aren't worth mentionin'," he answered. "If you fellows are satisfied, it can go at that, I suppose." And Cardew strolled out of Study No. 10.

Tom Merry made an impatient gesture. Tom was quite satisfied with the explanation Mr. Pomfret had given. Indeed, now that he had heard, from Mr. Pomfret's own lips, the story of the nephew who had died, the whole affair seemed simple enough to him. By a kind action to a homeless boy Mr. Pomfret had filled the empty place in his household—perhaps in his heart. He had not been deceived in any way—he knew precisely who and what Len Lee was. That Mr. Pomfret himself could be planning any deception, did not even occur to Tom's honest mind. How could the stockbroker himself benefit in any way by what he had done for a homeless orphan?

"Cardew's an ass," said Manners. "He can always see more in anything than any other chap can. We know now that Lee is straight and above board, and that's all we wanted to know."

"That's all," assented Lowther.

Tom Merry nodded.

"It looked bad at first," he said. "It looked as if Lee had somehow palmed himself off on Mr. Pomfret as his

(*Continued on page* 16.)

EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

"THE noble art of self-defence"—that is our subject for this week's special issue.

St. Jim's has always been famous for boxing. Monty Lowther declares that the school must have been founded on Boxing Day! At all events, St. Jim's has produced some rare champions.

The school boxing tournament has just taken place, and the historic gymnasium was the scene of many thrilling tussles. The rivalry between School House and New House was as keen as ever. I am happy to say that a School House fellow—Darrell of the Sixth—carried off the senior championship; and the junior championship was also won by a School House fellow, who shall be nameless. Modesty prevents me from shouting his name from the house-tops.

Boxing is not compulsory at St. Jim's; but practically every fellow is keen on it. There are just a few exceptions. The only sort of gloves Aubrey Racke ever dons are those of the white kid variety! Racke has no use for boxing. Still, when he is driven to it, he can fight like a cornered rat. The same cannot be said of Percy Mellish, who has always been a first-class funk. Mellish fights shy of boxing, and so do Clampe and Chowle.

If you were to have a chat with Baggy Trimble, he would try to convince you that he was the best boxer at St. Jim's, bar none. He would give you a long list of victims whom he had knocked out at some time or another—in his dreams! But if you took him seriously, and challenged him to a scrap, Baggy would run a mile!

A detailed report of the St. Jim's Boxing Tournament appears in another column; and George Alfred Grundy, who prides himself on being a second Jack Dempsey, has burst into poetry. I was obliged to correct Grundy's spelling before going to press. You wouldn't have been able to read the poem in its original state without the aid of an interpreter! Poor old Grundy! I fear he will never reap fame and fortune, or rise to dizzy heights. As a famous Dickens character once said, "You can't make a head and brains out of a brass knob with nothing in it!"

Now that you have waded through this rather rambling Editorial—which is the most uninteresting part of this issue—I will leave you to tackle the interesting part!

Tom Merry

SHOULD BOXING BE BANNED!

A question which has brought forth a torrent of replies, —some angry, some amusing.

JACK BLAKE:

Ban boxing, indeed! Who dares to make such an asinine suggestion? Only a hopeless killjoy would ever dream of banning boxing, which is one of the most manly of our sports and pastimes. To my mind, boxing is as necessary a subject as swimming. A fellow never knows when he is going to find himself in a tight corner. Supposing he is waylaid on a lonely country road, after dusk? A knowledge of self-defence would prove jolly useful in such a crisis. I'm willing to wager that no killjoy ever succeeds in banning boxing at St. Jim's!

HERBERT SKIMPOLE:

Boxing should certainly be banned! It is a brutal, Bolshevistic, blood-shedding business! Personally, I like to pass my days in peace and quietness, and it grieves me very much to see my schoolfellows indulging in fisticuffs. I have known the most dreadful things happen in the boxing ring. One boy had his nasal organ permanently flattened. Another lost the sight of his eye for a whole week! It is high time this barbarous business of boxing was banned by the authorities.

DICK BROOKE:

The finest pastime in the land
Should never by the "beaks" be banned.
Oh, noble art of self-defence,
Your popularity's immense!
And if they ban this grand old game
'Twill really be a "thumping" shame!

MR. RATCLIFF:

I have no brief for boxing. If I had the power, I should make it a punishable offence. I have already made representations to the headmaster, to try to induce him to forbid boxing, but he takes the absurd view that boxing is a manly recreation. The wise words of the poet should always be borne in mind: "Dear children, you should never let your angry passions rise: Your little hands were never made to black each other's eyes!"

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY:

I considah it would be a dweadful shame if they were to ban boxin'. I should be awfully watty about it, bai Jove! Schoolboys nevah shall be slaves! Neithah will schoolboys permit any attempt to intahfeah with their wightful liberties. I'm wathah a dab at boxin' myself, an' I like it awfully, because it keeps me as fit as a fiddle an' as sound as a bell. To Mr. Watcliff and othah killjoys, I would say, wespectfully but firmly, "Hands off boxin'!"

(*Continued at foot of next column.*)

KING OF THE RING!

By George Alfred Grundy.

"YOU are a fool!" said Clifton Dane.
He'll never call me fool again!
I dealt him one terrific blow—
He's in the sanny now, you know!

"You are a chump!" said Fatty Wynn.
"You are an ass!" said Bernard Glyn.
"Take that—and that!" I promptly said—
Now Wynn and Glyn are both in bed!

"You are a brainless lout!" said Blake.
"You take the bun, and take the cake!"
I floored him with two mighty blows—
Now swollen double is his nose!

"You really are," said Sidney Clive,
"The biggest lunatic alive!"
I smote him on the solar plexus.
(That's how we treat the chaps who vex us!)

"I weally think," cried noble Gussy,
"That you are foolish, vain, an' fussy!"
I hit him fairly in the chest—
He's now compelled to take a rest!

"Of all the duffers 'neath the sun,
You are the biggest!" shouted Gunn.
My knuckles crashed between his eyes—
Now bandaged on the couch he lies!

"I love you not," said Edgar Lawrence;
"In fact, I view you with abhorrence!"
I hit him once, I hit him twice,
And bitterly he paid the price!

"You dare not strike me!" blustered Knox.
"Besides, you don't know how to box!"
I punched his Highness on the brow—
He's groaning in the sick room now!

So listen all, both great and small,
Whilst words of wisdom I let fall.
Don't call me names, whate'er you do,
Or you'll be in the sanny, too!

SHOULD BOXING BE BANNED?

(*Continued from previous column.*)

(Hear, hear! It isn't often I agree with you, Gussy, but I'm on your side about this.—Ed.)

EPHRAIM TAGGLES:

Wot I says is this 'ere—if a pair of young rips wants to punch an' pummel each other, let 'em go ahead! They won't hurt nobody but themselves. This talk of bannin' boxin' is all tommy-rot!

(And so say all of us!—Ed.)

The St. Jim's Boxing Tournament!

A Graphic Description of Some of the Contests. By AN EYE-WITNESS.

George Darrell v. James Monteith.

This contest was to decide the senior championship, Darrell (School House) and Monteith (New House) having fought their way to the final. The bout opened in quiet fashion, but Darrell always looked dangerous. He was quicker on his feet, and he covered up well on the rare occasions when his opponent attacked. Monteith improved later, and there was some fierce fighting in the second and third rounds. In the fourth, Monteith began to tire; and Darrell, who had been holding his energies in reserve, came with a rush, and drove his man into a corner. After receiving a terrific straight left to the jaw Monteith never really rallied, and it was all over a moment later, Darrell flooring his man with a clean upper-cut. It was a popular victory.

Tom Merry v. George Figgins.

This was one of the semi-finals for the junior championship. It was expected that Figgins would put up a good show on behalf of the New House, but he was already tired, having had some strenuous fights in the earlier rounds. Tom Merry gained a sensational victory in the first round. He forced the fighting, and Figgins, with his back to the ropes, could not extricate himself from his difficult situation. He was floored once, but scrambled to his feet and fought gamely for a moment, only to be sent down again by a powerful drive between the eyes. Figgins was counted out amid the cheers of the School House supporters and the deep groans of the New House section.

Reginald Talbot v. Dick Redfern.

This was the other semi-final for the junior championship. It was a great fight. From beginning to end there seemed scarcely a pin to choose between the two boxers. They fought with a skill and dash that won the whole-hearted admiration of the spectators. In the third round Talbot seemed a certain winner when he floored his man with a straight left to the jaw; but Redfern recovered in remarkable fashion, and returned the compliment in the next round by flooring Talbot. The latter was on his feet again in an instant, and the ding-dong tussle went on. There was no knock-out, and the contest went the whole of the twelve rounds. The referee awarded the fight to Dick Redfern on points—but it was a very close thing.

Tom Merry v. Dick Redfern.

The Final. Tom Merry was fresher than his opponent, but Redfern boxed with magnificent courage. After taking heavy punishment for six rounds he was still on his feet, and he remained game to the last. At the beginning of the seventh round he made a desperate attempt to force a victory, but Tom Merry came through the crisis with his customary coolness, and then he, in turn, forced the fighting. Redfern stood firm as a rock under a bombardment of blows; but at length a right swing to the temple knocked him off his feet, and he went down for the count.

The Imaginary Epitaph of HARRY MANNERS.

By the St. Jim's Joker.

SOB, TRAVELLER, SOB!
For 'neath this mound
May yet be found
All that remains
of
HARRY MANNERS
(of which he possessed but few, and these were bad ones!)

Throughout his lifetime he was a chess maniac and a camera fiend; and he met his fate while attempting to take an aerial photograph of St. Jim's from a box-kite, at an altitude of ten thousand feet.

Fortunately, the camera was recovered undamaged; but its owner was slightly dented! Those portions of him which could be found were packed into a matchbox and conveyed hither.

ALAS, POOR MANNERS!

Nevermore shall we hear his familiar voice exclaim:

"CHECKMATE!"

or

"LOOK PLEASANT, PLEASE!"

And a new photographic expert must be found for the staff of "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

Meanwhile:

"Roll up, you fellows, by the score,
And mind you bring your tanners!
We mean to hold a raffle for
That camera of Manners'!"

The New "White Hope"!

By Baggy Trimble.

THE boxing world is made up of people who think they can box, and can't; people who know they can't box, and cheerfully admit it; and people who know they were cut out by Nature to be boxing champions.

I count myself in the last cattegory. You see, I'm a born boxer. Even when I was a tiny toddler in long clothes people used to gaze at my ample form and say, "That boy will become a world's champion! Look at his grate girth! Look at his sterdy lims, and his well-built figger! We shall see him winning the porker-weight championship before he is many years older!"

Of corse, Tom Merry will be awfully jellus when he reads these remarks. He hugs the deloosion that he is the best boy boxer at St. Jim's. Just bekawse he happened to win the junior boxing tornyment, by a flook, he puffs out his chest with pride, and says to all and sundery, "Behold, I am IT! There isn't a fellow who can hold a candle to me—or even a nightlight—when it comes to boxing!"

Some of you may feel inclined to ask, "Why didn't you win the junior tornyment yourself, Baggy?" The fact is, I could have won it with ease. I should simply have walked my way through to the final. Tom Merry and Figgins and Redfern and Blake and Talbot would have fallen like 9 pins before my mity blows. They would have bitten the dust, and cried aloud in angwish, "Packs! We give you best, Baggy!"

But on the very eve of the tornyment I had a stroke of crool luck. I was taken ill with newmonia in the right four-arm, and konsequently I was unable to enter the ring. It was a grate blow to my aspirations to become the junior champion of St. Jim's. But, of corse, you can't eggspect a fellow to box when he's got newmonia in the right four-arm, any more than you can eggspect a fellow to play footer when he's got creeping parralissis of the little toe.

But the day will soon dorn when my grate ambition will be realised. I shall become the junior champion of St. Jim's, and then the senior champion; and then I shall go out into the world and meet all the big boxers, like Jack Dempsey, George Robey, Charlie Chaplin, and Little Jackie Coogan. I shall rest their titles from them one by one. I shall win Belts and Cups and Purses and Huge Steaks, and my name will be in everybody's mouth. My present schoolfellows will see my pickcher in all the papers, and they will be able to point proudly to it and say, "Ah, this is Baggy Trimble, the world's champion boxer. I went to school with him, you know!"

I will conclood my artikle with some timely advice to those who are eager to become big stars in the boxing firmament.

(1) Always eat a harty meal before going into the ring.
(2) Make plenty of horrible grimmaces at your opponent, in the hope of scaring him stiff.
(3) Never hit below the belt—unless the referee happens to be looking the other way!
(4) Always keep your feet, and never lose your head.

"THE SHADOW OF A SECRET!"

(Continued from page 13.)

nephew, when he was nothing of the kind. Now it's all explained, and it's Pomfret's own business whether he tells people about the matter. No business of ours, anyhow."

"None at all," agreed his chums.

"As for changing his name by legal means, I don't know whether that can be done till the chap's of age," said Tom. "Anyhow, it's his own business and his guardian's. If he doesn't want us to mention to anybody that his name was Lee before he was adopted, we're bound not to mention it—especially as he was speaking in a sort of confidence when he told us his story that time. No bizney of ours—or of Cardew's, either. I'm jolly glad such a stroke of luck came his way, and I think Mr. Pomfret's a jolly good sort to take him up like this and stand by him."

"Hear, hear!"

And with that the Terrible Three dismissed the subject.

Ralph Reckness Cardew did not dismiss it from his mind as easily. He went to Study No. 4 in the Fourth, after leaving the Terrible Three. Len was there with Tompkins.

"Would you like to run along the passage and speak to D'Arcy, Tompkins?" asked Cardew.

Clarence York jumped up.

"D'Arcy want to speak to me?" he asked.

"Not that I know of," said Cardew affably; "but I want to speak to Pomfret."

Tompkins sniffed and walked out of the study. Cardew closed the door after him.

"Well?" said Len. "Are you satisfied, Cardew? I know that Tom Merry and his friends are."

"I know they are," assented Cardew. "They seemed to have some idea that you were spoofing Mr. Pomfret, making out that you were his nephew and goodness knows what. Your giddy guardian has fully satisfied them that he knows all about you and that it's all serene."

"And you?" said Len.

"I'm satisfied on that point, of course," said Cardew. "As I've said before, I don't like you personally, but I know you're straight. I'm under no obligation to keep secrets for you; but, on the other hand, it's against my principles to give a fellow away. So far as you are concerned, I am dumb."

"Thank you," said Len quietly.

"Only so far as you are concerned, of course," added Cardew.

Len looked puzzled.

"I don't quite see who else is concerned," he answered. "Of course, I should prefer Mr. Pomfret to let the whole facts be known. But if he chooses to keep his generosity a secret, it is not for me to dictate to him."

"Quite so—he's one of the johnnies who do good by stealth and blush to find it fame," said Cardew, with a nod. "He prefers to hide his light under a bushel. He doesn't look exactly that kind of a man—but there you are; facts speak for themselves, don't they?"

Len looked at him hard.

"Does that mean that you believe that my guardian has some motive for what he has done, that he does not care to make known?" he asked, very quietly.

"What motive could he have?" smiled Cardew.

"None that I can imagine."

"Same here. I'm dumb, as I told you—unless it should come out, somehow, that your giddy guardian has an axe to grind in playing this benevolent game. And in that case, if it comes to my knowledge, I will speak to you before I speak to anybody else."

"That's quite good enough," said Len.

"All serene, then."

Cardew lounged out of the study. Len sat very quiet over his books after the dandy of the Fourth had left him, his brows puckered in deep and troubled thought. The interview at Pomfret Lodge had satisfied and relieved him—as with the Terrible Three of the Shell. But he realised that it had not had the same effect on Cardew. He suspected Claude Pomfret—of what? Evidently that was a that it had not had the same effect on Cardew. He suspected him. That knowledge awoke in Len's heart the lingering doubt that had been laid to rest. Was there something behind this—something that he did not know and could not guess? If all was as his guardian had stated, why was Claude Pomfret so alarmed at the thought of the facts coming to light—facts harmless in themselves?

It was a painful and troubling thought to Len—and the thought seemed like ingratitude, like treason to his benefactor. It was only with an effort that he drove it from his mind.

When Tompkins came back to the study Len was working hard at his prep with a frowning brow.

CHAPTER 10.
Friend or Foe?

"GOAL!"

"Well kicked, Pomfret!"

"Pomfret!" murmured Cardew of the Fourth, as he strolled on to Little Side. "Dear old Lee is distinguishin' himself, it seems."

It was a week since the visit to Pomfret Lodge—and it had been a happy week to Len. With Tom Merry & Co. he came into a good deal of contact—it had not taken Tom long to discover Len's form as a footballer, and Len was keen and regular at games practice. Of Cardew, on the other hand, he saw little or nothing, and seldom exchanged a word with him. Cardew was in one of his slacking moods at the present time, and seldom showed up on Little Side—only on compulsory days, in fact.

With the Terrible Three Len had been a little uneasy at first—but that had worn off. They accepted him as Pomfret, and made no allusion to his former name—indeed, they had almost forgotten that he had ever had another. They liked him, and they respected him—and they were friends. And Len was not sorry to see little of Cardew—he had nothing in common with the dandy of the Fourth.

On this especial Saturday afternoon there was a junior House match in progress, and Len was playing for his House—the School House. And he was turning out well against Figgins & Co. of the New House.

Levison and Clive were both in Tom Merry's eleven, and Cardew had been left rather on his own for the afternoon. Perhaps that was why he had strolled down to see the finish of the House match.

"How's it goin', Mulvaney?" he asked, addressing Mulvaney minor, who was looking on, and stamping his feet to keep them warm.

"One for one," said Mulvaney. "Figgins scored in the first half, and Pomfret's taken the first goal for our House. Sure he's a good man entirely, and I forgive him for licking me; by the same token, he licked you, too, didn't he?"

Cardew, without answering, watched the game. There were ten minutes to go, and both sides were playing up hard. The School House forwards came sweeping down the field, Tom Merry with the ball; and he passed out to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who sent the leather in. But Fatty Wynn, of the New House, grinned in goal as he fisted the leather out.

"A jolly good save," said Mulvaney.

Then there was a roar:

"Goal!"

Pomfret had leaped at the ball, and headed it in, taking even Fatty Wynn unawares. Fatty blinked ruefully at the football.

"Bravo, Pomfret!"

Tom Merry clapped Len on the shoulder.

"Good man, Pomfret! By Jove, you're going to play in the next School match! We want you against Rookwood."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Good man, isn't he?" said Mulvaney. "A good man with his hands, and a good man with his feet. Bravo! Goal, goal!"

The sides lined up again for the last few minutes. Cardew stood looking on, his hands in the pockets of his overcoat, a thoughtful wrinkle in his brow. Len Lee was the same man that he had known him at Wodehouse—a splendid footballer, and an acquisition to any junior side. It was clear that he was making his way to the front of St. Jim's. Kildare of the Sixth was looking on at the junior match, and Cardew noted his approving glance at Len.

The whistle went a few minutes later, and the footballers came off, ruddy and breathing hard. Figgins called to Tom Merry.

"You've got a good man there."

"One of the best," said Tom cheerily. "We've got to find room for him in School matches."

"Good egg—if you don't leave out a New House chap," agreed Figgins.

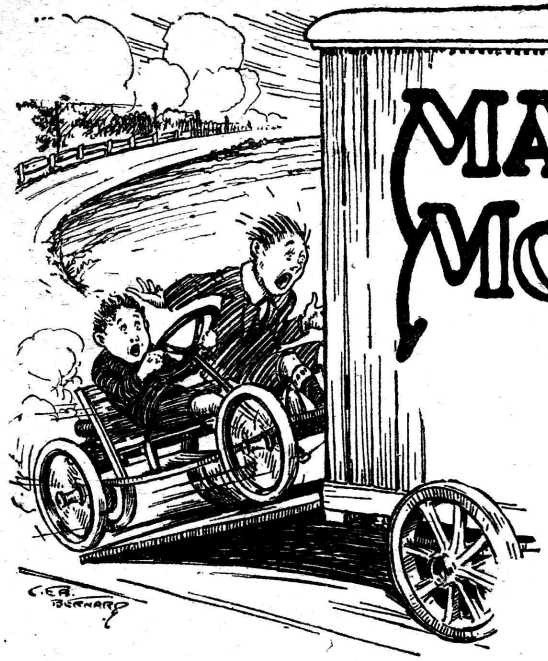
And Tom laughed.

Len, with a bright and cheerful face, came off the field with Tom Merry & Co., throwing on coat and muffler to walk back to the house. He had enjoyed himself that afternoon—it was like his old life at Wodehouse, and the interval he had spent in want and rags had almost faded from his mind now. And the secret that had troubled him

(Continued on page 27.)

Little Marmaduke McAndrew gets more—

—movement than he bargains for!



MARMADUKE'S MOTOR WHEEL

An Amusing Story of Mike McAndrew and his Mischievous Young Brother, Marmaduke.

BY

ELMER K. ARTER.

CHAPTER 1.
A Terrible Tangle!

THOUSANDS of boys have made go-carts with a box, a few nails, and two pairs of perambulator wheels, but very few have attempted to propel them by a motor.

Young Marmaduke McAndrew, despite his age, succeeded in doing this with the aid of one of his father's mechanics. Pride of achievement caused him to exclude his brother Mike from the experiments, because Mike had a way of taking charge, and little Marmaduke usually found himself acting as errand boy.

Mike had made a motor-car, of sorts; he had also built up a wireless set, so it was now Marmaduke's turn to try his hand at amateur mechanics with material from the scrap heap behind his father's garage.

Among the junk collected by his father during a year's trading with new and second-hand motor-cycles and cars Marmaduke found an old bicycle to which was attached an auto-wheel. As everyone knows, an auto-wheel is one of those little pneumatic-tyred wheels fitted with an engine which is fixed to the side of a bicycle or the back of a tricycle, and when started with a certain amount of noise, bounces along, pushing the machine to save the rider the effort. Marmaduke saw fresh possibilities in it, and as he just finished the no-horse power soap-box he called a go-cart, it occurred to him to harness the auto-wheel to it.

"You can't make that thing work, you clown!" said Mike, jealous that Marmaduke had appropriated the auto-wheel, and because his young brother refused his assistance. "What does a nipper like you know about mechanics?"

"It won't have three speeds backwards and only one ahead," replied Marmy hotly, reminding Mike of the chief characteristic of the car he had built.

"No—it won't go at all!" snapped Mike, and departed to complete his own experiment in telephony, for he was planning to link up his bed-room with that belonging to his chum, Billy Burton, next door.

From the thickness of the electric cable which now hung in a loop between the two houses one would have thought that Mike was planning to build an electric power station, but the cable was all he could find, so he had to be content.

"What you want to do, Marmy," said the mechanic, "is to hinge the auto-wheel behind the go-cart, then get going and drop the wheel to the ground. If everything is in order the engine will start and off you go. You can declutch by raising it from the ground again."

It sounded simple enough when Marmaduke's young brain grasped the essentials, and there was much hammering and squeaking of rusty nuts below the window where Mike was trying to listen to his chum.

"Can't you go to the bottom of the garden with that thing?" Mike demanded from the window.

"He'll be going in a minute, Mike," grinned the mechanic. "He'll be going under his own power."

Marmaduke sat in his soap-box, with the steering reins in his hands, a tense expression on his oily face, and his cap on back to front. The mechanic gave him a push and his go-cart gathered way. The string that held the auto-wheel off the ground, unable to withstand the sudden jerk upon it, snapped, letting the wheel down, then Marmy found himself being propelled forward at a greater speed than he had anticipated.

He even gave a little cry of alarm, but his eyes missed the thing that should have worried him. The go-cart leapt into Mike's hanging loop of cable, and the next moment Marmy, go-cart and auto-wheel were swinging in the air.

Marmaduke was not expecting a flight or he might have held on; as it was he left his go-cart in the air in order to make a rapid descent into a bed of chrysanthemums.

Thus, face downwards among the tangle of foliage, he did not see the go-cart and its auto-wheel describe a graceful somersault and drop into the apple-tree in the major's garden next door.

When Marmy crawled out on to the path he looked round bewildered by the noise of the auto-wheel somewhere above his head, yet he could not see it. Mike, in the bed-room window, was gesticulating wildly and pointing towards the dithering wheel and the go-cart quivering in the tree tops.

The peppery major, who was potterin about in his garden next door, looked up in surprise. What on earth are those confounded boys up to now, he wondered. They were always doing something to make his life a misery. He quite thought that Mike and his friend Billy had built an aeroplane and had got stuck in his apple-tree.

Groaning with having to straighten his back he ambled down the garden to where his dog stood by the tree barking. Just then the auto-wheel engine stopped, and as the major looked up, Mike dodged behind the curtain of his window, and the mechanic lowered his head from the wall-top to hide it among the chrysanthemums.

What the major said would not be accepted as good English in the best circles. He said it again and more forcibly as a stream of petrol and oil fell upon his upturned face. He screamed with anger as, with a cracking of twigs, the go-cart and its motive power fell at his feet.

The major's anger saved the situation and the auto-wheel. He picked it up, one hand on the hot engine, and threw it over the wall.

With a crash, the go-cart and motor-wheel landed on the garden path, narrowly missing Marmaduke, who had been about to get upon his feet. Marmy

evidently thought the end of the world had come, for he scuttled back into the chrysanthemums like a scared rabbit.

All was quiet. The mechanic slowly raised his head to look over the wall; the major, standing on a tree-pot was doing exactly the same thing. As both heads came up, mechanic and major found themselves with their noses within an inch of each other's, and eyes so close together that both were made to squint.

The mechanic won in the quick return manœuvre, for the major's tree-pot gave way, and the irate old martinet not only hit his chin on the coping-stone, but bit his tongue as well.

"Thew thrascally thscroundrels!" he spluttered, trying to speak with his tongue in his hand; then he trotted up his garden in search of butter and sugar to heal his talking organ.

The boys heard him go, and with their handkerchiefs stuffed in their mouths they looked round at one another and at the wrecked go-cart.

"I knew you'd do something silly," croaked Mike, in a loud whisper from the window, "and you've upset all my things up here."

The mechanic scratched the back of his head as he surveyed the buckled wheels of the go-cart and the dented tank of the auto-wheel.

"It's broke!" whispered Marmaduke hoarsely, tears of disappointment in his eyes.

"I guess it is, Marmy," said the mechanic. "At least, the go-cart is slightly bent, but the auto-wheel seems all right. You can get some more pram wheels, and——"

"No, I won't!" cried Marmy. "I'll fasten it to grandma's bathchair."

"Help!" squeaked Mike, from the window.

Marmaduke tenderly picked up the auto-wheel and examined it, the mechanic peering over his shoulder while he did so.

"It seems all right," said the latter.

Marmaduke's operations were now transferred to the cycle-house, where his grandmother's bathchair was sheltered.

The auto-wheel is often used to push invalid tricycles, so it was not a difficult matter to attach it to a bathchair. He fixed up the same arrangements for raising and dropping the wheel to start it, then hauled the chair out on to the garden path which, by the way, sloped towards the gates that opened into the back of the street.

A bathchair, though light, is not an easy thing to get going if the long steering arm is inwards, as it tries to swing over either to one side or the other.

This Marmy found out to his cost, for on pushing the chair along the arm came round and gave him a heavy smack on the nose. Marmy saw stars. He also heard a laugh from the bed-room window, where Mike was still wrestling with his telephone cable.

"You'll kill yourself with that thing," Mike called.

Marmaduke contented himself with rudely putting out his tongue, and then resumed operations.

A few moments later Mike saw his brother leap into the moving bathchair and grab the steering arm; then came one or two fitful explosions of the engine, followed by its quick and regular beat.

"Jumping monkeys!" exclaimed Mike, watching the receding bathchair with open mouth. "I wonder if he can stop it!"

Zip-zip-zipp!

"Look out!" Mike yelled, and then withdrew his head to scamper downstairs to his brother's aid.

Marmaduke found himself being propelled down the garden path at, what seemed to him, express speed. The path was straight, but Marmy's steering was not quite perfect, and the course of the chair was no straighter than a spring stretched out flat. Marmaduke was first bowling over the tiles on one side of the path, then making similar devastations among the ramblers on the other. All his attention was devoted to steering, he had no time to think of the disaster that awaited him at the bottom of the garden. First with one side wheel off the ground and then the other, the motor-propelled bathchair careered down the garden. The high

As both heads were raised to look over the wall, mechanic and major found themselves with their noses within an inch of each other's and their eyes so close together that both were made to squint.

wall, with its closed gate leading to the street faced him. In another second or so he would be piled up against it, and——

That is where good luck stepped in, for at that moment the old gardener opened the gate, a basket on his arm.

As Marmaduke's fiery chariot dashed through one gardener and his basket were sent spinning into the frame used for cuttings. There were cuttings in the frame, and eggs in the basket, and a very indifferent sort of salad they made as the old man sat upon the ingredients among the broken glass.

Out in the street Marmaduke run down a dog on the pavement, and upset the lady who was attached to it, so his appearance upon the public highway was heralded by the yelping of the little dog and the shrieking of its lady companion.

One wheel of the bathchair left the ground as Marmy turned to go down the road instead of across it. There was a Ford delivery van on one side and a fruiterer's horse and cart on the other. Both were moving until their drivers saw Marmy coming towards them. Evidently neither liked the bathchair's snaky course, for the Ford man took to the pavement and the fruiterer leapt down to hold his horse.

Marmaduke flashed by, followed by the startled eyes of the two drivers, and the lady who owned the dog still watching him from the pavement.

The bathchair gathered speed on the road, whizzed under the nose of a dosing horse, round the angular stern of a straying cow, and under a long ladder carried by two painters.

Then a policeman hove in sight, and Marmaduke suddenly thought of the string that lifted the wheel. He let go one hand from the steering tiller and grabbed the string. The chair gave a violent wobble, quickly righted itself, and slowed up on the rise of the road.

The policeman seemed dangerously near, and Marmy decided to turn. One wheel came up as he spun round. He almost completed the circle before the chair again rested on all its wheels. The dizzy whirl so confused Marmy that he let go the string again, dropping the wheel and setting the motor in motion.

The Ford driver saw the strange vehicle returning, so he trod on his accelerator and disappeared in a cloud of dust. The fruiterer and the straying cow by this time had met, and the former seemed to be having an argument with the latter over the merits of bananas as a suitable diet for cows.

Mike now came rushing out of the garden gate; he skilfully avoided the lady with the dog, but tripped over the leash which connected the two. The lady raised her parasol and hit Mike where his tummy would have been had he not suddenly turned round.

Now seated comfortably on the pavement, she had grabbed the unfortunate Mike by the fullness of his shirt and was belabouring him with the red silk-covered stick when Marmy passed again to the dismay of the cow and the fruiterer. The cow wheeled to get her head towards the strange basket that careered along on wheels with such unfamiliar noises. When a cow wheels it never thinks of where its rear part is going. In this case it went charging into the fruiterer's cart, and dislodged tiers of fruit which toppled over the hind quarters of the sleepy-looking horse—and woke it up.

For any one in the neighbourhood there were now three entertainments: Mike, the lady and the dog all mixed up with groans, shrieks, and yelps; the fruiterer, his kicking-horse, and the cow; and last, but not least, little Marmaduke in the animated bathchair snaking up the road like a cinema motor-car with Charlie Chaplin at the wheel.

Just at that moment a party of schoolgirls decided to cross the road; some of it got across, some of it did not attempt the passage, but contented itself with shrieking. The third portion—the middle bit—started playing a new game which could be aptly named Chasing Nothing Backwards and Forwards. It is a game in which groups of three or four girls cling to one another and run this way and that way according to impetus and the respective strengths of the outside members. The object is to carefully avoid avoiding on-coming traffic so that sooner or later the said traffic hits the said group or groups of players and disperses them.

Marmaduke won.

By zig-zagging in every direction, he not only succeeded in breaking up all the groups, but as a trophy of the chase

he continued his victorious progress with one of his victims lying across his feet and another clinging to the back where she found herself in close company with the smoking and nearly red-hot engine with its dancing wheel. It was this girl who brought an end to Marmaduke's present adventure.

The girl on the front of the chair rolled off, and the weight of her friend on the back of the vehicle brought the little front wheel off the ground. For a moment it pointed in mid-air, and Marmy's legs followed it. Over he went as the back of the chair folded over the auto-wheel and the girl. The final tableau was all Mike, now released from the lady and the dog, saw, as he rushed up.

It seemed a hopeless wreck, the upturned chair from under which two slim legs, two grasping hands, and a pig-tail protruded.

Marmy gathered himself together and paused on his hands and knees to look around at the army of girls who seemed to descend upon him. They nearly tore the basket-chair to pieces in their anxiety for their colleague's safety, and it was a much oil-stained little girl who was dragged from beneath Marmy's motor vehicle.

They gathered around their frightened companion and almost fought for places to get at her. This gave Mike and Marmy an opportunity to escape with the bathchair, and they dashed for safety before the High School for Girls had recovered sufficiently to notice where they had gone.

It was unfortunate that a friend of Mrs. McAndrew witnessed the episode. As the boys dragged the bathchair up the garden-path their mother met them, and without asking for, or allowing, explanations, she sent Mike to bed.

"But——" Mike started.

"Not a word, Michael," she said severely. "I will not have you behaving in such a manner in the road. It is disgraceful. Go to bed at once, and when your father returns he will visit you."

Again Mike tried to speak, but Mrs. McAndrew refused to listen and left him staring after her, dazed by the injustice of it all.

Turning, he saw Marmaduke doubled up behind the bathchair, grinning like a Cheshire cat. It is sad to relate that Mike lost his temper, grasped the side of the basket body and turned the whole thing over on to his brother.

Mike had to go to his room, but he did not go to bed; he still had his telephone experiments to occupy his time.

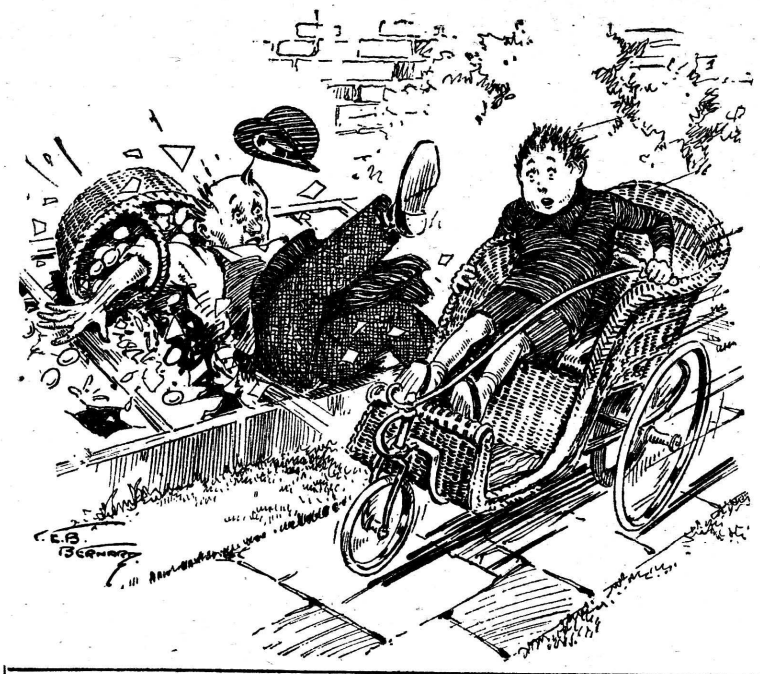
"You can kill your blessed self in future for all I care," he said to Marmaduke as he marched off whistling loudly, but badly out of tune.

CHAPTER 2.

Mrs. McAndrew Gets Alarmed!

THE joke was on Mike right enough, but he did not quite like his father laughing at it; he considered justice would be done only when little Marmaduke was suitably punished, Mr. McAndrew promised to call upon the baby of the family, and Mike felt easier in his mind, but he did not know that instead of punishing Marmy he sat on the bed telling him how to make a buck-board.

A buck-board, as you may know, is two pairs of motor-cycle wheels connected by a few springy planks. Buck-boards fitted with auto-wheels have been exhibited at the Olympia motor shows, and Mr. McAndrew told Marmy where he could find pictures of them to help him to make one.



As Marmaduke's fiery chariot dashed through the gate, the gardener and his basket were sent spinning into the cutting frame. There was a splintering of glass and a cracking of eggs.

Mike sighed resignedly when he heard of this conversation next day. He was pitying himself mightily at having been punished under a misapprehension, but Marmy was too busy to listen to his grumbles. He was picking out nice springy boards and four motor-cycle wheels, two axles and several other items of equipment necessary for the creation of the motor buck-board.

"There's a steering wheel and pillar in the stores you can have," said Mr. McAndrew, who always encouraged his boys in their hobbies.

"I wanted that steering-wheel for a motor-boat I thought of making," grumbled Mike to his brother.

"By the time you make your motor-boat I shall have another steering-wheel to give you," said Mr. McAndrew, and Mike left the budding engineer to return to his telephone cable.

Marmaduke worked hard. Fitting the boards on to the back axle was quite a strenuous task. The wheels would insist upon wandering about the yard as Marmy pushed and struggled with them.

In this yard was a brick-built well known as the stoke-hole, because the gardener had to go down there to stoke up the fire that heated the greenhouses. Once or twice Marmy found himself on the brink of it and pulled the wheels and axles and himself away in time to prevent a dive into the coaly depths. The stoke-hole seemed to exercise a kind of fascination over the two wheels; it seemed impossible to keep them away from it for more than five minutes at a time.

They were very near it at the moment Marmaduke decided to ask for assistance. The milkman had just called, and as he seemed interested in what Marmy was doing, he was pressed into service as a stop-block to prevent the wheels from wandering.

The maid also came out to see why the milkman failed to take the jug she was absently holding out of the kitchen door. She, too, lent a hand to hold the wheels stationary.

No one noticed that these two willing assistants were gradually nearing the yawning chasm behind them—that is, no one except Mike, who had a good view from his bed-room window.

"He'll have those two in the stoke-hole in a minute, the clown," he said. "Ah, well, if he will do these things I can't help it."

Mike sighed, but did not resume his own work.

"Anticipation is the better part of valour," he said, leaning far out of the window to get a clear view.

Nearer and nearer to the stoke-hole Marmy pushed his struggling helpers, an easy operation since the maid appeared more interested in the milkman than in the work on hand, while the milkman was looking at her instead of at the buck-board that was to be.

Marmy was looking at neither of them; with a monster spanner he was tightening up the bolts and nuts that fastened the axle to the wood.

The milkman and the maid approached the stoke-hole inch by inch, Mike extended himself out of the window in similar distances. No one was more surprised than he when they disappeared.

When they fell, Mike gave two shrieks, the first of delight and the second of alarm, for he fell also—out of the window!

Mike's cries arrested Marmy's attention just as he went to see what all the trouble was about in the stoke-hole—it sounded as if a ton of coal had fallen.

Running out of the yard into the garden Marmy saw Mike clinging for dear life to his telephone cable and swinging ten feet in the air directly over the lily pond.

"Hold on, Mike! I'll get the steps," cried the resourceful Marmaduke, rushing to the tool shed, but as he reappeared in the yard dragging the steps behind him Mike's cable gave way.

There was a heavy splash as if a lighthouse had fallen into the sea when Mike hit the water. The cable fell into the yard and struck Marmaduke across

the nose, causing him to stagger backwards with the step-ladder, which he dropped on to the prostrate forms in the stoke-hole before falling in himself.

It was the professional mechanic whom, returning to see how Marmy was getting on, did all the sorting out. First he pulled Marmy out of the wreckage, then caught a grasping hand and dragged up the maid with the step-ladder around her neck. As the milkman emerged, his white smock bearing marks of his struggle among the coals, Mike appeared from the garden, his clothes dripping with water and the leaves of water-lilies sticking to his face.

"I told you you'd do something silly if you started on that thing," said Mike. "Look what a mess I'm in!"

"And me!" spluttered the milkman.

The maid was too busy to add her quota to the dialogue. She had not yet extracted herself from the step-ladder which would insist upon folding up just as she was about to throw it over her head.

Eventually, however, order was restored, and as Mike did not wish to have an interview with his mother in his present state he went to the hot-house to get dry.

Little by little Marmaduke got his buck-board made, and attached his auto-wheel at the rear. To raise it from the ground he used a length of wire which he arranged so that he could operate it with his foot. For a brake he had a stout pole which slipped through an iron loop and, when brought into play, scraped along the ground.

In two days everything seemed all right for a trial spin, but when Marmy worked the steering wheel to turn the front wheels in the desired direction, it wouldn't work. Both wheels should have turned together, of course. They did not. By turning the steering wheel one way the front wheels swivelled inwards as if taking a look at each other; when Marmy spun the polished rim in the opposite direction the wheels showed a marked tendency to go away from each other.

"I wonder if it matters," said the puzzled Marmy to himself, after he had proved that when the wheels were straight the machine went in a direct line.

He soon found out that it did matter when he attempted to get the buck-board through the doorway into the garden. He could not move it.

To overcome this little difficulty Marmaduke lifted the front axle and twisted the buck-board round into the direction he wanted it to go. Then everything was all right, he could push it into the garden. The path just here did not have a single foot that was straight. It wandered around the lily pond in graceful curves, so Marmy again found himself in trouble. This convinced him that he had made a mistake, and much against his inclination he picked up the front part of the vehicle and wheeled it back again to the yard where he sat down to puzzle things out.

"That's got you. I knew it would," called Mike from the bed-room. "If you'd had your eyes open when I was building my car you would have seen how to do it."

"Well, it doesn't go to the right when I want it to go to the left like yours did," replied Marmy heatedly.

Marmy sat on a petrol tin in front of his buck-board and studied mechanics by following the action of the wheels and the cable that turned them. To do this it became necessary for him to describe a number of circles in the air with his forefinger, and he certainly did look strange staring directly ahead and waving his hand in circles in front of him.

The maid saw him through the kitchen window, and fetched the cook. The cook wiped her floury hands upon her apron and also took a peep.

"There's something wrong with that child," she whispered. "Fetch his mother, quick!"

By the time the maid reached her mistress she was firmly convinced that the boy was lightheaded.

"Master Marmaduke, mum," she gasped. "He's writing things in the air!"

"He's what?" queried Mrs. McAndrew.

"He's sky-writing with his finger."

"Well, if he's doing that he isn't in any other mischief——"

"But, mum, he's lightheaded, got sunstroke or something——"

With a cry of alarm, Marmy's mother rose to her feet and ran into the kitchen to see for herself. Through the window she saw Marmaduke seated on the petrol tin with his toes in, his eyes crossed, and describing imaginary circles with both hands.

"Goodness gracious!" she exclaimed. "Fetch the doctor."

And while she dashed into the yard to Marmy's side, the maid set off at high speed down the drive and into the street.

"What is the matter, Marmy?" cried Mrs. McAndrew soothingly, causing Marmaduke to gaze at her vacantly. "It's all right, Marmy, it's only mother."

"It's the steering, mum," Marmy murmured, as Mrs. McAndrew gathered him in her arms and ran with him into the house.

"Some ice, quick!" she shouted to the cook.

"No—I don't want any ice! I want to get the steering right. It won't work," shouted Marmaduke, struggling to get free.

— —

CHAPTER 3.
Full Steam Ahead!

IT slowly dawned upon Mrs. McAndrew that there appeared to be nothing radically wrong with her son, but she made him take a cooling draught as a precaution. So Marmaduke returned to the scene of his operations with a face all awry from a dose of medicine.

When the doctor arrived, post-haste from his tea, it was to find his patient squatting thoughtfully in front of his buck-board, but obviously in perfect health. The doctor was a motorist, so very kindly offered his assistance.

Marmy undertook to demonstrate his troubles. Manipulating the steeling wheel he caused the wheels to swing outwards, one of them—the muddiest one, of course—left the mark of the tread on one of the doctor's white spats.

"Most interesting—most," piped the doctor, fixing his glasses to obtain a really good look at the little bobbin that carried the steering cable.

Just then Marmy turned the wheel the other way and a muddy tyre printed its tread upon the doctor's collar.

"Remarkable—really remarkable," murmured the puzzled doctor, taking hold of the wheel himself and doubling himself up so as to look under the buck-board at the same time.

Then he sat down on the petrol tin and began to work things out for himself.

"Oh crumbs! The doctor's got 'em now," shrieked the cook to the maid, as the visitor began to draw little circles in the air with both his forefingers.

"That yard is bewitched," gasped the girl, as Mike sauntered through to join the amateur mechanics.

"What's up?" he asked suddenly.

The doctor was not expecting the sound of a voice in his ear. It rather startled him—and he slipped on to his nose in a little pool of oil that the auto-wheel had left.

"Hallo, young man!" said the doctor, with a forced grin, rubbing his injured nose and well distributing the oil on to his face.

Marmy explained to Mike how the two wheels would not work together as two self-respecting wheels should do. The doctor also explained, but in a different way, and he had to be corrected by Marmaduke. Then Mike advanced a theory—and all three illustrated their remarks by twirling fingers. Each was enthusiastic about his theory and argument ran high. To the gardener who joined them at that moment it seemed that they were quarrelling, and as he stood looking from one to another they appealed to him. Of course, it all had to be explained again, Marmy, Mike and the doctor—all together told him all about it.

Again they had to illustrate their theories, and in a very short time the gardener, too, was twirling and twisting his finger about to decide what happened when the wheel was turned—and why.

"I can't stand this any longer," grunted the cook, who had been watching from the window, and she joined the quartette in the yard.

With arms akimbo she stood listening for some time, bravely risking and carefully avoiding the gesticulating hands and arms.

It was with great difficulty that she bent her stout body to look upon the offending mechanism, then she dropped on to her knees and took another look. In another moment she, too, was waggling her finger about in circles, but unnoticed. The cook had evidently discovered something, for she suddenly reached for the bobbin beneath the axle and with much panting and grunting she detached one of the cables and had rewound it in the opposite direction.

"There, that's it," she exclaimed triumphantly.

The doctor stepped back in surprise, tripped over the cook's portly form, and landed on his hat on the buck-board.

"I've done it!" squawked the cook.

"Get away," said Mike disdainfully. "What do you know about it?"

"Try it and see!"

Marmy jumped to the steering wheel and revolved it. To everyone's surprise both wheels turned together.

"Most extraordinary!" breathed the doctor.

"Well, I'm pole-axed!" gasped Mike.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" shouted Marmaduke.

The cook marched back to the kitchen flushed with victory.

"It's all ready now," piped Marmy. "Come along, let's see if it works all right."

With a whoop, Marmy and Mike pushed the buck-board through the gate into the garden. Marmy jumped aboard, while Mike pushed at the side and the doctor at the rear. He was back again in the days of his youth, with his hands and face and clothes in about the same condition as when he had made a toboggan thirty years before.

Down the garden the party made their way, then through the big gate into

the street beyond. So energetic were they that the buck-board was moving at quite a good speed at the time Marmy turned down the road. Excitedly he released his foot from the wooden pedal that held the auto-wheel off the ground. The next moment Marmaduke's buck-board was under way. It seeemd to shoot out of the grasp of the doctor, who found himself running forward, his hands outstretched ready to break his fall which was inevitable.

When he did fall he laughed as he rolled. He was having a good time right enough—he had forgotten the worries and troubles of a medical man. Gathering himself together again he pranced down the road in chase of the speeding buck-board alongside which Mike was running as fast as his legs could carry him.

The gardener, too, had hobbled down to the road to watch the realisation of Marmaduke's dreams. He had had rheumatism for years, yet he hopped along to keep the little vehicle in sight.

He and the doctor were falling far in the rear, however, and they finally halted when they saw the buck-board, now with Mike standing behind the driver, disappearing into a road that led into the open country.

The buck-board was going well, and fortunately the road was clear, for Marmy's steering was not of the best, which was not entirely due to his inexperience, the cook's rapid alteration to the cable had made one somewhat shorter than the other. Consequently, the offside wheel had a very decided wobble.

Night was falling, a mist lay upon the ground, and the road was deserted as the little buck-board passed along.

And that was the last that was seen of the boys for two whole days.

. . . . . .

The great Missing Boy Mystery will be remembered by GEM readers. It will be recalled the newspapers stated that two boys, Michael McAndrew and his younger brother Marmaduke, out trying a wonderful machine which was to revolutionise motoring, had disappeared without trace on the Mickewick-Slubcombe Road. The police of five countries were engaged to trace them. Sexton Blake, Sherlock Holmes, and Timothy Sparks, the Mickewick detective, were engaged to solve the mystery. Experts were called in to calculate how far the auto-wheel would run without refilling with petrol. Some said a hundred miles and, as it was thought that the boys, once under way, could not stop the engine, places a hundred miles away were ransacked for some clue to the mystery.

Someone suggested that, unable to stop the machine, the boys had gone to the coast and fell off the edge of England into the sea. Wireless was used to acquaint ships of this theory, and the Broadcasting Co. were asked to send out an appeal.

Every paper was full of it. Scotland Yard was in danger of being discredited because it could not throw any light on the mystery, and then——

Mike and Marmy, very dirty, very tired, very hungry, and very frightened were found dragging their buck-board behind them on the Chester-Holyhead Road—two hundred miles away.

It will be remembered that the boys refused to tell the newspapers how and what had happened to them.

For the first time, by special arrangement with Mike McAndrew, the mystery is going to be explained here.

It appears that as darkness fell, Marmy and Mike found that they could not stop the engine. They were very, very nervous because they had no lights, and by the time they approached the next village they had practically decided to run into the ditch to stop their progress—but they did not know how deep the ditch was.

Marmaduke was just arriving with the steps when Mike's cable gave way. With a heavy splash Mike fell into the water while the cable fell into the yard and struck Marmaduke across the nose, causing him to stagger back with the step-ladder.

Presently there loomed ahead of them a great square black thing that looked like a house placed in the roadway. Marmy increased his grip at the steering wheel to go round it, but just then the lights of a car hove in sight coming in the opposite direction.

Both Marmy and Mike shut their eyes as they made straight for the obstacle which they now saw was a large furniture van—one of the type used for removing households from one part of the country to another. The back flaps were down—and up this the buck-board ran, disappearing into the blackness of the interior with several mighty bumps that stopped the engine and sent both passengers head over heels on to the straw-littered floor.

"What was that?" they heard a gruff voice ask.

"What was what?" snarled another.

"Hush!" whispered Mike to Marmy, as he gathered himself together. "They'll go away in a minute and then we can get out."

But the men did not go away. They simply slammed up the back flap, and with a noise like an earthquake fixed the bars and bolts.

Mike and Marmy and the buck-board were prisoners.

For a time they were silent in the darkness, then Marmy started to cry.

"Shut up," hissed Mike.

"Pa will be cross," whimpered the youngest McAndrew mechanic.

"So will those men if they find out we are here."

Suddenly the furniture van gave a lurch and the boys fell in a heap across the buck-board. As the lurching continued it was obvious that they were moving.

For some time the boys remained silent in the great rumbling and clattering van, then Mike thought that perhaps it would be better to let the men know that they were inside. He shouted, but there was no response. He hammered on the wooden door, but the noise of the steam-tractor that was towing them drowned every other sound.

After an hour or so of this the van was stopped—but Mike and Marmy could not make their voices or their hammering heard. Later, there was more lurching and shouting on the part of the men—then for hours and hours nothing happened.

Mike did not know that their prison was on a railway truck. He did not realise it when they started the second stage of the journey next morning. He guessed it later when they were banged about by the shunting and they heard the clatter of the goods yard.

All efforts to make themselves heard were in vain, and by this time they were very hungry and very tired, besides feeling very sick.

It was Mike who eventually discovered a little trap-door in the floor, and when he got it open he found daylight and solid ground.

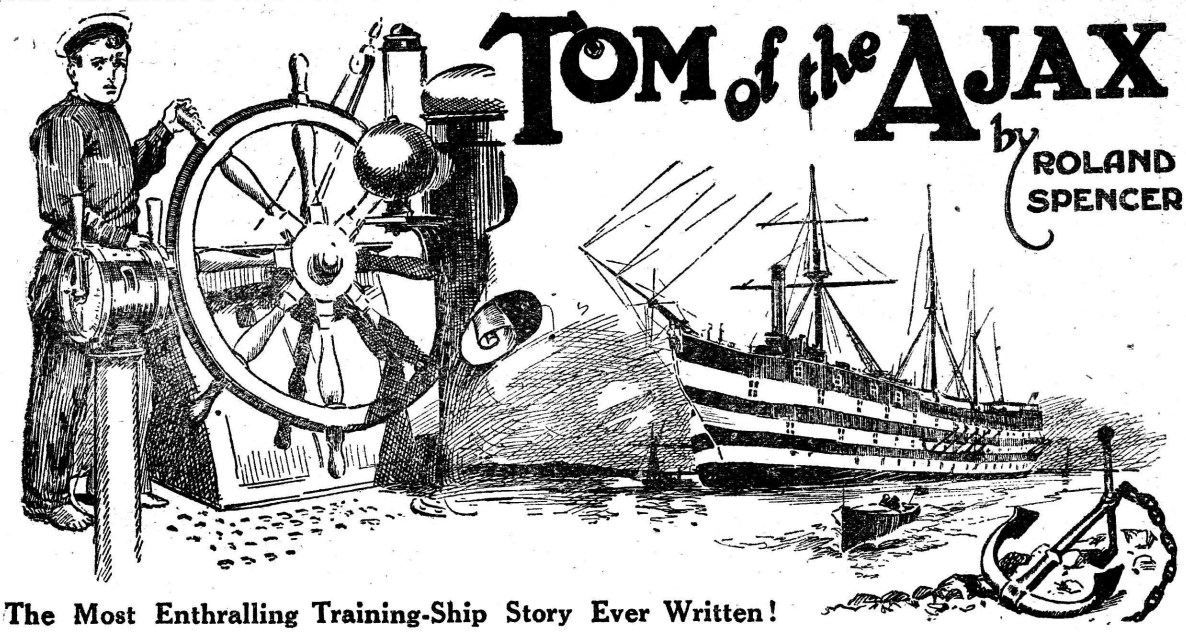
When the boys crawled out they found themselves in a deserted goods yard quite near to the road. Without being seen by anyone they opened the doors of the van and dragged out the buck-board. In another few minutes they were on the road dragging their vehicle behind them.

Their appearance in a village street almost caused a riot. The policeman had to be fetched out of bed to attend to the matter—but Marmy and Mike knew nothing about it. They fell asleep in the village police-station and were still sleeping when their parents turned up eight hours after.

THE END.

(Look out for an extra-thrilling complete story next week, chums, entitled: "FEX!" A magnificent Behind the Scenes Yarn. A tale you will say is TOPPING.)

Tom Gale needs a stout heart to face the perils in store for him!



TOM of the AJAX

by ROLAND SPENCER

The Most Enthralling Training-Ship Story Ever Written!

Bad Luck!

BURR retreated before the port fellow, edging nearer to the fife-rail round the foot of the great main-mast, to which the ropes were hitched at one corner of the ring. Peel followed up heavily.

Burr, near the fife-rail now, stood his ground, and slightly lowered his guard. It was asking for trouble, and Peel flashed in his left to take advantage of Burr's curious neglect to guard his chin. Burr ducked sideways, and the blow only grazed his chin, though he had not intended it even to touch him. Then he put his plan into execution. He pretended to miss his footing, to slip backwards. With a realistic stagger, as if in an attempt to regain his balance, he reeled back. His head struck the fife-rail as he fell.

There was an excited shout from the onlookers. Burr lay motionless, with closed eyes. His head had struck the rail, but he had been careful not to strike it hard—that would have been unnecessarily painful. However, he made no movement when he heard the voice of Mr. Bowser, the barrel-shaped little mate, begin the count. He lay like a log till the count was half-way through, then opened his eyes and groaned. His hand went to his head, and he made as if to rise.

"Eight—nine——"

Burr dropped his head to the boards and closed his eyes. He was a better actor than sportsman, was Stoniky Burr.

He heard the roar from the port watch as the count finished. Then hands lifted Burr and carried him out of the ring. It was some moments before he chose to open his eyes again.

Tom's eyes were dark. He had been near the mast, and he had a pretty shrewd idea of the true state of affairs. He guessed that Burr had deliberately sold the starboard watch for the sake of making sure that he was not beaten in fair fight by Peel. As it was, most of the onlookers imagined that Burr had been the victim of bad luck, that the blow of the fife-rail on the back of his head had been the cause of Burr's defeat.

But Tom was not the only fellow who realised the truth. Dicky West and several others knew, and they were not slow to spread the news. "Quitter!" The word was soon being muttered on all sides among the starboards.

But Burr did not hear it. Except for Tom Gale, no one on board the training-ship had ever licked Burr, and no one was keen on falling foul of the bully of the Ajax. Although the bully had shown the white feather with the giant port fellow, Peel, he was still as hefty as before—a fellow whom it was no joke to be "had out" by.

Burr, apparently regaining his dizzy senses, was surprised and angry to find that the ready sympathy of the starboard watch had suddenly waned. He moaned, with his hand to the back of his head, and still no one drew near to sympathise with him on his "bad luck."

Hemming, Burr's only friend on board the Ulysses—or the Ajax, too, for that matter—was standing not far away, watching Tom and Starling prepare for the deciding bout. Burr called to him in a weak voice.

Hemming turned.

"Hemming, old man——" began Burr weakly.

And then came the final straw.

Hemming, though a "bad egg" in the opinion of most of the training-ship youngsters, was at heart as keen on his watch as anyone. He had been near Burr when the bully had worked his little scheme, and Hemming, who knew Burr better than anyone else aboard, had not the slightest doubt as to the truth. He felt angry and sick with Burr for having sold the starboards, and now, when Burr called to him, Hemming flushed angrily.

To think that he was known throughout the training-ship as Burr's crony—the friend of a "quitter," of a fellow capable of selling his own watch!

"Hemming, old man!" repeated Burr, holding his head. "I say, hanged if that whack on the fife-rail hasn't sent me queer. I——"

And then the bully's eyes almost bulged from his head. He gaped like a stranded cod-fish.

Hemming, without a word, had turned his back on him.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

TOM GALE, a sturdily-built youth and chief petty officer of the starboard watch aboard the famous old training-ship Ajax.

STONIKY BURR, C.P.O. of the starboard watch, a bully of the first water.

DICKY WEST is a cheerful ginger-headed youth and a staunch chum of Gale's.

Trouble arises when a mysterious, sinister man in green spectacles approaches Burr. He gives his name as KALCHE, and he enlists the aid of Burr in a plot against Tom Gale, without, however, giving any reasons.

Following this Tom falls an easy prey to a trick of Burr's, is disrated, and struck off the list of boys detailed to sail on the annual cruise round the British Isles aboard the Ulysses.

A mad impulse seizes him, however, and, stealing out of his bunk at night, Tom plunges over the side of the Ajax, swims to the Ulysses, clambers aboard, and stows himself away in the chain-locker. His wild adventure comes to a sad ending, for, on reaching Harwich, he is taken ashore and delivered to the guard of an express for his journey back to the Ajax.

The train is wrecked. Tom is crawling out of the wreckage when he is rushed upon, overpowered, and carried to a car, in which he is conveyed to a lonely house on the moor. He effects an escape, however, but Kalche and his men are soon hot on his track. Fearlessly Tom swings round to face his pursuers!

With the aid of AVALANCHE HUME, the famous detective, Tom makes his escape, and reaches the Ajax in time to enter the boxing contests for the "Avalanche" Cup. Burr, fighting Peel, is a beaten man when he shows signs of the white feather.

(Now read on.)

The Deciding Fight!

"WHAT-HO, Tom!"

"Go it, the starboards!"

"Sock into 'em, ports!"

The excited youngsters round the ropes were shouting lustily as Tom and Starling stepped into the ring. "Quitter" Burr—as he was already being called—was temporarily forgotten.

"Lam into him, Starling! Cheers for the port watch!"

"Knock him into a jelly, Tom!" Dicky West's voice yelled defiantly in answer to the port cry.

Excitement was at fever pitch already. With Burr's defeat, the port watch were almost on equal terms with their rivals of the starboard. Snow having

knocked out his man in the second round, whereas Burr had lasted till the fourth, put the starboard watch a few points ahead. But it was pretty certain that this deciding fight would end in a knock-out for either Tom or Starling, in which case the slight difference in points would not matter. Whichever knocked the other out would bring victory to his watch.

Tom, sitting in his corner, was a reassuring sight for starboard hopes. He stripped well; the muscles firmly moulded on his slim, strong frame—every inch of the youngster's figure spoke of lightness and quickness, as well as strength, a vast difference from the heavy, bull-like strength of such fellows as Peel of the Grenvilles, and Stoniky Burr.

But the ports were equally cheered by the sight of Starling ready for the fray. The leader of the Nelson division was built on the same lines as the ex-leader of the Hoods—lithe strength was the first thing one thought of with both. He was a fraction less broad than Tom, but an inch or so taller, with a trifle longer reach—altogether, a very wiry, formidable opponent.

The bell sounded, and the two stepped forward smartly, and their hands gripped. The excited shouts dropped to a deathly silence, startling in its suddenness.

The first round opened in as lively a manner as anyone could have hoped for. Starling drove in with his left hard into Tom's ribs, at the same moment that Tom's left met Starling's right ear. There was a yell of applause from both port and starboard. The two, dancing lightly on their toes for an opening, flashed in their blows like lightning, each testing the other's mettle. No more hard blows were registered, but it was a fine exhibition of footwork and speed.

"By the great Horn Spoon—hanged if they aren't a couple of ballet dancers!" sneered Collis, a ferrety-looking lout of the port watch.

Dicky West snorted.

"Shows what you know about boxing!" he answered warmly. "That's the finest bit of boxing we've had on board the blessed Ulysses, if you only knew it. But what can you expect from a chap with a brain like a broken omelette? Oh, go and drown yourself in the wash-house, Collis!"

Collis moved off, muttering, and there was a chuckle from those near. Then dead silence again—the bell had sounded for the second round.

The two fighters rose from their seats at once, and their seconds—youngsters from the port and starboard watches respectively—left the ring in a hurry.

Tom was always very cool when in the ring. He was trying now to read Starling's face, to judge what tactics his rival meant to adopt now that he had summed Tom up. Tom himself, with his shorter reach, had already made his plans; he meant to force close, in-fighting, if he could. It was his only hope. If Starling could keep the Starboard youngster from getting in, his longer reach would be a terrific pull.

Starling evidently realised that fact as well as Tom himself, and he meant to keep Tom at a distance. With a long, jabbing right, the port fellow was well-nigh unapproachable. But then Tom thought he saw his opportunity, and stepped smartly in, inside Starling's guard. Tom's right flashed into the other's ribs, and Starling's eyelids quivered. He tried to get his left to Tom's chin, but Tom slipped aside and clinched again, jabbing in two lightning blows to the port fellow's ribs.

"Break away!" shouted the referee.

The two drew off. Tom was boxing beautifully, his right well extended, his left poised lightly and easily. Both youngsters were a perfect picture of strength and quickness as they faced each other.

Tom was anxious to get in again, but a straight left from Starling drove his head back, to be followed up a moment later by a flashing right to the body. There were excited cheers from the port fellows at the ropes—and then a starboard cheer as Tom, ducking to avoid another blow from Starling's supple left, jumped forward and sent a crashing blow into the other's face.

It struck Starling between the eyes, and he staggered. Tom followed up with his left, but the port fellow managed to slip aside and deflect the blow over his shoulder. Crouching as he was under Tom's guard, he drove in hard—only to smash vainly against the iron-hard stomach muscles of the Hood youngster. Tom had realised instinctively that the blow was coming, and the weak point with so many boxers—the stomach muscles—were strong as steel with him. With those muscles ready braced, he could stand any amount of hard hitting there.

The round came to an end a moment later. Dicky, leaning over the ropes, to lend Tom's seconds a hand, was jubilant.

"Keep it up, old man!" he cried. "You'll do it!"

Neither the port nor the starboard fellow looked at all "done up" when the third round opened, although the pace had been so brisk. Tom, pursuing his tactics, rushed it at once, and, although he received two hefty swings, right and left, in doing so, he forced his man back against the ropes. The starboards yelled themselves hoarse, as they saw Starling's breath jerk as Tom flashed home two lightning blows. Although Starling was boxing all he knew, he could not keep the starboard out. But then he saw his chance—he side-stepped swiftly, with the speed and agility of his lithe frame, and the next instant a terrible left hook to Tom's right ear sent the Hood youngster spinning to the boards.

Starling, breathing heavily, stepped back. Tom lay on the deck, half-dazed, and heard the voice of Mr. Bowser, the referee, commence the count in the dead silence that ensued. He made a move to struggle up, and sank down again. His head was singing, and the crowd round the ropes seemed to be swaying beyond a swirl of mist.

". . . five—six—seven . . ."

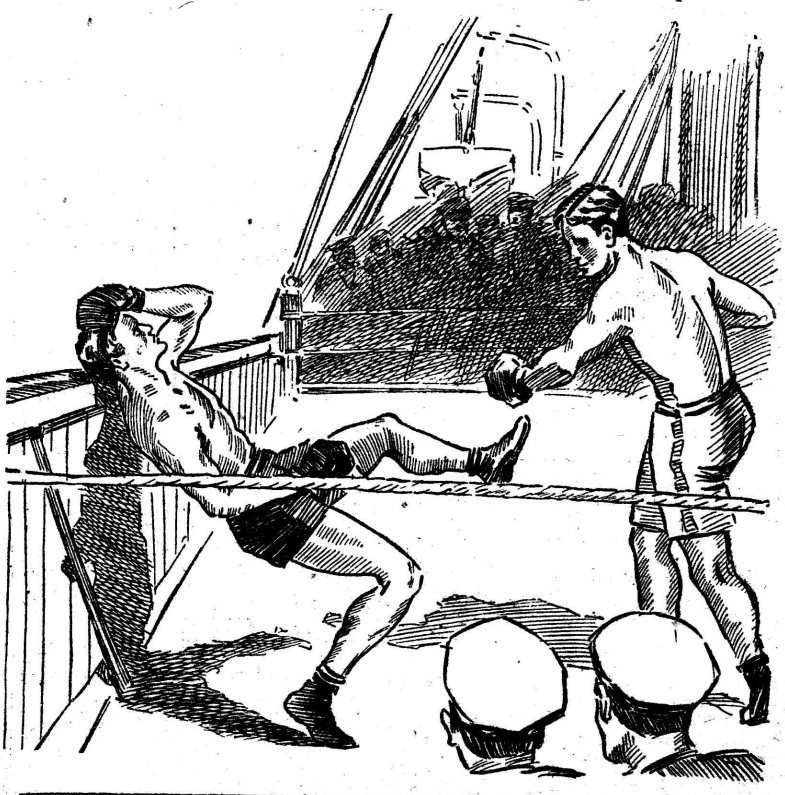
And then a shout came to Tom's ears—a wild, imploring cry in the voice of Dicky West:

"Get up—get up, for the love of Mike!"

It was the needed spur. Tom was on his feet with half a second to spare. But at the end of the round his head was still swimming, and he had received heavy punishment. Some of the starboard fellows were none too cheerful at the way things were shaping. But Dicky West was as cheery as ever.

"Keep cool, Tom—you want to get going again now, that's all. Keep cool, and don't forget the starboard watch is jolly well relying on you to pull us through!"

Tom grinned ruefully. He would do his best all right—he had no intention of following Burr's example. And he knew he could rely upon himself to keep cool. But he was none too sure of himself when he rose to his feet for the next round—he felt that his brain was not clear enough after that terrible blow for him to hold his own with such a boxer as Starling, of the port watch.



Just as his defeat seemed imminent Burr brought his plan into execution. Pretending to miss his footing, he slipped backwards, allowing his head to strike the fife-rail with a thud as he fell.

Starling took the offensive, and Tom gave ground before the long-arm jabs of his opponent. He managed to hold Starling off for that round, and with every moment he was pulling himself together. A few seconds before the bell went he flashed in his right to Starling's ribs, and gave his opponent a nasty jolt. His confidence had returned.

"Box him—box him during the next round as well!" whispered Dicky, as he sat in his corner. "Then go in and fight, and I'll bet my bottom dollar you'll pull it off."

Tom nodded. Boxing tactics were what he wanted for another round, unless Starling forced the pace. But to overcome his adversary—taller, and with a longer reach as Starling was—he would have to fight rather than box, and there is the world of difference between the two styles.

Tom put all his science and all his skilful foot-work into the next round. But Starling, cool and fresh as ever to all outward appearances, did not mean to allow that to go on for long. He forced the pace hard, and Tom, before he knew it, had been forced back against the ropes. The blows came raining in, and he had a hard job to guard. Lucky it was then that his stomach muscles were so strong—otherwise he could never have stood the punishment.

His left, beautifully timed, seized an opportunity and crashed home to Starling's jaw. The other staggered, and Tom followed up. But Starling pulled himself together in a moment, side-stepped like a flash of light, and sent a stinging left-hook to Tom's right ear. The starboard fellow ducked just in time.

Then they settled down to it, hammer and tongs, blow for blow, in a way that set the onlookers in a boarse frenzy of excitement. It was a wonderful exhibition of pluck and endurance, even if the boxing was rather wild. Tom was at his best, standing cool and alert, darting from side to side, ducking and twisting past the other's guard and hitting hard and true. Starling, well-built though he was, could not stand the body blows that Tom showered in, and the lightning jabs drove him slowly back at last. Dicky West, yelling till his face streamed with perspiration, led the starboard cheering. And then suddenly Dicky broke off. A look of consternation leapt into his eyes.

Tom, in an effort to get at the fatal point on the chin, had sacrificed his guard; it was only for a moment, but the port fellow seized his chance, and Tom went reeling back, with a smashing straight left between the eyes. He staggered back against the ropes, swaying.

"Go it, Starling! Finish him—now's your chance!"

A port fellow was shouting excitedly in the sudden hush. Starling followed up, and his left drove for Tom's chin with the force of a battering ram.

But, somehow, the blow did not reach its mark. Tom was grit all through, and his endless store of pluck stood him in good stead now.

He never quite knew how he managed to avoid that deadly left that came flashing to his chin. Instinctively his right fist flew up, and Starling's fist was pushed upwards and sideways, passing over Tom's right shoulder.

To Dicky West, watching, it seemed as though Tom could never rally in time to seize his chance then. But, somehow, Tom did manage it—his own left shot out, straight from the shoulder.

The blow smashed through Starling's defence like paper, the port fellow's glove striking his own forehead. And then Tom, with that beautifully timed straight left, brought Starling to his knees. The port fellow crashed over and lay still.

Mr. Bowser's deep, foggy voice began the count amid a breathless silence.

But Starling could not rise. He lay motionless, clean knocked-out. Tom had carried the starboard watch to victory!

Hemming's Secret!

ALTHOUGH no one had accused Stoniky Burr, in the bully's hearing, of quitting in his fight with Peel, of the Grenville Division, feeling ran high on the subject during the rest of the Ulysses' sojourn in the River Tay.

The fact of the matter was there were only two or three mowers on the ship who would dare to do such a thing as rouse Burr to anger, and they held Burr in such contempt that they did not trouble to speak to the bully at all.

The bustle of getting under way for sea again very soon gave the training-ship boys other things to talk about. But even after Broughty Ferry had been passed and Buddon Ness was abeam the boys reverted to the subject in their own particular little cliques.

Tom and Dicky, wildly excited at the prospect of further deep-water sailing in the barquentine, had agreed to let the gossip die a natural death. They were full of the joy of life, as the Ulysses, under easy canvas, cast out for sea, the land fading to a blue, misty outline to the north-east.

The ship was close-hauled on a south-easterly wind, her yards braced up sharp on the starboard tack, so that she could get a good offing from the land before bearing away and easing sheets. The famous Inchcape Bell Rock lighthouse could be seen with the naked eye, a faint verticle line on the swelling water to the south'ard, and to the north the now thin blue line of the land about Arbroath, in other days more picturesquely called Aberbrothock.

Dicky West and Tom Gale were standing together near the weather fore rigging, delighting in the steady "slough-slough" of the wash as the Ulysses bored steadily to sea, the boom of the wind in the great fore-course, and the occasional heavy jerk of the main and mizen sheets, with the following rattle of the reef-points, sounding for all the world like a scurry of rain on a window-pane.

Dicky was reciting one of his favourite poems, an appropriate one for the place:

"'Sir Ralph, the rover, paced the deck,
He fixed his eye on the darker speck——'"

when a booming voice from aft nearly made the two youngsters jump out of their skins in more of a fright than they would have been if the evil Sir Ralph himself had roared at them from the poop of his own ship.

"Lay aft, there, you boys, and get to polishin' up the brasswork! No skulking on this ship! Ye'll jump to it lively afore I've finished, I'll warrant!"

It was the chief mate, and the boys "laid aft" in double-quick time. They had already learnt that willingness to work and to obey orders instantly was the best defence against Mr. Bowser. Although his bullying, blustering talk was all bounce, the lads did not feel inclined to put Mr. Bowser to the acid test by being tardy and slow.

As the boys grabbed the tins of polish and the cloths for polishing, Mr. Bowser entertained them with a few words:

"We're all a-taunto and snug for sea. There ain't a halliard nor sheet nor brace needs touching. And ye all think that your work's finished, eh? Well, I'll show ye different. There's them scuttles and skylight-bars wants polishing. No tarnished brasswork on this ship, let me tell you. And that there binnacle! It was done this mornin', says you, afore we got under way? Well, it can be done again. There's the handles o' all the doors, and the ends o' the quarter-deck rail. They've gotta well nigh blind me afore ye can caulk down for that job!

"An' then when the polishin' is all finished, there's the galley to scrub out. And your own quarters down below. And I'll maybe find that the paintwork all wants washin' down again. All as clean as a new pin, says you? Well, we'll have it as clean as two new pins. And arter all that's done ye'll have been paddin' about the decks, so that we'll have to swab down again—ay, an' run the holystones over again, too!

"There's work for a tribe of negroes alow and aloft aboard this ship, an' so I'll tell ye. An' there's the lamps to trim, the capstan to grease, an' I'll have all the paint scraped off them blocks, thousands of 'em as there are, an' the wood all sandpapered like a yacht, and two coats o' copal oak varnish over all. When them jobs are done, the rest o' the day's yours.

"An', what's more, let me tell you this, me hearties, if ye don't jump to it good and likely, I'll start to haze you, split me if I won't!"

Mr. Bowser then walked forward.

"Crumbs, he'll haze us soon if we don't watch out!" grinned Dicky West. "Shipmates, if this is just plain, ordinary work, heaven preserve us from a hazing! Look out, here he comes again—all-boat and bow-legs!"

A ripple of laughter greeted Dicky's words, but the laugh died away as Mr. Bowser rolled towards them and started a fresh harangue.

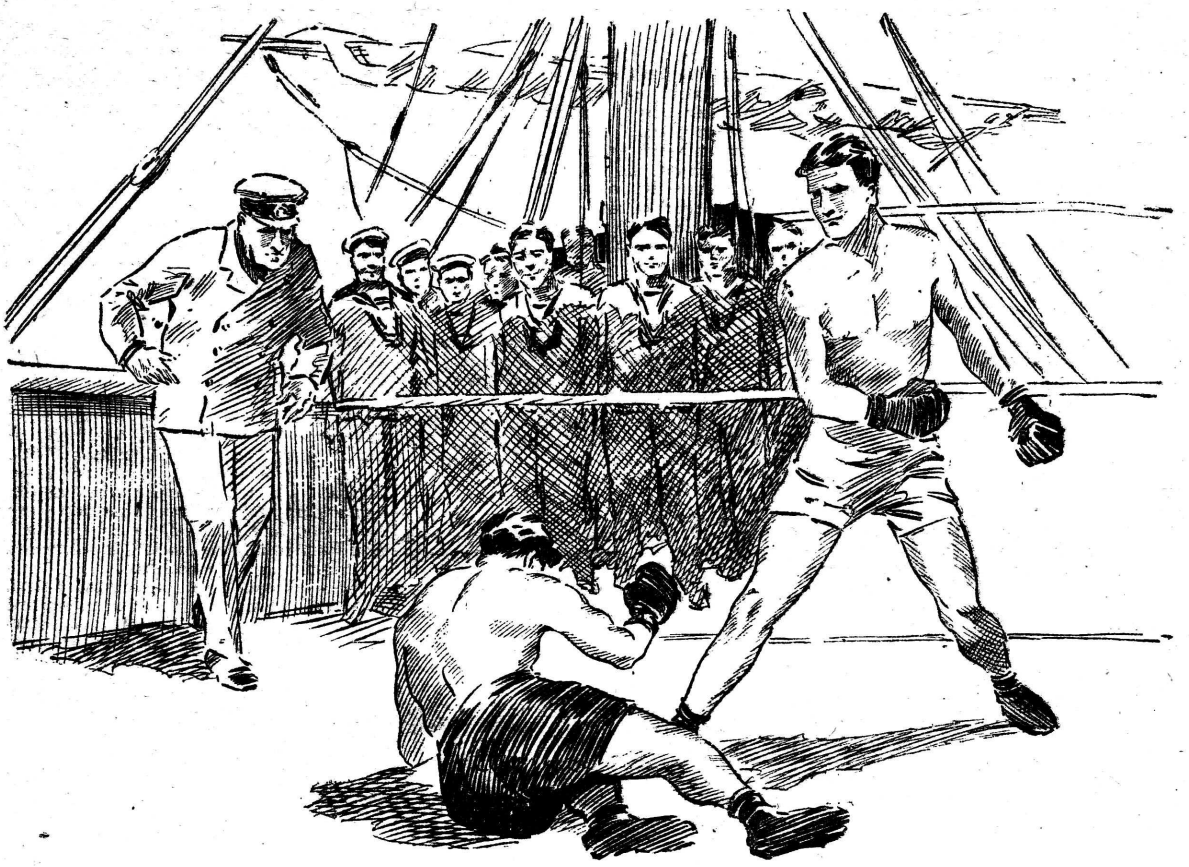
Dicky's term "all-boat" had caught on. Sea-faring folk say that a boat that is fat and round and bouncing-looking, without any over-hangs and pretty-pretty curves that don't help the boat in its work, is "all-boat"—nothing superfluous about her.

So from that minute onward Mr. Bowser had his nickname—one that fitted him as neatly as a belaying-pin fits into the hole in the rail—"All-boat" Bowser.

The mate hazed about on the quarter-deck for some time, promising the boys all sorts of horrors; but finally he entered into a lively conversation with the bo'sun, and the training-ship youngsters were left to chatter away to their hearts' content.

The boys were at first guarded in their conversation, for they were near the cabin skylight, and there were officers below. A seaman and a training-ship lad were at the wheel, but the former was a real big pal to the boys, entering into their pranks and sports as if he were a boy himself instead of a seasoned, ex-naval gunner. The boys didn't mind old Jake.

Captain MacNayre at last came on deck with the ship's doctor. The officers walked forward and stood near the main rigging, enjoying the breeze and the spring sunlight. Then the lads on polishing work aft let their tongues go freely.



There was a heavy thud of leather as Peel's right shot out and caught Burr on the point of the chin, sending him crashing backwards to the deck.

Stoniky Burr had been as mum as an oyster all the morning. The bully was terribly afraid of Mr. Bowser, and he worked at double pressure when the mate was near by. As soon as his back was turned, however, Burr would slack as much as he could.

"Look at old Stoniky skulking now that 'All-boat' has taken his eagle eye off us," said Tom. "Come on, Burr. The less you do the more we'll have to, so lap out all you're worth."

Burr scowled darkly.

"Mind your own business, Gale! And remember that I'm a chief petty officer, and you're not——"

"Cut it out, Stoniky!" said Tom. "That rank amongst us doesn't count for so much on the Ulysses as it did on the Ajax. Anyway, you're a fine one to taunt me with having been disrated!"

"You're perhaps suggesting that it was me painted the nose of the Ajax's figure-head red?" said Burr, with a voice that rasped like a file.

"I haven't suggested it, Burr. Anyway, it's up to us to see that you do your fair share of the work. We all want to slack off a bit when Mr. Bowser does let us alone for a spell, but hang doing nothing! What if we all wiped our hands with our polishers and didn't do a stroke?"

"We'd get it in the neck, right enough!" spoke up Hemming.

The boys turned in some surprise towards Hemming. It was not usual for Burr's crony to speak in that way—with Burr present. At the words, Burr flashed round on Hemming in a fury.

"You shut your mouth, you—you——"

"Come on, Burr," interrupted Tom; "call me what you were going to call Hemming. You won't, of course!"

"He can't!" put in Hemming; then suddenly turned red, and applied his duster with gusto.

Stoniky Burr wasted no more time in talking. He flashed his hand forward, caught Hemming's duster, and lashed the cloth across his crony's face. Everyone expected Hemming to go back into his shell. Instead, fire flashed from the boy's eyes.

"You rotter, Burr!" he shrieked. "You skulking coal-bunker! You—you quitter!"

The other fellows were now struck dumb with surprise as Burr stepped back from Hemming, his eyes smouldering like live coals, his face dark with rage.

"D'you know what happens to chaps like you, Hemming, if they cross me?" demanded Burr, with a deadly tone in his voice.

"I don't care!" replied Hemming, with spirit. "You can have me out, if you like. I'll fight you, even if I do get licked! I'm not afraid of a quitter who will let his watch down in the sports!"

"Look here, what do you mean by a quitter?" now demanded Burr. "You mean that I pretended faintness owing to that crack I got on the head against the fife-rail when I was boxing with Peel?"

"I mean that it was all a put-up job by you! You knew Peel would lick you, and you knew that that would lessen your power as the cock of the watch—that is, except Gale. Gale could make mincemeat of you if he wanted to. You can give me a hammering, if you like!"

"I won't," replied Burr, "but I'll tell you what I will do, Hemming. I'll stroll aft one bright day and make a report, and you'll be wanted aft, too, then, I can tell you!"

Hemming's face changed colour. He went white to the lips, and the boys saw him bite his under lip and turn away to bend over his work again.

What was it Hemming had done which would land him into hot water if it was reported? It must be something serious for him to take Burr's threat so badly. Burr was plied with questions, but nothing would drag anything further from the bully.

Tom and Dicky said nothing, but quietly continued with their work. If Hemming had done something wrong, he was entitled to keep his secret.

All the same, as the boys again applied their polishers with a bit of ginger in it, consequent on the approach of Mr. Bowser, the same question was hammering in the brains of Tom and Dicky.

Knowing Hemming, the boys realised that whatever it was it would most probably not be to his credit.

What could it be that Hemming had to hide?

The Menace of the Firth!

THE Ulysses made excellent way northward. She kept well out to sea, so that the training-ship boys, now being taught in class by Captain MacNayre, could be trained

more thoroughly in the use of navigating instruments—the sextant, the chronometers, and so on.

The navigation class was mostly held on deck, and the teaching consisted of lectures on the instruments and practical demonstrations. Each boy in his turn had to "shoot the sun" and read off the latitude. Then the whole class would work out the longitude by referring to the chronometers.

The binnacle and compass was, too, often the centre of much discussion and lecturing. Deviation, variation, etc., were thoroughly drummed into the boys' heads. Captain MacNayre, though a very easy-going master really, in spite of his show of stern methods against wrongdoers and strictness at all times, was wrapped up in his work of putting these boys through their paces. Captain MacNayre judged the value of a nation by the number of good seamen it could turn out.

The barquentine jogged about the North Sea for a few days, sometimes rolling lazily with the sails slapping and booming, and at other times thresh-ing along under easy canvas, with a ten-knot breeze roaring in the sails and harping the shrouds and back-stays.

The boys lived every minute of the time. Tom and Dicky particularly gloried in it. They were now allowed to go aloft and assist the seamen in furling canvas or making sail. Each boy had his appointed station for tail-ing-on to the braces or halliards or sheets. Each boy had to take his turn at the wheel.

The ship at last pointed for the Pent-land Firth. She was sailing on a west-north-westerly course, reaching well with the wind just forward of abeam on the starboard tack for the dreaded firth.

During the dog-watches on the day before they were due to make their landfall—South Ronaldshay Island, of the Orkney group, and Duncansby Head, on the mainland—the mate and the bo'sun were stumping about near where the boys were squatting on the main deck, telling their yarns and mending their clothes.

The two old sea-dogs were indulging in a few reminiscences, no doubt for the benefit of the boys. Mr. Bowser was talking without taking breaths again, or seeming not to breathe.

"Ay, ay, I mind when we were up this way in the Spitfire—torpedo-boat destroyer, she was. Young Mr. Reck-ness was commandin', and a rare dare-devil he were. We got into one o' the tide races just south o' Scapa Flow, an', bu'st me, if the Spitfire didn't bend like cane, an' snap 'er propeller-shafts like as they was made o' glass. 'Course we drifted, and it blew cruel from the west'ard. First we wallered along in the Swilkie—that's a west-going tide-rip—an' then we got into the Merry Men o' Mey, an' that's another tide race up there.

"I tell ye, ye couldn't tell the diff'rence between air an' water. The breakers were at their sixty feet height, an' there was naught but spray to be seen. We all took cover and hoped for the best, swirling and pitchin' along in the grip o' the ebb races, like a cork in a mountain torrent.

"Mr. Reckness pretended to be keep-in' count o' where we were. He said as we were sluicin' clear o' all dangers, but, to my mind, 'e didn't know. Any-ways, we got into one o' the eddy races,

an' it sluiced us back again, so's we had to drift the whole racecourse once more.

"We could 'ear the rocks ashore grindin' against each other. They do say as rocks weighin' tons are lifted from their beds in these 'ere tide-rips we're approachin' now. Strike me, but we was mighty glad to drift clear o' Dunnet Head, an' then we got a pluck into Thurso by a gunboat that was accompanyin' of us."

The training-ship boys had been lis-tening open-mouthed as Mr. Bowser pitched his yarn to the bo'sun. Tom, guessing that the mate was talking for the benefit of the boys, made bold to put a question.

"And do you think we'll get it rough when we go through, sir?" he said.

Bowser halted in his short perambu-lations to and fro.

"Sure to!" he replied cheerily. "But if it don't blow we'll be all right. I'll tell you now, we're bound for opening-up the firth between Ronaldshay an' the Skerries. Our landfall's doo for four bells in the forenoon watch, an' by the middle o' the arternoon watch we should be in the grip o' the newly set-in ebb tide. That'll sluice us up through the outer sound between the islands o' Swona and Stroma. Then we'll be practically clear.

"We'll be under power. Cap'n Mac-Nayre won't do it under sail, wi' steam at hand, you can lay your shirt!"

"What makes the tides so violent in Pentland Firth, sir?" asked Dicky West.

"Well, ye see," began Mr. Bowser, balancing himself to the heave of the ship on his bowed legs, "the Orkney Islands are a sort of breakwater for the tides runnin' in an' out o' the Atlantic. That deflects the water to either side, makin' it the tidiest holy terror at either end, particularly the firth. Whoy, at Great Skerry an' the Lother Reef I've seen the water that heaped-up at the stream side that it looks like a wall. An' there's a reg'lar boilin' cauldron on the other side. Let a ship strike the Lother Reef, an' she'll mebbe be drifted over into deep water in the rapids an' sunk there, far from human aid, by thunder! That's been known to happen many's the time."

The training-ship boys were greatly impressed, and even the stoutest of them felt a rather queer feeling in their breasts at the prospect of the passage amongst the tide-rips. However, Cap-tain MacNayre had been on the Admiralty survey at one time, and what he didn't know about the set of the tides in Pentland Firth was hardly worth worrying about.

"You boys has seen tides in the London river," continued the mate, thoroughly enjoying himself. "But, dang me, you haven't seen tides like them as swirls and lashes through the Pentland Firth. They go lashin' an' foamin' round about Scapa Flow till you don't know rightly whether ye're on your head or your heels."

"Wasn't Scapa Flow where the Ger-man navy was kept after it sur-rendered, sir?" asked Tom.

"It were," replied Mr. Bowser, "an' a better place for bottlin' of 'em up ye'd never find. You'll see the place. I'll take it on meself to point out Scapa Flow to ye all. It's to the nor'ard of where we'll pass. It was Cap'n Mac-Nayre did a lot o' pilotin' of the ships in when they surrendered. Strike me, but we boys o' the Navy wasn't half mad that they didn't come out to fight, 'stead o' givin' of themselves up gentle-like! I'll show ye the spot. I reckon we'll see it just arter we've cleared the Lother Reef. It's a deadly place, that Lother Reef, by gum!"

Mr. Bowser had a lot more to say about the Skerry Rocks and the Lother Reef, and the boys listened with all ears. The terrible stories of stress in the tide-rips were continued till the dog-watches were past and the sun began to sink in a glow of watery yellow to the westward. The watch below turned in, and the starboard watch remained on deck.

Tom and Dicky sat on the deck near each other. The boys did not speak. Dicky was thinking of the next day's passage—of the interest at the proximity of land and the excitement of being sluiced along at over seven knots an hour by a racing tide, for the tides have been known to reach a velocity of ten knots an hour in the Pentland Firth.

But Tom's thoughts were of other things. He was turning over in his mind what had happened that day when Hemming had called Burr a "quitter" and Burr had hinted that Hemming had something on his conscience.

What it could be, of course, was a mystery. It was useless even to hazard a guess. But Tom wondered if, some-how, it was connected with himself, and the mystery surrounding him. The man with green spectacles—that arch villain Kalche—had confided to a certain extent in Burr. That was matter now well beyond doubt.

Tom voiced his thoughts to Dicky.

"I wouldn't mind betting my out doornie togs that it is connected with your business, Tom," said Dicky. "Hemming's a rotter, as we well know, and if we do find out—well, you can clear yourself, that's all."

"Yes," replied Tom, "I'll certainly clear myself. I'm not going to suffer so that a rotter like Hemming can get off scot free. If he is the one who has done some of the things that I am now suffer-ing for, I'll just report, that's all, if I can't persuade him to own up."

"And you won't persuade him to do that."

"No, I s'pose not! But Hemming showed himself a bit of a sportsman, anyway, Dicky, over the boxing. Don't you think so?"

"Ay, I do. He seems as keen on his watch as you or me, Tom. Look out, bo'sun's piping! Wind's heading us off. We're to brace up and shorten sheets. Come on, old sport! Let's get to it with a 'johnnie.'"

The night passed uneventfully. Day-break saw eager eyes scanning the horizon for the first sight of land. Mr. Bowser seemed disquieted at a great black bank of cloud to the eastward, and even Captain MacNayre kept bob-bing up on deck to sniff the morning breeze and have a look out to windward.

"It's going to blow," Mr. Bowser vouchsafed. "Boys, ye'll see the firth as ye'll never forget it!"

"Land ho!" sounded out from the foretop at about the time the mate had predicted. Then the ship was luffed, the sails were stowed, and the engines signalled for ahead. The Ulysses, in a rising following wind, approached the dreaded Orkney Islands, dipping heavily into the rising seas, her screw threshing the water powerfully, and occasionally racing free in the air, to come down into the water again with a sickening crash.

(Continued on page 28.)

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DN

"The Shadow of a Secret!"

(Continued from page 16.)

troubled him little now—the Terrible Three were silent, and he felt that he could count on Cardew's silence also. He had resolutely given up thinking about the matter, and thrown himself whole-heartedly into the genial life of the school. He was a St. Jim's fellows now, and he already felt as if he had never been anything else.

The House match had been a triumph for him, too—both the House goals, as it happened, had been taken by him; and as Arthur Augustus remarked, it was his win. And the prospect of getting into Tom Merry's eleven, to play for the School, was a very attractive one. It was no wonder that Len's handsome face was bright as he came off the football ground with five or six cheery comrades.

Then he met Cardew's eyes in the crowd.

Cardew was looking at him—with a curious expression on his face. It was not enmity—there was no enmity in Cardew's look. Indeed, it seemed to Len that he could read compassion there—it was a look that it was hard to define, but it sent chill through Len.

The brightness died out of his face as he walked on with his friends. He did not share in the cheery chat in the changing-room; he hardly heard what Tom Merry & Co. were saying, and he changed as quickly as he could and hurried out. Cardew's strange look haunted him—what did the fellow mean by looking at him like that? What had happened—what did it mean?

He glanced round for Cardew, but the dandy of the Fourth was not to be seen. He hurried up to the Fourth Form passage, and looked in at Study No. 9. Cardew was not there. He went back along the passage to his own study—and there he found Cardew.

"You're here, then!" muttered Len.

"I was waitin' for you."

Len drew a deep breath.

"What is it? What do you mean? I saw that there was something up! What do you mean?"

Len spoke sharply, almost fiercely.

"I'm sorry——"

"Keep your sorrow! Tell me what you mean, and don't beat about the bush! Are you going to give me away—now? Is it your cat-and-mouse trick over again?"

"I told you," said Cardew, his face flushed, "I told you I was dumb, so far as you were concerned—but that if it turned out that there was a swindle I could not keep silent. You wouldn't want it. You'd be the first to speak out."

"I'm glad you think so," said Len bitterly.

"I never doubted you," said Cardew quietly, "but I doubted Mr. Claude Pomfret very much—especially after I had seen him. I knew there was something behind it—and you can be glad that I have found out what it was——"

"You've found out?"

"Yes!"

"You've been spying?"

Cardew's face became crimson.

"You call it spying?" he exclaimed. "For your own sake you ought to be glad—if you'd gone on it might have ended in——"

"In what?"

"Prison!"

"Prison!" Len staggered. "Are you mad? What have you found out—what do you think you have found out? Are you only a spy, or are you a liar as well?"

Cardew gritted his teeth.

"That's enough! I've acted as your friend—to save you from a scheming scoundrel! If that's your thanks, find it out for yourself—or wait till a policeman's hand drops on your shoulder!"

And with that, Cardew, his face white now with anger, strode out of the study, slamming the door behind him. Len stood as if rooted to the floor, for a minute. Then he called hoarsely:

"Cardew!" He dragged open the door of the study, and called again, in a husky and broken voice, "Cardew!"

But there was no reply. Cardew was gone.

THE END.

(Don't miss the next story in the splendid series of stories by Martin Clifford, entitled; "FOR HONOUR'S SAKE!" It is the finest yarn this greatest of boys' authors has ever written.)

"TOM OF THE AJAX!"

(Continued from page 26.)

The wind piped up in more fury, and Captain MacNayre called Bowser over to him. The pair began pointing and discussing something with a very serious manner. But the ship still held on.

Brasswork had to be polished as usual, and while at work on the skylight-bars Tom and Dicky heard the captain speaking to the doctor as the officers sat in the cabin.

"Can't turn back—unwise! South Ronaldshay already hard by. Ay, ay, grip of the ebb already. Fury? Not the word for it, my dear man. It'll be a lashing terror. I know these easterly winds. Pipe up like young hurricanes on the ebb."

"But you've got steam power," put in the doctor.

"Ay, ay, power; but only inadequate power on an auxiliary like the Ulysses. Shouldn't be surprised if we have to make sail——"

Just at that second a cry rang out:

"Wreckage in our lee! We'll strike!"

The officers charged for the companion stairs, and the others leapt for the lee side to look. Mr. Bowser was already craning over to judge what action to take. But before he could whip out an order there was a heavy crash under the Ulysses' heel, the ship quivered from stem to stern, and the engines began to race suddenly till steam was shut off.

As Captain MacNayre and the doctor peered overside at the big spars and the tangle of ropes floating under the quarter, crashing and grinding against the ship's plates, the chief engineer came tearing up towards them.

"Propeller's struck something and broken off, sir," cried the engineer—"every blessed blade! Nearly rocked the engines off their bedding when we lost the thrust!"

And the crippled Ulysses, no canvas set, was driving down the rising storm and seven-knot tide dead for the dreaded Pentland Skerries, on which so many stout vessels have crashed to disaster in the grip of the devilish tide-rip!

Another cry rang out from the fore-top:

"Skerries dead a-lee!"

Almost before the words were out of the seaman's mouth, Captain MacNayre had bawled through cupped hands:

"All hands make sail for their lives, Mr. Bowser!"

(Next week's instalment of this powerful serial is thrilling through-out. Don't miss it, chums.)