THE FINGER OF SCORN!

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

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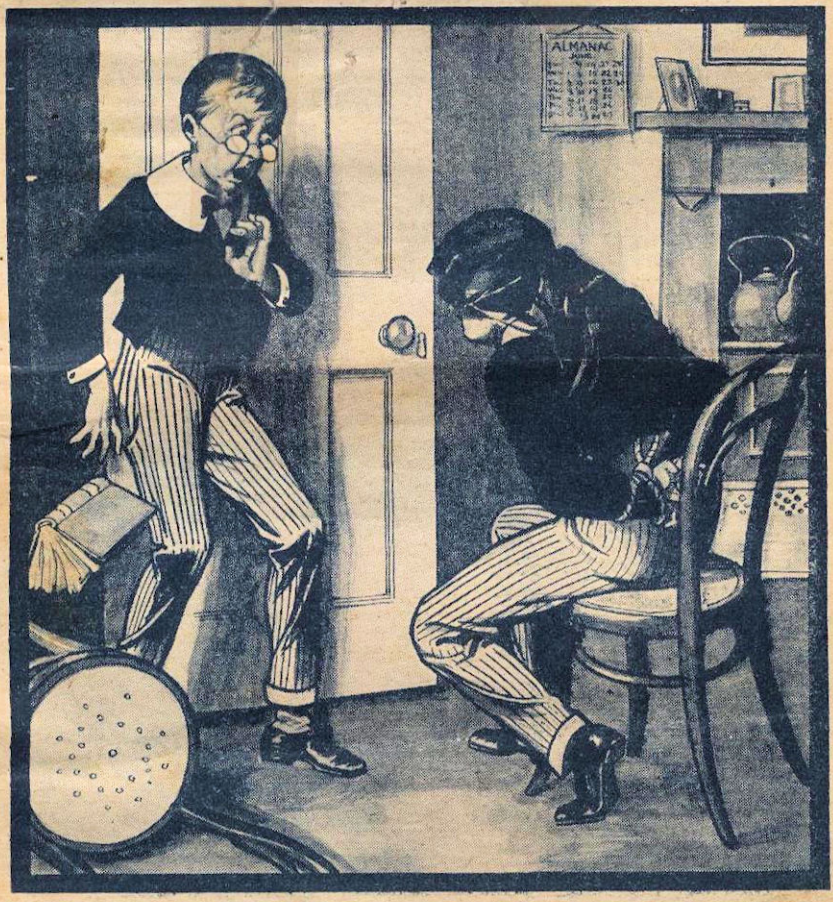


A STARTLER FOR SKIMMY!

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

THE FINGER OF SCORN!

By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.
Grundy Takes the Lead.

THUMP!

Grundy of the Shell brought his fist down upon the study table with a concussion that made the table jump.

"Something's got to be done!" said Grundy, in emphatic tones. George Alfred Grundy was always emphatic.

Wilkins and Gunn glared at their study-mate.

Grundy's emphasis was, in fact, ill-timed. Wilkins was pouring out the tea. Naturally he jumped as the table jumped, and the tea streamed over Gunn's knees.

"You burbling chump!" roared Gunn.

Grundy did not heed. He did not even seem to hear.

"Something's got to be done!" he repeated. "I've given Tom Merry the chance to take the lead, as he's junior captain. He won't. Well, I'm going to."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"What's the matter with you, Gunn? What are you mumbling about?"

"Look at my bags!" howled Gunn, who was mopping up hot tea from his trousers with his handkerchief.

"Oh, bother your bags!" said Grundy crossly. "Don't talk to me about your blessed bags! Can't you see it's an important matter?"

"I can see I'm swamped with tea, and feel it, too!" growled Gunn.

"You're always grousing about something! Look here, it's up to me to take the lead, as Tom Merry won't!"

"Oh, bother!"

"I spoke to Merry about it. I told him it was his duty, and that he was a rotten undutiful worm if he didn't do it. For some reason, he flew into a temper——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, Wilkins?"

"Oh, nothing," said Wilkins. "Pass the jam, if there's any left."

"Blow the jam! I had quite a scrap in Tom Merry's study," said Grundy indignantly. "Merry and Manners and Lowther actually lifted me out and rolled me along the passage. Me, you know!"

"Now, I wonder why?" remarked Wilkins, winking at Gunn. Gunn only snorted. He was still mopping his trousers.

"So it comes to this," said Grundy. "It's up to me to take the lead. I think of the honour of the school, if Tom Merry doesn't. My position in the House makes it necessary for me to act."

Grundy appeared to be under the impression that his position in the School House was somehow different from the position of any other fellow in the Shell. But Grundy was often under impressions that were ill-founded.

"The matter stands like this," pursued Grundy, too deeply engrossed in his subject to notice that Wilkins was finishing the last rasher and the last slice of bread. "That fellow, Cardew of the Fourth ought to get out of the school. You agree to that?"

"Any old thing!" said Wilkins, with his mouth full.

"It's a disgrace to St. Jim's! He's a swanking rotter, anyway—going about with a pocket-book full of banknotes in war-time, and all that," said Grundy. "Now it's come out that he was sacked from Wodehouse before he came here——"

"Not proven!" said Wilkins.

"There's a Wodehouse chap at the Grammar School, and you heard him accuse Cardew to his face on Saturday. Cardew didn't deny it. Tom Merry asked him if he had anything to say, and he hadn't."

Wilkins suppressed a yawn. He was bored.

"The fellow was sacked from Wodehouse for theft," said Grundy. "Lacy of the Grammar School said so to his face, after Cardew had licked him. Well, do we want a fellow at St. Jim's who's been kicked out of another school for theft?"

"I don't—at least, not particularly," said Wilkins. "Do you, Grundy?"

"Somebody's got to put his foot down, and it seems to be left to me," said Grundy. "The fellows look to me to act in the matter."

"Do they?" ejaculated Wilkins.

"Yes, they do!" roared Grundy.

"Oh, all serene! Coming down to cricket, Gunny?"

"You're not going down to cricket now!" said Grundy. "I want you!" George Alfred Grundy was Tsar of Study No. 3 in the Shell, and his word was law, or else there was an immediate scrap.

"I expect my study-mates to back me up. Now, Cardew's going to have fair play. That Grammarian cad accused him. He's going to have a chance to answer. We'll give him a fair trial before the whole House. Isn't that fair?"

"Not a bad idea," said Wilkins, showing some slight interest at last. "A House trial is a merry old institution here. It's amusing, anyway."

"This matter isn't amusing, George Wilkins! This is a serious matter—a very serious matter!"

"My mistake!" said Wilkins. "Fire away!"

"After tea we'll go round telling the fellows," said Grundy. "Every chap will have to back up. If Cardew's innocent, it will be good for him to clear himself before the House. Everybody's down on him now. Hardly anybody speaks to him excepting Levison and Clive. I suppose they think they have to, as he's in the same study."

"Right enough."

"Well, I'll get through my tea, and then we'll start," said Grundy briskly. "Hallo! Where's the bacon?"

"The bacon?"

"There doesn't seem to be any bread, either," said Grundy, with a puzzled look round the table. "Did we get the full allowance, Wilkins?"

"Ahem! I think so."

"Then where the dickens is my lot?"

"Oh where and oh where can it be?" murmured Wilkins.

"I suppose you fellows have scoffed it?" roared Grundy.

"The fact is, we—we were so taken up with what you were saying, Grundy, old chap, that we must have scoffed it without noticing it," said Wilkins blandly. "You know what you are, Grundy, when you begin to talk; a fellow simply has to hang on your words—he can't help it."

"Well, never mind," said Grundy, his frowning face clearing. "It's all right. Let's get going."

Wilkins winked at the ceiling, and rose from the tea-table. Gunn had finished mopping his trousers, as well as helping to finish Grundy's tea.

"Come on!" said Grundy, and his loyal followers followed him from the study.

They looked in at Study No. 10, the quarters of the Terrible Three. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther had finished tea, and were getting on with important editorial work for "Tom Merry's Weekly." They did not give the great Grundy welcoming looks.

"No admittance except on business! Travel!" said Tom.

"I'm here on business—important business! That fellow Cardew——"

"Oh, hang Cardew! Fed up with the subject!"

"That's all very well——"

"Exactly! Better let well alone," said Tom. "Good-bye, Grundy!"

"Cardew's accused of having been sacked from his last school for theft——"

"Ta-ta!"

"We don't want thieves at St. Jim's after they've been kicked out of other schools. Cardew's going to have a House trial, to prove whether he's guilty or not. See?"

"Wander off, old chap!"

"The House trial will take place in the Common-room at half-past seven," said Grundy, unheeding.

"My hat! Who's arranged it?"

"I have."

"Cheeky ass!" said Manners.

"I'm going to tell Cardew now," said Grundy. "I'm passing the word round to all the fellows. You'd better turn up. Otherwise, you'll simply be left out in the cold."

And Grundy retired from the study, closing the door with a slam.

The Terrible Three looked at one another.

"Silly ass!" growled Tom Merry.

"Why can't he let it alone?"

Monty Lowther looked thoughtful.

"Well, I don't know," he said. "We don't want to pile on a chap when he's down, of course; but this matter ought really to be cleared up, Tom. If Cardew was kicked out of his last school for theft, he ought to get out of St. Jim's now he's found out."

"We can't make him go," remarked Manners.

"He ought to be cut by the whole school, if it's true," said Lowther. "And a House trial will settle it one way or another. The fact is, Tommy, a lot of the fellows have been saying that you ought to take the lead in settling the

matter, and I think Grundy will be backed up."

"I can't believe it's true," said Tom.

"If it isn't, Cardew can prove it false."

"He ought to be glad of the chance," said Manners. "I'm for giving the fellow a House trial. It's a bit thick, after all his swank, if he turns out to be a common thief."

Tom Merry knitted his brows. The whole affair was painful, and he would have been glad to see it dropped. But there was little chance of that. The School House had been in a buzz over it ever since the ex-Wodehouse fellow at Rylcombe Grammar School had accused Cardew. The dandy of the Fourth was already cut by more than half the fellows in the House. For his own sake it was best that he should be given a chance of defence, if he had any defence to make.

"Well, we'll give Grundy his head," said Tom at last. "But, however it turns out, Cardew won't go of his own account. I'm sure of that!"

"He'll be barred by all St. Jim's if he doesn't," said Lowther. "Look here, Tom. Grundy's a silly ass, but he's right this time! The matter's got to be settled."

CHAPTER 2.
The Chums of No. 9.

THREE juniors were seated round the table in Study No. 9, in the Fourth Form passage of the School House finishing tea.

Not a word had been spoken during the meal, and they were still silent. Clive and Levison looked moody and uncomfortable, and there was a sarcastic expression upon the handsome face of Ralph Reckness Cardew.

Clive rose from the table at last. Levison, with a somewhat curious look at Clive, followed his example.

"Still light enough for some cricket, Levison," Clive remarked.

Levison paused, and then he turned to Cardew.

"You coming, Cardew?" he asked.

Cardew rose, and stood with his hands in his pockets, looking at his study-mates with a sarcastic smile.

"Never mind cricket," he said. "Cricket can wait! We'd better have this out, now, I think!"

"What?" said Levison uneasily.

"We've hardly spoken in this study for a couple of days," said Cardew. "I'd like to know how we stand. I've been cut by nearly the whole House since the Grammar School fellows were over here on Saturday. D'Arcy passes me with his nose in the air; Tom Merry turns another way if he sees me comin'; even Skimpole blinks at me sorrowfully. Well, I expected all that. But I want to know what you fellows are going to do. You're my study-mates, and we've been chums. Are you turning your backs on me, like the rest?"

There was a long pause.

"No!" said Levison at last.

"What about you, Clive?"

The South African junior looked steadily at Cardew.

"I'm not turning my back on you," he said. "But I want to know the truth. Lacy, of the Grammar School, who used to be at Wodehouse with you before you came here, said out before a crowd of fellows that you were expelled from Wodehouse for theft. If he lied, you can prove it easily enough. Why don't you?"

"Perhaps I don't choose."

"Oh, this isn't a time for mounting the high horse!" broke out Clive angrily. "Swank won't do you any good, Cardew. What Lacy said is either true or false. If it's false, you can prove it. It's up to you!"

"You think it might be true?"

"I shouldn't have paid the least attention to it if you'd spoken out, as you ought to have done. Tom Merry asked you what you had to say, and you answered that you'd nothing. If it was a lie, why couldn't you say so?"

"Suppose it was true?" said Cardew coolly.

Clive's eyes gleamed.

"If it's true—if you're a thief, you know that I sha'n't speak to you again, at all events!" he said.

"Quite so. But, suppose that, owing to rather peculiar circumstances, I can't explain?"

"That sounds to me like rot."

"It would, I suppose. But supposing that it is so?"

"Look here, Cardew," said Levison. "If Lacy is lying—I think he was—you ought to go to the Housemaster and ask him to write to the Headmaster of Wodehouse. A letter from your old Headmaster would clear you before all the fellows. It's the only thing to be done. Why don't you do it?"

"A letter from my old Headmaster wouldn't clear me," Cardew said, smiling.

"That means that Lacy was speaking the truth, then?"

"Not at all."

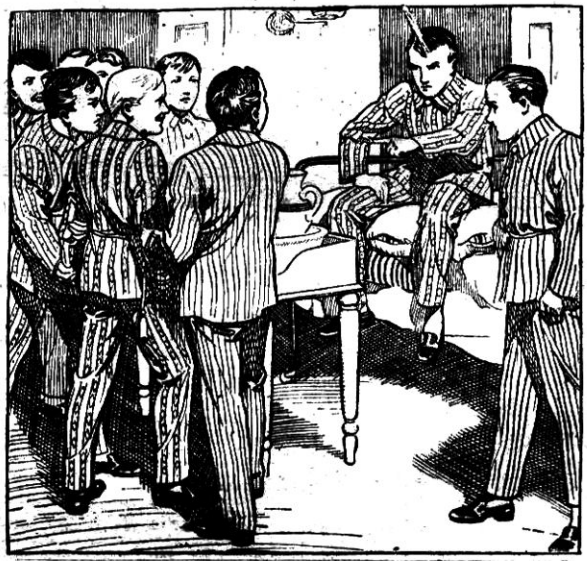
"You're talking in riddles. What do you mean?" exclaimed Clive roughly.

"I suppose it sounds rather a puzzle," assented Cardew. "But have I struck you as a chap who would steal?"

"No, of course not!"

"I don't see why you should, if you were capable of it," said Levison. "You always have pockets full of money."

"Exactly. Well, I am not a thief, if it's necessary for me to give you any assurance on that point."



Cardew refuses to take it seriously.
(See Chapter 4.)

"We take your word, of course. But why can't you prove it to all the fellows?"

"Because I can't."

"Why not?" demanded Clive.

"That's all I can say," said Cardew quietly. "You can take it or leave it at that. What Lacy said may be disproved some time—I think it will be disproved. But I can't disprove it. That's all I can tell you, and if you don't want to know me, you can drop my acquaintance. I shall have to dig in this study, but I won't come here more than I can help, and I'll keep my distance. I can't say fairer than that."

"You're putting our faith in you to a pretty severe strain," said Levison moodily.

"I'm not askin' you to pal with me. You can suit yourself."

There was a long silence. Levison and Clive looked at one another. Cardew hummed a tune.

"Well, what's the verdict?" he asked at last, as his study-mates did not speak. Clive drew a deep breath.

"I'm sticking to you," he said. "I can't believe that you ever did such a rotten thing!"

"Same here," said Levison quietly.

"Better think it over," smiled Cardew. "I'm goin' to be cut by the whole House, an' the New House as well. You fellows may be barred along with me if you stick to me."

"That makes no difference," said Levison.

"Done, then!"

There was a bump at the door, and it flew open. Grundy of the Shell stepped into the study with Wilkins and Gunn grinning behind him.

"House-meeting at half-past seven!" said Grundy.

"Hallo! What's it about?" asked Clive.

"House trial."

"By gad! Who's goin' to be tried?" asked Cardew. "I haven't seen one of your performances in that line. Must be awfully entertainin'. Who's the happy victim?"

"You are!" said Grundy grimly.

Cardew started.

"I!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, you. Turn up at half-past seven sharp! You'll have a fair trial," said Grundy. "If you can clear yourself, I'll congratulate you. If you can't, you'll be barred by the school. I hope you'll have the decency to get out of St. Jim's, in that case."

"You are a sanguine chap, then," said Cardew coolly. "I haven't the remotest intention of gettin' out of St. Jim's."

Grundy frowned portentously.

"You may be glad to," he said. "I think even you, rotter as you are, won't care to hang on here, scorned by every fellow in the school!"

"Quite a mistake! I shall hang on!"

"Well, we'll see."

"By the way," drawled Cardew, "I've an engagement for half-past seven, and I'm sorry I sha'n't be able to be present at your merry little entertainment, Grundy."

"If you don't come, you'll be fetched!" said Grundy, and he stamped out of the study.

"You'll have to turn up, Cardew," said Levison quietly. "It's the rule here. I've been through it myself."

"Well, I sha'n't do it!"

"It's no good trying to defy the House," said Clive. "Don't play the giddy goat, Cardew. You'll have to turn up!"

"We shall see," Cardew smiled. "You fellows get along down to cricket."

"Aren't you coming?"

"No. I am goin' to stick in my tent, like merry old Achilles. And there'll be some trouble before I turn up at the House trial."

Levison and Clive left the study, looking troubled enough.

Ralph Reckness Cardew locked the door after them.

After locking it, he put the table against it, added the armchair, and a couple of other chairs. Then, with a grin, he sat down on the window-seat and lighted a cigarette. When the House trial came off, it was evidently going to be some little trouble to get the prisoner into the dock.

CHAPTER 3.
Unavoidably Postponed.

THE junior Common-room in the School House was crowded soon after seven o'clock.

Word had been passed round that the House trial was to take place, and it was generally approved by the School House fellows.

Tom Merry steadily declined to take the lead in the matter, though it was really up to him, as junior House captain.

Blake of the Fourth, who was rival leader of the School House juniors, was also very backward in coming forward for once.

Had not Grundy of the Shell taken the lead, it is probable that nothing would have been done at all.

But Grundy had taken the lead, and in the most emphatic manner.

As a rule, Grundy's attempts at leadership evoked only merriment, and the House never took the great George Alfred at all seriously.

But on the present occasion he was given his head, as Tom Merry had put it. As Blake remarked, fools rushed in where angels feared to tread.

Nobody was anxious to take the lead in acting against a fellow who was down. At the same time, the juniors felt that the matter ought to be cleared up.

As for Grundy, he had no doubts, and he was swelling with importance. He was first in the field, with Wilkins and Gunn. Racke and Crooke, Mellish and Trimble, the black sheep of the House, were next—they had no love for Cardew. Their verdict was decided on already. Irrespective of any evidence that might be offered. Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, the famous Co. of Study No. 6, came in together. The Terrible Three followed them in.

Julian and Kerruish, Reilly and Hammond, came in, and Talbot, Gore, and Skimpole. Then came Kangaroo and Dane and Glyn. Contarini and Lumley-Lumley and Lorne and Boulton and the rest came in in ones and twos. Levison and Clive, both looking very moody, were the last to arrive.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced round through his elevated eyeglass.

"We all seem to be heah, deah boys," he remarked.

"All but the merry prisoner," said Digby.

"That feahful ass Gwunday seems to be wunnin' the show," remarked D'Arcy. "It is wathah infwa dig to follow Gwunday's lead. Howevah, I would wathah not take the lead myself undah the circs."

"Same here!" growled Blake. "Let Grundy rip!"

"Gentlemen!" began Grundy, who evidently thought the occasion propitious for a speech. It was not often that George Alfred could get an audience.

"Gentlemen——"

Grundy was ruthlessly interrupted.

"Cut the cackle!"

"Cheese it!"

"Get down to business, Grundy!"

"Look here——" roared Grundy.

"Ring off!"

"Yaas, wathah! Cut the cackle and come to the hosses, deah boy!"

"Where's the prisoner, Grundy?"

Grundy sniffed, and gave it up. There was no room for a speech, it was clear.

"The prisoner hasn't come," he said. "He's got to be fetched! Wilkins, cut off and tell Cardew to come here."

"Right-ho, my lord!"

Wilkins left the Common-room. He returned in a few minutes with a grin on his face. And he returned alone!

"Well, where's Cardew?" demanded Grundy.

"He says he can't come. He's sorry, but he's sent you his kind regards," said Wilkins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy gave a wrathful snort.

"There's nothing to cackle at in Cardew's rotten cheek!" he bawled. "Go and tell him that if he don't come, he'll be yanked here, Wilkins!"

"He's got the study door locked," grinned Wilkins, and all the furniture piled up against it." He answered me through the keyhole."

"The—the—the cheeky rotter!" shouted Grundy. "Why, I'll go and yank him here by his ears!"

Grundy rushed out of the Common-room.

The House meeting chortled.

"Bai Jove! Gwunday doesn't seem to be gettin' tweated with pwopah wespect," grinned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

It was some minutes before Grundy of the Shell came back. He strode into the Common-room with a crimson face. And he came alone!

"Haven't you got him?" asked Gore, with a chuckle.

"The cheeky rotter! Called me names through the keyhole!" panted Grundy. "Me, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! It's a feahful cheek, defyin' the House like this. But pewwaps he does not take you vewy seriously, Gwunday. Pewwaps I had bettah go and speak to him," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

"All you fellows follow me," said Grundy, unheeding. "If he won't come out, we're going to smash in the door. Come on!"

The meeting crowded away upstairs to the Fourth Form passage. They found the door of No. 9 fast.

"Cardew!" called out Arthur Augustus.

"Hallo!"

"Pway come out!"

"Rats!"

"It's a House twial, you know, and you are bound to appeah, by owdah of the House!"

"The House can go and eat coke!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Are you coming out, you cad!" roared Grundy.

"Not this evening, dear boy."

"Look here, Cardew!" exclaimed Blake. "You'd better come. You've got to go through with it, you know!"

"Sorry to disappoint you, my dear fellow. I haven't any time for your kiddish games," drawled Cardew.

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors began to look rather grim. A House trial was an old institution at St. Jim's, and was taken seriously. Cardew's description of it as a kiddish game pleased nobody.

"Will you come out!" roared Grundy furiously.

"Don't raise your voice like that, old scout. It rather gets on my nerves. I'm sure you don't mind my mentionin' it."

"You — you — you cheeky cad!" gasped Grundy. "Here, lend me a hand with this form, you fellows, and we'll soon bust the door in."

"That you jolly well won't!" exclaimed Clive warmly. "You're not busting in the door of my study!"

"Stand aside, fathead!"

"Rats! Drop that form, ass!"

"Yes, rather!" said Levison. "You can postpone the performance till to-morrow, Grundy. You'll be just as funny to-morrow, you know."

"Why, I'll—I'll——"

"Yes; chuck it," said Talbot of the Shell. "We don't want to bring the Housemaster up here!"

"I'm going to have him out!" roared Grundy.

"You're not!" said Tom decidedly. "It will keep! We'll put it off till lights out, and give him his trial in the dorm."

"Yaas, wathah! That's a good idea!"

And the juniors cleared off, leaving Grundy raging. The great Grundy bestowed a terrific kick on the door.

"Cardew, you rat!"

"Hallo, old chap!"

"You're going to get it all the same, you rotter!"

"Thanks!"

"You're a cringing, sneaking, disgusting Prussian!" roared Grundy.

"Bravo!"

Grundy bestowed another terrific kick on the door, and went his way. The House trial was unavoidably postponed.

CHAPTER 4.
Lights Out.

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW received somewhat grim looks from the rest of the Fourth when the juniors went to their dormitories that night.

It was well enough to decline to take the egregious Grundy with seriousness. But a House meeting was a House meeting, and it was rank mutiny to refuse to attend.

Cardew did not seem to worry about the fact that he had irritated the whole Form. Perhaps it amused his peculiar nature.

At all events, he was as cool and nonchalant as ever, and he answered a severe glance from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with an agreeable smile.

Levison and Clive did not look so cheery as their study-mate, however.

The trio were strangely-assorted enough, but a real friendship had grown up among them; and, apart from that, the fact that Cardew was down impelled his two chums to stand by him.

But the path he had taken was not an easy one for them to follow.

To have faith in him, in the face of his refusal to explain away Algernon Lacy's accusation, was hard enough. And his defiance of the House placed his friends in an awkward position. They were almost as irritated with him as the rest of the fellows were; but they were going to stand by him, all the same.

When Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, saw lights out for the Fourth, he noted nothing unusual among the juniors. There was no sign to indicate that there was anything on in the dormitory.

But after the prefect had gone a buzz of voices broke forth.

"Half an hour to wait," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Bettah make sush that the pwefects are not nosin' about, deah boy."

"It's for ten o'clock?" asked Levison.

"Yaas."

"The Shell are coming along here?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"By gad!" Cardew's voice was heard. "What is the merry entertainment fixed for ten o'clock, Levison?"

"House trial!" said Levison shortly.

"By gad! Am I in for it, all the same?"

"You are!"

"No getting out of it, Cardew," said Dick Julian. "You ought to be glad to have the chance of clearing yourself before all the fellows."

"My dear chap, I don't care a twopenny swear for all the fellows!" said Cardew, with a yawn.

"Perhaps we'll make you care, you cheeky spalpeen!" exclaimed Reilly wrathfully.

"Perhaps! I don't think you will though."

"This confounded cheek won't do you any good, Cardew," said Jack Blake ominously.

Cardew gave a tremendous yawn.

"Well, if it's fixed for ten o'clock, you might give me a call then. No need to waste sleep."

"He, he, he!" cackled Trimble. "I'll bet you won't sleep!"

"Your mistake, my fat friend. I'm goin' to sleep now."

Cardew laid his head on the pillow, and nothing further was heard from him. There was a desultory buzz of conversation in the dormitory, while the minutes passed, slowly enough, to the juniors. But ten o'clock sounded at last, the strokes coming dully through the night; and the last stroke had hardly died away when the door opened softly.

"You kids asleep?" It was Monty Lowther's voice.

"Who are you calling kids?"

There was a chuckle from the unseen Lowther.

"Whom, dear boy — whom?" he chided. "What kind of grammar do you learn in the Fourth? Don't you know the nominative from the accusative?"

"You cheeky ass!""

"Ordah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Don't begin to wag now, deah boys, or we shall have a pwefect up heah. Bettah not talk while the door's open."

"What are you doing, then?" grunted Blake.

"I am advisin' you not to talk while the door's open, deah boy. It would be wathah injudicious, undah the circs. Any pwefect passin' in the lowah passages might heah——"

"Dry up!"

"I am wequestin' you fellows to dwy up, because it is uttahly weckless to talk while the door is open—— Yawoooh!"

A pillow cut short the flow of Gussy's eloquence.

Meanwhile, the Shell fellows, unseen in the darkness, were gliding silently into the Fourth Form dormitory.

The door was closed as last, and Tom Merry laid a rug along it, to keep any stray ray of light from penetrating into the passage.

Then matches were struck, and candle-ends and bike-lanterns lighted.

A wavering and glimmering light spread through the long, lofty room—dim, but sufficient for the juniors' purpose.

Arthur Augustus groped under his pillow for his celebrated monocle, jammed it into his eye, and glared about him in the candle-light. There was wrath in the countenance of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Someone struck me with a pillow!" he said.

"Yes. Dry up!" said Tom Merry.

"I wefuse to dwy up, Tom Mewwy! I am goin' to thwash the wottah befoah the pwoceedin's pwoceed any furthah!"

"Is this a House trial or a jawbone solo by Gussy?" Monty Lowther wanted to know.

"I move that Gussy be gagged, and stowed away under a bed till the proceedings are over," said Manners.

"You uttah ass!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Out of bed, all you fellows!" said Blake. "Call Cardew, Gussy."

"Someone smote me with a pillow——"

"Someone will smite you again if you don't dry up!" exclaimed Blake. "Can't you get out of the limelight for once, ass? You're dead in this act."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Cardew's the heavy villain of the piece," said Tom Merry. "This is where you take a bight in the jawing tackle, Gussy."

"Bai Jove!"

"Right!" said Kangaroo. "We can't stay up all night while Gussy speaks his piece."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus bestowed a crushing glare upon the irreverent youths, and dried up at last. All the Fourth had turned out but Cardew.

"Wake him up!" said Grundy.

"He, he! He's only pretending to be asleep!" chortled Trimble. "Only swank, you know! He, he!"

"I dare say it is!" growled Grundy. "I'll jolly soon stop his humbug!"

Grundy strode to Cardew's bed.

He looked rather surprised as he stared down at Cardew. The junior's face was calm, his eyes were closed, and his breathing regular. It was evident that he was fast asleep.

"By gum!" said Grundy. "He's asleep right enough! Never heard of a rotter with such a nerve!"

He shook Cardew by the shoulder.

"Wake up, you bounder!"

Cardew's eyes opened. He blinked in the candle-light, and smiled as his glance rested on George Alfred Grundy.

"Hallo! You!" He yawned. "Can't you leave your funny business till the mornin', Grundy?"

"What!"

"I admit you're no end comic; but I shall lose my beauty sleep, you know."

"Get up!" roared Grundy, greatly exasperated by a chuckle from the other fellows, as well as by Cardew's remarks.

"Shush!" said Tom Merry. "Don't bring Railton here, fathead!"

Grundy gave the captain of the Shell a glare.

"You shut up, Tom Merry!"

"Eh?"

"Dry up! I'm taking the lead in this affair. I don't want any interference from you or anybody else!"

"You'll get some if you bring the Housemaster here with your blessed bellowing," said Tom.

"That's my bizney. I'm running this show. You ring off!"

"Well, my hat!" said Tom.

He was half-inclined to mop up the dormitory with Grundy on the spot. But he refrained. After all, George Alfred was within his rights. Tom Merry had refused to take the lead, and it had been left to Grundy.

"Now, are you getting up, Cardew?" said Grundy victoriously. "You can either step out or be yanked out. Take your choice!"

Cardew paused a moment. But there was no real choice for him, and he stepped out of bed. With his hands in the pockets of his stylish pyjamas he surveyed the crowd of juniors, a cool, mocking smile playing about his lips.

"Quite at your service, dear boys," he drawled. "Only cut it short. I hate to mention it, but you're borin' me."

"Bai Jove, you cheeky boundah——"

"We'll take some of the cheek out of him!" said Grundy. "You needn't chip in, D'Arcy. I'm runnin' this show!"

"Weally, Gwundy——"

"The thing would never have been taken up but for me!" said Grundy loftily. "I'm seeing it through."

Cardew looked at him, with a strange gleam in his eyes.

"So I'm indebted to you, Grundy?" he asked.

"Yes, you are! Now, shut up till you're told to speak," said Grundy autocratically. "Order, you fellows! Not so much jaw! Wilkins, you blithering ass, what are you sniggering at?"

"Was I sniggering?" asked Wilkins.

"Yes. Don't do it. I can't see anything to snigger at."

"There's a glass over my bed, Gwunday."

"Silence!" rapped out Grundy. "Now, then, the jury will form up. Every fellow present is a member of the jury. I am judge. That washstand is the bar. Prisoner, take your place at the bar!"

"Couldn't you make this bed the bar?" asked Cardew.

"Well, yes, if you like. Why?"

"Then I could go to sleep, and you could wake me up when you've finished," explained Cardew.

Grundy's face was a study for a moment.

"Get over to that washstand!" he roared—"I mean, the bar! Wilkins and Gunn, I appoint you warders. Take the prisoner in charge!"

"Right-ho, old scout!"

Wilkins and Gunn took an arm each of Cardew, and walked him to the washstand. There they planted themselves, one on either side of him.

"Now, counsel for the prosecution," said Grundy. "Who's going to be counsel for the prosecution?"

"I'm your man!" said Racke of the Shell, with a venomous glance at Cardew.

"You'll do! Anybody feel inclined to take up the defence?" asked Grundy, looking round.

"I do!" said Levison.

"Very good. Levison's liar—I mean lawyer for the defence. Tom Merry's to be foreman of the jury."

"Done!" said Tom.

"The jury can sit on the beds, if they like. Now, that's all fixed up!"

"What about a clerk of the court?" asked Monty Lowther. "Must have a clerk of the court, to instruct the judge in the law. That's the custom in a real law-court."

"If anybody gets instructing me, he will get a thick ear!" said Grundy darkly. "Shut up, Lowther! You're a juryman. The jury will keep their heads shut till I tell 'em to speak."

"Oh, my hat!"

Grundy looked round triumphantly. The arrangements were made to his full satisfaction, with a liberal allowance of limelight for Grundy, as judge of the court. The jury sat on the beds, or lounged round in their pyjamas, quite a numerous body. The prisoner at the bar was yawning portentously—a fact which the judge affected not to notice.

"Gentlemen," said Grundy, "the court is now open!"

"And let's hope a prefect won't drop in and shut it!" murmured Monty Lowther.

CHAPTER 5.
Trial by Jury.

"PRISONER at the bar!" said George Alfred Grundy, in a deep voice. Grundy had piled several bolsters and pillows on a bed, and was seated on the pile, in quite a commanding position.

"Hallo!"

"Don't say hallo to me, prisoner!"

"Why not?"

"Because you'll get jolly well clouted if you do!" roared Grundy. "Warders, you have instructions to clout the prisoner whenever he is cheeky!"

"What-ho!" said Wilkins and Gunn, together.

"Prisoner at the bar, do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

The prisoner appeared to reflect.

"That depends," he said. "I don't want to be out of order, but isn't it customary for a prisoner to know what he's accused of before he pleads?"

"Bai Jove! You never thought of that, Gwunday!"

"Silence! Prisoner, you have been accused of having been sacked from your last school for theft, and having sneaked into St. Jim's without letting the Head know—fooled him, in fact. Guilty or not guilty?"

"Fats!"

"The prisoner refuses to plead," said Grundy, with a frown. "Counsel for the prosecution opens the ball."

"Go it, Racke!" said the jury.

Racke of the Shell came forward. Racke was rather enjoying his position. He had scores to pay off against Cardew, and he intended to make the matter as bad for him as he could. Cardew gave him a contemptuous glance.

"Gentlemen of the jury, and your worship," said Racke, "I accuse the prisoner at the bar of being a mean thief"—Racke lingered on that word, as if he relished it—"of being a mean thief, and of having been sacked from his last school for theft, of having shoved himself in here among decent fellows who didn't know his real character, and having deceived the Head. I shall proceed to prove my case."

"Get on, and not so much jaw!" growled Clive.

"In the first place, the prisoner is well known to be a swanking cad," pursued counsel for the prosecution. "Every chap in the school knows that he's got no end of money, and he swaggers about with it——"

"That's a lie!" said Cardew calmly.

"Silence!" snorted Grundy.

"He's played lots of mean tricks since he's been at this school," continued Racke. "He got Merry into a row with the Head, and nearly got him flogged once, by a rotten trick. He played it low-down on the French master—a very popular gentleman, and an ally. He has been known to smoke and play cards."

"Oh, crumbs!"

This was decidedly cool from Racke, who was the blackest of the black sheep of St. Jim's.

"These facts are well known, and they testify to the bad character of the prisoner," said Racke. "Such a person, I submit to the jury, is capable of theft. That is the first point. The prisoner's bad character is established, I trust to the satisfaction of the jury."

"Get on with the washing!" said the foreman of the jury.

"Shut up, Tom Merry!"

"Look here, Grundy——"

"Silence in court! Go on, Racke!"

"I rather think our judge will get a prize thick ear before this trial is over," murmured the foreman of the jury.

"Gentlemen, I now come to the accusation——"

"Time you did!" remarked Blake.

"It happens that a fellow from the prisoner's old school, Wodehouse, has come to Rylcombe Grammar School. He recognised Cardew as a chap who had been expelled from Wodehouse for theft, being found with stolen money upon him. He accused Cardew to his face; and the prisoner, asked what he had to say, said that he had nothing to say. If the charge was false, he could easily prove it—a letter to Wodehouse School would settle the business. If the charge is unfounded, the Headmaster of Wodehouse would write at once and say so. Cardew had simply to ask Mr. Railton to communicate with him, in order to set him right with the fellows. He has not done so. He refuses to do so. Gentlemen, I put it to you, that this amounts to an admission of guilt. I call for a verdict of guilty!"

There was a murmur of approval as Racke concluded.

He stepped back.

There was no doubt that Racke had animosity against the dandy of the Fourth; but the facts he had stated were well enough known, and they seemed to be unanswerable.

"Counsel for the defence!" said Grundy.

Levison of the Fourth came forward. His face was grave and troubled. The accused could not have had a better defender than the keen, astute Levison, who was not likely to leave a single chance unimproved. But Ernest Levison had a difficult task before him.

How was he to defend a fellow who refused to defend himself? And if Cardew did not defend himself, what could the reason be but a consciousness of guilt? Yet Levison clung to his faith in him; and, at all events, he meant to do his best for him.

All eyes were upon Levison. Cardew glanced at him curiously, wondering, perhaps, what Levison could possibly think of to say in his defence.

"Gentlemen of the jury!"

"Pile in, old chap!" said Talbot encouragingly.

"Yaas, wathah! I wish you luck, Levison!"

"Gentlemen, I have undertaken the defence of the prisoner at the bar. I have to admit that the case looks bad. But first, as to evidence of character. The prisoner at the bar is my study-mate and chum, and I've got nothing against him. He's got his faults, but I've known him to do some thoroughly decent and plucky things. He stood up to Cutts of the Fifth for bullying my minor, and got awfully slogged for it. It isn't every fellow in the Fourth who'd stand up to a Fifth-Former. I submit that a fellow like that isn't likely to commit such a mean, sneaking, cowardly crime as stealing."

"Well said!" exclaimed the foreman of the jury. "But what about the facts, Mr. Counsel-for-the-Defence?"

"I'm coming to them. It's true that Lacy of Wodehouse accused Cardew, and—and Cardew said nothing at the time. But everybody here knows Lacy—a swanking, rotten bounder! He had his knife into Cardew for pulling his nose. I don't say he was lying about the prisoner; but I submit to the jury that he was—was labouring under a delusion."

"Does the prisoner deny the accusation?" sneered Racke.

"With the judge's permission," said counsel for the defence, "I shall put the prisoner into the witness-box."

"Go it!" said the judge.

Levison turned to Cardew.

"Prisoner——" he began.

"Excuse me," said Cardew blandly. "Is this washstand the witness-box as well as the prisoner's dock?"

"Yes, fathead!"

"Oh, all serene! A fellow only wants to know. Fire away!"

"You will answer my questions, prisoner," said Levison, and he gave his study-mate an earnest look. "It's for your own sake. Now, you were at Wodehouse School before you came to St. Jim's."

"Yes."

"Were you expelled from Wodehouse?"

"No!"

Levison drew a quick breath.

"That's the first time he's denied it!" sneered Racke.

"Don't make any mistake," said Cardew blandly. "I was not expelled from Wodehouse. I was requested to leave. Probably I should have been expelled if my grandfather had not happened to be a peer of the realm. But these things count, you know."

"You were requested to leave, without the option of refusing?" grinned Racke.

"Exactly. You have put it with your well-known perspicacity, Racke. Smokin' an' late hours haven't impaired your brains, I see."

"Why were you requested to leave Wodehouse, Cardew?" asked Levison, dismayed. He had hoped for something better than this.

"My fascinatin' society had lost its charm for the Headmaster, somehow. There's no accountin' for tastes, you know."

There was a chortle among the jurymen. Fellows who liked Cardew least could not help admiring his nerve. Whatever happened to Ralph Reckness Cardew, it was certain that he would be game all through.

Levison did not smile, however. Cardew's defence was not being improved by his pleasantry.

"Come, prisoner at the bar! Will you

tell the jury why you had to leave Wodehouse?"

"I've done so."

"What reason did your Headmaster give?"

Cardew was silent.

The jury exchanged significant glances.

"Were you accused of theft at Wodehouse?" asked Levison.

Silence.

"Cardew, tell the jury whether you were guilty of theft or not at your old school!" exclaimed Levison.

"Certainly! Gentlemen of the jury, since you're so dashed interested in my private affairs, I have the pleasure of informin' you that I was not guilty of theft, homicide, burglary, or droppin' bombs, or any other crime I can think of, while I honoured Wodehouse with my presence."

"You haven't said whether you were accused," said Racke.

"A fellow can be accused without being guilty," said Levison, turning to the jury again. "Gentlemen, I submit that, while my client was possibly regarded with a wrongful suspicion at his old school, he was innocent. Any chap might be suspected."

"That's all rot!" said Grundy. "If he was turned out of Wodehouse for stealing, it's because he stole something. That stands to reason."

"Not necessarily," said Cardew, with a smile. "It might happen to yourself, Grundy, to be suspected of something you didn't do."

"Rot!"

The foreman of the jury rose from the bedside.

"Look here, Cardew, let's have this out plain," he said. "What you've said amounts to this. That you were suspected of theft at Wodehouse, and your Headmaster believed you guilty, and turned you out, but that you were innocent of the charge."

"Put it like that if you like, dear boy!"

"That's how the matter stands," said Levison.

"And we're asked to believe that the Headmaster and all Wodehouse made a mistake in a matter as serious as that, and turned a fellow out, disgraced for life, for nothing?" said Racke. "You had better plish us something a bit easier, Cardew."

"But I'm not askin' you to believe it," said Cardew placidly. "I'm not askin' anybody to believe anythin'. At the present moment I've got only one desire."

"And that?" asked Tom Merry.

"To get back to bed," said Cardew calmly.

"Bai Jove!"

"Will you tell the jury the whole circumstances of the case, so that they can form an independent judgment?" asked Tom Merry.

"No. It's not their bizney."

"It's every fellow's business to know whether he's asked to associate with a thief!" snapped Blake.

"But I'm not askin' you anythin', Blake. The fact is, I'd rather you didn't associate with me. You're a bit of a bore, you know."

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Blake, exasperated.

"Is that language suitable for a jury?" asked Cardew, unmoved. "I appeal to the learned judge."

"Shut up, Blake!" said Grundy.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Well, I've finished," said Levison, much discouraged. "My point is that there was some sort of misunderstanding about Cardew at his school. And, anyway, I know he's straight."

"If it was all straight he could explain," said Racke. "We're asked to take him on trust, with everything against him, because he's too high and mighty to take the trouble of explaining. Rather too steep!"

"Too jolly steep!" said Blake emphatically.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gentlemen of the jury," said Grundy. "Guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!" came in a chorus from the Fourth and the Shell. Only Clive and Levison were silent.

"Prisoner at the bar," said Grundy sternly, "you've been found guilty by a jury of your fellow-countrymen, after a perfectly fair trial!"

"Go hon!"

"Sentence will now be given. You are called upon to leave St. Jim's, to get out as quickly as you can manage it."

"Anythin' else?"

"You will be given three days to make your arrangements for going," said the judge. "After that, if you are still disgracing this school with your presence, drastic measures will be taken."

"Is that all?"

"That's all—excepting that you're in Coventry while you remain at St. Jim's."

"Hear, hear!" said the jury.

"Does that mean that you won't speak to me again, Grundy?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Gentlemen," said Cardew, "I was feelin' rather bored by this entertainment of yours. But I'm glad I've been through it now. Henceforth I shall be the only fellow at St. Jim's safe from the awful infliction of Grundy's conversation! That's somethin'! Thank you all, from my heart!" Cardew bowed to the grinning jury. "Good-night!"

He crossed over to his bed.

"By gum!" roared Grundy. "I'm not going to be cheeked by that cheeky ass! I'll mop up the floor with him! I'll——"

"No, you won't, old scout!" grinned Wilkins, taking George Alfred by the arm. "You'll come away to bed!"

"Look here, Wilkins——"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry. "We shall all be pretty sleepy in the morning! Don't make a row, Grundy!"

"You shut up, Tom Merry——"

"Bump him if he makes a row!" said Tom.

And Grundy was hustled out of the dormitory by the Shell fellows. Blake blew out the candle-ends, and the Fourth-Formers turned in.

Cardew was in bed, and already falling asleep. Sentence had been pronounced, and he could not fail to know that it was seriously meant. Henceforth he was an outcast, scorned by the school. Yet he slept soundly that night, and in the morning he looked fresher and more cheerful than most of the juniors when the Fourth turned out at the clang of the rising-bell.

CHAPTER 6.
The Fall of the Mighty.

TOM MERRY & Co. stood by the sentence they had given in the House trial.

That the sentence was just not a fellow doubted.

The most easy-going junior in the House could hardly be expected to associate with a thief.

There was a possibility, certainly, that Cardew could have given some explanation, and that it was his supercilious pride which prevented him from doing so.

But it was a remote possibility; and if it was the case, the fellow deserved to be sent to Coventry for his cheek.

His honour and good name were at stake, and if he had anything to say in defence of them, why did he not say it?

Ralph Reckness Cardew had been sent to Coventry before he had been long at St. Jim's. This was not the first time that he had brought the wrath of the House down upon his devoted head.

It had not lasted long then.

Now it seemed certain to last until he left. He had been given three days in which to make arrangements for leaving the school. During those three days he was to be an outcast and a pariah.

Would he go?

How a fellow could want to remain, and face general scorn and avoidance, was a puzzle to most of the juniors. And he had the choice if he liked. He was indulged almost without limit by his grandfather, old Lord Reckness. He had only to say the word, and he would be taken away.

Yet hardly a fellow believed that he would go. Even Grundy doubted it.

The sentence of Coventry was carried out by the New House as well as the School House. The trial and verdict were known all over the Lower School, and Figgins & Co., of the New House, barred the convicted junior as grimly as his own House-fellows did.

Even the fags, with whom Cardew naturally had little to do, gave him the cold shoulder so far as lay in their power.

There was only one exception—Levison minor of the Third Form.

Levison minor followed his major's lead in everything. And he had not forgotten how Cardew had stood up to Cutts of the Fifth, and taken a terrific licking, to defend him from bullying.

With the exception of Levison minor, Cardew had only two acquaintances left in the whole school.

They were his study-mates.

In spite of all, through thick and thin, Levison and Clive were sticking to him. Well they knew the faults in Cardew's character. They had reason to know them. But they could not believe that he was a thief. Obstinate, self-willed, supercilious, reckless—but not that!

It required an effort to continue to believe in him against the evidence. But they did it. And they stood by him loyally.

But for their steady friendship, Cardew's lot would have been a harder one.

It was hard enough already; but it did not seem to affect him. If he felt it, he concealed his feelings. Outwardly, his aspect was nonchalant and careless as of old. He had flung down his defiance at the school, and he faced the scorn of the school with careless coolness.

It exasperated Grundy particularly to see him cool and unmoved. Grundy had taken the leadership into his hands for once; and even his chum Wilkins remarked that it had got into his head.

But Grundy was prepared to take more drastic steps. Having started to lead, he found it agreeable, and was ready to go on leading—if there was anybody to follow.

The next evening, in the Common-room, there was an icy silence when Cardew came in.

But Levison and Clive joined him at once.

The three stood chatting together, and certainly, from Cardew's aspect, it could not have been divined that he was an outcast in the school.

Then George Alfred Grundy rose in his wrath, and strode over to the group.

"Levison! Clive!" he rapped out.

"Hallo, Grundy!"

"That fellow's in Coventry, and you're not to speak to him!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Mind, every fellow who speaks to Cardew will be sent to Coventry, the same as Cardew!" roared Grundy.

"Oh, cheese it, Grundy!" said Clive.

"You talk too much, old chap!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Dry up, for a change! Your voice isn't musical, and the things you say aren't entertaining. Don't go on."

Grundy stood spluttering with wrath, while the whole Common-room chuckled. The South African junior was evidently not impressed by the wrath of George Alfred.

"You—you—" gasped Grundy at last. "Now, I mean business! You two will be sent to Coventry along with Cardew if you talk to him! Are you going to obey orders?"

"Whose orders?"

"Mine!"

"Oh, don't be funny!"

Grundy turned from the two delinquents, and glared at the grinning juniors, who were looking on. He pointed to the three.

"Those fellows are all in Coventry!" he announced. "Nobody is to speak a word to them in future!"

"Bai Jove! You are a cheeky ass, Gwundy! I shall certainly wefuse to wefuse to speak to Clive and Levison!"

"Don't be an ass, old chap!" murmured Wilkins.

"Shut up, Wilkins! Mind, that order's got to be obeyed!" said Grundy, in a tone of finality.

"Have they made you captain of St. Jim's, Grundy?" Monty Lowther wanted to know. "Or have you been appointed Head, by any chance?"

"Don't be cheeky, Lowther! See that you don't speak to any of those rotters, that's all!"

"Good-evening, Clive!" said Lowther calmly.

"Ha, ha!" chuckled Clive.

"Good-evening, Levison!"

Levison grinned.

"Wathah nice weathah to-day, Clive!" chortled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Good for cricket—what, Levison?" smiled Tom Merry.

"Do you think it will rain to-morrow, Clive?" asked Manners.

"Done your prep, Levison?" grinned Blake.

George Alfred Grundy stood rooted to the floor for a moment. He had given his orders! All that remained was for the orders to be carried out. But that seemed likely to remain indefinitely.

Here were all the fellows addressing remarks to Clive and Levison, simply for the purpose of showing Grundy that his lofty orders weren't going to be obeyed!

"Stop it!" shouted Grundy, finding his voice at last. "I've warned you! Every fellow who speaks to Clive and Levison will be sent to Coventry too!"

With one voice, nearly every fellow in the Common-room shouted in chorus:

"Good-evening, Clive! Good-evening, Levison!"

And there was a roar of laughter.

"Are you going to send us all to Coventry, Grundy?" asked Monty Lowther meekly. "Do! Don't talk to us again! I don't see why Cardew should have all the advantage of missing your conversation!"

"I'll punch the next fellow's head who speaks to them!" bellowed Grundy.

There was another chorus:

"Good-evening, Clive! Good-evening, Levison!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy was a fellow of his word. He rushed at Monty Lowther, with his big fists in the air. In a moment half a dozen juniors closed round Grundy, and he was swept off his feet.

Thrice he was bumped on the floor hard, each bump being accompanied by a terrific yell from the victim.

Then he was carried out into the passage, and landed there with another bump, and left sprawling.

He scrambled up, and rushed in furiously—

"Hallo! He wants more!" chuckled Blake. "Give him all he wants!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The enraged Grundy was seized again, and rushed into the passage, with his arms and legs flying wildly.

Bump!

He landed on the floor again, and roared.

The juniors retired into the Common-room, and left him. This time Grundy of the Shell did not return. He had had enough. George Alfred Grundy's brief period of leadership was evidently over!

CHAPTER 7.
The Finger of Scorn.

THE next day was Wednesday, a half-holiday. There was a House match in the afternoon, and Levison and Clive were both playing for the School House junior team.

Grundy had been effectually sat upon, and Levison and Clive were still on the old terms with the other fellows.

That they stuck to their study-mate through thick and thin, and held faith in him, did not lower them in the esteem of the House, in spite of the wrathful indignation of George Alfred Grundy.

When the juniors came out after dinner on Wednesday, Cardew of the Fourth lounged up to the notice-board in the hall. Upon that board he pinned a paper, and then sauntered out into the quadrangle.

Grundy of the Shell observed the action, and gave utterance to an indignant snort. For the barred junior to stick a notice on the board was the limit of cool impudence, in Grundy's opinion. Several of the fellows strolled to the board to see what Cardew had written.

They stared a little as they read; and Grundy, who had raised his head to tear the notice down, lowered it again. The paper ran:

"LOST SOMEWHERE IN THE SCHOOL HOUSE!

A £5 NOTE! No. 0002468.

FINDER PLEASE RETURN SAME TO R. CARDEW, No. 9 STUDY, IVth."

"Oh, that's all?" said Grundy. "I thought it was some cheek from the rotter! Only a fiver he's lost!"

There was certainly no exception to be taken to Cardew's action in this case. When any property was lost, it was customary to put a notice on the board, giving particulars, with the name of the owner.

"Weckless ass to lose a fivah!" remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Why, you lost one yourself a few weeks ago!" said Blake. "You're always losing something!"

"Weally, Blake——"

The Terrible Three went out into the quadrangle, and Cardew sauntered towards them.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther looked grim as once.

But Cardew did not speak.

He took a slate from under his jacket, and, to the astonishment of the Shell fellows, scribbled on it and held it up.

What he scribbled was: "Have you seen my fiver?"

The Terrible Three tried not to grin. The way Cardew was taking his sentence of Coventry was certainly humorous.

The three juniors shook their heads, and walked on. Cardew slipped the slate back under his jacket, and smiled.

"Cheeky ass!" muttered Manners. "He's trying to turn the whole thing into ridicule! That's his game!"

"He's a cool card," Tom said. "I suppose he's entitled to ask whether anybody's seen his banknote!"

"Has he really lost one?" said Lowther. "Looks to me like a trick to get out of Coventry!"

"Well, he won't get out of it. Blessed if I understand what he wants to stick in St. Jim's for! It can't be pleasant for him!"

"He won't be able to stick here after the beaks get to know about it," remarked Monty Lowther sagely. "It's bound to get to them sooner or later. When Railton hears of it, he'll call Cardew up before the Head. When the Head knows he was sacked from Wodehouse for stealing he will have to go!"

"But he won't till he's forced. What are we going to do about it when the three days are up if he sticks here?"

"That will have to be settled, Cricket now," said Tom.

And the chums of the Shell, not sorry to dismiss the unpleasant subject, went down to the cricket-ground.

When the House match started, Cardew of the Fourth was lounging outside the pavilion to look on.

He had no diffidence whatever about showing himself in public among a crowd of fellows who declined to notice his existence. He joined heartily in the cheering when a good hit or catch was made.

The School House batted first, and Cardew chatted with Levison and Clive in turn while they were waiting for their innings. But when Tom Merry & Co. went into the field, his friends were occupied, and he strolled off the cricket-ground. A smile was on his face as he went into the School House and up to the Shell passage.

Grundy was in his study. Grundy's valuable services were not required in the House match, and, moreover, he had lines to do, Mr. Linton having given him a hundred of Virgil.

Grundy was grinding away savagely at his lines, with a bitter feeling that he was misunderstood and undervalued at St. Jim's, just as he had been at his old school, Redclyffe. Wilkins was playing in the House Junior Eleven, and Gunn had gone out—perhaps guessing that if he stayed in he would be wanted to do half Grundy's lines.

It was really hard on Grundy, because he had a five-pound note which was burning a hole in his pocket, and he had intended to take a merry outing that afternoon.

His Uncle Grundy, who was extremely attached to George Alfred—for some reason Grundy's friends could not guess—often sent him handsome tips, and one had arrived that morning. Grundy had pulled out the fiver with great satisfaction, and planned an excursion for the afternoon. Wilkins and Gunn had been extremely interested to hear of the fiver; they always had better times in the study when Grundy was in funds.

George Alfred looked up angrily as Cardew stopped in at the doorway. He pointed to the passage with his pen.

Cardew's slate and pencil came out. He scribbled, and held up the slate: "Have you seen anything of my fiver?"

"No. I haven't!" growled Grundy. "I mean, I'm not going to talk to you, you cad! Get out!"

Cardew scribbled again.

"Where did you get that face?"

"What?" roared Grundy.

The slate-pencil scratched once more.

"Do you call it a face?"

Grundy hurled his pen at the inkpot and jumped up. He rushed at the Fourth-Former, with the intention of breaking his slate over his head.

Cardew darted into the passage, with Grundy raging on his track. They flew up the passage, Grundy close behind. Suddenly Cardew threw himself on the floor. Quite unable to stop himself in time, Grundy stumbled over him, and shot across him, landing on his hands and knees.

"Yarooh!" roared Grundy.

Before he could even wriggle, Cardew was upon him, and his knee was planted in the small of Grundy's back, pinning him down.

CHAPTER 8.
Nice for Grundy!

GRUNDY gasped under the grinding knee.

He was fairly pinned to the floor, struggle as he might.

Had he been able to regain his feet, the burly Shell fellow might have made short work of the dandy of the Fourth.

But he could not rise; and his somewhat slow brain realised at length that Cardew had deliberately tricked him into this position.

Cardew grinned down at the back of Grundy's head, as the burly Shell fellow wriggled under the gripping knee.

"Gerroff!" roared Grundy.

"Hallo! Are you talking to me?" asked Cardew, in tones of mild surprise. "You will have to send yourself to Coventry if you talk to me, Grundy."

"Groogh! Gerroff!"

"I'm quite comfy, thanks," said Cardew. "Don't howl like that, dear boy, or I shall jam your nose on the floor—like that!"

Cardew's hand on the back of Grundy's head jammed it down, and Grundy's nose felt as if it were being driven into the planks. He gave a muffled roar.

"Gurrrrrgg!"

There was no help for Grundy. On that sunny afternoon all the fellows were out of doors, and the studies were deserted. He was quite at the mercy of the barred junior.

He gurgled with rage, and his legs thrashed the floor helplessly. The knee in his back seemed made of iron.

"You—you—you rotter!" gasped Grundy. "Wharrer you up to? Lemme gerrup!"

"Shush! You mustn't talk to a chap in Coventry."

"I'll—I'll pulverise you! I'll—— Yow-ow!"

Cardew bent, and grasped Grundy's wrists, and drew his arms behind him. The Shell fellow's resistance was in vain. A looped cord was passed round Grundy's wrists, and drawn tight and knotted. He was quite powerless now, with his hands tied behind him.

Cardew rose then, and rolled Grundy over, and sat him up. Grundy looked at him volcanically.

"Comfy?" asked the Fourth-Former.

"Grooh! I'll smash you! Lemme loose!"

Cardew did not let him loose. He dragged Grundy's jacket up, and spread it over his head, outside in. The tail of the jacket hung down over Grundy's eyes. With a length of twine, Cardew tied it in that position, so that the Shell fellow was blindfolded with his own jacket.

"Now get up!" said Cardew.

"Gurrrrrh!"

Grundy was dragged to his feet. He could not see, and he could not use his hands. He kicked out wildly, and Cardew dodged the heavy boots.

"Ta-ta!" drawled Cardew.

"You rotter!" came a roar from Grundy. "You're not going to leave me like this, you rotten rotter!"

Cardew walked down the passage without replying. He descended the stairs and left the School House.

Grundy was left raging in the passage.

To go down as he was, was impossible. He could imagine the howl of laughter that would greet him, if he appeared in the quadrangle with his jacket tied up over his head.

He stumbled blindly along the passage. Unable to see, he had little chance even of finding his study.

He blundered into an open doorway at last, and knocked over a chair. He was in some study now—his own or another, he could not tell. He groped blindly round, and came in contact with another chair, and sat on it. That was all he could do. He hoped he was in his own study, and that Gunn would come in; and he comforted himself with the prospect of bestowing a terrific thrashing upon Cardew at the earliest opportunity.

It seemed to the wriggling, enraged Grundy that it was a century before he heard a footstep in the passage. Someone came into the study, and then there was a startled exclamation.

"Dear me! What a very extraordinary object!"

It was Skimpole's voice.

"Lemme loose!" howled Grundy.

Skimpole of the Shell blinked at him in amazement.

Skimmy had been watching the cricketers, and he had come in now to get tea. The match was nearly over. It was the study shared by Talbot, Gore, and Skimpole into which the blindfolded Shell fellow had stumbled. Skimmy was amazed to see him sitting there, and he did not recognise him at first.

"Extraordinary!" said Skimpole, blinking at Grundy through his big spectacles. "A most remarkable thing! Dear me!"

"You silly fool! Let me loose, will you?"

"Dear me! That sounds like Grundy's voice."

"I am Grundy, you blinking idiot!"

"My dear Grundy, that is not a polite way to address a fellow. May I inquire what you are doing in my study, in that somewhat extraordinary guise?"

"You—you—you chump!" roared Grundy. "Untie me!"

"Extraordinary!" said Skimpole. "If this is a joke of yours, Grundy, I fail to see the point. But may I ask how you contrived to tie yourself up in that extraordinary manner? The matter has a scientific interest for me."

"Idiot! Fathead! Chump! Untie me!"

"Really, Grundy, as you have tied yourself up, you can untie yourself, I suppose. Gore is just coming in, and he will expect to find tea ready, and Talbot will be hungry after cricket. Kindly be patient, Grundy——"

"Lemme loose!"

"My dear Grundy——"

"Hallo! What on earth's this?" exclaimed George Gore, coming into the study. "Is that the wild man from Borneo, or a freshly-caught Hun?"

"Let me go!" shrieked Grundy. "Cardew has tied me up like this, you idiot! Untie me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gore. "You let a Fourth Form kid tie you up like that? You must be a silly ass."

"I'll smash you! I'll pulverise you! Lemme go!"

"Oh, I'll let you go!" said Gore, yanking Grundy out of the chair, and to the door. "There's your way! Go!"

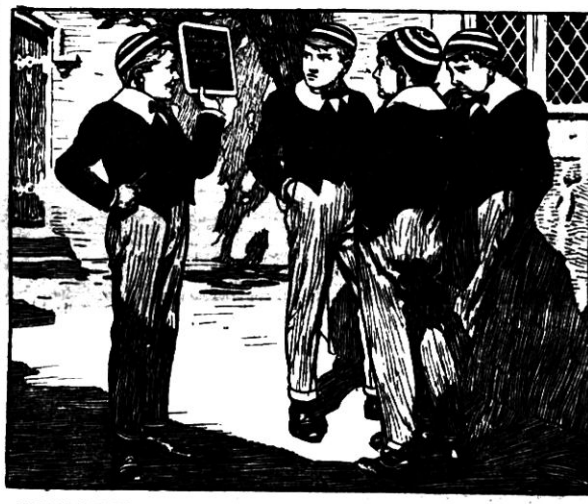
"Untie me!" shrieked Grundy. "I can't see!"

"Oh, travel along!"

Gore gave Grundy a push with his boot, and George Alfred travelled. Perhaps Grundy's threat of smashing and pulverising had not disposed Gore to assist him. Grundy had not been too tactful.

He blundered blindly into the passage.

There was a roar of laughter. The cricketers were coming in now, and Grundy met the astonished gaze of a crowd of them.



Cardew in Coventry.
(See Chapter 7.)

"Bai Jove! Look at that vewy peculiah object!"

"Ha, ha! It's Grundy!"

"Oh, Grundy!" gasped Wilkins. "Oh, dear! Oh, crikey! What have you got your jacket tied over your head like that for?"

"It helps to hide his face," remarked Monty Lowther. "Grundy must be starting in as altruist—doing good deeds to others, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've been tied up!" gasped Grundy. "It's a rotten trick. Let me loose, Wilkins, old chap!"

Wilkins kindly cut through the cords, and Grundy's jacket dropped from round his head. He gasped for breath, his face as red as a beetroot. The passage rang with merriment.

"There's nothing to cackle at!" bellowed Grundy. "Where's Cardew! I'm going to smash him! Where is he?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Wilkins. "I say, where are you going?"

"I'm going to look for Cardew."

"Tea-time, you know——"

"Blow tea!"

"Ain't we going to change the fiver?"

"Blow the fiver!"

And Grundy rushed downstairs, hot on the track of vengeance. He left the juniors yelling with merriment—all save Wilkins. Unless the fiver was changed, there was no tea in Grundy's study. That was a serious matter.

CHAPTER 9.
The £5 Note.

TOM MERRY uttered an exasperated exclamation.

The Terrible Three were in their study, at prep.

From outside, in the passage, there came a sound of scrambling, scuffling, bumping, and thumping.

"How the dickens is a chap to work with the row going on?" exclaimed Tom.

"Give it up!" said Manners. "Go out with a ruler."

Tom Merry picked up the biggest ruler, and strode forth.

There was a crowd in the Shell passage. In the centre of it was George Alfred Grundy. He was struggling in the grasp of three juniors—the chums of No. 9.

Grundy had not been able to find Cardew till calling-over. Then he had tracked him from the hall—with this result.

"What's that row about?" demanded Tom Merry.

"We're arguing with Grundy," said Levison. "He doesn't want to make it pax. We're going to argue with him till he does."

"Leggo!" roared Grundy. "I'll lick any two of you!" Yaroooh!"

"We have to be taken in bulk, if taken at all," grinned Clive.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going to smash Cardew! I tell you I'm going to break him into little bits!"

Bump!

George Alfred, in the grasp of the three, descended on the floor, and smote it with a mighty smite. The roar he gave could have been heard over nearly all the School House.

"Here, chuck that!" exclaimed Wilkins, coming along with Gunn. "Pile in, Gunny!"

"Oh, pile in!" said Cardew coolly. "There's for your nose, Wilkins."

"Yaroooh!"

"Go it, both sides!" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Have it out, deah boys! Don't twead on my feet!"

"How's a chap going to work with this row going on?" demanded Tom Merry. "Chuck it, the lot of you!"

But the six juniors had closed in strife now.

Grundy & Co. were rather bigger than Levison & Co. of the Fourth. But Study No. 9 put up a terrific fight.

In the midst of it Kildare came up the stairs three at a time, with his ashplant in his hand.

"Cave!" yelled Reilly. "Prefect!"

Kildare was on the scene the next moment.

The ashplant rose and fell. It rose and fell again and again. With loud yells the combatants separated.

The Shell fellows bolted for their study, and Levison & Co. scudded away to No. 9 in the Fourth.

The combat was over.

Kildare, with a frown at the grinning onlookers, strode away, his right arm aching a little. Tom Merry chuckled, and returned to his prep.

"By gad!" ejaculated Cardew, as he sank breathless into the armchair in Study No. 9. "Grundy is a tough bounder. Look at my nose!"

"Mine feels as if it's been pushed through the back of my head," groaned Clive. "I think Gunn's going to have a blue eye, though."

"I'm not surprised that Grundy was ratty," grinned Levison. "He looked a howling idiot when we found him with his jacket tied over his head. Blessed if I know how you managed to handle the big beast alone, Cardew!"

"Strategy!" said Cardew. "I didn't do it simply to play a fag joke on the duffer, though. There's more in the incident than meets the eye." He changed the subject abruptly, as his study-mates looked at him inquiringly. "You fellows don't seem to have got into hot water through stickin' to me. I'm glad of that!"

"I hope the others fellows will come round in time," said Clive.

Cardew shook his head.

"They won't, Clive."

"It will be dashed unpleasant for you, Cardew, keeping on these terms with the school for the rest of the term," said the South African junior uneasily.

"I can stand it."

"You're not thinking of going, then?"

"Not at all! I'm not goin' to be driven out of the school—especially by an egregious idiot like Grundy. Grundy is keepin' the game up; but perhaps he will have somethin' else to think about soon. What about prep?"

Study No. 9 settled down to work.

After prep Frank Levison came in, as he often did, for help with his books—help his major was always willing to give. Clive went down, but Cardew stayed in the study. He watched the brothers at work, and absently took a cigarette from his pocket. As he caught the involuntary look Levison minor gave him, however, he laughed, and put it away again.

Meanwhile, there were strained relations in Grundy's study.

George Alfred had spent so much time in looking for Cardew that tea had been missed in the study. The school shop was closed, and it was too late to change Grundy's fiver.

Wilkins and Gunn waited for supper in a morose humour.

They were hungry, and when Grundy talked indignantly of the astounding cheek of Study No. 9 in handling his lofty person, their replies were quite tart. But Grundy, as he often declared, wasn't inclined to stand any rot, and there would certainly have been scrapping in the study if Wilkins and Gunn had not retired to the Common-room.

Grundy was looking very ill-tempered when the Shell came up to bed. He snorted when he found Cardew of the Fourth in the doorway, with a slate in his hand. On the slate was scrawled:

"ANYBODY FOUND MY FIVER?"

The juniors grinned and passed in. Grundy made a grab at the slate, but Cardew jerked it back, and rapped his outstretched hand with it. Grundy gave a yelp, as the slate cracked on his knuckles, and rushed into the passage after Cardew. He rushed into Darrel of the Sixth, who was coming to see lights out.

"You clumsy young ass!" shouted Darrel. "Get into your dormitory immediately, and take fifty lines!"

"Look here, Darrel——"

Grundy said no more, for the exasperated prefect introduced his boot into the discussion. Grundy returned to the dormitory in a great hurry.

Cardew sauntered, smiling, into his own dormitory, slate in hand. He held it up for the Fourth Formers to see, and there was a grin.

"Bai Jove! Haven't you found your fivah yet?" said Arthur Augustus, forgetting that Cardew was in Coventry.

"You're speaking to him, D'Arcy!" squeaked Trimble. "Shut up!"

"If you are tellin' me to shut up, Twimble, you cheekay ass, you are wunnin' the wisk of gettin' a feahful thwashin'!"

"Don't talk to Cardew, then!" rapped out Mellish.

"I wegard you as a cheekay wottah, Mellish! But undah the cires, Cardew, I wefuse, of course, to speak to you!"

"Dry up, ass!" growled Herries.

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Hewwies. I am simply explainin' to Cardew that I am not goin' to speak to him."

Cardew scrawled on the slate and held it up:

"FATHEAD! GO AND EAT COKE!"

Arthur Augustus breathed wrath.

"Blake, deah boy, is it against the wules to give a wottah a feahful thwashin' when he is in Coventwy?" he asked.

"Ask me another," yawned Blake.

Fortunately, Langton came in just then to see lights out. The Fourth Form turned in, and only Clive and Levison bade good-night to Cardew. His voice was quite cheery as he replied.

He was the recipient of some furious glances the next morning. It was the third day since the House trial—the last day of grace. It was not known whether Cardew had made any arrangements for going. But it did not look as if he had. And the jury had promised "drastic measures" if he were still at St. Jim's after the period of grace had expired. It was certain that Grundy, at least, would not let the matter drop. The great George Alfred fully believed that it was up to him to purge St. Jim's of this disgrace. And there was no doubt that Grundy would have considerable backing in taking further measures.

After lessons Grundy was eloquent on the subject to Wilkins and Gunn, and this time his chums were quite polite and attentive. Their politeness was due to the fact that they were going to the school shop to change Grundy's fiver. On such an occasion, of course, politeness was called for, and they gave Grundy his head.

Grundy's purchases were as plentiful as was possible without transgressing the food regulations. Grundy was very particular on that point, and he spread himself upon the things that were not banned by the Food Controller. The fiver passed over to Dame Taggles, who

gave Grundy four pounds change. Cardew sauntered into the school shop while the Shell fellows were there, and stood looking on.

Grundy gave him a haughty stare as he went out, followed by Wilkins and Gunn, all carrying parcels. When they were gone, Cardew addressed Dame Taggles:

"Did Grundy change a fiver with you, Mrs. Taggles?"

"Yes, Master Cardew."

"Would you mind lettin' me see the number?"

The request was so strange that Dame Taggles blinked at Cardew, and several juniors who were in the shop stared at him, too.

"Really, Master Cardew——"

"Or, rather, take this, Mrs. Taggles," said Cardew, laying a slip of paper on the counter. "There's a number written there. Will you see whether that number is the same number as that on the note Grundy gave you?"

"Yes, Master Cardew."

Mrs. Taggles, somewhat flustered, picked up the slip of paper, and compared the number written thereon with the number on Grundy's note.

"It is the same, Master Cardew," she said.

"0002468!" asked Cardew.

"Yes."

"Oh, good!"

Cardew turned to the staring juniors in the shop. He took out his slate, with a grin, and the slate-pencil scratched on it.

There was a gasp as he held it up.

"GRUNDY HAS CHANGED MY FIVE-POUND NOTE! GRUNDY IS A THIEF!"

CHAPTER 10.
The Accusation.

TOM MERRY came into the tuck-shop with Manners and Lowther as Cardew held up the slate with that startling inscription upon it. The Terrible Three jumped.

"What's that?" shouted Tom Merry.

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"Look here, don't make jokes of that kind, Cardew!" said Manners. "You'll find yourself in trouble!"

"May I beg to point out to you that you are speakin' to a chap in Coventry?" drawled Cardew.

"Never mind Coventry now!" exclaimed Tom Merry angrily. "How dare you write up such a thing as that?"

"It happens to be true."

"Rot!"

"I accuse Grundy of stealing my five-pound note, and passing it here!" said Cardew, with an unpleasant laugh.

"You can't be serious!" exclaimed Tom Merry, aghast.

"Sober as a judge, dear boy! Grundy has passed the note."

"Rubbish! We all knew Grundy had a note by post yesterday!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

"We all know he said so," amended Cardew, calmly.

"Oh! But——"

"Sure, Cardew knew the number of the note," said Reilly of the Fourth. "He had it on a slip of paper, and Mrs. Taggles compared them."

"That's so," said Dick Julian. "Cardew may have seen Grundy's note, though, and taken the number."

"May I beg to inquire how I could possibly have seen Grundy's note, when I'm not even on speakin' terms with him?" yawned Cardew.

Julian was silent. It did indeed seem improbable. How could Cardew have spied down the number of the banknote Grundy's pocket?

"Moreover, I can prove that the note was mine," said Cardew.

"How?" demanded Tom Merry.

"I had my last lot of notes straight from the bank. You may be aware that when bankers send notes by post they refer to the numbers in the covering letter."

"Well, I never get banknotes from a bank," said Tom. "We're not all rolling in money, Cardew. But do you mean to say that you have a letter from a bank, in which the number of that note is mentioned?"

"Here it is."

Cardew felt in his pocket, and drew out a letter. He handed it to Tom Merry.

"I'm to read this" asked Tom.

"Certainly! Read it out."

Tom, with a face growing very grave, read out the letter. It was headed "City and Provincial Bank, Wayland," and was evidently genuine bank note-paper. Upon it was written in a business hand:

"We have pleasure in enclosing two £5 notes, Nos. 0002468/69, in accordance with the instructions of Lord Reckness. Kindly acknowledge receipt, and oblige.
—Yours faithfully,

"F. HEBBLETHWAITE."

The juniors in the tuckshop looked at the letter. It was evidently genuine. And the note Grundy had given to Dame Taggles was numbered 0002468.

"Mrs. Taggles, will you let me see Grundy's note?" asked Tom Merry quietly. "Can't make too sure."

"Certainly, Master Merry!" said the good dame, who was looking very distressed and flustered.

She took out the note, and Tom Merry looked at the number.

"No. 0002468!" he said.

"Right enough!" said Manners.

"My hat!" murmured Lowther. "Fancy Grundy!"

Mrs. Taggles looked doubtfully at Cardew.

"Then this note is yours, Master Cardew?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" smiled Cardew. "But keep it, Mrs. Taggles; you're not goin' to lose your money. I'll settle with Grundy."

"But I must tell the Head, Master Cardew."

"Not at all. If you do, I'll tell him I made Grundy a present of the note," said Cardew calmly.

"But—but——"

"Don't say anything yet, Mrs. Taggles," said Tom Merry, with a very worried look. "Grundy may be able to explain. I'll see him about it at once, and come back and tell you."

"Very well, Master Merry."

"You had better come with me, Cardew."

"But I'm in Coventry, dear boy!"

"Oh, don't be a fool! Come along!"

"Anythin' to oblige."

Cardew walked out of the tuckshop, holding up the slate like a banner. Tom Merry dragged it from his hand, though not before a good many fellows had seen it, and drew his sleeve across the inscription.

"Enough of that!" he snapped savagely.

"What are you so particular about? Don't you want the school to know that merry old Grundy is a thief?" smiled Cardew. "You weren't so dashed particular about me, were you?"

"Wait till it's proved!" growled Tom.

"Isn't it proved already?"

Tom Merry made no reply, but strode on towards the School House. There did not seem much room for doubt in the matter; but the discovery was too staggering to be swallowed at once.

Grundy was every kind of an ass, certainly. He was a duffer of the first water, and his high-handed methods sometimes came dangerously near to bullying. But the idea that he was a thief was simply staggering. He might have been guilty of any kind of folly, perhaps—but theft! Conclusive as the evidence was, it was incredible.

But certainly the matter had to be threshed out. Grundy had taken the lead against Cardew, on the suspicion that he had been sacked from his last school for theft. If Grundy was a thief himself, there was hardly any punishment that was too severe for him.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus, meeting the grim-faced little crowd of juniors as they came into the School House.

"It's come out that Grundy is a cheery old thief!" smiled Cardew.

"What!"

"Startlin' news, isn't it? But there you are—life is full of surprises."

"I wegard the statement as a wotton slandah, Cardew!"

"But you can't regard away the proofs, can you, old scout? And it's proved up to the hilt!"

"I don't believe it," said Jack Blake directly.

"There seems to be something in it," said Tom Merry reluctantly. "But Grundy's going to have a chance to explain. Come up to his study, Cardew!"

"I'm not comin', thanks. You gave me a Form trial, led by dear old Grundy. You can give Grundy the same fair play, you know!"

Tom Merry hesitated.

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander!" smiled Cardew. "Do you have two weights and measures at St. Jim's?"

"I'll tell Grundy to come into the Common-room," said the captain of the Shell quietly. "Blake, get the fellows there. Cardew is within his rights!"

"But he can't seriously be accusing Grundy!" exclaimed Blake incredulously.

"Quite seriously," said Cardew. "I've already proved it, too!"

"Is he gassing, Tom?"

"No; there seems to be something in it. Get the fellows into the Common-room, and I'll fetch Grundy!"

"Right-ho!"

The fellows did not need much fetching. The news of Cardew's accusation had spread already.

The School House juniors crowded in to be present at the inquiry.

Fair play demanded that Grundy should go through the same ordeal that Cardew had gone through. That could not be denied. And though most of the fellows, on first hearing of the accusation, concluded that it was a trick of Cardew's to revenge himself on Grundy, they were staggered when they heard what the proofs were.

There was not the slightest doubt that the note Grundy had changed was Cardew's property. How could he explain that?

Tom Merry tapped at Grundy's door and entered. Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn were at tea, and in high good-humour.

Grundy gave Tom an affable nod.

"Come in!" he said. "I suppose you've come about Cardew. I'm quite willing to consult with you, Merry, though it must be understood that I'm taking the lead. About dealing with Cardew, if he doesn't go——"

"Never mind that now," said Tom. "You're wanted, Grundy. Cardew

accuses you of stealing his five-pound note!"

Grundy stared blankly at the captain of the Shell.

"Is that a joke?" he asked at last.

"No."

"He—he—he accuses me—me!" stuttered Grundy. "Me! He accuses me!" Grundy jumped up from the table. "Where is he? I'll smash him! I'll squash him! I'll—I'll——"

"Cheese it!" said Tom. "This matter's serious, Grundy. Cardew accuses you, and he seems to have some proof on his side!"

"Oh, don't be a fool! Where is the cad? I'll pulverise him!" roared Grundy.

"You won't do anything of the kind," said Tom calmly. "You'll come down and stand your trial!"

"Where's Cardew?"

"In the Common-room."

Grundy did not need urging to go. He bounded out of the study and tore downstairs. Tom Merry followed, with the astounded Wilkins and Gunn. The spread in Grundy's study was left unfinished.

CHAPTER 11.
Found Guilty.

"WHERE is he?" Grundy rushed into the junior Common-room with a roar.

"Where is he? Where is the cad? Where's the lying Hun?"

"Alludin' to me?" drawled Cardew. "Here I am, old scout. You owe me five quid, Grundy!"

Grundy made a furious rush at the cool Fourth-Former; but hands seized him on all sides, and dragged him back.

"None of that!" snapped Blake. "That can come afterwards, Grundy, if you prove that it's a lie!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Is anybody here fool enough to think that it's true?" shrieked Grundy.

"You've got to prove that it isn't," smiled Cardew. "It won't be easy. Take it calmly, dear boy. Yelling won't save your bacon!"

"Let me go! I'll smash him!" roared Grundy.

"Easy does it, old chap," murmured Wilkins, catching Grundy's arm. "You'll make the fellows think you're afraid to face it out at this rate!"

"Don't be a fool, George Wilkins!"

Tom Merry closed the door and locked it. Nearly all the School House, Shell and Fourth, were gathered in the room. Grundy was reduced to order at last, though he was still fuming with rage.

Levison and Clive joined Cardew, both looking troubled. The affair had taken them utterly by surprise.

"Are you serious in this, Cardew?" muttered Levison.

"Naturally."

"You really think that Grundy bagged your banknote?" exclaimed Sidney Clive.

"It's for Grundy to prove that he didn't. He passed my banknote at the tuckshop in the presence of half a dozen fellows!"

"Great Scott!"

"Rather startlin'—what? Especially after the line Grundy has been takin' lately. But you never know a fellow till you find him out!" smiled Cardew.

"I can't swallow it," said Clive, shaking his head.

"Well, Grundy's goin' to have a fair trial—same as I had!" Cardew laughed. "Sauce for the gander, you know!"

"That's fair enough," said Levison.

The Common-room was in a buzz. Wilkins and Gunn stood beside Grundy, trying to pacify him. George Alfred was still anxious to settle the matter by a frontal attack.

"Now, we'll go into this," said Tom Merry quietly. "Grundy, you changed a five-pound note with Dame Taggles half an hour ago?"

"Yes, I did!" snorted Grundy.

"Where did you get the note?"

"My Uncle Grundy sent it to me yesterday. He often sends me tips!"

"Cardew claims the note as his."

"Cardew's a liar!"

"We shall see about that. Can you give me the number of your note, Grundy?"

"Of course I can't! I never thought of looking at it!"

"Can you prove that you received a banknote yesterday?"

"I could if it was necessary, but it isn't."

"It is necessary. Unless you prove that you are innocent, you will be found guilty of theft!"

"Why, you—you——" Grundy spluttered.

Wilkins pressed his arm.

"Go easy, old scout!" he whispered.

Grundy swallowed his wrath with difficulty. The grim looks of the juniors warned him that the matter was serious. He realised it, and he strove to keep his exasperation in check.

"I've got my uncle's letter somewhere," he said. "I dare say I can find it!"

Grundy fumbled in his pockets, and produced a letter.

"Read it out to 'em, Wilkins!" he snorted.

Wilkins read the letter out. It was evidently written by Uncle Grundy, and mentioned that a banknote for five pounds was enclosed.

"Well, that's all right," said Tom Merry. "It's settled that Grundy had a five-pound note of his own. Have you still got it about you, Grundy?"

"Of course I haven't! I changed it in the tuckshop!"

"Now we're coming to the point," said Tom quietly. "The note you changed in the tuckshop was numbered 0002468."

"I dare say it was; I never noticed."

"Cardew lost a note yesterday," continued Tom. "It was numbered 0002468. He has proved it by a letter from the bank, which gives the number of the note."

"Rats!"

"Here's the letter."

The bank-manager's letter had been passing from hand to hand. It was passed to Grundy now.

He read it, and blinked at it. Grundy was completely sobered now. Wilkins and Gunn exchanged a very queer glance.

"Well, the note mentioned in that letter must have been Cardew's, of course," said Grundy. "But that wasn't the note I changed."

"The note you changed was numbered 0002468. A lot of us have seen it. Dame Taggles showed it to us!"

"Jolly queer!" said Grundy. "I must say, it's awfully careless of the Bank of England to number two notes alike!"

"That's utter rot, of course! No two notes ever are numbered alike!" said Tom Merry. "The note you changed was Cardew's note!"

"But—but it couldn't have been!" stammered Grundy, bewildered, and somewhat alarmed now. "You see, it couldn't have been, because I've had it in my pocket ever since I took it out of Uncle Grundy's letter."

"You didn't change banknotes with Cardew for any reason?"

"No. Why should I?"

"Then how do you account for the fact that it was Cardew's note you changed?"

"It wasn't!" said Grundy.

"Don't be an ass! It was, and we all know it was! How do you account for it?"

"I—I can't account for it. It beats me!"

"Cardew put a notice on the board yesterday that he had lost a five-pound note. Did you find it?"

"No, I didn't!"

"I—I say, think a bit, old chap," whispered Wilkins. "Did you find it, and shove it in your pocket, and forget all about it?"

"No!" howled Grundy. "I didn't!"

A grim silence followed in the Common-room. Cardew had proved his ownership of the banknote Grundy had changed with Mrs. Taggles. Cardew's note had been in Grundy's possession, and Grundy had spent it. What more remained to be proved?

Grundy looked round almost wildly at the crowd of grim faces. He read condemnation in all. He looked at Wilkins and Gunn, and they averted their faces, and Grundy almost shivered.

"You, too!" he muttered. "You—you believe it?"

"May I make a suggestion?" broke in Cardew, with bland calmness.

"You can if you like!" said Tom Merry shortly.

"Grundy appears to have had a banknote of his own. He had only one, I presume. Is that so, Grundy?"

"Eh? Yes, I had only one," mumbled Grundy.

"As Grundy has spent my fiver, the probability is that he still has his own banknote about him," said Cardew. "He was gettin' rid of the stolen goods first. I dare say he was anxious to get it off his hands. Well, as Grundy had only one fiver, if one is found about him now, that will prove that he changed my fiver knowin' that it was mine. I suggest searchin' him."

"You can search me if you like!" shouted Grundy. "I changed my uncle's note at the tuckshop, and I can't understand the number being the same. If you find a fiver on me, I'll eat it!"

"Well, that will settle the matter beyond the shadow of a doubt," said Levison. "Trimble can search him."

Nobody else was anxious for that task, but Baggy Trimble did not mind.

In deep silence he went through Grundy's pockets, turning out all sorts of articles, but no banknote.

"I told you so!" snarled Grundy.

"Might be hidden somewhere," smiled Cardew. "Might be put behind the linin' or somethin'. Grundy may be an old hand at this game."

"You lyin' rotter! I'll——"

"I'll jolly soon see!" grinned Trimble.

He made a careful examination of the inside of Grundy's jacket, and gave a yelp.

"There's a hole in the lining."

"Look in it!" said Tom Merry, whose brow had become very grim.

Trimble's fat hand groped in the lining. He gave a sudden gasp.

"There's something there—a folded paper, or something!"

He drew out his hand. In the fat fingers was a folded five-pound note!

CHAPTER 12.
An Amazing Revelation.

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW burst into a light, mocking laugh as Trimble held up the banknote.

Grundy stared at it with haggard eyes. Wilkins and Gunn stepped a little further away from him. They were loyal to Grundy, but this was the limit. No fellow was called upon to back up a thief!

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"That's Grundy's own banknote," he said, "hidden in the lining! I don't think we need go any further."

"Wathah not!"

"Case is clear," said Lowther. "Blessed if I should ever have thought it of Grundy!"

"I am feahfully shocked, Gwunday! How could you evah have come to do such a mean, wotten thing?"

"I—I didn't!" Grundy was near to incoherent babbling. "I—I never! I didn't know that banknote was in the lining of my jacket! I can't understand it! I—I had only one fiver. I suppose that's it! But—but I don't understand!"

He cast a haggard look round at the juniors. There was contempt and derision in every face.

"Verdict!" said Tom Merry quietly. "Guilty, or not guilty?"

"Guilty!"

It was a shout on all sides.

"You hear that, Grundy?"

"I—I don't understand how——"

"You are found guilty of being a thief," said Tom Merry. "It rests with Cardew whether the matter is taken before the Head. In that case, you will be expelled from the school, and I must say it will serve you right! You were hard enough on Cardew, and it wasn't quite proved in his case. If Cardew chooses to let the matter drop, you can hand him back his money, and I hope you'll have the decency to get out of St. Jim's. You'll be sent to Coventry all the time you stay here."

Grundy passed his hand over his brow.

"I didn't, you know!" he gasped at last. "I don't understand——"

"Oh, don't keep that up!" said Gore contemptuously. "That game's played out, Grundy. You're guilty, and the sooner you go, the better!"

All eyes turned on Cardew.

The dandy of the Fourth had his revenge now if he wanted it. If he chose to report the matter, what was to save Grundy from expulsion? Levison and Clive looked at him anxiously.

Cardew smiled, and lounged forward with his hands in his pockets.

"I've got a few remarks to make, if you'll listen to them," he said. "You can send me to Coventry again afterwards, you know!"

"Cut it short!" growled Blake.

"Certainly! You may recall that when you honoured me with a House trial, I remarked that a fellow might be suspected of stealin', without bein' guilty!"

"What does that matter now?" exclaimed Tom Merry impatiently.

"Lots," said Cardew calmly. "Our dear old pal Grundy acted as judge on that occasion, an' he laughed the idea to scorn. Grundy wouldn't admit that a fellow could be condemned without bein' guilty. I dare say he has altered his opinion by this time!"

He cast an amused glance at the burly Shell fellow.

"Yes, I—I have," stammered Grundy. "That's right enough. You see, I ain't a thief. Whoever says so, I'm not!"

"Chuck that!" said Blake. "Anything else to say, Cardew?"

"Oh, yes! After this very painful scene, I am sure it will be a pleasure to you to learn that Grundy is perfectly innocent," said Cardew coolly.

"Wha-a-at!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Innocent!" exclaimed Clive blankly.

"Oh, yes! Queer, ain't it? They'd have condemned him in any law-court on that evidence," drawled Cardew. "But, as a matter of absolute fact, Grundy isn't a thief. I doubt whether he has brains enough to be one!"

There was a dead silence of utter astonishment.

"The fact is," resumed Cardew, with perfect coolness, "I got up this little affair to drive into Grundy's wooden brain that a fellow might be suspected, and even condemned, without bein' guilty. Even Grundy's brain must have assimilated that valuable knowledge by this time!"

"What do you mean?" shouted Tom Merry. "You——"

"My banknote was never lost at all," smiled Cardew. "I planned the whole thing, an' had it cut an' dried, and the notice I put on the board was the first step in the merry little game. I knew Grundy had a fiver; he swanked a good bit about it. Yesterday I handled him in the Shell passage, and tied his jacket over his head. You remember what an entertainin' object he looked. Grundy never had a suspicion that while I was doin' that I was takin' away his banknote, and puttin' mine in the place of it!"

"Oh!"

"Neither did he see, bein' blindfolded, that I tore the linin' of his jacket, an' shoved his own banknote there out of sight," said Cardew, with perfect calmness. "But I did, you know. Grundy was goin' around after that with my banknote in his pocket, thinkin' it was his own, and his own banknote hidden in the linin' of his jacket, never knowin' it was there!"

"You villain!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Let me finish, dear boy. Don't you find the yarn entertainin'? I waited for Grundy to change his banknote, watchin' him to see him do it; and when he did it, an hour ago, I dropped on him, led all you duffers by the nose, an' here we are! Gentlemen, I have much pleasure in assurin' you that Grundy isn't a thief—nothin' worse than a harmless lunatic!"

"My hat!" gasped Grundy.

He breathed with relief.

He was not thinking of vengeance now. He was only too glad that Cardew had told the startling truth at the eleventh hour. He shuddered to think of what would have been his fate if the dandy of the Fourth had chosen to keep silence.

Tom Merry & Co. were quite pale.

They knew that Cardew was telling the truth now. He had twisted them all round his finger. He had led them to declare an innocent fellow guilty of a base crime. He had told the truth at the finish, and there was perhaps some excuse to be made for his impish trick. But Tom Merry & Co. were not likely to forgive that trick.

"My dear friends and brethren, let this be a lesson to you not to judge any fellow too hastily," drawled Cardew. "And now you can send me to Coventry again!"

Perhaps Cardew had fancied that that lesson would cause a revulsion of feeling in his favour. Perhaps it was dictated simply by his strange, misguided nature. If he had hoped for any good from it, he was disappointed. There was bitter anger, scorn, and contempt in every face, and Levison's face and Clive's were as hard and grim as the rest. They had joined in the verdict of "Guilty." They, like the rest, had been within an ace of committing an act of cruel injustice. They looked at Cardew, and their glances were like steel.

Cardew caught their glances, and started a little. Then he understood, and a cold, cynical smile wreathed his lips for a moment.

"Grundy," said Tom Merry at last, "I'm sorry, and I think every fellow here is sorry, too. We were taken in by a scoundrel!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That fellow, whether he was a thief at Wodehouse or not, has the makings of a criminal in him," went on Tom Merry, his voice trembling with anger. "I'm done with him, and I should think his friends have done with him, too! I don't think any decent fellow will speak to him again. You can go, Cardew; you're not fit to touch!"

Cardew smiled. He looked at Levison and Clive, the smile still on his lips. They met his glance with hard looks, void of all friendship. It was too much; he had passed the limit this time. He had put too severe a strain upon their loyalty, and it had broken under the strain. Henceforth Ralph Reckness Cardew was to them as he was to the rest of the school.

Cardew understood. He put his hands into his pockets, and sauntered easily to the door. He hummed a tune from a light opera as he went down the passage. Henceforth he was alone, to fight his battle as best he could.

But one thing might be counted upon—he would be game to the last!

THE END.

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

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"STICKING IT OUT!"

By Martin Clifford.

The story of Cardew and the evil times upon which he falls at St. Jim's through the discovery that he had left Wodehouse School in disgrace is continued in this fine yarn. Into it comes, too, the old rivalry between Rylcombe Grammar School and St. Jim's.

I have had some letters lately complaining that the stories have gone off—which is, of course, merely to say that they do not suit quite so well as some past stories have the taste of the writers of those particular letters. The general consensus of opinion seems to be that we have seldom, if ever before, had such first-rate yarns as we are getting just now, and certainly the circulation figures do not suggest any waning in interest.

Those who make the complaints mentioned nearly all express their preference for what they call jape stories. Most of us enjoy these, but to give such stories every week would be a great mistake. Pathos and tragedy have their parts in school life as well as humour, and accordingly they have their parts in our stories. There is plenty of fun, and the stories are all the better for not being based on broad farce. Now and then a yarn which is funny all through is quite an excellent thing to read, but I am convinced that the GEM would not be as popular a paper as it is if I filled it with japing stories and cut out such fine yarns as the Talbot, Levison, and Cardew series have given us.

But, of course, there will be some of the rollicking kind coming along, and no one can truly say that Mr. Martin Clifford ever wrote a story devoid of humour. I don't believe he could do it if he tried!

Your Editor

EXTRACTS FROM

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

A FEAST OF THE GODS!

By Dick Russell.

"MOSSOO'S gone out!"

Skinner of the Remove made that announcement as he came into the Common-room.

Some of the fellows looked at him.

"Well, what does it matter if he has?" asked Bob Cherry.

Skinner grinned.

"Who says a feed?" he asked.

"Oh!"

There was a chortle all round the Common-room at once.

Some of the fellows had been feeling sore about it, especially Skinner and Bolsover major and his set.

It really didn't seem quite the thing, that while all Greyfriars was put under the food-regulations, Monsieur Charpentier, our French master, should be clinging to the fleshpots of Egypt in the way everybody had noticed.

Monsieur Charpentier, being a Frenchman, of course, knew how to cook. All Frenchmen can.

Billy Bunter, who had a holiday in France once, says that the French would be simply wonderful cooks if they had anything decent to cook.

Now at Greyfriars we had our sugar strictly allowanced, and the bread cut down to the regulation amount, and the meat the same; and to some fellows, like Bunter, it seemed as if the grub was reaching vanishing-point.

Then it came out that Mossoo had taken to doing cooking in his study.

He had one of those double-saucepans, that can be left on the fire without being watched, and he used to make some kind of a stew, and leave it there to simmer.

I don't suppose the Head knew. In fact, we were pretty certain he didn't, because he was very strict about the grub rules.

Mossoo had his tommy in Hall the same as everybody else, and we agreed that it was rather thick for him to make private stews in his study, and feed on them all on his own.

Bunter says a Frenchman takes to cooking like a duck to water; and certainly Mossoo must have been a jolly good chef, to judge by the smell of the things he cooked in his blessed saucepan.

Fellows went into his study with lines sometimes, and they miffed it. They said it was prime.

Lots of the fellows talked about it, and Bolsover major and his friends threatened to raid the stew some time when Mossoo wasn't there. Wharton held that Mossoo was a good sort, and too honourable to go over the food allowance; but Skinner said, in that case, what did he make his soups and things of? For it was a dead cert that Mossoo had his full allowance in Hall. Even Wharton couldn't answer that question: but he stuck to it that Mossoo was all right.

So when Skinner came in and told us Mossoo had gone out, quite a lot of the fellows were on at once. Bolsover major, of course, took the lead.

"Sure he's gone out, Skinner?"

"Followed him to the gates!" grinned Skinner. "Heard him tell Quelchy he was going to see a man in Friardale!"

"Good! Then he's right off the pitch!" said Bolsover. "I know his blessed cooking's going on, because it was there when I took my lines in an hour ago. He's going to scoff it when he comes back; he always does!"

"Ripping supper for him, and nothing for us!" grumbled Snoop.

"Rotten shame!" said Bunter, with great indignation. "Considering the way we stick to the regulations, I call it disgraceful!"

Bolsover major looked round.

"Who's game?" he asked. "I invite all the gentlemen present to supper in Mossoo's study. No charge!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm on!"

"Same here!"

"Go it!"

"Ain't you coming, Wharton?" asked Skinner, with a sneer.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Let Mossoo's grub alone!" he said. "I'm sure he's not exceeding the rules; he wouldn't!"

"Where does he get the stuff, then?" jeered Snoop. "Does he make his stew out of bits left over from dinner?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I know!" said Wharton. "Perhaps he makes them out of something that isn't restricted!"

"All meat is restricted, and rabbits, and poultry, and everything," said Bolsover major. "And it's not a vegetable soup—I know that!"

"Well, I'll stick to supper in Hall," said Wharton.

"Bread and yellow soap—and not much of that now!" sneered Bolsover. "You're welcome to it; you can have mine, too. Come on, you fellows!"

And Bolsover major led his flock away.

Skinner and Snoop and Stott and Bunter followed him at once. Then two or three of the other fellows went. They didn't see why they should be left out of the feast. As for Bunter, he was fairly gloating at the prospect. Bunter was always hungry, and bread and cheese in Hall was a mere joke to his appetite.

Bolsover & Co. sneaked into Mossoo's study very cautiously.

They didn't want to be caught there.

What Mr. Quelch may have thought about Mossoo's cooking we didn't know; but what he would have done if he had caught Remove chaps raiding Mossoo's supper wasn't doubtful at all.

They tiptoed into the study, and closed the door.

Monsieur Charpentier, having gone to Friardale, was safe for an hour at least. That was plenty of time.

The fire was low, but the double-saucepan that we knew so well was on it, and simmering away.

The old was a little aside, and a steam rose from the saucepan, and the smell was simply delicious to half a dozen hungry fellows.

Bolsover major smacked his lips.

"Gorgeous!" he said.

"I say, you fellows, it's corking!" said Bunter. "Better than bread and cheese in Hall—what?"

"You bet!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess there won't be much of that stew left for Mossoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha! No fear!"

"What about crocks?" said Skinner.

"There's some here," said Bolsover major. "I've seen the maid taking them down to wash up sometimes."

They looked in the cupboard, and found some crocks. There were several plates of different sizes, and some cups and saucers. It wasn't a time to stand on ceremony about crocks. There were only two spoons and a fork or two; but Skinner had brought some cutlery in his pockets, and he handed the things round.

Bolsover major took the lid off the saucepan, and took some of the stuff out in a spoon and tasted it.

"It's done all right," he said.

"What's it like?"

"Delicious!"

"Oh, good!"

Bolsover took the inner saucepan out, and helped with the stew. He poured it into plates and cups and saucers, and the raiders sat round Mossoo's table and started supper.

There was plenty of the stuff to go round, too. Mossoo wasn't stinting himself in quantity. And if he made all that lot without exceeding the meat allowance, he must have been a jolly clever cook, Skinner said.

The fellows shoved in their spoons, and started.

There was a shortage of bread to go with it, but they didn't mind that much. The stew was simply topping.

It was rather soupy, with small pieces of a very delicate kind of meat in it, and flavoured with herbs and things. Exactly what the little bits of meat were the raiders couldn't tell. Skinner thought rabbit, and Snoop thought chicken, and Bunter said they were game. Anyway, they were delicious; the fellows all agreed on that.

For about ten minutes the chaps were as busy as bees. By the time they had finished the saucepan had been scraped out clean, and there was hardly a mark left on the crocks, the stew was so nice.

"Now we'd better be getting off!" grinned Bolsover major. "We don't want Mossoo to find us here, under the circs!"

"I guess not," chortled Fisher T. Fish. "Let's slide!"

They shoved the crocks back in the cupboard and slid.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! How did you get on?" asked Bob Cherry, when the raiders came back chortling into the Common-room.

"First-rate!" said Skinner. "Silly ass not to come and have some! It was topping!"

"Gorgeous!" said Billy Bunter, rubbing his fat waistcoat. "Not quite enough of it, but simply prime. It was made of game."

"Chicken!" said Snoop.

"Rabbit!" said Skinner.

"Anyway, it was prime," said Bolsover major. "But I'd like to see Mossoo's chivvy when he comes in hungry and finds it gone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll have to keep it jolly dark," said Wharton, laughing.

"Oh, rather! Mind, you chaps, if Mossoo comes here to inquire, we haven't been outside the Common-room."

"No fear!"

All the chaps, as well as the raiders, were interested to know what Mossoo would do when he found his soup gone. There was great expectation when Mossoo was heard coming in, and when he went to his study the fellows were quite breathless.

"Now look out for fireworks!" murmured Bob Cherry. "I'll be bound he suspects the Remove! They always do seem to suspect the Remove when anything goes wrong."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob was right. About five minutes later Monsieur Charpentier came whisking down the passage, looking very red and excited. Naturally, he couldn't suspect a senior of raiding his stew, so he came to the junior Common-room to inquire after it.

"Mes garcons!" he began, in a voice trembling with excitement.

"Good-evening, Mossoo!" said Skinner, very politely.

"Bon soir, mon garcon! It is zat someone he have go viz himself to my chambre—my study—and take away zat vich I leave in ze saucepan on ze fire," spluttered Mossoo. "Zat boy zat do zis zing, he is vun vicked boy. I demand of him zat he give me back zat cookery!"

The fellows grinned. They couldn't help it. Bolsover major & Co. couldn't very well give Mossoo his stew back, considering where they had put it.

"I am anger," continued Mossoo. "I am verree anger and indignation. I pay ze money for ze snails and ze frogs, I make me mine soup, and now—— Mon Dieu! Vat is ze mattair viz you, Bolsover?"

Bolsover major had turned as white as a sheet.

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Skinner gurgled.

The rest of them looked sickly and queer.

"You—you—you make your stews of—of—of what?" Bolsover major managed to articulate.

Mosson looked surprised.

"Zat is a verree populaire dish in mine country," he said. "I make zem of ze snails and ze frogs. And——"

"Groooogh!"

"Gurrrrgr!"

"Yow-wow-wow!"

Mosson stared blankly at Bolsover & Co. He couldn't understand what was the matter with them. Stews made of snails and frogs were all very well for Mosson—he hadn't been exceeding the meat allowance, after all, it appeared. At least, I've never heard of a Snail Controller, or a Frog Controller, yet.

But for the Greyfriars chaps, who hadn't been used to French cookery, it didn't seem nice—quite the reverse, indeed!

Skinner sank down on the sofa, holding his head in his hands. Snoop made a rush for the window, and leaned his head out. Fisher T. Fish hung on the corner of the table, and groaned.

As for Billy Bunter, who had had a good whack in the stew, he simply collapsed. Bunter can eat almost anything, but even Bunter draws the line at snails and frogs.

Bolsover major groaned deeply.

"Mes pauvres garcons!" exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier, in great concern. Mosson is a good little chap; and he forgot all about his lost stew, as he saw the fellows taken ill like that all of a sudden. "Vat is ze mattair? Is it zat you have eaten of some zing zat do not agree viz your little inside?"

"Groooogh!"

"Gerrrrrrh!"

"Oh, lor'!"

"Bosher me a basin or something—grough!"

"Yow-wow!"

"Help!"

"Oh, Jerusalem!"

There was a regular howl in the Common-room. Every fellow who hadn't been to the feed simply shrieked. The fellows who had been to it didn't feel like laughing, though.

"It's all right, Mossoo!" gasped Harry Wharton. "The chaps have been eating some rather rich food, and it doesn't agree with them."

"Oh, is zat all?" said Mossoo. "Zen I am verree mooch relief. I am sorry zat you suffair so, mes pauvres garcons, but you sall be more carefull, isn't it, ven zat you eat of ze food zat is rich?"

And Monsieur Charpentier went away, without bothering any more about his missing cookery. He never suspected that that was the cause of the sudden illness in the Remove.

Bolsover major sprawled across the table, groaning. Being a big, bullying sort of chap, he had taken the lion's share of the plunder; and he was sorry for it now.

"I—I'm dying!" moaned Bolsover. "Oh, the horrid beast—snails—grooh! Oh, my tummy! Frogs—groogh!"

"I—I thought it was chicken!" moaned Snoop. "It was very—grooh—tender! I—it was frog—grerrrooooop!"

"Wow-wow-wow!" mumbled Bunter, rocking himself on the floor. "I—I do feel queer! Oh, my inside! Wow-wow-wow!"

"Gurrrgg!"

Bolsover & Co. limped out of the Common-room, fairly doubled up. They made sounds as they went like passengers on a Channel steamer on a rough day. They left the room in a roar from end to end. Everybody, excepting Bolsover & Co. thought it was funny—and so it was. After that evening, nobody ever suggested raiding Monsieur Charpentier's cookery. Even if the Huns starve us right out, I fancy Mossoo's grub will be quite safe.

THE END.

COKERISMS.

Sir Walter Raleigh was a great man, who was put in the Tower of London, and while there discovered that the little princes had been murdered. He was also put into the Waverley Novels; but this did not hurt him, as he was then dead.

Edward I. said: "When I die you will find 'Calais' marked on all my clothes."

The Primate of England is Lloyd George.

It was at Waterloo that the Duke of Wellington said, "Up, Guards, and at 'em!" which is why the L. & S.W.R. called their station Waterloo. But the Guards were not really railway guards, though history says they were in the van.

KEEPING "CAVE."

Another Story of Rake's Old School.

I.

"HALLO, Raddles! Anything doing?" asked a cheery voice at the study door.

"Yes, Gorringe! The sausages are doing—fine!"

"Ripping," said Gorringe, taking a seat on the corner of a very rickety table, and contemplating with hungry eyes the contents of the frying-pan.

"They do look all right, don't they?" Raddles remarked, grasping the handle of the pan, and turning the hissing sausages over with a penholder. "And smell all right, too."

"If you ask me, they smell too much," I said. "I could 'niff them at the other end of the corridor."

The rules against cooking in studies were very strict at my old show, and it fairly amazed me when I came to Greyfriars and found how different things were there.

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Raddles. "Is old Whiskers about?"

Thus irreverently did Raddles refer to our more or less respected Head. But I am not going to pretend that any of us loved the old boy.

"Sure to be prowling round somewhere," said Gorringe.

"The smell makes my mouth water," said Wiggins, joining in. When there was likely to be trouble ahead, Wig was sure to be there—dead sure.

"We might get a kid to keep 'Cave,'" said Gorringe thoughtfully.

"The smell would make his mouth water," I remarked. "And, the watering mouth might set Whiskers playing Sherlock Holmes stuff."

"Put all that down in writing, and let me have it later on," gibed Raddles. "Question is whether there's a kid to be had for the job."

"I saw that new merchant in the Third hanging around," said Wiggins. "Hewitt, his name is, isn't it?"

"Hang his name! Fetch him along, Wig!"

Wiggins trotted off, and soon came back with young Hewitt—quite a bright-looking lad.

But he wasn't as bright as he looked, it seemed. Or perhaps we counted on his knowing more than a new kid could be expected to know.

He received a couple of sausages and some potatoes and bread on an exercise-book with moderate thankfulness.

"I generally eat my food off a plate," he said. "But——"

"We don't," said Gorringe. "At least, not the grub we cook ourselves. Take it or leave it."

"I'll take it," said the new kid. "I thought breakfast was pretty measly. This will do to fill up corners, and be going on till dinner."

"What you've got to do is——"

"Do you suppose I don't know where to put grub?" chipped in young Hewitt.

"Look here, my infant, don't get getting above yourself! Listen to your uncle. You've got to hang around at the end of the corridor, and pass the word if you see old Whiskers coming."

"Who's old Whiskers?"

"The Head, of course, you hopeless young duffer!"

"And I suppose I should sing out, 'Ware Whiskers!' or something like that?" asked Hewitt innocently.

"Then you'd better go and get fitted for a new supposer—and take care it ain't a dotty one this time!" snapped Rad.

"Will it do if I whistle?"

"Yes—put pipe up 'The Campbells are comin.'"

"The Head's name isn't——"

"Oh, rats! Do as I tell you!"

"I can't. I can only whistle two tunes."

"What are they?"

"One's 'Rule, Britannia,' and the other—isn't."

I am not sure that that kid was so very green, after all.

"Anything will do, as long as it gives us warning," Rad told him. And he took his sausages and bread and potatoes out.

I have seen better-cooked stuff here than that was, for we did not get a lot of practice in the chef's art; and Raddles really was not the master-cook among us.

The potatoes were horribly watery, and the sausages were black—he had forgotten them while he was talking to Hewitt.

The smell had improved for the worse, as Wiggins said.

But Rad divided the stuff up into four whacks, and no one said "No."

We started in to mop up sausages and mashed as if for a wager.

Nobody remembered that Rad had left the frying-pan on the fire; and in the rather murky atmosphere no one noticed that the fat in it had got burning away, adding to the smell—to noses more critical than ours.

Suddenly there came a shrill whistle. It wasn't "Rule, Britannia," so perhaps it was the other tune. But it didn't sound at all like a tune.

Raddles crammed pretty nearly a whole sausage into his mouth, thus clearing the decks as far as he was concerned.

The step of Whiskers sounded in the corridor. The door-handle rattled. Wiggins promptly sat on his remnant. I flung mine into a corner, and chucked my cap on top to hide it. And Gorringe absent-mindedly deposited his in the gaping pocket of Raddles.

That handle was always a nuisance when one was in a hurry—and Whiskers appeared to be in a hurry. But it was a good thing for us—we thought so at the moment, anyway—that he did not know the trick of it.

"Open this door at once!" he thundered.

The frying-pan and saucepan went behind a bookcase, whence began to issue at once clouds of evil-smelling smoke.

I opened the door. Old Whiskers stalked in.

"I distinctly smell burning!" he snorted, looking at us as if we were criminals.

"I—I don't think so, sir," said Raddles.

It was a middling silly thing to say, too. For the Head naturally knew better what he could smell than Raddles did. And he must have had a very deaf nose if he could not smell that!

"What have you been throwing on the fire?" was the next query rapped out.

"Coal, sir," said Raddles.

Worse than ever! Old Whiskers was not to be done down that way. And with such a 'niff of burning, too!

"Wiggins," said the Head crossly, "why do you remain in your seat? Are you totally unaware of what decent manners requires of you?"

Wig was not. But there were things in the way of Wig's being as polite as he might have wished to be. It was as difficult for him to get up as it would have been for me to raise my cap at that moment. My cap was not on my head; it was down in the corner, covering sausage and mashed.

And that was what Wig was doing—he was covering sausage and mashed, too.

His face went the colour of a sunset on a frosty evening. He groaned, and arose.

Something dropped. A mass of the stuff which had clung affectionately to his trousers got tired of being affectionate just at that moment.

Whiskers did not see it fall. He was glaring at the fire.

"It must be jolly—I mean very bad coal, sir," said that ass Rad.

I had been trying to tip him the wink to let that little fiction slide. But it was no go.

"No coal ever mined could possibly emit such a loathsome and disgusting effluvium as this!" rapped out Whiskers. And he buried his sharp nose in his handkerchief. But he didn't bury his eyes, too—no such luck!

Then from behind the handkerchief came a muffled note of alarm.

"Good gracious! You are on fire, Raddles."

"I don't think so, sir," replied that hopeless ass.

Smoke and steam were coming from his pocket. The Head made a grab at him, and heroically thrust in his hand.

"Ugh!" he ejaculated, in disgust. His fingers had come into contact with the

sausage and mashed Gorringe had hidden. He did not appear to like it. Anyway, he called Raddles a "filthy little wretch," which wasn't polite.

Wiggins was standing up against the wall. He hoped to keep the condition of his trousers a secret. But his hopes were vain.

"Come here, Wiggins!"

Wig shuffled his feet, and behind him a nasty trail of grease appeared on the linoleum.

"Turn round, Wiggins!"

"Wha-whaffor, sir?"

"Because I tell you to!" thundered the Head.

Wig turned.

"You are a positive disgrace to a presumably Christian community!" roared the Head.

"I will see you boys in my study after classes this afternoon," he added ominously.

"It's a half-holliday, sir," I reminded him.

"True, Rake. I had forgotten. Then I will see you immediately after dinner."

He rustled out. Hardly had he gone when Hewitt looked in.

"I say, though, I hope it was all right?" said the new kid.

"All right!" repeated Gorringe, with a withering inflection of sarcasm.

"It was jolly well all jolly well wrong!" said Wiggins, without any sarcasm whatever.

"Well, I couldn't help it. I say, the old fossil caught me wolfing the stuff. Jolly rotten it was, too! You chaps can't cook a bit! I hope it didn't matter about him seeing?"

We groaned. Didn't matter, indeed! It had put Whiskers right slap on the track, of course. But—well, after all, there was that smell, and the nose of Whiskers was a pretty sharp nose—I don't mean a pretty nose, either—you know!

"Take our curse and go!" said Raddles dramatically.

"I say, though, what's the curse for?"

"For being a simply putrid young ass!" snapped Gorringe.

"What"—Hewitt looked round slowly and grinned—"well, there are five of us!" he said. Then he bunked. It was time!

II.

WE came back from the Head's study. Something had spoiled dinner for us all. Gorringe said it was the anticipation of what was coming. I thought it was sausage and mashed a la Raddles.

But we had put it behind us now. So, by the way, had the Head. No, I am not going to explain that. Go and do likewise, and you will understand.

"Are we going out on the river as per programme?" asked Raddles.

"It's out of bounds," said Wiggins doubtfully.

"What's the odds?" retorted Gorringe. "We've had——"

"We've had some," I said, "but there's plenty more where that came from. The trouble is a pleasure to Whiskers—bless him!"

"You're not funking it, Rake?"

"I'm not, Gorringe."

"Oh, let's go!" said Rad desperately.

"Well, I've arranged with old Jerry to have two Canadian canoes ready for us," Gorringe said—"cash in advance, too! And he's getting the grub in for a picnic."

"That's the style!" said Rad.

"Better make it footer togs," suggested Wig. "They don't notice so much as flannels."

"Ass! They don't in April, but this——"

"Oh, I forgot! All serene. Flannels, then." Ten minutes later we were in flannels and making our way towards the river by going in the opposite direction—which is strategy, or tactics; I never can remember which is which.

Young Hewitt butted in.

"I'll go with you fellows if you like," he said.

"Nothing doing!" I answered him.

"Oh, we'll let the kid come along and keep 'cave,'" said Rad generously.

"I say, though—no, I'm not on. I had enough of that——"

Rad took him by the ear.

"You're coming," he said.

Hewitt grinned, and came like a lamb.

He was badly disgruntled when he got his instructions, though. He wanted a place in one of the canoes, but we had decided that his place was on the bank—to watch for masters or prefects.

"We're going to race," Gorringe told him. "Rad and Rake against Wig and I——"

"Me, you mean," said Hewitt.

"Rats! You're no' in it, I tell you!"

"I didn't say I was. Don't you learn any grammar here?"

Gorringe glared.

"You can't say 'again-t Wig and I'——"

"Ass! I can. I did!"

"But it's wrong."

"Do you want a thick ear?"

"What's it like?" asked Hewitt innocently.

"H'm! Did they teach you anything except grammar at your old wash-out of a school?"

"I learned to swim," Hewitt said.

"Good! You can swim alongside and pretend you're a dolphin," Rad told him.

But it was not settled that way. Hewitt agreed to keep "cave" on the bank, and he said he hoped he would do it better than he had done that morning. And we said we hoped so, too!

We got aboard the canoes, and pushed into midstream.

"You can start us, Hewitt!" yelled Rad.

"I'm not coming out there to do it," answered the new kid.

"Idiot! One—two—three——"

"Go!" yelled Hewitt, catching on.

It was not a bad start.

"To the old mill!" sang out Gorringe.

We got off in such a hurry that we had forgotten to arrange for a winning-post.

The canoes shot forward.

Hewitt shouted to us from the bank. He was quite excited. He wanted me and Rad to win, because he objected to Gorringe, I think.

We put all we knew into it. We drew ahead. Gorringe was the best paddler of the four of us, but Wig wasn't much.

"Go it, Rake! Go it, Raddles!" yelled Hewitt.

"You attend to your job, kid!" howled Gorringe.

We drew near the bend.

We rounded the bend.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Rad.

I looked up. There, coming towards us in another canoe, were Whiskers and his daughter Winnie!

And Hewitt had not given the alarm. Not that it would have been much good if he had—unless we had all dived and tried to bamboozle the Head that our canoes were derelicts. And that wouldn't have worked, for Gorringe was the only one of us who was really a good swimmer.

Whack!

We had collided!

Winnie jumped up, and tried to push our canoe away.

Over she tumbled. Gorringe and Wig had bumped us.

Next moment we were all floundering in the water. And somewhere down there was Winnie.

Poor old Whiskers! I wonder how he felt?

"It's all right!" yelled Hewitt.

It certainly was not. But we understood him as we saw him dive in. As clean a dive as you ever witnessed! That kid was some swimmer.

Gorringe had collared Wig. Wig could swim like a stone, you know. Rad and I—well, I think we should have done our best for the girl. We were game to try. But I fancy our best would not have got her as far as the bank.

Alone Hewitt did it. The girl kid was very plucky, or he might not have managed it.

"Scramble up, Rake!" gasped Rad. "I can't, but I can hang on till——"

The bank was steep. I just managed to pull myself up. Rad clung to the branch of a tree. The Head sat there in his canoe, quite helpless. He could not swim either. Gorringe was hauling old Wig along.

Well, we got her out. She certainly was wet, but otherwise not much the worse. She laughed, but it was a laugh very near to crying. And the Head's eyes were wet.

He did not say much to Hewitt. I suppose he couldn't at the time. He did afterwards, I believe. But the rummy thing was that he said so little to us.

We had broken bounds and rules, and we had a sausage-and-mashed crime against us, and forgetting and forgiving was not the way of Whiskers generally. But, of course, circumstances alter cases. (Not copyright.)

Hewitt was a rotten bad hand at keeping "cave," but otherwise he seemed all there. A clever kid, too! He got into the Upper Fourth the next term. He was one of us then, and when I left to go to Greyfriars he took my place in the study.

THE END.

My Comic Column.

By MONTY LOWTHER.

REDDY, who is doing amateur gardening, dropped in at the greengrocer's the other day and asked:

"Have you seed potatoes?"

The greengrocer shook his head.

"Not lately," he replied; "and I don't expect to see 'em again till after the war."

We understand that the prize-money awarded to submarine crews is paid out of the sinking fund.

According to an American newspaper interviewer, Mr. Bernard Shaw advises the soldiers on both sides to shoot their officers and go home. It would be a shootable end to the war, to be shaw. Neither would it deprive us of our war news, for there would certainly be more than one bullet'in. Tommy is not likely to take Mr. Shaw's advice, however; and as for the Huns, we think it bunlikely.

The Germans realise that time is on the side of the Allies. That is why they prefer to be engaged upon peace-work.

A Hun professor has been telling his countrymen that the British blockade is really a good thing for them, as it compels them to develop fully the resources of their own country. It will, in fact, be the making of Germany. He might have added that it has already made Austria hungary.

Cuba coming into the war may cause a rise in the price of cigars. They may possibly be worth a guinea a Bock's.

The Kaiser's order to his troops to hold on to the Arras sector at all costs reminds us of Hubert's order to the two murderers in Shakespeare: "And look thou standest within the arras!"—though, of course, the Kaiser's order was given to more than two. But it appears that the Huns were tired of being 'Arassed.

The Duke of Wellington is supposed to have said that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton. We are told that the present war may be won on the potato-fields of the United Kingdom. Etonians need not complain, however, for though the fields are not Etonian, the potatoes certainly will be Eton.

Home-manufactured matches are better than the cheap foreign variety, of which the heads come off when you scratch them. We scratched a home match the other day, and it did not come off.

To Mr....., Newsagent.

Please keep for me a copy of the GEM LIBRARY each week until further notice.

(Signed),