

CHAPTER XVI

At last they reached the bend. The car from the village garage, which Mr. Bailey had sent to meet them, turned the corner, and the river and the glittering marshes lay before them.

"Is that the sea over there?" said Peter.

"No, that's only the river. It's high tide now. You've got to be careful when it's low—springs particularly," he said, thinking of the last day of the Easter holidays.

"That's old Fergus on the quay. Splendid old bird, when he's in a good temper. That's our post office and sockshop and fourteen other things together."

"It's a good view," said Peter.

"I suppose it is," said Denis. The car bounded over the last hundred yards of rough gravel road and lurched between the gate posts. He felt as if he were discovering his home for the first time and he longed to show Peter everything at once. He wondered if his father and mother would be waiting. A last turn and there they were by the porch. Mrs. Bailey had heard the car when still a mile away. "I think I'll go into Barford and meet them," she had said after breakfast; but Mr. Bailey had discouraged her. "It may be late and Handsome will only charge you both ways if you do, my dear." So Mrs. Bailey had foregone the thrill of waiting for the engine's whistle at Barford level crossing and had listened for the car instead. Now she played with her fingers and tried to smile calmly. She shook hands with Peter and gave Denis a kiss.

"Very glad to see you, Lord Ockley," said Mr. Bailey. "Not much of a journey, I'm afraid. How are you, Denis?"

"Jolly well, thanks, father. Hullo, Joan." He gave her a peck on the cheek and they trooped indoors.

“ Shall I tip the chauffeur, father ? ” said Denis, when the kitbags had been dumped in the hall.

“ No, no, ” said Mr. Bailey, “ that’s all right. ” He went out again, fumbling.

In the drawing-room the cushions and sofa had been smoothed and the antimacassars set at nice angles. Denis threw himself down in a corner and stared at his dusty, corps boots and puttees. He unbuttoned his tunic and put his thumbs in his braces. “ By Jove, I’m hot, ” he said. His mother and Joan were showing Peter the views from the window.

“ Well, what sort of a journey did you have, Denis ? ” said his father.

“ Not bad, father. Rotten slow train, of course. ”

“ Yes, I suppose so. I say, dor.’t ruck up your mother’s sofa if you can help it. Your boots are a bit dirty for the drawing-room, aren’t they, old man ? ” he said kindly. “ Hadn’t you better change them before lunch ? You’ve got a quar’er of an hour. ”

“ All right, father. In a minute. We got up at five this morning. I haven’t had a bath for ten days. I slept in my corps clothes last night, so that I could get up ready dressed. ”

“ Really ? ” said his father. “ Did you, by Jove. Be a good fellow and do your tunic up in the drawing-room. You run along and change, Denis. You must be hot. ”

Denis buttoned up his tunic and went upstairs. He was very tired and the dust and sweat seemed suddenly unpleasant. Slowly he unwound his puttees without bothering to roll them on his legs. They had been good companions these last ten days ; but now they were frayed yards of thick damp stuff. He threw them in the corner for Annie the maid to look after. From the room below came a murmurous hum.

“ Yes, it’s much the same in Scotland, sir, ” said Peter. “ They won’t grow by the sea. My father imported a new sort last summer, but they were no better than the last. ”

“ Really ? ” said Mr. Bailey. “ Do you hear that, Mary ? ”

Lord Ockley says they can't get raspberries to grow either. How about loganberries? They thrive here. I can never understand why."

"It's very curious, sir," said Peter.

"Do loganberries grow with you?" said Mr. Bailey.

"Fairly well, sir," said Peter.

"Do you hear that, Mary? Lord Ockley says that loganberries do well with them. I must tell the gardener that."

"Would you like to wash before lunch?" said Mrs. Bailey. "My husband will show you." Mr. Bailey frowned slightly and led the way to the lavatory. "Yes, it must be the sea air that stops them growing," he said.

During lunch Mr. Bailey asked questions about camp. He himself had a fount of amusing stories, but he was a good listener and never tired of adding to his wide knowledge.

"What do you think, Lord Ockley, is the real reason why Eton and Magnafields are such bad neighbours?"

"I'm not certain, sir," said Peter. "They think we are superior because we didn't ask for a return match at cricket, I believe."

"They're cads, anyhow," said Denis.

"How do you mean?" said Mr. Bailey, ignoring Denis.

"They asked us for a match, sir, and we got them out for about 13, and so next year we didn't ask them back."

"Quite right," said Denis. "They're not gentlemen."

"Aren't they, really?" said Joan.

"Now then, Denis," said his mother, "you mustn't say things like that."

"Well, they're not, mother."

"I see; and they think Eton insulted them?" said Mr. Bailey.

"I suppose so, sir."

"Yes, I see. It's very unfortunate."

"We let their tents down on the last night of camp, didn't we, Peter?" said Denis.

Peter laughed impartially.

"Tell us more about that," said Joan, who felt there was a good story lurking in the background.

"Have some more tart, Lord Ockley," said Mrs. Bailey. "You must be hungry if you got up so early."

"Do you mind if I do?" said Peter. "It's awfully good." He handed up his plate and Mrs. Bailey made a quick mental rearrangement of the evening meal.

After lunch, Mrs. Bailey suggested a short nap. The excitement of getting up early and the journey home had subsided and they were both tired and sleepy. Denis showed Peter his room and fell asleep on his own bed. When he next opened his eyes it was tea time. His mother and father were alone in the drawing-room. Joan had gone out to a tennis party. The two hours' sleep in his bedroom had put a gap between Anglersmead and his life of the last fortnight. Tidworth and Eton were already far away. Eager to begin the holidays, he suggested that they should all go down to the quay and inspect the *Cormorant*.

"You'll find it at its moorings," said Mr. Bailey. "The centreboard is done and I have had it scraped and varnished, though you will have to take down the sails and oars yourselves."

"Thanks, awfully, father. Will you come down, too? We might all go for a short row. The tide will be too low for sailing."

Mr. Bailey hesitated. "No, I have got some writing to do. Another time. Perhaps your mother would come if you asked her."

"I don't think I will to-day," said Mrs. Bailey. "You take Lord Ockley out yourself. I've got the whole holidays for a sail." She smiled at Peter.

"Oh, come on, mum," said Denis.

"Yes, do come too," said Peter.

"All right then, if you really want me to. I'll just go and put on my hat and some thin shoes. You go on."

"No, we'll wait for you," said Denis. He ran through to the outhouse to collect the oars, singing to himself. The holidays had started well.

The tide was out when they reached the quay. Green seaweed trailed from the timbers of the derelict wharf, like the manes of unkempt horses, and the steps slid away from sight into the water. From the sluice gates at the mouth of the river the marsh stream foamed and frothed in a final fluster to mingle with the salt tide ebbing to the sea. A spit of red gold sand jutted from the shore to form a pool for small yachts and fishermen's boats. On the hard itself were narrow grey boats with wicked barrels, swathed in tarpaulin. In the small hours of the season the Speenmouth fishermen coaxed them through the tortuous lanes of the reed beds, and with a single shot brought forty or fifty duck fluttering to the water. Now they lay idle on the hard, slim and fine as greyhounds, but dour looking.

"There's the *Cormorant*," Denis pointed to a stocky craft, spinning at her anchor in the swirls of the tide. Her varnished carvel caught the rays of the sun. She swung off her moorings and came bounding to her chain like a shy colt at the paddock gate.

"That one there?" said Peter.

"She's not much to look at," said Denis, trying to remember exactly how he had described the *Cormorant* when at Eton; "but she's damned good in a stiff breeze, isn't she, mum?"

Mrs. Bailey smiled. "She's a nice little craft. Are you a wetbob, Lord Ockley?"

"You won't notice it, I'm afraid," said Peter. "Have I got to sit in there, Denis?"

"Yes, it belongs to an old fellow called Bovney Jackson. He's an awfully decent sort and lets me use it."

"I'd like to see him in a rigger," said Peter.

"Bovney could sail anything. He taught me sailing. You watch." Denis threw the oars into a cockle shell with square ends and pushed it into the water. He propelled it with a single oar from the stern. In two more voyages he brought his mother and Peter on board and they started off down the river. Peter at bow kept prodding Denis in the back in efforts to match his quick, sharp stroke. Mrs.

Bailey in the stern held the tiller and looked away at the green spear beds.

"I think I'm better on the Thames," said Peter. "I prefer the bank holiday style."

"Don't worry about your legs," said Denis. "Quick jerks with the arms." The bow surged forward with short rushes, and Jack Hood, the poacher, paddling up along the flats, laughed to himself.

"Good evening, Master Denis," he bawled across the river. "Glad to see you back again."

"Good evening, Jack," said Denis. "How's the fishing?" The poacher shook a fist and paddled on.

"You're quite a character on the river," said Peter.

"They all know Denis," said Mrs. Bailey. "Jack Hood asked me last week when he was coming home."

"Old money grubber," said Denis. "But he won't get any more now I've got the centreboard."

"He's very fond of you, really," said his mother. "So is Fergus."

"We don't think," said Denis. "Come on, Peter, let's give her ten in racing style. Are you ready?"

The postman, returning from his daily row to Fanny Castle, hung on his oars and watched the *Cormorant*. "So master Denis is back," he said to himself. "The river will be livelier now."

The Baileys had supper at seven-thirty; but in honour of the guest the meal had been promoted to dinner and the time advanced to seven-forty-five. Mr. Bailey wore his dinner jacket, though he told the boys not to charge. Joan looked very grown up in a frock of apple green with more than a trace of powder on her face.

After the soup, Denis got up to change the plates. But Annie came into the room. His mother seemed to be talking with unusual animation, while the parlourmaid clattered the plates one on the other and bore them off to the pantry. In came Annie with a plate of fish, and Denis saw the menu written in round and flowing script:

Soup
Fillits of Place
Roast chicken & Bread Sorce
French Beans & Roast Potatos
Trifle

He caught Joan's eye and winked. Her eyebrows were raised in understanding. He sat back gravely and waited to be served. By Jove, his mother had risen to the occasion. And so had his father. Mr. Bailey had strolled over to the sideboard, where several bottles stood ready. "Do you drink wine, Lord Ockley?" he said casually. "Or there's ginger-beer or ginger-alc."

"Ginger-beer, please," said Peter.

Mr. Bailey opened a bottle and put it on the table. He paused with another in his hand. "Denis?"

Should he accept, Denis wondered. He drank water as a rule at Anglersmead, but Peter might feel uncomfortable if he drank alone.

"Ginger-beer please, father," he said. Mr. Bailey laid the second bottle firmly on the table.

"I think I'll have a glass of port, Hubert," said Mrs. Bailey.

"What, now, Mary?"

"Yes; it's good for my cold." Mr. Bailey poured out a glass and put the decanter back in the cupboard. He hesitated; then he poured a little whisky into his own glass and filled it up with water. Like Denis, he disliked the taste of whisky, but drank it on occasions.

There were four rooms on the top floor of Anglersmead. The first two looked out across the marshes and communicated with each other by a door, which was usually locked. But to-night it was open. Peter was brushing his teeth, when Denis pushed his way in.

"Got everything you want?" he asked. He had heard his father put the question. It was part of the ritual of hosts towards their guests. Mr. Bailey had already asked Peter if he knew the geography of the place—a phrase,

whose significance had struck him, when Lord Periton pointed to the closet door of Halkin Square and remarked, "That's the geography in there." Denis had wanted to laugh at its pompous absurdity till he realised it was the proper way of addressing the lavatory. To-day he had felt proud of his father for his easy allusion to the geography of the place.

Peter put away his toothbrush and admired himself in the mirror. "I say, your people are great sports, Denis." He undid the neck of his pyjamas and threw himself on the bed. "Your father is not half the ogre you make out."

"I'm glad you like them," said Denis.

"I expect he's been a bit of a lad himself in his day," said Peter. Denis digested the possibility and said nothing.

"I like Joan, too," said Peter, "though I'm not so sure that it's mutual. She kept looking at me during dinner as if I was an Archæopterix Lithographicus or another of Wilson's specimens."

"I expect she's afraid of you," said Denis. He had seen his sister's glances at Peter's plate.

"And you have damned good food," said Peter. "That cherry tart at lunch was the best thing I've eaten for a long time. I wish our cook could make one like that."

"You must meet Mrs. Mallard to-morrow. She's a good-natured old hag—except just before lunch or supper."

"Ye-es," said Peter, yawning. "I think I'll go to bed now. I'm damned tired. Wake me up when it's time to get up. Does your father mind if people are late for breakfast?"

"Well, yes, as a matter of fact he does, rather. But the first morning, I don't suppose . . ."

"That's all right. I shall be there in that case. Good night."

"Good night, Peter."

Denis thought of what Peter had said, while undressing. "Great sports." His father "a bit of a lad in his day." It struck him as a combination of the absurd with the irreverent, his father being a lad. His father watching little fluff ball at the Devil's Island cabaret. His father drinking

and smoking cigars in the bar of the Skittles Hotel. His father getting eight up from the head usher. He hadn't been amused when Denis had been swiped. Denis decided to pluck up courage and ask his father if he had been a bit of a lad in his day and what he had done at school. He was a grown up now, but presumably he had been a boy in his youth. And why shouldn't he have been a lad? The way he dealt easily with the drink question at dinner, for instance. Peter was right; his people were sports and he was at last beginning to appreciate them. Only it had needed Peter's presence to bring out their sportsmanship. Could they go on being sports, when Peter was gone and four course dinner had returned to two course supper? About the ginger-beer, he must understand that he hadn't taken unfair advantage of the opportunity. It was only to make Peter feel at home, and he was quite willing to revert to water when he had gone. The question was, could he appreciate his people without ginger-beer, and a dinner jacket, and four courses and a guest in the house? It ought to be possible. "I say, father, I bet you were a bit of a lad in your day."

"What exactly do you mean by lad, Denis?" he could hear his father ask. He would have to put it some other way.

In the next few days Peter went through a varied programme of entertainment. Sometimes it was obvious that the plan had been carefully hatched, such as the Anglers-mead tennis party. More often Mrs. Bailey suggested, as if the idea had just formed, that they should take their tea down to Fanny, or go over to the Spinnakers for the afternoon. By her veiled generalship she succeeded in filling every moment without appearing to manage things too much.

She had sent out invitations for the tennis party, when Denis was at camp, and most of the neighbourhood turned up by three o'clock. The county did not arrive much before tea, but were deplorably eager to get on to the court as soon as possible. Nearly all their rackets had the middle

strings broken, and they served frequent double faults. But they sprawled and chattered about the court with great enthusiasm and laughed at each other when they hit the ball into the next field. Every now and then they straightened their faces and exclaimed, "Come on, let's be serious." And all the while they showed off their London frocks in a variety of elegant postures. When the county were on the court, the neighbourhood sat together and pretended not to watch them.

"How do you like Peter Ockley, Joan?" said Maureen. Denis and Peter were playing a good-humoured double with two of the county. Joan thought for a moment. "He's got nice manners, I think."

"Denis is very fond of him, isn't he?" said Maureen.

"I don't know. I believe so. What do you think of him?"

"He gave me a very good tea at Eton," said Maureen.

"Is that all? Do you like him better than Denis?"

"What an extraordinary question. Of course I don't. I haven't known him so long, for one thing. Denis is much better looking." She bounced her racket on her toes. "Don't you think so, Joan?"

"Good gracious, yes," said Joan. "I think Peter is rather like a girl—except when he eats. His hair is too long."

"And he's so old for his age. He's not like a boy at all."

"And he's so lackadaisical; he never seems to want to do anything."

"I know. Denis has more spunk."

"Wherever did you get that word from? Spunk?"

"A friend of Denis's, who is coming to stay, used it. Spunk or guts. He said they were the same."

"Are you and Denis still friends?" said Joan suddenly.

"Of course we are."

"Only mother is always suggesting that Denis should take Peter over to see you, and Denis . . . but I don't know."

"And Denis what?"

"Nothing. Anyhow, there hasn't been much time lately."

"I see," said Maureen, banging her racket more quickly.

"Good shot," she exclaimed, as Denis made a wild smash, which pitched improbably on the base line.

"I say, I didn't mean that, Maureen," said Joan. "As a matter of fact, I think Denis has changed altogether, since I last saw him. Don't you agree?"

"I suppose he has."

"I mean, he's so much harder and more grown up. I don't understand him as I used to."

"You've changed too, I think," said Maureen. "That's probably why."

"Yes, but Denis and I were such tremendous friends. He even told me about Eton, before I went to Geneva. But he and Peter seem to enjoy having jokes between them, which they don't want to share."

"I expect it's only because we're girls," Maureen smiled. Mrs. Bailey came up to them.

"Will you come in to tea now?" she said. "Joan, will you bring in the others?"

"Right, mother. That's exactly it, Maureen. He seems to despise us."

On the last Saturday of Peter's visit, he and Denis played in a local cricket match. Every week during the holidays Lady Hindley raised a team from the neighbouring youth, and Denis was the most regular if not the most reliable of the Amplehurst players. The portico of Amplehurst Park resembled the Haymarket Theatre and was more important than the interior of the house. On Saturday afternoon a few bicycles and one motor bike leaned against the trees in the front drive. The butler stood waiting just inside the door. Denis and Peter propped their bikes against a bench and followed the butler through a series of rooms, which opened into each other. Owing to small islands and promontories of Victorian furniture it was quite impossible to determine their size. Sometimes they seemed enormous; but more often Denis had a feeling of cramped confinement. Once he had a nightmare, in which he was always running through room after room of Amplehurst and the chairs and china and photographs on their

little tables crept closer towards him. Just when he reached the last room, all the furniture closed in on him, he struck out at a great vase and woke up. But to-day he and Peter steered a clean course through the obstructions and reached the terrace, where the butler left them.

They went down through the pine trees to the cricket field. "There's Denis," said Lady Hindley. "How very nice to see you again, and this is your friend, Lord Ockley. We're so glad you could come. Fred, this is Lord Ockley."

"Good afternoon," said Sir Frederick. He stretched a hand across the scoring book. "Amplehurst has won the toss. Will you go in first, Lord Ockley, and Denis sixth?"

"Thanks, sir," said Peter. "But I'm not much of a bat."

"All right; tenth," said Sir Frederick, and he wrote his name down in a neat, legible hand.

"How's your dear mother, Denis?" said Lady Hindley. "She promised she would bring your father and Joan up to tea and a little tennis afterwards."

"They're all coming, I think," said Denis.

"That's right," said Lady Hindley. "That's excellent."

Denis and Peter sat down on a bench in front of the pavilion. The first two batsmen had gone in. On each side of them were coloured caps and blazers, and their owners looked sideways at Peter's double-breasted lounge coat and soft felt hat. Etonians without a colour had nothing to wear in the holidays to distinguish them. So they dressed as plain country gentlemen and looked down on the complicated caps and blazers of other schools. As soon as they left, they bought O.E. blazers, ties, scarves, braces, and cigarette cases.

Denis introduced Peter to Pat Bloomfield and Dick Lett, who lived in Barford.

"Going to make a lot of runs, Denis, this hols.?" said Pat.

"I expect so. How's your tennis?"

"I've got a new overhead service. It's pretty posh."

"We all know about your service. Eight serves a game, isn't it?"

"Shut up. I got three in yesterday. Stunners."

"The net must have been low," said Denis.

"We were both at the Park, too," Dick Lett was saying to Peter. "Were you in the night attack?"

"Silly sort of affair, wasn't it?" said Peter.

"We had a priceless time. Pat and myself were in a flanking operation, which caught most of Eton asleep and took them prisoners, didn't we, Pat? I forgot you were at Eton, Denis. We did you in nicely."

"You cheated," said Denis. Peter smiled.

"Are you at Magnafields?" he said.

"Yes. Are you at Eton too?" said Dick.

"Yes, I am."

There was a silence. Denis saw the khaki figures at the bar of the Skittles Hotel, their caps pushed back on damp, curly locks. He had utterly forgotten that he knew anyone at Magnafields and he would certainly have denied it at the time.

"We let your tents down on the last night of camp, Dick," he said. There was a shout from the ground and the umpire held up his hand.

Just before tea, Ralph Hindley, the last man for Amplehurst, joined Peter at the wicket, and a few minutes later Peter swept a promising off wide into the hands of mid wicket.

"Ralph has carried his bat again," said Lady Hindley, all smiles. "It's the fourth time running."

"It's wonderful how well he plays, considering his eyes," said a neighbour. Ralph not out, 0; and Peter, 7, returned to the pavilion. "Well done, Ralph," Lady Hindley clapped her hands in front of her. "Hard luck, Lord Ockley; it was very unfair being caught by that Somers boy. He's two years older than anyone here." Peter laughed and threw off his pads and the two teams went in to tea.

Against the end of Amplehurst a large wooden room had been built. The teams and the umpires sat down at separate tables on long benches. Pyramids of cake slabs and mountains of bread and butter lay alternately down the table.

A footman poured out tea from an urn and the cups were passed solemnly from hand to hand. No one spoke. Peter found a plate of currant bread and butter opposite him and set to work. Half way through tea Lady Hindley appeared in the doorway and beamed round on them.

"Don't get up, please. Enjoying yourselves?" she said.

"Yes, thanks, Lady Hindley."

"That's right." She hurried away along the path to the drawing-room. There was no element of doubt in Lady Hindley's existence. She managed cricket matches, week-end parties, and every movement of her own family with the same decision. She subscribed where she ought, and she called on those who deserved it. She admitted neither mistakes nor opposition. Saturday cricket was a part of Amplehurst and she had preserved it through the war. She had a figure which only a grande dame could have lived down. But none of the boys at the two tea tables seemed to notice anything wrong. They had a great respect for Lady Hindley and in their hearts they were rather fond of her.

The parents and grown-ups had a less substantial tea in the drawing-room. Joan told Denis later that she put three cucumber sandwiches into her mouth without thinking. When the Amplehurst team went out to field, the grown-ups were led off to tennis, and the more infirm parents marshalled by Lady Hindley for a game of croquet, which she had a way of pronouncing to rhyme with hockey.

The match ended by the defeat of Amplehurst by two wickets and everybody queued up to say good-bye. Denis watched Dick Lett start his motor bike and splutter off down the drive with Pat Bloomfield on the carrier. It had long been his ambition to have a motor bike of his own. Every week at Eton he read the second-hand mart columns of the motor cycling papers and looked out for the sort of machine he would buy if he had the money. "2½ h.p., lightweight, 2 str., 2 sp. clutch. Good condition. New tyres. £40." Whenever he spotted a similar advertisement, he pictured himself scudding up the forest hills, sitting back

and coasting easily down the dips, swinging round the tall hedged corners and putting the $2\frac{1}{2}$ h.p. to bed in the Anglersmead outhouse. Peter, so Lord Periton had told him in confidence, was to have a two-seater car for his next birthday, and the fact that Peter took so little interest in Dick's machine made Denis suspect that the secret had become a strong suspicion. After all, thought Denis, motor bikes were an awful nuisance. Dick was always leading his machine home with a broken belt, and once he had turned up at a cricket match with his trousers greased and frayed like the chimneys of the first railway engines. But there was a fine independence about a motor bike. A car was an impersonal sort of structure, in which the driver sat as if in a drawing-room and held a lady-like wheel. But on a motor bike there was just the rider and the road and a lot of levers and wires, that very visibly governed his relations with it ; and quite often didn't.

Denis bicycled home by the side of his father.

"How many did you make, Denis?" said Mr. Bailey.

"Nine ; I got bowled by a shooter. I say, Dick's bike is starting better this holidays, father. He went off like a rocket."

"Really?" said Mr. Bailey. "Is that the same one as he had last year?"

"Yes ; it's an Avis. Only $2\frac{1}{4}$ horse power and single speed, but he gets up Barford Hill easily. Dick got it for £35 in Easthanpton."

"Did Mr. Lett give it to him?"

"For his birthday. Of course you can get a second-hand Avis for less than that. I saw one in the paper the other day for £28, with lamps and speedometer. But I expect it's gone now."

"I suppose so," said his father.

"Dick told me you have to write at once," Denis remarked to the handlebars of his bicycle. But his father did not hear him.

The family went to church next morning. Mr. Bailey and Joan set off first on foot. Mrs. Bailey, Peter, and Denis

followed later on bicycles. When they reached the aisle they saw that the family pew was occupied. Summer trippers at Speenmouth had no respect for the card in the corner of the pew, on which was graven "H. C. Bailey, Anglersmead, Speenmouth." And the churchwarden, who had caught Denis poaching in his fields last holidays, made a point of showing visitors into the Bailey pew.

"It doesn't matter, Hubert," whispered Mrs. Bailey. "We can sit somewhere else to-day." Joan and the two boys stood about in the aisle. Two spinsters passed them, advanced a little way towards the altar, bobbed quickly and entered their pew.

"Excuse me, sir," said Mr. Bailey, touching a florid gentleman on the shoulder. "But this pew is private. I am sorry to trouble you, sir, but . . ."

"The churchwarden showed me in here," said the gentleman. His family looked steadfastly before them.

"I am very sorry, sir," said Mr. Bailey. He laid a hand on the back of his pew.

"So am I, sir," said the gentleman.

"Come along, Hubert," whispered Mrs. Bailey.

"But I am afraid this is my pew," said Mr. Bailey.

"There is a card in the corner."

The tripper family had knelt down quickly and were lost in prayer.

"Really, sir . . ." said Mr. Bailey.

"Shsh," said the gentleman noisily, pointing to his kneeling family. Mr. Bailey shrugged his shoulders and followed his wife into the pew behind.

"Some people are born bounders," said Denis aloud.

"Denis," whispered his mother.

"What a funny neck that man's got. Its like the bull of Basan."

"His head is screwed on back to front, I think," said Peter. The neck became very red.

"Wait till the first hymn starts," said Denis. Peter nodded. The congregation stood up and the vicar gave out the number.

"Hymn 228. 'Jerusalem the Golden.'"

"Good," said Denis. "Joan, listen to us. Here goes." In the best college chapel tradition Denis and Peter let fly at the necks in front of them.

*Jerusalem the Golden,
With milk and honey blest.*

Denis's voice was inspired. It swooped and soared far above its normal pitch and wandered briefly among the tenors before rejoining Peter in a harsh and toneless roar. At the first blast the tripper family faltered and stopped singing. Not to be outdone, bull neck embarked on a pompous bass of his own. But a more than usually cracked note from Denis, which finished away up among the altos, threw him out of stride. He turned a furious face at Mr. Bailey, who chanted his own tune in his own time and cared little for what progress the rest of the congregation were making. Joan warbled softly. Mrs. Bailey repeated the words of the hymn without singing. Before the last verse, bull neck closed his hymn-book with a snap and laid it on the shelf. "*And Spirit ever blest. Aaaa . . . men,*" sang the Speenmouth choir.

*Land of rest,
Who art with God the Father
And Spirit ever blest. Amen,*

sang Mr. Bailey. He folded his hands behind him and gazed round the church with mild interest. He never used a hymn-book, as he knew all the vicar's hymns by heart.

The congregation were in no hurry to disperse, when the service was over. Those, who did not belong to the Speenmouth Gentlemen's Club, used the churchyard as a useful spot to make mutual arrangements for the week.

"Good morning, Mrs. Bailey," said Maureen. "Hullo, Denis and Peter. I heard you two singing a dozen pews away. I wonder you weren't turned out."

"I wish I could always get Denis to sing as well," said Mrs. Bailey. "Usually he won't open his mouth."

"He was in jolly good form to-day," said Maureen.

"He can sing very well when he likes," said Mrs. Bailey. "Only you won't take the trouble, Denis, will you?"

"I think I'm better in a duet, mother."

"Ha ha," said his father, rubbing his hands. The sun shone through the trees in the churchyard. Sunday lunch was before him and the vicar's sermon behind. "Hi, Broadstairs," he hailed an Anglo-Indian colonel, "Golf, Thursday, what about it?"

"I'm not sure, Bailey. There's that cliff preservation committee. I'll let you know to-morrow."

"Confound the fellow," muttered Mr. Bailey. "Never can give one an answer. Mary, lunch. I shall start walking. Who's coming with me?"

"I will, sir," said Peter. "If Denis will lead my bike."

"You watch," said Denis. He got on to his own bike, picked up the hireling, and swung it in and out of the crowd gossiping on the church hill.

"The trouble about this place," said Mr. Bailey, "is there are too many Anglo-Indians."

"They are almost everywhere, sir," said Peter.

"You don't get them in Scotland, anyhow," said Mr. Bailey.

"No, but we get a good many Americans."

"Really, now."

"A millionaire from Chicago took the place next door to us last summer. He asked father and mother to dinner and insisted on playing roulette afterwards."

"Roulette, indeed."

"Mother wouldn't play; but father had told a story during dinner about Monte Carlo, so he couldn't very well refuse. He lost about a hundred pounds I believe, though he wouldn't tell me."

"Well I never," said Mr. Bailey. "Good gracious."

On the way home Denis overtook Maureen. "Careful, Denis," she said. "Don't run me over." Denis stopped the

two bikes with an effort. "Coming sailing this week, Maureen?"

"Oh, is Peter leaving?"

"To-morrow morning."

"In that case I'd be honoured."

"Don't be silly. You know that's not why I asked you. But I've been busy entertaining him; and it's not much fun in the *Cormorant* with three, now I've got the centreboard."

"You needn't bother to explain. I'm not hurt; I was only joking. Can I come to-morrow afternoon?"

"Tide will be out; but if you like."

"Tuesday morning, then?"

"Yes, if I haven't got to do anything for mother. I'll come up and fetch you."

"Say good-bye to Peter for me, Denis."

"If I don't forget. So long." He bowed his body on the pedals and hauled Peter's bike after him. The trouble about Maureen, was that she was getting too much like a girl, thought Denis.