

A PUZZLE FOR ST. JIM'S!

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



RATTY!

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. Many Invitations.

"**T**ROT in, Levison!"
Levison of the Fourth grinned as he came into Tom Merry's study, in response to Tom's cheery greeting. It was not so very long since the sight of Levison's face in the doorway would have called forth quite a different greeting from the Terrible Three of the Shell. But bygones were bygones, and Levison of the Fourth was now on almost pally terms with Tom Merry & Co.

"You fellows coming?" asked Levison. "That depends," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "Whither?"

"Prep!" said Manners. Manners was a well-to-do youth, and was never late with his preparation.

"Oh, hang prep!" said Monty Lewther, who wasn't in the least a methodical youth. "Prep can wait! What's on, Levison?"

"House-warming in No. 9," said Levison.

"Oh!"

"It's Cardew's spread," said Levison. "You know Cardew—the new chap in the Fourth—he's in my study."

"We've seen him," said Tom. "So he's giving a house-warming?"

"That's it. He's new here, and Clive and I have only just changed into No. 9, so we agreed that a house-warming was the proper caper. Cardew's standing the spread, and he's rolling in oof. Clive's doing the cooking, and I'm going round with the invitations."

"Equal division of labour," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We'll come with pleasure."

"Hear, hear!" said Lewther heartily. "Come on us, dear boy. Anything to prep off for a bit."

"We've only had a war tea, so we shall do justice to the spread," remarked Tom Merry. "What time?"

"Seven."

"We'll be there."

"Right ho!" said Levison cheerily, and he went his way.

"Not a bad idea of Cardew's," remarked Monty Lewther. "A house-warming is just the thing in these hard times. Lucky barge to have plenty of oof."

"Cardew's a bit of a snob," said Manners.

"My dear chap, you can overlook a few little imperfections in a chap who's got plenty of oof. In war-time, anyway."

"Fathend!" said Manners. "I don't feel more than half-inclined to go. He was saving something rotten about Reddy the other day—Reddy of the New House."

"What on earth for?" asked Tom Merry.

Manners sniffed.

"Because Redfern's at St. Jim's on a scholarship, of course! Reddy would have punched his nose if he'd heard him."

Tom Merry frowned a little.

"That's rotten!" he said. "I rather liked the fellow's looks. Still, we don't want to be unkind, and we've accepted the invitation now. You'll have to come, Manners."

"Oh, all right!" grunted Manners.

Meanwhile, Levison of the Fourth went on his way. His next call was at Study No. 6 in the Fourth.

Blake and Herries, D'Arcy and Digby were there. They were holding a discussion. Tea was late in No. 6—very late. It was owing to lack of funds. The clunks of No. 6 had missed tea in Hall, as usual, intending to have it in the study. But when they came to compare notes in the study, the painful discovery was made that the study finances were at a low ebb. How to get tea for four for the moderate sum of threepence halfpenny was a problem that would have baffled Mr. Bonar Law himself.

"It's wathah wathah!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "In fact, it's vevy wathah! I would not have thought my new necktie if I had been awash that you chaps were out of cash. It's vevy careless of you, I must say!"

Blake and Herries and Digby looked at the Honourable Arthur Augustus as if they could eat him.

"Of all the howling asses!" said Blake. "To blow the last seven-and-six on a necktie, and leave the study to famine!"

"There ought to be necktie-tickets in war-time!" growled Herries.

"Of all the chumps—" said Digby.

"Weally, dear boys, I was bein' awfully economical," protested Arthur Augustus. "I have been practisin' a vevy wathah war economy."

"It's war economy to blue the last seven-and-six on a necktie!" roared Blake.

"Yass, wathah! I usually give ten-and-six. I am not wholly satisfied with the necktie; but I regard that as one of the patriotic sacrifices a chap must expect to make in war-time."

"Oh, bump him!" growled Herries.

"Wally, Lewies—" said Digby.

"We shall have to raise a war loan somehow," said Blake. "Cut along and see that relation of yours, Gussy—the new chap. He's got lots of tin."

"Cardew is not weally a relation of mine, Blake—only a vevy distant connection."

"Not so vevy distant—only the third study from this," said Blake. "Go and squeeze a quid out of him."

"I would wathah not howwow money of Cardew, Blake. I do not like him vevy much."

"But you can surely work up sufficient family affection on the spot to borrow half-a-quid at least?"

"Weally, Blake—Hallo, come in, Levison, dear boy!"

Levison stepped in.

"You fellows coming?" he asked.

"House-warming in No. 9. Ripping spread—"

Blake collared Levison before he could get further, and hugged him.

"Come to my heart!" he said affectionately. "Come in Egypt! You're as wathah as the flowers in May!"

"You! Leggo!" gasped Levison.

"Seven sharp, then?"

"Right ho!"

Levison departed, leaving Study No. 6 quite merry and bright. Only Arthur Augustus was looking a little thoughtful.

"How jolly lucky!" said Digby. "That chap Cardew isn't a bad sort. I heard that he pitched into Cut's of the Fifth to stop him bullying Levison minor."

"What are you scowling at, Gussy?"

"I am not scowlin', Blake. I was thinkin'—"

"Well, don't. It doesn't suit your style of beauty. Besides, suppose something were to go bust?" said Blake seriously.

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake! The fact is, I wou'd do not wholly care about goin' to Cardew's house-warmint'. I don't like him vevy much."

Blake & Co. grinned at one another.

"Then the sooner you learn to like your relations, the better," said Blake. "This will be the first lesson. Anyhow, you're coming, if I have to march you in by the necktie?"

"I should wufuse to be marched in by the eeah, Blake! However, as you fellows don't want to miss tea, and you have been vevy weckless with the funds, peewapps we had better go."

There were doubts in Study No. 6 evidently, as well as in Tom Merry's study.

Levison, quite unconscious of that fact, sauntered cheerily out into the quadrangle, and crossed to the New House. He found Figgins & Co. chatting in the doorway of the House, and they nodded to him. Levison stopped.

"House-warming in my study," he said. "You three coming?"

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn at once.

"Well, we've had tea," said Kerr.

"It wasn't much of a tea," said Fatty Wynn. "I had nothing but the savoyos and ham and bloater-paste, beside the cake and the apple-tart. We're coming, Levison, and thanks!"

"With pleasure!" said Figgins. "I haven't seen much of Cardew, but I'll come to his house-warming, as he's so kind as to ask me."

"Right ho!" said Kerr, and he nodded. But Kerr somehow seemed to be afflicted with doubts in the same way as Manners and D'Arcy.

Levison went on into the New House, and looked into Redfern's study. He found Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence there. The three scholarship juniors were at work, but they stopped as Levison came in.

"Hallo, looking for a ragging?" asked Redfern genially.

Levison laughed.

"Pax!" he said. "House rags are off. I've come to ask you to a house-warming in my study."

"My dear chap, we wouldn't rag you for your weight in gold!" said Lawrence.

"Rely on us. When is it?"

"Seven sharp."

"We'll be there."

"Right you are!"

And Levison, his mission completed, strolled back to the School House.

"This house-warming has come along at the right time," remarked Redfern. "Looks almost as if Levison knew we'd only had bloater-paste for tea."

"Very decent of him to ask us, as we've never been on good terms," remarked Lawrence.

"Oh, that's all over now," said Reddy.

"Well, go."

"I suppose we'd better go," said Owen.

"Of course, fathend. Why shouldn't we?"

"Well, there's that new chap—Cardew

"In Levison's study. I suppose he'll be there."

"Of course he will. What's the matter with Cardew?"

Owen coloured.

"I don't know that there's anything the matter with him. Clampe said—"

"Clampe's a worm!" said Lawrence.

"Well, I know he is," agreed Owen.

"But he said Cardew was talking in the School House about—"

"About what, fathead?"

"About poverty-stricken scholarship cads, who wedge into a school they're not fit for," said Owen.

"I don't suppose the chap said anything of the kind," said Redfern.

"Clampe is always making mischief, and we know he tells lies. We've heard him do it often enough. We've no right to set the new kid down as a silly snob because of a rotter like Clampe."

"He passed me in the quad with his nose turned up," said Owen. "I was going to speak to him, and he walked right on."

"Perhaps he didn't see you."

"Well, perhaps he didn't," admitted Owen.

"Well, don't get your back up about nothing," said Redfern. "They've asked us to the house warming, and that shows that he isn't the kind of silly idiot you think."

"Well, I suppose it does," said Owen. "I dare say he'll all right."

"Of course he is, fathead! We'll go."

And Redfern & Co. went, joining Figgins & Co. in the quad to walk over to the School House.

CHAPTER 2.

The House-Warming!

STUDY No. 9 in the Fourth Form passage was looking decidedly merry and bright.

Sidney Clive, the South African junior, was very busy. Clive was a great hand at cooking; and he turned out the sausages and poached eggs in a way that Fatty Wynn himself might have envied. Ralph Rackless Cardew, the new fellow in the Fourth, had laid the table, and was watching Clive at work. Cardew could not cook. Perhaps, too, the elegant Cardew did not fancy the task, and did not like to soil his hands. That thought had not occurred to Clive, however. He was not suspicious, and he did the cooking simply because he could do it best.

Cardew looked very handsome and very elegant, almost as elegant a picture as the great Arthur Augustus D'Arcy himself, who was the glass of fashion and the mould of form in the Lower School. Cardew never forgot that he was the grandson of an earl, and there was a certain something in his manner which some of the fellows called swank. But he was on very good terms with his study-mates, who were not disposed to look for faults in him, especially Clive, who was very easy-going and good-natured.

In one or two matters, perhaps, Cardew had jarred a little. He had far more money than Clive and Levison together, and his money was somewhat in evidence—though he could not be accused of being a purse-proud bounder like Racke of the Shell. The spread in the study was a very expensive one, such as was seldom or never seen in junior studies; and Dame Taggles had opened her eyes wide when Cardew gave his orders at the tuckshop. Beside the more solid comestibles, there were boxes of preserved fruits and tangerine oranges and Turkish delight, which had run into more money than Clive spent in a whole term. And Cardew had been dissatisfied with the somewhat strappy crockery of

No. 9, and he had ordered a complete outfit from a stores in Wayland, at his own expense. There was also a new study-carpet, very handsome, and very expensive, from the same stores. These were certainly improvements in the study, and Clive and Levison could not exactly object to a rich fellow making himself as comfortable as possible in his own quarters. Yet it put them somewhat in the position of snubbing on their wealthy study-mate, since they had as much use of the new things as Cardew had. They wished he would draw the line; but he made himself so agreeable at the same time that, as yet at least, they did not care to say so.

Levison came back into the study, with a cheery face. The house-warming was not quite on the lines of the little parties in Racke's study, where Levison had once been a regular guest. There were to be no cigarettes after tea, and no nap or banker to wind up all. And it was laxations so very much after all. There was a pleasure to the one-time black sheep of St. Jim's to find that the best fellows in the Lower School were willing to come to the house-warming. But for exigencies of space, he would have included Kangaroo & Co., and Julian and his friends, in the list; but, as it was, the study was likely to be taxed to its fullest extent. No. 9 was one of the largest rooms in the Fourth Form passage; but thirteen guests were quite as many as it could accommodate.

Everything but the table and chairs had been taken out and stacked along the passage, to leave as much space as possible. And Clive, having finished his task, the fire was allowed to die down.

"Well, how many are comin'?" asked Cardew.

"Thirteen," said Levison laughing. "I thought I'd better stop there."

"Oh, we can get thirteen in," said Clive. "It will be a bit of a squeeze, but but we can manage."

"The more the merrier," said Cardew.

"And there's tuck enough for thirty," said Levison. "This will beat D'Arcy's house-warming at the beginning of the term."

"If there's anybody else you'd like to ask we could have an overflow meetin' in the passage," grinned Cardew. "We can borrow some chairs, or toll the chaps to bring their own."

"Good egg!" said Levison. "I'll cut along and tell Kangaroo."

"Hold on a minute!" said Cardew. "I don't know whom you've asked. You know the fellows an' I don't. But I take it all fellows that a chap wants to meet."

Levison gave him a rather sharp look.

"The best chaps in both Houses," he said. "Tom Merry and most of his friends."

"Oh, that's all right. Merry's decent. But there are some rather shady bounders in the School I don't want to get acquainted with."

"If you think I've been out asking shady business here, Cardew—"

"My dear chap, I know you haven't!" said Cardew. "It's all serene."

"I'm not planting Baggy Trumble on you, if that's what you're afraid of," said Levison, good-humoured again.

"By gad! I should think not," said Cardew. "Who's this Kangaroo you're speakin' of, though?"

"An Australian chap—one of the best."

Levison settled along to the end study in the Shell passage, where he found Harry Noble, Clifton Dane, and Bernard Glyn sitting down to tea. But the Cornstalk and his chums cheerfully left their own tea to join in the house-warming.

They promised to come, and Levison's next journey was to No. 5 in the Fourth, where he added Julian, Kerruish, Réilly, and Hammond to the list.

"It'll be a crowd, of course," he said. "You won't mind that. There's twenty guests in all, as well as three of us."

"My hat!" said Julian. "You're going great guns. We shall have to understand the merry sardine in the tin. All serene!"

"Extra chairs in the passage," explained Levison. "Bring your own chairs."

"Ha, ha! All right."

Levison returned in great spirits to No. 9. It was a house-warming on a tremendous scale for a junior study. Levison would have liked to call in his minor, too; but the fog was at a prep with Mr. Selby in the Third Form-room at that hour. And the party certainly was numerous enough.

The first guests arrived along with Levison. They were Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell. Cardew greeted them very cordially, doing the honours with a grace worthy of Arthur Augustus at his best. Manners, who was not shyly pleased to find himself there, was quite disarmed by the new fellow's cordiality.

Study No. 6 arrived next.

The study was getting pretty well filled by this time. But the juniors were used to crowding upon such occasions. Arthur Augustus was a little graver than usual. Something about Cardew seemed to have jarred on the sensitive nerves of the Honourable Arthur Augustus; but, finding himself there, he was the very model of urbanity.

"Here comes Figgins & Co.," said Lowther, looking from the study window. The New House fellows were crossing the quad.

"By gad, we shall want some more chairs!" said Cardew. "They can't bring chairs across the quad!"

"Ha, ha! No."

"We'll get them out of our study," said Tom Merry.

"Not at all, dear boy. I'll fetch them," said Cardew.

And he left the study, and went along to the Shell passage. He was still absent when the six New House juniors arrived.

"Come in!" said Clive, laughing.

"Not much room, but a hearty welcome."

"Right as rain!" said Figgins. "Sorry Fatty takes room for two, that's all."

"Well, you don't take room for one, so that makes it even," retorted Fatty Wynn. "Don't shove a chap, Reddy!"

"Not at all," said Reddy. "I'll go round you, Fatty. It's a bit of a walk, but it's good exercise."

"Look here, you ass—"

"Slush!" said Figgins. "Mustn't call fellows by their proper names at a house-warming."

"Any more coming?" grinned Kerr.

"Yes; seven more."

"Oh, good!"

"Here's Cardew, the founder of the feast," said Levison.

Cardew came back into the study, laden with chairs. He set the chairs down, and looked smilingly at his latest guests. The smile faded from his face at the sight of Redfern & Co.

"Glad to see you, Figgins!" he said. "Same to you, Kerr, and you, Wynn! Awfully good of you to come!"

"Not at all," said Fatty, with his eyes on the festive board. "Awfully good of you to ask us!"

But Cardew's words caused a cloud to come over every other face in the study.

He had deliberately ignored Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence.

That his action was intentional there could be no doubt, though how a fellow could be guilty of such unprovoked rudeness was a puzzle to the rest.

Redfern & Co., feeling decidedly uncomfortable, reddened, and exchanged glances. It was a painful moment.

Arthur Augustus eye began to burn behind his eyeglasses. Clive and Levison turned crimson. Cardew was quite nonchalant.

"Here's a chair, Reddy!" said Clive, hurriedly breaking the silence that had fallen. "Sit down old scout!"

"One moment!" said Cardew, in a cold, clear voice. "Isn't there some mistake?"

"Mistake?" said Redfern.

"Yes. Did Levison ask you here?"

Redfern's face was like fire.

"Levison asked us here, or we shouldn't have come," he said.

"All serene, then. Let it go at that," said Cardew, turning away carelessly.

Redfern's eyes blazed.

"Come on, you fellows!" he said, and he walked out of the study, followed by Owen and Lawrence.

CHAPTER 3.

Trouble in Study No. 9.

THERE was a dead silence in Study No. 9.

Clive and Levison looked as if they would have given a good deal for the floor to open and swallow them up.

Cardew's manner had not changed. He was as nonchalant and smiling as ever, but evidently relieved to see the exit of the three guests whom, for reasons of his own, he did not regard as welcome.

"Sit down, dear boys!" he said cordially.

The dear boys remained standing. The cheery geniality of the party had gone.

"Just a minute before we sit down," said George Figgins, speaking very distinctly. "It seems that there was some mistake about Reddy coming here. You didn't intend to ask him?"

"Well, no," said Cardew. "Levison didn't tell me whom he had asked, and I wasn't aware he had asked those chaps."

"You told me to ask whom I liked!" said Levison savagely. "What do you mean by insulting Redfern, confound you?"

"I don't see that I've insulted him," said Cardew calmly. "He could have stopped if he'd liked."

"You didn't want him?" said Figgins. "May I ask why you didn't want him?"

"Hardly necessary to explain that," said Cardew. "I don't care for fellows of that sort in my quarters, that's all."

George Figgins' big fists clenched, and he breathed hard. But he remembered that he had come there as a guest, and his fists unclenched again.

"Reddy's a friend of mine," he said. Cardew raised his eyebrows.

"Indeed? I understood you were always at loggerheads with him."

"In a way, yes; but we're friends all the same. If Reddy isn't good enough for this study, I'm not good enough," said Figgins. "Come on, Kerr! Come on, Wynn!"

Figgins stalked out of the study, breathing wrath, and Kerr went with him. Patty Wynn cast a lingering look at the gorgeous spread going from his gaze like a beautiful dream. But it was only for an instant, and then he followed Figgins and Kerr.

The Terrible Three exchanged a look. THE GEM.—No. 476.

and moved to the door. Study No. 6 were moving in the same direction.

At that moment the rest of the guests arrived—three of the Shell and four of the Fourth.

"Here we are!" said Kangaroo cheerily. "Not late—what?"

"The crisis is still they come!" grinned Julian. "Don't tread on my feet, Reilly!"

"Sure, ye should take a smaller size in feet, Julian darling!"

"Hallo! Anything up?" asked Clifton Dane, glancing in surprise at the red and discomfited faces of the party. "Not going now?"

"We find that we must do our prep, after all," said Manners grimly.

"Couldn't leave prep?" said Monty Lowther, with great seriousness.

"Awfully sorry, Cardew! It's painful to tear oneself away from a chap whose manners are so unusually graceful and charming, but what must be must be! Come on, Tom!"

The Terrible Three wedged through the crowd of new arrivals, and departed.

Clive and Levison were hopeless looks. They had not expected the fellows to remain after the insult to Redfern. They knew Tom Merry & Co a little better than Cardew did. The house-warming in Study No. 9 was likely to be a ghastly failure after all. Cardew looked puzzled and angry.

"Pwaw allow a chap to pass, Kangawoo!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"But what the merry thunder!" exclaimed Noble, in amazement. "I understood that this was a house-warming!"

"Yaas, I undahstood so when I came," said Arthur Augustus. "As I can hear as a guest, I cannot express my true opinion of Cardew's conduct. I will not say I don't utterly despise the howlid boundah for his disgustin' caddishness, as I feel I cannot very well do so undah the cires. Come on, Blake!"

Study No. 6, with grim faces, marched out in the wake of the Terrible Three.

"Well, my hat!" said Cardew. "Dox you expect any decent fellow to sit down with you, after what you've done?" asked Clive, with bitter contempt.

"Well, I must say this is a merry gathering!" said Kangaroo, astounded.

"Has there been a row?"

"Oh, not at all!"

"Isn't the house-warming coming off?" asked Julian, puzzled. "Blessed if I can make you fellows out!"

"Blessed if I can make out what the trouble's about, either!" said Cardew angrily. "There seems to be a storm because I didn't want three rank outsiders in my study. I don't see that I'm called upon to get acquainted with every rowdy outsider in the school."

"You're talking about Redfern & Co," said Levison, in explanation. "They came, and—"

Kangaroo's face hardened.

"I think I understand," he said. "Well, as I'm not so choice as Gussy in my manners, I'll tell you what I think of you, Cardew. You're a silly snob, and a rotten cad! Come away, you chaps! That silly rotter makes me ill!"

Kangaroo & Co. marched off.

"So that's how the wind blows!" said Julian. "You don't mean to say that the fellow insulted Reddy, Levison?"

Levison nodded, without speaking.

"About time we got back to Study No. 5, I think," said Reilly.

And Julian & Co. got back to Study No. 5 without delay.

Cardew burst into a bitter laugh.

"So there goes the house-warming!" he said. "I suppose you two fellows will be marshin' off next!"

"We can't march off, as it's our study," said Clive; "otherwise, I wouldn't breathe the same air with you another minute."

"Do you say the same, Levison?"

"Yes, I do."

"I mean to have put my foot in it," said Cardew coolly. "Is there anything special about those scholarship specimens to make them popular?"

Clive's lip curled.

"You wouldn't understand," he said. "Reddy is worth about fifty of you, that's all. Do you think any fellows here treat them differently because their people are poor, and they had to work for the scholarships they came here on? Why, even Crooke or Rakce isn't such a snobbish fool as that!"

"You're callin' me a snobbish fool?"

"I could call you a lot of things as well as that," said Clive contemptuously, "only I suppose you're too dense to understand. You've acted in a way that Baggy Trimble would be ashamed of—like an ill-bred cad!"

"Better mind what you're sayin'!" said Cardew.

"Rot! You'll get plain English from me!" said Clive savagely. "If you had any decency you'd change out of these fellows after disgracing it as you've done! How can we look at the fellows in the face again after this?"

"So you fellows treat that chap Redfern as if he were one of you?"

"He is one of us, you fool!"

"Better language, please!"

"Oh, go and eat cock!" Don't talk to me! You make me sick!"

Cardew's eyes glittered. His temper was rising, but he held it in control. Levison did not speak. Ever since Cardew had stood up for his minor against the bully of the Fifth, Levison had felt bound to stand by the new fellow. The position for him now was decidedly awkward.

"This school is full of surprises for a new boy," said Cardew. "There's a high tone of morality here that rather beats me. Fellows are shocked at the sight of a cigarette or a pink paper! Dashed if I didn't think I'd got into a Sunday-school by mistake at first! Now I find I'm expected to pal on with every Tom, Dick, and Harry from the slums, for all I know."

"Don't be afraid of that," said Clive. "Redfern wouldn't pal with you at any price, and I shall be surprised if any fellow speaks to you after this!"

"All because I don't choose to be friendly with a set of low bounders!"

"I'm friendly with the chaps you're talking about, and if you say another word like that I'll knock it back down your throat!" exclaimed Clive, his eyes blazing.

"Low bounders!" said Cardew coolly.

"That was enough for Clive. He made a spring at the new junior. Cardew put up his hands at once. Levison rushed between them.

"Hold on!"

"Let me get at the cad!" snapped Clive.

"Let him come on!" said Cardew.

"You can have it out in the gym," said Levison—"not here. There's really nothing to fight about, either."

"The gym would be better," said Clive, dropping his hands. "It'll show all St. Jive who we in this study think of you, Cardew. I want all the school to know that I had no hand in your rottenness! I'm going to the gym now, and I expect you to follow."

"You won't have to wait for me!" said Cardew disdainfully.

Clive left the study, without another word, his face very grim. Cardew gave Levison a mocking look.

"Are you against me, too, or are you going to be my second?" he asked.

There was a long pause. "I'm down on what you did," said Levison at last. "but I haven't forgotten that you stood up for my minor, and that Cutts of the Fifth half killed you for it. I'll be your second, if you like."

"But you don't want to?"
"No, I don't!"
"Then you can go and eat cake!" sneered Cardew.

And he strode out of the study. Levison, after a moment's hesitation, followed him.

A few minutes later a fat face looked into the empty study. The unheeded feast was on the table, forgotten and neglected. Baggy Trimble's eyes glistened as they lighted upon it.

"My hat!" murmured Baggy. He gave a cautious glance up and down the passage, and then slipped into the study. Then, without troubling even to sit down, he started. Perhaps Baggy did not believe in waste in war-time. Certainly, so far as Baggy Trimble could help it, that magnificent spread would not be wasted.

CHAPTER 4. In the Gym.

TOM MERRY & CO. had settled down to prep in their study.

They were unusually grave. The incident in No. 9 had made an impression upon the minds of all concerned that was not to be easily eradicated.

For Cardew's conduct they felt contempt and disgust, and they felt sorry enough for Levison and Clive, who were friendly with the snobbish fellow who had disgraced their study.

The incident was unpleasant in the extreme, and they tried to dissuade it from their minds, with the resolution to give Cardew a very wide berth personally in the future.

The three juniors were working in silence when Sidney Clive looked in, his face somewhat red.

"You chaps busy?" he asked.
"Prep!" said Manners.

Clive's colour deepened. "I suppose you know I had nothing to do with Cardew's rotten trick, or Levison either?" he said. "If we'd had the faintest idea he would have acted like that we'd never have spoken a word to the cad."

"Right-oh, old scout!" said Tom Merry. "You needn't explain that; we know it."

"The fact is, I want a chap to be my second," said Clive. "If you're busy I'll go further along."

"Hallo! You've got a fight on?"

"Yes."

"Who's the happy man?" asked Lowther.

"Cardew!"

"Oh!" said the Terrible Three together.

They understood.

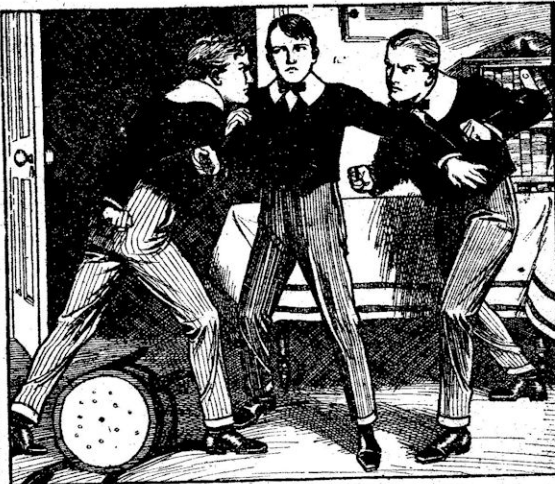
"We'll come," said Tom Merry, rising. "We can back up with prep after. I'll be your second with pleasure."

"And we'll come and see you make Cardew's chivvy look as it looked last week!" remarked Monty Lowther. "A cheer pleasure, dear boy!"

"Thanks awfully!" said Clive.

"Not at all!" grinned Manners. "We shall enjoy it!"

The Terrible Three accompanied Clive to the gymnasium. They were not surprised that the affair in Study No. 9 had ended like this, and they were not displeased. If ever a fellow deserved a hiding, and had asked for one, it was Ralph



Levison rushed between them.
(See Chapter 3.)

Reckness Cardew. The Terrible Three sincerely hoped that he would get it.

They found Study No. 6 in the gym. Blake had the gloves on with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The problem of tea had not been solved in the study, but there was an invitation to supper at eight in Talbot's study, and the chums of the Fourth had to leave it till then. Talbot of the Shell had gone to Abbotsford, and Gore, his study-mate, was getting supper ready for his return, and Gore had come to the rescue of No. 6 when he discovered their unfortunate plight. Blake & Co. were killing time in the gym. In the kindness of his heart Blake was giving Arthur Augustus some instruction in the noble art of self-defence, and the unexpected result had been that Blake was sitting on the floor of the gym, with Arthur Augustus smiling down at him.

"That was wathah neat, wasn't it?" said Arthur Augustus, beaming. "You see, dear boy, I left my guard open for you to wash in, and you washed in, and then the uppah cut came along. I wust I have not hurt you?"

"Yow-ow!" said Blake.

"Pewpaws your chin has been wathah jahhed, dear boy?"

"Wow!"

"You told me not to mind if there was some thumpin', you know," said Arthur Augustus anxiously. "I took it for granted that you would not mind, either."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries and Dig.

Blake scrambled up, trying to grin.

"All serene! I'm not made of putty," he said. "You're not such a silly ass as you look, Gussy."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hallo! Anything on?" asked Blake, as four serious-faced juniors came in together.

"Scrap!" said Tom Merry. "Clive and Cardew. Chuck over the gloves!"

"Oh, good!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Best of luck, Clive, dear boy!"

Cardew came in a minute or two later. He walked up to the group.

"I'm ready!" he said.

"Jackets off and gloves on!" said Blake.

"Who's your second, Cardew?"

"I don't specially want one. I'll take you, D'Arcy, if you like."

Arthur Augustus gave him a freezing stare.

"I wefuse to act for you, Cardew! I should be ashamed to be associated with you in any way!"

"Hallo! Are you on the same tack?" said Cardew coolly. "I shall have to mind my p's and q's in the future in dealing with scholarship cads!"

"Shut up, you worm!" said Blake.

"If you jaw like that here, you'll have another scrap on your hands when you've finished with Clive!"

"I've no objection at all! I'll take you on next, if you like, and D'Arcy after you, and then Herries and Digby, if they're keen!"

"Suppose you deal with Clive before you begin fighting the whole House?" suggested Tom Merry. "You mayn't be so full of fight afterwards."

"I'm waitin'!"

Jackets were thrown aside, and the gloves were donned. Juniors gathered round in a ring to watch the fight. Somehow or another, the story of what had happened in Cardew's study was getting known to all the fellows. There had been too many present for it to remain unknown. The looks of the juniors showed what they thought of the grandson of Lord Reckness, and on which side sympathy lay. The keen rivalry between the two Houses at St. Jim's did not prevent the School House juniors from backing up Redfern, of the New House, who was well liked all through the Lower School. That this uppish new fellow should have presumed to look down on old Reddy, became Reddy's

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people weren't rich, and Reddy had had to work his way to the School on a scholarship, put the juniors' backs up as nothing else could have done. Reddy was good enough for Tom Merry and D'Arcy and Higgins and the rest, but his swanking bearing presumed to look down on him. Every fellow present hoped that Cardew was going to get the licking of his life.

"Ready?" asked Tom Merry.
Kangaroo of the Shell took out his watch to time the combat.

"Yes!" said Kangaroo.
And the fight began.

CHAPTER 5.

Licked!

"GO it, Clive!"

It was a hearty chorus from the crowded ring.

Not a voice was raised for Cardew. He had not even a second. Levison of the Fourth had come in, but he went quietly back to look.

Cardew's unpopularity did not seem to affect him. His manner was quite cool and self-possessed.

He soon showed, too, that he knew something about boxing, and that, whatever his faults were, went of pluck was not one of them. But the juniors knew that already. Cardew, on his second day at St. Jim's, had stood up to Cutts of the Fifth, and had been severely hurt. And he had not complained. He had kept Cutts' part in the affair secret, rather than bring the bully to punishment. And as he had proved himself to be in some respects, there were traits in his character that the juniors could not help admiring.

The first round was fought hard, and there was punishment for both. Clive's face was grimly set, and he put his best into the combat. Cardew seemed equally determined, and his skill was equal to Clive's. But he did not possess the steady strength of the South African junior, and upon the whole he had the worst of the round.

"Time!" said Kangaroo
Cardew was breathing hard as he stopped back. Clive looked as fresh as a joint. His face was heated, and Tom Merry fancied it. Cardew stood alone and unfriended. He did not seem to mind.

"Time!"
Cardew had to give ground now, but he fought well and hard. The second round ended with Cardew on his back.

But when time was called again he came up gamely.

"Two to one on Clive, in quids!" said Crooke of the Shell.

"Shut up!" growled Blake.
"By gum, Clive's licking him!" remarked Grundy of the Shell. "Serve the cad right! I was going to lick him myself. Swank in the Fourth ought to be put down, Wilkins."

"Hear, hear!" said Wilkins, with a grin. "No swank allowed anywhere but in the Shell—what a lovely world."

"Oh, rats!" said Grundy.
"There goes Cardew!" said Gunn.
Bump!

Kangaroo began to count.
"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven."

Cardew was up again. He was looking groggy, but his back was set, and his eyes gleaming with determination. Clive stood back to give him a chance, and then the round went on. At the call of time, Cardew was staggering in the ring.

Levison came forward then.
"Here's my knee, Cardew," he said curtly.

"Hang your knee—I don't want it!" muttered Cardew unsteadily.

Levison, without replying, made a knee for him, and pulled him upon it. Cardew could scarcely stand.

"Going on?" asked Kangaroo.
"Yes, hang you!"

"You may as well chuck it," said Grundy. "You're done, you young ass!"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Cardew.

"My hat, TII—"
Wilkins pulled Grundy back.

"Back-pedal, old scout!" he said.
"You mustn't chip in here."

And Grundy grunted and subsided. At the call of time, Cardew detached himself from Levison's knee and came forward, his face white and his eyes gleaming. Clive gave him a hard look.

"I'm willing to chuck it now," he said.

"Come on!"
"You're not fit to go on."
"That's my business, not yours!"

"Give him his gruel till he's fed up," said Gore.

The fourth round commenced, Cardew fighting hard. He held his ground, but he was looking spent as the call of time came again. Clive was showing signs of combat now, but he was fresh enough.

Cardew sank gasping on Levison's knee.
"Better chuck it!" advised Levison.
"Oh, dry up!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.
"Time!"

Cardew staggered into the ring. He was evidently licked, but he kept on, and the fellows who were most down on him could not help feeling some admiration for his determination and pluck.

He began with a fierce attack, and Clive was driven back. But the cowardly junior recovered at once, and attacked in his turn. Cardew's feeble guard was knocked aside, and Clive's right came full in his face. But for the glove, the blow would have been a terrible one. As it was, it was severe enough. Cardew went to the floor like a felled ox.

"Bump!"
"One, two, three, four, five," counted Kangaroo, "six, seven, eight, nine, out."

Cardew made a desperate effort to rise. But he was done.

His head was swimming, he could not see clearly, and he sank back to the floor with a groan.

"Clive wins!" said Kangaroo, putting away his watch.

Levison picked Cardew up.
"I'm not finished yet," said Cardew thickly. "I'm going on. Hang your rotten countin'! I tell you I'm goin' on."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Tom Merry. "You couldn't stand up to a kid in the Third now. Take him away, Levison!"

Clive quietly peeled off the gloves. Tom Merry helped him on with his jacket. Cardew stood leaning on Levison's arm, casting a savage glance round him. His unpopularity had not affected him, but the licking at the hands of his study-mate had evidently stung him to the quick.

"Hang you!" he muttered. "You've got the best of me this time, Clive, but we'll try this again!"

"You're like," said Clive contemptuously.

He walked away with his friends. Cardew, savagely rejecting Levison's helping hand, struggled into his jacket, and strode unsteadily to the door.

"Let me alone!" he said fiercely, as Levison would have helped him.
"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Levison.

And he turned away, leaving the sulky and savage junior to his own devices.

Cardew went unsteadily out of the gym into the dark quadrangle. His head was aching, his forehead burning. He walked groggily, and he turned under the old elms, to recover himself a little before he turned up in the School House.

It was some little time later that Cardew came into Study No. 9. He had bathed his face, but the signs of the fight in the gym were very plainly to be seen. Clive and Levison were at work in the study, and they neither spoke nor looked up as their study-mate came in. The spread had been cleared away. Baggy Trimble had not left very much to clear.

Cardew eyed his study-mates savagely. "Can't you speak?" he sneered.

Clive looked up then.
"I don't want to speak to you," he said. "We've had it out, and that can drop. But I want nothing to do with you."

"Because of Redfern?"
"Because you're a cad!"
"And you, Levison?"

Levison coloured uncomfortably.
"I don't go so far as that," he said.

"But, as a matter of fact, I don't think you'll find any decent chap speaking to you, Cardew."

"That means that I'm going to be sent to Coventry—what?"

"Well, not exactly that; but the fellows will leave you alone. They don't want to know you."

Cardew set his teeth.
"They don't want to know me?" he repeated, as if he could scarcely believe his ears.

"Does that surprise you?"
"Yes, it does!"

"Well, I suppose you wouldn't understand," said Levison. "When you've been at St. Jim's a bit longer you'll see."

"You mean to say that any fellow who matters will put that poverty-stricken cad Redfern above me?" said Cardew.

"Miles above," said Levison calmly. "What does it matter to us whether he's got any money or not? We don't want his money."

"It isn't only money, of course," said Cardew; "but other things. Where does the fellow come from?"

"Blessed if I know, or care! Nobody else cares either. So long as a fellow is all right himself, he goes to the top, not been on good terms with Reddy till lately, but I know he's one of the best, and I'd rather have his friendship than yours any day. So would anybody else here."

"Oh!" said Cardew.
"If you've come here to swank about belonging to a titled family, or about having banknotes in your pockets, you've come to the wrong shop," said Levison.

The richest fellow at St. Jim's is Backer of the Shell, and nobody wants to know him, excepting a few toadying cads. D'Arcy's popular, but it's not because his father is Lord Eastwood—that doesn't count. You've got a lot to learn yet, Cardew."

Clive looked oddly at Cardew. It seemed surprising enough to him that any fellow should need to have all this explained to him.

"You were rotten cheeky to Hammond the day you came," resumed Levison, who seemed to have made up his mind to rub the salt in. "He was about it. Hammond's father made his money in hate, and he drops his 'h's. But any fellow in the House would tell you that Hammond's worth a dozen of you!"

"Cheeky!" repeated Cardew. "I don't call it cheeky, for a fellow like me to put a low bouncer like that in his place."

"Oh, you're a fool!" said Levison. "But you'll get some sense knocked into

your head before you've been here a term!"

"I'm learnin' some things already," said Cardew, after a pause. "This is a bit different from my old school!"

"Pity you didn't stay at your old school!"

Cardew did not reply to that, but he ast down to his preparation. Nothing more was said in the study till work was done, and then Levison and Clive went downstairs together.

Cardew remained in the study in deep thought, with a curious expression on his face. He left the study at last. The Terrible Three, their prep finished, were chatting in the passage, and Cardew stopped. Apparently he intended to put to the test Levison's statement that the fellows would not want to know him.

"I think you're junior footer captain!" he said, addressing Tom Merry.

"Right," said Tom.

"I'm goin' to join the club. Who's the sec?"

"Manners,"

"Thee? I'm to talk to you about it, Manners?"

Manners looked grim.

"Come into the study, then!" he said ungraciously.

Cardew went into No. 10, and the business was transacted in the shortest possible space of time. Then Manners rejoined Tom Merry and Lowther, and the three walked away.

Cardew understood. He was not sent to Coventry. But his acquaintance was not wanted, and if he forced it upon anyone, he was likely to be told so in plain language. It was not the reception Lord Reckness's grandson had anticipated at St. Jim's—not in the least! Cardew of the Fourth had plenty of food for thought that evening.

CHAPTER 6.

Planning a Good Deed.

MONTY LOWTHER came into the study, two or three days later, with a twinkle in his eyes.

Tom Merry and Manners, as they glanced at him, did not need telling of the fertile brain of the humorist of the Shell.

"I've got it!" announced Lowther.

"Go and bury it!" yawned Tom Merry.

"Look here, ass—"

"Keep it for the Comic Column in the Weekly," suggested Manners. "Then you won't be put in. Why is a husboat like a boathouse?—Because one rode a horse and the other rhododendron!"

"Fathed!" said Lowther.

"Same to you, old chap, and many of them!" said Manners. "Don't tell us it's a new limerick about Racke of the Shell and his pater's war-profits. There was row enough about the last."

"How Racke and his war-profits! I'm not bothering about Racke. It's about Cardew."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry, at once.

"Leave Cardew out of the Weekly," ass! "It's nothing to do with the Weekly, ass! It's not a limerick, jabberwock! It's a wheeze, duffer!"

"Well, leave Cardew out," said Tom. "We don't want to have anything to do with Cardew. You don't, any way."

"Oh, you're an ass!" said Lowther warmly. "Cardew was born specially to have his silly leg pulled, in my opinion. Besides, as scouts, we're bound to do a good deed every day. Giving a silly snob a lesson is a good deed, isn't it?"

"Clive gave him a lesson, and I don't see that it's done him much good," said Manners. "He hasn't apologised to Reddy, that I know of."

"I'm thinking of a different kind of lesson. You might back a fellow up when he's taken the trouble to think out the wheeze of the season," said Monty Lowther, in an aggrieved tone.

"Well, I'd rather cut Cardew out."

"It's hard cheese on Levison and Clive, having the cad in their study," said Tom. "Last term he might have got on with Levison. Not this."

"Well, it will be all the better for Levison and Clive if we help to cure their tame snob," said Lowther. "I fancy Cardew's been allowed to do pretty much as he likes at home, and it's got into his head. I'm going to take a lot of trouble to help him on in the way he should go. The earth isn't quite good enough for him to walk on, it seems. His relations are titled people, and he hasn't any connections lower down than an Oxford don. Now suppose some poor relation of his should turn up—"

"Oh! He's got poor relations, has he?" asked Manners.

"Not that I know of. But suppose one of them should turn up—some awfully low, seedy, boulder, say a cousin, some really out-and-out rotter, you know—poor and shabby, and dropping his 's'—"

"What a show-up for Cardew before all the fellows!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes, Cardew's the kind of chap who'd be hard hit by a thing like that," he said.

"But if he hasn't any such relation—"

"A good natured fellow like me might provide him with one."

"Eh?"

"I've just been over to the New House," said Lowther. "The H.J.A.D.s. have been having a rehearsal. Kerr's got up as Herr Schneider for the play, and I didn't know him at first. The New House rotters jaw no end about Kerr and the way he can make-up. I don't say he can't. But my idea is that a School House chap can do as well as he can, especially shining it."

"The School House Dramatic Society—Montague Lowther, Frin-stance!"

"Well, you're not quite up to Kerr's form in that line," said Tom. "But you can do it next best, I think. What's the giddy game?"

"It was really Kerr put it into my head, with his making-up," said Lowther.

"Kerr can make himself up as a fellow you know, and take you in. Perhaps I can't do that. But I could make myself up as a fellow you don't know."

"I suppose anybody could do that," remarked Manners.

"Your supposer's out of gear, then! You couldn't. But I could, and I'm going to!" said Lowther. "Wednesday's a half-holiday, and then the great scene is coming off—'The Amble'!"

Tom Merry and Manners stared hard at their chum for a moment or two, wondering whether Monty was wandering in his mind. Then they understood.

"You couldn't do it!" said Manners.

"Rats!"

"It would be funny," said Tom, laughing. "That silly snob ought to be kicked down a peg, right enough. I could kick him for the way he treated Reddy! It's doing him too much honour to take any notice of him, though."

"Quite so. But you know how keen I am on doing good deeds," urged Lowther. "This is a chance too good to be lost. Besides, it will show the New House bouncers that we've got a man who can beat Kerr in his special line."

All serene, said Tom. "It's a go!"

"All serene!" said Tom. "It's a go!"

"All serene!" said Tom. "It's a go!"

"All serene!" said Tom. "It's a go!"

"All serene!" said Tom. "It's a go!"

"All serene!" said Tom. "It's a go!"

"All serene!" said Tom. "It's a go!"

The Terrible Three left the study together. They passed Cardew in the doorway of the School House.

Cardew was looking out, with his hands driven deep into his pockets.

There was a cloud upon his brow.

Since the incident of the house-warming, Cardew had been left very solitary in the enjoyment of his own society. Nobody else seemed anxious to enjoy it. Racke and Crooke and Mellish and Trimble, certainly, had been friendly enough; but that shady crowd were not the fellows Cardew wanted to know. He had come to St. Jim's with the idea of being a prominent person in the best set in the school.

To his surprise, he had found that the best set did not consist of the fellows with the most money or the most aristocratic connections.

Redfern, the scholarship fellow, was as popular as any junior in the school, and it took Cardew some time to get used to the idea.

Cardew was no fool; and he realised that his miserable display of snobbishness, instead of being admired by the fellows, had earned him the cold shoulder from everyone but those of Racke's kind.

He had quarrelled and fought with his own study-mate, whom he liked; and he was not on the best of terms with Levison. Tom Merry and his friends ignored him; and they were quite chummy with Redfern, Owen, and Lowther. It was difficult for Cardew to understand.

He glanced at the Terrible Three as they came by. They did not look at him, and Cardew's brow darkened still more as they passed. He watched the chums of the Shell wheel their bicycles down to the gates.

"Hallo! All on your own?"

It was Racke's voice, and he nodded genially as Cardew turned. Racke, the heir of Messrs. Racke & Hacke the war-profits, had come to St. Jim's to get, as his respected pater expressed it, "a footing among the nob's." His attempt to gain the friendship of the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been a disastrous failure. But Lord Reckness's grandson was not so punctilious as the noble Gussy, and Racke was prepared to chum with him—if he could.

"Hastily cut out of doors," said Racke.

"Yes, it's cold."

"Come up to the study," said Racke genially. "We're going to have a bit of a game." He lowered his voice instinctively, though there was no one near. "Safe as houses, you know."

Cardew hesitated.

He was feeling lonely, and his own study had a very cold atmosphere just now. He nodded at last.

"I'll come," he said.

He followed Racke up the staircase. Crooke and Mellish were in the study, and they nodded very cordially to the earl's grandson.

Cardew sat down to the precious game. The door was locked. Racke & Co. were in great spirits. But Cardew did not enjoy himself. He had few scruples, or none, about joining in Racke & Co.'s shady amusements. But the vulgarity of Racke, the soapy familiarity of Mellish, and the blackguardism of Crooke, got on his nerves. The snob who had not considered Redfern good enough for his consideration company, had come down to this study set—a set whom, he knew, Redfern & Co. despised and carefully avoided. Yet Crooke and Racke had more money in a week than Redfern had in a whole term.

Cardew did not remain long. He had lost a couple of pounds when he left, and

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Racke & Co. cordially invited him to drop in again.

Cardew went along to his own study, and found Levison and Clive at tea. Levison looked up with a grin.

"Better use some eau-de-Cologne," he remarked. "What dry clothes."

"Why? What do you mean?"

"You smell of smoke."

Cardew sneered.

"From what I hear, it's not very long since you smoked cigarettes."

"Right on the wicket," said Levison calmly. "But I wasn't ass enough to be about smelling of the smoke. It's risky."

"I don't care."

"Well, it's your bizness! I was only giving you a tip."

Cardew looked at him. He did not sit down to tea, but lounged out of the study again. He was not welcome there, and though it was his own study, his pride was touched at the idea of remaining where he was not welcome. His face was clouded as he went down to tea in Hall.

CHAPTER 7.

Cardew's Cousin.

"GOAL!"

"Well kicked, Talbot!"

"Bravo!"

It was Wednesday afternoon, and a Form match on Little Side had just come to an end. Talbot of the Shell had kicked the winning goal for his side, almost on the stroke of time, and the Shell fellows shouted approval.

"Bai Jove! They've won," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in surprise, as the footballers came off.

"What did you expect, dear boy?" asked Kangaroo.

"Weally, Kangawooh—"

"Why didn't you play Lowther, Tommy?" asked Jack Blake. "We should have pulled it off, perhaps, if you'd played Lowther."

"Tom's Merry laughed.

"Lowther's gone out," he said. "I'm expecting him in every minute now, though."

Monty Lowther usually played for the Shell in a Form match; but he was not in the Shell Eleven this time. Monty Lowther was otherwise engaged.

Cardew of the Fourth stood among the crowd watching the match. Racke and Crooke were with him. Of late Cardew had been a good deal in their company.

Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence were all playing for the Fourth Form, with Figgins & Co., and Study No. 6 and Dick Julian. Cardew had watched them curiously.

"Those fellows play in the matches," he remarked to Racke.

Racke grinned.

"Oh, yes! Redfern's generally in school matches, too; he's a corker at footer. Owen and Lawrence generally show up in House or Form matches."

"It's dashed odd!"

"Oh, I remember you're down on them!" said Racke. "Not much good have Cardew. I agree with you, but a fellow can't swim against the stream. If a chap plays a good game of footer, the fellows don't care whether his father was a duke or a dustman."

"I play a good game," growled Cardew; "but I wasn't asked."

"You won't be, either."

"Why shouldn't I be?" asked Cardew angrily.

"The great and noble Merry is down on you, since you rowed with Redfern, and he's the Great Panjandrum in footer matters."

"I never rowed with Redfern. I didn't like the fellow comin' to my

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house-warmin', that's all. A fellow draws a line somewhere."

"The house-warmin' was rather a frost, wasn't it?" grinned Crooke.

Cardew did not reply. He watched the match in silence till the finish.

Racke and Crooke watched it out, too—not that they cared anything about the Form match, or whether their Form won or lost—but Racke had backed the Shell with a sovereign, and Crooke had backed the Fourth, so they had a financial interest in the result of the game.

"I'll trouble you for a quid, Crooke," grinned Racke, as the final whistle went and the players came off, while the crowd were still cheering Talbot's goal.

Crooke paid up with a bad grace. Racke had usually plenty of money, but he never liked parting with it.

"Hallo! Who's that Johnny?" exclaimed Crooke suddenly, in utter astonishment.

He fixed his eyes upon a curious figure that was coming on the football-ground.

Strangers were admitted to the St. Jim's ground to see the matches, if they liked, but seldom or never had such a "merchant" as this been seen there.

He was a lad of about the junior's own age, but his clothes were old, seedy, and dirty; his boots worn down at heel, his face reddened where it was not dirty, and his left eye was covered by a black patch. His boots squelched mud as he walked. A frowsy cap was set on the back of his untidy head.

Racke giggled.

"Precious sort of waster to come here!" he said. "I wonder Taggles hasn't booted him out."

Many glances were turned on the newcomer as he stared round him at the crowd of well-dressed fellows.

Levison of the Fourth, with a slight strain which kept him off the field, had been watching the game, with his minor, at some distance from Racke & Co. Levison stepped towards the stranger.

"The game's over," he said. "You're a bit too late if you've come for that."

The stranger blinked at him with his one visible eye. The black patch—apparently worn to cover a damaged eye—was a large one, and it was a little difficult to imagine what his face looked like without it. Not that much of the uncovered part of his face could be seen, so uncleanly was it.

"I ain't come 'ere to see the game," said the stranger. "I come 'ere to speak to a bloke."

"Oh," said Levison, "perhaps I can tell you where he is if you tell me his name!"

It was not much like the Levison of old; but, as a matter of fact, Levison's motive now was a kindly one. He knew that Taggles, the porter, was pretty certain to hustle this disreputable stranger away if he saw him, and he would willingly have saved the ragged lad from that humiliation if he could. The seedy youth evidently did not see any reason why he should not be there, but Taggles would certainly have taken a different view.

"My name of Cardew," said the stranger.

"My hat! You want to see Cardew?" Levison said, in surprise.

Yes, if he's 'ere. I understand 'e's been sent to this 'ere school," said the seedy youth. "He ain't answered my letter, an' I've come to see 'im 'ere. Tell 'im Dick Cardew wants to see 'im."

"Is your name Cardew?" asked Levison, in astonishment.

"Ain't I said Dick Cardew? Tell 'im his cousin Dick's 'ere, and means to see him, whether he likes it or not," said the stranger aggressively.

"Oh, gad!" gasped Levison.

Several fellows had heard the stranger's words, and grinning glances were exchanged among them. This awful outside, who evidently hadn't made close acquaintance with soap and water for a long time, was Cardew's cousin—cousin of the fellow who had looked down with lofty contempt upon Redfern & Co.!

The news spread like wildfire among the crowd round the football ground, and they gathered on the spot, quite prepared to enjoy the situation. It was doubtful whether the snob of St. Jim's would enjoy it; but that was Cardew's look-out.

"Cardew!" roared Gore of the Shell. "You're wanted!"

"Ha, ha! This way, Cardew!" yelled Pratt of the New House.

Cardew was leaving the ground with Racke and Crooke, but he looked back as his name was shouted on all sides.

"What's wanted?" he asked curiously.

"You are!" chuckled Gore. "You are, my noble juk! Your cousin's come to see you!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Here he is," said Levison. "This is Cardew."

"Course I know 'im, how I sees 'im," said a dilapidated stranger. "Ere I am, Ralph, old chap."

He grinned familiarly at the astounded Cardew. Racke and Crooke exchanged very queer glances.

Had they been mistaken in Cardew after all? They had heard that he was the grandson of a nobleman. How the dickens could a nobleman's grandson have a cousin like this?

Racke and Crooke drew a little further away from Cardew. They certainly did not want to get mixed up with his disreputable connections.

Cardew stood rooted to the ground for some moments, staring blankly at the seedy stranger.

"Who are you?" he gasped at last.

"Makin' out as you don't know me, speered Cousin Dick. That's like you, Ralph, that there is!"

"How dare you call me Ralph!" shouted Cardew furiously.

"Well, you've always called me Dick, ain't you?"

"I've never seen you before in my life!" yelled Cardew.

"You won't get nobody to believe that," said Cousin Dick coolly. "Don't pile it on like that there, Ralph."

Cardew strove up to him, his fists clenched and his eyes blazing.

"You dare to say you know me," yelled Cardew.

"Course I knows you, Ralph!"

"If you call me by my Christian name again I'll knock you down!" shouted Cardew fiercely.

"Look 'er, Ralph—"

Cardew sprang at him like a tiger. But a strong arm pushed him back with a strength he could not resist.

"No, you don't!" said Redfern of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 8.

D'Arcy Discovers a Relation!

CARDREW clenched his hands convulsively.

He glared at the ragged, dirty stranger, and at the thick crowd of mocking faces surrounding him. The footballers, coming off in their coats and mufflers, had joined the crowd. Redfern had chipped in promptly to stop Cardew's attack on the ragged lad.

"Let me alone!" muttered Cardew thickly. "I'll—I'll smash him!"

"You won't touch him!" said Redfern coolly.

"That you jolly well won't!" said Figgins, pushing forward. "Let the kid alone! What do you want to hit your own cousin for?"

"He's not my cousin!" shrieked Cardew.

"He says he is."

"He lies!"

"I don't see why a stranger should come here and say he's your cousin, if he isn't," said Figgins. "How does he know you at all, then, if you come to that?"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "That's wathah a posah. How does the chap know you at all, Cardew?"

Cardew panted.

How did the fellow know him? How could a perfect stranger pick him out and claim him amidst the crowd of St. Jim's fellows? That circumstance alone was proof enough for most of the juniors.

Certainly nobody there would have liked to be claimed by such a relation before half the school. Any other fellow in such an unpleasant situation would have received a good deal of sympathy as well as a good deal of mockery. But there was only mockery for Cardew.

Every fellow whom he had known by his consequential airs, every fellow who liked Redfern, and resented the insult that had had been put upon Reddy, grinned merrily over this dreadful show-up for the snob of St. Jim's.

There was a ripple of chuckles on all sides. In his downfall the snob of the school was friendless.

Only Levison took pity on the wretched junior. Levison had not forgotten how Cardew had stood up for his minor against the bully of the Fifth.

"Suppose he is his cousin. There's no reason why the fellow should shove himself in here if Cardew doesn't want him," he said. "You'd better get going, young shaver."

"Don't be 'ard on a cove," said Cousin Dick plaintively. "I've tramped 'ere to see my cousin, and I'm 'ungry."

"Bai Jove! Are you weally hungry?" asked Arthur Augustus, his noble heart touched at the sight.

"Hawful, sir!"

"Poor chap! You shall certainly not go away without somethin' to eat. Weally, Cardew, I considah that you might offah your relative a meal at least."

"He is not my relative!" panted Cardew. "You know he isn't, D'Arcy!"

"You know nothin' of the sort!"

"You are related to me yourself!" shouted Cardew. "You know I haven't a relative like that!"

"Wubbish! I nevah saw you befoah you came hah," said Arthur Augustus. "I know nothin' of you, exceptin' that you are a wevy distant connection of my family, and that I am ashamed of the connection."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Gussy!" said Blake admiringly. "Go it! You'll astonish 'em in the House of Lords some day!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Cousin Dick looked round pathetically at the crowd, and rubbed his single visible eye with a dirty knuckle.

"No offence, young gents," he said. "I never meant no 'arm in comin' 'ere. Tain't my fault if old Lord Lockness let his nephew go the dogs an' 'ave his son brought up in the work-us, is it?"

"Not at all," said Blake. "It's jolly hard lines on you."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's not true!" yelled Cardew. "My grandfather has no nephew!"

"Look 'ere, Ralph—"

"You impertinent bound!"

"Here! Better language, please!"

said Figgins. "My opinion is that your cousin's a bit more decent than you, any way, Cardew."

"He's not my cousin!"

"It's pretty plain that he is, and that you've treated him rottenly," said Figgins, with a curl of the lip. "I don't say he ought to have come here, but how's the poor kid to know any better? You're always swanking about with fivers. You might have spared a quid or two to your own cousin."

"I tell you—" Cardew choked with rage. "Ere, wot's this 'ere? You get hout of this!" Taggles had arrived on the scene, with a surly brow. "Tramps ain't allowed 'ere!"

"You keep off the grass, Taggles!" clucked Gore. "This chap is Cardew's cousin, and he's come to see Cardew."

"They heve!" gasped Taggles. The poor boy was hustled away. The juniors were feeling sympathetic towards the ragged stranger, and they were enjoying the snob's discomfiture. Taggles was not to be allowed to shoo away Cardew's unfortunate relation. Every fellow there was prepared to stand him a square meal before he went, anyway. Cardew's features were working with rage. But for the interposing juniors, he would have sprung upon the visitor like a tiger.

Racke and Crooke had drawn away from him. Their looks were sneering as they glanced at him. Racke and Crooke had stood a good deal of swank from Cardew.

They were not likely to stand any more.

Cardew's look was almost wild. "That fellow's an impostor! I've never seen him before! I have no Cousin Dick!"

"How does he know you, then?" sneered Gore.

"I—I don't know. I suppose he's seen me somewhere—"

"Yes, at 'ome," said Cousin Dick. "It's a lie!"

"At 'ome, I tell you, though I wasn't never allowed to come in, in case the servants should see me," said Cousin Dick plaintively. "I been turned from your door 'ungry!"

"Shame!"

"It's a lie!" screamed Cardew. "When I 'eard you was 'ere, Ralph, I says to myself, 'I'll come an' see you 'ere, and p'raps you wouldn't be so 'ard as you wall at 'ome with the old bloke,'" said Cousin Dick. "But you're as 'ard as nails, I see that. Well, I ain't goin' to ask you for nothin'. P'raps you thinks I wants your money? I wouldn't touch your money at no price!"

If the juniors had needed convincing, this would have been a clincher. For if the fellow was an impostor, what object could he have, excepting to extract money? If he did not want money from Cardew, how could he be an impostor?"

"Honly I ain't goin' to be called a liar afore all these young gents," went on Cousin Dick, with dignity. "I'll prove wot I says, an' I'll go!"

"Prove! It's a lie! You can't prove it!"

"Some of you young gents may 'ave seen my Cousin Ralph when he 'adn't his jacket on," said Cousin Dick, looking round. "I asks you, as he, or 'asn't he got a cut on the left elber?"

Cardew almost staggered.

"Yes, rather," roared Blake. "I noticed it the other day at ducker."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I saw it, too, in the swimming-bath," said Clive, with a nod.

Levison stood dumbfounded. He, too, had noticed the scar of a cut on Cardew's left elbow. Cardew's arm was covered

by his jacket now. How did this disreputable stranger know the cut was there, unless the facts were as he represented them?

"I've seen that cut," said Manners coolly. "You're bowled out, Cardew."

"I—I—I—" Cardew choked. "I—I don't know how he knows that, but

"We do!" said Kangaroo drily.

"I tell you he's an impostor—he's a rotten impostor! He's not my cousin!"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Yaas, dwey up!" said Arthur Augustus, his eyes flashing scorn. "If this chap is your cousin, Cardew, he must be a distant relative of mine, as you are a distant relative of mine. I shall certainly not allow a relative of mine to go hungry while I have a shillin' in my pocket."

"Come up to my study, dear boy, and we'll look 'at'ah you!"

"Oh, Gussy!" gasped Blake.

D'Arcy looked at him.

"I t'rust, Blake, that you have no objection to my lookin' 'at'ah my relative in the study?"

"Nunno!" stuttered Blake. "Don't let the Housemaster see him, though. Railton might cut 'up rusty."

"I should explain to Wailton, Blake, that this poor chap is my relative, who has been fearfully neglected."

"Ha, ha! Better not let Railton see him, all the same!"

"Wats! Come with me, dear boy!"

Arthur Augustus slid his noble arm through the dirty arm of the stranger, and led him away majestically to the School House. The juniors stared after them, and gasped. The contrast between Arthur Augustus' line of action and Cardew's was striking, and the comparison was all in Gussy's favour. Certainly there was no snobbishness about him. His only thought was to provide for the wants of the unfortunate fellow whom he had suddenly discovered to be a distant relation.

"Bravo, Gussy!" roared Figgins.

"Good old Gussy!" gasped Tom Merry. "Oh, my hat!"

Loud cheers followed the swell of St. Jim's. And the crowd followed him, too, curious to see what was to happen when Cardew's cousin was introduced into the august precincts of the School House of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 9.

A Surprising Revelation.

"TWO! Along, dear boy!"

The seedy youth had no choice about trotting along, because Arthur Augustus had taken his arm. But he seemed to hesitate and linger. Somehow or other, he did not appear to want to accept Arthur Augustus' noble hospitality.

"It's all wright," said D'Arcy reassuringly. "I am goin' to look 'at'ah you, you know. Nothin' to be afraid of."

"I—I—I—" stammered Cousin Dick. "P'raps you'd be nervous. Our Housemaster is a wegnah bwick."

But I—I—

"It's all wright! Wely on me!"

And Arthur Augustus marched the seedy youth up the steps of the School House, with an interested crowd in his wake.

Cardew stood where he had been left, his lips tightly set, his face pale with rage and chagrin and humiliation. The public derision that had fallen upon him seemed at last to have overtaken him.

He looked at Racke and Crooke, who were moving away, and rejoined them.

"You don't believe this, you fellows?" he said huskily.

Racke grinned. Crooke chuckled.

"We believe the fellow's your cousin, if that's what you mean," said Racke coolly. "Don't spin us any yarns, for goodness' sake!"

"I tell you I've never seen him before!"

"Well, you can't have seen much of him, or done anything for him, I should say, to judge by the state he's in," said Racke. "If you want a tip from me, you'll own up and do something for the fellow. Dash it all, it's a bit rotten to leave your cousin to starve when you're rolling in coo!"

"He's not my cousin!"

"No connection at all," I tell you I've never seen him before!"

"He's seen you," chuckled Crooke. "He knows there's a cut on your elbow. How does he know that?"

"I— I sasp't guess—"

"I can," said Racke, laughing. "So can everybody else. Why don't you admit the facts, you duffer. After all, any chap might have shabby relations. I've got some myself, only I don't let 'em visit me. But tellin' blank lies and disownin' your cousin don't do any good."

"Look here—"

"Oh, rot!" said Racke. "You put on a lot of side," said Arney. "I can't say I'm sorry you've had a show-up. And I can tell you that plainly. If you want to be so friendly to some wild one, you'll have to find some way of keeping your low relations at a distance."

"Wha-a-ah!"

"I was goin' to say the same," remarked Crooke, not at all sorry for the opportunity of rubbing it in. "Dash it all, Cardew, you know how you treated Redfern—a decent chap enough in his way. I suppose you won't say your cousin is up to Redfern's mark?"

"He's not my cousin!" shrieked Cardew.

"Oh, don't talk out of the back of your neck! We know he's your cousin. And I think the same as Racke. If you want to know us, you'll have to be careful about your poor relations. The fellow might come up and claim you anywhere, at this rate. Nice for us, if we happened to be with you somewhere, when he did it. I'm not a snob, but I draw the line at being claimed in public by a ragged hooligan."

"Who wants your friendship?" said Cardew, between his teeth. "You're a pair of shady rotters, and I want nothin' to do with you!"

"Done!" said Racke, with a laugh. "You certainly won't have anything to do with us, if you're goin' to spring relations like that on a fellow!"

Cardew turned on his heel, and strode away furiously to the house. He left Racke and Crooke laughing.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus and his protegee had entered the School House, in spite of the evident unwillingness of Cousin Dick. D'Arcy was piloting his new friend to the staircase when Kildare bore down on him. The prefect signed to them to stop. Kildare looked astonished, as well he might.

"What on earth does this mean, D'Arcy?" he exclaimed. "Who is this?"

"Cardew's cousin, Kildare."

"Nonsense!"

"Weally, you know—"

"It's all right, Kildare," chimed in Julian. "It's Cardew's cousin right enough. A poor relation who's come here to see him. Cardew won't own him. We're going to see that he has a feed."

"Hold on!" said Kildare. "This is all rot! The kid can't be Cardew's cousin. Who are you, young shaver?"

"These 'ere young gents know who I am, sir," said Cousin Dick. "Which I never knew as my cousin would cut up so rusty with me fur comin' 'ere. No offence, sir?"

"You are Cardew's cousin!" exclaimed Kildare, in amazement. "Even if, you are, you should not have come here."

"I meant no 'arm, sir," said the seedy stranger humbly. "I'll go now, if you don't want me to come 'ere."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy tightened his grip on the shabby arm.

"You will not go, deah boy!" he said.

"Kildare, this chap is poor and langsy, and I am goin' to stand him a feed, as Cardew was wases to wecognise him. I twist, Kildare, that there is no objection to that."

"I can't help thinking the fellow is an impostor," said the astonished captain of St. Jim's.

"He's proved that he isn't, Kildare!" sang out a dozen voices.

"I've proved it to these 'ere young gents, sir," said Cousin Dick meekly. "They knows. They ain't so 'ard on a bloke as my cousin, Ralph."

"Where's Cardew?" asked Kildare. "Call him in."

Cardew was coming up the steps, and Kildare beckoned to him as he came sight of him. The snob of the Fourth came forward with a furious look.

"This kid your cousin, Cardew?"

"No."

"Who is he, then?"

"I don't know. I've never seen him before. He's an impostor," shouted Cardew.

"Rats!"

"Dry up!"

"Shame!"

It was a regular roar from the crowd of juniors. Cardew cast a fierce glance round him; but he met only looks of contempt and mockery.

"This will have to be looked into," said Kildare abruptly. "If the boy is an impostor—"

"He isn't, Kildare."

"Right as rain, Kildare!"

"He's proved it!"

"Rats!" here, D'Arcy, while I call

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Cousin Dick, in dismay.

"Weally, Kildare—"

"Mr. Raiton is here!" said a deep voice. And there was a sudden hush on the crowd as the School House master came striding from the direction of his study. Cousin Dick made a motion as if to bolt through the big doorway into the open quadrangle, but Arthur Augustus held firmly to his arm. The swell of St. Jim's was prepared to see his protegee through.

Mr. Raiton eyed the seedy youth with a keen glance. Cousin Dick seemed to have an inclination to get behind Arthur Augustus. D'Arcy squeezed his arm encouragingly.

"It's all seawe, deah boy!" he whispered. "Walton is a bwick. Nothin' to be afraid of."

"Now, what is all this?" exclaimed the House-master. "Who is this boy?"

Twenty voices responded at once.

"Cardew's cousin, sir!"

"It's a lie!" raved Cardew. "He's

not my cousin, Mr. Raiton. I don't know him."

"This is an extraordinary affair," said Mr. Raiton, frowning. "Come here, my boy. You need not be afraid, but come forward."

Cousin Dick reluctantly came forward. "You claim to be Cardew's cousin, and Cardew denies it," said Mr. Raiton. "Kindly tell me your name."

"His name's Cardew, sir—"

"Silence, please! Let the boy answer for himself. Speak up, my lad!" said the School House master, not at all kindly.

Cousin Dick hesitated.

"Speak up, deah boy!" murmured Arthur Augustus, with another encouraging squeeze. "Tell the twuth, and it will be all right."

"Answer me!" said Mr. Raiton.

"What is your name?"

Cousin Dick gasped, and replied at last.

"Lowther, sir!"

CHAPTER 10.

Only Lowther.

"LOWTHER!"

The name was repeated in a yell by fifty voices.

Cardew stared stupefied at his "cousin."

Mr. Raiton stood rooted to the floor. Whatever answer he might have expected, he had certainly not expected that. Arthur Augustus dropped the claimant's arm as if it had suddenly become red-hot.

"Lowther!" gasped Mr. Raiton.

"Yes, sir."

"Lowther!" gasped Blake.

"Lowther! Oh, my hat!"

"Cousin Dick" removed the black patch from over his left eye. Now that it was gone, a resemblance to Monty Lowther's features could be traced through the reddened complexion and the dirt.

The crowd of juniors simply gasped for breath. Cardew drew a deep, deep breath of relief. It was only a jape, after all, though a jape of such magnitude that no one would have dreamed of suspecting it.

Mr. Raiton's brow grew very stern.

"So it is you, Lowther?"

"Yes, sir," said Lowther meekly.

"And what is the meaning of this ridiculous masquerade?" demanded Mr. Raiton sternly.

"Ahem!"

"Bai Jove! You uttah spoonful wottah, Lowthab," suttered Arthur Augustus.

"Silence! Answer me, Lowther! How dare you play a ridiculous trick like this, and cause so much disturbance?"

"I was doing Cardew a friendly turn, sir," said Lowther.

"What?"

"We were in it, too, sir," said Tom Merry, coming forward at once, with Manners. Now that the jape had taken a serious turn, Monty Lowther's chums were quite ready to own up and take their share in what was to follow.

"Indeed! And what was your object, Merry, in playing this ridiculous trick?"

The House-master inquired stormily.

"It was to give Cardew a lesson, sir," said Tom. "He's a silly snob, and we thought it would do him good."

There was a chortle from the crowd of juniors, and Kildare grinned. Kildare had noticed some of Cardew's lofty ways.

Mr. Raiton's face redoubled.

"No harm intended, sir," said Lowther cheerfully. "Of course, I didn't think you would be brought into it, sir, or of course—ahem—I shouldn't have thought

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ANSWERS

If you are not getting your right PENSION

of it at all. It was an act of kindness, sir, towards a schoolfellow—same as good little Georgie does in the story-books, only on different lines."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Be careful what you say, Lowther!" said Mr. Raitton, frowning again. "Merry, you will kindly explain to me the meaning of this nonsense."

"Ahem!" It was for Cardew's good, sir really!" said Tom. "He's a bit of a snob, and—and we thought this might cure him. I—I'm sure it's done him good."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cardew's face was a study. "You should have seen his face, sir, when he was claimed by his seedy cousin," ventured Manners.

Mr. Raitton gave the juniors a very curious look. Kildare slipped away quietly, to chuckle at his case in his own study.

"A most absurd trick!" said Mr. Raitton, at last. "You will—ahem—take fifty lines—Lowther, and do not let anything of the kind occur again."

"Yes, sir."

And Mr. Raitton retreated to his own study, and did not laugh till the door was safely closed.

"You—you spoofing bouncer!" exclaimed Blake. "So it was a jape all along? I'd have known you without that patch over your eye."

"My dear chap, you wouldn't have known me in three years, or during the duration of the war," said Lowther. "Cardew jolly nearly believed I really was his Cousin Dick."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Dore!" I regard you as a fearful epocafo, Lowther. Ha, ha, ha!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Sorry to deprive you of the pleasure of seeing a relation, Cardew," said Monty Lowther affably. "I didn't intend to be brought into the House. Accidents will happen. I hope you've enjoyed it!"

"You spoofing rotter!" shouted Cardew.

"That's gratitude!" said Lowther sorrowfully. "I've taken all this trouble to give a silly snob a lesson, and that's how grateful he is."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come and help me get these things off," said Lowther. "I want a wash-bath. I feel rather soiled as Cardew's cousin."

And Tom Merry and Manners, chuckling, followed Lowther up the stairs, where "Cousin Dick" proceeded to change in the dormitory, and resume his proper identity.

Cardew strode away, followed by shouts of laughter.

So well had Monty Lowther played his part that Cardew had almost begun to wonder whether he really had a Cousin Dick without knowing it. It was a relief to find that Cousin Dick was only Lowther of the Shell after all, exercising the skill he had acquired as a leading member of the School House Dramatic Society. But the jape had brought more ridicule upon Cardew than if Cousin Dick had really been his cousin, and wherever he showed himself he was greeted with chuckles and inquiries after his slummy relations, till he was almost frantic with rage and chagrin.

He took refuge in his study at last, and found Levison and Sidney Clive there, both grinning. They burst into a laugh at the sight of him, and Cardew eyed them furiously.

"Funny, isn't it?" he said between his teeth.

"Jolly funny!" roared Clive. "Ha, ha, ha! If you could only have seen your own face—Ha, ha, ha!"

"I call it rotten cheek!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Levison. "You shouldn't have played the giddy ox. Nothing to be ashamed of in having a poor relation. You'll be cackled to death for getting your wool off as you did, you know."

Cardew gave him a furious look, and went out of the study, and slammed the door. The laughter of his study mates followed him.

"Hallo, Cardew!" yelled a fag in the passage. "How's your cousin?"

Cardew made a rush for him, and the fag vanished, yelling with laughter. With gloaming eyes, Cardew strode away to Tom Merry's study. The Terrible Three were there, Lowther having changed into his everyday attire by this time. The Shell fellows grinned as Cardew strode savagely in.

"Had any more of your relations to see

sense of humour. It will help to cure you of being such a snob. Trot away now! I want to be busy!"

Lowther went back into the study, and Cardew, when he had recovered his breath, limped away. He was licked, and there was nothing more to be done. Cardew was not a pleasant study-mate in No. 9 that evening.

CHAPTER 11.

A Surprise for Redfern.

TOM MERRY & CO. had laughed heartily over the jape on the snob of St. Jim's, but, having laughed over it, they dismissed Cardew from their minds. The Terrible Three waited nothing to do with him, though they charitably hoped that his lesson had done him good. Study, No. 6 steered



Cardew's "Cousin."
(See Chapter 9.)

you, dear boy?" asked Lowther, in a most affable tone.

"You cheeky hound!"

"Eh?"

"Do you think I'm goin' to stand this?" shouted Cardew.

"Yes, I rather think so."

"Then I'll show you."

Cardew made a spring at Lowther. Tom Merry caught him by the shoulder and swung him back. Without ceremony, Tom grasped the struggling Fourth-Former in his sturdy arms, and pitched him out of the study.

Cardew landed there with a bump. He sprang up, his face flaming.

"Come out, Lowther, you coward!"

"My dear chap, I'll come out!" said Lowther cheerfully. "I dare say you'll wish I hadn't in a few minutes."

Lowther came out promptly. For five minutes there was a terrific scrap in the Shell passage. At the end of five minutes Cardew lay on the floor without an ounce of breath left in him, and Monty Lowther smiled down on him benevolently, mopping his injured nose carefully, at the same time.

"You ought to learn to take a joke, Third-Form!" he said. "Try to develop a

clear of him, so did Julian & Co., and Kangaroo and his friends. As for the New House fellows, they made no secret of their dislike and contempt. Even in his own study Clive avoided him, though they had not come to fisticuffs again. But for Ernest Levison, Cardew would have felt very lonely indeed. He no longer had much to do with Racke and Crooke and their set. Racke and Crooke, certainly, had come round, after the true identity of Cousin Dick was revealed, but Cardew repulsed them with angry scorn. That shady set, whom he had taken up as a last resource, had turned on him once, and he did not mean to forget or forgive it.

He was sitting in the study one evening, with his hands driven deep into his pockets, and a frown on his brow, when Levison came in. Clive was behind Levison, but, seeing Cardew in the study, he did not enter. Levison, however, came in. He sat down at the table and got out his books. Cardew looked at him.

"Beginnin' prep already?" he asked. "Yes, I've got to help my minor later."

"You take a lot of trouble about your minor," said Cardew.

"He's a good little chap."
"I'm getting fed up with St. Jim's," said Cardew, after a pause. "I seem to have made a bad break here."
"You have," assented Levison. "You'll live it down in time if you don't act the goat again. Why don't you apologise to Redfern?"

"I—apologise!"
"Why not?" said Levison, unmoved. "You're nobody in particular, are you?" Cardew flushed angrily.
"I won't quarrel with you," he said. "I shouldn't," agreed Levison. "You've quarrelled with enough fellows. No good adding me to the list."

"I hardly know why you're sticking to me," said Cardew, looking at him. "It isn't my money. You've shown that you don't want that. You don't want to join in any of the little plans I was layin' for hartin' a good time at this school."

"I don't mind telling you," said Levison. "You stood up for my minor. And I've been down on my luck myself, and a fellow stood by me and helped me through. Why shouldn't I do as much for you? Last term I'd have entered into all your rot and taken your money off you at my rot and banker. I was more unpopular then than you are now. I know what it's like."

"You seem popular enough now."
"I got on with the fellows," said Levison. "I like the change, as a matter of fact. I'm going to play in the Rookwood match when it comes off, and that's a bit better than sneezing off after fights out to play up at the Green Man with Lodgey and Banks. You seem to have got fed up with Racke & Co. yourself."

"Rotters!" growled Cardew.
"Hear, hear!"
"I've been thinkin' over things," said Cardew. "I never meant to act like a snob. I've been a good bit flattered, and so on, and—and perhaps a little rather a fool of. I haven't found things here as I expected."
Levison grinned.

"No; you expected to be a big Pandjandrum because your grandfather is a lord, and your pocket-book full of currency notes," he said. "Well, you can be popular with fellows like Trimble and Mellish on that account, if you like. What the dickens do you think a chap like Tom Merry would care about your dashed money? He doesn't want any of it."

"I'd like to set myself right with the fellows," said Cardew. "Not that I want to ask favours of anybody; but I don't like bein' looked on as a snob. I've got my faults, I suppose, but that's really not one of them. I—suppose it was just swank."
"You're getting on," said Levison. "Well, put your princely pride in your princely pocket, and go and apologise to Redfern. He's a good-natured chap, and may look over it."

Cardew did not reply. He sat for a long time in silence, while Levison worked. He left the study at last, and walked along to No. 5. He tapped at the door, and Dick Julian's voice called out:

"Come in!"
Cardew entered. Study No. 5 were at prep, but they left off work to glare at Cardew as he came in.

"There's the door!" said Kerruish.
"I've dropped in to speak to Hammond," said Cardew calmly.
"You needn't trouble," said Hammond. "Buzz off before I buzz a die at you!"

"We had a little disagreement the day I came here," said Cardew. "I was rather rude to you, Hammond. I really didn't mean it—only rot. I'm sorry!"

"Erh," said Hammond.
"I apologise!"
"Oh, crumbs!"
"That's all!" said Cardew, and he turned and left the study, leaving the chums of Study No. 5 staring.

The new junior sauntered across the quadrangle to the New House. He went in, and ascended the staircase. Figgins & Co. were chatting on the landing, and they frowned at the new-comer.

"If you're not looking for a thick ear, you'd better clear!" said George Figgins gruffly.

"I'm writing to see Redfern. Would you mind telling me which is his study?"
"Oh!" said Figgins, taken aback. "Study No. 5."
"Thanks!"

Cardew walked on, and tapped at Redfern's door.

"Trot in!" called out Redfern's voice. Cardew went in, to meet a deadly stare from Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence.

"You cheeky cad!" exclaimed Lawrence. "What do you mean by coming here?"
"I've come to apologise," said Cardew calmly.

"Who-a-at?"
"I acted rather like a cad the other day. I'm sorry!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Redfern.
"Anything else I can say?" asked Cardew.

"Anything," said Redfern grimly. "If you can see what a sneaking worm you were, and are sorry for it, your apology's accepted. Shut the door after you."

Cardew hesitated a moment, and then left the study.

"The silly rotter seems to be learning manners," remarked Lawrence, in wonder. "I shouldn't have expected that of him."

"The biggest duffer gets sense knocked into his head in the long run," said Owen. "I don't suppose he's had a very cheery time in his own House. Thank goodness he isn't in the New House!"

"Yes, that's a bit of luck," agreed Redfern. "He might have been planted on us. Pass the Latin die!"

Redfern & Co. went on with their work, and forgot all about Cardew. The latter returned to the School House with a thoughtful brow. Outside Study No. 6 the Terrible Three were chatting with Blake & Co. as he came by. Seven faces became elaborately unconscious in their expressions. But Cardew stopped.

"I've been over to the New House," he said.

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"Have you weally?" said Arthur Augustus politely.

"Yes, I've apologised to Redfern."

"Bai Jove!"

"Time you did!" remarked Blake.

"Didn't Reddy kick you out?" growled Horries.

"No; he didn't kick me out!"

"More duffer Reddy!" said I should have."

"Weally, Hewwies, an apology sets any matter right, you know," said Arthur Augustus reprovingly. "Cardew has done the wright thing. I wegard you as havin' acted in a wright and wpopah mannah, Cardew!"

"Thanks!" said Cardew. "If I'd had any doubts on the point, they would be set at rest now, of course!"

He walked on, leaving Arthur Augustus a little puzzled, and the other fellows grinning, over his last remark.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, after a pause. "The fellah is a wathah cheeky wottah, aftah all! I cannot help suspectin' that he was pullin' my leg!"

"Go hon!" said Lowther.

Cardew went on to his study. Clive was there with Levison.

"I've done it," said Cardew, with a grin. "While I'm in the vein, Clive, I'll apologise to you, though you really owe me one for knockin' me out as you did. Do I owe you any apology, Levison?"

"No," said Levison, laughing.

Clive laughed, too. There was more good-humour in No. 9 Study that evening; and later on, in the Common-room, Arthur Augustus came down off his pedestal, and favoured Cardew with a casual remark.

Monty Lowther was almost genial to him, convinced that his great jape had done Cardew good, and feeling the satisfaction that comes of a good action that has had good results.

But Cardew had really repented of his fault, or whether he had merely taken the easiest way of getting out of the odium it had brought upon him, was a question which even Levison, keen as he was, found it difficult to answer.

CHAPTER 12.

Mr. Ratcliff's Little Mistake.

"YAH! Oh! Ah! Yurrrrg!"

Cardew of the Fourth jumped.

It was dark in the quadrangle, dark and misty, and Cardew was almost feeling his way towards the School House, when that sudden uproar burst upon his ears, coming from the path under the elms. Cardew had been down under that letter in the box in the school wall that bordered the road. As he halted and stared towards the black patch of trees, two running figures came suddenly out of the shadows, and crashed into him together.

"Oh!" gasped one of them.

"Groogh!" gurgled the other.

Cardew caught at one of them to steady himself.

"What the dickens—" he ejaculated.

"Leggo!" panted a voice he knew.

"Redfern!" exclaimed Cardew.

"Shush, you silly ass! Who is it—a School House chap?"

"I'm Cardew!"

"Come on, Roddy!" Cardew recognised the voice of Lawrence. "Come on, you duffer! There'll be a crowd here soon!"

"Let go, Cardew!" said Redfern.

"Keep this dark!"

"What have you done?"

"Biffed old Ratty!" said Redfern, with a breathless chuckle.

"Mr. Ratcliff! Your Housemaster!"

exclaimed Cardew, aghast.

"Garrrg! Yurrrrgg!" came from under the trees.

"Why shouldn't we?" growled Lawrence. "He's been going for us for nothing! Figgy put gum in his slippers, and he caned us on suspicion, the rotter! We had to take out the caning somehow, and we've done it!"

"Keep it dark!" said Redfern anxiously.

"You silly asses!" said Cardew. "This means a flogging at least! Serve you jolly well right, too!"

"Mind your own business!" said Lawrence angrily. "Are you going to keep this dark, or are you a rotten sneak as well as a silly snob?"

Cardew flushed angrily in the darkness.

"Let him do as he likes," said Redfern. "I'm not asking any favours of the fellow. Come on! Let's get clear, anyway!"

The two New House juniors vanished into the darkness.

Cardew grinned. He had seen Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House, and had noticed that Ratty was not beloved in his House. Evidently the Housemaster's bad temper had exasperated Redfern & Co. beyond the limits of patience, and they had taken this extraordinary and risky method of getting their own back.

Mr. Ratcliff was still yelling and gurgling under the trees. From the loud howling, it might have been supposed that he Housemaster was seriously injured.

Cardew waited till the New House juniors were clear, and then ran towards the elms.

In the darkness he ran into a dark form, and instantly a grasp of iron closed on him.

"Ha! I have caught you!" gasped the New House master. "You need not struggle, you infamous young rascal! I have caught you! Who are you?"

"Let me go!" exclaimed Cardew.

"—"

"You are not a boy of my House," said Mr. Ratcliff, peering at him. "Who are you? Give me your name at once!"

"I'm Cardew!"

"Come with me!"

Mr. Ratcliff started for the School House, fairly dragging the astonished and dismayed junior with him.

"I didn't touch you, Mr. Ratcliff!"

gasped Cardew. "I heard you call out, and came to help!"

"Do not tell me absurd falsehoods!"

ground out Mr. Ratcliff. "You shall answer to the Head for this, Cardew! Come!"

"But I tell you, sir—"

"Silence!"

Headless of the junior's excited expostulations, the New House master marched him away, and up the steps into the School House. There was a buzz from the fellows in the hall as they appeared in the light.

Mr. Ratcliff's appearance was extraordinary.

He was smothered in soot from head to foot. There was soot on his hat, soot on his overcoat, and soot still more thickly on his thin, acid face. The Housemaster was barely recognisable.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "What evah has happened?"

"Follow me to the Head, Cardew!"

thundered Mr. Ratcliff, releasing the junior at last.

"But I—I tell you, sir—"

"Follow me at once!"

Mr. Ratcliff whisked away towards the Head's study, shedding soot at every step. The excited juniors surrounded

Cardew.

"What on earth have you been up to?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Nothing. I—"

"Ratty looks as if he's been enjoying himself," chuckled Monty Lowther. "After the feast comes the reckoning, old scout. Go and pay up!"

"I never touched the old fool!" muttered Cardew. "I heard him yell, and went to help him, and he collared me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! That was vevy unfortunate."

"Awfully unfortunate!" grinned Lowther. "You shouldn't play the good Samaritan, Cardew, where Ratty is concerned. He's never grateful. He wasn't grateful the time I put a kipper in his Sunday topper."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You must have been an ass, Cardew," said Clive. "What did you want to go for Ratty for? You've nothing to do with him. He's a rotter, but—"

"But he's not our game," said Levison.

"What did you do it for?"

"I didn't, I tell you!"

"Did you see who did?" grinned Lowther.

"Yes, but—"

Cardew paused. He realised that he was in a very serious scrape. Redfern and Lawrence, utterly ignorant of Mr. Ratcliff's unfortunate mistake with regard to Cardew, were safe in their own House.

"Follow me, Cardew!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff from the end of the passage.

And he disappeared into the Head's study, sooty as he was.

Cardew followed him reluctantly.

In the Head's study Mr. Ratcliff was standing trembling with rage, and dropping soot on all sides on the Head's carpet. Dr. Holmes was on his feet, with a brow like thunder.

"That is the boy, sir!" panted the New House master. "Look at me, sir! Look at the state I am in! It was Cardew—"

"Cardew!" thundered the Head.

"I—I did not touch Mr. Ratcliff, sir—"

"What?"

"It is false!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. "I was suddenly attacked in the dark, Dr. Holmes, and a bag of soot was smashed upon my head. I seized this boy who still groping blindly."

"I went to help Mr. Ratcliff, sir, as I heard him call out," said Cardew. "I thought he might be hurt or something."

The Head looked sharply at him.

"You were close on the spot, it appears, Cardew?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you see anyone else in the quadrangle?"

Cardew did not reply.

"Answer me, boy!" thundered the Head.

"Yes, sir," said Cardew slowly.

"Who was it?"

Silence!

"You declare, Cardew, that you did not assault Mr. Ratcliff, and that someone else was there, and the Head is omniscious tomes. I can scarcely credit your statement, but I am willing to give you every chance. Tell me who else was in the quadrangle, to your knowledge."

Cardew did not speak.

"Enough!" exclaimed the Head sternly. "Cardew, you have been guilty of a most wicked and disrespectful outrage upon a master of this School. If you were a new boy here, I should expel you from the School."

"Oh!" muttered Cardew.

He drew a deep breath.

"As it is," said the Head, "I shall administer a severe flogging—most

THE GEM—No. 476.

severe! Mr. Ratcliff, you may leave this matter in my hands. You can accept my assurance that this wretched boy's punishment will be most exemplary. Kindly send someone for Taggles as you go!"

Mr. Ratcliff whisked out of the study, still shedding soot. There were subdued grins on the faces of the fellows he passed in the hall.

"Mercy!" he rapped out savagely.

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"Go to Taggles' lodge at once, and inform him that the Head requires his presence immediately."

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Ratcliff scuttled away across the quadrangle to his own House. He would have been pleased to witness Cardew's exemplary punishment, but his most pressing need at this moment was a bath, with plenty of soap.

CHAPTER 13.

Facing the Music.

"**B** Al Jove! That means a flogging', dear boys!" said Arthur Augustus, in hushed tones. Tom Merry had gone to fetch Taggles. The juniors did not need telling what that meant. Taggles was wanted to hoist the unfortunate junior, who was waiting in the Head's study.

"Well, he must have been a howling ass," said Monty Lowther. "I'd like to see Ratty scoted every day of the week, but it's rather thick, scoting a House-master. Cardew shouldn't have stayed to be caught. It was — ahem! — injudicious!"

"It was feckfully weekless," said Arthur Augustus. "I cannot help wergardin' it as disrespectful, though Watty is wathah a Hun."

"Cardew said he didn't do it," said Clive. "I don't see what he could have done against Ratty, either. He's not in the New House. More likely Figgly or Reddy, or one of those chaps."

"Ratty caught him," said Blake, shaking his head. "Anyway, if it wasn't Cardew, he's only got to say so. He mightn't care to sneak."

Blake grunted.

"I don't see why a howling snob shouldn't be a sneak, too. Snobbery and sneaking go together."

"Well, yes, but —"

Tom Merry came back into the House, followed by Taggles, grunting. Taggles did not like being disturbed in the evening.

The old porter went down the passage to the Head's study, and the juniors gathered in a hushed crowd. Cardew had done his best to make himself unpopular while he had been at St. Jim's. But a flogging was a serious matter, and such an outrageous trick upon a House-master was certain to be punished by as severe a flogging as the Head could bring himself to administer. There was a good deal of sympathy for the unfortunate junior who was awaiting his fate in the Head's study.

"It's wathah hard lines," murmured Arthur Augustus. "I weally twust Watty was not makin' a mistake."

"Cardew would soon set him right," grunted Herries.

"Yaas, I suppose he would."

"It's hard cheese, all the same," said Tom Merry. "The Head's bound to lay it on for a trick like that."

The juniors listened in painful suspense. It was, as Monty Lowther remarked, a fate that might have befallen any of them, so they were bound to be

sympathetic. But the expected yells were not heard from the study.

As Taggles came in, Dr. Holmes pointed to Cardew.

"Kindly take that boy up for a flogging, Taggles."

"Yes, sir," said Taggles, quite brightly.

Perhaps the pleasure of assisting in a flogging compensated Taggles for being dragged away from the comforts of an armchair, a pipe, and a glass of gin-and-water.

Cardew opened his lips as if to speak. His face was pale.

"Have you anything to say?" demanded the Head sternly.

Cardew breathed hard.

"You have said, sir, that if I were not a new boy, you would have expelled me!"

"Most certainly."

Cardew's eyes glistened for a moment. The Head's reply left him in no doubt as to what would happen to Redfern if he spoke. Why should he suffer for a fellow he did not like—a fellow who had been the cause—the innocent cause, certainly—of the unpopularity he had earned in his House? Then Cardew closed his lips tightly.

"I am ready, sir!" he said quietly.

Taggles took up the junior.

The fellows in the passage did not hear a single cry from the study. But they heard the steady swish-swish of the birch.

"Poor old chap!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "He's goin' through it! He must be as hard as nails."

"Good man!" said Lervison. "I don't think I could stand that without a yelp. Swish! swish! swish! swish! swish! It seemed to the juniors that the sound

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would never end. And still there came no cry from the study.

Dr. Holmes paused at last.

"You may put Master Cardew down, Taggles," he said in a hard voice.

Cardew slid to the floor. His face was pale with pain, and his lips were trembling. Taggles, at a sign from the Head, left the study.

He have punished you severely, Cardew," said the Head. "The matter ends here. But if there should be any further outbreak of such reckless in subordination, you will be sent away from the school. You may go!"

Cardew left the study without a word.

He walked down the passage a little unsteadily, his face white. He looked at the crowd of juniors without speaking.

"Was it worse bad, dear boy?" asked Arthur Augustus softly.

Cardew nodded.

"Lucky not to be sacked!" said Blake. "You've really got off pretty cheaply, Cardew."

Cardew's white lips curled in a cynical smile.

"The Head hasn't sacked me because I'm new here," he said. "He's giving me another chance for that reason. Kind of him, isn't it?"

"Well, it really is kind of him," said Tom Merry. "For goodness' sake, don't be such a reckless ass again, Cardew! There's a limit, you know."

"You didn't try to put it on somebody else, after all," asked Reckie, with a grin. "It was all gas, what you said about another chap being there—"

Cardew looked at him without replying.

"Was it gas?" asked Crooke. "You don't want us to believe that you've taken a flogging rather than give the right man away? Ha, ha! That would be rather rich!"

"Yes, would it?" said Cardew. "It was gas, of course—I'm rather given to passing, you know. Of course, if it had been another chap, and I'd known, I should have given him away at once—naturally, I shouldn't expect you to believe anything else, Crooke."

"I shouldn't believe anything else, anyway," said Crooke, with a grin.

Cardew went slowly and painfully up the staircase. Levison and Clive followed him to No. 9 Study. Cardew did not sit down.

"You'll feel better later," said Clive consolingly.

"I hope so!" groaned Cardew. "I don't feel very lively now."

"I—I say—" Levison hesitated. "If I were you, Cardew, I—I shouldn't say any more about—about—"

Cardew grinned.

"You're going to warn me not to try to get a bit of cheap glory by pretending that I took this for another chap?" he asked.

"Well, yes," said Levison frankly. "What you said would give that impression. Of course, there's nothing in it?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Cardew. "Am I the kind of chap to take a flogging to save another fellow from being sacked?"

Levison stared at him.

"I'm blessed if I know!" he confessed. Cardew laughed again, and groaned with the next breath. That evening was a very painful one for Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth.

"Flogged!"

Redfern fairly howled out the word. It was morning, and the juniors were out in the quadrangle before morning.

Cardew. The New House fellows had just learned what had happened the previous evening.

"Flogged!" echoed Lawrence.

"Cardew—flogged!"

"Nothing to be surprised at, considering what he did, surely," said Tom Merry.

"But he didn't!" shouted Redfern, in dismay.

"What?"

"I did it—Lawrence and I!"

"You?" yelled Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

"You!" stuttered Jack Blake.

The silly ass!" gasped Lawrence. "How on earth did Ratty fix on him? We never dreamed of such a thing, of course. Why didn't he send us word? He must have known we'd own up!"

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry, with a deep breath. "I think I catch on now. The Head told him he'd sack him for it, if he wasn't a new kid. That is why he made it a flogging. You'd have been sacked, Ratty!"

"Oh, crumbs!" said Redfern. "And—and my scholarship of— My hat! I was a howling ass to do it!"

"You were!" agreed Tom Merry.

"But it's all serene! Cardew was meant to—"

"That snob!" muttered Lawrence, in wonder.

"We can't let it go at that!" said Redfern resolutely. "If we'd had the least idea anybody was being accused of it we'd have come over, sack or no sack, and owned up! You fellows know that!"

"Yaaa, wataah."

Tom caught Redfern by the arm. "No good jawing now, Reddy. Cardew's had the flogging, and it's no good your getting sacked into the bargain. Keep mum!"

"Bai Jove! Heah he is! Cardew, dear boy." There was a wonderful cordiality in Arthur Augustus' tone.

"Cardew, it appears that it was Weddy all the time—"

"Just found it out?" yawned Cardew.

"Yaaa. It was fearfully decent of you, Cardew! Old Weddy would have been sacked, and had his scholarship taken away."

"That's why I kept mum," said Cardew coolly. "A flogging isn't so bad as the order of the boot, and I owed you something, Redfern. I treated you like a cad the other day, and told you afterwards I was sorry. If you like to call the account square now, there's my hand on it."

Redfern took, willingly enough, the hand that was frankly extended to him.

"You're a good sort," he said. "If you like, I'll go in to the Head now and tell him how it was—"

"What rot! I've paid your bill," said Cardew, laughing. "What's the good of paying the same account twice?"

He sauntered away, whistling.

Perhaps he felt happier. Anyway, Shell and Fourth, School House and New House, alike felt differently about him. It was hard to size up the fellow; but, whatever he might be, he wasn't altogether the rank outsider they had thought him!

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"FACING THE MUSIC!" by MARTIN CLIFFORD.)

THE EDITOR'S CHAT.

For Next Wednesday:

"FACING THE MUSIC!"

By Martin Clifford.

Ralph Reckness Cardew, who has figured prominently in the last two stories, is again well in the fore in this. He has gained some credit among the fellows of the Fourth and Five by his behaviour in the affair of Mr. Ratcliff v. Redfern and Lawrence; but he throws it all away by his latest escapade, which bids fair to land Tom Merry in no light trouble. Yet in the event he redeems himself somewhat, and the timely intervention of others he has stood by saves him from expulsion, which had seemed inevitable. He remains a puzzle to St. Jim's.

'A FRIENDLY READER.

I always like to hear from really nice boys, and I have for some time past thought of starting a special Comic Column for such letters as the one I give now. They relieve the dull tedium of office-work no end; and, although they waste paper—not much in this case, as

the writer had economically cut off part of a bill-head to type his epistle upon—they add to the Post Office revenue—when stamped, which is not always the case.

"Dear Sir,—I have been a reader of the competition papers for nearly a year now, and have been satisfied until lately. Owing to the sudden ending of the Storytelling Competition, I am very much dissatisfied at the Gem in its new clothing. I think that you are a frauding (sic) publisher. I bet that you would not dare to publish this in the Gem."

There is no signature, but underneath my esteemed correspondent has typed: "Rate—losh—piffle—rubbish!"

No other comment on his letter is needed after that! He has my thanks for his very accurate self-criticism.

THE ST. JIM'S GALLERY.

Letters urging upon me the desirability of starting this feature have simply poured in since I inquired my readers' opinions on the subject. No one says "No!" and not one single objection to the Greystriars series has arrived.

The thing will have to be done. I am as keen as any man can be on pleasing my readers, though I have no belief in the melted-butter and soft-soap method!

But it may be some weeks before I can start the series. These character sketches are not easily written. I can tell you. The writer knows all the characters well—at least, as well as anybody but the authors do, and one could not ask the authors to write up their creations—and the writer has a pretty good memory; but he cannot pretend to remember everything, and hours of hard, though pleasant, work have to be put in over old volumes before a sketch is written.

Don't be impatient, then! The St. Jim's Gallery is positively coming! As to when—you will hear that in due course.

Your Editor

EXTRACTS FROM

"Tom Merry's Weekly" & "The Greyfriars Herald."

MISUNDERSTOOD. By George Kerr.

AVERAGES are all very well, and so is the ration notion; but Lord Devonport doesn't know Fatty Wynn.

The average ration is not exactly what anyone in particular has found out to be enough—we all know that. It is a lot more than some very small eaters require, and a heap less than others, who are naturally big eaters, do. It is all right in the Army, I suppose. They just burn up or feed to the pigs what the chaps can't eat through having their backs reckoned on the big eater's scale all the way round. At least, they used to seem satisfied to do that; perhaps it's one of the things that the new Government have changed for the better.

It seems a pity to feed what is left over to other pigs—four-legged ones—while fellows like Baggy Trimble of the School House and that specimen, Bunter, at Greyfriars are about. They ought to go and live near a camp. I could tell you things about Trimble, and I have heard one or two queer yarns lately about Bunter.

But our man Fatty isn't a Trimble or a Bunter. For one thing, he does lots more to get a healthy appetite than they do.

Fatty thinks no end of the new Government, which is quite natural, as he is Welsh. Until a little while ago he maintained that Mr. Lloyd George was the sort of man who never makes mistakes. I don't know that sort of man myself; but that was what Fatty said.

Now he says the Prime Minister has gone wrong once—about Lord Devonport!

"It's all very well for you chaps," Fatty said mournfully, after the Head had talked to us about the absolute necessity of practising patriotism by eating less. "But if it lasts more than a week or two I don't see how I'm going to live through it."

And the poor old chap was really so depressed that we felt it would be too bad to jape him.

"Look here, Fatty," said Figgins, "they reckon by the number of heads, where there's a family. They count the kid in the cradle as one, though it's a dead sure thing the kid can't wolf 25 lbs. of meat or lbs. of bread a week. Suppose we apply the same system to this study? I'll bet Kerr and I are under the figures. That leaves a margin for you."

Fatty brightened up a little at that. "I doubt it," I said. "For there really isn't much the matter with either my appetite or Figgys's. They're 'no that bad,' as folks say in my native country."

I figured it out as well as I could. Cake, pastry, and so on reckons as bread, of course. And the sausage in sausage-rolls is meat—when it isn't chiefly bread. It counts, either way.

And when I had done figuring, it seemed that Figgys and I would have to practise subtraction on our account, instead of addition on Fatty's. For I could not begin to make us come under the mark, either for bread or meat. As for the sugar, I gave it up. What can

you do when you start out with a beastly fraction like $\frac{3}{4}$, and then have to divide it by 7?

"We shall have to draw in a bit ourselves, Figgys," I said. "As for having anything in the way of a surplus to chuck to Fatty—nothing doing!"

"You chaps had better have mine between you," Fatty said mournfully. "I shan't be wanting it long. I shall be dead in less than a week!"

"Chump! We can't have yours after that, because there will be only two of us then instead of three," replied Figgys.

Fatty said it was too tragic for mere words. And he seemed to mean it, too.

He would not come to fester next day, or the day after. He would not go for a bike ride or even for a walk. He said that the only chance for him to escape absolute starvation was to cut out exercise altogether. We told him he would get fatter than ever that way.

"Rot!" he said. "I shall be a living skeleton in less than a month! I'm only living now on my reserves of fat—when that's done it's all up with me."

We were not cut down absolutely to the bedrock ration at St. Jim's. I fancy the Head must have gone pretty closely into the past figure of consumption, and come to the conclusion that it was not fair to suppose we had all been gorging for all we were worth, and that perhaps even Lord Devonport might see that a chap still growing and taking plenty of exercise would need a bit more than the average for a household that might include a baby in arms, a grandfather and grandmother without any teeth, and even one or two more non-combatants, if you get what I mean. At St. Jim's we had not any of that sort at all to help out the rations for the rest.

But the tuckshop stuff was cut down stringently, and, of course, that hit Fatty hard.

By and by we missed Fatty's good deal. He appeared to be shunning us; and when the three of us were together he seemed to have something weighing heavily on his mind.

Stories about Baggy Trimble were being told. I am not going to repeat them here. What could you expect of Trimble but that he should do just what he did—try every sort of dodge to get more grub? If the ration had been three times the size Baggy would still have groused and swindled.

But neither Figgys nor I liked it when the same sort of tales began to be told about our man Fatty.

And we would not believe them. If we could have found out who started them that chap's ration would have been enough for him for a week or two, for he should have made him eat his own lies!

For Fatty is as staunch and decent as a chap can be.

But grub is his weakest spot. And it was not wonderful, I suppose, that somehow or other doubts began to creep in even on us after a bit. Neither Figgys nor I liked owning to them at first. But every day Fatty seemed to get more and more mysterious, and we could not see that he got any thinner.

Of course it was not to be expected that a fellow would lose flesh much in so short a time, when he had what would have been quite enough grub for most people; but it was a bit queer.

It's horrid to doubt a chum. Not that what the rotters said Fatty was doing could fairly be called a crime. Thousands of other people all over the country were doing it—waiting until compulsion came along, I suppose. They seemed to be able to make it right with their consciences, though; but I'm hanged if I could believe old Fatty's conscience felt easy.

The tale was that he sneaked off to Rylcombe, or even to Wayland, to get grub—quantities of grub! You know how such yarns grow. I had to punch Clampe's head for asking whether it was true that seventeen empty salmon-tins, twenty-nine sardine-tins, thirteen jam-pots, scraped to the last smear, and various other things of the sort had been found in our cupboard. After that some of the asses took to calling old Fatty our "skeleton in the cupboard."

It was fairly rotten; but we should not have minded so much if we had been dead sure there was nothing in it.

We three don't stand on ceremony with one another at most times; but somehow neither Figgys nor I found it easy to ask Fatty straight out whether there was any foundation for those yarns, though we knew very well that it would have been the best thing to do. That was because we had let doubts creep in.

We three are old chums. We have been through lots of things together. But this mystery was rotting up everything.

Fatty was never to be found between classes or on half-holidays. We watched, but we could not catch him slipping out for grub. He just disappeared.

And at last he began talking in his sleep.

"Bread," I heard him mutter. And then something that sounded like "klyehb." "Meat," he murmured, and—as nearly as I could make out—"myahsa." "Sugar," and then "sakhlar."

Was the poor old chap raving? The rations seemed to have got on his brain; perhaps because there was not enough of them to be much good to the other place—where Lord Devonport would naturally have expected him to put them, I mean.

I woke Figgys up, and we both listened.

"Peas are—"

What were peas, anyway, besides being peas, of course? He left that unelated, and went on:

"Sees ess, and aitch en."

"He's gone stark, staring, raving mad!" said Figgys. "We'd better wake him up, and stop it!"

"Better not," I said. "If he is mad he don't know it so long as he's asleep, and he isn't dangerous."

Fatty tossed about. His brain seemed to be at work all the time. Half the things he muttered did not sound as if they had any sense in them at all.

Next morning the whole mystery was cleared up!

And all through Lathom catching Fatty attending to something else in class when he ought to have been at algebra!

"Bring that book here, Wynn!" said our Form-master sharply.

Fatty looked scared. He obeyed, of course. The book was a shabby thing with blue covers; not at all an interesting kind of book, one would have said, to see it at that distance.

Mr. Lathom opened it. He is not so sarcastic as some masters; but he can be so in a quiet sort of way when he likes.

"The study of languages is an excellent thing in itself, Wynn," he remarked; "but I cannot consider a mathematical class a proper place for the study of Russian!"

Fatty flushed to a beetroot colour, and looked across towards Figgy and me—1108 right at us, but our way—as if he was worried about our hearing that.

I don't want to brag; but all my life I have gone in for noticing things a bit more than most chaps, and I have once or twice had a little bit of success in the detective line.

And the occurrence in Form gave me a clue. It was a very slender clue at first; but it had grown before classes were over.

I grabbed Fatty as we came out, and Figgy and I got him up to our study. He didn't struggle, but he looked half obstinate and half ashamed. Lathom had given him back the book, and he had stuck it in his pocket.

"Let's have a look at that, old scout," I said.

"What for? Oh, I say, Kerr, it's no bizney of yours!"

But I had lugged it out by this time. It was someone or other's Russian grammar. I looked inside, but it didn't help me much. The words that were in English were all right, of course; but the Russian words were teasers. The letters were different from ours in some cases, and even when they were the same they didn't always seem to me to spell anything.

Fatty, I said, "what's the Russian for 'bread'?"

"What on earth—"

"Shut up, Figgy! Now, then, did you?"

"Klyeh—at least, that's as near as I can pronounce it."

"And for 'meat'?"

"Let's see; oh, myahso. But I dare say I couldn't make a Russian understand what I meant."

"And for 'sugar'?"

"Sakhar; but it's spelt c-a-x-a-p. That's jolly rum, isn't it, Kerr?"

"How is that?"

"Well, you see, the Russian letter 'p' is our 'r', and 'c' is our 's', and then their 'n' is made something like an 'h'."

Figgy was still in the dark; but light was flooding in upon me. If you will look back at the things I have reported Fatty as saying in his sleep, you will see that the Russian words for "bread" and "meat" and "sugar." And the things that sounded like ravings were due to his going over what he had memorised about the letters. "P's" "r's"—see? "C's" "s's"—do you twig?

Of course, what old Fatty naturally would do when he waded in to learn a language would be to mug up the words for different sorts of grub. Especially if he thought he would ever need to use the language. And I rather fancied Fatty had an idea about that.

"Well, this fairly leaves me gasping!" said Figgy. "Fancy old Fatty starting in to swot up Russian on his own!"

"What could I do?" asked Fatty, half

sulkily—though that is not his line as a rule. "I daren't take any exercise—it made me so beastly hungry. And we're put on our honour, so I couldn't play Baggy Trimble's game, and go getting in grub on the sly. Besides—"

He stopped short. "Nobody else knows old Fatty like Figgy and I do. The fellows think he is no end matter-of-fact. So he is, in some ways; but he has an imagination, too. He's Welsh, you know, and none of us Celts lack that. Quite wild things come into his head now and then. It wasn't so wild for a chap who knew Welsh to think he might learn Russian; but—"

"How does a fellow get to Russia now?" I asked him.

"The Baltic's no go," he answered. "You have to go by boat to the north of Sweden. Then by rail. I'm not quite sure yet—"

He stopped again, and his jaw dropped.

"You may think you're going, old scout; but we jolly well sha'n't let you!" I told him.

"Let him what? You're talking riddles, Kerr!" said Figgy.

"Go to Russia. Why, Fatty, they have four needless days a week there!"

"What?" gasped Fatty. "Why, I thought they had no end of grub, not being able to send it abroad—and, of course, not letting the Huns have any!"

"It's true, old chap."

"Hanged if I'm going then! And, anyway, it would take me about three lifetimes to learn Russian."

"You ass! Did you think you were going to scoot off to Russia?" howled Figgy.

"Why not? Other people go. Lord Milner went, and they had banquets and all that, and—but I'm afraid it's no go. I sha'n't bother any more about their beastly language if they are as badly off for grub as all that. Decent chaps, of course, but—"

That is what old Fatty had been doing when the slanderers made out he was copying Baggy Trimble—mugging up Russian in a secret corner near the hot-water pipes! And he hadn't had a single extra scrap of grub—that!

Did he really think he could get to Russia—or really mean to go?

Oh, ask me another!



GENTEEL GEORGE

(The Society Crook).

A Romantic Poem for Romantic Readers.

By PETER TODD.

(EDITORIAL NOTE.—Not to be taken too seriously!—H. W.)

The hero, with his hair in curl,
Approached the charming, blushing girl,
The fairest of her lovely sex—

Sternly he eyed her through his specs.

"Dear Bridget, dost thou love thy Joe?"

"Oh, Joseph—oh, not half, you know!"

"You love me!" Now he seized her hand—

"I love you, Joe, to beat the band!"

"Then you love not my hated foe?"

"I love none other but my Joe!"

Their lips were just about to meet,

When both were startled off their feet.

For from without there came a sound

Which held them fearful and spellbound.

The sound of laughter, harsh and gruff:

"Ha, ha! He, he! Ho, ho! Wuff,

wuff!"

The villain enters—dark and grim,
Immaculate and tall and slim.
The hero knows him in a trice,
The man he hates—a man of vice!
The battered hat, the burst-out boot,
The tattered scarf, the shabby suit,
The unwashed face, the uncropped hair,
The beery nose, the boozey stare,
All these signs point to one grim fact—
"Tis Genteel George—aristocrat!
The man who, unsuspected, roams
Throughout society's richest homes.
The suavest of the swell-mob crooks,
Who chats with earls and counts and
dukes.

He laughs again, so harsh and gruff:
"Ha, ha! He, he! Ho, ho! Wuff,
wuff!"

"You love me not, I heard you say?
The penalty your life shall pay!

You both shall die!" the villain quoth;
And thereupon he bound them both.

Then George came down to gibes and
jeers;

His drawing accents burnt Joe's ears.
"You thought you could defy me—
what?"

But things for you I'll make too hot!
A dread contrivance I'll design
To kill you, fore the clock strikes nine.
Look! In my hand you see I hold
Two boxes—one is full of gold;

The other—this'll turn you white!—
The other's full of dynamite!"

And then he laughed—'twas harsh and
gruff:

"Ha, ha! He, he! Ho, ho! Wuff,
wuff!"

"I stole the gold from Earl de Gyvres,
The dynamite's to end your lives!"

He lit a fire, and o'er it hung
An oblong box, which slowly swung.

His victims paled, for from the string
They saw a lighted candle swing!

The vile arrangement was complete;
At nine the pair their doom would meet!

The candle would have burned the rope,
The box would drop—for them no hope!

Joe's pallid face, 'neath crimson hair,
Made up a picture of despair.

Exit the villain—from the street
They heard his laughter, nowise sweet—

That laugh which was so harsh and
gruff!

"Ha, ha! He, he! Ho, ho! Wuff,
wuff!"

A moment later from without
A stunning crash was heard—a shout,
An oath, a curse, a yell, a roar,
A mighty bang, and all was o'er!

A trivial error George had made,
And with his life for it he paid.

To him the fates had been unkind—
The box of gold he'd left behind;

The dynamite, by error taken,
Dropped—popped, and George was badly
shaken!

So, victim to his own device,
George passed—but not to Paradise!

The hero and his bride no more
Will hear that suave-voiced roar,
That laugh, which was so harsh and
gruff:

"Ha, ha! He, he! Ho, ho! Wuff,
wuff!"

THE GEM.—No. 476.

THE CRYPTIC COMMUNICATIONS.

By S. Q. I. FIELD.

(From the "Greyfriars Herald.")

"BUNTER!"
"Letter for Bunter!"
"Hallo! Where's Bunter?"
A crowd of juniors were grouped round the letter-rack, and were examining a letter addressed to "Master W. G. Bunter."

"Who's that calling me?" asked Billy Bunter, coming in at the doorway.
"Letter for you," said Vernon-Smith, handing the envelope to the Owl of the Remove.

"What are you grinning for?" asked Bunter, as he grabbed at the envelope.
"Was I grinning?" asked Vernon-Smith. "Well, it's certainly rather amusing for you to receive a letter. I suppose it's a remittance from one of your titled relations?"

"Bound to be!" said Bunter, slitting open the envelope. "I've been expecting a postal-order for some days. I— Why, there's no letter, and—"

"What about the postal-order?"
"There isn't one—only a pea—a beastly green pea!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Let's have a look at it!"
Billy Bunter brought forth the pea, and gazed at it open-mouthed. It was very annoying to expect a postal-order, and to receive only a green pea.

The Removites roared with laughter.
"Must be your allowance for the day," said Vernon-Smith, grinning hugely. "You know there's some talk about putting us on compulsory rations."

"It's a swindle!" declared Bunter, with indignation. "I wish I could get hold of the chap who sent this. I'd—"

"Hullo! What do you want?"
Bunter's remarks were addressed to the pageboy, who had suddenly appeared on the scene, and was laughing with the rest.

"Letter for you, Master Bunter," he said. "Just been left by hand!"

"Chuck it over!"
"Here you are!"
"I wonder who the dickens this is from?" exclaimed Bunter.

"Perhaps it's another postal-order," suggested Vernon-Smith. "Or it may be another green pea. When you've got a hundred or so of 'em, there will be enough to boil."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Open it, Fatty!"

Bunter opened the letter, and drew forth a piece of paper, upon which was the drawing of a human eye.

Bunter gasped. The Removites roared.
"Some mistake, Bunter!" said Squiff.

"What do you chaps know about this?" roared Bunter, glancing round. "I don't mind an ordinary jape, but this is a bit too thick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"If I catch the chap who's responsible,"

continued Bunter, "I'll have no mercy on him!"

"Who is it, Bunter?"
"How do I know?" growled Bunter. "That's what I want to find out."

"Master Bunter here?"
The Removites looked round, to see the figure of Blagg, the local postman, on the steps.

"Yes, I'm here," said Bunter. "What do you want? Another letter for me?"
"Yes," said Blagg—"a registered one. Sign here, please."

"Gee whizz!" gasped Vernon-Smith. "Another of 'em!"
Billy Bunter signed the official form, and grabbed at the letter.

"I suppose this contains some more silly nonsense like the others!" he growled. "Yes, I thought so. A horse! What silly fool has sent me this? I wish I could get hold of him! I'd give him socks!"

"What is it?" asked Vernon-Smith.
"A gee-gee!"

"Yes," said Bunter, holding out a piece of paper containing the drawing of a horse.

"Ha, ha!" roared Vernon-Smith. "That's jolly funny! First you receive a pea, then an eye, and then a gee-gee. Ha, ha, ha! It's too funny for words! I guess the fellow who sent you those knew something about you, Bunter!"

"Why?" exclaimed Bunter, not understanding the gist of the Bounder's remarks.

The Removites, however, were grinning with delight. They had tumbled!
"You grinning asses!" roared Bunter. "What are you laughing at, I'd like to know!"

Vernon-Smith controlled himself quickly.
"Look here, Bunter," he said. "You've received a pea, haven't you?"

"Yes."
"And an eye?"
"Yes."
"And a gee—a horse, you know?"

"Yes."
"Well, what does P-I-G spell?"
"Pig!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The Owl of the Remove gasped.
"Now say the fellow who sent you those envelopes doesn't know your real character!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Beasts!" roared Billy Bunter. "I'd like to know— Why, I believe you know something about it, Smiddy, you rotter! Let me get at him, you chaps!"

"Sorry, Bunter, but I've just remembered that I'm going to tea with Bob Cherry," said Vernon-Smith. "Ta-ta!"

Next moment Smiddy had disappeared up the stairs, and in less than two minutes Billy Bunter stood alone, gazing at his cryptic communications.

Letters to the Editor OF THE "Greyfriars Herald."

TURN THE OTHER CHEEK.

Dear Sir,—Whereas certain cheeky fags in your Form have the cheek to be cheeky to me, Horace Coker—one of their superiors.

I warn all fags that are cheeky to me in future to look out for themselves, for my iron hand will fall on them.

Print this letter in your rag as a caution.

(Signed) HORACE COKER.

[We note your note, Lord Horace, and duly tremble with fright at the prospect of your iron hand falling.—Ed.]

A SACK CASE.

Dear Sir,—I make an appeal to you as an Editor of a paper of some sort, thow I have very low opinion of the rag. How can a fellow with an appetite live, now that the prices of food are going up by leaps and bounds, when the postal authorities do not deliver his postal-order promptly?

Again I say, how can a fellow live?

Yours in deep anxiety,

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER.

[Poor old Bunter! Don't lose any time in coming to us for an explanation.—Ed.]

THE SECOND FORM'S CHALLENGE.

Dear Wharton,—As captain of the Second Form Football Club, I hereby challenge the Remove to meet us next Saturday.

If you refuse, we shall know it is funk, and that you are afraid of getting the licking of your lives.—Yours truly,

DICKY NUGENT.

[Master Nugent will have to be disappointed. The challenge is declined—without thanks!—Ed.]

A "FISHY" OFFER.

Dear Sir,—I kinder guess I offer my services to you as Assistant-Editor. I calculate I would make a slick jay at the game, so you had better watch out and take my services. Terms to be arranged on a business basis.

Waiting your answer.—Yours to a frazzle,

FISHER T. FISH.

[Our Yankee friend seems to be up to his scheming tricks again—the on the make, as usual. My answer to his letter is "No!" I am not sure if this is good American, but it's straight English.—Ed.]

MONTY LOWTHER'S

Hints to Young Housewives.

Don't waste the string from the brown-paper. Rope is getting scarce, and there will be more people who will need hanging before the war is over! We have one or two of them at St. Jim's.

Save the silk from old umbrellas. Cut into artistic patterns, it will serve for a mantelpiece border, or it will make a pair of breeks for Fido, or something—it's sure to make something, if only a beastly litter about the place!

SKIMPOLE—DETECTIVE.

By REGINALD TALBOT.

"HALLO, Skimmy! You're looking jolly blue about something! What's the matter? Professor Ballycrumpet met with an untimely end, or what?"

"Tom Merry made the remark as he came in from footer practice with his chums, Manners and Lowther.

"No, my dear Merry," replied Skimpole, the genius of the Shell. "I am glad to be able to report that Professor Ballycrumpet is in the very best of health. A very peculiar thing has happened."

"Go on!" said Monty Lowther.
 "Yes," said Skimpole seriously. "I deposited a small quantity of steak in the cupboard of my study this morning. I had contemplated having it for my tea, but when I returned from purchasing Professor Weakke's latest book on 'How to Become Strong,' I found, to my surprise, that the meat had gone."

"Perhaps the sun's melted it," suggested Monty Lowther.
 "I consider that in the highest degree improbable," said Skimpole. "At this period of the year the sun is not at all powerful, and—"

"You must have eaten it and forgotten all about it," remarked Tom Merry.

"Impossible, Merry!" said Skimpole. "I have the true scientific memory, and I cannot credit the likelihood of my eating it and retaining no recollection of the occurrence."

"Well, what's happened to it, then?"
 "That is what I am endeavouring to discover," replied Skimpole. "All I need is a strong magnifying-glass, and then I am confident that, in no prolonged period, the mystery will be elucidated."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "This is no matter for derisive mirth," said Skimpole. "A thief has practised his nefarious arts, and I am determined to run the malefactor to earth."

"You can't chase a chap with a magnifying-glass, Skimmy," said Tom Merry.
 "You do not entirely comprehend, my dear Merry," said Skimpole. "I should not contemplate giving chase with a magnifying-glass. The necessity for the glass is to examine footprints."

"Footprints?"
 "Yes," continued Skimpole. "The unprincipled thief, just as he stole my meat, left his footprints in my study. I am confident that, with the aid of a magnifying-glass, I can track the villain to his lair."

"But he may be miles away by this time," suggested Monty Lowther. "It'll probably take you weeks to run the chap down."

"Are you not aware, Lowther, that the scientific detective never abandons hope?" asked Skimpole.

"Then you're going to become a detective?" said Lowther.

"Most decidedly," said Skimpole. "For a short period it is necessary that I should enact that role."

"My aunt!" ejaculated Lowther.
 The Terrible Three roared with laughter at the idea of Skimpole's becoming a detective. Skimpole, however, kept an impassive look, and was not in the least upset by the reception his announcement had received.

"Can you lend me a magnifying-glass, Manners?" asked Skimpole, button-holing the photographer of the Shell. "I understand that all photographers possess them."

"Yes," said Manners. "I've got one. Come along to our study."

Very readily Skimpole followed the Terrible Three to their study. They were quite eager to assist Skimpole in his case, for they realised that it would be funny.

Manners found the magnifying-glass and handed it to Skimpole.

"Thank you very much," said Skimpole. "Now perhaps you will have the kindness to accompany me to my study, and I will reveal to you the footprints that I intend to track?"

"Any old thing!" said Lowther.
 "Lead on, Skimmy!"

Skimpole led the way to his study. Arrived inside, he pointed to several dirty marks on the floor. "There was no doubt that somebody with very muddy feet had been there."

"Sure they're not your own footprints?" asked Monty Lowther.

"My dear Lowther," said Skimpole, examining the footprints and taking their size by means of a yard-measure. "Don't you know that I always make a point of drying my boots properly before I enter the house?"

"I wasn't aware of it," said Lowther.
 "But never mind, got on with the washing!"

Skimpole went down on his hands and knees, and scrutinised and measured each of the prints in turn.

"My word! He's on the track!" said Lowther, as Skimpole commenced to crawl out of the study.

Along the passage Skimpole went, slowly but surely. Tom Merry & Co., roaring with laughter, followed behind. Down the stairs and out into the quad the amateur detective tracked the footprints.

"Mind your clobber!" warned Monty Lowther. "You'll get your bags a bit muddier if you crawl far like that!"

Skimpole looked up at the humorist of the Shell.

"My dear Lowther," said Skimpole, "a scientific detective has a mind exalted above mud. His one aim is to serve the cause of justice."

"All right!" said Lowther. "Get on with it!"

And Skimpole got on. Yard after yard he covered, measuring footprint after footprint. He seemed to be picking up mud by the pound on his trousers, but he was not in the least worried.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Tom Merry at length. "Do you see what he's making for?"

"The wood-shed!" cried Manners.

"Yes, Skimmy," said Tom Merry wryly. "You'd better be careful! Supposing the chap's armed, and is hiding in the shed?"

"Do not disturb your mind as to that," said Skimpole. "If he should be so misguided as forcibly to resist capture, I shall remunerate with him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out, Skimmy!" warned Monty Lowther. "You'll burst the door down if you're not careful!"

Skimpole looked up, to find that the door of the wood-shed was within an inch of his head.

"At last!" he murmured. "I will enter and apprehend the malefactor!"

Skimpole rose, pushed the door open very slowly, and walked in.

"Stand and—Ow! Yow! Yaroooh!"

Skimpole emitted yells of anguish, and struggled hard but vainly to get away. Something, or somebody, was holding him back.

"Get on!"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It's Towser!"

"Get on!"

Towser—Herries' bulldog—had taken a tight grip on Skimpole's trousers, and was holding on like grim death.

"Yow! Call him off, Merry, please!" bleated Skimpole. "He's hurting me! He's—Ow! Yaroooh! Grooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Capture him, Skimpole!" said Monty Lowther, who was almost doubled up with laughter. "Don't let him get away!"

"I can't!" wailed Skimpole. "Oh, rescue me, do! Ow! Yow! Oo!"

With a very indignant look on his face, Herries, the owner of Towser, came tearing towards the shed.

"You'd better call your blessed dog off," said Tom Merry, "before he lays Skimmy!"

"Down, Towser!" bade Herries. "Good dog, Towser! Come here, old boy!"

Towser released his grip on the unfortunate Skimpole, and strode towards his master, with a sample of Skimpole's trousering in his mouth.

Herries patted the bulldog's head affectionately.

"What's all the trouble about, Towser, old boy?" said Herries. "Did they ill-treat you, then?"

Seeing that Towser could not speak, Tom Merry decided to explain matters.

"Skimpole missed a bit of steak from his study," he said, with a grin, "and resolved to track the thief down. With the aid of a magnifying-glass he followed the footprints to the shed, and—"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Herries. "I took that bit of steak!"

"You did?"

"Yes," said Herries. "Towser was jolly hungry, and as I had nothing to give him, I thought Skimmy wouldn't mind if I borrowed his bit of steak until later on in the day. I meant to have told him about it, but I entirely forgot."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

"I'm awfully sorry, Skimmy!" said Herries.

"Do not distress yourself, my dear Herries," said Skimpole. "It is rather unfortunate that my trousers should be damaged so, but the truly philosophic mind regards such trivial occurrences with the proper detachment. I am thankful to know that my deductions were correct, and that I was on the right track from the initial moment. It is possible that in the future I may decide to become a detective, and track down those who live by crime."

"Don't, Skimmy—don't!" said Lowther, in pretended despair. "I'm going to be a barrister. I'm looking forward to my pension of twenty thousand pounds, or so, as a retired judge. But if you go and abolish crime, where do I come in?"

THE END.

NEXT WEEK!

"The Haunted Study,"

"Not Buster!"

And Other Attractions.

EXTRACTS FROM

"T.M.W." AND THE "C.H."

TOMPKINS TRIES TO DO HIS BIT.

By PATRICK MULVANEY (Mulvaevy Minor).

TOMPKINS shares No. 1 Study with you. It's no great catch for me. You never know what the silly ass will be up to next. He looks good and better. For a perfect exhibitioner, he takes the shortbread. This is his latest. He said that it was up to everyone to do his bit. For his part, he was going to do his. Tompkins was always one to get a bit above himself. He said that he knew for a fact the President of the great French Republic would be downright pleased if he knew that the charming language of La Belle France (this is what Tompkins said it) belongs to French. He said it all right where it belongs; and don't see why it should not stay there—if he knew—I mean, if that jolly-looking President with the queer name—I mean, that Tompkins said no means—Oh, hang it! I am getting so mixed that I think I had better start again.

Here goes! Tompkins thought it was up to us to talk French all the time. He said the President would like it. He said French was no end easy, too. It was a fat-headed notion, I think. Tompkins had never made much of a show with French, but suddenly he wired in like one of our boys.

It might have been all right if he had kept his thing to our study. But that's not Tompkins. He's a bit of a show-off with being called "Moscow." And old Tompkins got a thick ear from D'Arcy for saying to him, "Mon cher, je crois que vous êtes un esprit très chic," or something like that.

D'Arcy said he wasn't having any; and he told Tompkins that if he spread it about that he—Gussy—went on the spread there would be something besides the thick ear to go on with.

That didn't choke off Tompkins, though. He was thinking of the President of the French Republic, and he went down to a rack-shop and began to try the article out. It wasn't the school shop, Tompkins has a faint glimmering of sense, although a silly ass.

There was a man behind the counter. The man was in his shirt-sleeves. I know, because I was there. You see, as Tompkins wanted me to back him up, and as he was standing tight I agreed.

"Bon jour, mon ammy," said Tompkins to the stout, fat man.

The chap had his sleeves rolled up, which is always a bad sign.

"Who're you calling 'ammy,' young shaver?" he shouted, looking annoyed.

"Tompkins said it was French."

"Ho, is it?" said the fat man.

Tompkins began to explain that it was the duty of everyone to talk French in these times, just as a mark of esteem for our brave Allies on the other side of the sick transit.

"Off your blooming rocker, ain't you?" said the shopman, who was busy.

Tompkins said that was not a genteel remark to make, and he wanted some gattos.

Well, after all, it was nothing to do with me; so after Tompkins had ordered the grub, I let the silly ass do what he chose.

Tompkins was only sure of a few words

of French; but when he asked up, he went on talking things he had learned on the day side of his conversation book, and the English side you know. He said that if he remembered them, he would find the rest quite simple. Hanged if I could see it.

"Has the grand-oldest of the baker the cake?" he asked the shopman.

The shopman said he didn't, since who had run; it wasn't his affair, anyway, and he would thank Tompkins not to gas so much. But old Tompkins kept on muttering, leaving me to scold the chair. He asked the shopman a whole lot of things about the handsome shoes which the butcher wore on Sundays, and the chap got hotter and hotter, because he had to attend to other customers, and Tompkins put him off them.

I saw that he had no interest at all in what the tailor had for supper; but Tompkins didn't take an interest when I kicked him under the table.

"You just leave it to me," said Tompkins. "I'll reach them French!"

Tompkins went on to say that he had the diamonds of the old Jew, the gold belonging to the washerwoman, as well as his only aunt's shoes and her petticoat. I could see the shopman looking at Tompkins as if he thought him fairly off his chump; but he didn't say anything more, and I took another plate of cakes, as Tompkins said he would pay.

Then the trouble began, though not about the cakes. The chap behind the counter had finished work for the evening, and I heard him call to someone.

Tompkins seemed to have been muzzing on the public news, and to have got mixed with the French conversation stuff, for he was muttering now about hiding bodies, and gruesome things like that. If you ask me, Tompkins had gone off his rocker completely!

I was pretty busy, but I began to see something was up. A lot more people came into the shop, and the fat man was talking to one of them who was a policeman, though he was only wearing his trousers—you know what I mean, he hadn't got his blue coat on, but, of course, he was a bobby all the same.

"Better take the young rascal in charge at once, Mr. Stims," the shopman was saying.

The policeman in trousers came up to Tompkins, and tapped him on the shoulder.

"You come alonger me, young feller," he said.

Tompkins looked at him, and smiled—his chaps knew his soft sort of grin.

"I have the false money of the gang in Cleve's hole," he blabbed.

The policeman collared him, and the hot man in shirt-sleeves bounced round the counter, and said he was going to be paid in good money for the things we had had; he didn't want counterfeit coin. I nudged Tompkins, but he only stared at me dreamily.

"I took the plate from the church," he said, "I love to dance in the moonlight with the baker's pretty cousin. The uncle of the maker of candlesticks has big feet. I will have pommes suetes—"

"You young rip!" shouted the policeman, dragging Tompkins out of his chair. "I'll lock you up before you take any thing else!"

Of course, I couldn't stand by and see the silly ass lugged off to prison, and the shopman wouldn't let me explain that Tompkins was only speaking French. I gave Tompkins a shove to get him out of the place, and he tumbled back against the policeman, upsetting him, and they both landed on top of the shopman. They all went down, and if the shopman hadn't, like a silly chump, tried to save himself by catching hold of a barrel of flour, it might have been all right. But

the flour tipped sideways, and we all got it.

It was a flour show, I can tell you. Tompkins and I dodged round the shop. Tompkins is pretty nimble when he likes. He cleared the counter, but his foot stuck in the mass of stuff hanging by the window, and down he went, with a load of tarts and cheese-cakes on top; while the policeman, in trying to catch him, slipped down in a pool of treacle. I heard him saying things to himself—worse than any French, though a bit like it. But Tompkins and I were too busy to stop and listen just then.

A flat jam-tart was sticking to the back of my head but it was no use minding a little thing like that. Tompkins seemed to be afraid of having to go to prison for the rest of his life, and he made a rush for the door, with bits of pickles sticking to his trousers.

The crowd broke away, not liking the look of us, and we got across the High Street, and reached the fields. We found a safe place in a wood, and cleared up things a bit. I finished the jam-tart. It wasn't my fault that I had brought it away, and it was no good wasting it.

It was gooseberry jam, I think, though it tasted chiefly of brilliance.

Tompkins was quite upset. He told me that people were very ungrateful, and difficult to convince. But he has stopped talking now about his dear old friend, the President of the French Republic; and if I mention the subject, he says "Assez! But I know jolly well who the ass is."

ADVERTISEMENTS FROM THE

"GREYFRIARS HERALD."

(The Editor takes no responsibility for the genuineness of advertisements.)

Percy Bolsoway, Remove Passage, wishes to sell a pair of football boots, size 9, guaranteed to give 200 goals during the last four seasons. (Now you fellows with fairly long legs, your chance!) But we never saw the goals and Bolsoway is the only back who ever scored 200 of 'em, we should say.—(Ed.)

Alonzo Todd, Remove Passage, wishes to dispose of his learned works Professor Spooftum's books on "The Pedigree of a Worm," and "Do Animals Speak?" price 1s.—(Any reference to W. G. B. = Ed.)

Fisher T. Fish (late Non-York City) wishes to sell the following articles: 1 dozen safety razors—guaranteed to give a close shave; 5 clean clocks; 3 pocket-knives; 2 pairs of braces; and a selection of other useful articles. Best offers taken. (Dud brands, all of them.—Ed.)

Wanted: a fellow to cash postal-orders in advance. Agent, Apply: William George Bunter, remove, (people will money to chuck away only should apply.—Ed.)

Lecture on War Economy to be given by Mr. Paul Proust, M.A., in the Fifth-Floor Common-room on Friday, at 6.30 p.m. sharp. Roll up in your thousands.—(Sure to be.—Ed.)

A GREAT SACRIFICE.—Owner wishes to sell a pair of white mice, as he is unable to pay for their keep. Apply: Box 99.—(Ed.)

MONTY LOWTHER'S "HINTS TO YOUNG HOUSEWIVES."

Keep your housekeeping books up to date. "Statistics" comes in usefully here. Don't act in the date as 12/10 1s. 7d., or you will not be able to strike a balance.

Don't cut your husband short of matches. Look the other way when he puts out his hand for a box, and you will be blessed in the land!

Feed the beast! But remember the Rations!