

SHERWOOD

W.R. Morley

"IN TOWN TO-DAY!" SPARKLING NEW ST. JIM'S FEATURE **INSIDE**

The GEM

2^D

In This Number

"THEY THOUGHT HE WAS A ROTTER!"

By Martin Clifford

"THE BOY WITHOUT A FRIEND!"

By Frank Richards

AND

Many Other Fine Features.



A BATH for a BOOKIE!



In Town To-day

**Introducing Tom Merry
to the Microphone. By a
B.B.C. TALENT SCOUT.**

INTERVIEWER: Actually, you are more of a Prime Minister than just a humble Member of Parliament, Merry?

MERRY: In a way. But as skipper I don't wield absolute power. I have to account for my actions to the games committee, and to the House committee, and in big matters to the Housemaster. Sometimes I have to do some quick figuring myself. The other day I picked Herries to play in goal in place of Wynn, who was crooked. Then at the last minute Wynn turned up, saying he felt fit to play. I had either to play Wynn and risk a breakdown, disappointing Herries into the bargain, or stand Wynn down and play Herries, who isn't by any means such an inspired goalkeeper as Wynn—and risk criticism for not including Wynn after he had offered to play.

INTERVIEWER: As junior captain of one of the finest schools in the country, Merry, I imagine you have some interesting experiences to relate?

MERRY: First of all, Mr. Interviewer, I should like to point out a slip in your statement. St. Jim's is not one of the finest schools—it's the finest in England, bar none!

INTERVIEWER: What about Greyfriars or Rookwood?

MERRY: Grand schools, but I think you'll find St. Jim's has a finer record than either.

INTERVIEWER: Naturally, you have heard of Eton and Harrow?

MERRY: I do seem to recall the names. But no fellow who could possibly get into St. Jim's would care to be either eaten or harrowed!

INTERVIEWER: Certainly the St. Jim's junior captain is an adept at getting in a word for his school. How long have you been junior captain, Merry?

MERRY: Too long, some fellows tell me, Crooke, for instance, and Gore. But I think Gore's reason for finding fault with my performance caps everything.

INTERVIEWER: And why is that?

MERRY: Before I came to St. Jim's, Gore used to wear the captain's cap himself!

INTERVIEWER: I hope you persuaded Gore to retire peacefully?

MERRY: Once it did appear as if one of us would retire—in pieces. But junior captain is elected, you know, just like a Member of Parliament. The difference is that once he has been elected the junior captain is held directly responsible for the success or failure of the junior sports, plus roughly a thousand and one other matters.

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INTERVIEWER: Clearly a situation calling for the judgment of a Solomon. What did you do?

MERRY: I played Herries. We won 2-1 against the Grammarians—and Herries gave a splendid show.

INTERVIEWER: As good as Wynn would have done?

MERRY: No; Wynn might have stopped the shot that beat Herries. You may say I should have played Wynn. But it seemed to me that Wynn's ankle might easily go again, if subjected to strain immediately after recovery—and there was my word to Herries.

INTERVIEWER: However, all was well that ended well?

MERRY: Except for the usual spate of criticism. But a win is a win, isn't it, even if it was won without a Wynn? Sorry! Naturally, I anticipate criticism, and welcome it. Everybody can't be expected to see eye to eye with me. A skipper just has to set his course and refuse to be put off it, even when the prophets forecast a storm. There's one thing, though. I'm sure nobody ever had a better or more loyal team to lead into the field than I have, and no captain need fear a Waterloo with men like Talbot, Figgins, and Kangaroo behind him!

INTERVIEWER: Your men will be glad to hear that, Merry. And I'm sure they will all feel proud of their skipper's broadcast.

MERRY: And I hope every GEM reader heard it, too. You couldn't wish for a stauncher bunch of readers, Mr. Interviewer. Thank you, one and all—and cheerio!

CUSSY'S STRANGE CONDUCT CAUSES A SENSATION AT ST. JIM'S AND A SPLIT WITH HIS CHUMS!



By
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.

They Thought He Was a ROTTER!

"You have called me a blackguard and accused me of bein' a wottah," said Arthur Augustus to his chums. "You are labouwin' undah a vevy wemarkable misappwehension, but that doesn't excuse you. Aftah this, you will oblige me by nevah speakin' to me again!"

CHAPTER 1. Astonishing!

"LETTER for you, Gussy!"
D'Arcy of the Fourth elevated his eyebrows in surprise.

He had just come into the School House from the playing fields, when two or three voices greeted him with the announcement that there was a letter for him.

There were half a dozen juniors gathered round the letter-rack in the Hall, and they were all grinning.

"Lettah for me?" repeated Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes!"

"I do not see any cause for mewwiment, Levison, in the fact that a lettah has awwived for me," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in his most stately manner.

"Perhaps you will, when you see it," grinned Levison of the Fourth.

And there was a chortle from the rest.

Arthur Augustus gave the juniors a lofty glance, and crossed with a stately tread to the letter-rack.

There was the letter.

As Arthur Augustus' eyes fell upon the superscription, he understood why Levison & Co. were grinning.

The address ran:

"Master augustus Darcey,
School House,
st. james' School."

The writing was thick and heavy and crabbed, and there were two or three erasures and re-writings.

D'Arcy took the letter from the rack; then he jammed his eyeglass into his eye and surveyed the grinning juniors.

"I weally do not see why you are amused," he said calmly.

"Who's your aristocratic friend, who spells Augustus with a small 'a'?" chuckled Levison.

"And St. James' without a capital?" grinned Racke of the Shell.

"A lack of education, deah boys, is wathah a weason for wegwet than for mewwiment," said Arthur Augustus loftily.

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No one at St. Jim's would have expected the immaculate Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to pal up with a disreputable bookmaker—least of all his own chums!

"A well-bwed chap would feel a wespectful sympathy in such a mattah."

"Is it from your pater, D'Arcy?" cackled Trimble, and there was a howl of laughter at the idea of Lord Eastwood writing such a fist.

"Certainly not, Twimble! I wegard the question as impertinent!"

"A begging letter, I suppose," said Racke. "Let's see it, D'Arcy."

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus took out his little pearl-handled penknife, and slit the envelope. Nothing would have induced the elegant Gussy to open an envelope with his thumb.

Levison & Co. gathered round him curiously. They were very interested in D'Arcy's unknown correspondent, who wrote and spelt so weirdly.

"Bai Jove, Banks!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Banks!" shouted Racke. "Is that letter from Banks?"

"Yaas."

"My hat! Lucky for you the Housemaster didn't spot it, then!"

"Weally, Wacke, I twust you do not mean to imply that I weceive lettahs I should not care for Mr. Wailton to see?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I can fancy his face if he knew you had a letter from Banks!" chuckled Racke.

"I fail to undahstand you, Wacke," said Arthur Augustus haughtily. He looked at the letter again, and looked at his watch. "Bai Jove! I shall have to huwwy!"

"You're not going to meet him?" shrieked Levison.

"I fail to see how it concerns you, Levison."

"Oh, great Scott!"

Arthur Augustus gave Levison a lofty stare and turned away. There was a buzz of excitement among the juniors as he disappeared.

That was not surprising. The fellows had wondered from whom that letter could be, and the discovery that it was from Banks simply staggered them. The name of Banks was well-known.

Mr. James Joseph Banks, an exceedingly disreputable bookmaker, sometimes made his headquarters in Rylcombe, and some of the bold blades of the school had had dealings with him. Levison of the Fourth and Racke and Mellish knew Mr. Banks, and that frowsy gentleman was not unknown to Cutts of the Fifth and Knox of the Sixth.

But no one had ever dreamed of suspecting D'Arcy of having such acquaintances.

The swell of St. Jim's regarded the dingy blackguardism of Levison & Co. with a lofty disdain he did not take the trouble to conceal. But, as Levison sagely remarked, you never know a fellow till you have found him out. If that letter was from Banks, it was evident that D'Arcy had dealings with the man—to such an extent that Mr. Banks ventured to write to him at the school.

"The silly ass!" said Racke. "No harm in a little flutter; but to risk letting that man write here—the innocent duffer!"

"Suppose Railton had spotted it?" grinned Mellish.

"Why, it would be a flogging at least," said Levison. "The sack, perhaps—though Gussy's such a favourite. The Head would simply have to come down heavy, though his pater is a governor of the school."

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"And he's going to meet him!" chortled Mellish.

"Oh, the ass!"

"Here he comes!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came quickly downstairs. He did not glance at Levison & Co. as he hurried to the door.

"I say, D'Arcy!" called out Levison.

"Yaas, Levison?" D'Arcy paused. He was in a hurry evidently, but he was always courteous.

"I'll have a bob each way!" chuckled Levison. Arthur Augustus looked perplexed.

"I fail to compwehend you, Levison," he said. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have no time to waste listenin' to wibald laughtah, you ass!" said Arthur Augustus, and he walked out of the House.

"He's really going!" exclaimed Mellish, as he watched the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus crossing the quadrangle to the gates. "I say, let's follow him! Let's see him meet the giddy bookmaker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors rushed out of the School House after Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's observed them as he turned out of the gateway, and he halted.

"What are you followin' me for?" he asked.

"We want to see Banks!" yelled Mellish.

"I wefuse to allow you to do anythin' of the sort, Mellish. If you fellows follow me anothah step, I will give you a feahful thwashin', although I am in watah a huwwy."

Levison winked at his comrades.

"Come on! I've got a wheeze!"

They marched on, and Arthur Augustus stood like a lion in their path.

"I shall hit out, you wottahs! Yawwooh!"

Arthur Augustus did hit out, and then three or four pairs of hands collared him. He went down in the dusty road in a sprawling heap, with the juniors clinging to him.

"Gwoogh! You wottahs! Ow!"

Levison jumped up.

"All serene!" he exclaimed.

He held up his hand; there was a letter in it.

The ragers, with a yell of merriment, followed Levison back to the gates.

Arthur Augustus sat up and gasped.

"Gwoogh! The feahful wottahs! Gwoogh!"

He struggled to his feet. He was quite prepared to put up a fight if the young rascals followed him any farther, but they did not follow.

Levison & Co. had disappeared within the gates. Quite unknown to Arthur Augustus, Levison's light fingers had abstracted the letter from his pocket as he struggled on the ground with Mellish and Racke.

Arthur Augustus dusted his coat, set his hat straight, and hurried away down the road, oblivious of the fact that the tell-tale letter was in the hands of the cad of the Fourth. Whatever dealings the swell of St. Jim's had had with Mr. Banks were not likely to remain a secret much longer.

CHAPTER 2.

An Amazing Letter!

TOM MERRY & CO. came in from the footer with ruddy faces.

There had been a House match that afternoon, and the School House had won it by a single goal. It was a narrow margin, but Fig-

gins & Co. of the New House had been beaten, and the School House fellows rejoiced.

"Late for tea," remarked Tom Merry. "Never mind; we've beaten the New House."

"You fellows come up to Study No. 6," said Blake. "We've got rather a spread. Gussy's got tea ready by this time."

"Good egg!"

The Terrible Three cheerfully accompanied Blake & Co. to Study No. 6. But that celebrated apartment was empty. There was no sign of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and no sign of tea.

Jack Blake looked round the study in an exasperated way.

"My hat! Where's that slacker?"

"Where is the blessed shirker?" exclaimed Herries warmly.

"And Gussy's got all the tin!" hooted Digby.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Then it doesn't look much like tea," he remarked.

"Better come along to our study," suggested Monty Lowther. "We've got several biscuits—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"And a sardine," said Lowther temptingly.

"A real sardine, with a splendid flavour—much stronger than those you buy at shops. We've had it a week. In fact, we're really keeping it for visitors."

"Oh, don't be a funny ass!" growled Blake. "I'm hungry!"

"Where's that howling duffer?" howled Herries. "Where's tea?"

"He may have gone out," grinned Manners. "It would be just like Gussy to decide at the last moment to spend the tin on a new silk hat."

"If he has, we'll pulverise him!" breathed Blake. "I told him I was hungry, too. Let's look for the ass! He's got all the tin."

There was evidently nothing doing in Study No. 6. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were short of cash, and tea in their own study would have been a very frugal meal; and they were hungry. So they joined Blake & Co. in looking for Gussy.

"The howling duffer!" said Blake indignantly as they went downstairs. "He had a remittance this morning, and we were relying on it. He wasted his last quid yesterday on something, and we've all been stony since. If he's blued his remittance, we'll boil him in oil!"

"Cleared right out, all of us!" growled Herries. "And I'm as hungry as Fatty Wynn! Where has that duffer got to? I say, Julian, have you seen Gussy?"

Julian of the Fourth looked round.

"I think he's gone out."

"Gone out!" yelled Blake.

"I believe so. He came in before you fellows and cleared off at once."

"Well, the ass!"

"The burbling jabberwock!"

"And it's too late for tea in Hall," said Digby plaintively.

"Where's he gone?" exclaimed Manners

"We'll go after him and yank him home by his back hair!"

Julian did not reply. There was a very peculiar expression on Julian's handsome face, which Tom Merry & Co. did not notice at first.

"Anything up?" asked Tom Merry.

"I'm afraid there's something up with D'Arcy," said Julian.

Blake's expression changed at once.



"I'm sorry to have to do this," said Bobby, "but I can't have suspicion pointing its finger at me!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Ross, Rosholm, Brent Road, Burnham-on-Sea.

"Something up with him? What do you mean, Julian?"

"I was coming to look for you fellows," said Julian. "There's something going on in the Common-room, and if you want a helping hand I'm ready to back you up."

A shout of laughter rang from the Junior Common-room at the end of the passage.

The juniors looked in that direction.

"What the deuce are you driving at, Julian?" exclaimed Blake. "Gussy isn't there, is he?"

"No; but his letter—"

"His letter!" repeated Blake. "Has he had a letter? And what does it matter if he has?"

"You'd better go and see."

"Blessed if you're not talking in blessed riddles!" said Blake crossly. "Here, come on, you chaps, and we'll see what's on."

Tom Merry & Co. headed for the Common-room, and Julian went with them.

There was a crowd in the room.

Some of the fellows—especially Levison & Co.—were laughing loudly; some looked astonished, and some concerned. They were gathered before a letter that was pinned up on the wall.

Kangaroo of the Shell came hastily towards the Co.

"You chaps know anything about this?" he asked.

"About what?" hooted Blake.

"That letter. If it's genuine, it ought to be taken down," said the Cornstalk. "Might be only one of Levison's rotten jokes!"

"Blessed if I catch on!" growled Blake. "Do you mean to say that somebody's got hold of a letter belonging to D'Arcy?"

"So it appears."

"Well, it's a cheek, but nothing to look so jolly serious about, I suppose?"

"I can't believe it's genuine," said Kangaroo. "But if it is, you'd better get it out of sight before a master sees it."

"What thumping rot!" Blake was getting cross. "Nothing in any of Gussy's letters that a master shouldn't see, I know that."

"Well, look at it!"

"Yes, look at it!" chortled Baggy Trimble. "Gussy has been going the pace! Gussy has been painting the town red! He, he, he! Yow-ow!" wound up Trimble, as Blake took him by the collar and sat him down forcibly on the floor.

Blake, with knitted brows, elbowed his way through the crowd of juniors, and looked at the letter on the wall.

Then his glance became fixed.

He stared at the letter as if he could scarcely

believe his eyes. And Tom Merry & Co. stared at it, and rubbed their eyes, and stared again.

There was cause for the chums of the School House to stare. For the letter ran:

"Dear Master Darcey,—Thank you for sending the pound. If you could come over this afternoon, we could have a talk about the orse. Thankin you kindly.

"J. BANKS."

CHAPTER 3.

Fists to the Fore!

"BANKS!"

"Banks, the bookie!"

"Gussy! Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at the letter. Blake was taken aback, and could only blink at it. Then he looked round with a dangerous gleam in his eyes. He had forgotten all about tea now. There was something more important than tea to be considered.

"Who put that letter up there?" he asked very quietly.

"I did," said Levison.

"Where did you get it?"

"Picked it up."

"You say that letter belongs to D'Arcy, and that it came from Banks?"

Levison laughed.

"Read it, and see for yourself."

"I've read it," said Blake. "I couldn't look at it without reading it. Will you shut the door, Dig, and see that nobody comes in for a bit? I've got to talk to Levison!"

"You bet!" said Dig.

Jack Blake quietly peeled off his jacket and turned back his shirtsleeves.

Levison of the Fourth viewed that preparation in some alarm and uneasiness. He was not looking for a scrap with the sturdy Yorkshire junior.

"What are you up to, Blake?" inquired Kerruish.

"I'm going to show Levison how Study No. 6 appreciates his ripping jokes," said Blake. "I dare say it's very funny to write a letter like that and stick it up on the wall for silly fools to cackle at. I don't quite see the fun myself, but we won't argue about that. But Levison can't use my chum's name in connection with Banks. Are you ready, Levison?"

"I'm not going to fight you," said Levison sulkily. "That letter is D'Arcy's, and every fellow here knows it."

"That letter isn't D'Arcy's," said Blake calmly. "That letter isn't genuine. You wrote it!"

"Of course he did!" said Tom Merry. "It's exactly one of Levison's monkey tricks."

Levison set his lips.

"A dozen fellows can prove that it's D'Arcy's letter," he said. "Lots of them heard him say it was from Banks when he opened it."

"Liar!"

"That part's true enough," said Reilly of the Fourth. "Gussy did say that, Blake, when he opened the letter an hour ago. Sure, I was surprised meself when I heard him!"

Blake was a little staggered. He knew that the Irish junior's word was as good as gold.

"You heard Gussy say that he had a letter from Banks?" he exclaimed.

Reilly nodded.

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"I did! He said so, right enough!"

"You misunderstood him," said Blake. "Gussy isn't the chap to have a letter from that scoundrel Banks and go to see him about a horse."

"If the letter's D'Arcy's, how did Levison get hold of it?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"He dropped it," said Levison sullenly. "We had a bit of a rag with him when he went out, and he dropped it in the road."

"And you read it!" said Tom scornfully.

Levison sneered.

"I picked it up. I knew he'd had a letter from Banks, and I meant to show him up. He's talked enough about me and other fellows for having a little flutter now and then. Now he's bowled out himself, and it's time his humbug was shown up."

"Hear, hear!" said Mellish.

"That's what we all say," chimed in Crooke. "He's found out."

"A clean show up!" cackled Trimble. "Who'd have thought it of Gussy?"

"You never knew a chap till you find him out," sneered Racke. "I've suspected something of the sort all along. Gussy was a bit too good to be true."

"That's five!" Blake said, as the cads of the School House made their remarks in a kind of chorus. "One for each of us. I'm ready, Levison!"

"Come on, Crooke!" said Herries.

"Come on, Racke!" chimed in Digby.

And Tom Merry added:

"Come on, Mellish!"

And Monty Lowther, always ready to oblige, advanced invitingly towards Baggy Trimble and said:

"Come on, Trimble!"

There was a ripple of laughter in the Common-room. The five detractors of the absent swell of St. Jim's did not seem anxious to come on. They seemed much more eager to beat a strategic retreat.

But there was no retreat for them.

The sight of the letter had given Tom Merry & Co. a shock at first, but a moment's reflection convinced them that it was not D'Arcy's. It was exactly like one of Levison's impish tricks—they knew him of old.

For once he was telling the truth, as it chanced, but he did not find believers.

"You don't seem keen to begin, Levison!" said Blake sarcastically. "It's more in your line to slander a chap than to answer for it, I suppose! But I'll oblige you by beginning."

And Blake began with a tap on Levison's nose that elicited a howl of pain.

The cad of the Fourth put up his hands then. He had to be punched, and he thought he might as well take it fighting.

Herries advanced on Crooke, and Digby upon Racke, and they put up their hands very unwillingly. Three fights were soon going strong in the Common-room in a ring of crowded juniors.

Mellish and Trimble dodged round the table. Mellish was soon stopped, with Tom Merry's grip on his collar.

"I'm ready for you, Percy dear!" said the captain of the Shell.

"Hands off!" yelled Mellish. "That letter's genuine—"

Smack!

"Yaroooh!"

Mellish put up his hands. But Trimble was in full flight round the big table, with Monty Lowther grinning in pursuit. He made a wild break for the door, but Manners was there, with his back to the door. There was no escape for Baggy Trimble.

He yelled wildly as Lowther's grasp fell on him.

"Yaroooh! Leggo! I—I say, Lowther, you know, I know that letter's spoof—that's what I was going to say! Levison wrote it. I—I saw him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The—the fact is, I—I was going to lick Levison for putting it there!" wailed Baggy. "I was, really, you know! I knew all along it was spoof. The fact is, D'Arcy didn't get a letter at all to-day, and he didn't say it was from Banks. I—I've never heard of Banks, in fact. Keep off, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if you go down on your knees and confess that you're a miserable, slandering worm, perhaps I could let you off with a thick ear," said Lowther, with an air of deep reflection.

"Look here, you know—" mumbled Trimble feebly.

"Sharp's the word!" roared Lowther, flourishing his fist within an inch of Baggy's fat nose.

"Yaroooh! Keep off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble dropped on his fat knees with

a bump. There were four fights going on in the Common-room, but the School House juniors were all watching Trimble. Baggy was the cynosure of all eyes.

"Now," chuckled Lowther, "repeat after me: 'I am a miserable, slandering worm—'"

"Oh dear! You are a miserable, slandering worm—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are, you ass!"

"Yes, I said you are!" mumbled Trimble.

"Repeat after me: 'I, Baggy Trimble, am a miserable, slandering worm!'" roared Lowther ferociously.

"Yow! 'I, Baggy Trimble, am a miserable, slandering worm!'" groaned the fat Fourth Former.

"And I beg humbly to be let off with a thick ear!"

"Look here, you know—yah!—keep off! 'I beg humbly to be let off with a thick ear!'" yelled Trimble.

"Then I shall be happy to oblige!" chuckled Lowther.

Whack!

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble rubbed his ear ruefully. He did not much mind eating humble pie, but the thick ear was more unpleasant.

"Now open the door, Manners, and help me kick him out!" said Lowther cheerfully.



Three or four pairs of hands collared Arthur Augustus and he went down in the dusty road in a sprawling heap, with the juniors clinging to him. As Gussy struggled with the ragers, Levison's light fingers abstracted the letter from his pocket.

"Everybody takes one free kick, and if you land him at the end of the passage, that counts as a goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble did not wait for the free kicks to be taken. As soon as the door was opened, he bolted through like a rabbit.

"Here, come back!" roared Lowther. "We haven't finished yet."

But Baggy Trimble did not come back.

CHAPTER 4.

Bitter Blood!

"**H**A, ha, ha!" Tom Merry burst into a laugh. His brief combat was over.

Percy Mellish had gone down. He had rolled under the table, and stayed there. He did not intend to come out again.

"Two off the list," grinned Kangaroo. "And there goes Crooke!"

Crooke of the Shell had been driven across the Common-room under Herries' heavy attack, till he brought up against the wall. There he could go no farther, and he had to stand his ground. But the slacker of the Shell was not much use against the bulky Herries. He went down, and lay gasping on the floor, glaring savagely at the muscular Fourth Former.

"Had enough?" asked Herries.

"Yow! Ow! Yes!"

"Well, you'll beg Gussy's pardon. I'll accept the apology for him, as he's not here."

"I won't!" yelled Crooke.

"You'll be kicked till you do," said Herries

coolly, and his big boots started on the sprawling Shell fellow without ceremony.

"Yow! Ow—ow! I beg Gussy's pardon!" shrieked Crooke.

"Good! That's good enough!"

And Herries turned his back on the unfortunate Crooke.

"Three wickets down!" commented Monty Lowther. "And Racke looks as if he's had nearly enough."

Racke, as a matter of fact, had had enough. He was bigger than Robert Arthur Digby, but he was not in such good condition. And Dig was so indignant at the aspersions on his absent chum that he seemed to have the strength of two fellows. He slogged Racke right and left.

Racke dropped his hands at last and jumped back.

"I give in!" he gasped.

"Right—ho! You'll beg Gussy's pardon."

"I won't!"

"Then you won't give in!" said Dig. "You're going on till you take back your slanders, you rat!"

Racke backed away from the attack. He stopped when he reached the wall, glaring furiously at Digby's grim face. Dig was generally one of the best-tempered fellows in the Fourth, but he was merciless now.

"I—I'll apologise!" panted Racke at last.

"I—I beg Gussy's pardon, hang you!"

"That's good enough, you cad!"

Jack Blake and Levison were still going strong. Levison had a good deal more pluck than his associates, and, since he had to fight, he put his beef into it. He gave a better account of himself than most of the fellows expected, and Blake had his hands full for some time.

But at last Levison could keep it up no longer, and he dropped his hands and backed away.

"That's enough, hang you!" he snarled.

"That isn't enough, unless you confess that you wrote that letter, and stuck it up there to slander D'Arcy?" said Blake, between his teeth. Levison's eyes glistened.

"I'll confess nothing of the sort. That letter is D'Arcy's. I took it out of his pocket."

"You said you picked it up," said Gore of the Shell.

Levison snarled.

"Yes, I said so, but I didn't. I took it from his pocket on purpose to show him up, and Mellish and Crooke saw me do it."

"I don't think they'll say so now," laughed Tom Merry. "You'd better own up, Levison."

"I've told you the truth."

"If it was the truth, you want licking for stealing a fellow's letter and reading it. But it isn't true."

"It's true—every word," said Levison, gritting his teeth. "You want me to own up to a lie, and I won't!"

"Sure, you ought to be pleased," said Reilly. "Lies are more in your line than the truth, intirely."

"Are you going to own up, you slandering cad?" asked Blake, advancing menacingly.

"No."

"Then I'll hammer you till you do!"

Talbot of the Shell interposed.

"Draw it mild, Blake. Levison's had enough."

Blake glared at him. He was usually very friendly with Talbot of the Shell. But he would not have brooked interference from his best chum at that moment.

Not Wanted in Texas!

Vernon-Smith, who is en route for Texas with his schoolfellows—Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars—has been warned by his enemies not to set foot in the cow country. But fear has been left out of the Bounder's composition. He's keener than ever to get

"ON THE TEXAS TRAIL!"

—and so is Buckskin Bill, the burly puncher of Kicking Cayuse, who is "riding herd" over the Greyfriars party. It's the start of an adventure such as Harry Wharton & Co. have never experienced before. For the latest news see today's issue of

The MAGNET

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"Get out of the way, Talbot! You know what he's done—slandered my chum, who's out, and can't speak for himself."

"Yes; cheese it, Talbot!" said Tom Merry. "The cad ought to be made to own up that it's a slander. That's only fair."

"Hammer him till he does!" shouted Herries. "I'm going to," said Blake. "I don't want to quarrel with you, Talbot, but if you don't get out of the way, you'll get hurt."

"Levison's had enough," said Talbot firmly. "He says that letter is D'Arcy's, and you don't want to make him tell lies about it, I suppose?"

"He's told lies already!" shouted Blake furiously. "Are you idiot enough to think that that letter is D'Arcy's?"

"I think very likely D'Arcy will have some explanation to give," said Talbot quietly. "I don't believe that he's been playing the giddy goat, or anything of the kind. That's all rot. But he had a letter from Banks—"

"He hadn't."

"Reilly heard him say so."

"Reilly's a silly ass!"

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

"Dash it all, Talbot!" exclaimed Tom Merry, almost angry with his chum. "You can't believe that Levison got that letter out of Gussy's pocket. If he did, he ought to be thrashed for such a dirty trick!"

"Well, he's been thrashed," said Talbot. "It was a dirty trick, and he's paid for it."

"He's going to own up that he wrote that letter," said Blake.

"Why not leave the matter till D'Arcy comes in? If D'Arcy says that letter isn't his, it will be time to hammer Levison for writing it."

"I'm not going to wait one second. Levison will own up that he forged that letter, or else I'll hammer him till he can't crawl!" roared Blake. "And if you don't get out of the way, I'll jolly well hammer you!"

Talbot's face set a little. He stood in front of Levison, and Blake could not get at the Fourth Former without pushing the handsome Shell fellow aside. And Talbot evidently did not intend to move. Levison, cad as he was, had done Talbot more than one good turn; and Talbot was the one fellow in the School House who was able to see any good in Levison. It was clear that Talbot meant to stand up for the cad of the Fourth.

"Are you going to move, Talbot?" asked Blake, setting his teeth.

"No."

"Levison ought to be made to own up that he forged that letter, Talbot!" exclaimed Tom Merry angrily. "And you jolly well know it!"

Talbot flushed.

"I don't believe Levison wrote that letter," he said. "He did a mean thing in taking it from D'Arcy's pocket and sticking it up here. He's been punished for that."

"He didn't take that letter from Gussy's pocket!" shouted Blake.

"He says he did."

"And you believe him?"

"Yes."

Blake's eyes blazed.

"Then you can have it instead of Levison!" he exclaimed. "Come on, you rotter!"

Blake rushed right at Talbot. In another second there would have been another fight in progress—a good deal more serious than the



"If we ain't rescued soon, Alfred, we'll have to start diving for the plug!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. McDonald, 39, King Edward Street, Regent Road, Salford 5.

previous scraps. But just then the door of the Common-room opened, and Mr. Railton strode in.

The din had brought the Housemaster to the spot.

"Blake!" rapped out Mr. Railton.

Monty Lowther quickly jerked the telltale letter from the wall and slid it into his pocket. It was not judicious to let that meet the eyes of the Housemaster, whether it was genuine or not.

Mr Railton's eyes were fixed on Blake. The Fourth Former stopped reluctantly. The row was over.

CHAPTER 5.

D'Arcy is Late Home!

MR. RAILTON looked sternly at the juniors. There was silence in the Common-room, so noisy a minute before.

"Now, what does this mean?" exclaimed the Housemaster. "What is this fighting about? Are you aware that I've heard the noise in my study?"

"Ahem! Sorry, sir!" said Tom Merry.

"What is it about?"

"A—a—a difference of opinion, sir!" stammered Tom.

"You must settle your differences of opinion in a less riotous manner," said Mr. Railton. "Which of you have been fighting? Come forward!"

Blake, Herries, Dig, and Tom Merry came forward. Monty Lowther joined them. His little affair with Trimble could scarcely be called a fight, but he was ready to face the music, all the same.

"What! You have been fighting with one another?" exclaimed Mr Railton.

"Ahem! No, sir!"

"Then with whom have you been fighting?"

Levison, Racke, Crooke, and Mellish came forward reluctantly. Baggy Trimble was far away.

Mr Railton scanned them sternly.

"Very well," he said; "each of you will take three hundred lines for fighting in the Common-room! If there is any repetition of this disturbance I shall cane the offender severely! You had better go, and bathe your faces. You look disgraceful!"

Mr. Railton quitted the Common-room.

"Gentlemen, the circus is over!" said Monty Lowther, when the Housemaster had gone. "Now, I appeal to everybody: Was my fight with Trimble worth three hundred lines? Have I had my money's worth?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake gave Talbot a bitter look.

"Will you come into the gym?" he asked.

Talbot shook his head.

"Not till after D'Arcy comes in," he said. "If you still want me to then, I'll come any time you like."

Blake's eyes glistened.

"If Gussy says that that letter is his, I'll beg your pardon," he said. "But as he won't say anything of the kind, I'll tell you out straight that you're a slandering cad as bad as Levison!"

Talbot's handsome face flushed.

"Draw it mild, Blake!" growled Tom Merry.

"I say what I mean! Any fellow who says that letter is Gussy's is a slandering cad! Any fellow who says Gussy ever had anything to do with Banks is a cowardly rotter and a slanderer!"

"Hear, hear!" said Herries and Digby.

"I did not say D'Arcy had anything to do with Banks," said Talbot quietly. "I don't believe anything of the kind for one moment. We all know D'Arcy too well for that. I think that letter's his, and that he has some explanation to make."

"Then you're a silly fool!"

"Thanks!"

"And if you're not a rotten funk, you'll come into the gym, where we can have it out!" roared Blake.

"Not until D'Arcy comes in."

"Oh, go and eat coke, you rotter!"

Blake stamped out of the Common-room with his chums. Talbot's face was flushed, but he did not speak.

Levison left the Common-room after the chums of Study No. 6 had disappeared.

Levison had suffered severely in the fight with Jack Blake, and he was quite spent.

He walked unsteadily as he went, and Talbot hurried after him and gave him his arm.

Levison shot him a grateful look.

"Thanks!" he muttered.

"You'd better bathe your face," said Talbot. "Let me help you to the dorm."

In the Fourth Form dormitory Levison splashed his heated, bruised face with refreshing cold water.

Talbot sat on a bed and watched him.

"I'm awfully obliged to you for chipping in!" said Levison, as he towelled his face. "I couldn't have raised a finger for myself."

"Blake had lost his temper," said Talbot quietly.

"I don't blame him. He believed that you had written that letter for a rotten joke on D'Arcy."

"I didn't," said Levison.

Talbot nodded.

"I believe that; but Blake doesn't, and perhaps you can't quite expect him to. As for what you've got, you asked for that!"

"Thanks!"

"Why couldn't you let D'Arcy's letter alone?" said Talbot. "It was a rotten trick to take it out of his pocket, and you know it! What do you do such rotten things for?"

Levison sneered.

"To show him up," he said. "You know how those cads have been down on me because I smoke and have a flutter on gee-gees occasionally. Well, it turns out that D'Arcy does the same kind of thing, the rotten hypocrite! Oughtn't the humbug to be shown up?"

"You are making a mistake, Levison! D'Arcy does nothing of the kind."

"I suppose Banks doesn't write to him for nothing?" jeered Levison.

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"He might have written that letter simply to cause D'Arcy trouble. He's rotten enough."

"He might; but he didn't. D'Arcy said himself that it was from Banks, and something about having to hurry off, or he'd be late. Then he rushed off. He went to keep the appointment in that letter."

Talbot was silent.

It was evident enough that so far Levison was correct, though Blake & Co. could not, and would not, see it.

"You can see it for yourself!" sneered Levison. "D'Arcy has been taking the fellows in all the time—making out that he was a good little Georgie, and all the time playing this game."

"That's impossible!"

"Then how do you account for it?"

"I don't account for it. It's not my business, for one thing. That letter may not even be from Banks, the bookmaker, at all."

"I suppose there aren't two Banks knocking about," sneered Levison. "Banks is at Rylcombe now. He's been seen there the past week. D'Arcy has gone to meet him. Besides, the letter said he was to see him for a talk about a horse. What does that mean?"

Talbot did not reply.

"And thanked him for the pound he sent," went on Levison. "That was owing over a bet, of course."

"I am sure D'Arcy can explain."

"Oh, rats! Great pip, look at my face!" said Levison, peering into the glass. "A pretty picture I look! Never mind, I've shown that hypocrite up!"

Talbot left the dormitory quietly. He had felt bound to interfere on Levison's behalf; but all his sympathy was with Blake & Co., as a matter of fact. The mean trickery of the cad of the Fourth jarred on all his nerves.

He was uneasy in his mind, too, about Arthur Augustus. The letter was D'Arcy's. He could not doubt that. What did it mean? Was it possible that the swell of St. Jim's, in his simplicity of heart, had been led into shady and disreputable ways? It seemed impossible. Yet how was the letter to be accounted for?

Talbot went to his study, where Gore and Skimpole were having their tea.

George Gore looked at him very curiously.

"You've got a fight on with Blake this evening," he remarked.

"I hope not," said Talbot.

"You could lick him!"

"Perhaps. But I shall not fight him if I can possibly help it."

"After what he said to you?" said Gore, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Yes."

"Oh, you're too good to live!" growled Gore. "If I didn't know you had more pluck than any other chap in the House, I should think you were a funk."

Talbot laughed, and made no rejoinder.

Meanwhile, tea was going on in Study No. 6. A frugal tea, for Arthur Augustus had not yet returned. Funds were low, and the only moneyed member of the Co. was absent.

Blake & Co. were in glum humour.

They had visited dire punishment upon the slanderers of Arthur Augustus, and they refused to believe for a moment that the letter belonged to Arthur Augustus. But there was an uneasiness at the back of their minds, all the same.

Monty Lowther had handed the letter to Blake. Blake was inclined to burn it at once, but he

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

Happy Easter to you all—even the chap who wrote calling me a bad egg.

"Easter Eggs Free For All," runs a headline. Egg-shell-ent idea!

Report states that 700,000 Easter eggs are expected to be consumed in Sussex this year. Now Baggy Trimble has come to St. Jim's, it might be advisable to make it a round 1,000,000.

I hear an Easter-egg manufacturer ordered 10,000 yards of ribbon to tie round his eggs. More ribbon development.

Quickly, now: After a tiring walk under a warm spring sun, what would you suggest for Mr. Ratcliff's tea? A hot cross bun.

decided to keep it till the swell of St. Jim's returned, to let Arthur Augustus see it.

But Arthur Augustus did not return.

His chums wondered where he was. It was an odd coincidence, to say the least of it, that D'Arcy should have hurried away as he had done at the same time that Levison was showing the letter from Banks referring to an appointment. Blake & Co. were anxious for his return. But when the time came for evening call-over, the swell of the Fourth had not put in an appearance.

But as the juniors gathered in the Hall for the roll-call to be taken, Arthur Augustus came in breathless, and joined the ranks of the Fourth in time to answer his name.

"Jolly near missed it, you ass!" growled Blake.

Arthur Augustus nodded cheerfully.

"Yaas, wathah! But a miss is as good as a mile, you know."

There was no time to ask questions just then. The roll-call finished, the St. Jim's fellows streamed out of the Hall, and then Arthur Augustus was immediately seized by Tom Merry & Co. and marched away to Study No. 6 to give an account of himself.

CHAPTER 6.

The Culprit!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY blinked at the six juniors in surprise.

Apparently he did not understand their serious looks.

"Bai Jove, you look wathah like a collection of boiled owls, deah boys!" he said. "I twust

Hikers will be out in force during the Easter hols. Each egging the other to bear the rucksack's yoke? Ow?

Remember, there is a right and a wrong end to an Easter egg, says an authority. I confess that has me beaten all ends up.

There is starch in all foods, states a scientist. Now we know why prices are so stiff.

Note: The old-fashioned killer used to put notches in his gun. The modern one puts dents in his mudguards.

An American quack doctor has been recommending a mild poison as a cold cure. Unless care is taken, of course, the cure is liable to be a little too permanent.

Misprint from "Wayland Gazette": "Buy One of Blankley's Wireless Deceiving Sets." Thanks, I've had one like that!

One more: "I'm sure a vacuum cleaner is just what you need," said the salesman persuasively. "No, thank you," replied the matron. "I'm quite certain we have no vacuums here!"

A reader says he dreamed he was just starting on his holidays, and it was raining in buckets. The trouble really starts, of course, when it rains out of buckets.

See you next Wed., chaps. Can't linger longer now.

there is 'not anythin' the mattah!" he said. "You need not wowwy about my missin' my tea. I have had a snack out of doors."

"We're not worrying about your silly tea," growled Blake.

"By the way, pewwaps you fellows have seen somethin' of a lettah."

"A what?"

"A lettah. I have lost one."

"You—you've lost a letter?" stammered Blake, utterly taken aback.

The juniors exchanged startled glances.

"Weally, Blake, I do not see any cause for surprise in that! Any chap might lose a lettah, you know. As a mattah of fact, I should not be surprised if that cad Levison collahed it out of my pocket. Those wottahs wagged me as I was goin' out, and I missed the lettah aftahwards."

"Great Scott!" muttered Blake.

He stared at Arthur Augustus aghast.

He had refused to believe a word of it from Levison. This confirmation from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's own lips was simply staggering.

The juniors could not speak. They could only stare speechlessly at Arthur Augustus.

"You weally perplex me vewy much," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I do not see any weason for stawin' at a chap. What's the mattah?"

"Oh, hang it, Gussy!" muttered Blake. "So—so that was really your letter?"

"Have you found it?"

"Is this it?"

Blake took the letter from his pocket and laid

it on the table, and Arthur Augustus turned his eyes on it.

"Yaas," he said, with great satisfaction. "I am glad you found it, Blake."

"I didn't find it, Gussy. Levison had it—he owned up; he took it from your pocket."

"The uttah wotah! I shall give Levison a feahful thwashin'!"

"He pinned it up on the wall in the Common-room," said Tom Merry. "Half the fellows in the School House have read it."

"Bai Jove!"

"Never mind about thrashing Levison," went on Tom. "Blake's done 'hat."

"Thank you vewy much, Blake! It is wathah a fag thwashin' a chap. Is that what's the mattah with your nose?"

Jack Blake rubbed his nose.

"Never mind my nose," he said. "Levison's got a nose that will take a prize in a beauty show. You own up that that's your letter, Gussy?"

"Certainly!"

"Most of the fellows wouldn't believe it," said Digby. "There were five chaps who said it was genuine, and we licked them."

"Bai Jove! What did you do that for?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in astonishment.

"I should think you could guess!" said Blake tartly. "We thought it was a rotten slander. I— I suppose we owe them an apology?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"We thought Levison had written that letter for a rotten trick," said Herries.

"I weally fail to see why you should have thought anythin' of the kind, Hewwies! You are talkin' in widdles."

"Talbot was right," said Tom.

Blake nodded.

"Yes; I'll tell Talbot I'm sorry," he said.

"What has Talbot to do with the mattah, Blake?"

"Talbot said he thought it was your letter. I was going to hammer Levison till he owned up that he had written it. I should have had a scrap with Talbot if Railton hadn't come in!" growled Blake. "I've been calling him rotten names, too, all on your account, you thundering ass!"

"It was wathah wude to call Talbot names, Blake, and I weally fail to see why you should call him names on my account."

"Look here, we've got to have this out!" said Blake angrily. "That is really your letter, Gussy?"

"Yaas, certainly!"

"You received it from Banks to-day?"

"Yaas!"

"And then you went off to keep the appointment fixed in it?"

"Yaas!"

"About a horse?" said Manners.

"Yaas!"

"And you've sent him a pound previously?"

"Yaas! It is wathah wotten to have the mattah brough't to ewerybody's knowledge like this; but that is the case, deah boy."

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Who'd have thought it?"

"It beats me," said Blake, aghast. "How he can stand there and tell us, without even blushing, beats me hollow!"

"I fail to see any weason for blushin', Blake," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner. "I twust I have never done anythin' to blush for!"

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"Aren't you jolly well ashamed of yourself?" hooted Herries.

"Certainly not, Hewwies!"

"Then you jolly well ought to be!"

"Hewwies, you uttah ass—"

"You've been down on Levison and Crooke hard enough for the same kind of thing!" growled Digby.

"Bai Jove! If you mean to imply, Dig, that my conduct wesebles that of Levison and Cwooke, I can only say that you are a silly idiot!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Blessed if I ever thought this study would be disgraced in this way!" said Blake. "You live and learn!"

"Disgwaced!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"What do you call it, then?"

"Am I to undahstand, Blake, that you imply that I have disgwaced the study?" Arthur Augustus' voice was not loud, but deep. Terrific wrath was gathering on his noble countenance.

But Blake was angry, too. He had fought Levison and was still feeling the effects of it. He had quarrelled with Talbot, and called him unjust names. And all the time he had been in the wrong. Arthur Augustus had not been slandered, after all. It was true! It was enough to make Blake angry. He did not care twopence for D'Arcy's gathering wrath. In fact, it seemed to him sheer cheek for D'Arcy to be angry, in the circumstances.

"You can understand what you like, if your silly brain is capable of understanding anything!" he snapped. "You've disgraced the study, and what I want to know is how you came to do it, and who led you into it? You're a silly ass, but you didn't get into this kind of thing without being led by some rotten blackguard."

"What kind of thing, Blake?" asked Arthur Augustus, his eyes glittering.

"Betting and being a blackguard!" said Blake savagely.

D'Arcy started back.

"Playing the giddy goat!" said Herries.

"Meeting rotten bookmakers!" growled Dig.

The Terrible Three were silent. They were there as friends of D'Arcy. But this was a family concern, so to speak, of Study No. 6, and they were not called upon to express an opinion. Their opinion was pretty clear, all the same.

It was not only that they had a deep contempt and repugnance for Mr. Banks, but Arthur Augustus had always been loftily down on the dingy blackguardism of the blades of the Lower School. He had never concealed his contempt for Levison, and Crooke, and Cutts of the Fifth, and that kind of fellow generally.

It looked now as if D'Arcy's lofty attitude had been spoof all along, and that he was no better than the fellows he had professed to despise. It savoured of a very unpleasant kind of humbug, which might be called by a harsher word. Hypocrisy and Arthur Augustus seemed as wide apart as the poles; yet what were his friends to think at this moment?

Arthur Augustus' face crimsoned, but the colour died away, and now it was quite pale. He looked steadily at his chums.

"You believe that I've been guilty of that kind of wotten conduct?" he asked at last.

"Haven't you?" growled Blake.

"I wufuse to answah such a question! It would be beneath my dig to do so!"

"Oh, don't play the giddy ox, now!" said Blake. "This is serious!"

"It is certainly vewy sewious, Blake—so sewious

that if you and Dig and Hewwies do not immediately apologise for your wotten wemarks, I shall nevah speak to any of you again!"

"Yes, you'll catch us apologising, after you've disgraced the study and made us make dashed fools of ourselves!" grunted Herries. "We've been licking chaps for saying you've done what you're owing up to now. We wouldn't have believed it for a moment from anybody else!"

"There appears to be some mistake. What have I owned up to?"

"Have you been to see Banks this afternoon—the fellow who wrote you that letter, or haven't you?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas!"

"I fail to undahstand you, Blake. You are talkin' in widdles."

"Oh, don't be a silly ass, if you can help it! Put that letter in the fire, and promise us never to see the man again!"

"You have no wight to make such a wequest, Blake, and I shall certainly wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. There is no weason at all why I should not see Mr. Banks!"

"No reason!" exclaimed Blake.

"None at all! As a mattah of fact, I am bound to see him again, as we have some business to get through."

"You—you admit that you've got business with Banks?" stuttered Blake.



Tom Merry & Co. could scarcely believe their eyes as they read the letter, for it ran: "Dear Master Darcy,—Thank you for sending the pound. If you could come over this afternoon, we could ave a talk about the orse. Thankin you kindly, J. BANKS." "Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Lowther. "Banks the bookie!"

"That settles it," said Blake. "I suppose nothing could be plainer than that! I suppose it's not our business, if you choose to do it!"

"Certainly it is not your business, Blake! Howevah, I should probably have told you about the mattah, but—but—"

"But what?" snapped Blake.

"But, on weflection, I decided not to mention it. A fellow does not want mattahs of that kind chattered about. It looks wathah wotten, just as if a fellow was doin' it in ordah to show off. In such mattahs it is wathah bettah for a fellow to hide his light undah a bushel, you know."

"Yes, a good deal better, I should say!" said Blake bitterly. "If fellows knew, they'd tell you what they thought of you, and if the Head knew, you'd get the sack before you could say knife!"

"Yaas! Why not?"

"He must be potty," said Dig. "That's the only thing—he's potty!"

"I am not potty, Digby, but it weally seems to me as if all you fellows are uttahly potty to be makin' such a wicidulous fuss about thiz for nothin'. And most certainly I shall see Mr. Banks again on Saturday to finish our business."

"About a horse?" sneered Herries.

"Yaas!"

"Well, my only hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "This beats me—beats me hollow!"

There was silence in the study for some minutes. The juniors simply did not know what to say.

If Arthur Augustus had shown some signs of contrition or shame it would have been different.

Whatever he might have done in a moment of folly, his chums would have stood by him and seen him through.

But this cool audacity—for it seemed like nothing else—took their breath away.

Arthur Augustus broke the silence. His aristocratic face was quite firm.

"You fellows have been callin' me wotten names!" he said. "I am willin' to accept an apology and ovahlook the mattah. Othahwise, our fiendship is, of course, at an end. Have you anythin' to say?"

"Yes," growled Blake, "I've got a lot to say. If you've some explanation to make, and will say you're sorry for having been a fool and a black-guard, we'll overlook the matter. Otherwise, you can go and eat coke!"

"Exactly," said Dig.

"My sentiments, too," said Herries.

"D'Arcy's eyes gleamed.

"That finishes the mattah!" he said. "Now, Tom Mewwy, will you be awfully kind enough to say whethah you agreee with these wottahs?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"I don't want to chip in," he said, "but I do agree with Blake. "If you've got any explanation to make—"

"I have nothin' to explain; and, in the circe, I should wefuse to explain in any case. You wegard me as Blake does, do you?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry at once.

"And you, Mannahs?"

"Certainly," said Manners, unhesitatingly; "and I think you ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself!"

"And you, Lowthah?"

"Though thy wrath smiteth me to dust and ashes, I do," said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"Vewy well! You have called me a blackguard and accused me of bein' a wottah like Levison and Cutts. You are labouwin' undah some vewy remarkable misappwehension; but that does not excuse you for entaintainin' such an opinion of me. Aftah this, you will oblige me by nevah speakin' to me again!"

Arthur Augustus turned on his heel and walked out of the study.

CHAPTER 7.

Under a Cloud!

JACK BLAKE drew a deep breath. D'Arcy's footsteps died away down the passage.

On many an occasion there had been rows in Study No. 6. It was no new thing for the great Gussy to get on his dignity and "wefuse" to speak to his chums, till, in the course of time, he came round.

But the matter was different this time. For this time Blake & Co. were equally determined. If D'Arcy's ways were not their ways, they were content to see him go.

"Well, that settles it!" said Blake, at last. "But—but who'd have thought it?"

"It beats me!" said Tom. "Gussy can't be so very much to blame; somebody has got him into this."

"He might show a bit of shame about it," said Herries; "and the least he could do would be to promise never to see Banks again."

"Well, that's so!"

"But when a chap says he's going on with the same bisney, whatever his chums think about him, that finishes it," said Dig. "We're not going to have this study disgraced!"

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"No jolly fear!"

"It's odd, though," said Tom musingly. "If Gussy has taken to betting and blagging, what is he indignant about?"

"Oh, that's only his dashed high horse bisney; I suppose a fellow never sees himself as others see him. What's blackguardly in Levison and Cutts isn't blackguardly in one's self, I suppose."

"Well, there's a lot of that kind of thing in human nature," remarked Manners. "People who speculate on the Stock Exchange turn up the whites of their eyes sometimes at betting on races. A chap never can see himself as others see him."

"But that's no excuse," said Blake. "Unless Gussy chucks it up, at least, he's done with this study. And—and to think I was going to fight old Talbot for thinking that the letter was Gussy's, when it was Gussy's all the time. I—I think I'd better get along and speak to Talbot."

Jack Blake left the study and went along the Shell passage.

Talbot, Gore, and Skimpole were at their preparation when Blake looked in, with a very red face. His task was not a pleasant one.

"Talbot, old chap!"

Talbot rose to his feet with a smile. Blake's mode of address showed that the Fourth Former was not on the warpath.

"Yes, Blake?"

"I'm sorry I called you what I did!" blurted out Blake. "It—it turns out that I was wrong."

Gore whistled.

"You mean to say that that letter was Gussy's all the time, Blake?" he exclaimed.

"I don't mean to say anything!" said Blake savagely.

"Oh, keep your wool on! I thought it was, all the time," said George Gore coolly. "I couldn't quite swallow it, that's all. But if you say so—"

"Oh, rats!"

"What lovely manners they have in the Fourth!" grinned Gore.

"My dear Blake," said Skimpole, in his solemn way, "I am shocked and surprised! Do you think it would do any good if I were to speak a word in season to that unhappy and misguided youth?"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass, Skimmy!" said Blake irritably.

"I'm sorry for what I said, Talbot. You were right."

"That's all right. But—but there's some mistake in the matter, I think," said Talbot. "I could see that the letter was D'Arcy's—it seemed plain enough to me. But I don't believe for one moment the construction Levison put on it."

"D'Arcy owned up!" growled Blake.

"Impossible!"

"But he has. He admitted that he went out to see Banks directly after he had got that letter."

Talbot started.

"Are you sure, Blake?"

"He said so himself in our study."

"I can't understand it!"

"Oh, we're all human at times!" grinned Gore. "Gussy has had a bit of a flutter. I've done the same myself in my time."

"Yes, and a pretty muck you made of it, too! You've been sacked from the school once, and deserved it half a dozen times!" grunted Blake.

Gore jumped up in wrath.

"You cheeky rotter!" he shouted.

Talbot pushed him back into his chair.

"Hold on, Gore!"

"Look here—"



Peter, the last King of independent Serbia.

Europe's Unluckiest Throne.

Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown—and never was this more true than of the rulers of one-time Serbia, as our expert tells you in dealing with Serbian stamps.



Alexander, the last of the Obrenoviches.

THESE days, with new stamp issues coming out almost every week, it's a welcome change to come across a country that can be collected completely and quite cheaply. Serbia, now known as Yugoslavia, is such a country, and the chequered history of its rulers and the novelty of its stamps make it a first-rate collecting proposition.

Before actually dealing with the stamps of Serbia it is necessary to take a peep at the country's more recent history. Although a power to be reckoned with in the fourteenth century, from then until the beginning of the nineteenth it was swallowed up by its all-powerful neighbour, Turkey.

SERBIA REVOLTS.

Then, in the early 1800's, a man named George Petrovitch, or Karageorge ("Black George," in token of his swarthy complexion), came to the fore. In 1813 he led an insurrection which nearly succeeded in throwing off the Turkish yoke. Three years later another Serb patriot, Milosh Obrenovich, started a revolt which was so successful that by 1829 the whole world recognised Serbia's independence, with Milosh as its king.

Uneasy, they say, lies the head that wears a crown! With the exception of Peter II, every Serb ruler from then, including Milosh himself, was either assassinated or exiled. Even Karageorge was murdered—by the order of Milosh in 1817.

Actually Serbian stamp history starts in 1866, when her first stamps appeared. Prince Michael, son of the aged Milosh, was on the throne, and his portrait appears on the second set of Serb stamps. The first specimens feature the Serb coat-of-arms—a crown surmounting a shield blazoned

"Oh, let him come on!" said Blake disdainfully. "I feel just inclined to hammer somebody now, and Gore will do."

"Rot!" said Talbot, still holding Gore in his chair. "Cut off, old fellow! Scrapping won't do any good!"

Blake turned away.

"Look here, I'm going after him, Talbot!" growled Gore angrily. "What are you chipping in for, you ass?"

"Let it drop," said Talbot. "Blake's cut up over this; you can see that. You don't want to go for a fellow when he's down."

Gore grunted. It was curious the influence Talbot had over the bully of the Shell. Gore gave a sulky nod.

"Oh, all right! I'm as sorry as anybody to see D'Arcy playing the fool like this. I know what it meant for me once. If you hadn't got me clear—"

"I hope D'Arcy will get clear, too," said Talbot.

by a white cross. In each quarter of the shield is a letter C—not our C, but the Slavonic sign for S. Here's how these letters are said to have arisen.

COMMEMORATING VICTORY.

When the arms were first devised in 1835 the white cross of Christendom was taken as the leading symbol on the shield to commemorate the victory of the Christian Serbs over the Turks. In further honour of this event flints were placed in the four quarters—reminders of the flints of the old flintlocks of the revolutionary Serb army. When copies of the arms were made it was found that the flints formed themselves into Slavonic S's—to lead to the coining of the Serb motto, "Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava" ("Unity alone saves the Serb"). Thereafter S's replaced the flints.

Prince Michael was a very enlightened monarch, but unluckily for Serbia he was assassinated in 1868 while walking in the park in Toplider. His cousin Milan, the fourth Obrenovich, came to the throne, and his head graced the next Serb stamps. But Milan was forced to abdicate in 1889, and his son Alexander took up the reins of office. Like his Uncle Michael before him, however, he came to an untimely end at the hands of an assassin in 1903, and with his death came the extinction of the Obrenoviches.

From 1903 onwards it was the turn of the Karageorges to have power. Peter, grandson of the first Petrovitch, was crowned king, and his portrait was a feature of all Serb stamps until the close of the Great War.

Except for the earliest issues, most Serb stamps can still be picked up quite cheaply, and, as there are only a matter of three hundred-odd major varieties available, the whole country makes up into a compact little collection.

"But I can't quite believe the thing yet. There's a mistake somewhere."

Blake returned to his study to do his prep. The Terrible Three had gone. Digby and Herries were looking glum.

Blake sat down discontentedly.

The affair had been a painful shock to the chums of Study No. 6. That study, so long happily united, was hopelessly divided now.

Arthur Augustus had many peculiar little ways, and he was sometimes a little exasperating; but the friendship of the four had been deep and sincere.

The thought that their chum had got himself into trouble was worrying; the knowledge that he had not only taken to vicious ways, but was obstinately determined to persist in them, was worse. And the fact that he was angry and indignant at their condemnation of him only fanned the flame of their resentment and exasperation.

They felt keenly enough the breaking off of an old friendship.

But they did not regret that D'Arcy had gone. There was no room for a blackguard in Study No. 6.

During the evening Hammond of the Fourth came in. He came for D'Arcy's books and other personal belongings.

Blake & Co. watched him while he was collecting them.

"D'Arcy's going to come into my study," explained the Cockney junior. "Me and Kerruish and Reilly and Julian are willing."

"You're welcome!" growled Blake.

Hammond sniffed.

"You're down on D'Arcy 'cause he's been and gone and done something," he said. "That what you call pally?"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Herries. "If you like betting blackguards in your study you're welcome to them; we don't!"

Hammond's eyes gleamed. He believed the same thing that Blake & Co. believed, but his loyalty to the swell of St. Jim's, who had been a good friend to him, was proof against any strain.

"I don't care what Gussy's done," he said. "I know he was a good pal to me—when I wanted one bad, too. I'm sticking to 'im, and if anybody says a word agin 'im for me to 'ear there'll be a scrap, that's all!"

And Hammond, with an emphatic snort, marched out with D'Arcy's books.

Blake, Herries, and Digby looked at one another rather queerly. Harry Hammond's unwavering faith in the swell of St. Jim's gave them a feeling that they had been wanting in loyalty. But facts were facts.

Blake & Co. resumed their prep with grim faces. The sun had gone down upon their wrath.

CHAPTER 8.

Kangaroo Means Well!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS was an object of great interest to the School House fellows the next day.

Everybody was surprised.

That the swell of St. Jim's should have taken to playing the giddy ox was simply astounding.

But there did not seem room for doubt about the matter. He had admitted that the letter from Banks was his—that was known. It was known that he had hurried off to see the writer of the letter.

And his own chums had quarrelled with him about it, and he was no longer a member of Study No. 6.

After that, it seemed there was nothing more to be said.

Fellows who liked D'Arcy—and nearly everyone did—were sorry to see the change in his ways. That it was a change they all believed. Only Levison & Co believed that this was merely an accidental discovery of what had been going on for a long time.

The curious thing was that Arthur Augustus did not seem in the slightest degree ashamed.

The least he could have done, his friends thought, was to look ashamed of himself now that he had been bowled out. But Arthur Augustus only looked puzzled and perplexed. It was really

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as if he did not know what his chums had quarrelled with him for, or why they thought so badly of him all of a sudden, which, of course, from Blake & Co.'s point of view, was absurd.

It was not easy to discuss the matter with Arthur Augustus, either. When Mellish of the Fourth, feeling that they were on a footing now, offered him a cigarette, Arthur Augustus first stared blankly, and then delivered his opinion of Mellish in the plainest of plain English. And when Mellish contended that smoking a cigarette, at least, wasn't quite so bad as backing gee-gees with bookies who had been warned off the Turf, Arthur Augustus pulled Mellish's nose—emphatically—to Mellish's breathless indignation.

It seemed, as Mellish remarked to Levison, that D'Arcy still wanted to ride the high horse, in spite of the indubitable fact that he had been found out.

Better-natured fellows than Mellish spoke to D'Arcy on the subject that day.

Harry Noble of the Shell, though not much given to preaching, felt that it was up to him to say a word, and he tackled D'Arcy in the quadrangle after lessons.

Arthur Augustus greeted him cheerily. He was feeling a little lonely now that he had broken with his chums, though nothing would have induced him to admit it.

"You don't mind my speaking seriously, old chap?" said Kangaroo.

"Not at all, deah boy. I quite approve of a chap speakin' sewiously," said Arthur Augustus. "But pway don't speak about my little wow with my mormah fwriends. That is wathah an unpleasant subject."

"Well, I won't, though I'm sorry to see that you've got on bad terms in your study. But about your little game—"

"Eh?"

"Is it good enough, Gussy?" urged Kangaroo. "You're not the kind of chap for that kind of thing. I know it's not my business, but we've always been good friends, so—"

"Are you alludin' to Blake's wotten suspicion wegardin' me, Kangawoo?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe that I have done somethin' of a disgwaceful nature?" asked Arthur Augustus, his eyes beginning to glitter.

"I know you wouldn't mean to," said Kangaroo practically. "But getting mixed up with a blackguard like that fellow Banks isn't very nice, is it?"

"Mr. Banks is a gentleman whom I wesppect highly."

"You're about the only fellow who does, then," said Kangaroo dryly. "For of all the rotten rotters—"

"I wufuse to heah you speak of Mr. Banks in that way, Kangawoo. If you wepeat such wotten wemarks, I shall punch your nose!"

"Oh, will you?" exclaimed the Cornstalk, nettled. "Well, I'll repeat them fast enough. Banks is a thorough scoundrel, and ought to be in prison!"

"Kangawoo, I should be sowwy to punch your nose, but I shall do so unless you withdwaw that wemark at once!"

"Rats!"

"You heah me, Noble?"

"Yes. Banks is a scoundrel, and you are a silly ass!" exclaimed Kangaroo, quite angry now. "Ah, would you you duffer?"

The next moment they were fighting.

There was a rush from all quarters at once. The Cornstalk was a great fighting man, though he was very peaceable until roused. He had always been on good terms with D'Arcy, as had most of the School House fellows. But they were fighting hammer and tongs now; and Arthur Augustus, though hardly a match for the stalwart Australian, was putting up a great fight.

"A fight—come on!" sang out Wally D'Arcy of the Third, Gussy's younger brother. "Go it, Gussy! You're going to get licked; but go it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pile in, Kangy!"

"Hurrah!"

Blake, Herries and Digby came running up from the footer ground.

What on earth the fight was about they could not imagine. It was really no business of theirs, as D'Arcy was no longer their pal or studymate; but they felt concerned for him.

The Terrible Three also were soon on the spot. The fight was taking place under the elms, fortunately at a good distance from the House.

"What in thunder's the row?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Blake shrugged his shoulders.

"Goodness knows! I don't!"

"Only Gussy looking for trouble and finding it," grinned Levison.

"Separate them," said Talbot.

"Oh, let 'em alone!" said Mellish. "Gussy has wanted a licking for a long time. Yah! You rotter, Blake, keep your elbow out of my ribs!"

"I'll put my fist in your eye if you don't shut up!" snapped Blake.

Talbot ran forward, and Tom Merry followed him. The two combatants were dragged apart.

"Welesee me!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"There's nothing for you two to scrap about," said Talbot. "For goodness' sake, chuck it!"

"I don't want to scrap," said Kangaroo, laughing. "But I can't have my nose punched."

"You said a wotten thing about a friend of mine!" panted Arthur Augustus.

"Well, if he's a friend of yours, I'll say no more about him," said Kangaroo. "But I don't compliment you on your choice of friends!"

"What the deuce—" began Blake.

"Don't you fellows run away with the idea that I've been slanging anybody behind his back!" exclaimed Kangaroo, flushing. "I was speaking of Banks. Gussy didn't like my calling him a scoundrel. I think most of you fellows here will agree with me about that."

"Yes, rather!"

"But since he's Gussy's friend," grinned Kangaroo, "I'll keep my opinion to myself. I won't shove my oar in again, D'Arcy, and you can keep your wool on, and go to the giddy bow-wows without any advice from me!"

And Kangaroo put his hands in his pockets and sauntered away, whistling.

"So you've been fighting about Banks?" said Blake grimly.

Arthur Augustus gave him a steely look.

"Pwae to not address me, Blake! I wufuse to speak to you!"

"Dash it all, Gussy, Banks isn't a friend of yours!" exclaimed Hammond.

"Not exactly a friend, Hammond; but I have a great respect for him, and I wufuse to heah him called by appwobvious names!"

"Well, my 'at!" ejaculated Hammond, overcome with astonishment.

Arthur Augustus walked away, leaving the juniors in a buzz of excitement.

For a fellow to admit publicly such an acquaintance was amazing. And the swell of St. Jim's did not feel in the least ashamed of it.

To most of the fellows it looked as if he was lost to all sense of shame.

After Kangaroo's experience, the fellows left the subject alone. If D'Arcy meant to fly out at a disparaging word about Mr. Banks, it was evidently useless to reason with him.

But at tea-time Kangaroo came into Tom Merry's study, with a thoughtful expression on his face.

"You fellows ready for a scrap?" he asked.

"Any old thing," said Tom Merry. "What is it—a raid on the New House?"

"Oh, blow the New House! I'm thinking of that rotter Banks!"

The captain of the Shell looked very grave.



"But, officer, I did put out my indicator—like this!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to B. Cooper, 1, Waterloo Road, Burslem, Staffs.

"He's in Rylcombe now," he said. "I've seen him about there."

"He's got Gussy under his thumb somehow," said Kangaroo. "Gussy is a good little ass, though he's playing the giddy ox now. That rotter has got an influence over him somehow. He fired up when I called the man a scoundrel!"

"The man is a scoundrel," said Tom.

"Well, suppose we chip in?" suggested the Cornstalk. "The rotter has no right to meddle with a St. Jim's chap. Levison's saying that Gussy has an appointment with him for Saturday. He heard them speaking of it, I believe. At any rate, Gussy will get the sack. He's made himself the talk of the Lower School already, and it won't be long before some of the prefects get to hear of it. That means being hauled up before the beaks, and flogged or sacked!"

"I know," said Tom, looking worried. "You can't blame Blake for getting fed-up; but, as a matter of fact, what Gussy needs just now is a pal to see him through, and save him from making a fool of himself. I simply can't understand him. I'd never have believed it, excepting from his own mouth."

"Well, suppose we chip in and stop that giddy appointment for Saturday?"

"But how?"

"By going to look for Banks, and giving him such a thundering hiding that he won't be able to keep any appointments."

Tom Merry laughed. The Cornstalk's plan was a little drastic, but it suited the Terrible Three. They were concerned about the swell

of the School House, and certainly an unscrupulous rascal who was leading a schoolboy on the road to ruin deserved no mercy.

"I'm on!" said Tom. "The rotter ought to be made an example of. Gussy will certainly get it in the neck if this goes on. It isn't only that he's playing the fool, but he's so jolly reckless about it."

"Then when you've done tea we'll go on the warpath!" grinned Kangaroo. "We'll save Gussy from the giddy road to ruin without asking his permission."

"Right-ho!"

After tea the Shell fellows started. Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn, Kangaroo's chums, joined them. And the six juniors went to look for Mr. Banks, full of grim determination to make him sorry that he had honoured Rylcombe with his presence once more.

CHAPTER 9.

A Painful Duty Well Done!

"MY hat! What luck!" Kangaroo uttered that exclamation.

The chums of St. Jim's were sauntering down the lane to Rylcombe. They knew where Mr. Banks, the bookmaker, was to be found—at the Green Man in the village. Not that they intended to venture into that disreputable haunt; but they hoped to find the rascal hanging about somewhere where they could handle him, and before they were half-way to the village, Kangaroo pointed across the fields towards the towing-path.

A fat figure was visible there in the sunny evening. It was Mr. Banks, the bookmaker, and he was strolling along, with his bowler hat at the back of his head, smoking a cigarette.

"What luck! There's our bird!" said Kangaroo.

"Come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The six juniors pushed through the hedge, and broke into a run towards the river.

Mr. Banks did not observe them. He was sauntering back now at an easy pace, evidently pacing to and fro on the towing-path while waiting for someone to join him.

The juniors could not help wondering whether it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy whom the fat rascal was there to meet.

They came out on the towing-path at a run, and Mr. Banks stopped in his walk, and looked at them.

"Evenin', young gents!" he said affably.

"Waiting for somebody—what?" asked Tom Merry grimly.

Mr. Banks nodded.

"A St. Jim's chap, perhaps?" said Lowther.

"That's telling!" smiled Mr. Banks. "Never tell tales out of school, young gents—that's a good maxim!"

"Are you waiting for a St. Jim's chap?" demanded Tom.

"Find out!" retorted Mr. Banks.

"Well, we don't need to find out—we know!" said Tom. "You've been away from this neighbourhood for some time, Mr. Banks. It would be better for your health if you were to go away again!"

"That's my business, I suppose?" said the bookmaker, staring at him.

"Not entirely!" grinned Kangaroo. "We're making it our business, too. Would you like to

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take a vacation, and keep away from this district altogether?"

"No, I wouldn't!" said Mr. Banks.

"It would be better for your health," said Kangaroo.

"I don't see it. What do you mean?"

"I mean that you're not going to be allowed to get St. Jim's chaps into mischief! You're going to clear off, or take the consequences."

"P'r'aps you're going to make me?" sneered Mr. Banks.



Mr. Banks gave Tom Merry & Co. a leering look as he passed, wot your 'eadmaster has to say about ducking a man!" Tom Merry answered.

"Exactly!"

Mr. Banks backed away a pace or two.

"You touch me—" he began.

"We're going to rag you," said Tom Merry. "You're going to give us your word to clear off, or else we're going to duck you in the river!"

"You cheeky young 'ound!" roared Mr. Banks indignantly.

"Are you going?"

"No blooming fear!" said Mr. Banks emphatically. "And if you lays a 'and on me, I'll thrash yer, and then come up to your 'eadmaster and complain!"

"Collar him!" said Tom.

The juniors made a rush, and Mr. Banks hit out at them savagely. But he was quickly grasped by six pairs of hands, and the next moment the fat bookmaker was on his back in the grass.

He lay there somewhat like an overturned turtle, and roared.

"In with him!" shouted Kangaroo.

"'Elp!" roared Mr. Banks "Perlice! 'Elp!"

But there was no help for the sporting gentleman. He was whirled up, heavyweight as he was, by the six juniors.

They rushed him into the reeds, and held him suspended over the shallow, muddy water of the river's margin. Mr. Banks' eyes almost bulged out of his head.



ed. "I told you I'd come!" he said jeeringly. "We'll see Tom Merry gave him a contemptuous look. "We're quite ready for it," he said.

"Put me down!" he roared. "You young raskils, put me down!"

"We're going to—in the water!" grinned Clifton Dane.

"You don't dare!" shrieked Mr. Banks.

"Will you promise not to have anything more to do with any St. Jim's chap?" asked Tom Merry quietly.

"Hanged if I will!" howled Mr. Banks.

"In with him!"

Splash!

There was a squelching splash as Mr. Banks' heavy, bulky form dropped into the water.

The fat bookmaker squelched and rolled in mud.

There was only six inches or so of water, but the mud was deep and thick.

Mr. Banks sat up in the water, smothered with ooze.

"Gerroh-oooh-oooh!"

"That's the first lesson," said Tom Merry, eyeing him grimly. "We'll look for you again on Saturday, Banks. If we find you anywhere near St. Jim's look out for another ducking!"

"Grooogh!"

Mr. Banks scrambled and floundered wildly out of the water.

Tom Merry & Co. walked away along the towing-path towards the school. They felt they had done their duty, and done it well. The unfortunate Mr. Banks felt that they had done it only too well.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Lowther. "Cutts, by Jove!"

"Cutts!" repeated Tom Merry. "My hat!"

Gerald Cutts, the dandy of the Fifth, was coming towards them with a rapid stride. He looked like a fellow who was going to keep an appointment for which he was already late.

Cutts gave the juniors a glance in passing, and hurried on.

Kangaroo whistled.

"My hat! Was Banks waiting there for Cutts, after all, and not for Gussy?" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha! I shouldn't wonder! We know Cutts meets him."

"Well, he wanted a lesson, all the same, and he's got it!" said Manners. "We know D'Arcy was going to meet him on Saturday, anyway."

"Yes, that's so."

"It will be rather a surprise for Cutts if he's going to meet him!" chuckled Lowther. "He can help Banks get the mud off."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors walked on to the school gates. As they entered, they sighted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walking in the quadrangle with Harry Hammond. Evidently the swell of St. Jim's had no appointment with Mr. Banks for that evening, at least.

Arthur Augustus bestowed a friendly nod upon Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn, and a steely look on the rest.

Tom Merry & Co. were on the list of fellows whom Arthur Augustus wasn't speaking to. That list seemed likely to increase.

Talbot met the Shell fellows as they came in. He laughed when they told him of the happening to Mr. Banks.

"Well, he's asked for it, even if he wasn't there for D'Arcy," said Talbot. "It seems to be an open secret that D'Arcy is going to see him on Saturday!"

"Banks may think better of it after that ducking," said Kangaroo.

"It's a jolly queer business," said Talbot musingly. "I can't help fancying there is a mistake somewhere. It's rather a risky business talking to Gussy about it, according to your experience, Kangy."

Kangaroo chuckled.

"You'll only come to punching noses if you speak about Banks," he said. "Better let the young ass rip."

Talbot nodded. But he was thinking very seriously over the matter. In spite of the apparently conclusive evidence on the subject, Talbot was not satisfied. Yet how there could be a mistake somewhere baffled even Talbot's

clear brain. Arthur Augustus' own word could not be doubted, and Arthur Augustus had admitted everything. But Talbot was not satisfied, nevertheless.

CHAPTER 10.

The Cold Shoulder!

REILLY of the Fourth came into Study No. 5 with a somewhat grim expression on his face.

Study No. 5 belonged to Reilly, Julian, Hammond and Kerruish; but there were five in the study now. Harry Hammond had insisted upon D'Arcy sharing his quarters now that he had left Study No. 6. His studymates had gracefully concurred, hoping that the swell of St. Jim's would soon make it up with his chums, for five was certainly a crowd in a junior study.

As for D'Arcy's disgrace, Julian & Co. did not make any remark on that. They considered that it was no business of theirs; in fact, they had shown almost a painful politeness in avoiding any reference to D'Arcy's undesirable acquaintances. But Reilly was looking quite grim as he came in now. Tea was going on in the study. Arthur Augustus was seated at the table, urbane as usual, though looking somewhat thoughtful.

"A word wid ye, Gussy!" said Reilly.

"Yaas, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus looked up.

"I just heard some jaw downstairs," said Reilly, in his direct way. "I hope there's nothing in it. I know Levison! But I'd rather you told me."

"Pway go on, Weilly!"

"They're saying that you've got an appointment with Mr. Banks for Saturday afternoon."

Arthur Augustus raised his eyebrows.

"I weally fail to see why my pwivate affairs should interest the fellows as they appeah to do," he remarked. "It is vevy surpwisin' to me."

"Sure, your private affairs don't interest me," said Reilly, rather tartly. "But I'd like to know whether that's true or not?"

"Yaas, it is quite cowvect. I suppose one of those eavesdwoopin' boundahs heard me say so in Study No. 6 when I was speakin' to Blake."

"You're going to meet Banks on Saturday?"

"Yaas."

"Howly mother of Moses!" exclaimed Reilly. "You own up to it as cool as a graven image!"

"I see no reason for concealin' it, Weilly."

Reilly grunted.

"Hammond asked us to let you into this study as your pals turned you out," he said. "It's rather a squeeze, but we don't mind that."

"Look 'ere—" began Hammond.

"You misundahstand, Weilly," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity. "I was not turned out of Study No. 6. I wefused to wemahin there. I shook the dust of that study fvwom my feet."

"Sure, an' you can shake the dust of this study from your feet, too," said Reilly grimly.

"Your private affairs don't matter to me a twopenny rap, but if you're going to keep on blagging—"

"What?"

"After disgracing your own study, you can't expect to be allowed to disgrace ours," said Reilly.

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"Gweat Scott!"

"I thought you'd played the fool just once, and that was an end of it," said the Irish junior. "If you're keeping it up we'd prefer your room to your company."

"If you do not appreciate my company in this study, Weilly, I should be the last person to wemahin," he said icily.

"Well, good-bye!" said Reilly, quite unmoved by the elegant Fourth Former's chilly dignity.

"'Old on!" exclaimed Hammond. "You're not going, D'Arcy! You can shut up, Reilly! Gussy's my pal."

"I advise you to be a bit more particular about your pals, Hammond."

"I'll ask you for advice when I want it. Look 'ere—"

"Order!" rapped out Julian. "Reilly's in the right, and I back him up. Gussy ought to chuck up that kind of thing. If he does, he's welcome here—welcome as the flowers in May. If he doesn't, the sooner he goes the better."

"Hear, hear!" said Kerruish heartily.

"Well, I don't say so!" said Hammond doggedly. "This 'ere is my study. Wotever D'Arcy 'as done, he's goin' to stay 'ere."

"Thank you vevy much, Hammond," said Arthur Augustus. "But it is impos for me to wemahin anywhere where my pwesence is unwelcome. Your fwienids seem to have altahed their opinion of me, for some weason I cannot quite compwehend. If they wepeat such wemahks outside the study I shall call them to account. I do not wish to make a wow in anothah fellow's quartahs, but I must wemahk that any person who accuses me of questionable conduct is a wotten slandewah!"

Reilly flushed red.

"That's for me, I suppose!" he exclaimed.

"But, sure, I don't call your conduct questionable—there isn't much question about it! On what you say yourself, you're a shady black-guard!"

"You uttah wotteh—"

"And I'll repeat that outside this study if you want me to," said Reilly. "I'll repeat it in the quad and sing it over in the New House, if you like."

"Vevy well. I shall ask you to come into the gym," said Arthur Augustus quietly. "You also, Julian, and you, Kevvuish, and any fellow who considahs that there is anythin' shady in my conduct."

"Steady on, D'Arcy!" said Hammond.

Arthur Augustus carefully adjusted his eyeglass and turned it on the Cockney junior.

"Hammond, you have made a wemahk which appeahs to me to wequiah some explanation. You wemahked that I should be welcome here, what-evah I had done. I am vevy much obliged to you, but I must ask you to explain that wemahk. Are you undah the impresshion that I have done anythin' to be ashamed of?"

Hammond could only stare.

"You have always been a fwienid of mine," continued Arthur Augustus. "Pway do not suppose that I desire to quawwel with you, Hammond. But I must weally ask you to answah that question."

"I—I—" stammered Hammond blankly.

Arthur Augustus' eye glittered behind his monocle.

"Do you agwee with Weilly's wotten wemahks, Hammond?"

"No, I don't," said Hammond sturdily. "Whatever you done, I stand by you. And whatever you does again, I stand by you, though I wish you'd think better of it."

"You are implyin', Hammond, that you believe me guilty of shady conduct?"

"Well, you—you see—" stuttered Hammond. "You always looked on that there kind of thing as shady yourself, D'Arcy. When I first come 'ere, you told me so. Now you've gorn and done it yourself."

D'Arcy looked at him fixedly.

"There appeals to me to be a gwovin' pwejustice against me in this House," he said. "You are the vevy last person, Hammond, I should have expected to believe a wotten slandah against me. I should have weliyed upon you even more than upon my formah fwriends."

Hammond looked bewildered, as well he might.

"But—but it ain't a slander, if you admit it yourself!" he faltered.

"I admit nothin' of the sort."

"But—but you have admitted it!" stammered Hammond. "Unless I'm dreamin', you 'ave!"

"Then you are certainly dwreamin', Hammond!"

"Blessed if I understand that spalpeen at all," said Reilly, puzzled. "D'Arcy knows as well as we do what all the fellows think of what he's done."

"I wefuse to speak to you, Weilly! I will not address a single word to you in any circumstances whatevah!"

Reilly grinned.

"But I am sowvy, Hammond, to see that you are undah a mistaken impression. You have allowed some slandewin' cad to deceive you, I pwesume. But until you change your opinion of me, and expwess your wegwet for havin' entahained it at all, I am sowvy to say that I must dwop your acquaintance."

"D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus turned his back and walked out of the study.

The chums of Study No. 5 stared at one another as the door closed behind the aristocratic figure of the swell of St. Jim's.

Hammond rubbed his nose.

"This 'ere beats me," he said slowly.

Reilly snorted.

"I suppose everybody's got to change his views at the same time as D'Arcy," he said sarcastically. "When father says turn, we all turn! Poof!"

"He'll be disappointed!" growled Kerruish.

Hammond left the study, with a subdued and troubled face. He was ready to stand by the noble Gussy, even if it came to the sack for the swell of St. Jim's. But to believe that he was doing right when he knew that he was doing wrong—that was rather too great a strain, even for the faithful Hammond. He looked for Arthur Augustus, and found him in the quadrangle. But he had no chance of speaking to him. Arthur Augustus gave him one steely glare and walked in another direction.

Hammond stood dismayed. Even Hammond had been added to the list of fellows whom D'Arcy no longer knew.

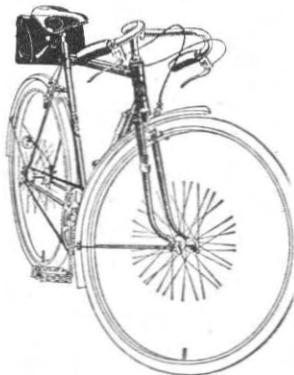
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CHAPTER 11.
Before the Beaks!

"GREAT Christopher Columbus!"
"Banks, by thunder!"
"And here!"

Mr. Banks did not seem at all discomposed by the sensation he made as he came lounging across the quadrangle from the gates.

Tom Merry & Co. spotted him and stared.

Mr. Banks had threatened to come to their headmaster and complain of the rough handling he had received earlier. But that the disreputable rascal would have the nerve to come to St. Jim's and face the grave and reverend Head they had never dreamed.

But he had come! Here he was—newly swept and garnished after his muddy ducking, but looking as fat and coarse as ever.

Mr. Banks was evidently out for vengeance.

The juniors exchanged glances. Their treatment of Mr. Banks had been high-handed, they could not deny that—but they felt that it was justified. Almost any means were justified in driving away an unscrupulous rascal, who was seeking to lead a thoughtless schoolboy into vicious ways. They believed that the Head himself would not blame them if he knew the facts.

But it occurred to Tom Merry & Co. now that there was a "but."

If they explained to the Head that they had ducked Mr. Banks for leading a St. Jim's fellow into his own rascally ways, Dr. Holmes would certainly take a lenient view of the matter—providing they proved their assertion. If they had acted on suspicion, the Head was bound to visit condign punishment upon them. They could prove their assertion easily enough—but only by giving Arthur Augustus away. And that was not to be thought of for a moment.

Mr. Banks came up to the School House and gave the chums a leering look as he passed them.

It was clear that the vengeful rascal considered his hour of triumph had come.

"I told you I'd come!" he said jeeringly. "We'll see wot your 'eadmaster has to say about ducking a man!"

Tom Merry gave him a contemptuous look.

"We're quite ready to answer for it," he said. "And you'll get another ducking if we catch you near this school again!"

"And a bumping along with it!" said Lowther.

"We'll see about that," said Mr. Banks. "We'll see!"

And he strode on and passed in at the open doorway.

"What do you want here?"

It was a sharp voice. Mr. Railton had seen the fat bookmaker from his study window, and he came out into the Hall to meet him.

Mr. Banks faced the Housemaster coolly.

"I've called to see the 'Ead!" he replied.

"Then it is unparalleled impudence on your part!" exclaimed the Housemaster. "You have no business with Dr. Holmes!"

"I've been ducked by a gang of young 'ooligans belonging to this 'ere school," said Mr. Banks coolly. "If I don't see the 'eadmaster, I'm going to the police to lay a charge of assault."

"You say that boys belonging to this school have molested you?" exclaimed Mr. Railton, taken aback.

"Yes, I does, and if you think I'm going to take it lying down—"

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"That will do. In those circumstances, you have a right to lay a complaint before Dr. Holmes. Follow me!"

Mr. Banks, abashed in spite of his impudence, followed the Housemaster. He was taken into the Head's study.

Jack Blake joined the Terrible Three in the quad. He was looking almost scared.

"You've seen that beast?" he asked, referring to the estimable Mr. Banks.

"Yes. He's gone to the Head."

"Does that mean that it's all up with D'Arcy?" asked Blakø. "Has the cad gone to give him away?"

"No, no! It's us!"

"Eh? You haven't been blagging with Banks, I suppose?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"No; we gave him a ducking as a warning to keep clear of St. Jim's."

Blake looked relieved.

"Oh, I see! And he's got the nerve to come here and complain!"

"Looks like it. I—I suppose he knows we shan't mention Gussy's name, and so we haven't much excuse for handling him."

Monty Lowther rubbed his hands anticipatively.

"Query—caning or flogging?" he remarked.

"Really, Blake, you might have kept your prize idiot in better order. We're landed in something now. I never thought the cad would have the cheek to come here!"

"Well, I'm glad it's nothing worse," said Blake.

"Worse, you ass! What could be worse than a licking all round for us?" demanded Manners indignantly.

"Well, I thought it was all up with D'Arcy when I saw that rotter coming in. Of course, you can't give D'Arcy away."

"Of course not, ass!"

"D'Arcy ought really to own up, and see you clear," said Blake uneasily. "It's up to him!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Don't speak to him. He doesn't know anything about it so far. We don't want to drag him into a serious row to get out of a licking."

"We did it of our own accord, without asking Gussy's permission," grinned Lowther. "It wouldn't be fair to drag Gussy into it now. But really I do wish you'd keep the prize duffer on a chain!"

Kangaroo came up, looking quite cheery.

"We're in for it!" he remarked. "Well, it was worth it, you know. And we'll take it out of Banks another time."

Mr. Railton looked out of the School House, and beckoned to the group of juniors. They approached reluctantly.

"Merry, you are wanted in Dr. Holmes' study; you, and all the juniors who were with you when you assaulted Mr. Banks."

"We didn't assault him, sir," said Tom. "We ducked him!"

"I think it comes to the same thing," said Mr. Railton. "You will be allowed to explain your conduct, if you can. Go to the Head's study at once."

"Yes, sir."

Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn were sent for, and the whole party followed the Housemaster to the Head's study. They found Mr. Banks there, looking surlily. The Head was very grave.

"Are these the boys, Mr. Banks?" he asked.

The Head's manner towards the fat rascal was

one of grave courtesy. His private opinion of Mr. Banks did not make any difference to that.

"They're the young raskils, sir," said Mr. Banks. "There was six of them; and I reckon they're the six. I could swear to three of 'em, anyway."

"Merry, you and your companions appear to have attacked Mr. Banks in an utterly lawless and unjustifiable manner," said Dr. Holmes. "Have you any explanation to offer? I desire to hear both sides of the matter."

"We ducked him, sir," said Tom.
 "You admit it?"

"We were all willing," said Glyn. "We thought the rotter ought to be stopped, and we think so still."

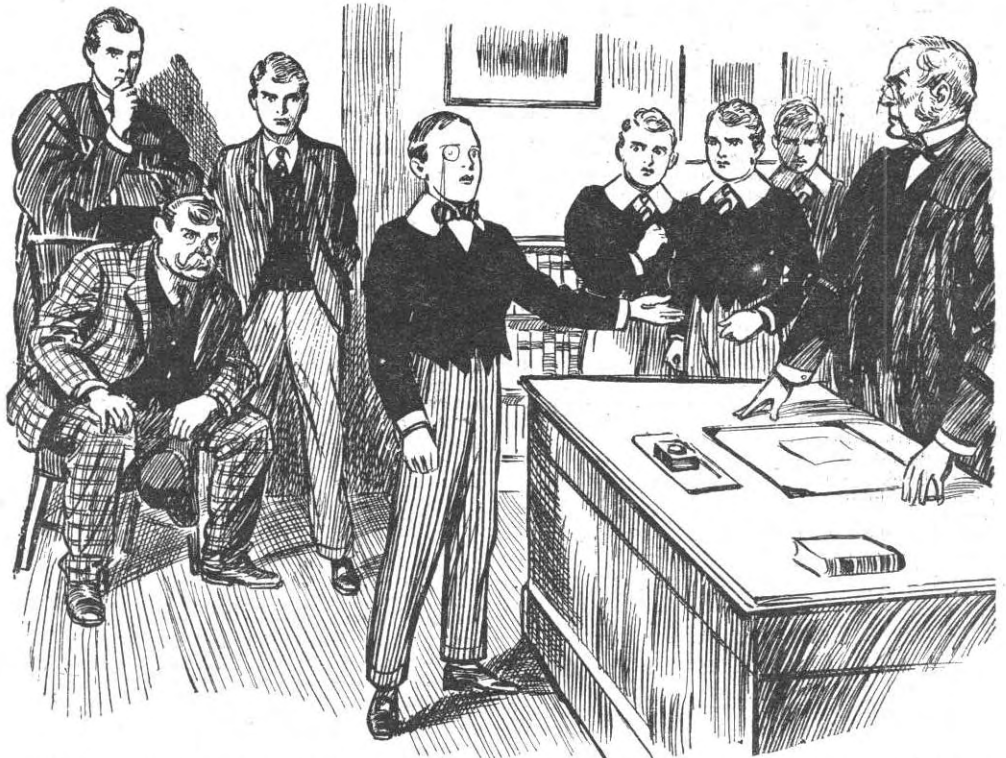
"Stopped?" repeated the Head.

"He was up to no good, sir."

"You must explain a little more fully than that," said the Head, regarding the juniors very curiously. "Of what do you accuse Mr. Banks?"

"He was getting a St. Jim's chap to bet and blag with him!" blurted out Tom Merry desperately.

"Blag!" repeated the Head. He knew half a dozen languages, but he had no acquaintance with



"I am wathah in the dark, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I have been informed that these fellows have been duckin' my fwriend Banks." Tom Merry suppressed a groan. Was the swell of St. Jim's out of his senses? His frank admission of his friendship for the bookmaker came as a shock to everyone in the room.

"It's true, sir. We thought we were justified."

"You mean that Mr. Banks gave you provocation?"

"Yes, sir."

"It's a lie!" growled Mr. Banks. "Never said a word!"

"What provocation did Mr. Banks give you, Merry?" asked the Head, apparently not hearing the bookmaker's interjection.

"We thought a rotter like that oughtn't to be allowed to hang round the school, sir."

"Merry! You ventured to take the law into your own hands in such an outrageous way—"

"It was really my idea, sir," said Kangaroo. "I thought of it, and asked these fellows to join me."

the verb "to blag." "What can you possibly mean, Merry?"

Tom coloured.

"I—I mean to—to be a blackguard, sir," he stammered. "We call it blagging."

"Bless my soul! What a very remarkable expression!" said the Head. "I presume that that is some kind of slang?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Your statement is a very serious one, Merry. You imply that some boy belonging to this school has had dealings of a questionable character with Mr. Banks?"

"That's no secret, sir."

"It was certainly a secret to me. Who is the boy you speak of?"

Tom Merry's lips closed hard.

"I am waiting for your answer, Merry," said the Head sharply.

"I can't give you the name, sir," said Tom at last. "We chipped in to save a chap from making a fool of himself, not to get him into a row. We'd rather be flogged than give him away, if—if you'll excuse us saying so, sir."

There was a pause. Mr. Railton looked out of the window. Dr. Holmes drummed on his desk for a moment or two, then he turned to Mr. Banks.

"Mr. Banks, is it a fact that you had dealings with a boy belonging to this school?"

"No, it ain't," said Mr. Banks sullenly.

"That's not true," said Monty Lowther. "He was waiting on the towing-path for a chap to join him, when we ducked him, sir. As it happens, it wasn't the chap we were looking after. It was another chap. But there was no doubt about it. We saw the chap hurrying to meet him. And we know he's done it before!"

Mr. Banks' expression changed. He had not suspected that his connection with Cutts of the Fifth was known. Mr. Banks' connection with the Fifth Form dandy was far too profitable for him to wish to risk anything coming to light. For the first time, the bookmaker understood that it was in the power of the juniors to "give away" the whole game, if they chose, so far as Cutts was concerned. The prospect was dismaying to the bookmaker.

The Head's keen eyes noted the change in his fat face. His eyes met Mr. Railton's, and the Housemaster nodded.

"I will not ask you the name of the boy you speak of, Lowther," said the Head quietly. "It has always been my object to discourage anything in the nature of informing. But I do not doubt your statement. A very strict inquiry will be made. Mr. Banks, this lets in a new light on the matter. I do not justify these boys in taking the law into their own hands. They should certainly not have done so, but—"

A tap at the door interrupted the Head.

CHAPTER 12.

Up to D'Arcy!

"HERE he is!"

While the interview was going on in the Head's study, Levison & Co. were looking for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

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They found the swell of St. Jim's sauntering under the elms in the quadrangle in solitary state.

It was rather a new experience for the Honourable Arthur Augustus to be lonely; but he was certainly feeling lonely now.

But he did not look pleased when Levison and Mellish and Crooke and Racke came up.

He regarded them with a lofty stare.

"Here he is!" chuckled Crooke. "You're wanted, Gussy!"

"Weally, Cwooke—"

"It's time for you to own up!" chortled Mellish.

"You've simply got to own up!" grinned Racke. "No good sticking out here on your lonesome and pretending you don't know anything about it! We've come to tell you, Mr. Lofty Adolphus!"

"I fail to compwehend, Wacke!"

"Then I'll jolly well explain!" grinned Racke.

"If you don't own up, you won't be able to pretend you didn't know. Banks has come here!"

Arthur Augustus started.

"Do you mean my fwient Banks?" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes; your friend Banks!" chortled Levison. "Tom Merry and his gang have been ducking him, and he's come to complain."

"They have been duckin' my fwient Banks?" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes!"

"Imposs!"

"They collared him on the towing-path and ducked him!" grinned Crooke. "Tom Merry and the rest are in the Head's study now, called up before the beaks."

"Serve them wright!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "If they have laid a finger on poor old Banks, I will give them a feaful thwashin' all wround!"

"Poor old Banks!" repeated Levison. "He's not so jolly old, I fancy."

"You uttah ass! He is sixty, at least!"

"What rot! But never mind his age. Are you going to own up? They chipped in on your account, and it's up to you to say so. They won't mention your name. You know that."

"I weally do not undahstand you, Levison. And I wufuse to believe that Tom Mewwy would lay a wuff hand on a man old enough to be his gwand-fathah, especially such a worthy and respectable old gentleman as my fwient Banks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That means that you're not going to own up?" sneered Racke. "Well, all the fellows will know what to think of you if you don't!"

Arthur Augustus did not reply. He turned his back on the cads of the School House, and hurried away towards the House.

Talbot of the Shell had just come out, and D'Arcy hastened towards him.

"Talbot, deah boy!" Talbot was still a dear boy; Arthur Augustus had not quarrelled with him yet, doubtless owing to Talbot's tact in refraining from mentioning controversial matters. "Talbot, deah boy, has my fwient Banks come here? Levison says so."

"Mr. Banks has come here," said Talbot. "He's in the Head's study now, with Tom Merry and the rest. They ducked him!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"I cannot doubt your word, Talbot, but it appears imposs. What did they duck the old chap for?"

"Because he asked for it, I suppose," said Talbot dryly. "And if you regard him as a poor old chap, you're quite alone in your opinion."

"I twust, Talbot, you are not joinin' in this inexplicable and unweasonable pwejudice against my fwient Banks?" said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, my hat!" was all Talbot could say.

"If you have anythin' to say against my fwient Banks, Talbot, I shall be obliged to dwp your acquaintance, as I have dwopted that of the othah wottahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Talbot hurriedly.

Kildare of the Sixth was coming towards them, and he had caught D'Arcy's words, and he glanced quickly at the two juniors. But D'Arcy did not see the prefect, who was behind him, and he went on in wrathful tones:

"I wefuse to shut up! Ewevy detwactah of that vevy worthy gentleman is a wottah! I am surprised at you, Talbot! My fwient Banks—"

Arthur Augustus broke off as a hand dropped on his collar.

"Bai Jove! Leggo, Kildare!"

Kildare looked at him grimly.

"So Banks is your friend, is he?" the captain of St. Jim's asked.

"Yaas, wathah!" replied Arthur Augustus undauntedly. "I see no weason for concealin' the fact, Kildare."

"You may see a reason after you've heard what the Head has to say about it!" the prefect remarked dryly. "Come with me! Some of your friends have got into trouble for ducking your friend Banks, and I rather think your evidence will be useful."

"If they have laid a fingah on my fwient Banks, I weward them with uttah despision—I mean, contempt—and I shall thwash them all wound!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly.

"So you're in the habit of seeing Mr. Banks—what?" said Kildare.

"Not exactly, Kildare. I have seen him twice, and I have to see him again on Saturday aftahnoon—"

"You have business with him, do you mean?"

"Yaas; about a horse."

"Great Scott!"

Kildare was too astounded to say anything further. It was surprising enough that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy should be mixed up in such things, but that he should say so coolly to the head prefect of the House was almost unnerving. Kildare marched him away to the Head's study and tapped at the door.

Even then Arthur Augustus showed no signs of uneasiness. His nerve was unshaken as he entered the awful presence of the Head.

CHAPTER 13.

Light at Last!

"COME in!"

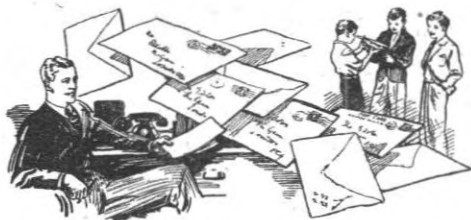
Dr. Holmes looked surprised as Kildare came in, with his hand on Arthur Augustus's shoulder.

"Excuse my interrupting you, sir!" said Kildare. "D'Arcy can throw some light on this matter, I think."

"Indeed! Then I shall be glad to hear him," said Dr. Holmes.

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances of dismay. They had kept the secret at risk to themselves,

(Continued on the next page.)



THE EDITOR'S CHAIR.

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

HALLO, CHUMS!—Here we are again—all merry and bright and, like most of you, looking forward to the first holiday of the year. As I write these words the sun is shining and there seems to be every prospect of a fine Easter. Let's hope that mythical person the weather clerk won't serve us any treacherous tricks at the week-end. Anyhow, here's wishing you all a grand time!

"THE PRICE OF SILENCE!"

For next Wednesday there is another splendid programme of fun, fiction, and fact. The star feature is, of course, the long complete St. Jim's story, which bears the above title. It introduces Arthur St. Leger, one of the "smart set" in the Fifth, and a pal of Cutts.

St. Leger is caught gambling by Major Stringer, a St. Jim's governor. The Fifth Former is in a blue funk, and he refuses to disclose his name. But that makes little difference, for the major will soon identify him at the school. St. Leger realises that he's booked for the "sack," unless something drastic is done. That's where Cutts comes in—and Baggy Trimble—and between them they fake up a perfect alibi. However, it's one thing for St. Leger to escape expulsion with Trimble's help, but it's quite another to keep the fat junior's mouth shut afterwards!

This is a great story, and readers will vote it one of the best of the year.

"THE REMOVE WELCOME!"

Frank Richards' next yarn of Harry Wharton & Co.'s early adventures is very amusing, and shows the Remove in a new light. Cliff House, a school for girls, is opening near Greyfriars, and the Remove decide to give Miss Penelope Primrose and her fair pupils a public welcome when they arrive. But the juniors seem very bashful about meeting so many girls, and the party dwindles until only twelve are left to greet the newcomers!

How that welcome is carried out by the shy juniors, and how Wharton—thanks to Bulstrode—is made to look foolish before the girls' school, will keep you in roars of laughter.

How do you like the new feature "In Town To-Day?" Novel and amusing, isn't it? Gussy takes his place before the "mike" next week, and I am sure you will all be interested to hear what he has to say. Then Monty Lowther has some good jokes and wisecracks he's itching to tell you, and our stamp expert contributes another full-of-facts article. Finally, illustrated jokes and "Pen Pals" wind up the programme.

A REMINDER.

Just a reminder before I sign off. Don't forget, chums, that three grand new issues of that ever-popular library "Schoolboys' Own" are just out. As I told readers last week, one of them is a gripping Easter holiday yarn of Tom Merry & Co. called "The Mystery of Holly Lodge!" and it's too good to miss. So is "The Downfall of Harry Wharton!" while the third number, "The Crook Schoolmaster!" featuring the St. Frank's boys, contains many hours of exciting reading.

See you next week, chums! Cheerio!

THE EDITOR.
THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 1,574.

but it was all up now. Kildare evidently knew, and the prefect's duty was to report the reckless young rascal. The game was up:

Arthur Augustus did not even glance at Mr. Banks. The juniors naturally expected some sign of guilt or alarm at the sight of the bookmaker, but D'Arcy seemed almost unaware of his presence in the study.

Dr. Holmes looked sharply at the Fourth Former.

"Do you know anything about this matter, D'Arcy?"

"I am wathah in the dark, sir," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I have been informed that these fellows have been duckin' my fiwend Banks."

"What?"

Tom Merry suppressed a groan. Was the swell of St. Jim's out of his senses? He had talked



"My husband doesn't like the larder any other way. He works in a grocery store."

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in this strain among the juniors, but to the Head—such reckless hardihood was simply unimaginable.

Dr. Holmes' brow was like a thundercloud. Mr. Railton looked startled, but Arthur Augustus went on cheerfully:

"My fiwend Banks, sir—"

"You speak of Mr. Banks as your friend, D'Arcy?"

"Certainly, sir! I wegard him as a vewy respectable old gentleman, and my fiwend."

Mr. Banks looked astounded.

"Off 'is onion!" he murmured.

"I think the matter grows clear," said the Head dryly. "D'Arcy is the boy with whom Mr. Banks has had dealings, I presume? As he admits it, you need not hesitate to speak out, Merry."

"Well, yes, sir!" almost groaned Tom. "But—Gussy couldn't have meant any harm, sir. He's simply a silly ass, sir! I—I mean—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Blessed if I catch on to this!" ejaculated Mr. Banks. "I don't know anything about this young gent—ain't never spoke to 'im that I remembers. It was another young gent. I—I mean, it wasn't nobody—"

"Do you recognise this man as a friend of yours, D'Arcy?" asked the Head, in a voice that resembled thunder.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Mr. Banks with a withering look.

"That man, sir? Certainly not!"

"Are you out of your senses, boy?"

"I twest not!"

"You are aware that this man is Mr. Banks, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,574.

I suppose, whom you have spoken of as your friend?"

Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove! Yaas, I wemembah now that the wottah's name is Banks, sir!" he said. "I had weally forgotten all about it. I am not in the habit of takin' any notice of such disweputable persons, or takin' the twouble to wemembah their names."

The Head looked bewildered.

Tom Merry & Co. wondered whether they were dreaming. But Mr. Railton struck in mildly:

"Are you acquainted with some other man of the same name, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Oh!" gasped the juniors blankly.

"You were alluding to some other person as your friend Banks?" exclaimed the Head.

"Weally, Dr. Holmes, I am surprised at that question! Is it possible that you suppose for one moment that I would wecognise that disweputable person as a fiwend? I am weally surprised!"

"Answer my question, boy!"

"Yaas, sir! My fiwend Banks is a vewy respectable old gentleman."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"Oh, holy smoke!" gasped Tom Merry.

"D'Arcy, kindly explain who your friend Banks is, and your dealings with him, and how you made his acquaintance," said the Head sternly.

"I have no objection, sir. I did not mean to say anythin' about it; but it is no secwet. I first heard of him at the vicah's, sir, when I went to the vicawage to tea. The vicah happened to mention poor old Banks," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "He is an old soldiah, sir, and he has fallen on wathah hard times. The vicah is helpin' him. Poor old Banks is stony—"

"What?"

"I mean he is hard up, sir. He lives in a little cottage near Wayland, and I went ovah to see him."

"Then—then it was an old soldier chap you sent that pound to?" asked Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I wish you would not dwag out twifin' details like that! That has nothin' to do with it. You see, sir, old Banks could get a job as a cawwiah if he had a horse, and he could earn an honest livin'—"

"A—a horse!" stuttered Kangaroo. "That was in the letter. You went to see him about a horse—"

"Natuwally, I went to see him about it, Kangawoo, as I had promised to manage it for him somehow. I have asked my patah, sir, to find the money to buy a horse for poor old Banks, and Lord Eastwood has been makin' inquiries, and he is goin' to do it," said Arthur Augustus. "My fiwend Banks will be set on his feet, and he will be able to earn his own livin'. I considered it my duty, sir, to look ahtah the old chap."

"I suppose your father will bear out your statements, D'Arcy?" said the Head, looking very curiously at Arthur Augustus.

"Yaas, sir; my patah would beah out my statements, if necessary. But, of course, I expect you to wely on my word without cowwobowation."

The Head grinned, and Mr. Railton smiled, and Kildare coughed.

Arthur Augustus was a little too much for them. "Mr. Banks"—the Head turned to the bookmaker—"these boys assailed you under a misapprehension. But it is clear to me that you have had dealings with a boy belonging to this school, though not the boy they supposed. That



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being the case, I refuse to inflict any punishment for their action. If you are not satisfied, you can take legal measures. I have no more to say to you."

Mr. Banks opened his fat lips for a torrent of abuse. But Mr. Railton's grip closed on his arm like a vice, and he was led out of the study—silent.

Mr. Railton's grip did not relax till the book-maker was outside the school gates. There the fat rascal was left to tramp away cursing and to take legal measures if he liked—a very improbable proceeding on the part of Mr. Banks, who was on the very worst of terms with the law.

Tom Merry & Co. left the Head's study with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. In the passage they collared him, and yanked him away to Study No. 6.

Blake, Herries and Digby jumped up from their preparation in amazement as Gussy was yanked into the room.

"What the merry thunder—" exclaimed Blake.

"It's all serene," said Tom Merry. "The silly ass was only pulling our leg all the time, pretending to be blagging."

"What!"

"You uttah ass, I was not pwetendin' anythin' of the sort!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"He doesn't know Banks," chortled Kangaroo. "Doesn't know him from Adam! Forgotten that there was such a person, by Jove! Ha, ha, ha!"

"The idiot has dug up another chap named Banks," explained Tom Merry, gasping. "He wouldn't say a word about it. Gussy is the kind of chap who does good by stealth, you know. There's an old soldier named Banks. That's Gussy's Banks."

"And a jolly good Banks, too!" grinned Lowther. "As good as the Bank of England!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Blake.

"Why didn't you tell us so, Gussy, you silly idiot?" roared Herries.

"Don't wear at me!" said Arthur Augustus. "How could I know you were labouwin' undah such a widiculous misappwewhension, you uttah asses? I had uttably forgotten the existence of that wascally bookmakah Banks. I did not know he had come back to Wylcombe at all. I am not in the habit of thinkin' about such wottahs in the slightest degwee. There are lots of people

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PEN PALS COUPON

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named Banks, you uttah asses! And I certainly should not have expected a friend of mine to suppose that I knew that wottah Banks—"

"But you said you knew Banks!" yelled Dig.

"That was the othah Banks, you ass!"

"We didn't know there was any other Banks, you crass idiot!"

"I wefuse to be called a cwass idiot! I wefuse to speak to you fellows at all! I undahstand the cause now of your remarkably idiotic conduct, but I cannot ovahlook the fact that you have supposed that I was acquainted with Banks. I therefore wefuse to wewnew your acquaintance, unless you apologise all wound."

"We'll bump you instead," said Blake. And they did!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did renew the acquaintance of his old chums, and he took up his old quarters in Study No. 6. He persisted that they were to blame for the absurd misunderstanding, and they persisted that he was to blame.

But one point they agreed upon—that Levison of the Fourth was to blame for having purloined the letter in the first place, and started the story that it was from the wrong Banks. So Levison was bumped till he roared, full justice being done in his case. More than justice had been done in Mr. Banks' case. But Tom Merry & Co. agreed that he deserved the ducking, on general principles.

And on Saturday afternoon Arthur Augustus kept his appointment with his friend Banks, and Tom Merry & Co. went with him, and made the acquaintance of the old soldier; now in possession of the horse provided by Lord Eastwood, and a cart provided by the vicar, and in business as a village carrier.

And the chums of St. Jim's were so chummy with Gussy's friend Banks that Arthur Augustus felt that he could fully forgive them for thinking that he was a rotter.

THE END.

(For Next Wednesday: "THE PRICE OF SILENCE!"—a powerful yarn of a St. Jim's senior who faked an alibi to escape expulsion, only to find himself under the thumb of a junior who helped him! Don't forget to order your GEM early.)

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THE OUTCAST OF THE REMOVE, WHAT CHANCE HAS MARK LINLEY OF PROVING THAT HE'S NOT A SNEAK?

The Boy Without A Friend!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK.

Since Mark Linley, the scholarship boy, came to Greyfriars, he has been persecuted by Bulstrode, Skinner, Snoop, and Stott, the snobbish set in the Remove, and matters reach a head when they seek to tar and feather him. But Mark resists so strongly that his enemies, except Snoop, find themselves as tarry as their victim!

Snoop escapes, but Linley chases him to get revenge, only to run into Mr. Quelch! The Remove master inquires about Linley's tarry state, and Snoop tells him that Bulstrode is the ringleader. Skinner, Snoop, and Stott are severely punished, and Bulstrode is booked for a Head's flogging.

Fearing the wrath of Bulstrode, Snoop lies that Linley sneaked to Mr. Quelch. When the Remove hear about it, the scholarship boy is sent to Coventry.

(Now read on.)

Alone!

HAZELDENE, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, was looking very pleased with himself as he came into Study No. 1. Harry Wharton & Co. could guess what was coming before he told them.

"Is Marjorie coming here?" asked Bob Cherry. Hazeldene grinned and nodded.

"That's it. Mrs. Locke has asked her to stay with Molly, and she'll be here to-morrow morning. Thought I'd look in and tell you."

"Jolly good!" said Wharton.

Miss Molly, the Head's young daughter, was one of the powers at Greyfriars, and she had bestowed her royal regard upon Hazeldene's sister.

"But, I say, what are you fellows shut up here jawing for, when things are going on?" asked Hazeldene.

"Anything happened?" asked Wharton.

"Yes. That chap Linley; he's for it at last. Bulstrode and his set tried to tar and feather him."

"Cads!"

"Well, it was rather rough, and they've made our study into a fearful state, and smothered themselves also. But the worst of it is that Linley complained to Quelch."

"Not to be wondered at, either," said Wharton, frowning. "The cads ought to have a thundering good hiding each."

"They've had it, except Bulstrode; and he's going to be flogged to-morrow morning."

"Serve him right!"

"I don't disagree with you, but I suppose you won't back up Linley?"

"No," said Wharton slowly. "I suppose the poor chap was exasperated and blurted out something. He's not the kind of chap to sneak. But is there any proof that he did sneak, though?"

"He hasn't denied it, as far as I know, but

it wouldn't be much use. He brought Quelch straight to Bulstrode's study, and the beak started on the ragers at once. Skinner, Snoop, and Stott have been caned, and Bulstrode is going to be flogged by the Head in the morning."

"Serve him right; but it's rough on Linley. I'm sorry he told about Bulstrode; it's not what I should have expected of him," said Wharton. "But the fault is with the cads who were ragging him."

"My worthy chum is terrifically correctful."

"Well, he's sent to Coventry by the whole Form now," said Hazeldene. "I don't want to be down on him, but I'm not going to speak to him any more. I know he was roughly used, but he had no right to sneak."

"Yes, if it's proved," said Wharton musingly.

"Not much doubt on that point. He's been rowing with Russell and Lacy since he was sent to Coventry, and I hear they've turned him out of the study, and he's taken his traps into the Form-room."

Harry Wharton rose to his feet.

"Where are you going?" asked Nugent quickly.

"To speak to Linley."

"But I say, old chap, if he's really sneaked, we can't stand by him," said Nugent uneasily. "I don't believe in kicking a chap who's down, but we're bound to bar sneaking to the masters."

"I'd rather hear the account from Linley's own lips before I condemn him," said Harry, and he left the study.

Wharton liked the Lancashire lad, and he was sorry for him. But badly as the junior had been treated, schoolboy honour required that he should fight his own battles without bringing any of the masters into the disputes. If he had failed on this point, there was no question about the result—he would have to be sent to Coventry by the whole Form.

There was a glimmer of light under the door of the Remove Form Room. Wharton pushed open the door and entered. Mark Linley sat there with his books. He was working.

He looked up as Wharton came in, and his face lighted.

"Wharton!"

"I heard you were here, Linley, and I want to speak to you," said Harry, stopping at his desk. "I know all about it."

"You know I am sent to Coventry? Yet you are speaking to me!"

"I want to know the facts. They say you sneaked to the Form-master, and I—"

Linley turned crimson.

"And you have come to ask me if it's true?" he asked. Harry Wharton nodded. "Well," said Mark, setting his teeth, "you needn't ask the question. I shall not answer it if you do. Have you anything else to say?"

Wharton flushed in his turn.

YOU'LL ENJOY EVERY WORD OF THIS GRIPPING YARN OF THE CHUMS OF GREYFRIARS.

He had not a patient temper, and Linley's manner was decidedly unpleasant—for the first time towards Wharton. Harry did not understand then how the implied doubt of his honour had stung the junior.

Mark had pride as high as Wharton's own, and he resented the question. He thought that Harry ought to have trusted him—to have taken it for granted that he was innocent. Perhaps Mark was a little overstrained, too, but it was what he had gone through that made him so.

"I don't see why you shouldn't answer a question," said Wharton tartly. "I came here to speak to you civilly—"

"You needn't have taken the trouble. I'm not on my defence. If I have a friend he will trust me, but I suppose I can't expect to have a friend here. If you choose to think ill of me, please yourself."

"That's not the way to clear yourself. The Remove are entitled to hear your defence, if you have one to make"

"They've not given me much chance of making one," said Mark bitterly. "But I would not make it, if they did. They've been seeking, ever since I came here, to get some handle against me—something that would excuse their being down on me. But I don't care for the whole Form! Let them leave me alone, that's all I ask."

"Does that apply to me, too?" asked Wharton, with rising temper.

"Yes, if you like to take it so."

"Very well," said Wharton.

He turned on his heel and walked out of the room. Mark looked after him with fierce, unyielding eyes

"Let him go!" he muttered bitterly. "Let him go, with the rest!"

And his pen travelled over the paper again. His face was pale and worn, but he worked on steadily.

The Outcast!

"SNEAK!"

Someone called out the word as Mark Linley entered the Remove dormitory. The junior from Lancashire did not appear to hear it. He walked straight towards his bed without a glance to right or left.

Harry Wharton looked at him, and made a step towards him, but Mark's manner was not encouraging. He seemed to be as grimly unconscious of Harry as of the rest. And the captain of the Remove did not speak.

"Sneak!"

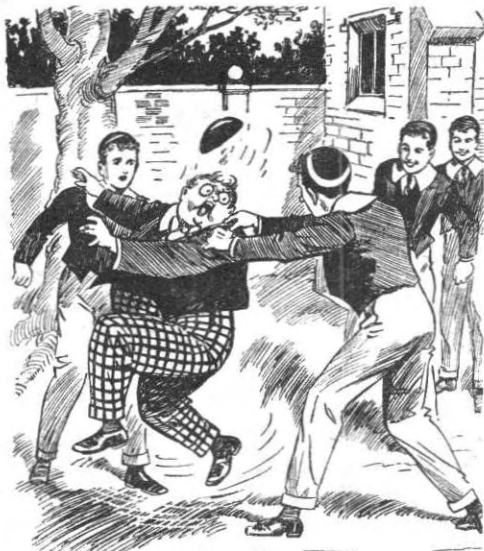
It was Groom who called out the word. Harry Wharton looked round towards him.

"Hold your tongue!" he said.

Groom held it. The Removites turned in, mostly in silence. No one said good-night to Mark Linley. The lights were put out, and one by one the juniors fell asleep; but it was long before slumber visited the eyelids of the outcast of the Form.

Through long hours of darkness Mark Linley lay awake, thinking—bitter thoughts. Had he made a mistake, after all, in coming to Greyfriars, in staying there, when the Remove had shown him so plainly that they did not want him?

He had won his scholarship fairly, by hard work, and he was entitled to his own; yet, after



"You young cad!" said Bulstrode, grasping Bunter by the shoulder. "You know jolly well that Linley's in Coventry. What do you mean by speaking to him?" "Ow!" howled the fat junior. "Don't shake me like that! I didn't mean to speak to him!"

all, was he an intruder? The thought had come to him before; it was sharper now. He began to feel that the course he had mapped out for himself was hard to follow. With the whole Form against him, how could he fight his way uphill?

Even if he had found friends at Greyfriars, the struggle would have been hard enough for the one-time mill-lad. And he had found only enemies. They had begun to tolerate him—some of them—yet this happening showed that they were only too willing to believe evil of him. If this matter blew over, something of the kind was certain to crop up again, if Bulstrode and his set could contrive it—and they could! Was it worth while prolonging a hopeless struggle?

He fell asleep at last.

The rising-bell clanged through the morning air and awoke the Remove, and at least two juniors awoke with heavy hearts. One was Mark Linley, the other Bulstrode. Bulstrode had succeeded in his object; the Lancashire junior was an outcast.

But there was another thing for Bulstrode to consider—the flogging that was due that morning. The whole school was to be assembled after prayers to witness it. Bulstrode was to be chief actor in an important scene, but he did not enjoy the prospect.

The Remove went downstairs. No one spoke to Linley, and he showed no desire to speak to anyone. Whether he deserved his exclusion or not, he was not the kind of fellow to complain. He could stand his punishment, deserved or undeserved, without whining.

Breakfast was a gloomy meal that morning. Most of the fellows were thinking of the coming

flogging. Bulstrode was to be the chief sufferer, but the other fellows could not help thinking about it. Floggings were rare at Greyfriars, and their rare occurrence made them more impressive.

After prayers followed the assembling of the Forms in Big Hall. Bulstrode was looking pale and harassed. The nearer his punishment came the less he liked it. He had the sympathy of the Form, but that did not avail him much now.

When Gosling came in with the birch, Bulstrode shivered. When Dr. Locke entered and he was called out, he was as pale as a sheet. But his dogged courage upheld him, and he was quiet and firm as he stood before the Head.

Dr. Holmes looked at him, and then his glance swept over the silent, expectant boys, ranged according to their Forms, in the Hall.

"Boys!" The deep voice of the Head rolled through the Hall. "Most of you know why you have been assembled here. A miserable persecution, directed against one of the most deserving boys in the Lower Fourth Form, has culminated in a ruffianly outrage. The ringleader in this outrage I am about to punish; his followers have already been punished by their Form-master. Bulstrode, I trust that upon reflection you will realise the cowardice, the unmanliness of your conduct. I trust that your present punishment will help you to realise it. Remove your jacket!"

Bulstrode, with pale face, obeyed in silence.

"Gosling!"

Gosling, the porter, whose expression seemed to hint that he was far from liking the task, took the junior's wrists, and he was hoisted.

Then followed a scene that Bulstrode, at least, never forgot.

Dr. Locke seldom flogged a boy, but he had a strong hand when he did, and every stroke seemed to Bulstrode like the searing of a hot iron.

The Forms looked on in silence.

Mark Linley was rather pale. Although he had certainly been the injured party, he felt a curious sense of guilt at that moment, as though he were in part responsible for Bulstrode's bad luck.

He realised, too, how this flogging accentuated the division between him and the rest of the Form.

It placed him in the position of being backed up by the masters against the Form-fellows—about the worst possible position a junior could be placed in. But there was no help for it.

Stroke followed stroke with clockwork precision. Bulstrode had determined not to cry out, and for some time his dogged courage upheld him, and no sound passed his lips.

But at last his fortitude deserted him, and he struggled and shrieked.

The last stroke fell at length, and Bulstrode was released, and he stood writhing, panting, his eyes blazing.

He seemed on the point of bursting into a torrent of invective, but the Head's cold, stern glance silenced him. The boys broke up, and the scene was over.

Bulstrode did not appear in the Form-room that morning. He was excused early lessons, and he was, indeed, in no fit state for work. He remained in his room, in dull pain and humiliation, and nursing hatred against the junior he regarded as the cause of his punishment.

Mark Linley fell lower, if that were possible, in the regard of his Form-fellows. He had betrayed Bulstrode to punishment—that was the common belief, and he did not take the trouble to defend himself. Perhaps he knew that he would not be

listened to, and that any explanation of the facts would be stigmatised as a falsehood without examination.

Black looks were directed towards the junior from Lancashire, but not a word was spoken to him. Even the taunt of "sneak" was no longer hurled at the outcast. He was sentenced to Coventry, and the sentence was rigidly carried out. Bulstrode declared that any fellow found speaking to Linley would be sent to Coventry, too, and the Remove concurred.

Marjorie Arrives.

HARRY WHARTON was looking very thoughtful as he came out of the Form-room that morning. He was thinking about Linley. Harry was usually able to make up his mind on any matter without much hesitation. But now he had to confess himself perplexed.

He could not help thinking that there was probably some mistake, some injustice. But Linley had not explained, and without an explanation from him, Wharton felt that he could not defy the opinion of the Remove.

Harry Wharton looked at his chums,

"What do you think about it?" he asked.

"Blessed if I know!" said Nugent. "I suppose it's true. Anyway, he doesn't say that it's false. I suppose he blurted it out to Quelch."

"He had provocation enough."

"I suppose so; but that doesn't excuse sneaking to a master. Bulstrode was a cad, but he's been flogged."

"Hang it!" said Bob Cherry. "If he sneaked the Form are quite right in sending him to Coventry. I wouldn't speak to him myself. And if he didn't sneak, why can't he say so and have done with it?"

"Well, he said so—or as good as said so."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Snoop. Let's ask him about it. Trevor says that Snoop actually heard Linley telling the Form-master."

"I say, Snoop, come here a minute!"

Snoop paused. He looked inclined to scuttle off, but he stopped. Snoop was wearing a far from happy look.

"Snoopy, we want to know about that sneaking business," said Bob Cherry. "Did you actually hear Linley sneak to Quelch?"

Snoop flushed dully.

"Yes, I did."

"He took him to Bulstrode's study, as Bulstrode says?"

"Well, Quelch went there of his own accord."

"After Linley had sneaked?"

"Yes."

Snoop walked away. The chums exchanged hopeless glances.

"That seems clear enough," said Bob Cherry. "Snoop wouldn't take a prize for truth-telling, but I don't see why he should be lying now."

"Still, I can't help thinking that we haven't got to the bottom of this," said Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, buzz off, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I was only going to say that Miss Hazeldene has come—"

"Oh!" Bob Cherry's expression changed at once. "Where is she?"

"I saw her in the Head's garden. She came during morning lessons. Vaseline has gone into

the garden. He has permission, of course. I was wondering whether we could go. As friends of Miss Marjorie—"

"You're not a friend of Miss Marjorie!" said Bob Cherry brusquely. "You're a fat little beast, and if you go into the garden I'll sling you out on your neck!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"
"Buzz off!"

And Bob looked so dangerous that Billy Bunter promptly buzzed off. Bob Cherry tried to get a reflection of himself in a window, and pulled his necktie straight. Then he gave a brush with his hand to his hair, which would never keep tidy. Then he looked at his hands. They were certainly rather inky about the finger-tips.

"Wait a minute for me," he said. "I—I can't give Miss Marjorie an inky fist to shake."

Harry laughed.
"Buck up, then."

Bob Cherry bucked up. He came back in a few minutes, and his face, as well as his hands, were glowing from vigorous ablutions, and his hair was brushed.

"I'm ready!" he announced. "I—I suppose it would only be civil to go and speak to Marjorie, wouldn't it?"

"Of course," said Wharton. "Come on, then." And the juniors made their way to the Head's garden, and for the time Mark Linley was forgotten. The garden was forbidden ground to the juniors. Seniors walked there sometimes, in serene stateliness. But the Lower Forms could not invade the sacred precincts without danger of incurring lines. But that was of little moment to the chums of Study No. 1.

It was a bright April afternoon, and the garden was showing the green of spring. Just inside the gate Marjorie was talking to her brother. She looked up, with a bright smile, as the chums of the Remove came in sight.

"We're glad to see you again, Marjorie," Harry Wharton said, while Bob Cherry shook hands with the girl without uttering a word. But perhaps the deep colour in his cheeks spoke his feelings as eloquently as words could do.

"And I'm glad to see Greyfriars again," said Marjorie brightly. "I suppose you know I'm to be your neighbour next week."

"Yes—Hazeldene told us. It's ripping!"

"I should like to ask you to tea in the study at Cliff House," said Marjorie, "but we shan't have any studies as you do; and Miss Penelope would be horrified, too. Miss Penelope doesn't like boys."

"Curious," said Wharton, laughing. "They're so nice, too, as a rule. But who is Miss Penelope—your governess?"

"The headmistress of Cliff House. She is very kind—and very strict, and—hallo, is that your dinner-bell?"

"Oh, that's nothing," said Bob Cherry. "We're not hungry."

"Not a bit," said Nugent.

"I know jolly well I am!" said Hazeldene. "I'm off! See you again very likely, Marjorie!" And Hazeldene hurried off. Marjorie laughed.

"I shall not keep you from your dinner," she said. "I suppose I shall see you again. Good-bye!" And Marjorie walked up the garden path. The chums of the Remove turned away slowly towards the House. They passed Linley near the garden gate; he was walking along slowly, with his eyes on the ground, and did not look up.

No Savvy!

AFTERNOON school passed heavily enough to Mark Linley. He had taken his exclusion so quietly and calmly that some of the fellows were provoked by it, and inclined to take more active measures. He was avoided with a public pointedness that there was no mistaking. The fellows on either side of him in Form crowded away as far as possible, in order to leave the junior in marked isolation.

Mark Linley showed no sign of having observed it.

But Mr. Quelch, the Form-master, had keen eyes, and he took interest, too, in the boy from Lancashire. He noted the exclusion of Mark Linley at once, and though he made no remark upon it, he compressed his lips, and a wrinkle appeared for a moment on his brow.

The lessons passed off and the class was dismissed. The Form-master made a sign to Linley to stop behind as the others went out. Mark halted by the desk.

The Remove went on, and in the passage outside they were not slow to remark upon the circumstance. Bulstrode, still sore from the flogging, had an explanation to give at once.

"Linley's making his report," he said bitterly. "He's taken on the job of sneak as a permanency."

"Looks like it," Skinner remarked.

And most of the juniors agreed that it looked like it.

Had Mr. Quelch known what was going on in the Remove he would have been more careful. His intention was wholly kindly towards the Lancashire junior.

"There seems to be something wrong between you and your Form-fellows, Linley," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Mark quietly.

"I noticed that you were working in the Form-room last evening, instead of in your study."

"Yes, sir."

"You are on bad terms, then, with the rest of the Lower Fourth?"

Mark was silent.

The Form-master did not press him for an answer. In such a case, there was little a master could do, beyond sympathy and advice.

"I am afraid you have found a thorny path to follow at Greyfriars, Linley," he said. "No doubt your present unpopularity is due to the flogging of Bulstrode, although he was flagrantly in the wrong. It will die away, I think. At all events, if you go on as you have begun, you may be sure of this—that you are fitting yourself for an honourable place in the world, and winning the respect of those whose good opinion is really to be valued."

"Thank you, sir," said Mark. "The fellows don't understand—they don't mean to be as hard as they are. It's all right."

He left the Form-room with a lighter heart for those few kind words.

The groups of Removites in the passage looked at Mark with savage contempt as he came out. But he hardly noticed it. He was growing accustomed to that kind of thing. At the door Harry Wharton touched him on the arm, and Mark turned round.

"You won't mind my speaking," said Harry hesitantly, "but—"

"The other fellows will," said Mark. "Can't you see how they're looking at you? You'd better leave me alone."

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Let them look! I was going to say—you just

stopped behind in the Form-room to speak to Mr. Quelch?"

"What about it?"

"It's injudicious. Some of the fellows jumped to the conclusion that it was sneaking—that you were telling Quelch something—"

"And were you one of them?"

"I was not, or I should hardly be speaking to you on the subject now. I only wanted to warn you that it looks bad."

"I dare say you mean well," said Mark, "but I've given up trying to get on good terms with the Remove. I'm learning my lesson at last."

"What lesson? What do you mean?"

"The Remove don't want me. I'm not surprised at it—the son of a working man, I suppose, has no right here—unless he became a snob and a liar and pretended he was something else. Then he might be tolerated. I never learned to be either a liar or a snob, and so I've no chance. This affair is only an excuse for sending me to Coventry. They wanted to do it all along. Well, this is the end—I shan't trouble them any more. But as for taking any trouble to conciliate them or gain their good opinion—it's not worth it. I despise them too much, if you want to know the exact truth."

Several fellows had gathered round while Mark was talking, and heard his words—and there were black looks at his plain talking. The Lancashire junior walked away, leaving Wharton perplexed. He understood how Linley was feeling; but he knew that Mark's bitter mood would never do. Unless he conciliated the Remove, life would be impossible for him at Greyfriars.

"Cad!" growled Skinner. "Despises us, does he?"

"And no wonder, if he was speaking of you particularly!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "What do you expect, Skinner?"

"Look here, Bob Cherry—"

"You've been talking to the outsider, Wharton!" broke in Bulstrode fiercely. "You've been warned that anybody speaking to Linley will be sent to Coventry, too!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Don't let it happen again, that's all! That fellow's cut!"

"Oh, rats!"

And Wharton turned on his heel and strode away. Bulstrode turned scarlet with rage, but the general opinion was on his side. There was no doubt that if Wharton took the side of the outcast, he would lose his hold on the Form.

Linley had his tea in Hall. He had an empty seat on either side of him during the meal—a fact that did not pass unnoticed by Mr. Quelch, who was at the head of the Remove table.

Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, came into the Hall late, and dropped into a chair beside Linley. There was a low murmur, instantly suppressed by a glance from Mr. Quelch.

After tea Mark Linley left the room first, and when the other fellows went out they found him talking to Wun Lung in the hall. It was not Mark who had sought the conversation. Wun Lung was showing him a Greek exercise, and demanding expert advice. It was not like Linley to refuse a favour, in spite of what had passed. Bulstrode dropped a heavy hand on the Celestial's shoulder.

"Cut that!" he said sharply.

Wun Lung looked up innocently.

"You speakee to me?" he asked.

"Yes. Drop that!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,574.

Wun Lung had a Greek lexicon under his arm. He misunderstood Bulstrode—or affected to misunderstand him—and dropped the lexicon—on Bulstrode's toe.

The Remove bully gave a fiendish yell and jumped clear of the floor.

"Ow! You heathen beast! You've squashed my toe!" he roared.

"Me solly!" murmured the Chinese. "You say dlop it, and me dlop it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up, you cackling idiots! I believe the heathen beast did it on purpose! You—you pigtailed rotter!"

"Me velly solly!" said Wun Lung blandly. "You say dlop it, and—"

"Look here, you're not to speak to Linley!"

"No savvy."

"You stupid heathen! He's in Coventry!" shouted Bulstrode.

"No savvy. Coventry in Midlands; Gleyfiars on sea coast. How Linley in Coventry?"

"The utter fool! He doesn't know what Coventry means!" growled Bulstrode. "I mean that nobody's speaking to Linley—he's cut!"

"No see cut," said Wun Lung, looking over the Lancashire junior as if in search of a wound.

"You—you pigtailed dummy! I mean, he's not spoken to—he's barred!"

"No savvy."

"Look here, you're not to speak to Linley, or we'll jolly well yank your heathen pigtail off!" yelled Bulstrode.

"No savvy."

"I—I—"

Mr. Quelch came out just then, and the enraged bully of the Remove had to leave the matter where it was. But Wun Lung was determined not to "savvy," and he walked away with Mark Linley, still discussing Greek. For the little Celestial's own sake, Mark tried to explain to him how matters stood, but Wun Lung either could not or would not "savvy," and Linley gave it up at last.

Linley Finds a Friend!

MARJORIE HAZELDENE stopped. It was dusk in the Close as she crossed towards the Head's house after a visit to the village.

From the dusk under the trees a sound came, and she started for a moment and then stopped. The next moment she caught sight of Mark Linley. The junior was standing leaning against a big elm, and a book had just slid from under his arm and fallen to the ground. That was the sound Marjorie had heard.

But Linley had not noticed it; he did not notice her. His hands were thrust deep into his pockets, his face clouded, his eyes on the ground. It was an attitude of utter dejection, and Marjorie felt sorry for him at once.

She had met Linley in company with the chums of Study No. 1, and she had learned to like and respect him.

She looked at the junior. He was so deep in thought that she hesitated to speak, and a slight shyness, too, kept her silent. She might have passed on, but something made Linley raise his eyes. He saw her.

His cap came off in a moment.

"Miss Hazeldene!"

Marjorie smiled at him a little tremulously.

"Yes," she said. "I am just going in. I—"

"Did I startle you?" said Mark.

"Oh, no! But—"
 She paused. Mark looked at her, and read concern in her face.

"You are in trouble?" said Marjorie, with sweet frankness.

Linley smiled a little.

"It is nothing—that is—well, nothing. It is very kind of you to care about it at all, Miss Hazeldene! But—"

He broke off.

She looked at him inquiringly.

"What were you going to say?"

"I don't know whether I should let you speak to me," said Mark, flushing. "Your brother mightn't like it—and the others."

"Not like my speaking to you?" said Marjorie, in amazement. "You haven't quarrelled with my brother, have you?"

"Oh, no; not exactly! Only I'm on bad terms with the whole Form, you know—your brother among the rest—and Wharton and all your friends. It's all right. Don't bother your head about me."

"But I shall!" said Marjorie. "What's the matter? Why have you quarrelled with the Form? Have they quarrelled with you?"

"Yes."

Mark hesitated to reply. He was far from wishing to appear desirous of sympathy. He wanted to face his troubles alone. Yet to the lonely boy there was something infinitely sweet in the girl's gentle tone and in her look of concern.

"What about?"

"They think I told tales to a master," he said. "Sneaking, they call it."

"Oh!" said Marjorie, with sudden comprehension. "And you are sent to Coventry—is that it?"

Mark nodded.

The girl's lips were pursed thoughtfully. She knew enough of the matter now to understand Mark's position.

"But you did not?" she said. "I am sure you did not."

"You are very kind to say so, Miss Hazeldene. I did not—but they all believe that I did."

"Can't you explain?"

"They would not believe me if I did."

"But have you tried?"

"You don't understand," said Mark. "Even Wharton thought it of me—and he might have known me better. What would be the good of denying it? I have denied it, but no one cares for that. They found me guilty before asking a single question. And if I explained, it would be my word against that of another—another, whom they would certainly believe before me."

"Tell me all about it."

Mark hardly knew how it was, but he found himself telling her. Marjorie listened quietly.

"Mr. Quelch questioned me," he went on. "It was Snoop who told him. I suppose he was afraid of Bulstrode. I don't know exactly what he said to Bulstrode, but Bulstrode believes that I sneaked. So do the others. It would be no use entering into a dispute with Snoop about it. I dare say he was afraid to own up."

"And you don't want to tell about him, either?" said Marjorie quietly.

She understood what was in Linley's mind.

"No," said Mark frankly; "but if I did they would stick by him. They wouldn't even listen to me."

Marjorie was silent for some moments.

"Of course, you won't say anything about what

I've told you—to the fellows, I mean?" said Mark hastily.

"Suppose I explained to Harry Wharton? He would try to do you justice."

"Perhaps. But the Form have made up their minds, you see; and I don't want to drag Wharton into it. He would stand by me if he thought it right; and he would be sent to Coventry, too. I don't want that."

Marjorie nodded.

"I understand."

"Don't mention it to any of the fellows. I don't want to make my peace with them. I can stand it. I don't want to make it up with any of them, unless they make the first advances. But—"

"Marjorie!"

It was Hazeldene's voice. He came out of the gloom, and looked surprised when he found Linley with Marjorie. He looked keenly from one to the other.



"Drop that!" exclaimed Bulstrode, as he saw Wun Lung speaking to Mark Linley, the outcast. The Chinese junior affected to misunderstand the Remove bully, and dropped the Greek lexicon—on Bulstrode's toe! "Ow!" gasped the bully. "You heathen beast!"

"I've been looking for you, Marjorie," he said abruptly.

"I've just come in," said the girl. "Good-night, Linley!"

"Good-night, Miss Hazeldene!"

Mark raised his cap. The girl walked away with her brother. Hazeldene was looking a little peeved.

"Hang it, Marjorie!" he said, as soon as they were out of hearing of the Lancashire junior.

"You mustn't speak to that chap, you know."

"Why not?"

"He's in Coventry."

The girl was silent.

"He sneaked to the Form-master," explained

Hazeldene "Of course, we can't stand that sort of thing in the Remove. We have to bar sneaking."

"Are you sure he did?"

"Oh, of course he would tell you he didn't. There's no doubt about it. You see, he took Quelch to Bulstrode's study. Snoop heard him telling Quelch, too."

Marjorie did not speak. Was it possible that Linley had spoken untruthfully to her? She dismissed the thought. Truth had rung in the tones of the Lancashire junior.

And a thought was working in the girl's mind now—a plan for helping the outcast of the Remove.

He had not wished her to speak about it to any of the other fellows, and she would respect his wish. But there was another way of getting the truth made known.

Hazeldene little guessed what was passing in his sister's mind as they walked to the Head's house together.

Marjorie Speaks Out!

THE next morning the sentence of "Coventry" was still being rigidly carried out—more rigidly than ever, if possible. Mark's isolation was complete, except for little Wun Lung.

The Chinese had received dire warnings from half the Form as to what would happen to him if he persisted in speaking to the ostracised junior; but the warnings made not the slightest difference to him. Apparently, he did not "savvy."

He persisted in speaking to Mark on every possible occasion; and in the grim, icy silence that

now enveloped his life, even the company of the quaint little Celestial meant much to the lonely lad.

Mark tried to point out to the Chinese how matters stood. But Wun Lung did not understand.

"You'd better leave me alone," said Mark at last, desperately. "Bulstrode will be on your tail if you don't."

"You no wantee helpee me with lesson?"

"Yes, yes; of course I want to help you, but—"

"Allee light; you helpee."

"Yes, but don't you understand that the Form are not speaking to me?"

"Allee light; me speakee."

"They'll be down on you, Wun Lung."

"Allee light."

"You'll be ragged if you don't keep away from me."

"No savvy."

"My dear kid, you'll be cut by the other fellows, and perhaps licked, into the bargain," said Mark impatiently.

"No savvy."

Mark had to give it up. Licked, too, Wun Lung certainly would have been, but for Harry Wharton. Bulstrode was proposing, in the Common-room, to frogmarch him, and give him a dormitory licking, when the captain of the Remove quietly chipped in.

"You'll let him alone," he said.

"We'll do as we like!" Bulstrode blustered fiercely. "The heathen rotter knows well enough that Linley's in Coventry, though he pretends not to understand."

"The fellow who touches Wun Lung will have a fight on his hands, that's all," said Harry Wharton, very quietly.

"You'd better take care, Wharton, or you may get a dormitory licking yourself," said Bulstrode savagely.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm willing to face the music, if you like to start," he said.

"Oh, leave the heathen alone!" said Russell. "After all, you can't expect a Chinaman to understand. Let him alone."

And Bulstrode decided to leave Wun Lung to go his own way. As for sending the little Chinese to Coventry, very few of the Removites could find it in their hearts to be hard on the cheery, irresponsible little fellow. Besides, as he could rely upon the Famous Four for company, he would have cared little.

There was one other fellow who broke the rigid rule. That was Billy Bunter. Not that the Owl of the Remove was inspired by generous feelings. Bunter thought he saw a way of grinding a private axe in the matter.

After morning lessons that day he tapped Mark Linley on the arm in the Close, after a cautious glance round to see that his action was not observed. But as Bunter was extremely short-sighted, his caution was not worth very much. As a matter of fact, there were several Remove fellows in easy distance, who saw him speaking to the ostracised junior.

"I say, Linley—"

"What do you want?"

Mark's question was very sharp, and not at all cordial. Billy Bunter assumed an injured expression.

"Oh, really, Linley, I think you might be a little more civil to a chap. I thought you'd be feeling lonely, as you're sent to Coventry, and

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so I made up my mind to speak to you. I say, don't walk away while I'm speaking. I've got something to say to you."

"Then say it—quickly!"

"I've been disappointed about a postal order. I was expecting it this morning, but it hasn't come. I'm going to inquire at the post office about it. I'm stony just at the moment. If you could lend me five bob—"

"I couldn't."

"I can let you have it back next week for certain."

"I've no money to lend—"

"I could make a bob do. If you—Ow! Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You young cad!" said Bulstrode, grasping the fat junior by the collar. "You know jolly well that Linley's in Coventry. What do you mean by speaking to him, hey?"

"Ow! I didn't mean to speak to him. He spoke to me—I mean—"

Mark Linley walked away. Bulstrode shook the fat junior violently.

"You fat young porpoise—"

"Ow! I'm sorry! Don't shake me like that, Bulstrode, or you'll make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken, you'll have to pay for them. I wasn't really speaking to Linley. He wanted to borrow some money—"

"Faith, and it's a champion loiar ye are!" exclaimed Micky Desmond. "Sure, I heard ye trying to borrow of him."

"I—I mean—it's all the same thing, you know, really—ow—wow!"

Bulstrode walked away, leaving Bunter sitting on the ground, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels. The fat junior did not speak to the outcast of the Remove again.

It was a bright afternoon. Most of the Removites turned out on the football ground before dinner. The football season was nearing its end, but the juniors were just as keen as ever. Mark Linley did not join them. He knew very well that if he had done so, the players would have walked off the field, which would have placed Wharton in an awkward position.

The outcast of the Remove took his books into a quiet corner of the Close and studied there.

Mr. Quelch saw him as he took a stroll after lunch in the sunny Close. The Form-master frowned a little. The feeling against Linley, which he hoped would die away, was apparently as strong as ever. Mr. Quelch understood what the exclusion must mean to the Lancashire junior when he could hear the merry shouts from the football field.

Mr. Quelch's brow was very thoughtful as he went in. He felt keenly for Linley, but he did not know the true circumstances, and he could not help the boy. He went into the study—and then gave a sudden start.

The room was not empty, as he had expected. A graceful, girlish form rose from the easy-chair as he came in, and he found himself looking at the blushing face of Marjorie Hazeldene.

"Excuse me!" said the girl hurriedly. "I came here to speak to you, Mr. Quelch. The door was open and you were absent, so I thought I might wait!"

"Quite right," said Mr. Quelch, smiling. "Please do not rise. What can I do for you, Miss Hazeldene?"

The girl remained standing, one hand on the table.

"I—I want to speak to you," she said. "I—I—"

"Certainly, Miss Hazeldene. Go on."

The Form-master's kindly tone reassured the girl. But her eyes were on the floor as she went on.

"I—I don't know whether you will think it presumptuous of me—I do not mean it so—but—but I felt that I ought to speak. It occurred to me, you know, that—that I might set the matter right."

"What matter are you alluding to?"

"It is Mark Linley."

Mr. Quelch started a little.

"Yes?" he said inquiringly.

"He has been sent to Coventry by the Remove, because—"

"I was aware of that, Miss Hazeldene," said the Remove master quietly. "The boy has a hard path before him here. But he is a plucky lad, and he has courage enough to carry him through."

"But—but you do not know all," said Marjorie. "It is not only that, but—but they think he told you about Bulstrode."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. He understood immediately. The girl's words had let in a flood of light upon his view of the late happenings of his Form.

"They think that he—he sneaked, as they call it," pursued Marjorie, blushing. "You will know whether he did or not, Mr. Quelch—"

"He did not."

"Ah, I was sure of it!" said Marjorie eagerly. "I—I thought you might think it important enough to—to let the Form know—"

"I certainly do think it's important enough," said Mr. Quelch. "The boy who told me about Bulstrode must have spoken falsely afterwards, or the blame could never have fallen on Linley. I will see that right is done!"

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Quelch! And—and you don't think it—impertinent of me—"

"I think you have acted in a generous way, Miss Hazeldene," said Mr. Quelch. "I am only too glad you have spoken to me. I can set this matter right, and I have no doubt that Linley's Form-fellows will do him justice. I thank you for speaking."

And he opened the door for Marjorie, and the girl, with a tremulous smile, left the Form-master's study, feeling very glad that she had paid that visit.

Cleared!

THE Remove were to be taken in first lesson that afternoon by M. Charpentier, the French master. But when they entered the Form-room, they found, to their surprise, that Mr. Quelch was there.

He was speaking to the French master, and he did not turn round till the Remove were in their places. Then he held up his hand for silence, and a pin might have been heard to drop in the Remove-room. The juniors were curious, and they listened eagerly when their Form-master spoke.

"I have to say a few words to you before lessons commence, with Monsieur Charpentier's permission," said Mr. Quelch. "The matter is somewhat important. A boy in this Form has been flogged for playing a cowardly trick upon another boy."

Bulstrode turned red.

"There appears to be an impression in the Form," resumed Mr. Quelch, "that Linley gave me the information leading to the discovery of Bulstrode as the culprit."

The Remove gasped.

Snoop turned as white as a sheet. He could see that the truth was coming now; his cowardly falsehood had only put off the evil hour after all.

"This impression," said Mr. Quelch, "is quite incorrect. I found Snoop and Linley on the stairs, the latter in a tarry condition. I questioned him, and he was silent. I do not say it was right of him to remain silent when questioned by a Form-master. I am only stating the facts."

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Bulstrode's face was a study.

"There was another boy, who, in his eagerness to save himself, told at once about Bulstrode," said Mr. Quelch. "I will not mention the boy's name. He was perfectly correct in answering a question put to him by his Form-master; but he appears to have acted in a cowardly and contemptible manner afterwards, by attributing his own action to Linley."

"Snoop!" murmured Nugent.

"As Linley seems to be suffering from a general persecution over this matter, I have

"The oughtfulness is terrific."

"Faith, and it was jolly decent of Quelch to speak out, too," said Desmond. "I'm sorry I was down on ye for snaking, Linley darling—I mean, by thinking ye was snaking. I wonder how Quelch knew about it?"

Mark was wondering, too.

"Bulstrode, ye spalpeen, come and beg Linley's pardon, can't ye? You know jolly well that he never snaked on you."

Bulstrode scowled.

"I suppose he didn't," he said. "I suppose Snoop was lying."

"Then tell Linley you're sorry."

"Hang him! I'm not sorry."

And Bulstrode thrust his hands in his pockets and strode away. A loud and prolonged hiss followed him. The feeling of the Form had quite veered round.

It was some time before Mark Linley could escape from the Removites. Almost all were anxious to make amends for unjust suspicions and hasty condemnation; and even those who had been the hardest on the mill-boy were anxious to show that the sentence of Coventry was over and done with.

Mark Linley's heart was light as he went into the Close. His position in the school had been strengthened by the late happenings, after all. There might be snobbish and thoughtless prejudices left still, but every junior's sympathy naturally went out towards the victim of treachery and injustice.

And Mark was thinking of something else, too. How had Mr. Quelch known? Was it merely a coincidence that he had spoken to the Form the day after that talk with Marjorie? Linley did not think so.

The sight of the girl near the Head's garden sent Mark hurrying towards her. Marjorie Hazeldene smiled kindly as he raised his cap.

"It's all right," said Mark. "But—you know?"

She nodded, with a slight blush.

"Yes. And it is all right now?"

"Yes; and I know whom I have to thank for it," said Mark earnestly. "I shall never forget your kindness, Miss Hazeldene. If ever a time comes when I can show that I am grateful, I shall not fail."

And Mark little guessed that the future held a time when he would be called upon to remember those words.

(Next week: "THE REMOVE WELCOME!")

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deemed it my duty to make this public statement of the facts," said Mr. Quelch. "I can only hope that all the right-minded boys will do all in their power to make reparation to Linley for the injustice they have done him."

And Mr. Quelch walked out of the room.

There was a murmur in the Remove, a general muttering and commenting, and it was nearly time for the French lesson to end before M. Charpentier could reduce his class to anything like attention.

Glad enough were the Removites when the hour of dismissal came that afternoon. The wretched Snoop hurried away, not daring to face his Form-fellows. Mark Linley found the chums of Study No. 1 round him as soon as he left the Form-room.

"We didn't know how it was," said Harry Wharton simply. "I still think you might have explained. I, at all events, would have believed you, whatever the others had done. But it's all over now, and I think the Form are pretty well ashamed of themselves. They ought to be."

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