

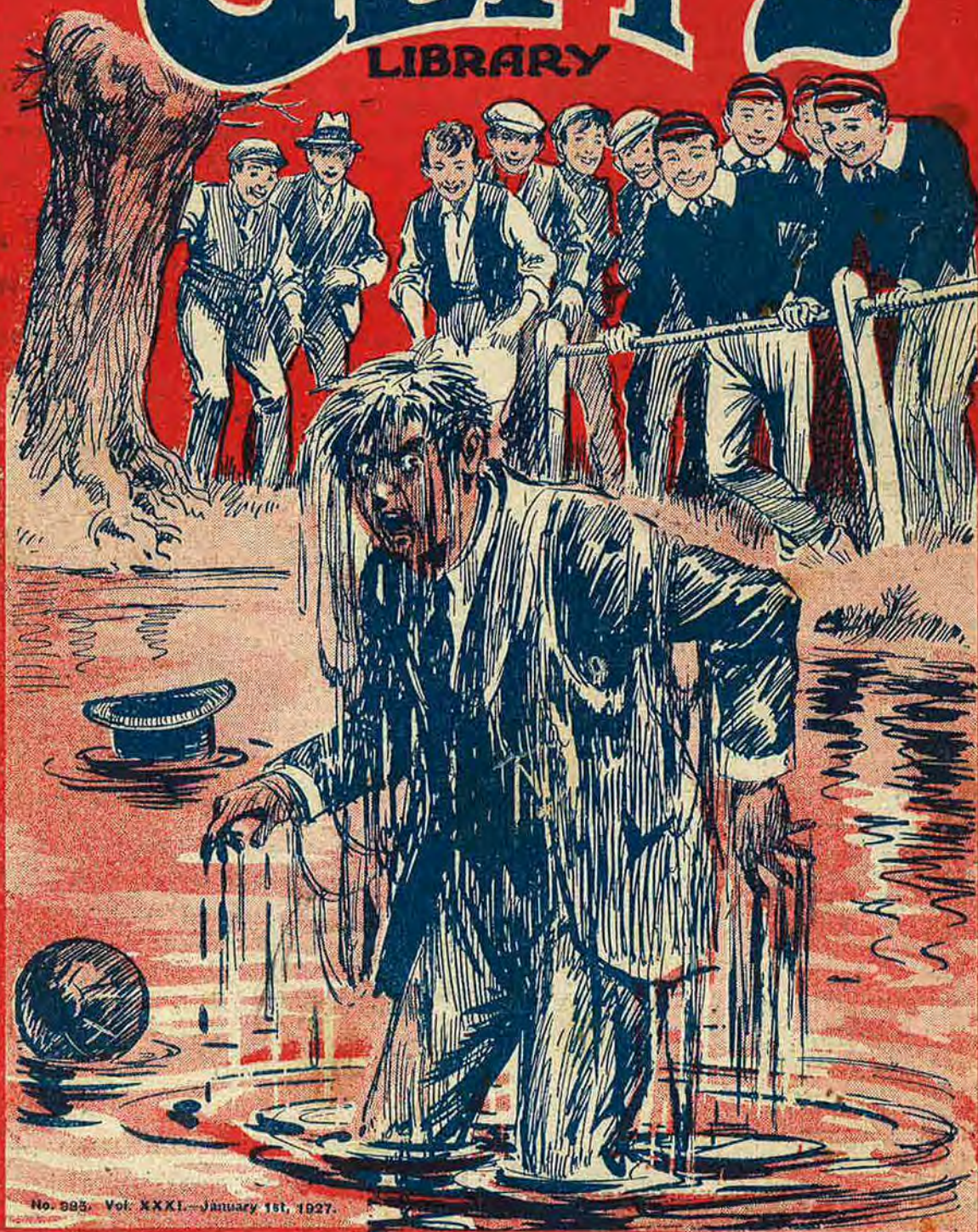
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KNOX MINOR REAPS THE REWARD OF HIS CADDISHNESS!

(An incident from the extra-long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's in this issue.)

KNOX MINOR! A dangerous mixture of cleverness and rascality, Knox minor, a new boy at St. Jim's, seems bent on making as much mischief as he can. Especially does he make a dead set against Tom Merry, the junior captain.



OUT FOR TROUBLE!

An Extra-Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, introducing Percy Knox, cousin of the unpopular Prefect of the Sixth.

By
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. Ominous News!

TOM MERRY came into Study No. 10 in the School House at St. Jim's with a rather rueful grin on his sunny features. He found his study-mates, Lowther and Manners, seated at the table—Lowther scribbling out an impot, and Manners putting a fresh roll of films in his camera.

"I can see trouble ahead, you men!" he remarked.

"Let it rip, then!" suggested Manners, without looking up.

"What's wrong, anyway?" said Lowther.

"Trouble on the giddy horizon!" grinned Tom Merry.

"I can see it coming from afar."

"Well, wait until it comes before worrying us about it," grunted Manners. "Never trouble trouble until trouble troubles you, you know."

"There's such a thing as being prepared for trouble when it comes, though," chuckled Lowther. "Cough the trouble up, Tommy! Have the beaks found out it was you who bungled that footer through the gym window?"

"Nunno!"

"Have they found out who changed the cheese for chunks of soap at supper the other night?"

"Nunno! It isn't—"

"My hat! Is it me?" demanded Manners anxiously. "Don't say old Linton knows I snapped him when he slipped on that jolly old banana-skin—"

"Nunno!" chuckled Tom. "It's nothing—"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, in sudden alarm. "Is it me, then? Has old Ratty seen that humorous poem I did about him?"

"Not at all, old chap!" said Tom Merry reassuringly. "You see, he wouldn't know it was a humorous poem if he saw it."

"You silly ass!"

"Wouldn't even dream it was even supposed to be a poem," said Tom blandly. "So don't worry about that, old fellow!"

"Why, you—you—you—" Lowther spluttered.

"In any case," went on Tom, with a chuckle, "it was such blithering, footling piffle, that neither Ratty himself nor anyone else would understand that it was a skit on him."

"Oh, you—you awful rotter!" gasped Lowther. "It was a jolly good poem, and it was jolly funny—"

"Well, we've got your word for that, of course."

admitted Tom Merry, rubbing his nose and winking at Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners, highly entertained by the expression of wrath on Lowther's features. "Go it, Tommy!"

"Oh, cheese it!" growled Monty Lowther, blushing. "You're only pulling my leg, fathead!"

"Go hon!"

"You admitted it was a jolly funny skit yourself!" snorted Monty. "It was a ripping poem—"

"It was fearfully, awfully ripping!" agreed Tom soothingly. "But don't worry, old chap—it wasn't that. It's a trouble that may concern us all in the Shell. You've heard there's a new chap expected this afternoon?"

"Eh? Yes, I did hear something about it," said Lowther, staring. "But how does a dashed new kid concern us?"

"Blow the new kid!" agreed Manners.

Both Manners and Lowther spoke wittingly. To such important "men" in the Shell as Tom Merry & Co. new fellows were very "small beer" indeed.

"It doesn't really concern us at all—yet!" grinned Tom. "But as I say, it might. The trouble looms on the horizon as yet. You see, this new kid's name happens to be Knox!"

"Knox!" gasped Manners and Lowther together.

"Just so!" chuckled Tom Merry. "You see, he's a giddy relation of dear old Knox of the Sixth—a giddy cousin."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Trimble's just told me," smiled Tom Merry. "The fat ass overheard Knox speaking to Railton about the kid, it seems. And as the kid's coming straight into the Shell—"

"Phew!" murmured Lowther. "Fancy having a relation of dear old Gerald in the Shell!"

"Bound to mean trouble!" grunted Manners.

"That's what I thought at once!" said Tom Merry, scratching his curly head meditatively. "You see, the kid may be like his cousin—"

"Bound to be!" agreed Lowther.

"Perhaps worse!" said Manners, frowning. "He'll be a crawling little worm, you know! He'll be spying round, and running off to Knox with tales all the time."

"Getting us continually into trouble!" said Tom Merry. "It'll be, 'Please, Gerald, Tom Merry's just kicked me,'" grinned Lowther. "And 'Please, Gerald, this and that all the giddy time. I can see a warm time ahead.'"

"Phew! Yes, rather!"

"If he does, we'll make things warm for him, of course," said Tom.

"Yes; and dear old Knox will make it thundering warm for us—with his ashplant!" growled Manners.

"Yes; that's the trouble, of course!"

"Stands to reason," said Tom Merry, shaking his head, "that this new chap will be no end cocky having a cousin

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in the Sixth, and a prefect at that. And he's almost certain to be like his Cousin Gerald. We know what Knox is—a beastly bully!"

"And a dingy blackguard!" added Manners.

"Hear, hear!" said Lowther. "Knox is all that, and more!"

"Thank you very much!"

It was a voice from the doorway—a voice that made the Terrible Three jump.

The study door, which had been slightly open, now swung wide, revealing a tall senior, who stood eyeing the three startled juniors with a grim, ominous smile on his face.

It was Gerald Knox, of the Sixth Form.

"Thank you very much!" repeated the prefect pleasantly. "So glad to hear your invaluable opinion of me—charmed, in fact! So I'm a beastly bully, and a dingy blackguard, what?"

"Oh crumbs!"

The Terrible Three gave each other dismal glances; they were "for it" now, with a vengeance! Gerald Knox was scarcely the fellow to overlook a thing like this.

"Oh dear!" groaned Tom Merry. "Sorry, Knox!"

"I'm sure you are," agreed Knox. "You'll be sorrier still presently."

"We didn't know you were listening, or we wouldn't have said it," went on Tom.

This was candid enough; but it did not seem to please Knox. His eyes glittered.

"That's enough, Merry!" he said. "It seems that you three fags are lacking in due respect to a prefect. I will endeavour to rectify that at once. There's a cane on the table in my study, Merry. Fetch it!"

Tom Merry nodded and left the room.

It was no good refusing to obey a prefect. He brought the cane, and Knox gave the Terrible Three two on each hand with it. They were not light ones, and the hapless juniors were wriggling and groaning when he had finished.

"That's a little lesson in the respect due to a prefect from scrubby little fags," said Knox, tucking the cane under his arm. "And now we'll discuss what I came about, Merry. Have you anything on this afternoon, kid?"

"Ow—ow!" gasped Tom Merry, squeezing his smarting hands under his armpits. "Yow! Yes, you—I mean yes: it's footer practice."

"Good! Then you can postpone the footer practice, Merry. I want you to trot down to the station to meet a new fellow. His train gets in at three-thirty—see you get there on time, kid!"

Tom Merry blinked at him.

"New fellow!" he gasped. "Me—meet a new kid?"

"Exactly!" smiled Knox. "I know," he added, with heavy sarcasm, "that you are a very big man in the school, Merry, and that meeting a new fellow is a bit below your dignity. But, all the same, it is my order—see? You'll obey me—or you'll smart for it."

"But—but look here, Knox!" spluttered Tom Merry. "That's a bit too thick! The Greyfriars match is next week, and—"

"The Greyfriars match doesn't interest me," said Knox calmly. "I suggested to Mr. Railton that a Shell fellow should meet this new chap, and he left it to me to choose a fellow. I decided upon you, Merry, because this new fellow happens to be a relation of mine, and so I'm particularly keen that he should be looked after properly."

"Oh!"

"I've got a sort of an idea," resumed Knox grimly, "that because this new chap happens to be a cousin of mine, you little scrubby fags will try to get a bit of your own back by taking it out of him. I want to make it quite clear from the beginning that I'm going to see nothing of the kind happens."

"Nothing of the kind will happen if the kid's a decent chap, Knox," said Tom Merry warmly, "and you know that well enough."

"It had better not!" snapped Knox, his eyes glinting. "Anyway, you can cut off to meet him now, Merry. I shall hold you responsible for his comfort and all the rest of it."

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's the programme!" said Knox cheerfully. "You'll meet him at the station, and you'll bring him to St. Jim's and show him round after he's seen the Head, Merry. And mind you're kind to the kid; no bullying, remember, and no ragging!"

"Bully—bullying?" stuttered Tom

"Just that!" said Knox. "Any bullying by you, Merry, and I'll come down on you with my ashplant! Be decent to him, and see he comes to no harm."

"Can't somebody else go?" snorted Tom Merry.

"Nobody but you will do!" said Knox, allowing his cane to slide down into his hand again. "Do I take it that you will meet the three-thirty, Merry?"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed for a moment, but the sight of the cane decided him. An order from a prefect—just, reasonable, or otherwise—was an order to be obeyed.

He nodded after a moment.

"Good!" said Knox. "I thought you'd agree to oblige me, Merry. Mind you're kind to the kid, now!"

And, with a peculiar grin on his face, Gerald Knox tucked his cane under his arm again and strolled out of the study.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry, as he departed. "If that isn't the giddy limit, you chaps! Didn't I tell you so?"

"It's a good beginning, right enough!" murmured Lowther, with a rueful grin. "And a licking each to kick off with! And he thinks a licking will make us kindly disposed to the kid! My hat!"

"Be kind to him—eh?" gasped Tom Merry. "Yes, I'll be kind to him! Why, I—I'll—"

As if to give vent to his feelings, Tom Merry took a running kick at the half-closed door, sending it crashing to. And as he did so the door was brought up short with a crash, and a familiar voice rang out in a howl of woe:

"Yawwooooooogh!"

CHAPTER 2.

Arthur Augustus is Firm!

"YAWWOOOOOOOGH!"

Bump!

"Oh, my hat!"

The Terrible Three rushed to the passage, and then they grinned.

Seated in the passage was an elegantly dressed junior, and he was clutching his nose with both hands and groaning. Evidently that nose had come into violent contact with the door as Tom Merry had kicked it with his boot. Behind Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Blake, Herries, and Digby were standing, and they wore broad grins.

"Gussy!" grinned Tom Merry. "Come in, old fellow!"

"Don't sit there in a draught!" advised Monty Lowther kindly.

"Gwoooooogh!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby kindly helped their groaning chum to his feet. Lowther carefully examined the door.

"No damage done!" he reported reassuringly. "All serene, Gussy! You haven't even scratched the oak, old chap!"

"Ow! Yow!" gasped Arthur Augustus, blinking at Lowther, with watering eyes. "Ow! You utterly careless dummies! Ow! Bai Jove! You have nearly busted by dose!"

"Your own fault, you know!" said Manners severely. "You should have knocked before entering! I'm surprised at your lack of manners, Gussy!"

"He did knock before entering!" said Blake. "He knocked with his nose! Is it bleeding, Gussy?"

"Gwoooooogh! Nunno! But—"

"Then it's nothing to make a song about, old fellow! Suppose it bled all down your waistcoat and necktie! Think of that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! You gwinin' dummies!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I am vewy much hurt, and it is nothin' to laugh about! I have a vewy good mind to thwack—"

"I should," remarked Lowther. "If a door hit me on the nose like that I should certainly thrash it, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! I meant to thwack—"

"Never mind what you meant," said Blake. "Life's too short to listen to what you meant or didn't mean! You haven't harmed the door, and these fellows have told you it's all serene; they've already forgiven you!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Blake—"

"Cheese it, old chap!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus subsided with an indignant sniff, and resumed hugging his damaged nose, which looked decidedly red and swollen.

"You chaps just going down to footer?" asked Tom Merry.

"Well, yes; we're ready!" said Blake, grinning. "But

we called in to see if you chaps have heard who the new chap is. Trimble says—"

"It's quite right!" said Tom Merry grimly. "The new chap's name is Knox, and he's a giddy cousin of our dearly beloved Gerald. If you've come to talk about that, you couldn't have arrived at a better moment. I was just showing my feelings in regard to Knox and his blessed cousin when I slammed that door on Gussy's boko!"

"We thought you'd feel like that about it?" chuckled Blake. "Thank goodness, he's not coming in our Form!"

"You'll see and hear plenty of him, never fear!" warned Tom Merry. "There's going to be trouble over that kid, you mark my words! He's bound to be a smaller edition of his cousin!"

"Bound to be!" assented Blake. "We think that—at least, all of us do except Gussy; that silly fathead thinks we ought to meet the kid at the station and fall on his neck and kiss him just because he's Knox's relation!"

"Just like Gussy!" grunted Digby.

"Bai Jove! I think nothin' of the kind, Blake!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus warmly. "I certainly suggested wallyn' wound and meetin' the new fellow, but I nevah suggested kissin'—"

"No, but you were jolly near it!" snorted Jack Blake. "You said a picked selection of the most influential fellows in the Shell and Fourth should go to meet him. Great Scott! Fancy going out of one's way to meet a relation of Knox's! B-b-b-brrrr!"

"Wats!" retorted Arthur Augustus indignantly. "You are puttin' an uttably w'ong construction upon my view of the matter, Blake!"

"You said—"

"I said that the new fellow is entitled to faiah play even if he is a relation of Knox's!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "He may be a vewy decent fellow, you know—I have met cousins who are uttably unlike each othah in chawactah. And I maintain it is quite w'ong to imagine in advance that this new fellow is a wottah just because his cousin is."

"Well, that's right enough!" grinned Tom Merry. "But—"

"There is a 'but'—a very big 'but'!" growled Blake. "I can see trouble ahead—"

"Wubbish! I see no weason why there should be trouble."

"Well, I do, Gussy," said Tom Merry calmly. "In fact, it's started already, my dear man. Knox was in here just before you came laying down the giddy law about his cousin. He says we've got to toe the line and eat sugar out of his hand, or we'll get it in the neck from him!"

"Bai Jove!"

"He spoke words to that effect, anyway," said Tom. "And I've got to meet the new kid this afternoon myself or take a licking from him. How's that for a start?"

"Phew!"

"Is that a fact, Tommy?" demanded Herries.

"Yes, it just shows the way the wind's going to blow," said Tom.

And he told the Fourth Formers of the prefect's visit.

"Just what I expected," said Blake, shaking his head. "He picked on you, Tommy, to show us what to expect."

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus, a trifle taken aback. "That certainly does show Knox expects trouble. However, that only proves what I maintain, dear boys. Knox knows we are vewy much up against him, and he guesses we shall be pwejudiced against his cousin at the start on his account. That would be vewy unfair against the new fellow."

"Well, that's so!" grunted Tom Merry, rubbing his nose thoughtfully. "But that's no reason why we should fall on the giddy kid's neck, fathead! We shan't worry him if he doesn't worry us, of course. If he proves a decent sort, then—"

"That is all vewy well, dear boy!" argued Gussy. "But it is highly pwebable that Knox has already told his cousin what to expect, and my idea is to show the fellow from the vewy beginnin' that the impression that we shall be pwejudiced against him is a mistaken one."

"Fathead! Let the new kid rip!" sniffed Blake.

"I have no intention of lettin' him wip, Blake."

"But, you silly ass," roared Blake, "do you think we've the time to bother with footling new kids? Let him rip. I tell you! I vote Merry let's him rip, too, and be thumped to Knox!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I've a jolly good mind to do it, too!" snapped Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming. "Blow Knox! We can't muck up footer practice just to please him! Look here, if Gussy wants to go, let him go instead of me! Are you game to go instead of me, Gussy?"

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"I have already quite made up my mind to go, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"That's good enough, then," remarked Tom, setting his lips. "Wait here a sec. I'll do that rotter Knox yet!"

And Tom Merry hurried from the room. He was absent some seconds only, and when he returned he was grinning cheerfully.

"All serene!" he said. "I've just seen Railton, and he said Gussy can go and meet the new fellow instead of me. He seemed rather surprised that I had bothered him to ask," added Tom, with a chuckle.

"You didn't tell him Knox insisted that you should go?" grinned Herries.

Tom Merry smiled.

"Not likely!" he said. "I just asked if he minded D'Arcy going in my place. He said it was certainly all right."

"Oh, good!"

"One in the eye for Knoxy-woxy!" chuckled Lowther. "Well, you'd better be getting off, Gussy. Mind you are kind to the new fellow! Kiss him fondly, and wipe his tears away if he's feeling home-sick!"

"Don't be wedie, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I should certainly be kind to the new chap, however, if he does happen to be at all home-sick. And now I had better wun away and see Knox."

"Knox?" ejaculated Blake. "You mean the new—"

"I mean Knox of the Sixth—the pwefect," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "Fwom what Tom Mewwy says, it is quite cleah that Knox is undah the impression that we shall be all pwejudiced against his cousin. My object is to wemove that impression."

"Fathead!"

"I stvongly object to bein' called a fathead, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Don't care for home truths—what?" inquired Blake.

"Wats! I have already told you what my views are, Blake. I intend to save unnecessary trouble and misunderstanding by lettin' Knox know before the new fellow awakes that he will be treated fairly and justly by us."

"You burbling chump—"

"I wefuse to listen to anythin' you have to say, Jack Blake. I have quite made up my mind to see Knox, and to tell him quite fwankly that though we all considah him a blackguard and a wotten bully, it will make not the slightest diffewence to our twatment of his cousin," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"Oh, great pip!"

"You—you'll tell Knox that?" yelled Blake.

"Yaas!"

"Knox, the giddy pwefect?"

"Certainly! There is no othah Knox at St. Jim's yet," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall speak out stwaight fwom the shoudah and wemove any ewwoneous impression he may have formed. Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, you burbling fathead!" gasped Blake.

"That is enough, Blake!"

"But Knox will slaughter you, you born idiot!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Wubbish! He will doubtless be vewy pleased that I have taken the trouble to inform him of our views," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "Howevah, I must see him before he goes out, bai Jove!"

And with that the swell of the Fourth hurried from the study. He left his chums gasping.

"Well, of all the born idiots!" remarked Lowther, with a chuckle. "If he starts in to tell Knox that we considah him a blackguard and a wotten bully, he'll soon be in need of an ambulance and a hospital!"

"Great Scott! Yes, rather!"

The chums stared at each other in sudden alarm.

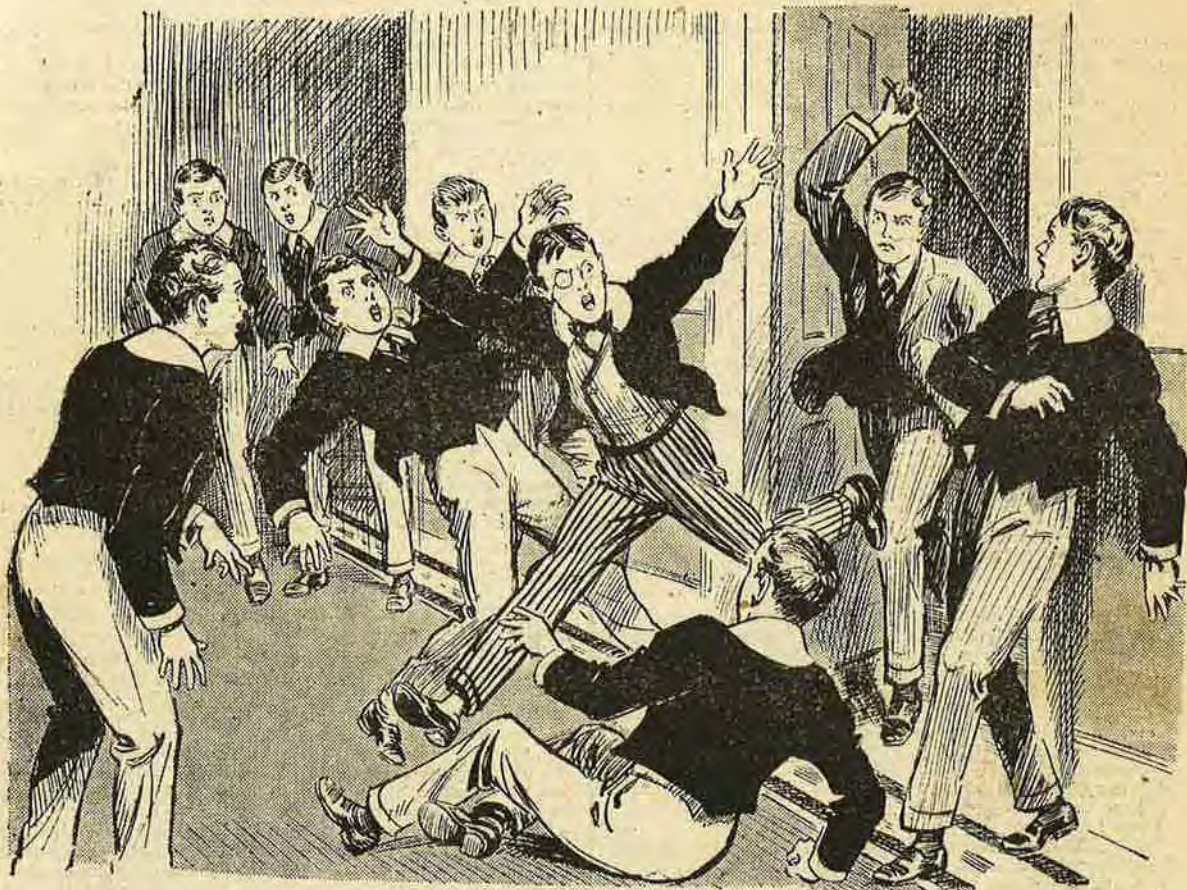
"Think the silly ass really will do it?" said Tom.

"Of course he will!" snorted Blake. "The fathead is capable of any silly foolery. Oh, my hat! We'd better go and see what happens."

"And to pick up the pieces!" murmured Lowther.

"Yes, rather! Come on!" snorted Blake.

He led the others from the study, and the next moment they were hurrying towards the Sixth Form passage. Knox of the Sixth was not a fellow to overlook cheek, even from the innocent and guileless Gussy. And it was certainly unheard-of cheek for a junior to tell a prefect that he was a blackguard and a rotten bully; in fact, it was worse than cheek. It would undoubtedly bring down dire punishment upon the head of the earnest and well-meaning Gussy. And though Arthur Augustus was certainly "asking for it," his chums were never willing to allow him to get all he asked for.



Crash! Bump! As Arthur Augustus raced out of Knox's study, with the cane lashing about his shoulders, he rushed straight into Tom Merry & Co., scattering them to right and left. "Yaroooooh!" roared Tom Merry, as he was sent sprawling. "Yooooop!" gasped Blake. "You dangerous lunatic!" (See Chapter 3.)

CHAPTER 3.

Not According to Plan.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY tapped respectfully on Knox's study door in the Sixth Form passage, and on hearing the senior call from within, he entered the room.

He was quite calm—indeed, he saw no reason whatever to be other than calm. Arthur Augustus was an exceedingly kind-hearted junior, and he hated the thought of Gerald Knox being under a misapprehension as to their attitude towards his cousin. And now he—Arthur Augustus—was going to put the matter right in a kindly way, pointing out to the prefect that, despite his own shortcomings, and the contempt the juniors felt for him personally, it was going to make no difference whatever in their treatment of his young cousin.

Of course, even Arthur Augustus felt that it was a very delicate matter to discuss with the prefect; but, none the less, he felt confident that, with the aid of his celebrated tact and judgment, he could put the matter without offence to the unpopular prefect. And, in view of Knox's remarks to Tom Merry, it was obviously necessary to do so without delay.

Gerald Knox was standing before the fire, his feet planted apart on the hearthrug, as Gussy entered. He looked at D'Arcy a good deal as a cat watches a mouse.

"Well?" he asked.

"Ahem!" Arthur Augustus coughed. Now he had bearded the lion in his den, so to speak, Arthur Augustus found it rather difficult to begin. "Ahem! It is in regard to your cousin, Knox, the fellow who is awwivin' to-day, deah boy. I felt it only fair—"

"So you've come to see me in regard to my cousin—what?" said Knox pleasantly.

"Yaas, I have just been discussin' the mattah with Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus, "and it has occurred to me that a word in season, you know, might pwevent a gweat deal of twouble, Knox."

"Really?"

The prefect spoke quite amiably, and quite casually he

strolled to the door and closed it gently. Arthur Augustus noted the action rather uneasily.

"I twust you will not misconstweue my motive in comin' to talk mattahs ovah, Knox," went on the junior, a trifle nervously. "But I felt such a course was necessawy, in the cires. I undahstand, fwom what Tom Mewwy tells me, that you are undah the impresshion that we in the Shell and Fourth will be pwejudiced against the new fellow on your account."

"Go on, kid!" said Knox encouragingly.

Arthur Augustus went on, gaining courage at Knox's polite attitude.

"I assure you, Knox, that such an impresshion on your part will be quite mistaken," said Arthur Augustus earnestly. "We are quite weady to give the new youngstah ewevy chance, deah boy. Because he happens, by an unfortunate chance, to be welated to you is no weason why we should tweat him like a wascally cad, you know."

"What?"

"No weason whatever!" went on Arthur Augustus, quite failing to note the expression on the prefect's face. "It would be wank injustice: the poor fellow cannot help his welations, you know. It should be all the more weason why we should be kind and forbearin' with him—out of sympathy, I mean."

"Oh!" gasped Knox. "And—and you've come here to tell me this, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas; I felt it my bare duty, deah boy. We are quite weady to tweat your cousin as a decent fellow until he pweves that he is othahwise," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, are you?" gulped Knox.

"Certainly. Because we wegard you as a blackguard and a bullyin' wottah, it is no weason why we should be pwejudiced against your cousin, is it?" asked Arthur Augustus innocently.

Gerald Knox did not answer that question. His face was a study. He just walked to the table and picked up something in his hand. It was a cane—the same cane Knox had used on the Terrible Three that afternoon. From the truly ferocious expression on the prefect's face as he glared

at Arthur Augustus, it was very plain that it was going to be used on that confiding junior now.

Quite suddenly Arthur Augustus seemed to suspect that, and he jumped as Knox snatched up the cane.

"Bai Jove! What— Weally, Knox, I twust you do not pwopose to—"

"You cheeky young sweep!" hissed Knox.

"Bai Jove!"

"You insolent little reptile!" choked the prefect, his face red with rage. "You dare to come here and call me names like that? Why, I—!"

"Weally, Knox! Here— Gweat Scott! Pway allow me— Yawwoooooogh!"

Lash! Lash! Lash! Lash!

Arthur Augustus howled as the cane lashed across his shoulders. The next instant he was fairly flying round the study table with the infuriated senior in hot pursuit, lashing out with his cane as he followed the hapless Gussy up.

Lash, lash, lash, lash!

"Yooooooop! Oh, gweat Scott! Yawwoooooogh! Oh crumbs! Ow-yow! Oh, you fearful wiffian! Stop! Yooooooop!"

Arthur Augustus had undoubtedly asked for it, and now he was getting it. From the sound of his yells he was not liking it.

"Bullying rotter, am I?" hissed Knox ferociously. "Dingy blackguard—eh? You—you little sweep! I'll teach you a lesson, D'Arcy!"

Lash, lash, lash!

"Yooooooop!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

Risking coming to closer quarters, Arthur Augustus stopped suddenly by the door and tore it open. Then, with the cane fairly lashing across his noble shoulders, he flew out into the passage. There was a sudden series of yells as he crashed into several juniors who had just arrived outside the door. They were his own chums, and his rush scattered them to right and left.

"Yarroooogh!"

"What the— Oh, my hat!"

"You careless— Yooooop!"

Crash! Bump!

Blake and Tom Merry staggered and sat down suddenly under the sudden impact. As they did so Gerald Knox of the Sixth joined the melee with a rush.

Lash, lash, lash, lash!

"Yooooop!"

"Oh, my hat! Look out!"

"Yarroooogh!"

Arthur Augustus was already bolting wildly along the passage, and Herries, Digby, Manners, and Lowther were after him in a flash, all of them yelling.

And Tom Merry and Blake wasted little time. They picked themselves up and fled, dodging the rain of blows from the prefect's cane, Knox following with long strides, his cane still lashing.

At the staircase, however, he desisted his labours, and turned back, his brow still furious and his breath coming in angry gasps.

At the top of the stairs Tom Merry & Co. stopped, panting and groaning.

"Oh crumbs!" panted Tom Merry. "Oh, great Scott! This comes of looking after Gussy, the awful ass!"

"The raving chump!"

"The chump-headed looney!"

"Ow-ow-yow!"

"I'm hurt! Groooooogh!"

"Same here! Yow-ow!"

Tom Merry & Co. filled the air with their lamentations. "Bai Jove! It was weally your own fault," groaned Arthur Augustus, rubbing his shoulder tenderly. "I weally cannot undahstand what came ovah Knox; he suddenly gwapped his wotten cane and wushed at me like a mad-man!"

The rest of the juniors glared at Arthur Augustus. Scarcely one of them had escaped Knox's lashing cane.

"You—you footling idiot!" hissed Blake. "You—you born imbecile! I suppose you called him a blackguard, and all the rest of it."

Arthur Augustus groped for his eyeglass and jammed it into place. Then he returned his chums' glare.

"I see no weason whatever for you fellows to blame me," he said indignantly. "And I certainly twust that I should nexah be such an uttah ass as to call Knox either blackguard or bullyin' wottah to his face. I simply passed the remark to him that we saw no weason why we should be pwejudiced against his cousin just because we looked upon him as a blackguard and a bullyin' wottah!"

"Oh, my hat! You said that to Knox?" gasped Tom.

"Yaas."

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"And isn't that calling him a blackguard and bullying rotter?" yelled Blake.

"Eh? Certainly not, Blake! As I explained to him, I merely desired to make it quite clear that we did not intend to treat this new fellow like a wascally cad just because he was unfortunate in being related to him."

"Oh, you—you prize ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You chump-headed idiot!" snorted Blake, rubbing his neck tenderly where Knox's cane had landed. "You silly—"

"Weally, Blake, I stwongly object—"

"Oh, bump the silly ass, and let's get down to the footer," snorted Herries.

"Good idea!"

"Bump him!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, you wottahs— Yawwoooooop!"

Bump!

"Yawwoooooogh!"

Arthur Augustus roared as he was lifted in many hands and dropped down hard on the passage floor. The juniors were still feeling the effects of those terrific swipes from the prefect's cane, and Herries' suggestion was acted upon with a will. Three times the astonished and indignant Gussy was lifted and dropped, and then the wrathful juniors streamed away for the footer, leaving Arthur Augustus seated on the passage floor, gasping and groaning.

CHAPTER 4.

A Coughdrop!

"TWIMBLE, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made the observation as he sighted Baggy Trimble of the Fourth on the platform of Rylcombe Station.

Despite his unfortunate experience at the hands of Knox of the Sixth, the swell of the Fourth was still keen on meeting the new fellow, and giving him a suitable welcome to St. Jim's. Ever just and good-natured, Arthur Augustus had no intention of visiting the sins of Gerald Knox on the head of his young cousin.

True, a great deal of his enthusiasm had been damped by the unexpected incident, but none the less Arthur Augustus was still determined to be friendly with the new-comer to St. Jim's, and to make him understand that he would receive fair play at the hands of Arthur Augustus, if not at the hands of the rest of the Shell and Fourth.

As he stood by the station platform, Arthur Augustus looked quite a dazzling sight. The swell of the Fourth was always very well dressed, but on this occasion he had taken a great deal of care with his attire. From the crown of his gleaming "topper" to the soles of his natty shoes he looked the picture of Bond Street elegance.

He certainly presented a striking contrast to Baggy Trimble, whom he now found ambling about the platform. Baggy, in addition to being the fattest junior at St. Jim's, was also the laziest and most untidy.

Arthur Augustus blinked at him in surprise through his celebrated monocle. Trimble was obviously waiting for someone.

"Bai Jove, Twimble, deah boy," he remarked, "what are you doin' here?"

Trimble stopped his aimless mouching and grunted. He did not seem at all pleased to see D'Arcy.

"Come to that, what are you doing here, Gussy?" he inquired independently. "You haven't bought the blessed station, I suppose?"

"Weally, Twimble, I was only askin' you a civil question," said Arthur Augustus mildly. "I do not mind tellin' you why I am here at all. I have come to meet Knox, the new fellow."

"I thought as much!" snorted Trimble. "Look here, Gussy, you keep off the grass, you know. No need for you to butt in. I'm meeting this new chap, not you."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus looked very hard at Trimble now. He understood why Trimble was there, and he frowned. Trimble was a borrower who never paid back if he could help it, and a cadger without shame or principle. This was well-known at St. Jim's, and Trimble found it very difficult either to borrow or cadge successfully from his Form-fellows.

But with new fellows it was different. New fellows, not knowing Trimble's failings, often fell victims to his greed and craft. For this reason Trimble always made a point of meeting them at the station, to get what he could out of them before they discovered his little ways and customs.

Arthur Augustus understood now, and he frowned.

"Weally, Twimble, you fat wottah," he said warmly, "it is you who had better keep off the grass, you know. I have taken young Knox undah my wing, and I shall certainly not allow you to exploit him. Wathah not, bai Jove!"

"Yah! Who's going to exploit him?" snorted Trimble, glaring. "Nice thing to say about a chap! You clear off, D'Arcy! I'm looking after Knox; his cousin in the Sixth especially asked me to meet him."

"Bai Jove! You fat fibbah, Twimble! I am perfectly suah that Knox did not ask you to meet him—wathah not!"

"Look here, you interfering rotter—"

"I have no desiah to look at you, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus disdainfully. "You are a scubby little wascal, and you are here for the express purpose of wookin' the new fellow. I warn you that I shall not allow you to play any of your wotten twicks upon him, so wun away!"

"Sha'n't! Yah! I know your little game," jeered Trimble. "Soaping round Knox of the Sixth—getting round a blessed prefect! I suppose you think—"

"Bai Jove! If you dare to suggest such a wotten thing to me, Twimble—"

"Well, what have you come to meet him for?" jeered Trimble. "You must think you're going to get something out of it. That's not like me, though. I've just come out of natural kindness of heart, you know. Knox says we must be kind to the kid. He's bound to be a simpleton, and so—"

Hallo, here's the train! You shove off, Gussy!"

The local train from Wayland steamed in just then, and Trimble rolled along the platform, eagerly scanning the compartments as they rumbled past.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I weally must stop that little wascal's game!"

He was about to follow on Trimble's heels, when the door of a carriage flew open, and a youth jumped out on to the platform.

He was a tall, bony youth, with strong, hard features, and he was dressed in a lounge suit and a bowler hat. In his hand he carried a suitcase.

With an expression of disgust on his harsh features he glanced about the little platform, and then his eyes fell upon Arthur Augustus, and he grinned. It was not a pleasant grin.

"I say, old fashion-plate," he remarked, "do you happen to live in this awful hole?"

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass more firmly into place and eyed him frigidly.

"Bat Jove!" he gasped. "Were you addressin' me?"

"Eh? Yes, of course I was! You're the only object in sight resembling a dashed fashion-plate, aren't you?"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm bound for St. Jim's," explained the stranger coolly. "If you happen to know the place, perhaps you'll tell me how to find it, what?"

"Great Scott!"

Arthur Augustus forgot his wrath in his surprise. From Knox's injunction to "be kind" to the new fellow, he had naturally expected Knox minor to be a timid, forlorn youth, who would arrive in a sad state of snivelling home-sickness.

If this were Knox's cousin, then he had been sadly mistaken in his expectations.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Are you Knox, the new fellow?"

"Eh? Yes, I'm Knox!" was the surprised reply. "Great pip! Don't say you're from St. Jim's?"

"Yaas, I am from St. Jim's," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner.

"But I thought St. Jim's was a school for boys, not for tailor's dummies!" ejaculated the new fellow. "But perhaps you're the butler, or the pageboy? I believe they do try to do the heavy these days."

Arthur Augustus went pink with wrath.

"You—you cheeky wottah!" he gasped. "I am certainly neither the butler nor the pageboy. My name is D'Arcy, and I am in the Fourth at St. Jim's."

"Oh crumbs!"

"I consider you an insultin' cad!" said Arthur Augustus haughtily. "I have been sent to meet you by your cousin, Gwald Knox; but I wegwet havin' done so now."

"So do I," grinned Knox minor. "I consider dear old Gerald has insulted me by sending an object like you to meet me."

"Bai Jove!"

"Run away and play," continued Knox minor. "Go and look at yourself through your silly eyeglass, you footling top!"

Go and play draughts on your giddy waistcoat, old—Great pip! What's this object?"

Apparently the new fellow was referring to Baggy Trimble, who came rolling along just then. Having seen no one else resembling a boy alight from the train Baggy evidently guessed the fellow talking to Arthur Augustus was his intended victim.

"Hallo, here you are!" he observed, smiling affectionately at Knox minor. "You're the new kid, what?"

"Another of them!" groaned Knox minor, eyeing the fat and fatuous Baggy in disgust. "Well, what a pair of hopeless freaks! Look here, have you been sent to meet me, too?"

"Eh? Yes, I've come to meet you, old chap," said Baggy Trimble. "But, look here, don't you be cheeky, or—"

"Then it's a practical joke!" snapped Knox minor. "An animated lard-barrel, and a dashed tailor's dummy sent to meet me, eh? We'll see about that, my pippins. Here, I'll deal with you first, old fashion-plate!"

And, raising his fist, the extraordinary new fellow hit the crown of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's best silk hat a smashing blow, sending it down like a crushed concertina over the elegant junior's eyes.

"Yawwooooooh!" wailed Arthur Augustus. "Gweat Scott! Oh, you feahful wuffian! I will give you a feahful thwashin' for that!"

For a moment the astounded Arthur Augustus danced about, struggling madly to wrench his crushed hat off his head, and then, finding it useless, he made a furious rush at the new fellow, who stood roaring with laughter.

As he did so, Knox minor, who seemed to be a very cool customer indeed, stepped swiftly aside, and his arms swept round the irate Gussy's slim waist.

The next moment Arthur Augustus was swept up into the air, struggling furiously.

"Yawwoooooh! Gweat Scott! Lemme go, you feahful wuffian!" shouted the swell of the Fourth.

"Certainly, old chap!" assented Knox.

He swung the struggling Gussy as if he had been a child, and then let go.

"Yooooooop!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Oh crumbs!"

Crash!

The bewildered Arthur Augustus found himself lying on his back in the compartment of the train in which the new fellow had travelled.

Slam!

The carriage door slammed, and at that identical moment the train began to move on again.

"Oh ewikey!" gasped the swell of the Fourth.

Realising what was happening, Arthur Augustus leaped to his feet, and tore at the carriage door frantically.

But it was held on the outside in a strong grasp by Knox who was running alongside the moving train with a cheerful grin on his face.

"Leggo!" roared Arthur Augustus. "Oh, gweat Scott! You feahful ass! I shall be taken on to Melford! Oh, you—"

In desperation Arthur Augustus leaned out of the window and struck frantically at the grinning Knox; but Knox ducked deftly, and Arthur Augustus merely succeeded in striking his head a fearful blow against the side of the window as he overbalanced.

The next moment the new fellow dropped from the foot-board of the moving train as it reached the end of the platform.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The new fellow doubled up and roared with laughter as the red and furious face of Arthur Augustus appeared suddenly at the window again.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" he called. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"You feahful wascal!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

For another brief instant his red face and wildly waving arms were visible at the carriage window. Then they vanished from sight as the train disappeared round the bend.

And Knox minor roared with laughter, what time Arthur Augustus dropped, panting, on the carriage-seat in a state of mind bordering on the hysterical. Once again the kindly meant but misguided efforts of Arthur Augustus had resulted in dismal failure.

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CHAPTER 5.

Baggy's Turn!

"O H crumbs! M-my-my hat!" Baggy Trimble stared blankly from the laughing new fellow to the train as it vanished round the bend. He was just as astonished as the hapless Arthur Augustus must have been.

And he was also dismayed. He had anticipated an easy victim in the cousin of Knox of the Sixth. That autocratic prefect had ordered Tom Merry to be kind and gentle to the new fellow, and from that fact Trimble had looked forward to the extraction of an easy loan from him, with a good feed possibly to back up the transaction.

But now he saw it was not going to be an easy matter at all—or a safe one. This new fellow was just a little too cool and self-possessed for Trimble's liking, and certainly far too big and hefty. The way he had handled Arthur Augustus—who was no duffer—was an eye-opener.

"Mum-my hat!" repeated Trimble to himself. "What a giddy coughdrop! I—I think I'd better leave the beast alone! He might try his games on with me, even!"

And Trimble was just about to amble disgustedly away when the new fellow ceased laughing and came hurrying back to him.

"You here yet, fatty?" he grinned. "Oh, good! I'll be able to deal with you now!"

"Oh crumbs! Look here—" Trimble was turning to bolt for it, but the new fellow was too quick for him. Apparently he desired more entertainment—at the expense of Trimble this time.

His hand closed on the fat junior's collar, and Trimble wriggled and twisted in vain.

"Leggo!" he gasped, in great alarm. "I—I say, I didn't really come to meet you—not at all! It was a mistake! Leggo!"

"That's right!" said Knox minor pleasantly. "A mistake that isn't going to happen again, old fat man! I'm going to see that it doesn't. Like this!"

"Leggo!" roared Trimble.

He yelled and struggled furiously as the new fellow took a firmer grasp of his collar, and half-dragged, half-lifted him across the platform.

By the railings of the platform a porter had evidently been busy pasting posters on the notice-boards. The porter was not there now—having apparently retired to the porter's room to recuperate from his strenuous efforts in seeing the local train in and out. But the bucket of paste and the posters were still there.

Suddenly, pinning Trimble's arms to his side, the new fellow lifted him up and twirled him over; heavy-weight as Trimble was he handled him with ease.

"Leggo!" roared Trimble. "Oh crumbs! Leggo, you awful beast! I tell you— Oh crikey! Yarooooop!"

Trimble shrieked as he suddenly realised the new fellow's intention.

But Trimble's head was already over the bucket of paste now, and, despite his frantic struggles, the next instant it was fairly in the bucket.

Splosh!

The slimy paste splashed over the sides of the bucket as Trimble's bullet head was plunged in.

Three times Trimble's head went under, and then Knox minor dropped Trimble with a chuckle. Trimble flopped to the platform, gurgling and gasping and gouging paste from his eyes and mouth.

Knox minor picked up one of the posters and calmly wrapped it round Trimble's head.

"There you are," he remarked. "Just a little warning, fatty! I knew you hadn't come to meet me out of kindness; you'd some little game on, you fat frog! Well, perhaps that'll teach you not to come any games on Percy Knox. See?"

"Gug-gug-gug! Groooooogh! Oh crikey! Oh, you—Groooooogh!—awful beast! Mum-mum-mummmmm!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Percy Knox roared as Trimble sprawled on the platform, with paste streaming down him the while he tore at the clinging poster round his head. Then the new boy planted his foot behind Trimble as he sat there, and, turning away with a chuckle, he picked up his bag and started to leave the station.

But before he had taken a couple of strides a heavy hand dropped on his shoulder and he was swung round.

"Hold on, my pippin!" said a grim voice. "Not so fast! Bullying a St. Jim's chap—what? We'll see about that!"

The new fellow saw three fellows before him, all of them wearing St. Jim's caps. The one who held him in a strong grip was a rugged-featured junior, big and burly. Unlike his two companions, who were grinning broadly at Trimble's plight, he was looking very grim and serious indeed.

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"Hold on!" he repeated sternly. "What d'you mean by bullying a St. Jim's chap, you cheeky cad?"

Knox minor smiled at him.

"Are you a St. Jim's chap, then?" he inquired.

"Eh? Yes, of course I am," snorted the rugged-featured youth, who happened to be none other than George Alfred Grundy of the Shell. "I'm Grundy—Grundy of the Shell!"

Grundy spoke as if that stood for a very great deal. The new fellow did not seem impressed.

"Oh, you're Grundy, are you? Son of old Mother Grundy, I suppose—what?"

"Why, you—you—" Grundy's face went red, and he spluttered.

"And a St. Jim's chap, too!" repeated Knox, in a tone of wonder. "Well, I'm blown! I've only met three St. Jim's chaps up to now, and all three were freaks. The first had a chunk of glass in his eye, and was dressed like a tailor's dummy; the second was this fat freak here; and you're the third, Grundy. But you're the biggest freak of the lot, old chap!"

Wilkins and Gunn chuckled; but their leader did not chuckle. He almost foamed at the mouth.

"Well," he spluttered—"well, you—you cheeky outsider! Put your dashed fists up, you rotter!"

"Certainly, old chap," said Knox.

He lifted his fists up hard; one of them caught Grundy under the chin, and the other caught him a fearful thump in the chest.

"Yaroooooop!" roared Grundy.

He staggered back, gasping, releasing his grasp on the new fellow as he did so.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wilkins and Gunn; though they were far from approving such treatment of their leader they could not help roaring.

"That what you mean?" inquired Knox innocently.

George Alfred did not answer in words, but in deeds. He rushed at the new fellow like a mad bull, his rugged face red with wrath.

Smack!

"Yooop!"

Bump!

It was not Knox, but Grundy who was down; somehow Grundy's wildly waving fists were swept aside, and a fist hard as iron took him under the chin, sending him down on the platform with a heavy thump.

He sat there dazedly, the crimson streaming from his nose.

"Ow-ow!" he gasped. "Oh crumbs! Oh, just you wait, you rotten outsider!"

For a moment George Alfred sat regaining his breath and scattered wits, and then he jumped up and rushed into the fray.

The next moment they were at it hammer and tongs.

What followed was rather an eye-opener to Wilkins and Gunn. Grundy was a burly fellow, and though far from being a skilful boxer he certainly was a hefty fighter.

But the new fellow handled him with seeming ease. He was obviously a very rough handful, and his methods of fighting were none too merciful. His face was hard now, and his eyes glittered.

Again and again Grundy went crashing down, and yet last he stayed down, whacked to the wide.

"Chuck it, Grundy, old chap!" called Wilkins. "The cad's too good for you!"

"Grooogh! Oh, my hat! I—I'll smash him!" panted Grundy.

Game yet, the burly Shell fellow tried to stagger to his feet again; but he fell back gasping.

"He's licked!" jeered Knox, with an ugly grin. "What about you chaps?" he added, turning on Wilkins and Gunn. "Like to have a go, what? I've a few good punches left."

But Wilkins and Gunn declined the offer of a few punches. If Grundy had deemed it his business to fight the stranger they saw no reason why they should. He was obviously an ugly customer, and they did not like the look of him—little dreaming as yet that he was the much-discussed new fellow.

"Funky, what?" sneered Knox minor, as Wilkins and Gunn helped Grundy to his feet. "Well, perhaps this will show you chaps what to expect. My cousin warned me the chaps would be up against me, and I'm going to show I can look after myself."

"Great Scott!" gasped Wilkins, eyeing the new fellow queerly. "You—you're not Knox's cousin—the new chap?"

"Yes, I am," grinned Knox minor, mopping a cut lip.

"Nice surprise for you—what? You expected a miff, I expect—a chap you could take it out of, eh? Well, this'll show you I'm not to be played with. I tell you, I'm going to make things hum at St. Jim's; no flies on me, I might tell you. Got that?"

"You've got plenty of gas, anyway," said Gunn quietly.



"Ha, ha, ha!" The new boy roared with laughter as the red and furious face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy appeared suddenly at the window of the compartment. "Good-bye, Bluebell!" "You fearful wascal!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, waving his fist. Next moment the train, gathering speed, drew clear of the station.—(See Chapter 4.)

"But you won't get all your own way at St. Jim's—let us tell you that, you swanky cad!"

The new fellow looked ugly, and he took a threatening step towards Gunn. Gunn did not move.

"So you want a licking, after all?" said Percy Knox.

"No, I don't—not from you," said Gunn calmly. "I'm just giving you a word of advice; you seem to need it badly. You won't find bragging and swanking go down at St. Jim's—whether you can use your rotten fists or not."

The new fellow took another step towards Gunn and raised his fists; but he dropped them again as Wilkins stepped forward by the side of his chum.

"Two to one, eh?" jeered Knox. "Is that how they fight at St. Jim's?"

"Only when dealing with bullying cads!" said Wilkins grimly.

"Oh, all right! I'll remember you!" said Knox savagely.

"You can go and eat coke!" said Wilkins.

The new fellow hesitated, and then he turned away, scowling. Taking a packet from his pocket, he took out a cigarette and lit up with careless and seeming indifference. If his intention was to impress the St. Jim's juniors the act was a failure; Wilkins and Gunn turned their backs in disgust. The new fellow hesitated again, and then with a shrug he picked up his bag and walked from the platform.

Wilkins and Gunn stared after him, their faces showing eloquently what they thought of Gerald Knox's cousin. Grundy was too busy attending to his many damages to stare, while Trimble was still too busily engaged with the paste and paper that enveloped him.

"Well, my hat!" remarked Gunn, with a low whistle.

"So—so that's Knox's cousin! What a blessed specimen! That merchant's booked for trouble at St. Jim's, Wilky!"

"And the cad will cause plenty of trouble, too!" said Wilkins grimly. "Jingo! He can scrap, though! But—but he's a howling cad!"

"Yes, rather! A smoky cad, too—like his blessed cousin! Great pip! What will the fellows think about him? Feeling better now, Grundy?"

Grundy, who was leaning up against the railings, ceased mopping his nose and blinked at his chums out of a rapidly closing eye.

"The—the cad!" he gasped. "The awful rotter! He—he's actually licked me—me, you know! What do you fellows think about that? But you wait—you just wait until I get a go at him again. I'll show him—the swanking cad!"

"You'd better leave him alone, Grundy," said Gunn grimly. "A fellow like that's best left alone. What started it, Trimble?"

Trimble groaned as he rubbed at the paste in his hair. The fat junior had succeeded in getting rid of most of the sticky paper; but he still looked a fearful sight for all that.

"Ow!" he groaned. "The—the awful cad! He went for me just for nothing at all, and did this to me! After me coming all this way to meet him, the ungrateful beast! Grooogh!"

"But I thought D'Arcy was meeting him," said Wilkins. "I heard Tom Merry say—"

"So he did!" gasped Trimble, with another groan. "But that beast's sent him all the way to Melford!"

"What?"

"Played a rotten trick on him, you know," mumbled Trimble. "He bashed Gussy's hat in, and then he shoved him in the train just as it was starting!"

"And the train's taken D'Arcy off to Melford?" gasped Gunn.

"Yes."

"Oh, my hat!"

Despite their feelings towards the new fellow, Wilkins and Gunn could not help grinning.

"So he's a joker as well as a swanking cad!" said Wilkins.

"My hat, I can see high old times ahead! But—but fancy poor old Gussy getting that for looking after the new chap so kindly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gunn. He could not help it; the thought of the well-meaning Arthur Augustus being whirled away to Melford was certainly funny. And Wilkins joined him. But Grundy snorted.

"It's nothing to laugh at, you silly asses!" he snorted. "That cheeky, swanking rotter wants putting in his place; and I'm the man to do it!"

"But he's just licked you," murmured Wilkins.

"That was a fluke!" snapped George Alfred, setting his jaw squarely. "I admit the cad can punch, and he certainly licked me for the moment. But next time he won't; next time I'm going to hammer him to a jelly. Come on!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Wilkins, in alarm. "Aren't we booked for the pictures in Wayland? Train will be in in a sec, you ass!"

"Blow the pictures!" snorted Grundy. "I'm going after that swanking cad, and I'm going to lick him this time. Cheeky rotter! Come on!"

"But look here—"

"Come on!" roared Grundy ferociously.

He started off for the platform exit, and Wilkins and Gunn looked eloquently at each other and groaned as they followed. Like the rest of the juniors at St. Jim's, they had anticipated trouble when it became known that a cousin of Knox of the Sixth was coming into the Shell; they knew now for a certainty that there was going to be trouble—for Knox minor himself as well as for others.

CHAPTER 6.

Knox Insists!

"STOP!"

"What the dickens—"

Tom Merry, who was bearing down on goal with the ball at his toes, stopped short in his stride and glanced round.

Footer practice was in full swing on Little Side, between picked sides of School House and New House fellows, skippered by Figgins and Tom Merry respectively. Both sides were playing up well, and so far there had been no score; but when that authoritative shout rang out, Tom Merry had certainly looked like scoring.

That shout did it, however.

As Tom stopped, George Figgins nipped in like a flash and lifted the ball almost from his toes. The next moment the New House forwards were speeding towards the School House goal with it.

"Blow!" panted Tom Merry, while a howl went up from the School House fellows.

"Tom, you ass!" bawled Monty Lowther.

"Merry, you footling fathead!" yelled Talbot.

Tom Merry groaned and nodded towards the touchline. The tall form of a senior was just starting across the ground. It was Gerald Knox. Tom Merry had recognised the voice, and he had stopped, guessing at once what Knox was after.

"Blow him!" snorted Lowther.

"Let him rip!" snapped Talbot angrily. "What the thump does he want chipping in like—"

"Look out, chaps!" yelled Lowther. "On the ball, Tommy, you fathead!"

Herries and Manners, the School House backs, had managed to stop Figgins' rush, and as the ball came swinging upfield again Talbot and Lowther made a rush for it.

Talbot trapped it neatly, and, being challenged by Kerr and Redfern, he got rid of it by swinging it back to Tom Merry.

"Wake up, Merry!"

It was a howl from all round the field, and Tom Merry suddenly woke up. Redfern and Lawrence were bearing down on him in a combined rush, and Tom Merry trapped the ball, steadied himself, and swung round, and kicked.

His intention was to send the ball out to his wing, but he had forgotten that Gerald Knox of the Sixth was bearing up behind him.

Biff!

Like a shot from a gun the whizzing, muddy football hurtled full into Knox's chest, and he sat down with a heavy thump on the muddy ground.

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"Yoooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Had the match been an important fixture that roar would have probably been a roar of rage; as it was it was a roar of laughter from the spectators. Only the School House footballers themselves were angry.

"Yah!—Get off the field, Knox!"

"You clumsy chump!"

"Grooooooh!"

Gerald Knox sat on the muddy ground and gasped and glared round him.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Tom Merry. "Sorry, Knox! It was an accident."

The prefect staggered to his feet; his face was red, and he was in a towering rage.

"Accident!" he hissed, glowering at Tom Merry. "I'll give you accident, you little sweep! You heard my shout, and you knew I was coming up behind, hang you! I'll make you sit up for this, you little cad!"

Lefevre of the Fifth, who was refereeing the match, came hurrying up to the group.

"It was your own fault, Knox!" he snapped. "Dash it all! What d'you want buttin' in on a match like this for?"

"You shut up!" snarled Knox. "This young hound did it purposely! I—I'll make him smart for it! Merry, get off the field!"

"Here, hold on!" said Lefevre, flushing. "You can't come those games here, Knox! It was your own fault. Get off the field yourself, and let Merry carry on!"

"You seem to forget that I'm a Sixth-Former and a prefect!" said Knox furiously.

"You never give anyone the chance to forget that," said the Fifth Form skipper, his lip curling. "That's no reason why you should stop a footer match and order fellows off like this!"

"Merry knows why I am ordering him to leave the field!" gritted Knox. "I ordered him to go to Rylcombe Station this afternoon; he's seen fit to disobey the order of a prefect and to play footer instead. I'm saying nothing about his assaulting me just now—"

"Rubbish! That was an accident—brought on by your own clumsy interference!" said Lefevre hotly. "I know nothing about your giving Merry orders, and I care less. But I know you've stopped the dashed match, and now you're holding it up."

"Confound the match!" was Knox's furious retort. "Think I'm going to allow a fag to disobey me like this? Merry, leave this field at once and go to the station. I shall report the matter to Railton if you don't!"

"Don't go, Merry!"

"Let him go hang!"

There was a murmur of voices, but Tom Merry set his lips. He was not afraid of Knox reporting him to the Housemaster on such a matter—far from it. But he did not wish to cause trouble between Knox and Lefevre—or cause trouble at all. After all, he had really promised Knox that he would go in the first place.

"Look here, Knox," he said quietly, "there's no earthly reason why I should have to go instead of anyone else, and you know it. D'Arcy has gone to the station in my place. He'll do, I suppose?"

"No, he will not do!" said Knox, showing his teeth. "I've ordered you to go, Merry, and you'd better go. And you'll come to me at six over this accident, as you call it."

"It was an accident, Knox; I'm willing to be reported to Railton for that."

Knox bit his lip; he certainly did not desire to report that matter to Mr. Railton—far from it. There were too many witnesses to prove that it was an accident.

"I can deal with the matter myself," he said, his eyes glinting. "Are you going to the station or not, Merry?"

Tom Merry nodded slowly.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "Talbot, you'd better get hold of Glyn to fill up, if Figgy agrees; he's about the ground somewhere."

Talbot looked angry, but he nodded; and Tom left the ground, with a good many remarks—uncomplimentary either to himself or Knox—ringing in his ears.

He hurried straight to the changing-room, and was very quickly changed and out again, and within ten minutes he was striding at a good pace for the station. He took the path through the woods—a short cut—realising that Arthur Augustus would be almost certain to bring the new fellow that way, for it was already past time for the train to arrive.

Tom was savagely annoyed at having to leave the footer, after all, and he was not feeling at all kindly disposed towards the new fellow—which was scarcely surprising in the circumstances. But he meant to do as he had promised, and he was anxious to get the job over in order to get back to see the finish of the match.

As he reached the village green, however, he halted. A kick-about match was in progress on the green between two

sides of village youths. Tom Merry's face cleared, and he grinned as he recognised Grimes & Co.

Grimes was the grocer's boy from the village shop, and he and his stalwarts were great friends with Tom Merry & Co.—friends and sporting rivals.

For some moments Tom watched with interest a stiff tussle round the ball, and then he was just moving on again when a voice called to him:

"Hallo, you! Hold on!"

Tom turned and stared. Standing by the rails, also watching the villagers, was a youth of his own age or near, but much taller and wearing a lounge suit and a bowler hat. Tom had noticed him as he came along; but it had been merely a casual glance.

It was Percy Knox, who was now on his way from the station, though Tom Merry was far from guessing that.

"Did you address me?" asked Tom.

"Yes, old bean—I did address your giddy Royal Highness!" said the new fellow, without removing his cigarette from his lips. "You're a St. Jim's chap, I see?"

Tom Merry eyed him rather coldly. The supercilious glance and the cigarette did not appeal to Tom—nor did his mode of address, which was certainly irritating.

"I'm a St. Jim's chap, right enough," he said briefly.

"Good! You're not such a freak as the other St. Jim's chaps I've met so far," grinned the new fellow. "You look pretty hefty, too, I must say. Are you fairly strong, might I ask?"

Tom stared still more; he wondered if the stranger was a trifle "loose" in the head.

"I think I'm fairly strong," he answered, smiling.

"Good!" remarked the stranger again coolly. "Then you'll be able to carry this dashed bag to St. Jim's for me. I was just hoping a chap like you would blow along. Here you are!"

"Well, I'm thumped!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "You—you cheeky rotter! You can go and eat coke and chop chips, my friend! And if you want your silly nose punched——"

Tom Merry paused suddenly, the truth dawning in on him.

"Great pip!" he exclaimed, eyeing the cool Percy curiously. "You're not the new fellow, are you—Percy Knox?" Knox nodded with a chuckle.

"I'm the very chap!" he said. "Surprised—what?"

"Yes, in one way, though not in another," said Tom calmly. "I certainly didn't expect such a cool customer; but I did expect a smoky rotter, or something of the sort! Better chuck that fag away, my pippin! Smoking isn't allowed at St. Jim's."

"Asking for a licking?" asked Percy Knox pleasantly.

"Not from you—nor would I expect one," said Tom, his lip curling. "Look here, you've got a trifle too much bounce for a new fellow; I'd advise you to sing small for a time at St. Jim's, or you're booked for heaps of trouble!"

"Thanks no end!" yawned Percy Knox. "As it happens, I'm pretty chock-full of advice already. My dear cousin in the Sixth has already primed me with advice—heaps of it. He advised me for one thing to mind my eye at St. Jim's, as the fellows would be up against me on account of him. I'm going to mind my eye. I've already licked one fellow at the station, and put it across two others. I'm ready to start on you if you like. I might tell you that I'm going to make things hum at your rotten school!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed; but he was more disgusted than angry. He faced the new fellow calmly.

CHAPTER 7.

Looking for Trouble!

"SO that's your programme, is it?" he said quietly. "Well, if your programme ends up in fireworks for you it's your own look-out, I suppose. Look here—Tom suddenly remembered Arthur Augustus—

—"what's happened to D'Arcy—the fellow who came to the station to meet you?"

"You mean the walking fashion-plate with the eye-glass?"

"Yes," said Tom, smiling grimly.

"Blessed if I know. I just shoved him in the train I came out of, and off he went with his topper bashed over his eyes."

"You—you shoved D'Arcy in the train going on to Mel-ford?" gasped Tom.

"Yes; the other freak who met me—a fat sort of worm—I ducked in a bucket of paste and wrapped a poster round him. The other fellow—fellow with a face like a broken brick, who said his name was Grundy, is in the hospital by now, I expect. He asked me for some trouble, and, being an obliging sort of chap, I gave him some."

"Phew!"

Tom gazed blankly at the new fellow. So this was the chap Knox major had asked him to be kind to! Tom fancied he saw all sorts of trouble ahead. Certainly, he was a smoky cad and a braggart; but—but he was evidently also a bit of a coughdrop; that much was clear.

"Well," Tom managed to get out—"well, you've made a pretty good start, anyway, Knox."

"I meant to make a good start, and go on as I've started," said Knox minor meaningly. "And now, my curly-topped friend, are you going to carry my bag to St. Jim's, or have I to start on you?"

Tom Merry set his lips; the fellow was obviously out for all the trouble he could find; but Tom had no intention of satisfying him so far as he was concerned.

"Look here, Knox," he said calmly, "I happen to be junior skipper of the School House, and it's up to me to give you advice, whether you want it or not; you certainly need it. You may be a funny joker, and you may be able to use your fists a bit. But too much of that won't go down at St. Jim's, I warn you. You'll find plenty of fellows who are handier with their fists than Grundy is."

"Thanks, old curly-napper!"

Tom Merry flushed and bit his lip. The fellow was clearly not to be advised. Tom began to lose his temper a bit.

"As for carrying your bag, you cheeky cad," he snapped. "I'll see you hanged first! If it wasn't your first day, I'd mop up the thumping earth with you—or try to. But I'll show you to St. Jim's, for all that. Your cousin ordered me to meet you, and bring you here, and I shall carry out his orders. Come on!"

He was about to start away when a football dropped just in front of Tom, and outside the rails of the green. At the same moment Grimes, with Pilcher and another villager at his heels, came racing up to the rails.

"All serene, Grimey!" called Tom cheerily. "I'll see to it."

He ran after the bouncing ball, and, trapping it smartly, lifted his boot to kick it back to the village youths beyond the white-painted rails.

But even as he did so a foot was interposed, and the ball was neatly and deftly hooked off his toes.

It was Percy Knox, and the new fellow chuckled as he juggled with the bouncing ball.

"How's that?" he grinned. "I think I'll see to it, not you, old curly-out!"

With that Knox minor kicked the ball, but not in the direction of the players, however. It was a pretty dropping shot—a shot Tom would have admired at any other time—and it dropped with a soft splash in the exact centre of the village duck-pond.

"Well, you mean cad!" exclaimed Tom, flushing with anger.

"Good shot, what?" grinned Knox. "Now, let's see those scrubby little beasts fetch it out again!"

Just then the "scrubby little beasts"—as Knox minor termed Grimes & Co.—came ducking under the rails, their faces red and furious.

"Here, what did you do that for, you rotter?" shouted Pilcher.

"That chap a pal of yours, Master Merry?" asked Grimes, his eyes gleaming.

"Not at all!" said Tom promptly. "He's no pal of mine, Grimey!"

"That's good enough, Master Merry," said Grimes grimly. "He's kicked our bloomin' ball in, and he's got to get it out again!"

"That 'e 'as!" bawled Sidney Pilcher. "If he don't get it out that pond in 'e goes after it!"

The villagers surrounded Percy Knox in a yelling swarm. He stood his ground, and simply stared at them coolly and sneeringly. Smoky rotter and braggart as he was, he certainly did not lack pluck or nerve—or so thought Tom Merry.

"Better get the ball for them!" snapped Tom. "You're for it if you don't; these chaps won't stand any nonsense!"

"Do I look the sort of chap to funk this dashed swarm of hooligans?" sneered Percy. "I'll be hanged if I fetch it!"

"You won't fetch it, you rotter?" yelled Grimes.

"What was that you called me?" said Knox pleasantly.

"A rotter!" shouted Grimes excitedly. "And you are one to kick that there ball like that just for nothing, like! You—Ow!"

Smack!

It was a punch like the kick of a mule, and it caught Grimes clean under the chin, lifting him back against the rails with a crash. The grocer's boy yelped, and slid down to the ground, holding his chin.

But he was on his feet again the next second, his blue

eyes blazing. With a rush, he went for Percy Knox, who laughed and put his hands up.

"Hold on, Grimey!" called Tom Merry; he saw at a glance that Grimes, plucky as he was, stood no chance against Knox, who was nearly a head taller, and obviously hefty to boot. But Pilcher and his comrades had already seen that, too.

They rushed forward and the fuming Grimes was hauled back, protesting angrily.

"Let me get at the rotter!" he yelled.

"No fear!" said Sidney Pilcher. "He looks a bit too good for you, Grimey. We'll deal with the sweep! Collar him!"

"What ho!"

There was a rush of village youths, and, despite the fact that he sent several lads reeling away with hefty punches, Percy Knox was collared and held fast.

The new fellow was looking a trifle uneasy now; he had obviously not anticipated such a situation—though he might have expected it.

"Back me up, Merry!" he panted. "We'll soon smash this rabble between us!"

"Go and eat coke!" retorted Tom Merry. "You fairly asked for it, you silly ass! If you don't want to get it, you've only got to get that ball for them."

"I'll be dashed if I will! Let me go, you howling cads!"

"Not likely!" grinned Sidney Pilcher. "You got to get that ball out of that pond first."

"That's the programme."

Knox minor glared round him desperately. All the footballers were on the spot now, and he was surrounded by angry, threatening faces. Then his glance fell on the duckpond, and he shuddered. It was quite a large pond, and it was covered with slimy weeds and green scum. In the centre reposed the ball.

"Look here," he gasped. "You can easily get your ball by throwing stones at it, you low cads!"

"Easily," assented Pilcher. "But we're not going to get it, see? That's your job. You can chuck stones at it if you like, but you've got to get it. If you don't, we'll sling you in arter it, neck and crop!"

"Better get it," advised Tom Merry.

"Hang you! Shut up!" snarled Knox furiously.

The new fellow's jaw set squarely. The duckpond did not look at all inviting; but on the other hand, the thought of giving in to the villagers—and in front of Tom Merry—made him grit his teeth with rage.

As if he had made up his mind not to do it, he started to struggle furiously, savagely.

"Help me, you funky rotter!" he panted to Tom Merry. "I'm a St. Jim's fellow now, aren't I? Back up your own school, hang you!"

"Get that ball for them, and I'll back you up soon enough," said Tom coolly. "Right's right, and you're in the wrong, Knox."

"Hang you!"

"Rats!" said Tom.

The new fellow ceased to struggle suddenly, his eyes gleaming.

"All right, you sweeps!" he snapped. "Let me go, and I'll get it."

"You'll get that there ball back?" demanded Pilcher.

"Yes."

The village lads let him go instantly; they had had plenty of dealings with St. Jim's fellows, and they did not dream of suspecting the fellow now that they knew he was a St. Jim's chap.

"Get it, then," grunted Pilcher.

Percy Knox, breathing hard, picked up his bowler hat from the ground. He glanced from his bag to Tom Merry, and then he started down to the margin of the duckpond.

When a yard or so from the water he turned suddenly and took to his heels.

So unexpected was his treacherous action that the villagers and Tom Merry simply stared after him for a moment, then a perfect howl of wrath went up from Grimes & Co.

"After 'im!" roared Grimey.

There was a rush of the village footballers after the new fellow. But he had a good start now, and he could run. And he would undoubtedly have escaped but for three St. Jim's fellows who came along just then in the distance.

They were Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn. In his desperation, Percy had not thought of direction, and he had fled back the way he had come from the station.

They stared as they saw the flying figure pelting towards them.

"Great pip!" ejaculated Grundy. "It—it's that rotter! Stop him, you men!"

Grundy jumped out to meet the flying figure, his jaw set grimly. What Knox had been doing to get that yelling swarm of villagers after him he did not trouble to wonder.

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Grundy wanted to meet Knox minor again, and he wanted to meet him badly. Grundy was still feeling sore and bruised all over after the terrible hammering he had had at the hands of the new fellow; but Grundy was never satisfied—he never knew when he was beaten or when he had had enough.

"Let the rotter rip, Grundy!" snorted Gunn.

"Help me stop him!" yelled Grundy in reply. "Here he comes! Got you?"

Crash, crash!

Grundy certainly had "got him." Both he and Knox minor crashed together, and then they rolled over, struggling furiously. But they did not struggle for long. Just then Grimes & Co. pounded up, and they grasped Knox and fairly wrenched him from Grundy.

Grundy scrambled up wrathfully.

"Here, hold on, Grimey, you cheeky ass!" he snorted, panting. "Let him go!"

"Look 'ere, Master Grundy—"

"Let him go!" bawled Grundy. "Stand aside and make a ring, you village chaps. I'm going to smash that cheeky rotter to little bits!"

"Oh, are you?" gasped Pilcher. "My heye!"

He was evidently surprised at Grundy's remarks, but he was not impressed.

"He's licked me once—by a fluke," explained Grundy. "But it won't happen again. Make a ring, you fellows. Tom Merry, you can referee."

"Thanks," grinned Tom.

"Hold on!" snorted Grimes. "You ain't goin' to fight 'im yet, Master Grundy; he's gotter get our ball out of that duckpond where he kicked it, the bloomin' sneak!"

"Eh? Did the cad kick your ball in there?" demanded Grundy, glancing towards the pond.

"That 'e did, just for nothin' at all!"

"Is that right, Merry?" demanded Grundy magisterially.

"That's right," grinned Tom, nodding.

"Well, that's all right, then," said George Alfred. "You can go ahead with it, kids. I'll lick him after he's got your ball out."

"Look here—" hissed Knox.

But Percy was not listened to. He was collared by the irate villagers, and he was propelled and dragged towards the pond, fighting and struggling furiously. He gave Tom Merry a bitter glance as he was dragged away.

"Serves him right!" snorted Grundy to Tom. "That cad needs a lesson—too cheeky by half, kid."

"Like you," assented Tom.

"Look here—" began Grundy. But he stopped and hurried after the crowd, eager to see what happened. Tom also followed. They found Knox struggling madly at the edge of the pond in the grasp of several villagers, all of whom showed the marks of Knox's fists on their faces. Undoubtedly Knox minor was game.

"In with 'im, if he won't go on 'is own!" yelled Sidney Pilcher.

"'Ere, 'ere!"

Apparently Percy had no intention of wading in on his own, however. He fought and kicked savagely, but the villagers were too many for him, and suddenly there sounded a heavy splash.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "He's in!"

Knox minor was "in" right enough. Propelled from behind, he had stumbled suddenly, and an unexpected push from behind had done the rest.

He sprawled face downwards in a couple of feet of slimy mud and water.

For a moment he floundered there, struggling desperately, and then, as he scrambled to his feet, a shout of laughter went up.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The new fellow was a most awful sight. Green scum and slimy weeds hung from him in festoons. He gasped and panted, his face—or what could be seen of it—was fiendish with uncontrollable rage.

"It were your own fault!" gasped Grimes, looking a trifle alarmed. "If you'd tried to get that there ball yourself this wouldn't 'ave happened."

"You—you—you—"

Knox minor spluttered and gasped incoherently.

It had certainly been his own fault. If he had waded in instead of struggling it certainly would not have happened.

But this was small comfort to the new fellow. He struggled ashore, leaving his bowler hat floating on the pond. He was dripping with water, and literally shaking, partly with the cold of the water, partly with rage.

"Now you can 'avo him to yourself, Master Grundy," grinned Sidney Pilcher, who did not seem to share the good-natured Grimes' alarm. "We won't insist on 'is gettin' the ball out arter this. We'll chuck stones at it and get it ourselves."

"Go it, Grundy!" called Wilkins with a chuckle. "Let him have it hot and strong, old chap."

But Grundy's enthusiastic desire to "lick" the new fellow led as he gazed at the shine-covered object he now presented. Not for worlds would he have tackled him in his present state.

"No fear!" he grinned. "Great Scott! He fairly hums! Let's get away, you chaps. I think I'll lick the rotter another time."

"I think I should," grinned Wilkins.

And he and Gunn followed Grundy as that great man strode away after a grinning glance at the hapless new fellow, who was wringing the water from his clothes.

Tom Merry hesitated, and then he stopped.

In a way, the good-natured skipper of the School House juniors felt sorry for Knox minor, or for the plight he was in. At all events, it had been his own fault from beginning to end without a doubt. But he was a new fellow for all that, and Tom wondered if he had done right in refusing to do anything to stop the villagers. A word from him,

"You—you sneaking, howling cad!" hissed Knox minor through white lips. "I knew I should hate you the moment I set eyes on your smug face, you snivelling swine! You put those low brutes up to it all. I know who you are now: my cousin wrote about you. I'm going to give you the hiding of your life for this!"

"Look here—" began Tom.

"You refused to back me up—you encouraged them, you rotter!" hissed Knox furiously. "I blame you for it all, Merry! Hang you—hang you! Put your dashed fists up, and we'll have it out now. You're top dog at St. Jim's, I believe; you're not going to be top dog now I've come! Put your fists up!"

"Look here, you silly ass—" Tom was beginning again; but he halted and sprang back, for the new fellow was coming on with a rush.

Tom hesitated for the briefest part of a second. Then he dropped the bag and bolted, pelting off schoolwards as

CAMEOS OF SCHOOL LIFE.

"IN FUNDS—and OUT!"



*When all the fellows in the Form
Are rolling in remittances;
When every pater's heart is warm,
And 'stead of paltry pittances,
A crisp and rustling "fiver" comes
To gladden youthful mortals,
We congregate with all our chums
Within the tuckshop portals!*

*The rich red wine is flowing free
(Wine of the fruit variety!)
And good Dame Taggles beams with
glee,
And welcomes our society,
She bustles here, she bustles there,
Dispensing sweets and similes;
Though Father Time has streaked
her hair,
Her cheeks retain their dimples!*

*Well to the fore is Fatty Wynn,
Demanding tarts and patties;
For they are all the world to him—
"Some" appetite is Fatty's;
And Buggy Trouble's also there,
Consuming many an eatable;
"These tarts are topping!" he'll
declare,
"The flavour is unparellel!"*

*And so we frolic, feast, and feet,
A herd of gay humanity;
But soon will come the time of need
To bring us back to sanity!
A time when paters will forget
To post us our remittances;
A time of dearth, despair, and debt,
When tuckshop lacks ministrations!*

*The rich red wine no longer flows,
The tuckshop is forsaken;
And into Hall each fellow goes,
To feed on leathery bacon!
We feel no longer overjoyed,
And every study cupboard
Is just as vacant and as void
As that of Mother Hubbard!*

*But soon the famine will be past,
And ended our privation;
The postman will be hailed at last
With joy and jubilation,
And then we'll seek that jolly shop
Where good Dame Taggles caters
And drink, in foaming ginger-pop,
A health to generous paters.*



he knew, would have made Grimes & Co. get the ball themselves, though they would have done so reluctantly.

Moreover, Tom had come to see the new fellow safely to St. Jim's.

"Better get a move on, Knox," he said quietly, trying to suppress a smile. "No good kicking against the pricks like this. It was your own fault, and you can't say I didn't warn you."

"Shut up!" hissed Knox.

He glanced about him, evidently looking for his bag.

"I'll see to your bag now," said Tom. "Come on, let's get to St. Jim's."

The junior picked up the suit case and started to walk away. Knox minor followed, his eyes glinting with the fury that consumed him. He did not look round at the grinning faces of the villagers. The two tramped off the village green, and reached Rylcombe Lane without a word being spoken, Tom keeping a few yards distant from his companion. This was really necessary from Tom's point of view—and sense of smell.

Knox minor suddenly stopped.

Tom Merry glanced at him. He saw at a glance that the new fellow meant further trouble.

hard as he could pelt. Knox followed, his boots squeaking dismally as he ran. But he soon gave it up; he was not in a suitable state for running. He stopped, and then he returned for his bag, and, picking it up, he started after Tom Merry at a walk, his face showing the savage state of his mind.

But Tom Merry did not stop running. He did not funk a scrap with the new chap by any sort of means but he certainly did funk coming into close contact with him in his present state.

CHAPTER 8.

A Surprise for Knox!

"HALLO! Here's Merry!"

It was a shout as Tom Merry ran in at the old gateway of St. Jim's. Quite a little crowd was gathered there, and Tom saw that Grundy & Co. were prominent amongst the crowd. It was easy to guess that Grundy & Co. had already related their experiences with the strange new fellow.

Though most of the fellows were on Little Side or out

of gales, quite a number had been on the spot to hear Grundy's story. They surrounded Tom eagerly as he ran in.

"Where is the merchant?" demanded Gore excitedly.

"What's happened to him?"

It was a chorus, and Tom Merry smiled, and pointed back along the Rylcombe Lane.

"He's coming along now," he chuckled. "I ran away from him."

"You whatter?"

"He wanted to fight with me, so I bolted," grinned Tom Merry.

"You—you bolted!" almost yelled Crooke. "Great pip! Fancy Tom Merry bolting from a blessed new fellow!"

"Funk!" grinned Aubrey Racko.

"You'll understand why when you chaps see him," said Tom Merry. "Won't he, Wilky?"

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"Here he comes!" yelled Baggy Trimble excitedly.

Trimble had apparently been indoors to wash and change, though he still bore signs of his adventure with the poster and paste.

Trimble was looking gleeful now, naturally delighted at the fate that had befallen the fellow who had handed him.

"Here comes the awful outsider!" he yelled. "I say, you fellows, let's pelt him with turfs and make him clear off! Let him see we don't want cheeky cads like him here!"

The juniors chuckled, and waited with anticipatory grins on their faces. In the distance a trudging figure, carrying a suitcase, was visible along the lane.

It was Percy Knox right enough, and his face was scendish as he saw the crowd obviously awaiting to see him.

"Here he comes!" chortled Baggy Trimble. "Mum-my hat! What an awful sight! He, he, he!"

"Shut up, Trimble!" snapped Tom Merry.

Tom turned to go in; he did not wish to crow over the new fellow, or to make things worse for him. But even as he turned away a harsh voice broke out:

"So you're back, Merry! What does this mean?"

It was Gerald Knox of the Sixth, and the prefect was eyeing Tom almost wolfishly. He did not observe the object of the crowd's attention for the moment.

"Where is the boy you were sent to meet?" went on Knox grimly. "Did you go to the— Great Scott! What—what—"

The prefect almost collapsed as he sighted his hapless cousin.

"What—what, Percy," he stuttered, "what—what has happened?"

The new fellow gave the grinning juniors a bitter glare; then he pointed at Tom Merry, his eyes glittering with hatred.

"It was all that fellow's dashed fault!" he choked. "The cad set a swarm of hooligans from the village on me!"

"Liar!" said Tom Merry calmly.

"Thumping liar!" added Grundy warmly. "You awful rotter! It was your own fault, you cad! Merry did nothing of the kind—no more than we did, and we were there."

"That's right," assented Wilkins and Gunn together.

"You shut up!" snapped Knox, his eyes gleaming with spite. "I know whom to believe. I expected something of the sort from Merry. Right! I'll show him that he can't play games like this on me or anyone belonging to me. Go to my study, Merry, and wait for me there!"

"Look here—" began Tom hotly.

"I want to hear no more lies. Go!"

"Let him go to pot," muttered Grundy. "You won't get fair play if you go— Here!"

Smack!

"Yarroooooop!"

Grundy staggered back with a howl as the prefect gave him a savage smack on the ear with his flat hand. For a moment the redoubtable George Alfred looked like rushing at the unpopular prefect, but he resisted the impulse as he remembered what the penalty for striking a prefect was.

"Go to my room, Merry, or I'll take you there by the scruff of the neck!" snapped Knox.

"I'll go!" said Tom quietly.

There was really nothing else for it, and Tom went, his face flushed and his eyes gleaming angrily. He saw now that all his fears were only too well grounded. The arrival of Knox's cousin at St. Jim's meant trouble, as he had expected, knowing Knox senior as he did.

And Tom realised that he was "for it" now. As Grundy had said, he could not expect fair play from Knox of the Sixth, an old and bitter enemy of the School House chums.

The prospect looming ahead was certainly not promising. And what made it seem worse was that Percy Knox was no duffer. He had proved that he could more than hold his own when trouble brewed.

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"Oh crumbs!" groaned Tom Merry. "I can see a high old time coming!"

He entered Knox's study and waited there. He had not to wait very long. Knox entered presently, his face showing the mood he was in. Without a word, he walked across to the bookshelves and picked up his ashplant.

"Bend over that chair, Merry," he snapped, pointing to a chair.

Tom Merry did not stir.

"I want to know what you intend to lick me for first, Knox!" he exclaimed grimly.

"I'm going to give you the hiding of your life, Merry!" said Knox. "In the first place, you assaulted a prefect; you kicked that ball deliberately at me and knocked me down. You know what the penalty for attacking a prefect is. Be



Biff! Like a shot from a gun the muddy football hurtled full in "Yoop!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the footballers. "Get off the field!" Knox sat on the muddy ground and gasped.

thankful I only intend to lick you instead of reporting the matter."

"I'd rather you reported the matter, Knox," said Tom coolly. "There were plenty of witnesses. I demand that the matter be reported either to the Housemaster or to Kildare."

"You—you impudent little sweep!" hissed Knox.

He had not the slightest intention of reporting the matter himself—not from any regard for Tom, however. He knew only too well that the evidence would prove that it had been an accident, a fact Tom Merry knew well enough.

"I'm going to deal with the matter myself," he went on, setting his lips. "The way you've treated my cousin is a personal matter, and I'm going to deal with it personally. I'm going to lick you for that also, now."

"I appeal against that also," said Tom. "There were plenty of witnesses—Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn were there. I'd rather you reported that also to the Housemaster, Knox."

Knox eyed him savagely and bit his lip hard.

"I shall do nothing of the kind, you little sweep! Get across that dashed chair—you hear me!"

"I won't!" said Tom. "I appeal to Mr. Railton!"

"Won't you?" said Knox through his teeth, and he rushed at Tom.

The junior darted round the table, with Knox plunging in pursuit.

"Stop!" he shouted.

"Rats!" retorted Tom.

The junior had no intention of obeying the command.



into Knox's chest, and he sat down with a heavy thump and a roar. "Get off, you silly chump!" "Groooough!" Gerald gasped and glared round him. (See Chapter 6.)

Knox followed him hard, lashing out with his cane as he did so. Twice Tom went round the table, and the third time he suddenly stopped short and dragged it round, knocking a chair over as he did so.

Crash!

Knox of the Sixth measured his length across the chair, his cane flying from his hand.

Tom Merry darted for the door and tore it open.

As he did so he collided violently with a youth who was just about to enter.

It was Percy Knox; and, grasping the position, in a flash, he grabbed hold of Tom.

"Hold him!" panted Gerald Knox, leaping to his feet.

"Hold the little brute, Percy!"

"In you go!" snapped the new fellow.

"Let go!" gasped Tom.

He struggled furiously; but the new fellow was just as strong, if not stronger. The two leaped back into the study, struggling desperately.

Knox ran to the door and closed it. Then his furious grasp closed on Tom. In a moment the junior skipper was held helpless between the two.

"Bend him over that chair!" hissed Knox of the Sixth.

Between them they managed to bend the junior over the chair, despite his desperate struggles. Knox, his eyes glittering, raised his ashplant.

Knock!

It was a sharp rap at the door, and Knox muttered an imprecation. He lowered the cane, and while he hesitated the door opened, and Kildare, the skipper of St. Jim's, entered the study.

"Hold on, Knox!" he said, giving Percy Knox a curious glance. "What's this little game?"

Knox bit his lip.

"I'm licking Merry for insolence, and for assaulting me!" he said savagely. "No need for you to interfere, Kildare!"

"I fancy there is," said Kildare, his lips curling a trifle. "Do you usually need the services of other juniors—and especially new chaps—to help you lick a kid, Knox?"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Knox.

Kildare ignored the injunction.

"You're licking Merry for that accident on Little Side this afternoon, I suppose, Knox?" he said quietly.

"It was no accident!"

"I came to see you about that matter," said Kildare. "Lefevre mentioned the affair to me, believing you intended to lick Merry for it. I thought I'd better say that I think it will be bad policy to do so. I've made inquiries, and I'm quite satisfied that it was purely an accident—at least, it was not Merry's fault, but happened through your own fault in interrupting a game."

"Oh, you're satisfied, are you?" sneered Knox.

"Quite!" said Kildare. "I advise you to let the matter drop."

"I shall do nothing of the kind!"

"Perhaps you would rather the matter was brought before Mr. Railton, then?" asked Kildare calmly.

Knox chose to ignore the suggestion.

"I'm licking Merry for something else as well!" he said thickly. "This afternoon I sent him to meet my cousin here at the station, and see him safely to St. Jim's. Instead of doing so he set a gang of ruffians from the village on my cousin. They chucked him into the duckpond. Doesn't that deserve a licking, Kildare?"

"Is that true, Merry?" asked Kildare, with another curious glance at the new fellow.

"No!" said Tom. "It is totally untrue. This new chap has been asking for trouble since he landed. Some village chaps—decent kids they are—were playing footer on the green. Knox kicked their ball into the pond for no reason at all—unless it was to cause trouble. Anyway, he refused to get it out again, and they tried to make him, and he got shoved in. I simply refused to help him because he refused to get their ball out. It was entirely his own doing. You can ask Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn, Kildare; they were on the spot!"

"Right! Fetch them here, Merry!"

Tom Merry hurried out. He came back a couple of minutes later, and Grundy & Co. were with him.

"I want you fellows to tell me what happened at the village pond this afternoon," said Kildare briefly.

"I'll jolly soon tell you that, Kildare," said Grundy.

And he did, while Wilkins and Gunn supported his evidence.

"It's all lies, of course!" snarled Knox senior. "Can't you see they're just backing Merry up?"

Kildare nodded grimly.

"Yes, I can see that," he assented. "They're backing Merry up in the truth; that's quite clear to me, Knox. You'd better let this matter drop, too, I fancy."

"Will I thump!" snapped Knox.

"Then you shall not lick Merry for it!" snapped Kildare, in his turn. "You have the other alternative—you can report the affair to Mr. Railton. But I'll see you don't lick Merry. If you do, you'll have me to deal with."

"I—I'm not bothering Railton with a matter like this!" hissed Knox savagely.

"That's good enough, then," said Kildare. "Merry and you other kids can clear!"

"Right, Kildare," said Tom meekly.

He followed Grundy & Co. out of the room. Kildare came out after him and strode away, a faint smile on his face. Grundy & Co. walked away chuckling. But Tom Merry was looking serious as he went to Study No. 10. He knew that this was only the beginning of trouble—the bitter look of hatred the new fellow had given him as he came out told him that.

CHAPTER 9.

Chuck'd Out!

BEFORE tea all the Lower School was buzzing with the circumstances under which Percy Knox had arrived at St. Jim's.

The story, naturally enough, caused no little amusement, and no little alarm.

Certainly Percy had made rather a bad start for a new fellow. In the ordinary way new boys "blew in" blissfully disregarded by the "old men," who had other important matters to occupy their attention. But, being the cousin of the most unpopular prefect at St. Jim's, made all the difference in the case of Percy Knox.

The Lower School had looked upon his coming with many misgivings. In the past Gerald Knox had managed very well to make himself decidedly unpleasant to the juniors of the Shell and Fourth; with the advent of a relative who would be in constant touch with the juniors, they felt it more than likely he would become intolerable. They had taken it for granted that a relative of Knox's must, in the nature of things, be a smaller edition of him.

Now they had good reason to believe that their forebodings were only too well-founded.

Monty Lowther and Manners heard the news as they came off the footer-field, and they hurried to their study immediately after changing. As they expected, they found Tom Merry there.

He gave them a feeble grin as they tramped in, ruddy and breathless, from the footer-field.

"You've heard the news, then?" asked Tom, noting their excited faces. "What d'you think about it, chaps?"

"Just as we expected!" said Manners. "There's going to be trouble with that merchant, Tommy."

"Tell us all about it," suggested Lowther.

Tom told of his afternoon's adventures.

"Phew!" whistled Lowther, as he finished. "What a giddy coughdrop! He's made a good start, and no mistake. Thank goodness he got it in the neck over the duckpond affair, anyway. And he's a smoky rotter, too."

"Seems a regular goer by the way he talked," granted Tom.

"Can't be much good at sports, or anything, then," said Lowther.

"I don't know that he's a duffer—it's pretty clear he isn't," said Tom, frowning. "It takes a good man to lick old Grundy in a rough-and-tumble scrap. And he's jolly strong. I've had good proof of that already."

"That's why he wanted you to meet him!" growled Manners. "I noticed how Knox grinned when he told you to be kind to his dashed cousin. He was grinning up his sleeve when he said that."

"He wanted me to get a licking from him, I expect," said Tom. "I think I see his game. He thought—"

Tom was interrupted. There came an authoritative rap at the door, and it opened revealing Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House. Behind him was none other than Percy Knox. There was a smirk on the new fellow's face.

Tom Merry set his lips.

It occurred to him at once that the visit meant trouble—that either Knox had reported the matter, after all, or that the new fellow had "sneaked" to the Housemaster.

But it proved to be nothing of the kind; it proved to be something far worse from the point of view of the Terrible Three.

"Ah, Merry," exclaimed Mr. Railton, motioning Knox to follow him into the room. "I believe you have already made the acquaintance of Knox, who joins the school to-day. His cousin, Knox of the Sixth, tells me you were kind enough to meet him at the station."

Tom Merry stared—his chums stared. From Mr. Railton's genial words it was quite clear that he knew nothing of what had happened that afternoon. Apparently Knox senior had told no details; possibly he had deemed it best not to tell any; the story was not to the credit of his young cousin.

"Yes, sir," stammered Tom. "I—I met him at the station."

"Very good!" said the Housemaster, smiling. "For the present Knox will join you in Study No. 10 until I can make fresh arrangements. He will probably be allotted to one of the other studies in a few days."

"Oh!"

It was an exclamation from the Terrible Three, and it held a world of meaning.

They were flabbergasted, and utterly dismayed. The problem of which study Knox minor would be allotted to had not even occurred to them. It was a staggering blow. Even had the fellow been a decent sort they would hardly have been pleased.

"We—we're rather cramped in here already, sir!" Tom Merry managed to stutter.

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"I am afraid that is the case with most of the junior studies just now, Merry," said Mr. Railton. "It is only for a few days, however. I trust you will make the new boy as comfortable as possible, and that you will all get on well together."

And with that the Housemaster took his departure. Tom Merry let him go without attempting to make further protest. In any case, there had been a note of finality in Mr. Railton's tone, and he knew it would have been useless.

There was a silence in the study—an uncomfortable silence for the Terrible Three. They looked at each other eloquently. Knox minor came further into the study and grinned at them coolly, and evidently quite unconcerned at their looks.

"Rotten hole, this!" he remarked blandly. "Like a blessed pigsty, in fact!"

The Terrible Three glared; they were very proud of their cosy little study, and the new fellow could not have said anything more calculated to get their backs up. As a matter of fact, Tom Merry saw from the grin on his hard face that he had said it purposely to offend them.

"So you think it's like a pigsty?" said Lowther, an ugly gleam in his eye.

"I do—beastly little show!"

"Then it will just suit you—the right place, in fact!" said Lowther grimly. "So make yourself at home."

"I'm going to," said Percy Knox, with a grin. "You'll find I'm a fellow who likes, and generally gets, his own way. Got that?"

Tom Merry said nothing. With the changing of his clothes, Percy Knox had evidently changed his attitude somewhat. But Tom felt he preferred him showing bitter animosity and hatred than this grinning, sarcastic superiority.

"We might as well come to some understanding at once now I'm booked for this study," said Percy coolly. "I've already met Merry; we've got a little matter to settle yet. I'm going to settle it, but it can wait for the present."

"It's no need to wait," said Tom Merry, his eyes glinting. "I'm ready to settle it any time, you swanking cad!"

"So am I," agreed Percy calmly. "But I want my tea just now. I got rather the worst of that affair this afternoon, I admit. But I don't often get the worst of things. I might tell you. Now, look here, I'm booked for this study, and I mean to make myself comfortable here. Got that?"

"Rats!"

"If it's uncomfortable for me," went on Knox, unheeding. "I shall make it dashed uncomfortable for you chaps! I'm not the fellow to stand nonsense from anybody. Start any games, and I'll make it dashed hot for you!"

"Will—will you?" ejaculated Tom.

"Yes. You may be a thundering big man here, Merry; but you're neither going to boss me in this study nor out of it! See?"

"I see," said Tom. "Your idea is to be boss here—is that it?"

"Something like that," assented the new fellow calmly. "I like to be top dog—and usually I am."

"You've got a good opinion of yourself, haven't you?" asked Manners, with heavy sarcasm.

"Oh, quite!" agreed Percy grimly. "It's backed up by ability, though."

"And brag!" added Lowther.

The new fellow looked at him.

"Say that again!" he said.

Lowther said it again, a grin on his face.

Smack!

Knox minor's fist smacked home under Lowther's chin. It was a powerful drive and lifted the astonished Lowther clean off his feet. He fell with a terrific crash and clatter into the fender.

There was a silence.

"That," remarked Percy Knox coolly, "is just a hint of what to expect if you come up against me. Now, perhaps, you'll— Here, none of that! One at a— Ow!"

But Tom Merry and Manners ignored his shout; they came on two at a time. Tom Merry's fist hit the new fellow in the mouth, making him yelp.

"Out with the howling cad!" snapped Tom Merry, his eyes blazing. "We'll show him whether he can come those bullying games here! Pitch him out on his dashed neck!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hold on!" yelled Knox.

But Tom Merry and Manners drove him round the table, and he defended himself desperately. Then Lowther jumped up and joined them. Big and strong as he was, the new fellow had no chance whatever against the Terrible Three—who had not got their nickname for nothing. His fists were struck aside, and strong hands gripped him and whirled him towards the door.

"Out with him!" panted Tom.

He released one hand and tore the door open. Knox

minor, struggling and fighting like a wild cat, flew through the doorway and fell crashing in the passage.

The Terrible Three returned into their study, and closed and locked the door after them. They had scarcely done so when a terrific hammering and kicking sounded on the panels. Evidently Knox minor was not done yet.

The juniors ignored it and started to get tea ready. They had had enough of Knox minor for a bit. But suddenly they heard a knock and the well-known voice of Mr. Linton.

"Merry, open this door at once!"

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Tom Merry.

He opened the door. Mr. Linton came in, with Knox minor, looking much the worse for wear and with a savage face, behind him.

"Merry," exclaimed Mr. Linton, "I understand that you refuse to admit Knox to this study! Are you aware that he has been placed with you temporarily?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then cease this foolishness and allow him to enter!" said the master of the Shell sharply. "I am surprised at you, Merry! This is scarcely the way I should have expected you to treat a newcomer to St. Jim's!"

"Very well, sir."

The master hesitated, as if about to say more; and then, with rather a sharp look at Tom Merry, he whisked out of the room.

"Done you, after all!" hissed Knox minor, his eyes glinting spitefully. "Here I am again, and here I mean to stay! Any more—Here, where—"

"You can stay," said Tom Merry, his lip curling; "but we shan't stay! Come on, you fellows, we'll invite ourselves to tea with Blake and his lot. Knox can have the pigsty, as he terms it, to himself!"

And with that Tom led his chums from the room, while Knox minor glared after them, his face showing his savage rage.

CHAPTER 10.

Poor Old Gussy!

"POOR old Gussy!" said Jack Blake. And there was a chuckle in Study No. 6 on the Fourth Form passage. Blake & Co. were at tea there, and with them were the Terrible Three—only one member of the two famous Co.'s being absent. And that was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

There was a glowing fire in the study, and a most delicious smell of fried sausages there also. There were no signs of sausages, however, for the company had just finished tea.

"Poor old Gussy!" repeated Jack Blake. "But it's really no joke, you fellows. There isn't a train back from Melford before seven, and poor old Gussy will have to hoof it about seven giddy miles."

"He'll be raving!" grinned Lowther.

"Thirsting for the new fellow's giddy gore!" added Digby.

"It was a bit thick, though!" grunted Herries. "Gussy isn't the sort to get a fellow's back up—and we know what a cad Knox is. He must have done it out of sheer ill-natured mischief."

"Hard lines for Gussy after tramping there and dropping the footer for the purpose of meeting him."

"Just like Gussy," said Manners.

It certainly was just like Gussy. And, though Tom Merry & Co. could not help smiling at the fate that had befallen Arthur Augustus, they also did not lose sight of the fact that it was a mean trick on the new fellow's part. Gussy was one of the kindest and best-natured fellows going, and they knew he was the last fellow to provoke a stranger.

"He should be back by this time, in any case, I should think," said Blake. "If you fellows have all finished tea, what about strolling down to the gates to wait for him?"

"Right-ho!"

The juniors rose to their feet from the table; but as they did so the door opened, and an eyeglass gleamed in at the doorway. Behind the eyeglass showed the red, perspiring, and decidedly angry features of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Oh, good!" said Blake. "Here he comes!"

"The merry old wanderer!" said Lowther.

Arthur Augustus entered the study; he almost tottered in, and he collapsed immediately into the nearest chair.

"Whacked?" inquired Blake sympathetically.

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I am vewy much whacked, deah boy. I have had a most feahful ex-

pewience; I have twamped all the way ffrom Melford, you know!"

"We know, old chap!" said Blake.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, starting up. "Then you have heard what that feahful wuffian did to me?"

"Yes; it's all over the place, old chap."

"Oh dear!" Arthur Augustus went pink and groaned. "Oh ewmbs! I was hopin' that twighful wascal would say nothin' about it. Howevah," went on Arthur Augustus, his noble eye gleaming, "they would have got to know, I suppose, for I intend to give that wottah Knox the thwashin' of his life! I—I—I—"

Arthur Augustus almost exploded in his emotion.

"Never mind, old chap!" murmured Lowther. "The cad got it in the neck himself afterwards."

"Better have tea now and tell us all about it, old chap!" said Jack Blake. "The sosses are all gone, but there's a couple of boiled eggs—"

"I do not wequiah eithah sosses or eggs, Blake," said Arthur Augustus grimly. "All I wequiah is a cup of tea, and then I shall be weady to give that feahful wottah the thwashin' he wiche deserves!"

"You're going to scrap with him now?" ejaculated Blake.

"Yaas; the mattah cannot wait, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus, his eye gleaming behind his monocle. "He has uttably wuined a new toppah; he has played a wottah twick on me, and made me look a fool before ewewybody, bai Jove!"

"Better leave the cad alone, Gussy," advised Tom Merry. "He's a rough handful!"

"That does not intewest me, Tom Merry!"

"Better wait until you've got over your tramp, anyway," said Herries. "You look whacked to the wide!"

"And you'll be whacked to the wide if you tackle the beggar now," said Lowther.

Arthur Augustus laid down his cup and rose to his feet. His eyes were gleaming with determination.

"Do you fellows happen to know where I can find Knox?" he asked.

"He's in our study—or was," grunted Tom, looking uneasy. "But look here, Gussy. Let the rotter alone; he's not worth touching, for one thing, and he's too much for you to handle for another—in your present state, anyway."

"Wubbish! I uttably wufuse to allow the mattah to stand ovah anothah hour," said Arthur Augustus. "Blake, may I enlist your services to see faih play?"

"Fathead!" snorted Blake. "If you mean to fight the chap, why not wait until morning and have it out in the gym with the gloves on?"

"I do not wequiah gloves, and I wufuse to wait until mornin', Blake!"

With that the irate Gussy marched out of the study.

"Come on!" groaned Blake. "Better

look after the ass!"

In a far from easy frame of mind Blake led his chums after Arthur Augustus. It was clear that nothing on earth would move the swell of the Fourth from the task he had set himself.

And the rest of the chums shared Blake's uneasiness. Knox minor was undoubtedly a rough handful, and though a clever boxer and no duffer Arthur Augustus was plainly not in the state to tackle such a task. Certainly Knox was something of a dark horse as yet; but he had licked Grundy; and Lowther, at least, had good reason to know he could punch.

The chums reached Study No. 10 just as Gussy was entering. They followed him, and found Knox minor seated in the armchair with his feet up on the mantel. There was a haze of cigarette-smoke in the room.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed as he saw the cigarette between the new fellow's lips.

Without a word he stepped swiftly before Arthur Augustus, and with a sweep of his hand he sent the cigarette flying from between the lips of the new fellow.

Knox minor leaped to his feet, a dull flush of red tinging his cheeks.

"You—you cheeky cad!" he shouted, turning on Tom in a fury. "What in thunder did you do that for, hang you!"

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"You're not the cock of the walk here yet, Knox!" snapped Tom. "There's going to be no smoking in this study while I'm in it."

Knox minor clenched his fists. His eyes were glittering. "You—you cheeky hound!" he hissed. "Pick that cigarette up for me, or I'll smash you!"

"Get on with the smashing, then," said Tom calmly. "You seem determined to cause all the trouble you can here, Knox. I'm ready to give you all you want."

"Hold on, Tom Mewwy!" snorted Arthur Augustus, pushing the junior captain aside. "Pway allow me to settle with this frightful cad first!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Chuck it, Gussy!" implored Blake. "Leave it to Tom Merry."

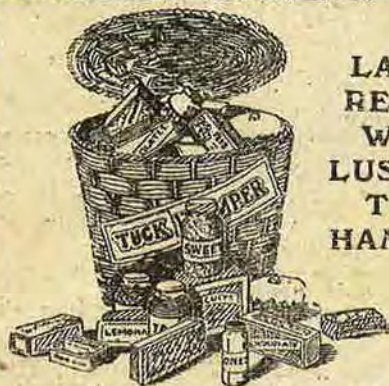
"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus.

He carefully peeled off his jacket, and just as carefully turned back his cuffs. Knox watched both operations with a faint grin on his face. Apparently the preparations Gussy was making amused him.

"That merchant going to fight me?" he asked, his rage seeming to have vanished now.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said Lowther. "You won't find it such a grinning matter, Knox."

"It's the chap—the freak I shoved into the train," jeered Knox. "Great pip! Fancy old fashion-plate showing fight!"



A
LANCS.
READER
WINS
LUSCIOUS
TUCK
HAMPER!

THIS
WEEK!

A READY RETORT!

A shopkeeper was giving away toy balloons to children, and one little fellow asked if he might have two. "Sorry," said the assistant, "but we only give one balloon to each boy. Have you a brother at home?" The youngster was truthful, but he did so want another balloon. "No," he replied regretfully, then added hopefully, "but my sister has, and I want one for him!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to A. Richardson, 35, Park Drive, Nelson, Lancs.

The aristocratic face of Arthur Augustus went pink. He breathed hard.

"Put your fists up, you wottah!" he said, his eyes gleaming with a war-like gleam. "And get weady for a feashful thwashin'! You have wuined my toppah, and you have bwrought widicude upon me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Knox.

"You cacklin' wottah!" shouted Arthur Augustus, going pinker than ever. "Put up your fists!"

"What for?" asked Knox. "I've only got to blow, you blessed tailor's dummy, and you'd fall down!"

Arthur Augustus kept his temper well in hand, though he was boiling with rage at the new fellow's insolent scoffing.

"Push the table aside, you fellows!" he gasped. "Hewwies, do you mind lockin' the door?"

"Not at all," said Herries, grinning.

The table was pushed aside, and Herries locked the door. It was clear that Knox thought Arthur Augustus a duffer, and they felt that was in Gussy's favour. There was a surprise in store for the new fellow.

It came quickly.

Arthur Augustus went at him with a rush, and he scarcely troubled to guard himself. The next moment a stinging drive from Gussy's fists took him between the eyes, and all but floored him.

"Good man, Gussy!" called Blake.

Biff! Smack! Biff!

Right. Left. Right!

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Swift as lightning Arthur Augustus followed up his first drive with three more. The first jarred every tooth in the new fellow's head, the second connected with his left eye, and the third took him clean under the chin.

Crash!

Knox minor was down, the most surprised and hurt fellow in St. Jim's.

There was a chorus of chuckles. Arthur Augustus stepped back lightly on his feet, his guard up. Knox staggered to his feet with a dazed and astounded look on his face.

But he was under no delusion now as to Arthur Augustus being a duffer. When Arthur Augustus came on again he side-stepped neatly, and as the elegant junior's fist grazed his head he drove a powerful jab into D'Arcy's ribs that made that junior gasp aloud.

"Steady, Gussy!" called Blake anxiously.

It was clear that the new fellow could use his fists now, and the chums watched with no little anxiety. He was taller than Gussy, and he was certainly stronger; in quickness and agility, however, Arthur Augustus had the advantage.

But he was obviously not at his best to-night by any means. That long tramp from Melford had sapped his endurance and energy. The new fellow scented this, and he swiftly took on the offensive, relentlessly pursuing the swell of the Fourth with drives, hooks, and hefty jabs.

Arthur Augustus stood up well to him, but it was very soon seen that he was tiring.

"No good!" groaned Tom Merry, in a whisper. "Gussy's off the map to-night."

Blake nodded gloomily. It was necessarily a rough-and-tumble fight—no round being called, or expected. This was to the advantage of Knox, and he made the most of it, giving Gussy no rest. Arthur Augustus—it could be easily seen—was the better boxer; but Knox could fight, and he could take punishment. The pace was getting hotter every minute now, and, though little noise was made, anxious eyes continually turned to the door, the knob of which had been tried several times, whilst several fellows had shouted asking what was on.

It was almost a relief when the end came: the juniors had seen that Gussy could never win in the present circumstances. He had already been sent crashing down three times in the last few seconds, and suddenly a terrific right-hander sent Gussy spinning round like a top, and he collapsed amid the fire-irons in the hearth.

He lay panting, his chest heaving; then he strove to rise. But Tom Merry jumped forward.

"That's enough!" he snapped. "Chuck it, Gussy! You're licked this time!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus gasped faintly. "Bai Jove! I'm not. I—I'm not done yet!"

He scrambled somehow to his feet. Both Blake and Tom Merry stepped before Knox, whose eyes were glittering with triumph. Herries, Digby, and Lowther grasped Arthur Augustus and held him fast.

"You can have a go at him again some time, Gussy," said Tom. "You've had quite enough for the present. Knox, you'd better clear!"

Knox grinned, his bruised face looking uglier than ever.

"I'm ready to start again," he said, with a jeer. "What about you, Merry? We've got to square our account yet."

Tom Merry gave him a grim look. The new fellow was certainly game enough. And though Tom would have been glad enough to oblige him, he knew it would be unfair to the fellow after the scrap he had just put up.

"Don't talk rot!" he snapped. "Kick the cad out if he won't go, chaps!"

"We'll jolly soon do that," said Lowther.

Knox shrugged and put on his coat, which he had ripped off during a lull in the scrap. Manners unlocked the door and he went out, giving vent to a sneering laugh as he did so.

"Chuck it, Gussy!" said Blake, as Arthur Augustus tried to follow him. "It's no good; you're not up to him to-night. You'll have your chance again—if the fool's still alive! By the way he's going on he'll soon need a hospital or a funeral."

Luckily the rumpus seemed to have attracted no one in authority, and after making sure the coast was clear Blake, Herries, and Digby led their damaged study-mate back to Study No. 6 for much needed repairs. Tom Merry whistled when they had gone.

"Well," he said, "that merchant is the limit!"

"A regular fire-eater!" said Lowther.

"But he'll burn himself yet!" said Tom grimly. "He'll be meeting his Waterloo. Anyway, we're standing no nonsense from him in this study. That's settled!"

"Yes, rather!"

Tom Merry & Co. were determined upon that if they were determined upon nothing else!

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CHAPTER 11.

The Plotters!

"JUST a minute, Merry!"

It was a few days later, and the Terrible Three were crossing the quad just after dinner. Looking round, Tom Merry saw with some surprise that it was Knox, the new fellow, who had called to him.

Tom Merry frowned.

He was on the worst possible terms with Percy Knox—as were all of the chums of the School House.

Since the first day of his arrival there had been heaps of trouble in the School House—and even in the New House—with Knox minor.

The bragging and domineering cousin of Knox of the Sixth seemed to live on trouble, and he found plenty to occupy him at St. Jim's. Naturally enough, the fellows objected to his manners and customs—they were not likely to submit to being bullied and hectored by a new chap—whether a "rough handful" or not. In those few days Knox had fought with at least a dozen fellows in the Shell and Fourth—and he had licked ten out of the dozen.

He was undoubtedly a "coughdrop."

Grundy had insisted upon satisfaction the very next day—he forbore to administer his licking so soon after D'Arcy's eclipse—but the next day he had looked for Knox minor, and he had found him and started in to lick him.

Unfortunately for Grundy's plans, it was Grundy who got the licking.

But though Knox was decidedly unpopular, he had earned no little amount of respect—on account of his fists. A fellow who could stand up and lick a chap like Grundy was bound to earn a certain amount of respect.

And very soon Knox minor had realised that it didn't pay to brag, and that his "cock-of-the-walk" manner was a mistake. For reasons of his own, he wanted to be popular, and after the first two days he changed his methods and started in to become popular.

He soon grasped the fact that the chief stumbling-block to the consummation of his desires in that direction was in the mere fact that he was related to Gerald Knox of the Sixth.

On realising this he gave up all ideas of making capital out of the relationship. It did not pay, and—with Gerald's secret approval—he gave his cousin a wide berth.

But he very quickly made friends; and as Tom Merry & Co. had expected it was in Racke & Co.'s set that he became friendly. It was, as Lowther put it, a case of birds of a feather!

In Study No. 10 there had been trouble again—as was only to be expected. Coming into the study on Knox's second day, the Terrible Three had been astounded to find their group photographs taken down and some of Knox's own substituted.

They had pitched the photos out, and their owner with them, after a furious struggle with him.

On the following day, happening to return to the study unexpectedly, they had found a little smoking-party composed of Percy Knox and Racke & Co. assembled there.

Like Knox's photos, Racke & Co. had been pitched out into the passage, and Knox himself after them.

Nor did Percy Knox come back again—except to fetch his belongings—for, with Mr. Railton's permission, he had joined Racke and Crooke in Study No. 7—greatly to the joy of the Terrible Three, who felt they almost liked the new fellow for going!

They had seen very little of Percy since then—had ignored his very existence as far as was possible with a fellow in their own Form. Tom Merry especially had avoided him, knowing as he did that the new fellow's intention was to force a fight on him if he could.

Tom Merry did not intend to gratify him in that respect. He simply did not wish to have anything to do with him. Moreover, the Greyfriars match was perilously close, and Tom did not want a fight on his hands, until that was over, at all events.

So Tom frowned now as he heard Knox minor call to him. Knox wore his usual supercilious grin; behind him were Racke, Crooke, and Scrope, and all three were grinning also.

"Well?" said Tom quietly.

"I hear you're the junior footer skipper here, Merry?" said Knox.

"You know very well I am," said Tom. "What about it?"

"Just this," said Knox grimly. "I've been here some days now, and you haven't asked me yet if I can play footer?"

"I never thought of asking you," said Tom.

"Why?" asked Knox coolly. "Didn't want to, I suppose—afraid I might prove to be a better man than you, as I happen to be at a good many other things, Merry?"

"You can certainly beat me at bragging," said Tom.

"I only brag, as you call it," retorted Knox, unmoved, "when I can back up my statements with ability. I happen to be able to play footer."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Tom. "I noticed you failed to turn up for footer practice yesterday, though; too good, I suppose?"

"Exactly," assented Knox. "I've no use for practice, or practice matches. I want something bigger. It's the Greyfriars match to-morrow, I believe?"

"It is!" said Tom, staring. "But that won't interest you."

"It does interest me. I want to play in the Greyfriars match to-morrow, Merry," said Percy Knox coolly.

"Wha-ai?"

"Oh, my hat!" gurgled Lowther.

"What awful cheek!" snorted Manners.

Tom Merry fairly blinked at him.

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"You want to play in the Sixth match with Rookwood next week?" said Tom, with biting sarcasm.

"I fancy I'm good enough for that," remarked Percy gravely. "But it's the Greyfriars match to-morrow I'm set on for the present. I don't want to brag—"

"Don't you?" ejaculated Lowther.

"No. I'm merely stating a fact when I say that I can lick any fellow in your team at the game. If I can prove my words, I suppose you won't refuse to play me to-morrow, Merry?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"There's something seriously wrong with your supposer, then," he said.

"You won't?"

"Certainly not, you silly ass!" exclaimed Tom, laughing. "You must be potty, Knox! Even if you proved you could play, I wouldn't risk an unknown quantity in an important match. I want men I know and can rely on. Besides—" He paused.

"Go on," said Knox, his lip curling. "Besides, I'm not a pal, am I?"

Tom's eyes gleamed; but he kept his temper.

"No, it isn't that," he said quietly. "It's this—a fellow like you who smokes and generally acts the giddy goat, isn't likely to be a player at all. I suppose this is a bit of leg-pulling, Knox. You can go and eat coke, you silly ass!"

With that Tom walked away with his chums, both of them grinning. Percy Knox looked after them, his face savage. Racke hid a covert grin. Tom Merry had not taken the new fellow seriously; but Racke, looking at Knox's savage face now, realised that he was in earnest and that he had intended to be taken seriously.

"The jealous cad!" hissed Knox. "I might have known he wouldn't give me my chance, though!"

Racke chuckled. At that moment Knox minor reminded him very much of George Alfred Grundy who was always expecting to be offered a place in the St. Jim's team and always getting disappointed. Indeed, to Aubrey Racke Percy Knox's expectations seemed much funnier even than the great George Alfred's.

"Chuck it, Knox!" he grinned. "What's the good of making a fool of yourself like that? You can't play footer, and, in any case, you're about the last chap Merry would offer a place to. He wouldn't trust you in the blessed team any more than he would me, the cad!"

Knox bit his lip hard. He found the genial Aubrey more than trying at times, and, only the thought that Aubrey might prove useful to him prevented him knocking the grinning cad of the Shell down and kicking him hard.

"Shut up, you!" he snarled. "I tell you I can play footer better than that sweep can! How I hate the cad! Look here—"

He paused, his brow reflective.

"Come along to the study," he said, after a moment. "I'm going to play in that match to-morrow—I've set my mind on it. And I think I see a way of wangling it. I mean to show the chaps here what I can do."

Racke stared.

"You silly fool!" he gasped. "What on earth—"

"Shut up!" snarled Percy. "I've stood about enough lip from you, Racke; any more cheek and I'll punch that long nose of yours!"

"No need to get huffy," said Racke sulkily. "I'm only warning you—"

"Keep your dashed warnings until they're asked for!" said Knox. "I've told you I mean to play in the match to-morrow. I'm going to work the thing somehow, and I don't care how!"

"But—but Merry—"

"Hang Merry!" said Percy Knox, his eyes gleaming with determination. "I'm going to get square with that rotter! I'm going to lick him at footer, and then I'm going to lick him with my dashed fists! That's the first part of the programme. The rest will follow quickly enough, I fancy. Come on!"

And he led the way indoors. And Aubrey Racke winked meaningly at Crooke and Serope and started to follow. Racke evidently felt either that Knox minor was a bit "batty" or else he was swanking, as usual. Racke was wrong on both counts, as it happened. Aubrey Racke was to find out—as was Tom Merry—that Percy Knox was a force to be reckoned with!

CHAPTER 12.

Where is Tom Merry?

"FEELING fit, you chaps?"

Jack Blake asked the question cheerily as he came into Study No. 10 the following afternoon.

Behind him were D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby, and all three looked as cheery as Blake did. Dinner had

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been over at St. Jim's some time. It had not been a very big or hearty dinner for Tom Merry and his fellow-foot-ballers, for it was the afternoon of the much-discussed Greyfriars match at last. It only wanted half an hour to kick-off.

"Fit as giddy fiddles!" grinned Tom Merry, without looking up from the footer boots he was looking over. "We'll lick Greyfriars this time!"

"Yaas, wabwah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Mustn't take 'em too lightly, though," warned Tom Merry. "I believe they've a jolly strong team."

"They usually have," said Lowther. "It's going to be a stiff tussle."

"We'll lick 'em, though," said Tom confidently.

"I hear Racke's laid two to one against us with that new chap, Knox," grinned Blake.

"Let me catch the cads betting on a school match!" said Tom grimly.

"I'm rather surprised to hear Knox puts his giddy money on us, though," chuckled Monty Lowther. "Rather a compliment—what?"

"He must know a bit about footer after all," chuckled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. seemed to find humour in that remark. "That chap isn't exactly a fumbler with a ball, though," said Tom Merry.

"He booted that footer of Grimey's into that duckpond rather neatly, I thought, the other day. If only he could play and could be relied on, he'd make a useful player, I should think."

"Pretty hefty, anyway!" said Blake carelessly. "Blow him! What about getting down to the changing-room now?"

"Right ho!" assented Tom, glancing at his watch. "I—Hallo! What's this?"

He stooped and picked up an envelope from the floor. It was a small, square envelope, with Tom's name on it in typed letters, and it had evidently been pushed under the door.

"From Kildare!" said Tom, in surprise. He tore open the note, wondering why the note had not been brought to him, instead of being shoved under the door. "Some lazy fag, I suppose?"

He scanned the typed note inside. It was signed by Kildare, as he had expected. Kildare possessed a portable typewriter, on which he usually typed notices and official sports correspondence.

"Dear Merry," ran the note,—"I'd like a word with you before the match if you can manage it. Shain't keep you a minute.—ERIO KILDARE."

That was all.

"Wonder what he wants?" murmured Tom to himself. "A few tips about the game, perhaps." He turned to his chums:

"Kildare wants to see me a sec, chaps," he said aloud. "I'll join you in the changing-room presently."

"Right ho!"

Tom hurried away to Kildare's study, and his chums strolled down to the changing-room, discussing prospects for the afternoon. Tom was astonished to find Kildare's study empty.

Hurrying out again, he almost barged into Percy Mellish of the Fourth.

"Seen Kildare about Mellish?" asked Tom.

"Fancy I spotted him going round by the chapel when I came in a moment ago," said Mellish promptly. "Thanks!"

Little dreaming that Mellish had been hanging about Kildare's door for the sole purpose of giving him that answer, Tom Merry hurried out of doors. It struck him as strange that Kildare—who was most considerate, even to juniors—had sent him that message and then gone out of doors. But he gave little thought to it at the moment.

Out into the frosty quadrangle he hurried, and round by the chapel. It did not occur to him to wonder what Kildare could be doing round there at that hour of the day. Kildare was not in sight as he approached the fine building, and Tom hurried round to the back.

He had scarcely taken a dozen steps round the corner when an astonishing thing happened.

There sounded the quick rush of feet, but before he could swing round, something was whirled round his head, effectually blinding him.

It proved to be part of an old sack, and before the astounded junior could raise a hand the sack was swiftly pulled down. It was too late to struggle then. More footsteps sounded, and then, as he began to struggle furiously, the sack tightened round his waist, pinning his arms to his side.

Then he was hustled, still struggling, away.

But his struggles, with his hands helpless, availed him little.

Many hands grasped him, and one pair at least were strong, and he was propelled along, despite his efforts to make a stand.

"You rotters!" panted Tom, almost choked in the dark sackings. "Let me go!"

He kicked out backwards, and there sounded a muffled howl. But that was all the sound his captors made. It was also all the damage Tom was able to do his captors. Stone flags rang under his feet now, and the next moment the stone flags seemed to fall away from him, and he stumbled and went rolling down stone steps.

There were not many of them, however, and he stopped rolling, bruised from head to foot, and all but suffocated. Then he was dragged to his feet and urged on again.

But this time only for a few steps; and then he was released suddenly, and there sounded the thud of a heavy door closing. There followed a silence as of the tomb.

But Tom knew only too well where he was—the dank, musty smell and the icy chill of the air told him that. He was in the vaults beneath the old part of the college. And in a flash the reason for it all came to him. It was obviously to keep him away from the match.

Who was responsible for it, however? Into Tom's mind there suddenly flashed Blake's remarks concerning Knox and Racke betting on the match.

There was a motive, at all events; and at the thought Tom gritted his teeth and started struggling to free himself with savage fury.

But it was useless—his bonds were too strong for that, and he desisted at last, exhausted and utterly dismayed. The icy chill of the vaults struck into his heated body, but he dare not walk about to keep himself warm, fearing to lose himself in the blackness. So he flung himself down to wait in smouldering fury and despair for his release, which he knew must come sooner or later.

And meanwhile, in the changing room, Tom's chums were waiting impatiently for him to turn up.

"Where the thump can the ass have got to?" snorted Lowther.

"Only wants three or four minutes," grunted Herries.

"Like you blessed School House fatheads!" grinned Figgins. "It's time Tom Merry turned over the job of skipper to a New House chap."

"Oh, rats!" said Manners crossly.

He was beginning to feel rather alarmed, as were several other fellows. Time was getting on.

Darrell, who was refereeing the match, came hurrying in.

"Come along, you kids!" he snapped. "Time to be getting on the ground. Hallo! Where's Merry?"

"Goodness knows!" said Blake. "Kildare sent for him, I believe—wanted to speak to him."

"Kildare's gone to Wayland," said Darrell.

"Oh!"

"You fellows had better get on the ground," said the Sixth-Former. "Gore, you might hang on here and hurry Merry up when he does arrive."

"Right!" said Gore.

The footballers hurried out, and it was Talbot, the vice-captain who led the St. Jim's team on to the field that afternoon. The Greyfriars fellows were already on the ground, and the rival fellows exchanged greetings cheerily. Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars were well-known at St. Jim's.

"Only three minutes more," snapped Darrell, looking annoyed. "Where can that young ass have got to? Talbot, you'd better tell off a reserve, in case—Hallo! Who the thump's this merchant?"

Amid a clamour of voices round the ropes, a figure in footer attire had just run on to the ground. It was Percy Knox, and the St. Jim's juniors stared blankly as they recognised him.

"What the merry dickens—" ejaculated Lowther.

Knox, a queer grin on his rather heavy features, ran up to the juniors. He looked a heftier figure than ever in footer togs. He handed a note to Talbot.

"From Merry, I believe!" he said coolly. "He sent a note to me, too, saying I was to play in his place."

"What?" It was a howl.

CHAPTER 13.

A Personal Triumph!

TALBOT took the note and tore it open. He jumped as he read it aloud.

"Go ahead with match, Talbot," he read out blankly. "I'm detained, blow it! But I'm sending this new fellow along. I've just learned he's a good man. Go in and win!"

"TOM MERRY."

"Well," ejaculated Talbot, staring at Percy Knox's smug face. "Well, I'm blowed!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Great pip!"

There were expressions of utter disgust and amazement on every side. From the ropes round the ground fellows were yelling madly.

"Where's Merry?"

"Get off the field, Knox, you footling imbecile!"

"Kick the idiot off, Talbot! What's this idiotic game?"

Darrell rushed up just then, his face wrathful. Talbot handed him the note. He read it, but did not seem concerned. As a matter of fact, he fancied he had heard Knox of the Sixth say something about his youthful cousin being a player.

"Oh, all right," he grunted, glancing at Percy Knox.

"That's good enough, but that young idiot Merry's run it jolly close. Line up there! Shove that new chap somewhere, for goodness' sake!"

"I'll go in Merry's place at centre," called Talbot, making his mind up swiftly. "Knox, you go in my place at outside-right."

Talbot's mind was in something of a whirl, he could only accept Tom's statement in the letter; there was no time for anything else. As for the rest of the St. Jim's players, they simply did not know what to think. Tom Merry was the last fellow in the world to play a practical joke with a match, and he was the last fellow also to take any risks with his team. But—but—

There was a terrific "but" about the extraordinary affair. The juniors would certainly have felt more comfortable had it even been a duffer like Aubrey Racke in the team. They did know what he could do, if it was only to get in the way of the other players.

"Oh, my only Sunday topper!" groaned Lowther. "What the—Hallo!"

Phceep!

It was the whistle. Talbot had already won the toss, and the next moment the ball was in motion.

There was a roar from the crowd.

Talbot had the ball, and he was taking it down the field.

There was a rush of Greyfriars fellows, and Talbot got rid of the ball at the right moment, sending it sailing over to Levison at outside-left, who was unmarked.

Levison went along the touchline like a hare.

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"Go it, Levison!" roared the St. Jim's crowd. "Go—Oh, blow!"

Levison had been a trifle too eager for once. He tripped suddenly, and his sprawling foot sent the ball almost on to the toes of curly-headed Bob Cherry of the Greyfriars. Remove. Bob whanged the ball over to Harry Wharton, and that junior took it up the field again.

It was the turn of the Greyfriars contingent to roar, and they roared.

Their enthusiastic excitement came to nothing, however. Harry Wharton was soon tackled, and though he came out on top of the scrimmage that followed, someone came along like a flash of lightning and neatly lifted the spinning ball from his foot.

It was Percy Knox. It was then St. Jim's began to get their surprise.

The new fellow was off like a shot, showing a wonderful mastery over the ball as he took it along at a turn of speed that made the St. Jim's juniors gasp.

But the next moment they were yelling wildly.

In swift succession Percy Knox beat two Greyfriars defenders, and then he was racing along just within the touchline with the precision and confidence of a Meredith.

"Great Scott! He'll do it!" gasped Lowther, racing along with Blake. "Who'd have dreamed— Oh, good shot!"

Almost to the corner flag the new fellow took the ball, and then he sent it in with a low, oblique shot.

Whizz! The next second the net behind the Greyfriars goal was shaking violently.

"Goal!"

It was a roar from all round the packed ground.

"Oh, good man, Knox!" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove! I couldn't have sent a bettah shot in myself, Blako."

"You jolly well couldn't!" agreed Blake with a chuckle.

Despite their personal dislike of the bumptious new fellow, Tom Merry's chums were only too ready to give credit where it was due. It certainly was due now.

"Good man, Knox!" called Blake quite genially, as Knox minor came back up the field with them. "A jolly good start, old chap."

"Oh, that's only a beginning," said Knox minor loftily but breathlessly. "I'll show you fellows something before the afternoon's out."

The bragging note in the new fellow's remarks grated horribly on the footballers' ears, but they could not help but admit that he had some excuse to brag now.

And as the game proceeded they had to admit it still more. That goal certainly was only the beginning. The fellow had shown in that brief run that he could "handle" a ball, and that he could shoot. He very soon proved that he was a born footballer.

Certainly he stuck tight to the ball when he got it, but he did something useful with it every time. The crowd lost sight of his selfish playing in the wonderful exhibition of personal achievement.

"He's a blessed wonder!" gasped Gunn, who was standing at the rails with Grundy. "Who'd have thought it?"

"He's not so dusty," admitted George Alfred Grundy with rather lofty tolerance. "Not quite my style, of course."

"Not quite!" agreed Gunny, winking at Wilkins.

"He sticks to the ball too much, though," said Grundy, shaking his head. "It's selfish, you know, and it's not good play."

Grundy seemed to be near the truth for once.

"But he's a rattling fine player—better than Tom Merry even," said Gunn reluctantly. "Great pip! We're pretty certain to win now."

"If I were only playing—" began Grundy enthusiastically.

"It would be ten goals to the good at least—"

"That's right!" said Grundy.

"For Greyfriars, I mean, of course," went on Wilkins blandly.

"That's cheek!" snorted Grundy. "Look here, Wilky, I'll— Hallo! The beggar's off again! Bravo!"

"Go it, Knox!"

There was an anticipatory howl as the new fellow trapped a spinning ball skilfully, and in the twinkling of an eye he was off along the touchline.

Again he took the ball almost up to the corner flag, and then he sent it goalwards.

Biff!

There was a howl of disappointment as the ball, caught by a sudden gust of wind, lifted and crashed against the crossbar, and Hazeldene, the Greyfriars goalie, fisted it out thankfully.

But his thankfulness was short-lived, for as the ball

dropped a slim figure darted in and hooked it deftly off the toes of Vernon-Smith.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and with a brilliant short pass—for he had no opportunity to shoot successfully himself—the swell of the Fourth sent it out swift and sure to his outside-right.

And Knox was ready for it. He trapped it, and the ball left his foot like a shot from a gun.

Goal! Hazeldene, once again, was beaten to the wide—beaten by a shot that would have got past any goalkeeper.

"Bravo!"

"Good man, Knox!"

"Two up for St. Jim's!"

"Hurrah!"

Percy Knox's face was blazing with triumphant satisfaction as the roar of voices acclaimed him. He grinned as Talbot thumped him on the back.

"Ripping, Knox! You can play, and no mistake! Let's have some more, old chap!"

"Yaas, wathah, bai Jove! I must say that Knox has surprised me, you know. I weally do not think that I could play bettah myself!"

"Go hon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The St. Jim's footballers were in a gleeful mood. They were already two up, and though footer is an uncertain game, there was every prospect of a good win, if only Knox held out. Knowing he was supposed to be a "smoky cad," and that he was supposed not to practise or attempt to keep himself fit, Talbot felt none too certain of that.

But he need not have worried. The new fellow seemed to be made of whipcord, and though he was breathing fairly hard now, so were many of the other fellows of both teams. He was certainly not at all distressed, however.

As the whistle went for play again he piled in with inexhaustible energy and fire.

Greyfriars were getting badly scared now. Most of their men seemed helpless against Percy Knox, though Harry Wharton got the best of more than one encounter with him. At half-time the score was still the same—two to none against Greyfriars. And Greyfriars were looking very glum during the interval.

"Not over yet, though, by a long way," said Talbot to Harry Wharton, laughing. "What d'you think of our new outside-right?"

"Where's Tom Merry?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Goodness knows," said Talbot, frowning. "The silly ass seems to have got himself detained or something. Anyway, I fancy you haven't gained much by us losing Tommy, what?"

"Your new man's a scorcher!" grinned Bob Cherry ruefully. "He makes me feel I want to chuck footer and take up hopscotch."

"He's brilliant!" said Harry Wharton. "But—but—well, I think I should choose Tom Merry between the two. He's steadier, and I should think he's more reliable, and he doesn't hang on to the ball."

"Knox made you fellows trot round a bit, anyway," grinned Talbot.

"Game isn't over yet—as you reminded me," said Harry Wharton grimly. "There's time yet for a lot to happen."

But Harry spoke with more hope than confidence. And his private misgivings were more than justified during the second half. St. Jim's took the field confident, and they started again with irresistible dash and energy.

Within three minutes of play the Saints had registered another score, again through the brilliant play of Knox minor. His shot for goal was fisted out by Hazeldene, but Talbot sent it in again with a thud that shook the rigging behind the dazed Hazeldene.

St. Jim's were almost hysterical with joy. The match with Greyfriars was about the most important on the calendar, and St. Jim's were three goals up!

But the Friars were playing a desperate defensive game now, and try as they would the Saints did not get through again until just within a minute of the final whistle.

By this time Percy Knox was tiring visibly, and all the fire seemed to have gone out of his attack; but just in that last minute a chance came, and he showed that he had not by any means shot his bolt.

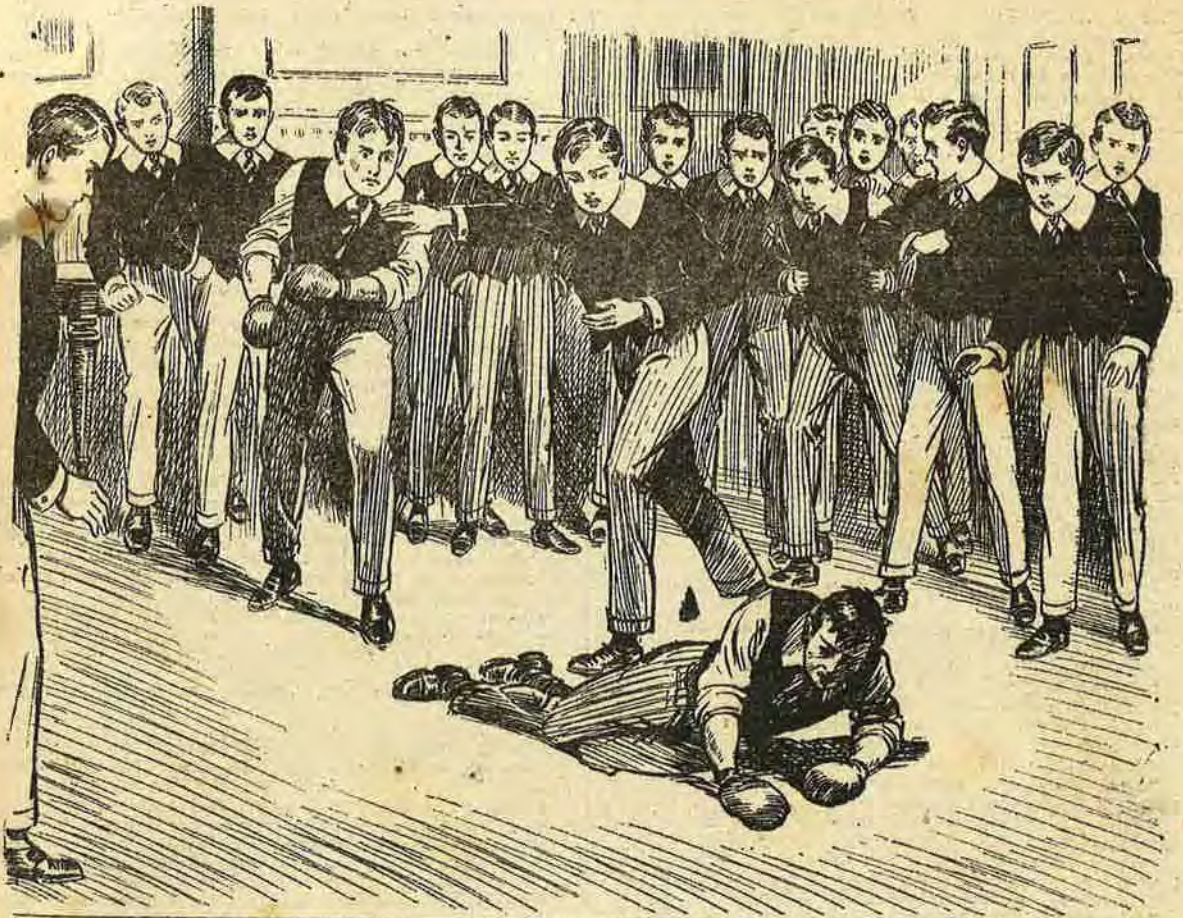
It was Blake who gave him his chance this time. The ball came trickling out of a particularly hot scrimmage in midfield, and Blake got it. He took a swift glance round, and, seeing Knox unmarked, he sent it out to him in a high, dropping kick.

Knox woke up, and was on it like a terrier on a rat.

He hooked it round, and sped off with it like the wind, this time deserting the touchline for an inside place.

There was a roar of voices, and Talbot, who saw an open goal before Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, running level with Knox, shouted wildly to the new fellow:

"Let Gussy have it Knox—pass!"



Percy Knox darted in, and his right and left shot out in two smashing blows to the face. Tom Merry rocked on his feet and crashed down, and he remained down. "Licked!" snorted George Alfred Grundy, pushing his way forward. "Licked to the wide, by jingo! Here, lemme have a go at the rotter!" (See Chapter 14.)

Knox ignored the yell. He went on. A back tackled him with desperate vim, but Knox simply left him standing still, and then he shot for goal.

There was a sudden silence, and then a wild roar from hundreds of throats as the ball was seen to be rolling at the back of the net. Hazeldene was blinking down sideways at it with a ludicrous expression of surprise on his face.

"Goal!"

A shrill, sharp pheeep from Darrell's whistle denoted the fact that another goal had been scored, and then almost the next second came a still longer blast, drowned in a roar of cheers from St. Jim's.

"St. Jim's wins! Hurrah!"

"Good old Knox!"

"Up with him!" howled a voice—it was Racke's voice—and the cry was taken up as a swarm of enthusiastic fellows rushed on to the field.

Percy Knox's brilliant and spectacular "fireworks" had taken the excited juniors by storm, and in a flash he was lifted shoulder-high and swept away off the field amid rousing cheers.

In that exciting moment even Blake & Co. forgot the new fellow's bumptious manner and shady practices. They only acclaimed the brilliant footballer at that moment.

It was certainly a triumphant moment for Percy Knox, and the new fellow's eyes were glittering with triumph. He was ambitious—little the fellows dreamed then just how ambitious—and little they dreamed how he had gained his first point in his ambitious bid for notoriety.

CHAPTER 14. Another Triumph!

TOM MERRY stirred restlessly on the stone floor of his gloomy prison beneath the ancient ruins of the monastery of St. Jim's.

He had tramped to and fro in a confined area, and he had stamped about to keep his feet warm, and to

bring some sort of circulation to his body. But he had to fling himself down at last on the stone flags, damp and mildewed as they were, weary and exhausted with his efforts and the close, horrible atmosphere.

His head ached abominably, and he was chilled to the bone with the icy cold of the vaults. Indeed, he felt quite ill, and his constant sneezes were sufficient to tell him he must expect a bad cold as a result of his imprisonment in that damp and unhealthy place.

Moreover, he was sick at heart with dismay and disappointment. He had looked forward to the Greyfriars match for weeks, and he had slaved hard bringing his men up to scratch for the day.

Now it had arrived, and here he was a helpless prisoner. He had succeeded in tearing the sack from his head, but he could not release his hands, and he knew that escape was hopeless. In any case, the match would be over now, he felt certain.

It would result in a severe trouncing for St. Jim's, he felt certain of that. In all modesty, Tom Merry knew he couldn't be spared from the team, and he believed there wasn't a fellow to replace him. Had Racke & Co. and Percy Knox done this to suit their betting game?

If, as Blake had said, Racke had taken two to one against St. Jim's winning, it was scarcely likely that Knox would have done this. Racke might, but Knox would be a fool if he did. If Knox had done it, it had been out of revenge.

Tom Merry very soon got tired of sitting on the flags—indeed, it was almost impossible to remain sitting on them for long—and he was just getting to his feet again when there came a sound at the great oaken door of the vaults.

The door suddenly swung open on creaking hinges, and Tom fancied he glimpsed forms in the gloom.

He jumped forward towards them, bound as he was. The forms vanished, and Tom heard their owners run up the steps without. Their running feet on the flags above died away.

Tom's legs were not bound, luckily, and he hurried up the

steps with heartfelt relief. To his surprise he found it deep dusk outside.

The junior hurried from the ruins and round by the chapel. After hesitating a moment by the steps of the School House, he turned away, and made for Taggles' lodge. He knocked, and after a moment Taggles blinked out at him.

"What—Master Merry!" he ejaculated. "Ere, what's this mean?"

"Cut me loose, Taggy!" snapped Tom. "I'll see you to-morrow about this."

In the little, lighted porch of the lodge Taggles blinked in great amazement at Tom's white face with the smudges of grime on it. He fairly jumped as he saw Tom's bound wrists.

"Cut them!" said Tom. "I want to get at a couple of bob in my pocket, Taggy."

It was enough for Taggles—the mention of the two bob had done it, so to speak. He took out his knife and cut the cords round the junior's sore and bruised wrists.

"My eye!" he gasped. "Who done this, Master Merry? Some of them New House young raskils up to their larks again, eh?"

Tom did not say "Yes" or "No." He took out a florin and handed it to Taggles, and then he started off at a run for the School House. Reaching the building, he hurried up to his own study. He found Manners and Lowther there, and they fairly gaped as they spotted his grimy, haggard features and dishevelled attire.

"Great pip!" gasped Lowther, in great alarm. "What the thump—"

"Where the dickens have you been, Tommy?" demanded Manners.

"Never mind your questions now," said Tom briefly. "How did the match go?"

"Three to none," said Lowther. "But—"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Tom. "You mean to say they licked us by three goals to none?"

"Eh? Certainly not!" said Manners, staring. "We won, of course."

"We won?" yelled Tom.

"Yes. You were right, Tommy. That chap, rotter or not, is a thundering good man!"

"Who is?" exclaimed Tom blankly. "What are you gassing about?"

"About Knox, of course," said Manners, staring. "He played a great game. Scored three on his own practically."

"Knox did!" almost shrieked Tom.

"Of course! You sent him, didn't you? You said he was a good man in your note! He was. No doubt about that, Tommy."

Tom's head was swimming. He felt as if he were dreaming.

"I'm blessed if I can make head or tail of this, you fellows," he said, holding his throbbing head in his hands. "Tell me all about it, and afterwards I'll tell you my yarn."

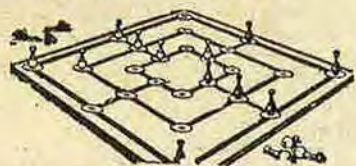
Lowther told him all about the match, Manners helping him. Tom Merry gaped like a stranded fish as he heard how Knox had played. He was, at first, overjoyed at the discovery of a new footballer of such talent in the Shell. But the discovery was tinged with no little dismay at the knowledge that it was Knox, the fellow who hated him so bitterly, and who was hopeless from a disciplinary point of view.

And then quite suddenly the truth dawned upon Tom.

"Oh, the—the cad!" he hissed, his eyes glinting with rage. "So that's it. He worked this kidnapping game in order to get himself in the match!"

"Eh? What's that?" demanded Lowther, not comprehending.

"ANSWERS" GREAT GAME



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Tom told his chums of his adventures, and they gasped. "Then—then those notes were forgeries?" stammered Monty.

"Of course they were!" said Tom thickly. "It's all a plot to enable that hound to play in my place. I might have guessed something of the sort."

"Well, the rotter!" gasped Manners.

"I'm thundering glad we licked Greyfriars!" said Tom grimly. "But I'm not the fellow to overlook this. I'm going to have a reckoning with Knox, and I'm not waiting for it!"

"Better wait until you feel better," said Lowther. "Man, you look positively ill!"

"I'm going to have a settlement now!" snapped Tom. "You fellows can please yourself about coming!" he added bitterly. "Perhaps you don't want to upset the triumph of the hero of the hour, though!"

With that Tom Merry strode from the room, looking very far indeed from his usual cheery self. Monty and Manners looked at each other and whistled. It was rare they saw Tom in such a bitter, savage mood as this.

But they followed, determined to back him up, come what might. Percy Knox was not in his study, nor were Racke & Co. The Terrible Three tracked them down at last to the junior Common-room.

They were lounging round the fire among a crowd of fellows, all of them excitedly discussing the great match. In the centre of them, hands in trousers-pockets, feet apart, stood Percy Knox, his back to the blazing fire. It was only too clear that he felt himself monarch of all he surveyed. He seemed to be on the best of terms with the crowd in the Common-room for all that.

Tom Merry's face flushed as he sighted him, and he strode over to his enemy.

There was a yell from the rest of the juniors.

"Here he is!"

"Here's Merry at last! Where the dickens have you been, Merry?"

"Sneaking off, and leaving the team in the lurch!" said Racke. "If it hadn't been for old Knox—"

"School, would have been hopelessly licked," added Crooke.

"What happened, Tom?" asked Talbot quietly.

Tom Merry planted himself before Percy Knox, his eyes only showing the rage that consumed him. The rest of the fellows stared at his white, haggard face in some astonishment. Knox eyed him quite calmly and coolly.

"You cad!" said Tom thickly. "Have you told these fellows of the dirty trick you played me?"

"I don't know what you are talking about, Merry!" said Knox, in pretended surprise.

"I'll tell you then—chiefly for the benefit of these other chaps," said Tom.

And he told of his strange adventures that afternoon. The story caused a sensation in the Common-room.

"And you expect us to swallow that yarn?" said Knox, raising his eyebrows. "Have you any proof of this? And why on earth should you think I had a hand in it?"

"Have you got that note that was supposed to be from me, Talbot?" demanded Tom.

"I'm afraid I chucked it away—goodness knows where!" said Talbot, frowning.

"And I chucked away the note I got from Kildare—or that I believed was from Kildare!" said Tom, biting his lips with vexation.

"And you've no proof of your yarn?" laughed Percy Knox.

"He can easily write another," said Crooke, grinning.

"You can see the state I'm in, and you can see the state of my wrists," said Tom. "And Lowther and Manners know I had a note telling me to see Kildare. It's no good coming the innocent game, Knox! You played the whole trick to get my place in the match, you impudent rascal!"

Knox minor looked serious.

"That's rather a strong statement to make, Merry," he said. "I can very easily explain how I came to be in the team. I got a note from you—I believed it was from you, anyway—telling me I was to report to Talbot to play. You said in the note you had heard I was a good man at the game."

"Where is that note?"

"Goodness knows!" said Percy Knox coolly. "I just handed that to Talbot. If somebody else has played a trick on you, you can scarcely blame me, can you? And, in any case," said Percy steadily, "I won the match for St. Jim's. Fellows have told me it wouldn't have been won if I had not played."

Tom Merry flushed crimson. Only he saw the bitter enmity and hatred in Percy Knox's eyes. In that moment Tom realised for the first time what the new fellow had in his mind. He was "out" to do Tom all the harm he could—possibly to shift him from the leadership of the junior

school at St. Jim's. He had already scored heavily, Tom realised. His chums had told him of the enthusiasm of the crowd—of the wild scenes as they carried the hero of the hour shoulder-high.

It was bitter knowledge to Tom. He was far from being a jealous junior; but he was human, and, moreover, the way in which Knox had attained his objective made the junior skipper inwardly seethe with fury.

"You—you howling cad!" said Tom thickly. "You can deny it as much as you like; but I know it was you and your shady pals who kidnapped me. And I'm going to smash you to a jelly for it!"

"Really?" said Percy Knox coolly. "That's good news! I've been wanting to have a go at you since my first day here. What about settling the matter now—with gloves, or without?"

"I don't feel up to scrapping now," said Tom. "I'll meet you where and how you like to-morrow!"

"To-morrow never comes!" jeered Racke.

"That's it, Racke," smiled Knox, though he was far too keen a youth not to know that Tom did not funk him. "He's always got an excuse why he should not fight me. I think I'll settle the matter myself."

With that he stepped swiftly forward and struck Tom a flat handed blow across the face. It was a nasty smack, and it left a vivid patch on the white skin.

"How's that, Merry?" asked Knox calmly. "What about having it out now?"

"You howling cad!" shouted Lowther. "You can see Merry's ill, and that's why you're provoking him now, you sweep!"

"Don't let the cad get what he wants!" said Manners, his own eyes blazing. "Can't you see his game?"

Tom Merry could see it; but he was not in a reasonable

He shook his head, laughed aloud, and came on again. "Steady Tom!" called Lowther anxiously.

He felt instinctively that Tom was beaten already. There was no mistaking the fatigue and lack of energy in Tom's movements, despite that last jab.

"Wake up, Tommy, you born idiot!" bawled Grundy. "What in thunder is the matter with the chap?" he asked all and sundry. "Wake up, for goodness' sake, or let someone else have a go!"

There was a laugh—apparently the fact that he had already been licked by Percy Knox made no difference to the great George Alfred; he was quite ready to go on again.

As a matter of fact, the blunt and good-hearted Grundy was in a state of agony lest Tom Merry should be "licked" by Knox. At every blow registered on Tom's anatomy Grundy winced as though it had landed on his own.

He yelled repeatedly, and appealed to Tom to "wake up" until the rest of the juniors had to threaten to throw him out neck and crop if he made any more row. There was always a certain amount of noise proceeding from the Common-room in the evenings; but Grundy's powerful voice was making the noise a trifle too risky.

Crash!

Tom Merry was down, sent there by a powerful drive in return for a light body blow from Tom that Knox secretly felt.

Monty Lowther groaned and bent over him.

"Chuck it, Tommy!" he pleaded. "You're no more fit to scrap with him than old Gussy was the other night. You advised Gussy to chuck it then; why not take your own blessed advice now?"

"I'm going on," said Tom in a panting, husky whisper. "I'm not letting that cad think I funk him any longer!"

Tom staggered to his feet again.

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME!

"TOM MERRY'S ENEMY!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

A Grand Extra-Long Story of the boys of St. Jim's, dealing with the rivalry between Tom Merry and the newcomer to the Shell, Percy Knox.

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mood. He scarcely heard his chum's words. Without a word he peeled off his coat.

"It'll do in here now as well as anywhere or any time," he said, his eyes glinting dangerously. "Look that door somebody, and shove those forms back!"

"Chuck it, Tommy!" muttered Jack Blake. "Don't be an ass!"

"Bai Jove! Don't allow the schemin' wottah to dwav you!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus anxiously.

Tom took no notice. He flung his coat away and turned back his sleeves. Percy Knox did the same unconcernedly. He was certainly a very cool customer.

Tom's chums groaned; they knew of old that look on his face, and they knew it was useless to plead with him.

A ring was formed, gloves were produced, and the rest of the juniors crowded eagerly round. They did not think Tom was unwell at all—they took his white, strained face for passion. Scarcely one of them expected Knox minor to prove the victor. Tom Merry had the reputation of being the best boxer in the Lower School.

Only Tom's own personal chums were anxious. They knew he had a bad headache, and they knew he was chilled yet and far from being in a fit condition for a gruelling fight with a fellow like Percy Knox.

But it had to be—they saw that, and they could only hope for the best.

The first round opened with a rush on the part of Knox minor. That crafty youth knew full well that Tom was far from being at his best—indeed, he had forced the fight now for that very reason. And he was going to rush things now for that same reason.

Tom Merry sprang back, and side-stepped, sending out a swift right as he did so—at least, he intended it to be swift; to the spectators and to Knox himself it seemed pathetically slow.

Tom's glove slid harmlessly past Knox's ducking head, and an iron-bad fist smacked home under Tom's ear.

It almost rocked Tom off his feet, and there was a gasp. But the junior managed to steady himself with a desperate effort, and he countered swiftly—with more success this time, for the blow caught Knox a nasty jab in the jaw.

"Come on!" said Percy Knox tauntingly. "Come and take a few more prize packets, Merry!"

He backed carelessly before Tom's savage rush; he regretted his carelessness the next moment, for Tom beat back his guard by sheer fury, and a right rocked him on his feet, and then Tom's left connected with his jaw with a smack that resounded throughout the big room.

Crash!

For the first time Percy Knox was down—and he went down hard. A murmur of delight went up from Tom's supporters.

"Do it again, Tommy!" yelled Grundy. "Oh, good man!"

Tom tried to do it again. He came on with another savage attack, forgetting his fatigue and aching head. It was forgetfulness that cost him dear.

Blow after furious blow Tom registered on Knox's face, head, and body, and Knox backed, defending himself desperately before the sheer fury of Tom's attack.

"Steady, Tom!" cried Manners.

He saw that Tom was wasting precious energy—and Tom himself saw it when too late.

Quite suddenly he seemed to falter, and his attack petered out feebly. A nasty jab stung Tom's lips, and another struck him on the temple. Knox laughed, and came on like a whirlwind.

Smack, smack, smack, smack!

Right and left, the new fellow drove Tom before him, dazed, bemused, and utterly helpless almost to defend himself from a single blow.

"Tom's whacked!" groaned Manners.

"Chuck it away!" said Blake, his brow dark.

"He was whacked before he started," said Cardew grimly. "He was an ass to fight at all."

Tom himself was realising that fact only too well now. The end came swiftly.

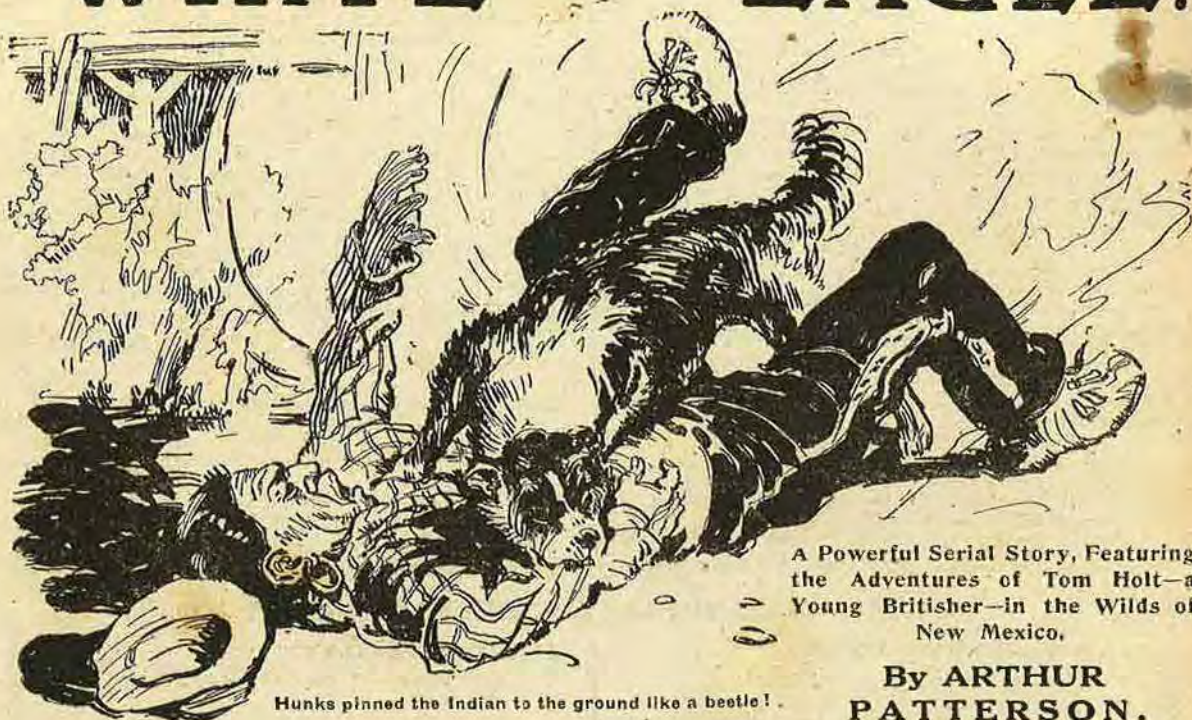
Backing stumbly before the hurricane attack, defending himself with almost ludicrous efforts, Tom Merry suddenly caught his heel in a hole in the linoleum.

(Continued on page 28.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 585.

SOME DOG! It doesn't matter to Hunks what rank a person holds if he's trespassing on his friend's property—even the chief of the Apache nation is humbled in the dust when the sagacious dog catches him prowling round Calumet Ranch!

WHITE EAGLE!



A Powerful Serial Story, Featuring
the Adventures of Tom Holt—a
Young Britisher—in the Wilds of
New Mexico.

By **ARTHUR
PATTERSON.**

Badger Head!

A BRITISH dog, of course, would have leaped the corral fence, attacked the stranger, and called attention to his presence in a way which would have resounded for a square mile. But Hunks knew far too much to do this. Men in his country were armed. Any assault must be carried out without warning before, for if the man were white, either of his hands could pull that wicked contraption which lived in his belt or breast; or, if he were red, the not less evil knife concealed on the hip. So, with ears cocked and nostrils aquiver, Hunks kept rigidly still, listening to the soft tread of the stranger, and trying to imagine what he was going to do, and what, therefore, he—Hunks—should do, with due regard to his own personal safety, to prevent the man from doing it.

The corral was square, and the stranger was approaching one corner of it. When he turned that corner he would be facing the back premises of Calumet itself. Was he going to the house? Probably. But to get there he must pass over an open space of at least a hundred yards, where there was no cover. No Indian would do that, Hunks knew very well, if he were there with evil intent; nor would he pass along the other side of the corral, for that would bring him within sight of the upper windows of the house.

He would work back the way he was coming now, creep to the opposite end, and make a circuit among dwarf bushes

of oak scrub, long tufts of grass, and a growth of dwarf cedar which ran up near the back of the stables. In that tract of waste land Hunks knew he could follow with ease, take the man by surprise, pin him to the ground, and then inform the authorities.

The stranger followed the course Hunks expected, and when he arrived at the end opposite the stables he broke away into the bushes. It was now time for Hunks to take action, but this required great caution and skill. Well, he knew what Indian ears were like. If he made the least sound the man would hear, and, being an Indian, conceal himself instantly, a result which would be very serious, for it would probably mean that when they met he would see Hunks first! For a minute Hunks kept still, waiting until all sound of the Indian's progress had ceased.

Then, running swiftly back a few paces, he bounded at the corral fence, cleared it by an inch, and landed on the other side upon a heap of soft sand. As he rose above the fence he caught sight of the man some fifty paces ahead. He was standing behind a small cedar, gazing intently at the stables with his back to Hunks. He did not turn, or show the least sign that he had heard the dog alight, so the pup, slinking behind the bushes and winding his way in and out with a stealth which would have done credit to a coyote, came well within striking distance before the Indian heard anything at all.

WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY.

TOM HOLT, a sturdy young Britisher of seventeen who has lived for a time amongst a tribe of Apache Indians in New Mexico.
BLACK HAWK, chief of the tribe.
WHITE CAT, his son.
COLONEL CHAPIN, a wealthy rancher.
SADIE, his daughter.
HUNKS and **MALINKA**, Tom's dog and horse respectively.

Tom soon endears himself to the Chapins and Calumet Ranch becomes his new home. But Tom doesn't forget his friends the Indians. On the contrary he does much to pull down the barriers of racial hatred that

exist between the Whites and the Reds. Unknowingly, however, Tom is being used by Black Hawk to collect information about the white settlements, which the Indians plan to raid next spring. The colonel, like most of the cowboys in Serrita, has good cause to hate the Redskins, but his views change when his daughter is caught in a forest fire, for the Redskins are the first to offer their services. Sadie is saved, thanks mainly to Tom, White Cat and his Indians. The colonel, eager to show his gratitude, throws open the doors of Calumet Ranch to Black Hawk's tribe. Next morning Hunks discovers a Redskin prowling in a suspicious manner in the vicinity of the ranch. With every sense alert, Hunks watches the trespasser.

(Now read on.)

Then the dog launched his attack. The whole weight of his body struck the Indian on the shoulder and swept him to the ground. As he fell Hunks gripped his right arm below the elbow, planted both front paws upon the chest, plumped his body down upon the stomach, and pinned the man to the ground like a beetle. Hunks made no sound, nor did the Indian. They struggled furiously in silence in a cloud of dust; the man trying to throw off the dog, at the same time feeling round his belt with his left hand to pull a revolver.

But Hunks had seen that weapon, and, though the sight of a pistol in an Indian's belt greatly astonished him, he was ready, and, changing his hold from arm to throat, and thrusting his body upon the weapon, began to choke the Apache into insensibility. He would have done this, though his antagonist was a powerful man, had not a voice he loved better than all others, Tom's excepted, yelled to him to let go.

It was White Cat, who, if the truth be told, was concealed not far away watching the man as curiously as Hunks himself. The dog's attack nearly scared White Cat out of his life, for he knew who this Indian was, and, flinging himself bodily upon the pup, he dragged him off.

The fallen man was upon his feet in an instant. Neither by sign nor word did he show the least agitation. Standing quietly erect, he drew the revolver he carried with the swift, easy movement of a panther raising his paw to strike.

"Let go!" he said in Indian to White Cat, in a cool tone, taking aim at the pup's heart.

But White Cat did not obey. He ordered Hunks to lie down, at the same time deliberately shielding the dog with his own body.

"Chief, this is White Eagle's dog," he replied, in a low voice, respectful but very firm. "His life is worth a man's."

The face of the stranger stiffened in a peculiar way. His eyes, which were very deep-set and, unlike those of most Apaches, large and a light yellowish grey, glared with a tigerish expression, his upper lip lifting at the same time and baring prominent teeth.

"Huh! Is it worth mine? Let go!"

But White Cat did not move, though he shivered at the look he saw upon the chief's face. Hunks had obeyed, and was on the ground gazing up into his old friend's face with a look of perfect confidence.

"Promise, chief, that you will not shoot!" the boy gasped. "I promise," was the reply, "that you shall be put over the fire for this. Let go!"

White Cat breathed heavily. It was the worst punishment, except death, known, and this man would have no mercy. But something in himself he could not understand made him cling to Hunks.

"No!" he muttered. "No! White Eagle is my friend." The face of the chief changed. It had been brutal before; now it became that of a fiend.

"You dare!"

He deliberately turned his weapon upon the boy; but before he could pull the trigger a voice exclaimed:

"What does all this mean? White Cat, who is this man?"

It was Sadie. She had slept badly, and was out very early for a walk, and had come upon the scene unheard by either of the men. Hunks had known of her presence, but his instinct warned him not to stir while that Indian's pistol was out of holster.

The arrival of the girl changed everything. The weapon went back to sheath as swiftly as it had been drawn, and White Cat let Hunks go.

"It is Badger Head," he answered her, outwardly as cool, though the Indian power of self-control, as if nothing had happened at all—or were to happen, "the greatest chief of the Apache nation. Hunks not know him, and fight. Chief—"

He turned slowly, all expression gone from his face. "She Yellow Flower, daughter of Senor Colonel Chapin."

Indians do not salute women; and Badger Head, by temperament as well as by right of his rank, would have scorned such a thing; but he was fully aware of the importance of this slight girl.

"It is very well," he said solemnly, crossing his hands on his heart, "that I meet Yellow Flower. She is a good young friend of the Apache nation."

Sadie's reply to this polite speech was a curt little nod. She was not in the least impressed with the greatest chief of the Apache nation. As a Western girl she could not blame him for defending himself with a deadly weapon against Hunks, and she was totally unaware of what had passed between the chief and White Cat. But Sadie's eyes were sharp, and she had suspicions.

"Good-morning!" was all she said. Then turning to White Cat: "Why did Hunks attack your chief? He loves Indians."

White Cat found this a difficult question to answer. "Badger Head stranger—" he began. But Sadie caught him up.

"You know that is not the reason. Hunks only flies at— at those he doesn't like."

She was going to say "bad men," but remembered in time that the stranger knew English. White Cat discreetly held his tongue, and the situation became strained. But Sadie was equal to it.

"You wish to see my father," she said to Badger Head. "He is still at rest; but the servants shall tell him you are here. Come to the house. You too, White Cat. We will have some breakfast."

Sadie turned and walked away, taking it for granted that the Indians would follow. But Badger Head did not stir, and White Cat saw that he was deeply offended at the girl's tone. Then a thought seemed to strike him, and he moved up to her, his eyes travelling over her face and figure with an expression White Cat did not at all like.

There was a self-consequence now about Badger Head: an air of possession, offensive in every way, that made White Cat grit his teeth.

They had passed the stables, locked up and deserted, for the boys had leave from Sandy Bowker to take things easily after their long night's labours, when Hunks whined and gave a glad bound forward, and round the bend of the drive came Tom. Sadie waved a joyous greeting, but full of the responsibility of conveying the Indian chief, did not run to meet him, while Badger Head, whether by accident or design, pressed even more closely towards her as they advanced.

Now Tom, like Sadie, had suffered from a bad night, and though refreshed by the morning air, was not quite himself, and the sight of this Apache almost touching Sadie displeased him exceedingly. Striding up, he took the girl's hands, which were outstretched to meet his, when she saw the expression in his eyes, and, gently drawing her to one side, he met the Apache squarely.

"Your business?" he said sharply in Indian.

Badger Head returned Tom's glare with a look of scornful indifference.

"I seek the master of this ranch. You are not he."

"I am his friend," was the reply, cool as the Indian's, and as biting. "My name is White Eagle."

There seemed very little in the words. Sadie saw nothing except that Tom was out of temper over something, but they gave Badger Head a very severe shock. He had not the least idea that such a lad as this—for Tom was very youthful in appearance still—could be the Englishman whose name was on the lips of every warrior of the nation. The news almost stunned him, and had he not been an Indian he would have been lost in confusion. But an Apache never allows himself to appear confused in any circumstances, and Badger Head, whatever his moral courage might be, was a clever man. In response to Tom's words he gave a slight exclamation as of pleasure, and then, with an entire change of manner, touched him lightly on the shoulder with one finger, and answered in English:

"Huh! The oldest chief of the Apache Nation greets the youngest. My brother!"

Badger Head had a deep, resonant voice, far more musical than Black Hawk's. His words, too, were well articulated, and now, as he held out the other hand with a gesture full of graceful dignity and welcome, Tom had no choice but to take it with the best grace he could command. But Badger Head did not stop there. Turning from Tom to Sadie he bowed to her now as respectfully as if she were a princess.

"Yellow Flower, this chief, White Eagle, is the bravest in our nation. One day he will be head of all, and unite in brotherhood Red men and White throughout the world. May I now come and meet that great man, your father?"

Sadie nodded gaily. She rather wanted to laugh, for the change in this man was so funny, and to hear Tom spoken of in such language was a scream. But there was something about this Indian so masterful and altogether different from the others, that she felt his words must be taken seriously.

"We'll just come right in. Father will be very glad to see you." Then she noticed something. "White Cat, why are you going away?"

The boy had retired some paces in obedience to a look Badger Head had given him. Sadie had not seen that glance, but she noticed that White Cat was looking very miserable.

"Come with us. I insist!"

Then as the boy shook his head she turned to Tom.

"Oh! Tell him to come. What is the matter?"

Tom was asking himself the same question, but he had seen Badger Head's signal, and knew that White Cat must be in disgrace.

(Be prepared for some amazing developments in next week's thrilling instalment of this powerful serial, chums!)

OUT FOR TROUBLE!

(Continued from page 25.)

In a flash Percy Knox had darted in closer, and his right and left shot out in two smashing blows to the face.

Tom rocked, and crashed down; and he remained down. It was ended—the rottenest, most unsatisfactory scrap, as Lovison put it, that any of the juniors had witnessed.

"Licked!" snorted George Alfred Grundy. "Licked to the wide, by jingo! Here, lemme have another go at the rotter!"

And George Alfred flung off his jacket and would have "gone for" the victorious and grinning Percy had not a dozen fellows dragged him back by sheer force.

"You awful idiot!" snorted Wilkins. "Hasn't he had enough as well as Merry? Where's the game in scrapping with a chap who's only just gone through a stiff mill. Scrap with him when he's as fresh as yourself if you must, you footling ass!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Grundy. "I never thought of that!"

And Grundy put on his jacket again.

Monty Lowther and Manners, with Blake & Co., helped Tom Merry to the nearest bath-room, and there they helped him to bathe his injuries and to clean himself up. Tom scarcely said a word to any of them. He knew he had asked for the licking—had been a fool to take on such a tough handful as Percy Knox in his present enfeebled state. With a punishing headache, a cold brewing, and stiff and aching from his unpleasant imprisonment in the icy vaults, Tom should never have tackled such a task; and he knew it.

What would happen now, he wondered. Knox had licked him in a stand-up fight—a thing Tom knew he should have avoided at all costs. The fellow was undoubtedly out to do him all the injury he could—to ruin his prestige and popularity in the House and school. He had already scored on the footer field—scored heavily. And he had now licked him—licked the best fighter in the Lower School. After this his swank and brag would be utterly unbearable. Moreover, his possibilities of making mischief would be trebled. He would feel himself "cock-of-the-walk" indeed now.

Tom Merry felt very sick and very dismayed about it all. He would have been still more disturbed in mind had he

heard the conversation in Racke's study some minutes later.

After treating the assembled juniors to a thrilling account of his last fight at his former school—Knox did not say where it was—he had strolled out of the Common-room with the gleeful and admiring Racke & Co., for a quiet smoke behind a "sported oak." Seated in the best easy-chair, showing few signs of his combat, Knox puffed at his cigarette contentedly.

"So you've done it, Percy!" grinned Aubrey Racke. "By hat! I never thought you would!"

"Nor did I, old chap," said Serope.

"I knew I'd get him sooner or later," remarked Percy, blowing out a cloud of smoke. "I generally do get what I go for, I might tell you!"

"You've licked the best man in the Lower School," said Racke admiringly. "You've licked him at scrapping, and you've shown you can lick him on the footer field!"

"I meant to," said Percy Knox complacently. "And I haven't finished yet. I'm rather ambitious, you know!"

Racke eyed him curiously, and took out his cigarette. "Look here," he grinned. "What's your little game, Knox? You aren't going to all this dashed trouble just to get your own back out of Merry because you hate him."

"My game," said Knox, blowing out a cloud of smoke. "Well, I don't mind telling you that, Racke. As I say, I'm ambitious. I'm out to get Merry booted from his job as captain of the Lower School, and as captain of footer and cricket here! Killing two birds with one stone, you know. I shall pay out that pie-faced sweep, and I shall also pave the way for myself to step into his shoes, what?"

"You've got a nerve for a new chap, who's scarcely been here five minutes," grinned Racke.

"I've already done quite a lot since I came, what?" said Percy Knox coolly. "I'm going to do much more, and you kids can help me. Are you game?"

"What-ho!" chortled Aubrey Racke.

"Yes, rather!" said Crooke and Serope together.

"That's good enough, then!" grinned Percy.

And crossing his legs, Percy Knox puffed out another cloud of cigarette smoke. He smiled and watched the circling wreaths of smoke ascend. In imagination he already saw himself the junior skipper of St. Jim's; but whether he would ever see himself in that coveted position in reality remained to be seen.

THE END.

(Tom Merry is up against a formidable rival in Percy Knox—how formidable he has yet to learn. Mind you read next week's grand story of the Chums of St. Jim's—It's a corker!)

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