

CLAMPE'S COUSIN!

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



RATTY AND THE JOLLY SAILOR!

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CLAMPE'S

BY
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COUSIN!

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

CHAPTER I.

Just Like Gussy!

TOM MERRY & CO. were chatting by the School House steps, when Clampe of the New House came across the quad, with his hands in his pockets, and his usual slouching gait.

Leslie Clampe was not a favourable specimen of a St. Jim's fellow. He was not beloved in his own House; and he was on the worst of terms with Tom Merry & Co. of the School House.

He bestowed a scowl upon the cheery group of juniors as he passed them. Tom Merry and Manners did not heed him; but Monty Lowther made a remark.

"Keep an eye open for Ralston, dear boy."

Clampe stopped and stared at him. "What do you mean?" he snapped.

"Only a friendly warning," said Lowther affably. "Suppose the merry Housemaster should drop in while the cigarettes are going, in Racke's study? I believe Ralston has a sort of prejudice against nap and banker in junior studies."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Clampe.

And he went on, leaving the Terrible Three grinning.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form came down the steps as Clampe reached them.

To the surprise of the Terrible Three, and Clampe's as well, the swell of St. Jim's bestowed a gracious nod upon the New House fellow.

"Hallo, Clampe, deah boy!" he said cordially.

Clampe stared, and walked on.

"Pway don't wush away, Clampe. I was goin' to speak to you. But Jove! He's gone in!"

Without heeding the Honourable Arthur Augustus Clampe of the Shell went into the School House.

True, Arthur Augustus never condescended to notice Clampe's existence, as a rule, and his cordial greeting surprised the black sheep of the New House. But, having condescended so far, Arthur Augustus had apparently not expected this rebuff.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured.

"What's the matter with you, fat-head?" inquired Tom Merry. "What are you so chummy all of a sudden with that smoky bouncer for?"

"Pway don't address me as a fat-head, Tom Mewwy! I wegard is as an opprobrious expression."

"Ass, then," said Tom. "Anything to oblige. What are you clumming with Clampe for, ass?"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyes glass upon the Terrible Three with a very serious expression.

"I have been thinkin', deah boys—"

"You!" ejaculated the Shell fellows, in a chorus of astonishment.

"Pway don't wot, deah boys! I have been thinkin' that we have been wathah hard on Clampe. Of course, he is a

smoky watah, and I feah that he is goin' now to Wacke's study to play bankah. But I have just heard about Clampe's cousin."

"Has he got a cousin?" yawned Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And you're wasting politeness on him because you're just heard that he's got a cousin?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Yaas."

"Well, of all the clumps—"

"His cousin is wathah a special sort of cousin, Tom Mewwy. He is comin' heah to see Clampe this week, I heah. He is in the Navy."

"Oh!" said Tom.

"You see, the chap is a lieutenant in the Navy, and was in the Jutland battle," explained Arthur Augustus.

"I need not remind you fellows that we owe a vewy great deal to the Navy. They are keepin' the Huns out, you know. Probably the weel would have been burned ova our nappaahs befoah now, if the Navy did not keep the German fleet bottled up. Morcovah, think of the chaps in Flandahs. They couldn't get any wab or munitions but for the Navy, and then the Huns would mop them up, you know."

"And we owe all that to Clampe's cousin?" asked Monty Lowther.

"To Clampe's cousin and the west, certainly," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"Undah the cires, I wegard it as bein' vewy much to Clampe's credit that he has a cousin in the Navy, and I am prepared to tolerate him for that reason. Besides, Lieutenant Leslie is comin' heah this week. I heard Wacke say so. Comin' to visit Clampe, you know, duwin' his leave. Now, I have been thinkin'—"

"Twice?" ejaculated Lowther.

"Impossible!"

"Wats! I have been thinkin' ova this matten. This chap, Lieutenant Leslie is one of the best—"

"How do you know?"

"He is a naval offeah," explained Arthur Augustus.

"Oh! Quite so! Go on!"

"Well, this chap Leslie bein' one of the best, it would be howid for him to see, while he is heah, that his cousin, Clampe, is a beastly wotah, wouldn't it? Vewy likely it would hurt his feelin's, if he noticed that Clampe was wegard with contempt by the best fellows in the school!"

"Us, fringance?" suggested Lowther.

"I was wehly thinkin' of my study," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "But the same applies to you chaps. I see nothin' to cackle at, deah boys. Now, havin' thought the matten ova, I have come to the conclusion—"

"Hear, hear!" said Lowther. "I was beginning to be afraid that you'd never come to a conclusion."

"Pway don't interwupt me with fivoolous remarks, Lowthah! I have come to the conclusion that it is up to us to be wathah nice to Clampe while his cousin is heah. Clampe can't wehly be all bad, when he has such a wippin' chap

for a cousin; and my ideah is to make the best of him, you know, and see him through. Leslie will natuwally want to see his fiwends, and it would be howid for Clampe to be able to introwduce him only to sneakin' wottahs like Cwooke and Wacke. But if we make fiwends with him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cacklin' at?" demanded Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Blake and Henwies and Dig burst out cacklin' just like that when I said the same thing to them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you are goin' to treat my suggestions in this wibald spiwit, I wese to discuss the matten any furthah," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

"Sorry, my lord!" said Monty Lowther, wiping his eyes. "It's a ripping idea. It's a real corker! But aren't you going to ask Clampe's permission before you make fiwends with him?"

"Weally, Lowthah, I pwesume that Clampe would be vewy pleased. I take that for granted."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you are goin' to cackle at everythin' I say—"

exclaimed Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

"You'd make a dead Hun cackle, I think," chuckled Tom Merry. "But I'll tell you what—you make fiwends with Clampe, and then you can give us an introduction to your new chum. Clampe didn't lock vewy enthusiastic when you cackled him just now; but perhaps he misunderstood."

"Yaas, I pwesume he misunderstood. I am certainly goin' to speak to him in a fiwendly way, and explain my views."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats!"

With that the swell of St. Jim's marched into the School House, leaving the Terrible Three chortling.

"Good old Gussy!" murmured Tom Merry.

"I wish him luck with Clampe; but if he interrupts the game in Racke's study, I fancy the result would hardly be a new friendship. We may as well go along and gather up what's left of him when he's finished making fiwends with Clampe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Terrible Three followed Arthur Augustus into the School House with that kind object in view.

CHAPTER 2.

Making Friends With Clampe.

THERE was a haze of cigarette smoke in the study shared by those two bright youths, Racke and Crooke of the Shell. Clampe of the New House came in, and locked the door after him.

Locking the door was a very necessary preliminary. In case of an unexpected visit from a master or prefect, time was required to get the smokes and the cards out of sight.

Aubrey Racke was shuffling a pack of cards at the table. Nap and banker were

the favourite relaxations of Racke of the Shell. Outdoor games did not appeal to him at all, and Clampe and Crooke were quite of his way of thinking.

Leslie Clampe dropped into a chair at the table.

"Cut for deal!" said Racke. The young rascals wasted no time. The cards slid round. Clampe, with an ostentatious air, placed a little pile of silver on the table before him. The black sheep of the New House was in funds.

"Snap!" he said, looking at his cards. There was a tap at the door.

Racke started angrily to his feet.

"Who's that?"

"It is I, Wacke!"

"Only that fool D'Arcy," said Crooke, in relief. "Sit down!"

Racke dropped into his seat again.

"Clear off, D'Arcy!" he called out. "You're not wanted here!"

"Isn't Clampe there, Wacke?"

"Yes, ass."

"I desiah to speak to Clampe."

"The desiah's all on your side, then!" growled Clampe. "Cut off!"

"Pway allow me to entah!"

"Buzz off, you!"

"I wufuse to buzz off, Wacke! I desiah to speak to Clampe, and it is wathah important."

"Tap, tap, tap!"

"Will you go away?" roared Racke.

"Certainly not!"

"If I come out to you, I'll mop up the passage with your silly carcass!" shouted Racke.

"You are perfectly welcome, Wacke, to make the attempt," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

"I wathah think it would result in your gettin' a feahful thwashin'. Pway open the door!"

"You're interrupting us, idiot!"

"I wufuse to be called an idiot, Wacke! And I have not the slightest compunction in interruptin' wotten gamblin'."

"Shut up, you fool!" hissed Racke, fearful as to what ears Arthur Augustus' words might reach.

"I decline to shut up, Wacke! I have no doubt whatever that gamblin' is goin' on in your study, or you would not have the door locked."

Racke rose and unlocked the door, grilling his teeth against it. It was not quite safe to allow Gussy's remarks to continue outside. Crooke slipped the cards into a drawer as Racke threw the door open.

Arthur Augustus walked gracefully in.

"Oh, heah you are, Clampe, deah boy!" he said.

Clampe stared at him, in a far from friendly manner.

"What the dickens do you want?" he demanded. "You've got nothing to say to me—nothing that I want to hear, at any rate!"

"That is hardly polite, Clampe."

"Oh, rats!"

Arthur Augustus's noble eye gleamed behind his monocle; but he restrained his rising wrath.

"You appeal to misundahstand me, Clampe. I have come heah to speak to you with friendly intentions."

"And now you can buzz off!" said Clampe. "Go and bore your own friends."

"Jove!"

"Well, have you finished jawing?" snapped Racke.

"I object to havin' my wemarks chawetwised as jawin', Wacke, and I have not finished! I am verry sowwy, Clampe, to see you engaged in smokin' and gamblin', undah the cirs."

"What cirs, you feathed?"

"I pwesume you have not forgotten that your cousin, Lieutenant Leslie, is comin' to see you to-morrow?" said D'Arcy severely. "You have been talkin' about it a good deal, and I have become awah of it."

"That isn't your business, I suppose?"

"Yaas, in a way it is my business, Clampe. I wegarud your cousin with verry great respect."

"Oh!"

"My ideah is, that you will natuwallly want to please that wippin' chap, while he is at the school. He will want to see your friends, and you can scarcely introvude fellows like Wacke and Cwooke to him."

"Wha-a-at?" ejaculated Clampe.

Racke and Crooke looked at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as if they would eat him. D'Arcy did not appear to observe it. He rattled on cheerfully:

"You see, naval men are wathah sharp fellows, Clampe, and Lieutenant Leslie would see at once what shahly blackguards these fellows are. You don't mind my speakin' frankly, Wacke, do you?"

"You silly idiot!" roared Racke.

"You howling chump!" snorted Crooke.

Clampe grinned.

"The fact that you have a cousin in the Royal Navy, Clampe, has waited you in my estimation," continued Arthur Augustus calmly. "I feel that you must have some good about you somewhere, and cannot be an utterly wotten wapsalloon, like Wacke, for instance."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Therefore," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "I am prepared to make friends with you, Clampe."

"Great pip!"

"My friends will also make friends with you," went on Arthur Augustus. "Then, when your cousin awives, if you choose to introvude your friends to him, you can introvude some weally decent chaps, who will do you credit, instead of the wotten boundahs. See?"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Clampe.

"I wegarud that as a faiah offah."

"Kick him out!" growled Crooke.

"I wufuse to take any notice of you, Cwooke, or to wreply a single word to your wemarks! Clampe, deah boy, pway leave the society of these shahly wottahs, and come away. Wether you wippin' cousin should prevent you fwom associatin' with such feahful boundahs. Don't you think so?"

Racke picked up the poker from the grate. He was getting fed-up with the noble eloquence of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Crooke laid hands on the inkpot.

"Come on, deah boy," said D'Arcy encouragingly. "Give these wottahs a wip, at least till aftah your cousin has been and gone. I am quite pwepared to make a chum of you for the time bein'."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Clampe. "Take him away to a lunatic asylum, somebody!"

"I wegarud that wemark as bein' in wathah bad taste, Clampe. I am speakin' in perfect sewiousness. Blake and Hewwies and Dig will wally wound, and Tom Mewwy and Mannahs and Lowthah and Figgins & Co."

"Oh, sheer off!"

"Ahem! And Weddy and Owen and Lawrence, too," said Arthur Augustus.

"Weddy, a twobah in the Navy, you know, so I am sure he will play up. It will be verry agreevable for your cousin to—"

"Redfern!" said Clampe, with a sneer. "I've heard about his brother—a forecastle hand!"

Arthur Augustus started a little.

"Wethy, Clampe, I wegarud that you 'm likely to introvude my cousin to a chap whose brother is an A.B.," said Clampe contemptuously.

"Clampe, you sneakin', wotten worm—"

"Hallo, you're changing your tune!" grinned Clampe.

Arthur Augustus trembled with anger. "I came heah," he said, in tones of deep indignation, "to make friends with you, Clampe. I am sowwy to see that you are even more of a sneakin', wotten, cwingin' cad than I had supposed. I wufuse to make friends with you now, Clampe, and I wegarud you with uttiah contempt. You make me feel ill, Clampe. I will leave you to your blackguardly gamblin'; it is all you are fit for. But first I shall pull your nose, you wottah, for havin' dared to make diswepsectful wemarks concernin' a sailah in His Majesty's Fleet."

"Hands off, you fool!" roared Clampe, starting back.

But Arthur Augustus' hands were already on his finger and thumb closed on Clampe's nose like a vice, and the cad of the New House gave a muffled yell of anguish.

"Yurrrrrrr! Draggimoff!"

Racke and Crooke rushed to the rescue. The poker lunged at Gussy's noble ribs, what time the inkpot was emptied on his aristocratic head.

The swell of St. Jim's released Clampe quite suddenly, and jumped back.

"Yawcoh! You feahful wottahs—"

"Down him!" yelled Clampe, hugging his damaged nose with both hands.

"Jump on him! Kick him out!"

"Bai Dove!"

The Honourable Arthur Augustus put up his hands, but they were not much use against a poker. He was driven out of the study, snorting ink. He managed to close with Racke in the doorway, and get the poker away, but Crooke rushed in with the fire-shovel, and Clampe chimed in with a bat.

Arthur Augustus was hurled forth into the passage.

The door slammed after him, and the key turned in the lock. In the passage Arthur Augustus gasped for breath, streaming with ink, and feeling as if he had a bump on every inch of his noble person.

"Gwoogh! Yo-hooh! Oh, cwumbs!" he muttered.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar along the passage.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—weally, you cacklin' duffahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Have you made friends with Clampe?"

"Wats!"

With that reply Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hurried away in search of a bathroom. His inkly face and collar drew howls of merriment from all the fellows he passed. In Racke's study the interrupted game of nap was resumed; and there were no more interruptions.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had quite given up the idea of making friends with Clampe.

CHAPTER 3.

A Little Wet!

REDFERN of the Fourth was wearing a somewhat clouded expression. The Terrible Three came upon him under the elms in the quietude of a letter in his hand, and that clouded expression on his face, and they stopped. Redfern belonged to the New House, with which the School House fellows were always more or less at war, but when rains were going on they were very good friends.

"Wherefore that worried brow, my son?" asked Monty Lowther. "Are you worryin' because School House is cock-house of St. Jim's?"

"Fathend!" was Redfern's reply.

"Has Gussy been singing one of his tenor solos to you?"

"No, ass!"

"Mr. Rateliff been more ratty than usual?" asked Manners sympathetically.

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"Oh, hang Ratcliff!" said Redfern. Tom Merry's glance fell on the letter in the New House junior's hand. "Not bad news?" he asked. "Oh, no! Good!" said Redfern. "Well, you don't look very chirpy for a fellow who's had good news!" said Tom, laughing.

Redfern coloured a little. "It's from my brother," he said. "Your brother at sea?" "Yes. And he's well and jolly!" said Redfern. "I—I've been wondering whether to ask him to come down to St. Jim's when he gets his leave. 'Ripping idea!' said Tom, Merry heartily. "Make it a half-holiday, and we'll all line up and do him honour!" Redfern smiled.

"I suppose you know my brother isn't an officer," he said. "Yes; I've heard so."

"Clampe thinks that makes a lot of difference." "Clampe would!" said Tom, with a curl of his lip. "I suppose you're not going to worry about what a worm like Clampe thinks?"

"Well, no! I was thinking of punching his head," said Redfern. "Jolly good idea! Do!"

"The cad hasn't said anything to me, but he sneers about it to other fellows. It seems that Clampe's relations are all officers—"

"Except the one who keeps the pawnshop!" said Monty Lowther. "Clampe denies the existence of that one, though I've often asked him about him."

Redfern grinned. "Clampe's got an idea that only the quondam is respectable," he remarked. "I don't see how a ship is to be run without a foreseeable myself. Somebody must be forrard. You see, my people are not well off, and Clampe's people are reeking with money, so I suppose our views would be different."

"Take your Uncle Thomas' advice and rub Clampe's nose on the doormat," said Tom Merry.

Redfern, with a nod and a laugh, went off to the New House.

Tom Merry compressed his lips a little as he looked after Redfern.

"Fancy a sneaking worm like Clampe bothering Reddy!" he remarked. "What has Clampe got to be snobbish about, I wonder? I suppose a sneaking cad can always hurt a decent chap's feelings. Clampe wouldn't be here at all but for his pater's money. He hasn't brains enough to get a scholarship like Reddy. I think I'll look for Clampe and give him a thump!"

"Ear, ear!" said Lowther.

As it happened, Clampe of the Shell was coming away from the School House just then, the little party in Racke's study being over. Clampe was in a bad temper, as his expression showed. He had left a sovereign in Racke's study, and Clampe did not like losing money.

"Hold on, Clampe!" said Tom Merry, halting.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Clampe.

"Hold on, I tell you!"

"Rate!"

Tom Merry planted himself directly in the New House fellow's path, and Clampe had to hold on. He cowered savagely at the captain of the Shell, and clenched his hands.

"What do you want?" he growled. "Only a word or two," said Tom quietly. "I'm captain of your Form, you know, and I think it's up to me to speak a word in season. It's come to my ears, from one or two sources, that you've been making yourself obnoxious on the subject of Redfern's brother."

Clampe sneered.

"What about it?"

"This—you've got to stop it!" "Are you going to make me?" jeered Clampe.

"Yes," said Tom quietly. "I'm going to make you, if you haven't decency enough to stop being a low cad of your own accord. I suppose it's no good telling a sneaking worm like you that every man who wears the King's uniform is as good as any other man in the kingdom, whether he's an officer or private, commander or seaman. A fellow of your kind can only understand money and what it brings. But if you can't be decent you can hold your tongue, and you're not going to be allowed to sneer at Reddy's brother—see?"

"I shall do as I like," said Clampe. "Precious sort of chap to be at St. Jim's at all—Redfern! I wonder what my cousin would think when he came if he knew that a forward hand was here. I'll do what I like, Tom Merry, and I'll say what I like. So put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"You won't!" said Tom.

"While going to stop me." "Reddy would, if you had pluck enough to make your remarks to him personally. You haven't. So I'll stop you for him." Tom Merry pushed back his cuffs. "Now put up your hands, Clampe, and I'll teach you to respect the King's Navy, you worm!"

Clampe backed away.

"I'm not going to fight you," he said sullenly.

"Your mistake—you are!" said Tom Merry grimly.

"Pile in, Clampe!" said Monty Lowther, encouragingly. "I'll hold your cap if I'll let you get your jacket! Pile in! I can see the light of battle gleaming in your eye already!"

Clampe looked alarmed.

He would as soon have tackled a wild Hun as Tom Merry. The weedy slacker of the Shell was not a fighting man when he could help it. His favourite weapon was his tongue.

Tom Merry followed him up grimly as he backed away.

Tom was the best-tempered and most peaceable of fellows; but his back was up now with a vengeance. Redfern of the Fourth was one of the best, and for Reddy to be troubled and humiliated by the snobbish sneers of a ratter like Clampe was not to be tolerated. What Clampe wanted, in Tom's opinion, was a thrashing, which was likely to do him more good than Arthur Augustus' offer of temporary friendship.

"Look here, you rotter, let me alone!" panicked Clampe, as he backed into the fountain with a bump, and could back away no further.

"Certainly, if you promise to keep your caddish mouth shut!" said Tom. "Not otherwise."

"Hang you!" snarled Clampe. "I'll say what I like, and I'll rub it in, too! I'll take jolly good care to make Redfern understand what fellows think! Yah! Oh! Grinoooh!"

Tom Merry hit Clampe by the neck, and he forced the Shell fellow's head down into the basin of the fountain.

Clampe struggled and kicked furiously. But Tom's grasp was like iron, and Clampe's head went fairly in with a splash, and he gurgled and gurgled frantically.

"Grogg! Grogg! Grogg! Moooooh!" Clampe's head came up dripping, his face red and furious. He gave Tom Merry a watery glare of rage.

"Gug-gug! Ow-yow!" he spluttered.

"That will do for you now," said Tom. "As you're too proud to fight, you sneaking snob! But if you say another word about Reddy and his brother, and I hear

of it, I'll kill you all round the quad! That's a tip!"

Clampe did not reply. He mopped his face and head with his handkerchief, and started for the New House.

He passed Redfern as he went in, and gave him a dark and furious scowl.

"Hallo, you look wet!" remarked Redfern, in surprise.

Clampe strode in without replying.

CHAPTER 4.

Clampe is Too Humorous.

"WHAT about this afternoon?" "Question Racke asked the fellows came out of their Form-room the following day.

It was Wednesday, and a half-holiday. The St. Jim's fellows were at liberty till evening call-over, and Racke was designing to spend his hours of leisure after his usual fashion. He addressed Clampe and Crooke as they went out into the quadrangle.

"I've got an engagement," said Clampe.

"Oh! Your cousin?"

"Yes, he's comin' down this afternoon," said Clampe. "I'm goin' to meet him, and bring him to the school. You fellows can come along if you like. My cousin's a chap worth knowin'."

"Bit of a bore, meetin' relations!" yawned Racke.

"Every fellow at St. Jim's can't hand out a relation like my cousin, anyway," said Clampe, loftily. "Your pater would like you to make his acquaintance, Racke?" he added, with a sneer. "I understand that you came to St. Jim's to get to know decent people."

"Oh, shut up!" growled Racke.

"Trimble says your people lived in the East End before they made a big fortune out of the war," grinned Clampe.

"Trimble's a liar! And if you want your case flattened on your clivvy, Clampe, you've only got to keep on at that tack!" growled the heir of Messrs. Racke & Hacke, the war-profiteers.

"Peace, my infants!" grunted Crooke.

"Let Aubrey's aristocratic connections alone, Clampey. We'll come and meet your cousin, if you like. Did you say he was an officer?"

"You know he is!" snapped Clampe.

"Do you think I'd own a relation like Redfern's?"

"No, I know you wouldn't. Only don't let Redfern hear you say so," smiled Crooke. He might get up rusty.

"I'm jolly well going to let Redfern know what I think of his precious relations, all the same!" said Clampe. "Look at this!"

He took a postcard from his pocket. There was a pen-and-ink drawing upon the blank side, clumsily executed—(Clampe was not artistic. It represented a man in seaman's garb clinging to a lamp-post, apparently in a state of intoxication. Clampe's comrades grinned as they looked at it.

"I'm going to pin that up in the Common-room on our side," said Clampe. "The fellows will know whom it's meant for."

"You ass! Redfern will scalp you!"

"He ass! I know I put it there," said Clampe coolly.

"He, he, he! That's jolly funny!"

Clampe spun round, to find Baggy Trimble of the Fourth grinning at the card over his shoulder.

"You spying rotter!" exclaimed Clampe. And he brought the back of his hand across Trimble's fat face with a loud smack.

"Yaroor!" roared Trimble. And he fled.

Clampe slipped the card into his pocket.

"Well, what time are you meeting

your blessed cousin?" asked Racke, rather sulkily.

"Three o'clock. He's comin' to Wayland, and he's goin' to walk across the fields to the school. He used to be at St. Jim's, you know, before our time, an' he knows the place. I'm going to meet him on the footpath in the wood," said Clampe.

"You can please yourselves about comin'."

"Oh, we'll come!"

As a matter of fact, both Crooke and Racke—especially the latter—were pleased at the idea of parading a naval officer about St. Jim's. Most of the fellows received visits at one time or another from relations in the fighting forces, and there was a certain amount of distinction in it.

Racke's relations were too busy profiteering to have time for fighting the Germans, and Racke could not feel that there was much distinction in being visited by a war-profiteer.

Clampe went off to his own House for dinner, and when he rejoined his chums later he was grinning.

"Done the trick?" asked Crooke, referring to the postcard.

"Yes; it's stuck up in the Common-room. Come on, we may as well get off now!"

And the precious trio strolled out of gates.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was chatting in the gateway with his chums, Blake and Horrie and Digby. He did not bestow a word or a glance upon Clampe, who had proved himself so unworthy of the great Gussy's friendship, even as a temporary boon. The Terrible Three came along to the gates.

"You fellows coming to lend a hand with the 'Weekly'?" asked Tom Merry.

"It's about time we got out a new number."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"I've got a bone to pick about the 'Weekly,'" said Blake.

"What silly ass cut down my serial in the last number?"

"Ahem! Needs must, you know," said Tom.

"Paper famine! When a paper costs three times as much to produce half the former size, something must go. But I cut your serial very carefully; I missed out alternate chapters. It really did us no harm."

"You aas, you mucked it all up!" roared Blake. "How are you to follow the thread of a story, with alternate chapters missed out?"

"My dear chap, we couldn't let your serial run on for ever," said the chief editor of the "Weekly" soothingly. "Some of the fellows on the waiting list were getting very restive. Trimble's had a serial waiting a whole term."

"Bother Trimble!"

"Look here, you know!" Baggy Trimble rolled up. "If you're going to do the 'Weekly,' Tom Merry, I'll come and help. If you like to wind up Clampe's serial in one column, mine can begin in this number—"

"You silly ass!" growled Blake.

"I suggest, also, that Lowther's comic column should be left out for a few numbers," went on the cheerful Baggy. "That would leave more space for my serial."

"You howling chump!" said Lowther witheringly.

"And Manners' articles on photography, too. Nobody wants to read that piffle."

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Trimble?" asked Manners darkly.

"And as a matter of fact, Merry, lots of the fellows think the paper would be better without your column—"

"Fathead!"

"Hallo, here comes Reddy! More merry contributions, I suppose," said Blake.

Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence, the



In the Wood.
(See Chapter 5.)

three scholarship juniors of the New House, came up. All three were looking grim.

Redfern had a card in his hand, and his eyes were gleaming.

"You fellows seen this?" he asked.

Tom Merry's brow darkened as he looked at Clampe's artistic effort.

"I found it in our Common-room," said Redfern.

"Nobody saw it put up there," Figgins thinks some School House chap might have sneaked in and put it there. I thought of Clampe, but it seems he went out immediately after dinner. Might be Racke, or Melish, or Piggott. I'm going to lick the cad who drew this picture, when I find him!"

"He, he, he!"

"Oh, so you think it's funny, do you?" exclaimed Redfern, seizing Baggy Trimble by the collar.

"Yo-ow! Leggo!" roared Trimble.

Redfern shook him forcibly.

"You fat rotter! Was it you?"

"Yaroo! No!" howled Trimble.

"I know who it was—Yo-ow-ow!"

"Who was it, then?"

"Clampe. I saw him showing it to Racke and Crooke, and the beast punched my nose," said Trimble.

"Looks like Clampe's idea of a joke," said Tom Merry. "There's no curing that measly cad."

"I'll try to cure him," said Redfern, between his teeth. "Have you any idea where he is?"

"Just gone out. The three of them together. They took the path across the fields towards the wood," said Blake.

"Thanks! Come on, you chaps!"

Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence went out at the gates.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a deep breath. "I trust that Weddy will give that howlin' cad a fearful thwashin'."

"Not much doubt about that," said Tom. "Come on, let's get on with the 'Weekly'!"

"What about my serial?" demanded Trimble.

"Bring it along, by all means, Baggy. Wastepaper fetches a good price now, and we're saving up scraps. Your serial will help!"

And the editorial staff of Tom Merry's "Weekly" walked away to the School House, leaving Trimble snorting with wrath and indignation. Baggy had no desire whatever to have his serial sold in the village by weight.

CHAPTER 5.

Licked!

CLAMPE & CO. had entered the footpath in the wood from the fields, and were sauntering along under the trees, when there were hurried footsteps behind them. Clampe and his friends had taken their time, and it was already past half-past three, the time when Lieutenant Leslie should have been there. The St. Jim's old boy had doubtless been looking forward to revisiting his schoolboy haunts, and was probably taking his time also, for he was not in sight on the footpath from Wayland.

Clampe looked back, as he heard running feet, and his face changed as he sighted Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence. The three Fourth Formers came hurrying along the footpath. Clampe looked uneasy, and Racke and Crooke did not seem quite happy. It was not difficult to see that Redfern of the Fourth was on the war-path.

"Stop!" he shouted. "It was not much use to begin a running match, though Clampe felt inclined to do so. He did not like the expression on Redfern's face."

But Redfern would have run down the unfit slacker in a few minutes; and, moreover, Clampe did not want to risk

running into his naval cousin, with Reddy pursuing him. As Lieutenant Leslie had arrived in Westland by the three o'clock train, and set out to walk to the school, it was pretty certain that he was some where on the footpath through the wood. Clampe stopped, his comrades following his example, and waited sulkily for Redfern & Co. to come up.

"Well, what do you want?" he snapped.

Redfern held up the pictured card.

"Look at that!"

"Is that a picture of your brother?" asked Clampe insolently. And Racke and Crooke grinned.

"I found that card pinned up in the Common-room in the New House," said Redfern, compressing his lips.

"You needn't have taken the trouble to come and show it to me," said Clampe. "I'm not interested."

"Did you put it there?"

"Why should you suppose I did?" said Clampe.

"Trimble says you did."

"Dash Trimble!"

"Do you deny it?" asked Redfern quietly.

Clampe hesitated. It was not much use to do that; and to deny his own action was a confession of funk he did not care to make in the presence of Racke and Crooke. They were already smiling in a sneering way.

"Well?" snapped Redfern.

"You've no right to question me," said Clampe sullenly. "Find out!"

"I might have guessed it was you, Clampe," said Redfern. "New! I know it was! You put this rotten picture in the Common-room to insult me, and to insult my brother, a man who's fought the Germans to defend you, among others."

Clampe shrugged his shoulders.

There was a rustle for a moment in the thicket by the footpath.

The juniors did not notice it.

A man in the uniform of a naval lieutenant was standing under an oak, leaning on the trunk, with his gaze idly on the footpath through the openings in the bushes.

The naval officer had been enjoying the quiet and beauty of the deep wood, rich in the tints of autumn, when the voices of a school of schoolboys came through the thicket.

His eyes had been on the footpath, as if watching for someone to pass, but Clampe & Co. had not yet come abreast of where he stood, when they stopped.

A mass of thickets intervened and shut the officer off from their sight, though if they had taken a dozen steps further they could have seen him.

As he heard the name of Clampe, the lieutenant moved, but, as if acting on second thoughts, he resumed his position, leaning against the oak, and made no further movement.

A somewhat peculiar expression had come over his handsome, bronzed face.

Perhaps he did not care to come on the scene of what was evidently a schoolboy quarrel. At all events, he remained where he was.

Redfern of the Fourth tore the card into little pieces, and scattered the fragments in the grass, Clampe watching him with a sarcastic grin.

Then he fixed his eyes on the cad of the Shell, and pushed back his cuffs.

"Are you ready, Clampe?" he asked.

Clampe backed away a step.

"I'm not going to fight you, Redfern, if that's what you mean," he said sullenly.

"You are!" said Redfern. "You sneaking, cowardly snob! What right have you to insult my brother? You have never even seen him!"

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"I'm not likely to see him at St. Jim's, I suppose," sneered Clampe. "You wouldn't have the cheek to ask a common seaman to the school!"

"That's a mistake, Clampe. When my brother gets shore-leave, I'm going to ask him to come down to St. Jim's."

Clampe gave a scornful laugh.

"I fancy the fellows will show you what they think of him, and you, if you do," he said. "You wouldn't have the nerve!"

"I don't think any nerve is required for that," said Redfern. "My brother is a seaman in the Royal Navy, and I'm proud of him. Just as proud of him as if he were a commander or an admiral! Only a mean, sneaking cad like you, Clampe, would think of feeling any different. You can be a silly snob if you like. That's your business. But you won't be allowed to insult my brother and the King's Navy through him. I'm going to call you to account for it, and teach you how to behave yourself, before my brother comes here, as he may some day. You're going to put up your hands now!"

"I'm not!" said Clampe.

"You can take your choice," said Redfern. "You're going to have a hiding, anyway. Either you'll fight, or I'll cut a stick in the thicket and thrash you with that, like the cur you are!"

"Hear, hear!" said Owen.

"And if Racke and Crooke would like to join in, we're ready to oblige them," remarked Lawrence. "What do you fellows say?"

"You can leave us out," said Racke.

"Nothing to do with us."

"Quite so," said Crooke.

"Sure you're not spoiling for a fight?" grinned Lawrence.

"Oh, go on! eat coke!"

"My friends will see fair play," said Redfern. "That's why they've come."

The fight fast enough if you were three to one. Are you coming on, Clampe?"

"I'm not going to fight you," said Clampe. "Another time, if you like."

"Another time won't do."

"My cousin's visiting me to-day," said Clampe, biting his lips. "I'm meeting him here—he may come along the footpath any minute. I'm not going to let him find me scrapping with you!"

"You should have thought of that before you insulted my brother. Will you come on?"

"No, I won't!"

"Then I will!"

Redfern advanced on the Shell fellow, his hands up and his eyes gleaming over them. Clampe backed away, his face pale now. Redfern's knuckles came with a sharp tap on his nose.

Clampe still backed away.

"Owen, old chap, cut me a stick," said Redfern. "If he wants a flogging instead he can have it."

"Right-ho!" grinned Owen.

"Hang you!" snarled Clampe, and he made a fierce rush at Redfern.

There was no choice about the matter, and Clampe made the best of it. He was bigger than Redfern, and older, and he had a good chance, if he had but courage to stand up to his adversary. But it was courage that the snob of the New House lacked.

Redfern met him grimly, with left and right.

In a minute or so they fought fiercely, and then Clampe went heavily to grass.

He remained there, gasping.

"Up with you!" said Redfern scornfully. "You're not licked yet!"

"I give you best!" panted Clampe.

"Will you get up?"

"No!" howled Clampe.

"You rotten funk!" said Redfern, in utter disgust. "And you're the fellow

who claims to look down on a man who's fighting the Germans! But you're not getting out of it so easily as all that. You'll get up, or I'll help you with my boot!"

And as Clampe did not rise, Redfern suited the action to the word. The Shell fellow scrambled up then, and came on.

"Go it!" grinned Lawrence.

"Pile in!" chorled Owen. "Sure you won't take a hand, Racke? It's dull work just looking on."

Racke did not answer.

Hammer and tongs now the fight was going. Clampe was doing his best at last, and in sheer desperation he put up a good fight. For five minutes there was tramping, panting, and thumping. At the end of that time Clampe was licked, though he could have gone on if he had liked.

"That will do, if you don't want any more," said Redfern contemptuously. "Keep off the subject of my brother in future, that's all!"

Redfern turned and walked away with his chums. Clampe groaned and gasped, and picked himself up slowly. He scowled at the grinning faces of Racke and Crooke, and dabbed his streaming nose with a handkerchief.

"Feeling bad?" smiled Racke.

"Yes, hang you!"

"You could have licked him, if you'd tried," said Crooke. "Why didn't you pile into the fellow?"

"Why didn't you pile into Lawrence or Owen?" sneered Clampe. "Don't talk to me, you funk!"

"Your merry cousin will be entertained when he sees your chivvy," chuckled Crooke. "My hat! You do look a sight! Your nose is double life size!"

"Hang my cousin, and hang you!" snarled Clampe. He turned, and strode away towards the fields.

"What about your cousin?" asked Racke.

"I can't meet him with a face like this, you fool!" snarled Clampe. "He can come to the school if he wants to see me. I'm going back!"

And Clampe tramped away. His comrades, grinning, followed him.

As they left the wood, the naval officer stepped from under the trees, into the path, and stood looking after them.

His bronzed face was somewhat grim in its expression.

He stood for a few moments, looking after the juniors, in deep thought. Then he turned, and strode away towards Wayland.

CHAPTER 6.

Startling News.

FIGGINS & CO. were chatting in the porch of the New House when Leslie Clampe came in. Clampe had bathed his face in the river

before entering the school; but he was still showing signs of damage, and Figgins & Co. looked at him rather curiously.

"Met Reddy?" asked Figgins, with a grin.

"Landed Reddy!" growled Clampe.

"Better doctor your chivvy a bit, if your cousin's coming to-day," remarked Kerr. "That isn't a face to show to a distinguished visitor."

"I'd have given you a black eye to show him, if I'd been Reddy!" growled Fatty Wynn.

Clampe tramped in without answering. There was no sympathy for the snob of the Shell in his own House.

For the next hour or so Clampe was busy removing the signs of trouble from his face. His nose left off oozing red at last, but it was still crimson in hue, and larger than usual; and there was a mouse under one eye that would not be persuaded to depart. Clampe surveyed his

face in the glass, and scowled at the reflection. He came down at last, somewhat surprised that his naval cousin had not arrived.

There had been ample time for Lieutenant Leslie to walk three times the distance from Wayland to St. Jim's.

But certainly he had not come. It looked as if something had occurred to delay the visitor, and as if the visit was not coming off that afternoon, after all. But it was odd that the lieutenant did not send word to the junior who was expecting him. But as Clampe came out into the quadrangle, with a sulky and sad face, Levison of the Fourth called to him.

"Clampe!" Clampe turned round. "There's a kid asking for you at the gate," said Levison. "He's got a message, I think."

"Oh!" said Clampe. He went down to the gates. A shock-headed youth with a dirty face was speaking to Taggles the porter. Taggles was grunting.

"This here boy's got a message for you, Master Clampe," said Taggles. "Nice goods hon, I says."

"What do you mean?" snarled Clampe.

"Which I don't know what the 'Ead would say to a feller gettin' messages from the Black Bull," grunted Taggles. "Which he says it's from a relation of yours, Master Clampe, an' I dunno whether I ought to report yer."

Clampe started. A relation of mine at the Black Bull? he exclaimed. "Don't be a silly kid, Taggles."

"Which he says so," grunted Taggles. And he went back into his lodge, evidently very unfavourably impressed by the message and the messenger.

Which was not surprising, for the Black Bull was a public house in Wayland with a most unenviable reputation. Two or three fellows near the gates looked very curiously at Clampe. They had heard all about his naval cousin. Clampe swanked somewhat on that subject. But a relation who put up at the Black Bull in Wayland was certainly a very queer relation for a St. Jim's fellow to have.

"What he, he!" It was Baggy Trimble's fat chuckle. "Is your cousin putting up at the Black Bull, Clampe?"

Clampe gave him a furious look. "Of course he isn't, you fat fool! He's going to put up at the Hotel Royal while he's down here!"

"He, he, he! That message doesn't look like it!" grinned Trimble. "I say, is your cousin really an officer at all, Clampe?"

Clampe strode angrily towards the shock-headed youth from Wayland.

"What do you want here?" he demanded angrily.

"You Master Clampe?"

"Yes."

"Then this 'ere is for you."

The lad produced a well-thumbed envelope from his pocket, and handed it to Clampe.

"Who's it from?" asked Clampe.

"Gent staying at the Black Bull, sir. He give me a shilling to bring that there letter 'ere, sir, saying as 'ow you expected 'im this afternoon."

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

Clampe's face was a study.

The lad from the Black Bull went down the road whistling shrilly, leaving Clampe with the letter in his hand.

He opened it slowly, and took out the note inside.

How his cousin came to be putting up at the Black Bull was a horrid mystery. It could not be from ignorance of the neighbourhood, for, as an old St. Jim's

fellow, Lieutenant Leslie must have known Wayland pretty well. Moreover, in a previous letter to Clampe, he had mentioned that he was going to put up at the Hotel Royal. There was doubtless some explanation in the letter, and Clampe wondered uneasily what it was.

His eyes almost started from his head as he read the missive, written in his cousin's hand. It ran:

"Dear Leslie,—I have been prevented from coming over this afternoon, but I shall come and see you to-morrow, after less."

"By the way, I don't think I mentioned to you that I am no longer an officer. But, of course, it makes no difference to you whether I am an officer or a seaman. I am sure you will be equally glad to see me."

"Depend upon seeing me to-morrow afternoon."

"Your affectionate cousin,

"FRANK LESLIE."

Clampe held that startling note in his hand, staring at it blankly.

A thunderbolt falling at his feet could not have startled him more.

He could scarcely believe his eyes.

For a moment or two, indeed, he fancied that there must be some mistake, or that it was a dream.

But Lieutenant Leslie's handwriting was well known to him. The letter was evidently written by his cousin.

Clampe's face grew quite pale.

"Bad news, Clampe?" asked Kangaroo of the Shell, who was one of the fellows standing near. "Nothing wrong with your cousin—what?"

Clampe looked at him dully, without answering. He crushed the letter in his hand, and walked unsteadily away.

It was like a horrid dream to him.

How could it have happened?

So far as Clampe knew, there was no reason why Lieutenant Leslie should have lost his rank. How could he have become a common seaman—the Redfern's brother? How was it possible?

And he was still coming to see Clampe! That was the unkindest cut of all!

After the snobbish attitude Clampe had taken up on the subject of Reddy's brother, this was to happen! He felt crushed.

Clampe went to his study in the New House, and shut himself up there, to try to think the matter over.

What was he to do?

After all his swank, after his sneers at Redfern! Hadn't his cousin Frank an atom of sense? he wondered. He might have known that Clampe would not want to see him at the school unless he was an officer. Surely he might have known that Clampe said to himself savagely and bitterly. What was he to do?

To any fellow with a healthier and more decent mind than Clampe's, the situation would have presented no difficulties at all. He had simply to meet his seafaring cousin exactly the same. But that simple solution of the difficulty did not recommend itself to Clampe's snobbish mind.

He tramped about his study for more than an hour, trying to think it out, and unable to decide what to do.

He felt that he must have advice from somebody. But where could he go for advice? His friends—Racke, Crooke, Melville—he could picture their sneering grins when he told them this!

But he felt that he must take counsel with somebody, and at last he made his way to the School House to see Racke. Racke was a cad and a rotter, and would rub it in undoubtedly; but he was cunning, and might think of some way of helping him. It had become known to the school that Somchow Frank Leslie had to be kept away, and the fellows had to be

prevented from learning that he was merely a seaman. In a state of utter misery the hapless snob presented himself in Racke's study.

CHAPTER 7.

The Last Hope!

RACKE and Crooke were at tea when their New House pal arrived. Both of them looked in surprise at the clouded, unhappy visage. The licking he had received from Redfern was not enough to account for his being plunged into the depths of woe like this.

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Racke.

Clampe closed the door.

"I've had bad news!" he stammered.

"Your cousin hasn't come," said Crooke. "Anything happened to him?"

"Yee-es,"

"Sorry!" yawned Crooke, helping himself to jam.

"I—I want you fellows to help me somehow," said Clampe huskily.

"If that means that you are hard up—"

"It isn't that!"

"Oh, good! What's the trouble, then?"

"You'll keep it dark?"

"Certainly!" said Racke, in astonishment. "Blessed if I see what can be the matter. Has your cousin deserted, or anything like that?"

"Worse than that!" groaned Clampe wretchedly.

"My hat!"

"Look at that letter!" mumbled Clampe, throwing it on the table.

The two Shell fellows, their curiosity keenly excited, read the letter together. Then there was a roar of laughter in the study.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Clampe stared at them furiously.

"What is there to laugh at, you rotters?" he hissed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Racke. "This is too rich! After all your little jokes about Redfern's brother! 'Ha, ha, ha!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Crooke. "It's too funny!"

"Hang you! Hang you! Can't you do anything but cackle when a pal's in trouble?" muttered Clampe savagely.

"Well, it is funny, you can't deny that," chorled Racke. "Still, you have my sympathy. I suppose it's all rot, your yarns about your nobby relations, the Leslies. I half suspected it all the time, to be candid."

"Same here!" grinned Crooke. "You piled it on too thick, Clampe. Was your cousin ever an officer at all?"

"Can't you see what he says in the letter?" hissed Clampe.

"Oh, I see that. But perhaps that's arranged between you to make out that he has been an officer."

"You silly fool!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Leslies are rich people," said Clampe. "I was named after them because—"

"Well, that looks like being the truth," grinned Racke. "I suppose you weren't named after them for nothing. But how did your cousin come to get this fall in the world?"

"I don't know. He must have done something, I suppose," mumbled Clampe.

"But—but an officer is allowed to resign if he likes. There was no need for him to join up as a seaman. I can't understand that."

"My hat! The fellows will cackle," grinned Crooke. "I suppose the Captain Leslie and the Colonel Leslie you've

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told us what will turn out to be private, if they ever come to St. Jim's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Racke. Clampe clenched his hands with rage. As a matter of fact, his cousin's letter was really rather remarkable, after all Clampe's talk on the subject of his nobby connections.

"Oh, you rotters!" he muttered. "You rotters!"

"A serene, Clampey!" smiled Racke. "Can't help being tickled, you know. You've talked too much, and you must admit it. If you hadn't bragged and bounced, the fellows wouldn't think anything of this. Half the fellows in the school have relations in the ranks, now that everybody's called up. It was only your swank, making out that your people were influential enough to get commissions for all your relations, whether they were fit or not. Why, D'Arcy's got a relation a private, though his brother's a captain and his father's a lord. You only make yourself ridiculous by entering at Redfern's brother. But you'll get angrier at now, and no mistake, when your cousin turns up. You've asked for it, you see!"

"You have, and no mistake!" chorled Crooke. "Fairly asked for it!"

"You were just as down on Redfern's brother as I was!" hissed Clampe.

"Well, I haven't any relations on the lower deck!" said Crooke, laughing. "If I had I should be a bit careful how I talked."

"Are you going to let him come here, all the same?" asked Racke.

"I can't help it, can I? He says he's coming to-morrow!" roared Clampe.

"Write him a line, and tell him to keep away."

"I-I can't! I can't offend him!" muttered Clampe. "You've got expectations from my uncle Leslie, his pater."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But you can't let him come here!" said Crooke, becoming serious. "Dash it all, you're not going to introduce him to me! I draw the line there!"

"Oh, you do?" flamed out Clampe.

"What about your pater—a swindling company-promoter in the City?—a man from the lower deck is better than that, anyway. Your family's a gang of low rotters, and your uncle, Colonel Lyndon, can't stand them, and I know it. Don't you put on any airs with me, Crooke!"

"Look here—" began Crooke fiercely.

"Shush!" said Racke. "Don't begin to rag! We've got to see Clampe through this. It reflects on us as his friends!"

Clampe winced.

"If you can't afford to offend the fellow, you must keep him off some other way," said Racke. "It's easy enough, I should think. Be ill!"

"H!" repeated Clampe.

"Yes. That's easy enough. Get a friend to write him a letter saying you're laid up in the sanatorium with a severe cold, and say he's anybody. How long is he staying in Wyland?"

"I understood that he was going to stay only one night."

"Well, then, he will clear off to-morrow, and it will be all right!"

Clampe brightened up a little.

"That might keep him off," he agreed.

"Most likely, anyway."

"But—but he's an old St. Jim's chap. He may be coming here to see the school as well as me. You know what Old Boys are!" mumbled Clampe.

Racke nodded.

"Well, if he's determined to come, you can't keep him away," he said. "It's jolly awkward. Still, there's a good chance. Try, at any rate."

"But—but if he comes, after all, and finds I'm not in sunny—"

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"Oh, rats! You've had a sudden recovery—that's all. Most likely the letter will keep him away, if he understands that he won't see you if he comes."

"Well, I'll try it," said Clampe. "It's the only chance."

"I'll write the letter for you, if you like."

"Right! Get it done now and I'll post it; I shall have to go down to Rycomb. Can't post a letter addressed to the Black Bull in the school box."

"Ha, ha! No!"

Aubrey Racke cleared a corner of the table, and sat down to write. Falshood came easily enough to the profiteer's son, and the letter was quickly written. It informed Leslie that Clampe was laid up, and could see nobody, and was signed by Racke, who explained that he had written because Clampe was unable to write.

Somewhat comforted, and hoping for the best, Leslie Clampe took the letter, and hurried out for his bicycle. He pedaled away rapidly to the village to post the letter.

Racke and Crooke chuckled as they sat down to finish their tea.

A cynical philosopher assures us that there is always something agreeable in the contemplation of the misfortunes of our friends. Certainly that was true in the case of Racke and Crooke. Clampe's peevish misfortune seemed to them the joke of the season, and they chorled over it loud and long.

CHAPTER 8.

The Distinguished Visitor!

THE following day was a day of misery to Leslie Clampe of the Shell.

His letter was posted, and had doubtless been delivered to the gentleman staying at the Black Bull, and he could only hope that it would produce the desired effect.

But he had miserable doubts.

Suppose his cousin should come after all! It would be a shoving-up that he felt he would never recover from.

To some extent he repented of the wretched snobbery that had made this trial worse than it would otherwise have been.

To a snobish, conceited fellow like Clampe, it would always have been painful to admit that he had any connections who were not highly prosperous. He would always have been ashamed of any relation who served his King and Country without a commission, or who should have been under the necessity of earning his bread in civil life. Money was the standard by which Clampe judged everything and everybody.

But he knew that most of the St. Jim's fellows were quite unlike him in that respect—that fellows like Tom Merry & Co. for instance, would not have cared twopenny which deck his cousin came from. But for his unfortunate remarks on the subject of Redfern's brother, Frank Leslie might have come and gone without attracting any special notice.

Now he was certain to attract much attention, if he came. After his sneers about Seaman Redfern, Clampe was receiving a visit from a near relation who was a seaman! It would discount all Clampe's yarns about his people. Colonel Leslie and Captain Leslie were real persons, true, but who would believe it, after Lieutenant Leslie had turned out to be an A.B.? Again, that would not have mattered, but for his snobish rant. Nobody thought any the worse of Redfern, because he did not claim to have any wealthy or influential relations. Nobody who mattered, at any rate. But

Clampe had made such claims, and talked about them to all who would listen. He realised that he would be an object of mockery when his yarns were discounted by the arrival of his cousin. Fellows might not even believe that Frank Leslie had ever been on the quarterdeck at all. Naval officers do not lose their rank for nothing. There was more than a hint of disgrace in this change in his cousin's fortunes.

Clampe looked forward to the afternoon in miserable apprehension—which was not made happier by the grins and covert remarks of his dear pals, Racke and Crooke.

Those two cheery youths found much amusement in the peculiar situation.

They did keep it dark, as Racke said, the matter reflected on them, as Clampe's pals. It made Clampe writhe with mortification to hear it put like that. Hitherto he had been rather lofty towards Racke, whose people were well known to be upstarts who had made their fortune out of the war. Racke was getting his own back now.

During afternoon lessons Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was down on Clampe more than once for inattention. But Clampe could not help it.

He was only longing for the day to pass—without a visit from his cousin. Was the fellow coming after all? That was the incessant question that troubled him.

When classes were dismissed Clampe came out of the Form-room with a moody brow. Tom Merry & Co. regarded him rather curiously. Everybody in the Shell had noticed how troubled Clampe was.

"That merry merchant's been having bad luck at banker, I should say," Monty Lowther remarked as the Terrible Three went out into the quad.

"The fellow's scotching the matter with him," said Tom. "His cousin didn't come yesterday, after all. I hope nothing's happened to him."

"He, he, he!"

"Hallo, Trimble! What are you sniggering about?"

Trimble of the Fourth chuckled spasmodically.

"Clampe's been yarning about his cousin," he said. "His cousin isn't an officer at all, I'll bet you. He's staying at the Black Bull in Wyland. Man must be no class to put up at a place like that."

"What rot!" said Manners.

"He sent Clampe a message yesterday from there," said Trimble. "Clampe wouldn't let anybody see the letter. He seemed struck all of a heap. He, he, he!"

"Oh, shut up!" grunted Manners. "You're like a cheap alarm clock, with your he, he, he!"

Clampe of the Shell hung about the quadrangle with his hands in his pockets and a moody look on his face. His eyes were constantly on the gates. Racke and Crooke remained with him, though they had given him to understand that if his relative turned up, he could count them out. As Racke pleasantly explained, they didn't want anything to do with Clampe's low relations.

Clampe was on tenterhooks, and so worried that he hardly noted his dear friend's sneers.

If Leslie was coming, he was due now, and at any moment he might come in at the school gates.

"Hallo!" said Racke suddenly. "My hat! You're in for it, Clampey!"

A figure had appeared in the open gateway.

It drew a good many glances at once, not only from Clampe & Co.

The new-comer was a man in sailor clothes.

His face—especially his nose—was very

red, and his chin was bluish, as if he had not shaved that day—as, indeed, he evidently had not.

He walked with a rolling gait, and the roll in his gait told more of the “cup that cheers” than of the sea.

Clampe looked at him and gasped.

Was this—could this be his cousin, whom he had last seen as a handsome, well-set-up naval lieutenant?

Was it possible?

Clampe stood rooted to the ground. Racke and Crooke exchanged a glance, and walked away together. They had no intention whatever of helping Clampe through his interview with that exceedingly rollicking-looking seaman.

“My hat!” murmured Lowther. “That can’t be Clampe’s cousin!”

Arthur Augustus D’Arcy was sauntering elegantly in the quad. He turned his eyeglass upon the new-comer, and approached him, with his usual politeness, and raised his cap with great courtesy. The seaman seemed to be hesitating in the gateway.

“Pway step in, dear boy,” said Arthur Augustus. “You have called to see somebody? Pewpaws I can be of service to you?”

“Ay, ay, sir!” said the seaman, in a deep voice. “Is my cousin knocking about?” If you could put me alongside him, I’d be obliged, young gent.”

“Certainly. What is his name?”

“Clampe, sir.”

D’Arcy started.

“Bai Jove! Are you Clampe’s cousin?” he ejaculated.

“Ay, ay!”

The seaman rolled in.

“Clampe ‘ere?” he asked. “You tell him his Cousin Leslie’s come to see him, will you? Blow my topsails, he might be at the gate to meet a cove!”

“Yas, wathah! Pway come with me.”

Some of the fellows near the gate were grinning. There was not the trace of a smile upon the risatistic countenance of Arthur Augustus D’Arcy.

With great dignity, he led the seaman into the quadrangle, where he was at once the cynosure of all eyes.

CHAPTER 9.

Clampe’s Cousin!

“A HOY, there, Cousin Clampe!” The seaman had spotted Clampe lurking under the elms, and he hailed him in a voice that rang across the quadrangle. “Ahoi, my hearty!”

Clampe fairly trembled.

This was his cousin. Now that he was closer, Clampe recognised him easily enough. It was the same handsome face he knew well, though disfigured by the redness of the nose, which seemed to hint that Frank Leslie had taken to drink since his cousin had last seen him.

It was Leslie right enough; but the change in him was unerring.

It was not only that he was dressed as a seaman, Leslie, as Clampe had known him before, would have made a handsome seaman.

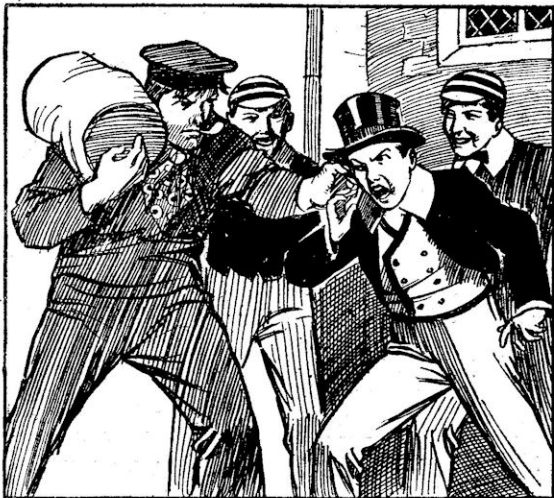
But he seemed to be utterly changed. His voice had become loud and boisterous; he had picked up the language, as Clampe supposed, of the fore-castle. And he certainly looked as if he had sampled the refreshments at the Black Bull, not wisely, but too well!

“Ahoi!” roared the seaman. “Here you are, Cousin Clampe! Bear up, my hearty, and give us your flipper!”

“Bai Jove!” murmured Arthur Augustus.

Clampe approached mechanically.

Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence were going towards the New House, and they paused, in sheer astonishment,



Racke and the Jolly Sailor!
(See Chapter 12.)

At the sight of seaman’s clothes, Redfern thought for a moment that his brother might have paid him an unexpected visit. But Seaman Redfern was not much like this fellow. Redfern had seen a good many seamen, but never one quite like this. Indeed, the man seemed more like a stage sailor than the real article.

“My hat!” said Lawrence. “So that’s Clampe’s cousin! The boulder must have been lying about him.”

“Looks like it,” grinned Owen. “My word, that’s a rather roty merchant! Not much like the Royal Navy, I must say!”

“Clampe must be a silly ass,” said Redfern, in wonder. “What was the good of lying about his cousin, with the chap coming here to give the show away?”

Clampe, wishing that the earth would open and swallow him up, shook hands with his cousin.

The seaman gave him a grip that made him jump.

If he had been an ordinary sailorman Clampe would have borne it better. But the man seemed to have made himself into a caricature of a sailorman. There was not a trace of the smartness of the Navy about him. His boots were down at heel, his trousers were muddy, and he wore a dirty spotted neckerchief. Even the fellow who was not snobbish might have hesitated to own this dreadful apparition. To the unhappy snob it was sheer torture.

“You’re not looking very hearty, rty boy,” said the seaman, scanning Clampe’s pale and miserable face.

“I—I—” stammered Clampe.

“Glad to see me ‘ere, I s’pose, hey?” said the jolly sailor.

Clampe shuddered. What was the fellow dropping his H’s for? Lieutenant Leslie had never dropped his H’s. Had he dropped his aspirates along with his rank?

What did it all mean? It seemed like an evil dream to Clampe!

Glances were directed at them from all sides, and every glance seemed to burn the miserable Clampe.

“Sorry I couldn’t come along yesterday,” went on the sailorman. “I started heul, but something ‘apened to stop me. You don’t mind—hey?”

“I—I—”

“You got my letter—hey?”

“Ye-es.”

“I thought I’d send you a note, you know, as you was expecting me, and the young bloke at the Black Bull was willing to come hover with it.”

The seaman’s powerful voice was audible all the way from the School House to the New House. Nobody at St. Jim’s was left in doubt as to where he had taken up his quarters in Wayland.

Most of the fellows turned away in sheer pity from the unfortunate Clampe. But the more curious ones looked on.

“That chap an old St. Jim’s boy!” Mellish of the Fourth said to Piggott. “I don’t believe it, for one.”

“No fear!” grinned Piggott. “Looks more like an old reformatory boy!”

“He, he, he!” cackled Trimble.

Tom Merry took Trimble by the collar. “Shut up!” he muttered. “If you giggle at the chap, you fat beast, I’ll put your head in the fountain!”

The seaman’s booming voice went on: “Blinkin’ long walk ‘ere from the Black Bull, Cousin Clampe, Specially with this ‘ere bag to carry. Bear a hand, you young lubber.”

The man was carrying a canvas sack, such as sailormen sometimes use on board ship for their clothes. Clampe took it from him mechanically.

“Nowlet’s see your quarters, my hearty! I’m going to ‘ave a bite at your mess while I’m ‘ere.”

Clampe groaned.

“Anything the matter?” demanded the seaman, staring at him.

"No, no," panted Clampe. "C-c-come in, will you?"

"Ay, ay!"

Clampe led his terrible cousin towards the New House, his cheeks burning, and his eyes on the ground.

He was anxious to get his visitor out of sight as soon as possible; not that that was of much use.

But the seaman did not seem at all anxious to get out of sight. He rolled along in quite a leisurely manner, looking about him, and making remarks in a powerful voice. And his remarks were not at all those an Old Boy would have been expected to make. Had Clampe lied on that point, too? The St. Jim's fellows had no doubt that he had.

"Esl Jovell!" murmured Arthur Augustus, when Clampe had got his cousin into the New House. "So—so that is Clampe's cousin?"

"Not quite like Clampe's description of him!" grinned Blake.

And Herries and Digby chuckled.

"I have no doubt, dear boys, that he is a very worthy fellow," said Arthur Augustus. "He is not responsible for Clampe havin' told whoppahs about him."

"Blessed if I understand it at all!" said Blake. "He doesn't look a bit like a Navy man, only he's in sailor's clothes. More like a giddy longshoreman to look at!"

"Perhaps he's not in the Navy," said Herries. "Clampe seems to have been lying all along the line."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hallo, Racke! Aren't you going to help Clampe entertain his cousin?" asked Digby.

Racke shrugged his shoulders, with a sneer.

"Clampe's relations are a bit too much for me," he said. "I know I'm not going to have anything to do with that merchant!"

"Same here!" said Crooke emphatically. "Why, the fellow's been drinking!"

"Poor old Clampe!" sighed Monty Lowther. "I fancy he will ring off about Reddy's brother after this."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is up to you, Wacke, as Clampe's friend, to back him up," remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Rats!" said Racke.

"Clampe doesn't seem to be enjoying himself," chuckled Blake. "I don't envy him his distinguished cousin. Poor old Clampe!"

And the juniors chuckled. Clampe's terrible cousin seemed a first-rate joke to everybody—with the exception of Leslie Clampe. Clampe of the Shell was not able to see the humour of the situation.

CHAPTER 10.

The Sufferings of a Snob!

CLAMPE, as he piloted his cousin into the New House, had some vague idea of getting the man to his study, and keeping him there till it was time for him to go. But in that he reckoned without Seaman Leslie. That gentleman seemed to be in exuberant spirits, and not in the least inclined for seclusion.

Clampe wondered whether he had received the letter sent to the Black Bull. He had made no allusion to it, or to having expected to find Clampe in "sanny." It was, however, the letter written by Racke, it had made no difference; and yet, that was very odd, too. Could he have guessed that the letter contained a falsehood? Or was his conduct simply due to the fact that he had been drinking?

Clampe was hopelessly puzzled and dismayed. More than once he suspected

that Leslie was deliberately assuming a loud boisterousness of manner, in order to make him writhe. Yet why should he? In other days Lieutenant Leslie had been kind to him, though perhaps he had not liked him much. Why should he come here like this, as if for the special purpose of disgracing Clampe before the whole school? It was a horrid mystery. Clampe could scarcely believe that this was the same man he had known before. Yet evidently he was the same man. What could it all mean?

Seaman Leslie resisted Clampe's efforts to pilot him upstairs. He stopped in the Hall of the New House, looking about him, and talking loudly.

Clampe was in terror of Mr. Ratcliffe, his Housemaster, coming by. He was yearning to get the seaman out of sight. Month of the Sixth came along, and stopped, with an expression of astonishment on his face.

"Is this a friend of yours, Clampe?" he asked.

"Ye-es, Montheith," muttered Clampe. He would have rather owned Leslie as a friend than a relation. But Seaman Leslie did not let it go at that.

"Clampe's my cousin," he announced. "I'm Clampe's Cousin Frank, from the sea. Is this a messmate of yours, Clampe?"

"It's our head prefect," muttered Clampe.

"Prefect—hey? Sort of midshipman—hey? Or a warrant officer?" asked Seaman Leslie. "How do you do, my hearty?"

Smack!

The seaman gave Montheith a tremendous slap on the shoulder, which made him stagger. The Sixth-Former jumped away with a howl.

"What in thunder—" he exclaimed.

"Excuse me, sir, that's our way on the lower deck; no offence!" said the seaman cheerily.

Montheith muttered something under his breath, and hurried away. If that was a lower-deck greeting, the prefect did not want any more. His shoulder was aching.

"Come up to my study, Frank!" muttered Clampe wretchedly.

"No 'urry, me 'earty—no 'urry! Let a cove get a pipe on!"

To Clampe's horror, the seaman produced a short, black pipe, crammed it with thick shag, and lighted it. Clampe was given to smoking cigarettes himself, but the powerful aroma of that thick shag made him cough and gasp.

New House fellows were looking on and grinning, and evidently enjoying Clampe's frame of mind. The miserable fellow would have given a large pocket-money for the floor to open and swallow him up. He fairly held on to the banisters for support when the seaman produced a pocket-flask, and took a deep swig at it.

"C-c-c-come up to my study!" groaned Clampe.

"Right you are, my hearty!" The seaman's heavy tread rang up the staircase after Clampe. His boots were large, but there was really no need for him to make such a terrific noise. Again it came into Clampe's mind that his cousin was deliberately tormenting him. Yet, why? He could not answer that question.

Fellows stared at the red-nosed seaman with a rollicking gait, as he went with Clampe to his study.

"We—we we'll have tea here, Frank," groaned Clampe. "I—I hope—I mean, I suppose you're ready for tea?"

"I could peck a bit," admitted Seaman Leslie, sitting on the corner of the table, and blowing out great clouds of smoke.

"I—I'll get tea here!"

"Do you feed here in your berth—hey?"

"You—you used to be at St. Jim's, Frank," stammered Clampe. "You remember we have tea in the study—"

The seaman did not heed.

He took another swig at his flask, and then, to Clampe's horror, started upon a sea-song in a deep and booming voice, which fairly rang through the House.

There was a rush of footsteps in the passage, and several juniors peered into the study in astonishment, mingled with awe.

Clampe kicked the door savagely shut. "Belay there!" roared the seaman.

"What?"

"What are you closing the porthole for?" demanded Seaman Leslie. "Let your messmates come in if they like!"

"But—but—"

"Avast, I say! Open that port!"

Clampe unwillingly opened the door. Grinning faces looked into the study.

The seaman resumed his interrupted ditty. His booming voice rang loudly down the passages and the stairs, and Clampe trembled with fear that it would reach Mr. Ratcliffe in his study. How was he to explain a visitor like this to his Housemaster?

Figgins of the Fourth suddenly came speeding up and looked in.

"Ratty's coming, Clampe!" he said. Clampe groaned.

"I—I say, Frank, my Housemaster's coming up," he mumbled. "It—it isn't allowed to be quite—quite so noisy here, you know. They—they can hear you in the quad!"

"What's the odds so long as you're 'appy?" asked Seaman Leslie.

The juniors in the passage started as Mr. Ratcliffe came along. The New House master's thin, acid face was very angry. Mr. Ratcliffe had hardly been able to believe his ears when he heard Seaman Leslie's stentorian voice booming through the House. He had come to investigate, with a brow of thunder.

"Hallo, old cock!" the seaman hailed him, as he glared into the study. "You the commander of this here craft—hey? Just come aboard, sir!"

"Clampe, who is this person?" gasped Mr. Ratcliffe.

"My-my cousin, sir!" groaned Clampe.

"What?"

"Mum-mum-my cousin, from—from the sea, sir!"

"Ay, ay!" chimed in the seaman. "That's my rating, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliffe. "There is no objection, Clampe, to your receiving a visit from your cousin, but—but—I must request your relatives to be a little less noisy, and—in fact, it would be judicious for him to take an early departure."

"No 'urry, cocky!" said the seaman, slipping off the table, and blowing a cloud of smoke towards Mr. Ratcliffe. "I've got shore leave, mate. Cousin Clampe ain't showed me his friends yet, neither. Likewise, I'm going to 'andle a knife and fork at the mess. Hey, Cousin Clampe?"

"Look here, my man—!" began Mr. Ratcliffe.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"You had better go. You have been drinking."

Clampe almost fainted as the seaman spat on his hands and squared up to the horrified Housemaster.

"Say that agin!" thundered the sailor man.

Mr. Ratcliffe did not say it again. He jumped out of the study like a jack-in-the-box.

"Don't you shove your finger-head in this berth agin, you old pirate!" roared

the seaman. "I'll lay aboard you if you do, you landshark!"

"Clampe, take that man off the premises at once!" quavered Mr. Ratcliffe from the passage.

"Oh, sir! Yes, sir! Oh, dear!"

"Hallo! You still hailing?" roared the seaman. "You odd pirate, you still in the offing—hey? If I clap on sail after you—"

"Goodness gracious! I—I insist upon your going at once!"

"You wait till I come alongside!" roared Seaman Leslie.

And he rolled out of the study.

Mr. Ratcliffe fled without waiting for him to come alongside. There was a howl of merriment from the juniors in the passage as the Housemaster dashed downstairs, his gown flying behind him.

Mr. Ratcliffe did not stop till he was safe in his study with the door locked.

"Frank—Frank! C-c-come back!" stuttered Clampe.

But the seaman was under full sail in chase, as he would probably have expressed it. He went downstairs three at a time, and Clampe, in dumb misery and dismay, followed him.

It had seemed like a dream to Clampe, now it seemed like a nightmare. Seaman Leslie rolled out of the New House into the quadrangle. To Clampe's relief he did not chase the Housemaster to his study. But he was now in full view of all St. Jim's again, and a crowd gathered round him at once.

CHAPTER 11.

Simply Awful for Clampe!

"B-A-I Jove, what a mewwy aftahnoon!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Clampe must be enjoying himself!" roared Lowther. "Hullo, Reddy, how's things in your House?"

Redfern gasped.

"Oh, it takes the cake! The sailor-man's got ratty with Ratcliffe, and chased him downstairs!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I bet Watty was wudo to him," suggested Arthur Augustus. "Watty is a bit of a snob, like Clampe."

"Well, the chap was making rather a row," grinned Redfern. "He seems to take the New House for the fore-castle of an ocean tramp."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We've heard him," grinned Tom Merry. "He's the jolliest sea-dog I've ever seen. Has he been drinking?"

"Well, his nose looks like it, and so do his manners and customs," said Redfern. "But otherwise he's got rather a nice face. But he's simply torturing Clampe to death by inches!"

"Poor odd Clampe! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here he comes!" chuckled Cardew of the Fourth. "Clampe's not with him now. Clampe's fed up!"

"No wonder!" said Olive, laughing. "Clampe's about the last fellow to stand that."

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"Clampe appears to have deserted his cousin," he remarked. "The chap can't be neglected while he is at this school, dear boys. He is wathah noisy; but we must remember that he is a British sailah, and has been keepin' the flag flyin'. I am goin' to look aftah him if Clampe doesn't."

"Go it, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus bore down on the sailor-man. Clampe was peering out of the New House, after his terrible cousin, but he did not venture out. He simply could not bear any more of it.

Such an extraordinary occurrence was quite unknown in the history of the school, and it was certain that it would

never be forgotten. How Clampe was to live it down was a puzzle.

This was the aristocratic cousin Clampe had swanked about! This was a specimen of the wealthy Leslie relations of whom the St. Jim's fellows had heard without end!

"Pway excuse me, sir," said Arthur Augustus, with marked respect and cordiality, "pewwaps you would care to join us at tea in the School House?"

"Ay, ay, my hearty!" said Seaman Leslie. "Have you seen an old pirate cruising about here—a lubber with a figger-head like a gargoyse?"

"Ahem! No!" stammered Arthur Augustus, guessing that Mr. Ratcliffe was alluded to. "I—I have not seen Watty. Pewwaps—"

"Ahoy! Cousin Clampe! Ahoy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors. It was extraordinary and entertaining to see the sailor-man hailing the New House as if it were a ship at sea.

"Ahoy! Show a leg there!" roared the seaman.

Clampe, white with fury, came out of the New House. There was no help for it.

"Oh, here you are—hey!" said the seaman, clapping him on the shoulder as he came up, with a clap that made Clampe howl. "Don't get out of sight of your consort, my 'earty!"

"Shall I—shall I walk back with you?" gasped Clampe.

"I'm not going yet, Cousin Clampe!"

"Oh!" mumbled Clampe.

"This young gent has asked me to tea."

"Yass, wathah! I shall be very much honahed!"

Clampe gave the swell of St. Jim's a deadly look. He hated D'Arcy; in fact, he hated everybody and everything just then.

"Come along with your cousin, Clampe, dear boy!"

Clampe did not heed.

"I'd rather you had tea with me in my study, Frank," he mumbled.

The seaman did not seem to hear.

"Steer a course, my hearty!" he said. "I'm fellerin'. Come along, Cousin Clampe!"

"But—but I—"

"Come along!"

Seaman Leslie grasped his cousin's arm, and led him away. Clampe had no choice about accompanying Arthur Augustus to the School House. D'Arcy's chums joined him at once. They were enjoying the seaman's visit. It was tea-time, and a good many fellows were going in, and Tom Merry & Co. joined the crowd with Clampe and Clampe's remarkable cousin.

Arthur Augustus had been thinking of tea in Study No. 5. But Seaman Leslie bore away to the dining-room as soon as he was inside the School House. He seemed to know the way well enough.

"Isn't it tea in the study, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

"Apparently not, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

"Go ahead!" grinned Levison of the Fourth. "Latime's face will be worth seeing. Anything the matter, Clampe?"

"Er? No!"

"You look rather white about the gills," grinned Cardew.

"Oh, rats! Hang you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The seaman had marched in, and Arthur Augustus piloted him to the Fourth Form table. There was plenty of room there, as a number of the Fourth had their tea in their own quarters. Arthur Augustus whispered to Blake, who cut off to the tuckshop for some extra supplies for the guest.

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, was at the table, and he glanced rather

curiously at the seaman over his glasses. Arthur Augustus approached the Form-master respectfully.

"I trust, sir, there is no objection to my havin' a guest to tea—a membah of the Woyal Navy, sir?"

"Certainly not, D'Arcy," said Mr. Lathom. "The man is very welcome. Is he a relation of yours?"

"A relation of Clampe's, sir."

"Very well."

Arthur Augustus sat down beside his new protégé. Clampe sat on the other side of him, in a state of misery that words could not have expressed. If his cousin had wished to torment him to the fullest possible extent, he could not have done it better than by this means.

Every eye in the room was on the red-nosed seaman, and fellows who heard the news abandoned tea in their studies, and crowded in to see him. Everybody knew about the upstart in the New House, and Clampe's cousin was an object of the keenest interest. Racke and Crooke came in to enjoy the discomfort of their dear pal.

Seaman Leslie talked, in his deep, powerful voice, as freely and cheerfully as if he had been in the fore-castle of a tramp at sea. Every word was a dagger to the unhappy snob.

The seaman's talk turned on home matters, but it was not exactly confidential, as nearly everybody in the room could hear him.

"Ow's your father, Cousin Clampe?" he asked.

"Eh? I haven't seen him since the vac," muttered Clampe.

"I posse he's still in the grocery line, hey?"

Clampe shuddered.

"Wha-a-t do you mean?" he stammered. "My pater isn't in business, You know that!"

"Has he sold the grocery shop?" asked the seaman, in surprise.

"He never had one!" hissed Clampe. "You know he hadn't!"

"Pity to sell it now, from what I 'ear," said the seaman, unheeding. "There's lots of money in grocery now—more than there is in fighting the Germans, hey? Ow about your brother—joined up yet, hey?"

"No!" hissed Clampe. "He's exempted."

"Conscientious objector, hey?"

Clampe ground his teeth.

"No! He's in a Government office, and can't be spared. You know it! C-c-can I pass you anything?"

"Ay, mate; heave the jam over this way."

Clampe passed the jam.

The seaman upended the jar over his plate, and the jam streamed out. The juniors watched that proceeding with fascinated eyes. They had never seen jam served in that manner before.

"Gimme a knife, Cousin Clampe!"

"Here you are!"

"Don't shove on my elber, my hearty. Give a cove room to get his knife to his mouth."

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyeglass dropped from his eye. He had never seen jam eaten with a knife before.

But his face remained unmoved. The sailorman was a guest, and a guest could do as he pleased without remark.

Tom Merry looked at the seaman rather suspiciously. He knew that seamen did not, as a rule, act in this amazing manner. A suspicion came into Tom's mind that Clampe's cousin was a practical joker, and was deliberately acting in this remarkable way to torment the unhappy snob of the New House.

Clampe, who had known his cousin as

a well-bred naval officer, could not make it out, unless Leslie had gone mad.

Clampe was glad when tea was over. His feelings were Hunnish. He would not have been sorry to see the whole gathering of School House fellows blotted out by a Zeppelin bomb at that moment.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Lathom, when the seaman rolled out with a crowd of fellows round him at last. "Bless my soul! What a very remarkable character. Very remarkable indeed!"

And Mr. Lathom's opinion was generally shared. There was no doubt that Clampe's cousin was a decidedly remarkable character!

CHAPTER 12. The Last Straw!

SMAACK!
Seaman Leslie thumped his unhappy cousin on the back when they came into the quadrangle.

"Cheero, my hearty!" he exclaimed. "You're looking down in the mouth!"

"W-a-a-is!" stammered Clampe.

"Ay, ay. Cheer up!"

"Isn't— isn't it time for you to get back, Frank?" muttered Clampe. "You— you've got a long walk before you, you know!"

"Ay, ay!" said Seaman Leslie, glancing up at the clock in the tower. "Must be getting up anchor soon."

"Thank goodness!" breathed Clampe.

"Hey! What did you say, Cousin Clampe?"

"N-n-nothing!"

"Thank you young gent for kindly looking after me like this 'ere," said the seaman, addressing the delighted juniors.

"I've enjoyed this 'ere visit, same as my Cousin Clampe has."

"Bai Jove!"

"Is there a young feller 'ere named Racke?" continued the sailorman.

"A—a friend of mine," stammered Clampe.

"He—he isn't here just now."

"I 'ad a letter from 'im," said the sailorman. "Fetch 'im 'ere."

"Racke, you're wanted!" shouted Kangaroo of the Shell, catching sight of Racke in the quad. "This way!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Racke, turning in the opposite direction.

Lowther and Manners promptly cut after Racke, and took him by the arms, and walked him back. If the guest wanted to see Racke, he was going to see him!

"You Mr. Racke, hey?" asked the seaman.

"Yes," snapped Racke. "What do you want?"

"I want to know what this 'ere letter means."

The seaman took a letter from his pocket, and unfolded it. Clampe and Racke exchanged uneasy glances. It was evident that the seaman had received the letter, after all, though why he should produce it in public now was a mystery. In his loud, booming voice the seaman read the letter out.

"Dear Mr. Leslie,—I am writing to inform you that Leslie Clampe is laid up in the sanatorium with a very severe cold, and the doctor will not allow him to see anyone. He has asked me to write and tell you how sorry he is that he will be unable to see you, and to ask you to defer your visit to the school till another occasion. He hopes to see you at home during next vacation.—Yours sincerely, "AUBREY RACKE."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, with a glance of contempt at Racke.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 504.

The juniors grinned. Clampe's miserable trickery was fully exposed now. The wretched Clampe's face was a study.

"Now, what does that there mean?" demanded the seaman. "Cousin Clampe ain't ill, and he ain't laid up on his beam-ends, hey?"

"It—it was a joke," stammered Clampe.

"Seems to me more like a blinking lie!" said he. "If I'd took any notice of that there letter, I'd 'ave missed seeing you, Cousin Clampe, and both of us would 'ave missed this 'ere pleasant afternoon."

"Yaroooh!" roared Racke of the Shell, as the seaman suddenly grasped his ear with a finger and thumb that seemed like a vice.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You-ow-ow! Leggo, you ruffian!" shrieked Racke. "Leggo! Oh, my ear! Oh, my hat! I'll kick your shins!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let that be a warnin' to you not to tell lies, Mister Racke!" said the seaman, releasing the infuriated junior at last. "Don't you 'ave anything more to say to that there young rascal, Cousin Clampe. He's a bad egg."

Clampe muttered something indistinct. He was afraid that Racke would betray his share in the letter, and in that case he had fears for his own ear.

But Racke, with a furious face, stamped away, and Clampe was glad to see him go. The juniors were almost in hysterics by this time.

"Now I better be gettin' up anchor," said Seaman Leslie. "I've only got to call on the 'Ead, and pay my respects."

Clampe trembled.

"N-n-no need to see the 'Ead!" he gasped. "The fact is, Dr. Holmes is very busy, Frank. He—he can't be seen just now."

"I know my duty, Cousin Clampe. I got to call on the 'Ead and pay my respects," said the seaman obstinately.

It was the last straw. Clampe felt that if this red-nosed hooligan interviewed Dr. Holmes, he would never survive it. His sufferings had reached the limit of endurance.

"Look here, let's get off!" he exclaimed. "I'll come with you—"

"To see the 'Ead?"

"Nunno!"

"Well, I'm going to the 'Ead! Then I shall want my bag. Where did you leave my blinkin' bag, Cousin Clampe?"

"It's in my study in the New House!" muttered Clampe.

"Fetch it hout!"

"You might get it, Redfern!" muttered Clampe. He did not want to leave his cousin just then. He was in terror of the man forcing his way to the Head's study, to interview the stately headmaster of St. Jim's. At any cost, that interview must be prevented.

Redfern nodded, and ran off to the New House.

He returned in a few minutes with the canvas sack.

"Thanky kindly, sir," said the seaman. "Now, Cousin Clampe, 'praps you'll show me in to the 'Ead."

"I—I—"

"Sharp's the word!"

"You—you can't see the 'Ead!" said Clampe desperately. "Look here—"

"But I got to pay my respects to the 'Ead."

"It's not necessary—"

"Avast there! I know my duty! You steer a course for his berth, an' I'm arter you. Now then, tumble up!"

"I tell you—"

"'Praps you think I'd better 'ave a brush-up afore I see the 'Ead, hey?" said the seaman, glancing down at his muddy boots and trousers. "'Praps you're

right. P'raps one of the young gent's will show me into a dormitory."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus at once. "P'way come with me!"

The swell of St. Jim's was certainly of opinion that a wash and brush-up would do Seaman Leslie good, before he interviewed the Head.

Arthur Augustus led the seaman into the School House, leaving Clampe helpless.

Dr. Arcy showed the guest into the Fourth Form dormitory, and left him there. The miserable Clampe gave him a dark look when he came down. The juniors waited in the hall for Seaman Leslie to descend.

"You—you rotter!" muttered Clampe. "He—he's not going to see the 'Ead! I won't have it!"

"Weally, Clampe, you have no wight to prevent your cousin payin' his respects to Dr. Holmes!"

"I tell you—"

"Besides, if he is weally an Old Boy, the 'Ead will natu'rally like to see him befo' he goes."

"He looks like an Old Boy, don't he?" chorused the boys of the Fourth. And there was a laugh.

"He is!" said Clampe savagely. "He was at St. Jim's, in his time, and he was a lieutenant in the Navy a month ago!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Draw it mild, Clampe!"

"Cheese it!"

"It's true!" howled Clampe. "I—I can't quite understand—how he's turned out like this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Clampe, your statement is p'p'osectious. P'way do not wepeat it!"

"It's true, you rotters!"

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wats!"

"Here he comes!" said Levison at last, as there was a heavy tread on the stairs.

Every eye was turned on the staircase. And then there was a howl of astonishment.

CHAPTER 13. A Sight Surprise.

LIEUTENANT LESLIE, R.N., came down the stairs.

The juniors gazed at him. It was the same man evidently.

It was Clampe's cousin. But the change in his appearance was staggering.

The red nose was no longer red—the blue chin was no longer blue. And the young man was dressed in a naval lieutenant's uniform. The juniors could guess now what the canvas sack had contained.

A wash and shave and the change of clothes had wrought a wonderful difference.

It was a handsome young naval officer who burst upon the astounded view of the St. Jim's fellows. Clampe, most astonished of all, gazed at him open-mouthed. He pinched himself to make sure that he was awake.

"My hat!" murmured Redfern. "Is this a giddy dream, Tommy?"

"It must be!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! The boundah has been spoofin' us!"

The naval gentleman stopped on the lower stair, and glanced down at the amazed fellows with a smile.

"What on earth does this mean, sir?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"An explanation is due to you fellows," said Lieutenant Leslie, in quiet, cultivated tones that contrasted curiously with the booming voice the juniors knew so well. "I have been guilty of a little harmless deception for the benefit of my Cousin Clampe."

"Oh!" gasped Clampe.

"Yesterday," continued the lieutenant,

"I left Wayland to walk to the school. On the footpath through the trees I was the witness of a scene that I did not like a little bit."

Redfern coloured.
I heard my Cousin Clampe twitting one of his schoolfellows," resumed the lieutenant, "with a baseness and snobishness which I was very distressed to find in a relation of mine. He twitted Redfern with the fact that his brother was a seaman on the lower deck, as if that were something to be ashamed of; a view that only a small, contemptible mind could take."

"Oh!" murmured Clampe again.
"Bai Jove!"
"I was naturally annoyed, and did not carry out my intention of coming here. I reflected upon the matter at my hotel in Wayland. I decided that Clampe needed a lesson—a severe lesson, and this scheme came into my mind. I went to

the Black Bull, where I discarded my uniform, and dressed myself as a seaman, and sent a letter to my cousin. My intention was to pay him a visit as a seaman, and I dropped my rank for the purpose, and came here as Seaman Leslie, in order to teach Clampe a lesson, and I trust it has done him good. His sufferings during my visit have been very severe, I believe."

"Yaas, wathah!" chorled Arthur Augustus.

"And I hope the lesson will go some way towards curing him of his miserable snobishness. I think, Cousin Clampe, it will be some time before you forget your experiences of this afternoon. Remember them, my boy, and remember that you owe them to your own foolish snobbery. Try to be more decent."

And with that the lieutenant walked down the passage, heading for Dr. Holmes' study. There was a moment's

silence, and then Tom Merry led a cheer, which rang like thunder down the corridor.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "So it was a practical joke, aftah all! What a wippin' wheeze! Clampe, deah boy, has the lesson done you good!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Rats!" snarled Clampe, as he swung away.

But Clampe, angry as he was, was very much relieved in his mind. The lesson had indeed been a severe one, and undoubtedly the cheery naval gentleman hoped that it had done Clampe good. But fellows who knew Clampe well were doubtful on that point!

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"MR. SELBY'S DILEMMA!" by Martin Clifford.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"MR. SELBY'S DILEMMA!"

By Martin Clifford.
Mr. Selby, the tyrant of the Third Form, is one of those enthusiastic people who, being well above military age, take a very stern view of the obligation upon younger men to join up. He incurs the wrath of Monty Lowther, who thinks out a scheme which puts the master into a very unpleasant position. When you are told that it brings a recruiting officer to St. Jim's to inquire why Mr. Selby has not joined, your curiosity as to what will happen after that will be acute, naturally. And next week it will be satisfied!

Because the pleasure to inform you that this story has been illustrated by Mr. R. J. Macdonald, your old favourite, who is now Lieut. R. J. Macdonald, R.N.V.R., and has very little time for artistic work. But he has been able to do two stories for me. And first-rate as is the work of his capable lieutenant, Mr. Warwick Reynolds, you will, I know, be glad to see the old hand's pictures again.

GOOD NEWS.

Extra numbers generally are impossible under the present paper restrictions, and we have not had one for a long time. Meanwhile we have been practising economy for all we are worth, and so we are able to promise you that Christmas—the special season which is like no other in the year—will not be allowed to pass without.

SPECIAL BUMPER NUMBERS

of both the Gem and "Magnet." The Gem will be first in the field, as usual, and its Christmas Number will appear during November.

I sometimes asked why these Christmas Numbers don't appear nearer the season to which they belong. But the thing simply cannot be done. Just remember that the Gem is published by what I believe to be the biggest publishing house in the world. From this house go out over so many other papers—"Answers," the "Union Jack," the "Magnet," the "Seaside," the "Library," "Answers' Library," "Forget-Me-Not Library," "Puck," "Chuckles," the "Jester," to name only a few. If the Christmas Number of any one of these is to appear in the same week, they would all have to be set, printed, machined, cut and bound within one week some time before. Now, our printers are desperately hard worked, but even they can be expected to put through double their ordinary output of labour like that. But by spreading out the Christmas Numbers over a period of some weeks, the extra labour, though difficult, is brought within the bounds of possibility. Do you see? After all, you can save up the Christmas Number till Christmas Day. But perhaps you can't! Perhaps it is going on being read before. Shouldn't wonder!

QUEER NOTIONS!

A reader whose mind I don't envy, writes to say that he is going to stop reading the

papers unless I stop putting in bad language such as "by the head, cad, rotten, rotter, my only Aunt Jemima Jane, etc."

Bad language—yes? First I've heard of it! And another reader has carried his keenness for the promise of a holiday to the absurd extent of threatening to withdraw the support of himself and his chums if it does not appear at once. He calls himself a "Loyal Reader," too!

He is certainly an enthusiastic one, and I am glad to hear that he likes the Greyfriars Gallery so much. I have done all the work—except the artistic work—on that myself, and very hard work it has been—far harder than any reader can understand. When I have time I shall start the St. Jim's Gallery. But I have not time at present, and it must wait. Before the first sketch in the series can appear many hours of work must be put in with the long array of Gem volumes on my shelves. Forgotten incidents must be brought back to memory, where stories must be read again; notes must be made in plenty.

I had hoped to find someone else capable of the work. One man came along and asked to be allowed to do it. I told him he might try, and if he could do it as I wanted it done I should be only too pleased. He promised the first three sketch-articles within a week, and the subject—Tom Merry, Arthur Augustus Darcy, and Paddy Wynn—a varied and representative trio. A fortnight later I heard that my would-be helper was finding it more difficult than he had expected. Since then—silence. And that was a couple of months ago. The only conclusion I can come to is that he has chucked it!

NOTICES.

Football—Matches Wanted by—

TOWER ROVERS—15-4-mile radius.—F. C. Biggs, 88, Courts Road, Burdett Road, London, E. 3.

An Erith Team—15-4-mile radius.—R. Freeman, Elm Road, Slade Green, Erith.

IVYDALE JUNIORS—15-4-mile radius.—A. Buckland, 22, Marmaduke Street, Edge Hill, Liverpool.

THE GREYFRIARS ATHLETIC—14-15-5-mile radius.—L. Parker, 16, Ravenshaw Street, West Hampstead, N.W.

AVONDALE—17-4-mile radius of Kensington district (Liverpool).—T. Meakin, 20, Exmouth Street, Everton, Liverpool.

RAGLAN RANGERS—17-6-mile radius.—H. Siskel, 29, Southlands Road, Bromley, Kent.

CLARENCE UNITED—16-mile radius.—John N. Hart, 110, Lytham Road, Brixton, S.W. 2.

BROMLEY NATIONAL OLD BOYS—16-6-mile radius.—H. Vonsden, 4, Madras Place, Colgate Road, Bromley, Kent.

NEWTOWN JUNIOR—13-14-5-mile radius—away matches only.—Arthur Monks, 4, Ivor Street, Nixon Street, Castletown, near Rochdale.

MAYFIELD UNITED—17-3-mile radius—

W. Skinner, 9L, Oakfield Road, Higham Hill, Walthamstow.

REDBISH JUNIORS—15—anywhere in Manchester or Stockport.—F. Thompson, Jun., 14, Reddish Lane, Gorton, Manchester.

BULWELL COVENTRY—14-16-5-mile radius.—G. Robinson, 5, Brady Yard, Main Street, Bulwell, Nottingham.

CLARENCE SECOND TEAM—16-17-2-mile radius of Boodle.—E. Webster, 53, Palmerston Avenue, Litherland, Liverpool.

MORLEY ROVERS—15-16-3-mile radius.—A. R. Jenkins, 31, Mabey Street, Hornerton, E. 9.

ACRE UNITED—16-5-mile radius.—H. Atkins, 370, Brookcroft Road, Walthamstow.

ALLERTON A.F.C.—15-16-mile radius of Vauxcross Playground.—S. Marsden, 21, Mayville Road, Mossley Hill, Liverpool.

DOVEDALE—15-16-5-mile radius.—C. Butterfield, 95, Herondale Road, Mossley Hill, Liverpool.

HUNTINGDON ATHLETIC—16-17-2-mile radius.—A. Croomer, 33, Offord Road, Burying, N. 1.

BARKING CORINTHIANS—15-16-5-mile radius.—R. W. Dunk, 40, Wakering Road, Barking.

MOOREFIELD—16-17-2-mile radius.—J. R. Kellard, 4, Wayne Street, Barking, S.W. 14.

CAMPDEN RANGERS—16—ground Wormwood Scrubbs.—J. Noakes, 64, Somerleyton Road, Brixton, S.W. 2.

STEVENY AND DISTRICT LEAGUE—vacancies for a few teams—average age 17.—H. Fudge, 13, Dakin Street, Linchwood, E. 14.

Leagues, Magazines, etc.

Cecil J. Price, 2, Delaval Road, Whitley Bay, wants readers for printed amateur magazine, 12d. 1/4.

No. 1 and 2 of amateur magazine sent for 1/4d. in stamps—contributors wanted.—T. Hadfield, 17, Whalley Road, Accrington.

F. Wirtz, 12, Ravistock Place, Bloomsbury, W.C. 1—club started—particulars sent on receipt of stamped and addressed envelope.

More members wanted for Exchange and Correspondence Club—both sexes—no subscription—readers abroad specially invited—stamped and addressed envelope, please.—G. Cotgrave and A. E. Tatler, 23, Dee Lane, Chester.

Boy members wanted—13-15—for club, Kensington magazine, library, footer, etc.—if calling, after eight o'clock evenings.—D. Crown, 110, Kensington Park Road, W. 11.

Correspondence Wanted by—

H. Armstrong, 15, Miller Road, Merton, S.W. 19—with boy readers outside metropolitan area interested in stamp collecting.

Your Editor



THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA

Our Great New Serial Story.



NEW READERS START HERE.

THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA are PHILIP and PHILIPPA DERWENT, known to their friends as FLIP and FLAP. They have with them a remarkable cockatoo, whose name is COCKY. Flip takes the bird to Highcliffe, to which school he is bound, while Flap goes to Cliff House. They fall in on the way with some of the Highcliffe nuts, and GADSBY forces a quarrel on Flip, and is well thrashed. The Colonial boy, however, makes friends with the other nuts, and especially with PONSOMBY, TUNSTALL, and MERTON. But VAVASOUR and MONSON MINOR are less disposed to like him, and MR. MORBS does not take to him at all. Flap meets MARJORIE HAZELDENE, PHYLLIS HOWELL, and CLARA TREVLIN, of Cliff House, and finds chums in them. She gets to know that PETER HAZELDENE, of Greyfriars, Marjorie's brother, is in some trouble—he is, in fact, in debt to Ponsomby, with whom he has been gambling during the holidays. She writes to her brother, warning him against Ponsomby, and Flip does not like it.

(Now read on.)

Gadsby's Trick.

BUT certain other fellows could do nothing right for Mr. Mobbs. That Caterpillar, though not of the nuts, seemed to be among those whom Mr. Mobbs revered. Flip learned later that De Courcy was the nephew of an earl.

Courtenay was no favourite with the master. But he did not care Courtenay, it struck Flip that he was, in a queer kind of way, more than half afraid of the skipper of the Fourth.

But a shock-headed, plain-faced, decent junior named Smithson was caned three times—more to the evident amusement of some of the nuts.

His offences were small ones—a wrong answer, wandering attention, speaking to the boy on his left; not worthy fifty lines, any of them. Fifty lines was exactly the price Monson had to pay for throwing a bad of chewed blotting-paper in the face of Jones minor—who was caned for upsetting an ink-pot when he jumped up! And—though Flip did not know that yet—Monson was just about as likely to write those lines as Mr. Mobbs was to ask for them!

A dirty trick, that of which Monson had been guilty. And, chancing to catch Flip's eyes, he saw in them a scornful look which told what the new boy thought about it.

Monson whispered something to Gadsby, and then Gadsby looked over to Flip, and said—“The cat's in the hat, and the face has been at breakfast—as far as one could judge with a face that looked so very unlike itself as Gadsby's did after yesterday's battering.”

“Now, if Flap had warned me against that chap!” thought Flip.

When classes were over, and the Fourth were streaming or dawdling out, Flip showed that he had not yet come to know the ways of the nuts, by a hurry to get outside that resulted in his finding himself far ahead of Pon & Co.

Frank Courtenay came up to the new boy. “It's a bit warm for footer,” said the captain of the Fourth, “but we're starting practice to-day. Cricket's dead for this year,

though we did have a knock last night. Are you as good at footer as at cricket, Derwent?”

“Oh, I think so!” replied Flip.

“Was it the Australian game you played?”

“I have played it, but our school game was soccer.”

“Good!” You'll come along, I suppose?”

“Oh, rather!”

“He's as keen as mustard,” Courtenay told his chum the Caterpillar a minute or two later.

“Your tidin's are joyful, Franky! Keep him keen if you can,” said De Courcy. “He can take my place to-day. Too jolly hot for me, y'know; an' I'm really bushy unit.”

“You look it,” said big chum gravely. “Turn to the light, Rupert. Hang it all, you'll be growing a corporation if you're not careful. I certainly shall not let you off. I'm going to work you like a horse this season.”

“Oh, by gad!” A corporation!” groaned the Caterpillar, gazing down at his slim figure. “Franky, dear boy, don't you think if you made an effort—a great effort; but you're used to makin' em—you could avoid insultin' a fellow in his tenderest feelin's?”

Flip rushed upstairs and into the study.

“Philby, Cocky wants a pea-nut! Where you been so long?”

“Hanged if I've got one, Cocky!” said Flip, rummaging his pockets. “Oh, I remember! That fat beast of a peacock. Being informed that Cocky would like it even better, he produced a package, and told Flip to help himself.”

“But I can't sponge on you,” Flip said. “The old chap expects one every time he asks. And if he gets almonds half a dozen times pea-nuts will be dead off. I shall have to get some.”

“Can't he had nearer than Courtfield, I fancy. Don't eat 'em myself, but the fags do.”

“My sister carried some. I'd better get hers.”

“Well, why not cut along now? I'll stroll with you if you like. I can stay outside, y'know. Don't hanker after facin' Miss Primrose, by Jupiter!”

“I'm playing footer. Just come up to get my togs.”

“Oh!” said Merton, as if rather surprised. Tunstall came in.

“The old chap expects one every time he asks. And if he gets almonds half a dozen times pea-nuts will be dead off. I shall have to get some.”

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“Can't he had nearer than Courtfield, I fancy. Don't eat 'em myself, but the fags do.”

“Bonza? Oh, Australian, I suppose! It means 'good,' or 'all right,' or anything like that.”

Flip scrawled the note, and handed it over to Merton, who put his hand in front of Tunstall to take it. Merton meant to deliver that note personally.

Five minutes later Flip was on the foot-ground, and Frank Courtenay was asking him where he usually played. He said centre-forward. Courtenay played half that morning, for Flip was on his side.

Courtenay was a centre-forward of no common skill, but the game had not progressed far before he and others saw that in the new boy he had his equal at least.

From the very outset it was plain that there was a place in the Fourth Form Eleren for Derwent—if he cared to take it.

And he was keen; there could be no doubt about that.

But Courtenay and the Caterpillar—and not only they—realised that the Fourth would not have the new boy's help if Ponsomby could prevent it.

Pon and Vavasour came down to look on at the game for a few minutes, and it was obvious that Pon was not pleased.

“Hope he'll show 'em,” said the Caterpillar. “If the dear Pon tells Derwent he is not to, that ingenious youth—free an' unfettered an' all that, y'know, Franky—will tell the deuce, and Gadsby replied by flinging the tablecloth over Cocky's cage.”

“To eat coke? Jolly sure he does! Leave Derwent alone, Rupert. He is really keen, and I'm not sure Ponsomby can keep him off. Anyway, we can do no good by meddling.”

Pon did know too much. But as he strolled away he confided to Vavasour a plan to keep the new fellow out of the Fourth team, and Vavasour pronounced it good.

Meanwhile Gadsby was busy. He looked in at Study No. 6, and found no one at home—no one but Cocky, that is. Cocky fluttered his feathers, and said in complimentary words, and Gadsby replied by flinging the tablecloth over Cocky's cage.

“I should like to wring your beastly neck!” he snarled. “An' I'll do it some day, by gad! But it wouldn't be safe just now.”

Gadsby's eyes fell upon Flap's letter. The nuts had none too high notions of honour. Pon, Gadsby, Vavasour, and Monson were not to be trusted a yard. Merton, or Drury, or Tunstall would not have done what Gadsby did then, though.

He peeped into Merton's desk, but found little to interest him. Tunstall's was locked, and none of Gadsby's keys would fit it. But one of them fitted Flip's.

Gadsby's eyes fell upon Flap's letter.

He had no hesitation about reading it. He read it with a sneer.

“Brigish little muff!” he growled. “Pon was rather snooty, I know. Wonder how he'd fancy this?”

“Oh, you pig!” came from under the tablecloth; and Gadsby started guiltily, and then swore.

He looked out of the window. Pon and Vavasour were coming back from the playing-fields in deep converse. They would pass right under the window at which he stood.

With a sudden impulse Gadsby tore the letter across, and let the two halves flutter out of his hand. He watched them until they had settled down. The two were very near

by that time, and Gadsby saw Vavasour quicken his pace and pick up the two pieces. Then Gadsby plucked the tablecloth from the cage, put it back, locked Flip's desk up again, and bolted.

"That ought to make Pon a bit wild," he muttered. "He'll be mad with Derwent, too. Pon didn't treat me nicely yesterday. An' Merton an' Tunstall are gettin' too thick with that new cod, 'e's thrivin' one of them meddled with his piffin' letter there'll be a row in the family. It's all to the good, anyway."

It was a foul trick, none the less foul for its triviality. But Gadsby did not feel a bit ashamed of it as he hurried off to his own study.

Shame was not much in Gadsby's line.

Ponsonby and Vavasour.

"O H, by gad, Pon, here's your name in this dashed letter!" said Vavasour.

"Hand it over!" commanded Pon, and Vavasour obeyed.

It did not seem to either of them that it was only playing the game to read other people's letters. The nuts, for the most part, had long ago overcome any scruples they may ever have had about that kind of thing.

"Vavasour read the letter over Pon's shoulder.

"Seems to be from the sister," he said.

"Doesn't seem to be it, 'e's you idiot!"

"Oh! absolutely!" said Vavasour weakly.

Pon was not pleased. He frowned blackly for a moment.

But then his face cleared.

"You seem quite backed about it, old man," Vavasour remarked.

"Well, on the whole, I don't mind to be gad."

"I should. I call it dashed cheek, writin' like that, Pon."

"So it may be. But she never supposed I should see it."

"That's not odd. Check of him—I mean, Derwent, 'e know."

"He didn't write it, you noodle!"

"Well, it was written to him, anyway."

Vavasour's mental processes were not easy to follow. The fact of the matter was that he disliked thinking, and was not very successful on the rare occasions when he tried it.

"Now, Pon was not at all that he might have been by long odds, but no one could deny that he had brains.

"Impossible it had been written to you?" said Pon.

"Oh, dash it! It couldn't have been!"

"But it it had, you wouldn't have apologized to me, would you?"

"No, I shouldn't have said anything about it."

"Well, that's just what Derwent's done. But you want me to blame him."

Vavasour looked at his watch.

"Oh, have it your own way," he said.

"I've got nothin' against Derwent. But Gadsby has."

"I'll see that Gadsby keeps within bounds," said Pon.

"You'll have your work cut out—absolutely!"

"Gadsby had better be a donkey. He'll be sorry for it if he can't, by gad!" said Pon viciously.

"Looks to me as if you thought a dashed heap more of this chap Derwent than you do of your old pals. Pon."

"But I think the fellow's the right sort!"

"Not our sort!"

"No, not yet. He will be. I mean the next sort to keep us to keep up the amount that our cousin Courtenay an' the condemned Caterpillar—yes, an' the Greyfriars rotters, too, hang them!"

"He'll do. He doesn't seem to object much to Courtenay just now."

"I'll stop that. I've told you how. It's easy to work as he's such a rippin' good player."

"I don't quite see—"

"I'll do the thinkin', Vav. It never was in your line."

"I can do a bit of it, too, when I like. An' say, Pon, that it is because you're gridy well-mashed on the sister that you make so much fuss about the dashed brother."

It did not require a first-class brain to perceive that; and after all, though it was true, it was only partly true. Something about Flip himself had taken Ponsonby's fancy. He did not know what, and he did not ask himself whether that something would not have gone for ever when once he

had succeeded in making of Philip Derwent the complete nut.

He was surprised that Vavasour should have discovered his secret. The nuts were always surprised when Vavasour showed signs of having thought anything out for himself. But Pon was not annoyed.

"She is the prettiest girl I've seen for dogs' ages," he said. "I can't stand Hazeldene's do!"

"Do!" said Vavasour. "The Trevyn hussy is too much the Suffragette type for me. The Howell charmer's nearer the mark. But this one licks her into a coked hat."

"You seem to forget that Hazeldene is Ponsonby's dangerous character, an' has won her dearly beloved brother against him!" Vavasour sneered.

"Oh, no, I don't! That pleases me, by gad!"

"My aunt! You've queer tastes!"

"An' you've no more brains than you were born with! A fellow couldn't say much less than that!"

"I'll admit that I haven't the sort of brains that can see any battery for in that dashed letter!" snarled Vavasour.

"But I don't know at all. I don't know whether I'd call it battery; but there's one thing this letter proves—I'm in her mind!"

"More on it than in it!" answered the dandy of the Fourth, who the unexpectedness of this comes to the duldest at times. It really was not bad for Vav—unless it was accidental, which is likely.

"On it or in it is all one. She's thinkin' about me, that's something gained, an' if you can't see it you must be a woodener-headed idiot than I took you for, Vav; an' that's sayin' the very deose of a lot!"

Vavasour sucked for a few minutes after that. They were outside the gates now, and Pon had put the letter in his pocket. He evidently meant to keep it. Vavasour thought it was mostly because Hazeldene had written it, and not down Pon as 'gettin' soft."

But it was not exactly as Vavasour thought. Pon had a notion that he might be able to use that letter.

"I say, where are we goin'?" asked Vavasour after a bit.

"On 'e'll stroll towards Regent," replied Pon, in an off-hand way.

Vavasour grinned. The road to Regent was also the road to Cliff House. He was sure Pon had not forgotten that.

"I say, where are we goin'?" he do about that as Hazel?" Vavasour inquired.

Hazeldene had spent part of the summer holiday in quite the worst sort of place for a fellow with his weaknesses of character.

While a good many of the Greyfriars' boys had been working on the land helping harassed farmers to get in the harvests that the country needed—and might come to need even more sorely—Hazel and Pon and Vavasour had been of other sort of boys, who will remain unknown to this story, had lounged on the front at a fashionable seaside town, and played games of chance night after night for stakes that were far too big for Hazel.

"I'm goin' east with Hazel," said one of the fande among the Pon pets. His pocket-money was on so small a scale as allowed of the games he played. And he played badly, too—he always did. A run of luck at first had got him into the habit, but then had come the inevitable sequel.

Every penny he had taken with him was soon gone. On the morning of the day upon which he returned to Greyfriars, he had paid for his dinner, his creditors, his whole pocket-money for the term, and all but the irreducible minimum of his journey money.

And he still owed Pon over five pounds. With Vavasour he had settled up the amount in that case was trifling. Vavasour might win at games of mere chance, but when brains were called for he usually rose from the table a loser. Bunker was a better player than he was. You he did not mind, but, though he was willing to play bridge, it was for Vav buying a headache at a high price.

Pon's answer surprised his friend.

"I'm goin' east with Hazel, 'e said Pon.

"What on earth for?"

"Oh, Hazel ain't really half a bad sort!"

"That ain't why. I've heard you say different things about the outsider before now."

"It's good enough for you!" snapped Pon.

Vavasour risked a regular bridge headache by doing some more thinking.

"What?" The giddy pip, by gad?"

"No, but it's dashed well enough to give a chap it—absolutely!"

"You're a mischief!"

"Think I can't see through you, Pon, my

luck? Hazel has a sister at Cliff House as well as Derwent!"

"Rot! I've told you that Miss Hazeldene is not my style."

"Oh, I know all that! She wouldn't look at you, anyway. But if you don't get a footin' at Cliff House through Derwent, you reckon there's a chance of doin' it through Hazel?"

"Yav, if you work your brain to the extent you'll be peggin' out young, by gad!"

The Nuts at Cliff House.

At this moment the nuts, rounding a bend in the road, came in sight of the Cliff House playing-field.

Hockey was the girls' winter game, of course, and a dozen or so of them had taken out their sticks that bright September morning. But it was warm as well as bright, and there was no great general keenness for the game.

Something had happened, too, to take their attention from it.

Merton and Tunstall had turned up. They had seen the girls on the field, and thought they'd better while to go up to the house. Neither youth was specially shy, and both knew several of the Cliff House pupils slightly.

It seemed an opportunity not to be missed. Merton and Tunstall did not propose to miss it.

They recognized Flip at once from her likeness to her brother. But Merton, who had taken out his sticks, knew better than to go up to her with it.

He approached Phyllis Howell.

"You needn't come unless you like, Yum," he cried.

"Kats! You'd feel bashful without me to support you, old man."

So they went together.

Merton and Tunstall were both quite well-looking youths, and they dressed well. The girls might know them as two of the nuts; but none of the evil notoriety that clung about Ponsonby attached to these two in the eyes of the house.

Phyllis Howell smiled upon them pleasantly enough, though not at all flirtatiously, and called to Flip as soon as she had leashed what she took.

Flip came, bright-faced, her hair blowing about her; and the two nuts were no longer surprised that Pon had been smitten. They were not at all sure they were not smitten themselves. The honest boy and girl friendship that existed between a lot of the Greyfriars fellows and a few of the Cliff House girls was not quite in the same style.

But Merton and Tunstall were not exactly out of what they might have called "a mashin' expedition," and there was nothing in their manner to which offence could possibly be taken.

"Flip, this is Merton, of Highcliffe—and this is Tunstall. Miss Derwent," said Phyllis; and the ceremony of introduction was sufficiently accomplished. "They have your brother in their study," Miss Howell went on; "and they have brought you a note from him—about that wonderful bird, I think."

"He's a fine chap, Miss Derwent, an' we like him," said Merton. "Oh, I mean Cocky, 'e know! It wouldn't be the thing, 'e says, to say just that about your brother's bird. But we're jittin' it off pretty well with him so far—eh, Tun?"

"Derwent's all right," replied Tunstall. "I'm sure we shall get on with him like—oh, like a—"

Flip smiled. She was relieved to hear that Flip was not one of Pon's study-mates. There could not be much harm in these two, she thought.

With a word of apology, to which Merton murmured, "Don't men!" she opened the note. Then she smiled again, and handed it to Phyllis.

"May read it aloud?" asked Phyllis.

"Oh, yes! Flip wouldn't mind, I'm sure."

"It's a very brotherly note," said Phyllis. "You girls will know what to expect when I say—"

"Oh, we know!" said Miss Clara, who had just come with Marjorie.

"If you've brothers who don't precisely fit the brotherly off Mr. Tully, may I suggest myself as a well-broken specimen, used to—"

It was Merton who rattled off that. But Clara and her gang were ready.

"I can see myself promising to be a sister to quite a lot of people of your type," she said, with a saucy curve.

"By Jupiter!" said she, "ain't the sort of answer I'd like to be final!" said Merton.

"You would find that you had to, Clara"

replied demurely. "But I may tell you that Miss Primrose does not allow proposals even to members of the highest Form, and we are not that, you know."

"Really, Clara?" murmured Marjorie.

"You don't deny the truth of that, surely, my dear?"

"You're interrupting the girls' proceedings, Clara," said Phyllis severely. "Girls, last night Mr. Flap said it sent some of us quite a nice message. We were to accept his compliments, he said, and to take great care of his sister. And we're going to. But this is the way he writes to his sister: 'Dear kid, -If any peanuts in hand, send per bearer. My lot swizzled by a fat specimen named Bunter. Cocky will be wild if he don't get him when he yells for it.-Flap. There'"

"I don't call it dumb," said Clara.

"You would! That is about the level of your intelligence, my dear," answered Phyllis blandly.

"I don't see what's the matter with it, really, Phyllis," urged Flap, always ready to stand up for her twin.

"It's a revelation of the selfishness of the unfair sex—that's all it is to me. Not a word about how he's getting off or—"

"But he knew we could tell you all that, Miss Howell," pleaded Tunstall.

"Did he know that you would find us here? And what chance would you have had of telling her if you hadn't? Miss Primrose wouldn't have asked you in."

"I always said we were lucky barges, Tun," said Merton.

"I must go and get the pe-nuts," Flap said.

"We're interrupting the game, Merton. They're pinin' to get rid of us," said Tunstall.

"Once the pe-nuts are in my hands, it will be no use for us to think of fingerin' longer."

"No, it isn't like that, really," said honest Flap, who was minded to like them both.

"Here, take my stick, and play while I'm away!"

"She thrust the stick into his hand, and was off in the grace of a deer, and almost the speed."

"By Jupiter, she'd lick any of our crowd in a level hundred!" remarked Merton.

"It's a match is it? Well, I'll be free," returned Clara, elevating a somewhat turned-up, but very pretty little nose.

"By gad, Miss Trevelyan, you're rough on us," murmured Tunstall.

"Not a bit more than you deserve!" said Phyllis.

"Where's Derwent, that he could not come himself?" Clara asked.

"Playin' footy. But I'll tell him you missed him," volunteered Merton.

"And why aren't you two playing?"

"You need not ask them that, my dear," Phyllis said. "The two Tunstalls bode that stick!"

"He is not quite sure which is the right end."

"As a matter of fact, Tunstall had played a good deal of mixed hockey and was far better at that game than at footer."

"The girls around, a dozen or so now, for others had drawn near, giggled. Tunstall did not appear in the least offended—only rather sorry for himself."

"I believe it's this way," he said humbly. "An' isn't there something they call bullyin'?"

"Will you show me, Miss Trevelyan? You ought to be a good hand at it, by gad!"

"It's bullyin' off, and it's done like this," said Phyllis, and she proceeded to show him.

Tunstall winked at Merton, and then looked very solemn as he caught the eyes of Marjorie and Clara upon him.

Phyllis found a pair of supple wrists, that were certainly no mere novice's, opposed to her, and it was Tunstall who got the ball away after the sticks had crossed twice.

"Spoofed, Phyllis!" cried Clara.

"Oh, no! Show me again, please, Miss Howell!"

A small wisp of a girl, with red hair and bright blue eyes, thrust her stick into Merton's hand.

"It's my little Molly Grey!" he cried.

"Didn't even know you were here, kid?"

And Merton forgot that he was a nut, and patted the small friend of his young sister on the head in quite a fatherly way.

"Only came yesterday," she hissed. "You an' Tunstall an' I will play any this of them if themobey will lend me a thicket!"

"Don't be a little traitor, small child!" said Clara.

"I'm not, really. But I know Alfy an' Tunstall, too, though they didn't take any notice of me."

"You didn't see you, Molly," explained Tunstall, shaking hands with her.

Molly Grey had certainly helped to make good the footing of the two nuts at Cliff House. The girls thought their manner to the small kid quite nice—as it was. And within a minute Miss Molly was in goal with a borrowed stick. Merton was at back, and Tunstall was bullying off in the circle with Phyllis, who had Marjorie and Clara and three more as supporters.

"What would Miss Primrose say?" Marjorie asked.

"Well, my dear, she couldn't eat us, and I don't think that she has ever forbidden us to play with boys—as long as they were nice boys. And I don't much object to these two, in spite of their ties and their socks. Now, if it were kiss-in-the-ring—"

"Look out, Marj, or he'll be past you!"

But Tunstall found the gentle Marjorie by no means easy to run round. She could play hockey as well as back, and Merton shoved the pe-nuts in his pocket, and repulsed a hot attack by Phyllis and Marjorie. And someone on the other side gave up her place and

the Tasmanian girl fairly made rings round Merton, and from just within the circle put in a shot that little Molly Grey found all too hot for her.

That was the situation of affairs when Pon and Vavasour came upon the scene.

"Oh, by gad! Look at those silly bouncers! Playin' hockey with a crowd of

bums! It's the limit, absolutely!" said Vavasour, in high scorn.

Pon scowled. Vavasour could not imagine why, unless it was at the utter folly of Merton and Tunstall.

But it could not very well have been that, for, to Vavasour's intense surprise, Pon said:

"Come on, you dummies! We're not going to let those merchants steal a march on us like this!"

Vavasour followed. He was used to following Pon's lead. But he was not at all keen.

Others did not appear keen either. As Pon came in to the field the game stopped.

Merton and Tunstall did not look at all ashamed of themselves, and they were willing to continue, with or without the great Pon.

But the coming of Pon seemed to have damped the ardour of the girls.

"We can't play with a whole crowd of them," said Marjorie to Clara. "There would be a row; there may be even as it is."

"Oh, I'm willing to stop, my dear! But I'm not at all sure that if it had been, say, the pugnaclip Flip Devent and Drury, you would have thought of that. But 'nuff said!"

The game stopped. Pon was not exactly smiling, and the girls he knew responded to his greetings, but that was all. Miss Clara had nothing more to say; Miss Phyllis looked haughty, as she could when she chose; Miss Marjorie subsided into an inconspicuous position in the rear; and Miss Philippa was somewhere behind Miss Marjorie.

No one could say that Pon was precisely smug. Yet there was a hint of coolness about him.

And the temper of Pon was not quite angelic as the noble nuts wended their backward way. He snapped at Merton as he passed, and he rather warmly at any cherry; and he called Vavasour at least eleven separate and distinct pet names.

"Old Pon was in the very dickens of a way," Merton said to Merton.

"By Jupiter—what for? What had little old man, Tun, my boy?"

"Oh, ask Pon! If you care how he feels, I'm hanged if I do it! I don't mind Merton, but I care rather less of the great Pon this term. He ain't half a bad game. We might slide over there again an' take Flippy along. Flippy's sister ought to be grateful."

"You're right, Merton. She's the queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls, d'ye know, old man?"

"By Jupiter, Tun, you'd better look out, or you'll be catchin' the complaint!"

Pon's Dodge.

PON tapped at a study door in the Sixth Form quarters.

"Come in, whoever you are!" called a cheery voice; and the leader of the Fourth Form made ready to enter.

"Hallo, Ponsenby! Aurthin' special in the wind?" asked Lansley, captain of Highcliffe, looking up from a sporting paper.

"Nothin' but a big, overcast, good-looking fellow, whom nearly everybody liked, but he was not a good captain. He had notions

of fair play, which were worth something, but extremely little notion of discipline. Highcliffe under Lansley had not prospered.

Perhaps he knew it, and was sorry for it. But he was not sorry enough for the feeling to make much difference to his actions.

He had been a witness to the revolution in the Fourth, and he liked and respected Courtney. He knew that if ever the day came for Frank Courtney to captain Highcliffe the school would be made to buck up, even as the Fourth had been made to.

But Courtney's tastes were not Lansley's. Last, and worst of Pon's weaknesses, was not scheme and lie, and intrigue, but he betted and smoked and played cards.

"It's about the footer team I've looked in on, really," said Courtney.

"Oh! Had no idea you were interested. Goin' to play again this season? But even if you do, I can't offer you a place in the First Eleven. Pon's got you up to our form—which is moderate enough, goodness knows."

"I'm not askin' it. I've no intention at present of goin' in for hard labour because some silly asses call it a game," replied Pon.

"You do mean Courtney to play a sort of a kind of a team that will call itself Highcliffe, just for the look of the thing?"

Lansley nodded.

"The judge look of the thing?" he echoed, smiling his easy smile. "An' a 'sort of a kind of a team' ain't a bad description, though rather cheeky. I suppose I must make up my mind to be a bit cheeky."

"Well, I've looked in to put you on to somethin'."

"Have you? What's the wheeze? Want me to lead some of 'em, an' De Courcy, for that your way will be clear to bossin' the Fourth side?"

"Don't I say I've no notion of playin'!" snapped Pon.

"You've heard that. You needn't scowl, young Ponsenby. It don't improve your face much."

"You can't raise eleven decent players," Pon said.

"True, my boy! About six, if you count me in."

"You're the best of a rotten lot, as a matter of fact, by gad."

"You do me proud, Pon! I had thought of puttin' some backbone into the side my askin' Courtney an' De Courcy to play regular."

"They wouldn't! They'd stick to their Form team, whatever you said."

"Oh, by gad, though, any chap must care somethin' about gettin' his school colours!"

"It's some credit to play, even for Highcliffe!"

"Dashed little!" answered Pon morosely.

"Well, what's your notion?" snapped Lansley. Even the easy-going skipper of Highcliffe could be nettled.

"There's a new chap in the Fourth—Derwent—no end good an' no end keen."

"Pal of yours?"

"Well, yes."

"Almost a miracle that he's keen, then, isn't it? You aren't exactly mustard on your chin, as clean an' decent as footer, young Pon?"

"That he hanged! There ain't so dashed much difference between me an' you, if you come to think."

Lansley did not resent that straight saving, save by a slight contraction of the forehead.

"How good is he?"

"Nailin' good! He'd be all over most of your slackin' duifers!"

"So would Courtney an' the Caterpillar. So would most of the Greysfriars Remove. I don't see how it can be that if we were duffers."

"The Greysfriars kids—or even our own Fourth—I wouldn't bet on our pullin' it off."

"Well, Derwent's as good as Courtney—"

"If I'm not mistaken, that if we were duffers, was rotten jealousy, so I won't. But he's better than De Courcy—an' the Caterpillar's ordinary form. When that beggar likes to buck up, he's a sight superior, if my opinion's worth anythin'."

"It's not worth a heap when Courtney comes into the matter. Do you expect me to play this kid our own Ponsenby?"

"No, I don't expect enough. You know, Lansley, that I know the game as well as the next man, though it don't suit my book to play it. An' you know that he can play it if I choose. Face it is that if I choose, you an' offered to play half for the team, you wouldn't turn me down without jolly well thinkin' it over. You're weak everywhere, but I know I could strengthen the half-back line."

(To be continued next week.)