

'SENT TO COVENTRY!'

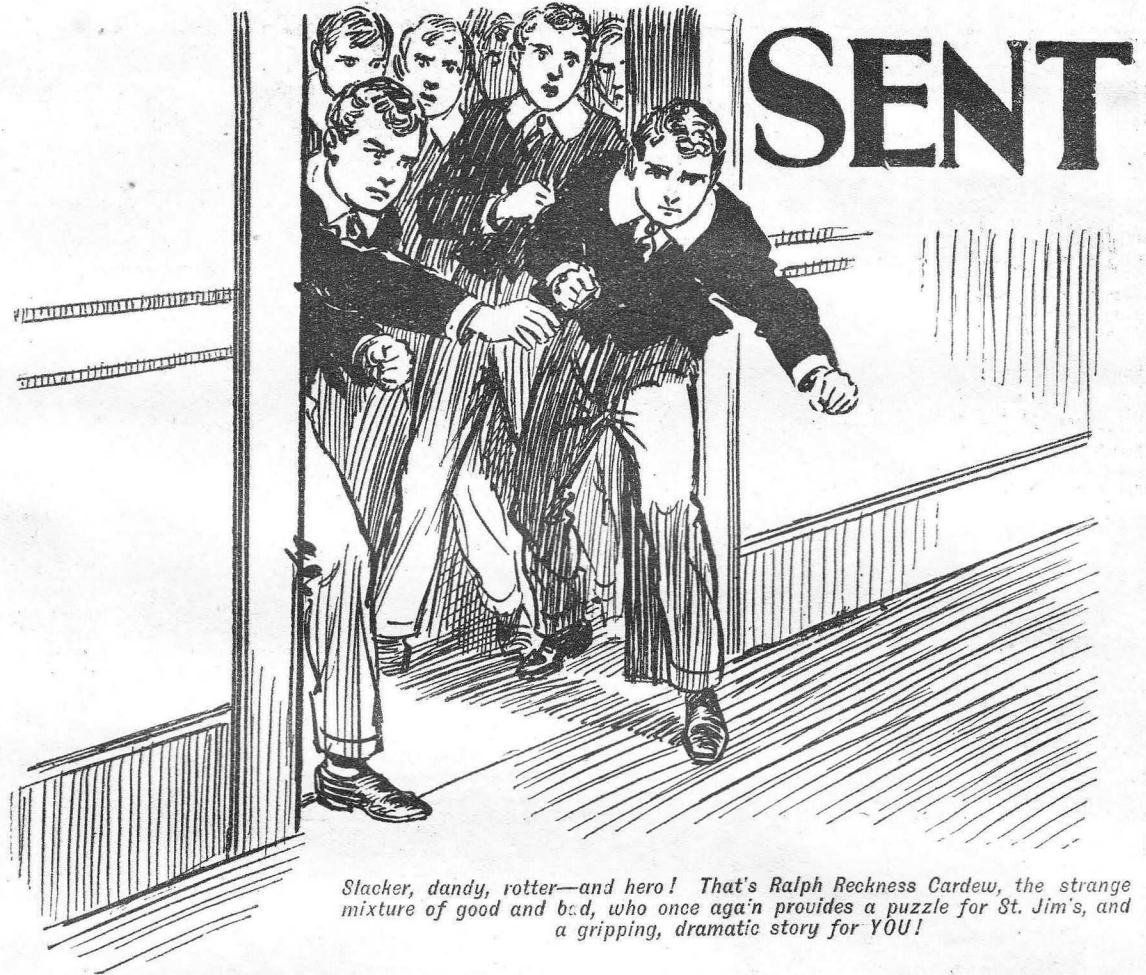
This week's sensational
and dramatic story of
Tom Merry & Co

THE GEM 2^d



**A VICTIM
OF THE WRECK!**

SURPRISES AND THRILLS GALORE IN THIS TOPPING YARN



Slacker, dandy, rotter—and hero! That's Ralph Reckness Cardew, the strange mixture of good and bad, who once again provides a puzzle for St. Jim's, and a gripping, dramatic story for YOU!

CHAPTER 1. On Little Side!

THUD!

Sped by the muddy footer-boot of Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell at St. Jim's, the football had struck the crossbar of the goal.

It had been a clever shot, delivered with smashing force. But it had been unlucky. A sudden gust of wind had lifted the ball a few inches, just in time to save it from sailing into the top corner of the net.

Harry Hammond, in the goal-mouth, breathed again.

A swarm of fags behind the net, who had been watching eagerly the practice-game taking place on Little Side, rushed to retrieve the ball, which had bounded over the bar and fallen behind the goal-line. A few moments later the ball was in play again—the centre of an exciting tussle in midfield.

It was Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday, and football was in full swing on Little Side.

Though it was only a pick-up game between mixed sides of School House and New House fellows, it was an important one.

On the following Saturday, the St. Jim's Junior Eleven was visiting Greyfriars, where Harry Wharton & Co., their old rivals, could always be depended upon to give Tom Merry's team a hard fight on the footer field.

But next Saturday's match promised to be a harder tussle even than usual. For two of the best footballers in the Junior Eleven were on the sick-list—Talbot and Jack Blake.

Tom Merry had arranged a practice game that afternoon to aid him in his selection of substitutes.

It was only a mild attack of 'flu that had laid Talbot and Blake low. But it was quite enough to prevent their visiting Greyfriars on the following Saturday. And that

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gloomy fact had come as a bitter blow to Tom Merry, as to the rest of the eleven.

Without Talbot of the Shell and Jack Blake, the leader of the Fourth, in the team, the chances of the St. Jim's eleven appeared anything but rosy for the big match on Saturday.

Though it was no good crying over spilt milk, Tom Merry had been a good deal worried. The task of selecting substitutes was a difficult one.

Though he had just failed to score a goal for his side against that skippered by George Figgins of the New House, Tom had not been playing a very prominent part in the game that afternoon. He had been too busy watching the other fellows on the field, sizing up their respective merits.

He watched critically as Bernard Glyn, of the Shell, tackled Digby and flashed the ball across to Dick Julian, one of the forwards in Figgins' team.

Julian was knocked flying by a shoulder-to-shoulder charge from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's. But Arthur Augustus lost his footing on the treacherous mud, and went down himself a moment later, while the football rolled away towards the touch-line.

But the leather was not left to its own devices for long.

A slim, handsome figure raced up and took possession, curved past one of the opposing forwards with smiling ease, and, with the ball dancing at his toes, went speeding down the field towards the goal where Fatty Wynn of the New House, the goalkeeper for the Junior Eleven, was custodian for Tom Merry's team.

"Go it, Cardew!" gasped Figgins, as he raced along in support of the coolly smiling junior who had the ball at his feet.

Cardew swerved beautifully as one of the opposing halves tackled him, and raced on. As if by magic, he completely fooled another half-back and flashed the ball across to Figgins. Figgins passed back a moment or two later, as

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—FEATURING TOM MERRY & CO., & RALPH CARDEW OF ST. JIM'S!

TO COVENTRY!

By
Martin
Clifford



he was tackled, and Cardew sped on towards the goal with the light grace of a ballet dancer, keeping the ball perfectly under control.

Though Ralph Reckness Cardew could shine on the footer field when he chose, he seldom seemed to exert himself. Even when, on compulsory days, the slacker of the Fourth had to put in an appearance in footer kit, Cardew often refused to exert himself more than the abso-

lute minimum! On such occasions, his display would be a languid exhibition of sheer laziness.

But occasionally the slacker of the Fourth found amusement in showing what he could do when he chose, and this afternoon happened to be one of those times.

The whim had taken Cardew to display his brilliant abilities.

Like a wizard he danced round Kerr of the New House, who was playing left-back for Tom Merry's team, and with a deliberate, careless, smiling air, curved in towards the goal, where David Llewellyn Wynn was waiting, tense, between the posts.

Fatty Wynn was a fine goalkeeper. But even he looked anything but confident as Cardew came towards him, with the ball in perfect control. Fatty Wynn knew what Cardew could do when he liked—and this afternoon Cardew was evidently out to do his brilliant best.

There was still that faint, almost mocking smile on the handsome face of Ralph Reckness Cardew as he curved in towards the goal.

It was muddy on Little Side that afternoon—very muddy! Fatty Wynn was caked with it. But Cardew seemed still as clean and tidy as when the game had started; as immaculate as though he had just left the dressing-room.

The right-back was rushing across to tackle him. Cardew laughed and deliberately slowed down, waiting. The back came at him, grim-faced. It was Clifford Dane, the Canadian junior. A moment later, Clifford Dane was left helpless, wondering where Cardew had got to, as the slacker of the Fourth took the ball neatly round him and ran on.

Fatty Wynn rushed from the goal-mouth. In the circumstances, it seemed to be the wisest thing. But Cardew, with a soft chuckle, lifted the ball with his toe, headed it clean over the head of Fatty Wynn, danced past the portly New House goalkeeper, and tapped the ball into the net with the side of his foot.

It came to rest in the back of the goal, and Cardew turned away, smiling.

It had been a brilliant exhibition of football, and from the groups of onlookers, as well as from several of the other footballers, there broke a cheer.

"That youngster Cardew is a blessed wizard, when he likes," murmured Philip Lefevre, the captain of the Fifth, who had been passing Little Side with his two chums, Leo and Smith major, and had paused to watch the game.

"The trouble is he so seldom likes, I believe," put in Smith major dryly. "He's a frightful young slacker!"

The three Fifth-Formers strolled on, while the ball was returned to the centre.

North, of the Sixth, who had consented to referee the game, sounded his whistle, and Tom Merry tapped the ball to Levison, of the Fourth, who was at inside-right.

He was promptly tackled by Figgins, who succeeded in robbing him of the ball. Tom tackled Figgins, and the New House leader swerved to avoid him. But his feet betrayed him on the soft, treacherous mud of the centre-line, and George Figgins went down.

As he fell a little gasp of pain escaped him.

He tried to scramble up, but his left leg seemed to give way beneath him. He went down again, with another gasp.

"Oh crumbs!"

Tom Merry turned quickly to him, his face suddenly anxious. He thrust out a hand to aid Figgins to his feet.

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"What's up, Figgy?"

"Hurt my blessed ankle," said Figgins glumly. "I don't think I can stand Gimme your arm, old chap!"

Helped by Tom Merry, Figgins succeeded in staggering to his feet. But when he put his left foot to the ground he lifted it again with a wry grimace.

The ball had been swept away up the field. But North, seeing that something was wrong, sounded his whistle, and hurried across towards Tom Merry and Figgins.

There was dismay in Tom Merry's face.

"What's up?" demanded North.

"Twisted my ankle when I went down," explained Figgins gloomily. "Can't use it."

North stooped down swiftly, pulling down Figgins' stocking. With gentle fingers, he examined the injured ankle. But even that faint touch drew a quick gasp from the New House leader.

"You've done for yourself, young 'un!" said the Sixth-Former sympathetically. "It's a bad sprain, I'm afraid!"

"'Fraid it is!" grunted Figgins.

"This knocks you out of the Greyfriars match on Saturday, for a cert," went on North. "Rotten luck!"

From Tom Merry there broke a cry of dismay, and the faces of the other footballers, gathered round now, went stoned.

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Monty Lowther, in consternation. "That puts the lid on it!"

"Absolutely!" groaned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Oh cwmbs! Talbot and Blake in the sanny—and now Figgy cwooked! Oh, bai Jove!"

Aided by Tom Merry and Kerr, George Figgins hopped off the field, leaving the rest of the footballers staring at each other in consternation.

It had been bad enough before, with Talbot and Blake on the sick list!

But now, with Figgins cwooked as well—three of their very best men missing from the team—the prospects for the St. Jim's eleven, when they played against Greyfriars on the following Saturday, appeared black indeed!

CHAPTER 2.

Cardew Declines!

"I SAY, Merry!"

Tom Merry, emerging from the cycle-shed, where he had been putting his machine away that evening after a visit to the post office in Rylcombo, turned his head as he heard his name called.

He made out the figure of Clifton Dane, the Canadian junior, hurrying towards him through the deepening dusk.

"Hallo, Dane!"

Tom Merry's usually cheery face was clouded as he halted to see what Dane wanted with him.

Ever since the disastrous finish to the practice game on Little Side that afternoon Tom's mind had been busy with anxious thoughts.

He had been wracking his brain over the problem of filling the three vacant places in the eleven to visit Greyfriars on the Saturday.

"What about Saturday?" asked Dane eagerly. "Rotten luck poor old Figgy getting cwooked. But—well, I was wondering if there's a chance of my playing against Greyfriars, now you've got three places to fill."

Tom smiled faintly.

"I can't say yet. But the list will be up this evening."

"Oh!"

Clifton Dane's voice showed his disappointment.

Tom nodded and strolled on towards the lighted doorway of the School House. At the foot of the steps he was accosted by Harry Hammond, the Cockney junior.

"I say, what about Saturday?" exclaimed Hammond, in an eager tone. "I know goal's my usual place, and you've got Fatty Wynn for goal; but you'll find I can play bloomin' well at half—"

"Sorry, Hammond—"

"After all, you've got three places to fill," urged Hammond.

"Yes," Tom nodded, frowning. "I'm afraid I shan't be wanting you, old chap, all the same. Anyway, if I change my mind, I'll let you know. The list will be up this evening."

He passed on up the steps, leaving Hammond growling to himself.

Three Shell fellows were in the Hall as Tom entered the big doorway—George Alfred Grundy, the powerfully-built duffer of the Shell, and his two chums, Wilkins and Gunn.

At sight of Tom Merry Grundy hurried towards him with a determined expression on his rugged countenance.

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"Oh, there you are! I say, about Saturday—"

Tom gave an impatient exclamation. He was not in the mood for being pestered by Grundy.

The great George Alfred always imagined that he ought to be included in the Junior Eleven. At a time like this, when there were three vacant places in the team, he evidently considered more than ever that his invaluable services should be called upon.

"What about Saturday?" repeated Grundy, in a truculent tone. "You've got three places to fill."

"Thanks! I know that already," answered Tom dryly.

Grundy tapped himself on the chest.

"Well, what about me? I know you didn't even put me in the practice-game this afternoon, which shows what a rotten captain you are! But it's not too late to put things right, even now. I'll overlook the slight; I'm willing to play against Greyfriars—"

"Jolly good of you!" murmured Tom, in the same dry tone.

At any other time Tom would have smiled. Grundy was the worst footballer at St. Jim's—the worst footballer, according to the Lower School, in the whole wide world. The idea of including him in the team to meet Greyfriars was decidedly comic to anyone except George Alfred Grundy.

But just now Tom was in an anxious, troubled, rather "nervy" mood, and he did not smile.

"Look here, Tom Merry—" began Grundy, in a roaring voice.

"Rats!" cut in Tom. "I'm not playing you on Saturday, Grundy, and I'm not likely to! So don't worry!"

Grundy breathed hard, and clenched his great fists. But if he contemplated physical violence he changed his mind—fortunately for George Alfred!

"All I've got to say is, you're a rotten captain, and it's about time we had a change of skipper!" roared Grundy, and marched away, red with wrath.

Tom turned towards the stairs. But Wilkins touched him quickly on the arm.

Wilkins and Gunn had not marched off with Grundy.

"Half a jiff!" exclaimed Wilkins eagerly. "Don't take any notice of Grundy, of course. But what about me?"

"And me?" interjected Gunn.

"Hope you noticed I was rather on form in the game this afternoon?" said Wilkins modestly.

"You both played a good game," nodded Tom. The faces of Wilkins and Gunn lit up. "But I don't think I'll want you for Saturday. Sorry!"

He went on up the stairs, leaving Wilkins and Gunn staring after him gloomily.

"Br-r-r!" growled Gunn. "Blessed if I don't think old Grundy's right for once! We want a new skipper, some chap with an eye to a fellow's form!"

And, looking very disgruntled, Wilkins and Gunn went off to search for the great George Alfred.

On the stairs, Tom Merry met Kerruish, the junior from the Isle of Man. Kerruish it seemed, was quite convinced that Tom could not do better than fill one of the vacant places in the junior team with Kerruish of the Fourth.

At the end of the Fourth Form passage, a few moments later, Tom ran into Dick Julian. Julian, it turned out, considered that a partial solution to Tom's troubles would be to give one of the vacant places in the eleven to Dick Julian.

Tom's answer was non-committal.

"The team will be up this evening."

He left Julian looking far from satisfied, and turned along the Fourth Form passage.

Outside Study No. 9 he halted, and knocked. From within, a languid voice bade him enter. Tom Merry pushed open the door and strode in.

Ralph Reckness Cardew was alone in the study. His two chums, Levison and Clive, had gone down to the junior Common-room, having just finished their prep.

Cardew, on the other hand, had not yet even started his prep. Instead, he was reclining gracefully in a deep chair by the fire, with a cushion behind his smooth, well-brushed head, and his feet resting comfortably on a second chair.

He glanced round lazily as Tom entered.

"Hallo, dear man!"

Tom closed the door, and crossed towards the fire. He halted by Cardew's chair, staring down at the slacker of the Fourth rather grimly.

"I've come to see you, Cardew—"

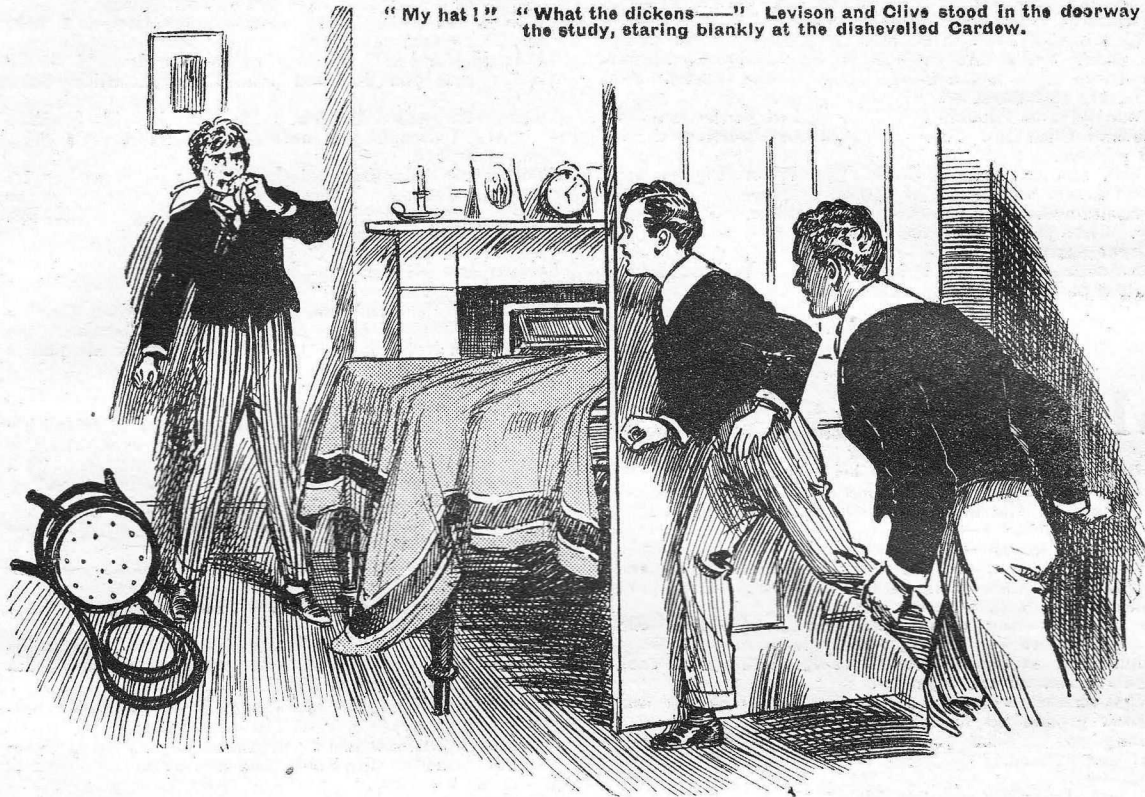
"Do you know, I've noticed that," chuckled Cardew.

Tom frowned.

"Oh, don't rot! It's important. About Saturday. As you know, Talbot and Blake are in the sanny, and Figgins got cwooked this afternoon—"

"Why keep tellin' me things I know?" inquired Cardew, with a yawn. "Excuse my not risin', by the way, but I'm

"My hat!" "What the dickens——" Levison and Clive stood in the doorway of the study, staring blankly at the dishevelled Cardew.



feelin' rather tired. All that rushin' round after a footer this afternoon, don't you know!"

He yawned again, and smiled.

"If I were dear old Figgins," he added reflectively, "I should be jolly glad I'd got crocked this afternoon. Saves him from playin' against Greyfriars, don't you know. Such a giddy energetic crowd, Greyfriars!"

"Don't talk like an ass!" said Tom impatiently. "It's about the Greyfriars match I want to see you, Cardew."

"Really?" murmured Cardew. "Why?"

"Because I want you to play in it!"

Cardew did not betray by so much as the flicker of an eyelid any surprise he may have felt. A queer smile came into his handsome face.

"Gad! It's a long time since the great Thomas did me the honour of askin' me to play in the eleven," he drawled. Tom nodded.

"It is," he said grimly. "And you know why. Because you're such an unreliable slacker, Cardew——"

"Thanks!"

"Oh rats! You know it's true. But after the form you showed this afternoon, it's clear you can still play footer when you choose——"

"You're very flatterin'!" murmured Cardew. "Spare my blushes, I beg!"

Tom bit his lip. Cardew's bantering sarcasm always had the power to irritate him, even though in sunnier moods he was able to repress his feelings. But in his present mood the captain of the Shell was too worried over his difficulties to bother to conceal his irritation.

"For goodness' sake, Cardew, talk straight! I'm offering you a place in the team for the big match. I shall expect you to accept it."

"You will?" yawned Cardew.

"Yes," said Tom steadily.

Cardew smiled. He shook his head.

"Sorry, dear man. Afraid I must disappoint you, then. I hate disappointin' people, too. But I really don't think I could stand the strain of playin' against Greyfriars. Such an energetic crowd, as I've said. Frightful!"

For a moment there was a tense silence in Study No. 9.

When he spoke again Tom Merry's voice was grim and bitter.

"You refuse?"

"Yes," yawned Cardew.

"In that case, Cardew," said Tom Merry quietly, "I am going to give you, here and now, the licking of your life!"

He reached down, and his fingers closed with a vice-like grip upon Cardew's immaculate collar. With a heave, he

sent the slacker of the Fourth spinning out of the chair on to the carpet.

Cardew scrambled to his feet, white with rage. Instinctively he put up his fists.

With a smashing left-hander, Tom Merry sent him reeling against the wall.

"Now, you rotter!" said Tom, between his teeth. "So you refuse to play in the Greyfriars match, do you? Come on, then, and be thrashed!"

Cardew did not need a second bidding. Though Tom was the finest boxer in the junior school, Ralph Reckness Cardew was himself no mean exponent of the noble art. And he was certainly no coward.

With blazing eyes, his face livid, he hurled himself at Tom Merry.

It was seldom indeed that the St. Jim's juniors saw the sunny-tempered captain of the Shell with his temper up. But Cardew was seeing him that way now.

The languid refusal of the dandy of the Fourth to play in the Greyfriars match, when the Junior Eleven was faced with so black a prospect that even Tom could not feel optimistic over its prospects with Harry Wharton & Co., had roused Tom Merry to a bitter anger.

But if Cardew counted upon Tom's anger to upset his fighting science, he was badly disappointed.

Tom was hitting out coolly now; and after a few moments Cardew reeled back once more, from a smashing blow that brought blood from his lips.

He recovered himself and came back to the attack. But before he could land a blow, a swinging right-hand punch took him on the jaw. He crashed to the carpet, and this time he did not rise.

Tom Merry stood over him with clenched fists.

"Had enough?" he said quietly.

Cardew did not answer.

"I hope this may be a lesson to you, Cardew!" Tom Merry's voice was steely contemptuous. "I can't force you to play in the Greyfriars match, and I wouldn't if I could!"

He turned to the door and swung it open. Without another glance at the sprawling dandy of the Fourth, he stepped out into the passage and closed it behind him.

His angry, bitter mood had died away. It was replaced by troubled anxiety.

Cardew would not play! With that refusal on the part of the slacker of the Fourth, Tom's last hope of putting a really good team into the field against Greyfriars had gone. He knew that no other substitutes he could find were quite

up to the standard required for the match against Greyfriars.

With a dark shadow in his eyes, Tom Merry strode away from Study No. 9. At the end of the passage he almost walked into Levison and Clive, Cardew's study mates. But he scarcely saw them.

"Poor old Tom's looking sick," remarked Ernest Levison, as he and Clive saw Tom vanish in the direction of the Shell passage.

"Don't wonder," grunted Clive. "It's rotten, Figgy being crooked as well as Blake and Talbot."

Levison nodded, and the two chums went on towards their study. Clive pushed open the door.

"Great Scott!"

The South African junior gave a startled exclamation as he halted on the threshold, staring in.

CHAPTER 3. A Quarrel!

"MY hat!"

Ernest Levison gave a gasp.

To Cardew's chums, the sight of the usually immaculate dandy of the Fourth leaning dazedly against the wall with his collar torn from its moorings, his tie awry, his clothes dusty and dishevelled, and his hair in wild disorder, came as a startling shock!

"What the dickens—"

"What the thump—"

Levison and Clive stepped quickly into the study and shut the door. Cardew faced them, glaring, dabbing at his bleeding lip with a handkerchief.

He was quivering with anger, and his face was still very pale. There was an unpleasant gleam in his eyes.

Ralph Reckness Cardew was anything but his usual cool, nonchalant self at the moment!

"What on earth's happened?" ejaculated Levison, staring. Cardew ground his teeth.

"Hang you! Need you stare at me as if I were a freak?" he snarled.

"But—"

"It was Tom Merry—curse him!" ground out Cardew viciously. "He was in a temper, and I couldn't hold him off—the bound!"

"What?" gasped Levison. "Tom Merry—in a temper?"

"What on earth about?" cried Clive, in astonishment.

"Because I refused to play in the Greyfriars match!" muttered Cardew, turning to the mirror over the chimney-piece, and commencing to readjust his collar and tie.

"You—you refused to play in the Greyfriars match?"

Levison's voice was breathless.

"You mean to say he asked you to play in the match on Saturday—and you refused?" ejaculated Clive.

"Yes!" snarled Cardew.

There was a silence in Study No. 9, broken only by Cardew's laboured breathing. He turned from the mirror, and met the eyes of his chums with a bitter, defiant smile.

"Well?" he inquired coolly. "Why are you starin' at me like that?"

Levison strode forward and grasped his chum by the shoulder.

"Cardew! Tom asked you to play on Saturday, and you—you refused?"

"How many more times do you want me to tell you?" yawned Cardew.

His customary coolness was returning rapidly. But there was still an ugly light in the eyes of the slacker of the Fourth.

"I suppose you two will now proceed to lecture me on the error of my ways?" he went on mockingly. "You don't approve of my refusin' dear Thomas' little request, what?"

Levison's face had gone dark.

"So that's why Tom Merry licked you?" he said slowly.

"In that case you deserved all you got, I tell you straight."

"Yes, rather!" put in Clive in a grim tone. "Hang it, Cardew, where's your decency?"

Cardew's lips curled bitterly.

"So my friends are against me, too?"

"Yes—in this!" snapped Levison. "We are your friends, but that can't make us approve of anything you choose to do, Cardew! At a time like this, when the eleven needs every decent player it can get, to save us from a licking by Greyfriars—"

Cardew broke in with a mocking laugh.

The wayward, willful slacker of the Fourth was always something of an enigma, even to his chums. But on this occasion it was obvious that all his worst qualities were rising to the surface.

There were many sides to Cardew's nature. But now they were faced with the worst side! The bitter venom in his eyes told Levison and Clive that.

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"I suppose you would have both stood by without doin' anythin' when Tom Merry went for me, if you'd been in here?" he said tauntingly.

"I would, for one!" nodded Levison bluntly. "I should have felt that you deserved your licking, Cardew—since you ask."

"Thanks!" sneered Cardew. He dabbed at his bleeding lip. "And I thought you were my friends! Gad!"

Levison flushed.

"So we are!" he said quietly. "We put up with a lot from you, Cardew. Many's the time we've tried to persuade you to chuck your rotten slacking habits, too. But we've always stuck by you—"

"Thank you for nothin'!" yawned Cardew.

Levison bit his lip.

"Look here, Cardew—"

"Oh, chuck lecturin' me, hang you!" grunted Cardew savagely. Then he broke into a mocking laugh. "So you still call yourself my friends, eh? After all you've said?"

"Yes," said Clive quietly.

Cardew's lips twisted into a bitter smile.

"Then all I can say is, yours is the kind of friendship I can do without!" he said, with gleaming eyes. Despite his cool exterior, his voice quivered with anger. "I'll leave you two to do your moralisin' all alone in future."

"What do you mean?" demanded Levison.

"I'm clearin' out, that's all!" returned Cardew. "There's an empty study at the end of the passage—No. 12. I'll ask Railton this evenin' if I can move my things in right away."

"Cardew!" breathed Levison. "You don't mean that? You can't mean it!"

Cardew made a final dab at his lip, and thrust his handkerchief into his pocket. He turned to the door, but paused with his fingers on the handle.

"And it may interest you to know," he went on mockingly, "that one reason why I'm declinin' to play in the Greyfriars match is that I v arranged to play billiards on Saturday afternoon with Slade, the marker at the Duke of Bedford, in Wayland!"

"Cardew!"

Cardew laughed. It was not a pleasant sound.

With a shrug, he swung open the door and vanished into the passage—leaving Ernest Levison and Sidney Clive staring at the shut door.

For a moment, Levison started forward, as if to call back his angry chum. Then he came to a standstill.

What was the use of going after Cardew?

In his present bitter mood, Ralph Reckness Cardew would certainly be unlikely to listen to either of the chums with whom he had quarrelled. He had gone; and, knowing Cardew, both Levison and Clive realised that he had gone for good!

CHAPTER 4. The Footer List!

THE news of the breach between the chums of Study No. 9 caused a big sensation among the School House juniors that evening.

It was well known that in the past friction had not been infrequent in that study. Though they had stuck to their wayward chum through thick and thin, the slacking habits of Ralph Reckness Cardew had long been a source of exasperation to Levison and Clive. But it was a very long time since there had been an actual quarrel!

That the present quarrel was a bitter one was obvious from the fact that Cardew had cleared out and taken his residence in Study No. 12, by himself!

It was Baggy Trimble, as usual, who first got hold of the news, and it did not take Baggy long to spread it.

As soon as he had learnt of Cardew's departure from Study No. 9, Baggy scuttled downstairs as fast as his fat little legs would carry him. In the Hall a big crowd of juniors was waiting, with a good deal of impatience, for the appearance of Tom Merry with the footer list for the big match against Greyfriars. But their excitement over the question of the team to visit Greyfriars on the following Saturday was temporarily forgotten, as Baggy told of the quarrel between the slacker of the Fourth and his chums.

"Wonder what the row was about?" queried Herries of the Fourth, with great interest. "My hat! Fancy those three falling out!"

"Personally, deah boys, I am not in the least surprised," announced Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a shake of his noble head. "I am meahly surprised that two chaps like Levison and Clive had put up with a slackin' wottah like Cardew for so long!"

Baggy Trimble sniggered.

"Cardew was looking a bit bashed about, when I saw him

shifting his things into No. 12," he grinned. "Levison and Clive must have lammed him for something!"

"Bai Jove!"

A step on the stairs caused a number of the fellows in the Hall to turn their heads.

"Here's Tom Merry!" breathed Kerruish eagerly.

In an instant the matter of Cardew's surprising change of studies was forgotten, as Tom Merry pushed his way through the crowd to the notice-board and pinned up the eagerly awaited footer list. Without a word, Tom retraced his steps, vanishing up the stairs, while the fellows surged and jostled round the board.

Hopes were high among all sorts of likely and unlikely fellows.

There was always a certain amount of heartburning over footer lists. But on this occasion, with three of the usual eleven on the sick list, and no less than three vacancies consequently to be filled by fellows who did not as a rule represent St. Jim's, nearly every footballer in the junior school was hoping, either openly or secretly, to see his name on the board.

Some of the juniors had already had their hopes dashed. Hammond, and Wilkins and Gunn, and the great George Alfred Grundy had been definitely told by Tom Merry earlier in the evening that their services would not be required.

But others—such as Kerruish and Wildrake, Julian and Roylance, Bernard Glyn and Clifton Dane, and Herries and Digby—were keenly excited to know whether Tom Merry had selected them to fill a vacancy.

The juniors pushed and struggled to see the list. There were gasps and exclamations as they surged round the board.

"Yow! Keep you blessed elbows to yourself, Reilly!"

"Ow! You're treading on my foot, Julian, you ass!"

"Look here, Kerruish, who do you think you're shoving?"

"Out of the light, there!"

"I say, read the list out somebody!" gasped Boulton from the outskirts of the crowd. "Am I down?"

"You? Not likely!"

"Look here, Roylance—"

"Shut up, you asses!" yelled Kerruish, who was squashed up near the board. "I'll read the names out!"

"Good egg!"

"The following will represent St. Jim's in the Greyfriars match on Saturday," Kerruish read aloud. "Wynn; Clive—"

"Clive?" breathed Clifton Dane. "Oh!"

The Canadian junior's face had fallen. He himself had hoped to be chosen for right-back.

"Yes, Clive!" repeated Kerruish. "'Noble; Glyn—'"

There was an excited, joyful exclamation from Bernard Glyn of the Shell. Roylance, who had hoped desperately for the vacant right-half position, glared at him.

"Shut up, Glyn! Carry on, Kerruish!"

"Glyn, Kerr, Manners—"

Somebody groaned. With the selection of Harry Manners, the last vacancy was filled. The rest of the names that Kerruish read out—Redfern, Levison, Merry, Lowther, and D'Arcy—were all usual members of the junior team.

The disappointed crowd looked at one another.

"Manners!" growled Roylance indignantly. "My hat! Fancy sticking him in! He's no more use than a sick headache!"

"Rats!" exclaimed Digby hotly. "Manners played a rattling good game this afternoon!"

"Br-r-r!"

"If you ask me," snorted Gore, "it's a piece of rotten favouritism! Just because Manners is a pal of Tom Merry's, he's been stuck in!"

"Hear, hear!"

Arthur Augustus went pink with wrath. He adjusted his gleaming monocle and surveyed Gore with great indignation.

"Bai Jove! Weally, Gore, you wottah—"

"Oh, ring off, D'Arcy!"

"I refuse to wing off! I considah—"

"I don't think it's favouritism," put in Roylance. "It's just that Tom Merry hasn't got an eye for form!"

Roylance was bitterly disappointed that his own name had not appeared on the list. He was feeling sulky and resentful.

"Hear, hear!" nodded Dick Julian glumly.

"You're jolly well right, Roylance!" growled Wilkins.

"Fancy putting in Glyn and leaving me out, for one—"

"Why, you silly ass—" began Glyn hotly.

"What we want," went on Roylance, breaking in on Glyn's wrathful protest, "is a new skipper! Tom Merry's stale! He's been captain too long. A change would be a jolly good thing all round!"

"Hear, hear!"

There was a chorus of agreement from the disgruntled

crowd, in which the quick protests of Arthur Augustus, Herries and Digby, Kangaroo and Bernard Glyn went unheeded.

"That's it!" growled Grundy. "It's time we had a change of skipper!"

"Wats! Weally, Gwunday, you fwabjous idiot—"

"Shut up, Gussy!"

There was a step on the stairs. The tall figure of Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, appeared.

"Bedtime, you kids! Buzz along!"

The excited hubbub died away. The juniors, most of them looking decidedly disgruntled, turned away from the board where the names of the eleven to visit Greyfriars were pinned.

As they mounted the stairs, the crowd of disappointed ones growled and muttered to one another.

There was no doubt that the forthcoming match against Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars was causing, one way and another, a good deal of trouble! Feelings were running extraordinarily high among the juniors who had been disappointed over their hopes of a place in the team. And though only a few of the juniors present were aware of it, it had been over the matter of the Greyfriars match that Levison and Clive had quarrelled so bitterly with their wayward chum, Ralph Reckness Cardew.

And though as yet even Cardew himself did not know it, that quarrel between the chums of Study No. 9 was to have far-reaching, amazing results at St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 5.

Tea with Doris!

"COME in!"

The voice of Ralph Reckness Cardew gave that invitation, from within Study No. 12, as Toby, the School House page, tapped on the door.

It was the following day, shortly after the finish of afternoon classes.

Toby stepped into the study.

Cardew was standing by the window, his hands thrust into his pockets. There had been a bitter smile on his handsome face as he stared out absently into the quad.

Evidently Cardew's thoughts were not pleasant ones, in the loneliness of Study No. 12!

"Well?" he said impatiently, as Toby grinned at him.

"Which I didn't know you'd moved into this study, Master Cardew!" exclaimed Toby cheerfully. "I was looking for you in No. 9, of course, but Master Clive told me you was in here now—"

"You can cut out your adventures, and tell me what you want to see me about; there's a good chap," drawled Cardew.

"The 'Ead wants to see you!"

"Then I'll probably look him up," said Cardew.

"Thanks!"

Toby grinned, and departed.

As the door closed, Cardew's handsome face took on again the brooding, bitter look that had been there at Toby's arrival.

It was about the chums with whom he had quarrelled that he was thinking.

Cardew himself could not have explained why he felt so bitter against Levison and Clive. But, somehow, their blunt admission that they considered Tom Merry had been justified in licking him in his own study for his refusal to play in the Greyfriars match had filled him with a burning resentment that would take a long time to heal.

Perhaps it was that in his heart he knew he was in the wrong—though he would not have admitted that even to himself.

Cardew's wild, wayward nature was a strange mixture of good and bad, and the quarrel with his chums had brought all the worst in him to the surface.

His refusal to play against Greyfriars had been chiefly due to an impulse. Cardew always enjoyed baiting Tom Merry. He had expected a hot argument, in which to exercise his wit upon the blunt straightforwardness of the captain of the Shell. In the end, having amused himself at Tom's expense, he would probably have agreed to play in the big match.

Instead, utterly unexpected so far as Cardew was concerned, Tom Merry had taken the law into his hands, instead of arguing, with the result that Cardew had been made to look small!

There was nothing that Cardew disliked so much as being made to look small. And the fact that his own chums had approved of his discomfiture had turned his bitter anger against them, oddly enough, rather than against Tom Merry.

His face was dark as he stared out broodingly into the quad.

A malicious gleam came into his eyes. He would certainly not play in the Greyfriars match now! And with Talbot, Blake, and Figgins out of it, Tom Merry's team would be hard put to it to save themselves from defeat at the hands of Harry Wharton & Co.

In his present mood that unpatriotic thought was a source of a good deal of satisfaction to Ralph Reckness Cardew.

He turned abruptly towards the door.

"A summons from Dr. Holmes had to be obeyed with promptitude!" Though why the headmaster of St. Jim's should want to see him was rather a puzzle to Cardew.

"Wonder what's up?" he muttered.

Surely no one could have overheard his mocking declaration to Levison and Clive that the reason why he did not wish to play in the Greyfriars match was that he preferred to play billiards at the Duke of Bedford Hotel, in Wayland?

That seemed impossible! But there was a faintly uneasy look in Cardew's eyes as he left his study.

A minute later Cardew was knocking on the door of the Head's study.

The deep tones of Dr. Holmes invited him to enter.

The Head smiled in a kindly way as the junior stepped into the big book-lined room. Cardew's vague uneasiness vanished. Evidently it was not in order to haul him over coals that the Head had sent for him!

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Yes, Cardew."

The Head picked up a letter from his desk.

"I have received a letter from your grandfather, Lord Reckness, Cardew. As you know, he has just returned from a holiday abroad, and is at present in London for a few days. He has asked me to give you permission to go up to London to-morrow, to spend the day with him."

Cardew's face lit up.

"I will inform your Form master that you are excused all lessons to-morrow," went on the Head. "You may leave as soon after breakfast as you like. But you must return not later than seven o'clock. There is a train that arrives in Rylcombe at half-past six. I desire you to return by that train, Cardew."

"Very good, sir!"

"Your grandfather wishes a telegram to be sent, informing him of the time of your arrival in London."

"I'll wire him at once, sir."

The Head dismissed Cardew with a nod and a smile.

Five minutes later Ralph Reckness Cardew was cycling out of gates on his way to Wayland.

"Gad! Doris!"

Cardew gave that muttered exclamation as he emerged from the Wayland General Post Office, where he had just sent off a telegram to his grandfather in London.

A slim, girlish figure was passing the post office. It was Doris Levison, the pretty sister of Ernest Levison, of St. Jim's. Doris was a pupil at Spalding Hall, a school for girls, near Wayland.

She caught sight of Cardew in the post office doorway, and stopped, with a bright smile.

Though she knew something of his reputation as a slacker, Doris could never quite believe it. She had a very warm admiration in her heart for her brother's handsome chum.

Cardew raised his cap. He was smiling—though it was rather an ironical smile, really, had Doris only known.

In the circumstances, it would be amusing, Cardew was telling himself, to make himself particularly charming to Doris Levison!

"Good-evenin', Miss Doris!"

They shook hands.

"How is Ernest?" asked Doris brightly. "He hasn't been over to Spalding Hall for quite a while!"

"That seems most amazin' to me!" murmured Cardew.

Doris coloured a trifle, and laughed.

"Old Ernest is very fit, though," went on Cardew easily. "Oh, very fit! All alive and kickin', you might say!"

It was quite obvious that Doris knew nothing of the quarrel between himself and her brother from her manner, even if she had not told him that Levison had not seen her for some time. She was clearly enjoying the meeting with Cardew.

Cardew was enjoying the irony of the situation thoroughly! He knew that Levison would be sure to learn, in due course, of the meeting between his sister and the chum with whom he had quarrelled so bitterly.

"I'll tell you what," went on Cardew, "what about havin' some tea over there?"

He nodded towards a cheerfully-lighted cafe.

"I'd love it!" nodded Doris brightly.

Five minutes later Doris Levison and Ralph Reckness

Cardew were seated at a small table near the fire in the little cafe, busy with tea and cakes.

There was a faint, flickering smile on the face of the dandy of the Fourth as he listened to Doris' cheerful conversation.

That Ernest Levison would be anything but pleased to learn of his sister's meeting with him Cardew felt certain enough!

And the thought filled him with intense, malicious satisfaction, as he sat facing Doris across the little table.

Cardew could make himself very charming and be very amusing when he liked. He was keeping Doris laughing gaily with his light, witty talk, when suddenly the door opened.

Cardew glanced round. He drew a quick breath.

"Gad!" breathed the dandy of the Fourth.

Two fellows wearing St. Jim's caps were entering the cafe—two fellows who, as yet, had not seen Doris Levison and her companion.

Cardew's eyes gleamed.

The two newcomers, already turning towards a vacant table, were Levison and Clive!

CHAPTER 6.

For His Sister's Sake!

"WHY—Ernest!"

Doris Levison gave a delighted exclamation as she caught sight of her brother and the South African junior. And at the sound of his name, Levison turned his head quickly.

His face lit up for a moment at sight of his sister. Then abruptly the smile died away, as his glance fell on her companion.

"Cardew!" breathed Levison.

Cardew rose. There was a mocking smile on his face, unseen by Doris.

"Why, it's dear old Ernest—and Clivey!" drawled Cardew.

Levison and Clive were both utterly taken aback for the moment, as they stared at Cardew's cool, smiling face.

Cardew laughed softly.

He was enjoying thoroughly their obvious, extreme discomfort. Nothing could have pleased him better than this accidental meeting. It appealed keenly to his particular ironical sense of humour.

"Why, what's the matter?" grinned Cardew maliciously.

Levison went scarlet.

"N-nothing!" he stammered.

Doris' welcoming smile faded. She glanced quickly from her brother and Clive to Cardew.

She realised that there was something wrong, though what it was she could not imagine. A little, perplexed frown appeared on her pretty forehead.

"Why, what is it, Ernest?" she said suddenly.

Levison forced a smile.

"Nothing! I—I was only surprised at finding you here, you know. Jolly glad to see you!"

Cardew grinned.

Though Levison might be pleased to see his sister, he knew that he was anything but pleased at seeing her in the company of the chum with whom he had quarrelled.

Clive shot Cardew a grim look. Cardew smiled back serenely.

"Didn't know you two men were comin' into Wayland this evenin'," he drawled. "Doris and I have just been havin' a spot of tea together. What about joinin' us?"

His eyes met Levison's.

Though there was still something in his manner that puzzled his sister, Ernest Levison had regained his composure, even though he could not simulate the same easy, careless air as the nonchalant slacker of the Fourth.

"Certainly!" said Levison quietly.

He drew up a chair beside his sister, and sat down at the table. Clive followed suit, without a word.

"Quite a jolly little party—what?" grinned Cardew.

"Rather!" nodded Clive. But his tone was rather grim.

Clive, like Levison, had always been a loyal chum to Ralph Reckness Cardew. But he felt as strongly as Levison over the affair of Cardew's refusal to play in the Greyfriars match.

Clive considered that if the breach between them was to be healed, it was up to Cardew to make the first move. But he realised well enough how unlikely it was that Cardew, with his proud, wayward nature, would swallow his pride and do so.

It was a painful situation for Sidney Clive—as it was for Levison.

The presence of Doris compelled them to do their best to appear as though nothing was wrong between themselves and Cardew. But it was not an easy task, and the

mocking light in Cardew's eyes, the ironical smile that flickered every now and then at the corners of his lips, told them both how keenly Cardew was enjoying their discomfort.

Cardew himself was serenely at his ease. He had not enjoyed himself quite so much for a long time!

"A rippin' surprise, runnin' into you two fellows," he murmured. "I'll order some more tea for you!"

"Thank you," said Levison quietly.

The meal continued. But Doris was no longer gay and animated.

Though she did not speak of it again, their manner towards one another still struck her as odd, and she watched the three juniors with a faintly bewildered look in her pretty, dark eyes.

She realised that her brother and Clive were feeling queerly restrained and uncomfortable, despite the easy air of Ralph Reckness Cardew, and she wondered very much why!

Cardew kept up a flow of airy conversation, beneath which ran a vein of irony that, even though it was hidden from Doris, caused Levison and Clive to squirm inwardly at times.

But at last Cardew tired of his amusement.

He glanced at his watch, and gave an exclamation.

"Gad! I must be trottin' along, I'm afraid. I've got some lines to do for old Lathom, bless him—got to buzz 'em in to-night! I hate havin' to leave you all. But I take it you'll be seein' your sister back to Spaldin' Hall, Levison, dear man?"

Levison nodded, without speaking.

Cardew said good-bye to Doris with his most charming smile. He nodded, with a cool, veiled insolence to Levison and Clive, and sauntered out of the cafe.

"And now," said Doris Levison, with a determined note in her voice, "you can tell me what it's all about!"

Clive coloured. "I—I don't think I understand!" he answered awkwardly.

"I think you do," said Doris. "What's happened?"

Levison smiled in a twisted way. "If you must know," he said quietly, "Clive and I have had a bit of a row with Cardew." He fiddled uncomfortably with his cup. "Nothing much—"

"I see," His sister flushed. "Isn't it rather silly? Cardew is such a—a nice boy—"

"Yes, he's a good chap at heart," nodded Levison, with clouded brow. "But it's scarcely our fault, Doris. You see—"

Levison began a frank account of the quarrel. When he had finished, there was distress in Doris' face.

She was silent for a while. Then suddenly she touched her brother's hand.

"Ernest, I want you to promise me something. Will you?"

"Of course!"

"You used to have such a lot of influence over Cardew," went on the girl eagerly. "And there is so much good in him that I hate to see him behaving like this. I want you to—to do your best to persuade Cardew to do the right thing—to play in the Greyfriars match!"

Levison jumped.

He had not realised that the promise he had rashly given was to be in connection with the slacker of the Fourth.

"But—"

"You said you would promise what I asked," Doris said coaxingly. "After all, if you succeed, it will be as much for the sake of St. Jim's as for my sake, won't it?"

"If!" said Levison bitterly. "There's not a hope of my being able to persuade him to play on Saturday!"

"Well, I want you to try," begged Doris. "Will you?"

"Very well," said Levison, after a moment's hesitation. "I'll try. It's no good, old girl, but I'll try, since you want me to."

Doris squeezed her brother's hand.

"Thank you!" she breathed.

She coloured slightly, feeling a little self-conscious at displaying such an interest in the slacker of the Fourth.

But it would be a wonderful thing, she was telling herself, if through her, Ralph Reckness Cardew could be brought to mend his ways.

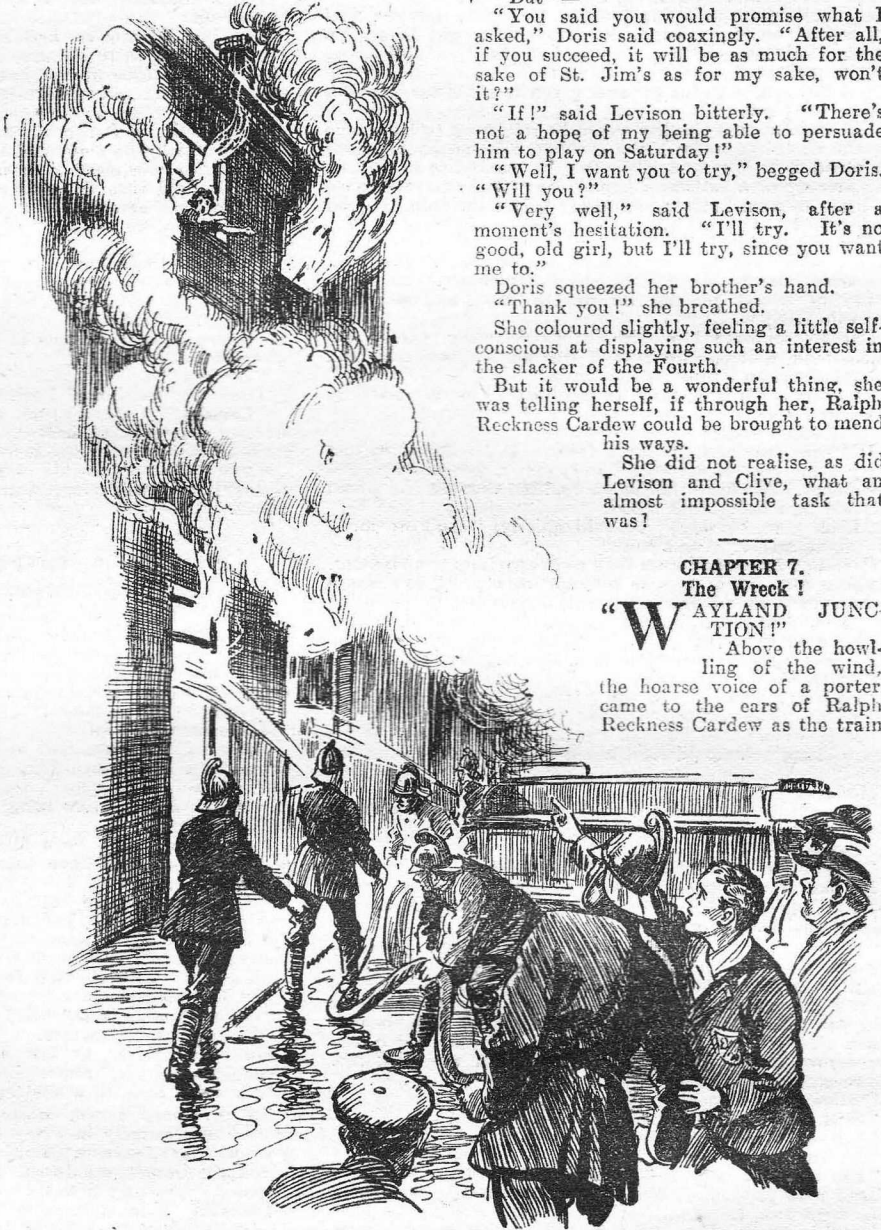
She did not realise, as did Levison and Clive, what an almost impossible task that was!

CHAPTER 7.

The Wreck!

"WAYLAND JUNCTION!"

Above the howling of the wind, the hoarse voice of a porter came to the ears of Ralph Reckness Cardew as the train



Ralph Reckness Cardew grasped the fireman's arm. "What are you going to do?!" he panted. "There's a kid in the house, at that top window!"

in which he had travelled down from London drew to a standstill beside the lighted platform.

Cardew was alone in a corner of a first-class compartment near the front of the train.

There was a hard look on his handsome face.

Despite the day in London with his grandfather, Cardew's thoughts had returned to events at St. Jim's as soon as he had found himself alone, on his way back to the school. He had been brooding.

The attitude of Levison and Clive towards his licking at the hands of Tom Merry curiously embittered him. It filled his mind now to the exclusion of all else.

"Wayland Junction!"

Cardew did not move from his seat. He was travelling on to Rylcombe.

He heard the guard's whistle blow—heard a sudden

shout: "Stand back, there!" The next moment, as the train began to glide forward, the door of his compartment was swung violently open, and an athletic figure jumped in.

It was a St. Jim's junior. And from Cardew, as he caught sight of the fellow's face, there broke a sharp exclamation: "You!"

"Yes, me!" answered Ernest Levison.

He met Cardew's gleaming eyes steadily.

In accordance with his promise to Doris, Levison had attempted, on his return to St. Jim's the night before, to speak with Cardew. But Cardew had simply snubbed him and walked away, coolly declining to listen.

But Levison, with his promise given to his sister, was not to be easily put off.

Finding out that Cardew would be returning to Rylcombe by the six-thirty train in the evening, Levison had decided to board it at Wayland. Whether he wanted to or not, in the privacy of a railway compartment Cardew would have to listen to what Levison had to say before the train reached Rylcombe!

The fact that he had found Cardew in an otherwise empty compartment was no more than he had expected. The evening train from London was usually fairly empty.

Levison tossed his cap on to the rack, and sat down opposite Cardew.

Cardew surveyed him with coldly-gleaming eyes. He understood well enough that it was no accident that had brought Levison into his compartment.

"So you're tryin' to force an interview?" he said harshly.

Levison nodded.

"I'll admit that."

His eyes searched Cardew's face. If he hoped to find there some sign of a reconciliatory spirit, Levison was disappointed. His heart fell as he realised that he had found Cardew in a bad, bitter mood.

"Look here, Cardew," he said quietly, "can't we make up this quarrel? Won't you?"

Cardew's face set in lines that were anything but pleasant.

For a moment or two he did not answer. There was a tense silence in the carriage, broken only by the buffeting of the wind on the glass beside them. It was a wild, stormy night, with almost a gale blowing. In the dim light the trees beside the line could be seen swaying madly.

Cardew smiled derisively.

"So you're wantin' to be 'friends' again, eh?" he drawled. "The sort of 'friend' that you were before, I suppose—when you were glad Tom Merry licked me! When you told me you would have stood by and gladly seen him do it!"

His eyes gleamed.

"No, thanks! I've had enough of that sort of friendship, Levison. I don't want any more!"

"Cardew——"

"Excuse me. I want to read," yawned Cardew.

He picked up a magazine that was lying on the seat beside him and opened it. His face had gone rather pale, though he was cool enough outwardly.

"Cardew, you must listen to me," said Levison. A pleading note had crept into his voice. "I can't understand you when you are like this. You wouldn't have had me pretend what I didn't feel about that affair with Tom Merry? I told you the truth, and you must know I'm right, in your heart. You ought to play up for St. Jim's, in this match to-morrow, for the sake of the school! For my sake, too. We've been pals so long——"

Cardew yawned deliberately.

"Still talkin'?" he asked.

Levison flushed.

"Listen, Cardew——"

"I'm tired of listenin'!" Suddenly Cardew's face was aflame with passion. "Who are you to lecture me? I've done with you, Levison, as I've told you, and I'll be glad if you'll leave me alone in future. Mind your own business, for a change, hang you!"

Levison stared dumbly into the blazing eyes of the dandy of the Fourth.

The sudden, startling change from the cold, ironical Cardew had taken him aback.

Cardew had half-risen to his feet, breathing fast. Levison jumped up.

"You're mad, Cardew, to talk like this! I'm your oldest friend at St. Jim's——"

"Are you really?" snarled Cardew passionately. "Then I'll show you what I think of your friendship!"

He raised his fist and struck Levison violently in the face.

Levison reeled back, with a look in his eyes that was to haunt Cardew later. And then, as the dandy of the Fourth stood quivering, with his back to the carriage door, his eyes blazing down to where Levison had fallen, a sudden thunderous, echoing crash seemed to fill the air. The floor of the carriage swayed up at one end, to a din of splintering

wood and glass and shrieking metal. Cardew felt himself hurled through the air, clutching desperately at nothing.

With reeling brain, Cardew was flung against a mass of splintered wreckage. Something struck his head violently. Dazed and half-stunned, the slacker of the Fourth lay amid the ruins of the smashed carriage, his sole sensation one of bewildered horror.

From somewhere not far away came a shrill hiss of escaping steam.

The big locomotive had struck a giant elm that had crashed down on to the line a few moments before, blown over by the force of the gale. It had plunged down the side of the steep embankment, dragging with it the first half-dozen coaches of the lighted train. And in the mass of wreckage Ralph Reckness Cardew lay half-senseless.

Mechanically he staggered to his feet.

His brain was clearing now.

He realised that by wonderful chance he had been flung clear to some extent as the carriage had toppled over, its side ripped clean away.

"Levison!"

The name broke from him in a wild, choking cry.

He could see running figures in the gloom, and figures that crawled amid the debris. Someone was groaning not far away. There were hysterical screams, and the sobbing of a woman, and the hiss of steam joined with the shriek of the wind.

"Levison!"

There was no sign of Levison.

"Levison!" But Cardew's voice was no more than a whisper in tones of horror, as he stared dazedly at the mass of twisted wreckage before him. "Levison!"

Somewhere in that pile of ghastly debris Ernest Levison of the Fourth was lying. Cardew covered his face with his hands.

CHAPTER 8.

Cardew's Plea!

ONLY for a few moments more did horror numb the slacker of the Fourth.

An instant or two later he had stumbled forward, his face pale, his lips set in a thin line, his eyes searching swiftly as he explored the splintered wreckage.

"Levison!" he shouted.

There was no reply.

Cardew's heart was cold as he began his feverish search. On either side of him, in the gloom, other dim figures were working desperately amid the piled debris of the wrecked carriages. People were being dragged out—some senseless, others groaning.

Had the carriages been filled with passengers the result of the wreck would have been appalling. But fortunately there had been very few people on the train.

As if by a miracle both the engine-driver and fireman had escaped unhurt. The driver was now racing away up the line with a red lantern, to stop the up-train that was due very shortly. Some of the wreckage blocked the other line, and the up-train had to be stopped at any cost.

But Cardew was utterly unaware of all that was going on around him as he stumbled about in the gloom, searching wildly for Ernest Levison.

He caught sight at last of an outflung arm that he recognised. He felt almost sick—Levison's arm, protruding limply from beneath a shattered carriage seat.

As he stared down, white-faced, Cardew felt himself trembling strangely in every limb. But it was no time to give way to weakness. Pulling himself together, Cardew seized the broken woodwork, and exerting all his strength raised it, thrusting it aside.

The still, huddled form of Ernest Levison was revealed.

Cardew never quite knew how he managed to drag the senseless figure out of the wreckage. The next thing he remembered clearly was kneeling at the foot of the embankment with Levison in his arms.

Levison's face was white, his eyes closed. He seemed scarcely to be breathing. Cardew saw that his head was injured. Gently he wiped the blood away from his chum's face with a handkerchief.

"Levison, old man!"

A sudden picture flashed into Cardew's mind as he stared down at that white face—the picture of Levison reeling back before the blow that he had struck him; and the look that had been in his chum's eyes then came back to Cardew, searing his heart like a knife.

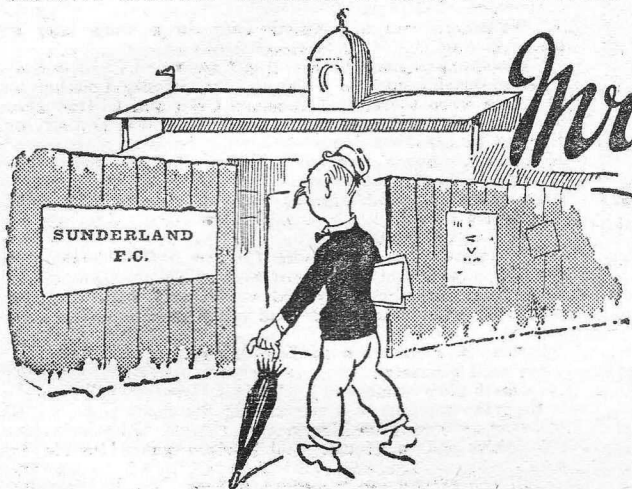
"I—I hit him!" stammered Cardew aloud.

He found himself sobbing as though his heart would break.

To and fro across the floor of a little room in the sanatorium of St. Jim's Ralph Reckness Cardew paced.

(Continued on page 12.)

HOW A CANARY HELPED A GREAT FOOTBALL CLUB!



Mr. Parker POPS IN TO SEE SUNDERLAND.

If you want money, go to Sunderland. If you want to see good football, go to Sunderland as well. This is what Mr. "Nosey" Parker realises after a visit to this northern club.

Riches Galore!

WHENEVER it is necessary for me to borrow money, I always feel like making a trip to Roker Park, Sunderland, where I have many friends. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that I am always successful in my efforts to get a bit there, but I have always had the impression that there was plenty of money floating around Roker Park. Anyway, the club appears to have some inexhaustible source of wealth. They can spend money on players, and on their ground, apparently just when they think they will.

As a matter of fact, though you may not know this, it is almost literally true to say that Sunderland first got among the top-notchers of football by offering to lend money to other clubs. In the long-ago days—I am now taking you back to about 1890—the Sunderland club wanted to get into the League. They made their application in due course, but the other clubs replied: "Oh dear, no, Sunderland is much too far off the map for us. Look at the cash it would cost to take a team all the way to Sunderland!"

The officials of the Sunderland club at that time were not so easily put off, however. They proceeded to show that they could find the ready. "If you will take us into the League," they said, in effect, "we will pay the travelling expenses of all the clubs which visit us." Wasn't that nice of them? Anyway, it was an offer which could not very well be turned down, so Sunderland were duly admitted to membership of the Football League. It seems funny, at this distant date, to imagine Sunderland—later to be known as the "Team of All the Talents"—only getting into the League by promising to pay the travelling expenses of their opponents.

Their Canary Friend!

BUT while we are dealing with ancient history, let me tell you another story which was re-fold to me when I was at Roker Park the other day. This story shows that there have been times in the history of the Sunderland club when they hadn't too much money. At one period—before they thought of applying for admission to the League—there wasn't a bean to the credit of the club.

However, one enthusiastic official had a brain-wave. He offered to raffle his pet canary for the club's benefit. The offer was accepted; the canary was raffled several times, and enough money gained thereby to enable the club to carry on. So the Sunderland club, having been built, as we might say, on the back of a tiny

canary, it is only right that they should sing a cheerful song. And they are singing a much more cheerful song just now than they were earlier in the present season.

The trouble with the song they sing around the dressing-rooms at Roker Park is that the words are in a language which I don't altogether understand. I suppose it's real Scottish, but when I asked one of the few English players on the staff if it was Scottish he replied: "No, it's St. Mirren."

"Aime from St. Mirren!"

WHEN I began to nose around for the explanation of this remark, I was not long in finding it. First of all there was the manager to be interviewed. His name is John Cochrane, and he is comparatively new to Sunderland; certainly new enough not to have picked up the dialect of that district. I asked him whence he came, and he replied: "St. Mirren."

Then I bumped into the trainer, and I recognised the same language. He, too, comes from St. Mirren. This trainer, Andy Reid by name, is very proud of and pleased with his quarters. A year or two ago the Sunderland officials spent some twenty-five thousand pounds or so on their ground, building a fine new stand, and that sort of thing. But they did not forget that the players should be comfortable, and have up-to-date appliances, too. The new offices are fine; the dressing-rooms are lovely, and trainer Andy Reid has at his command all the latest gadgets for turning out thoroughly fit footballers. He showed me very nearly a dozen electrical appliances which are used as an aid to fitness, and wanted me to try all of them. Of course, I didn't try them, because I had a feeling that Andy might be preparing for me shocks of the sort which I do not fully appreciate.

Interviewing these Sunderland players was very much like having a meal of haggis, the difference being, of course, that you get mental indigestion instead of pains elsewhere. McPhee, who is a neat little winger, assured me—I think I interpreted him aright—that he wasna much of a talker, but he would do a Highland fling for me instead of being interviewed. And he was as good as his word. McPhee is the best footballer-dancer I have ever seen, and I could understand his dancing quite all right.

The Scot of Scots!

BUT I must not leave the impression that the whole atmosphere around Roker Park has been directly imported from St. Mirren. There are some Englishmen in the side in order—

as goalkeeper Johnny Bell put it—referees would be able to understand when an appeal was made for a penalty kick. Johnny comes from a place where they turn out footballers by the score—Seaham Harbour, which is not far from Sunderland. Clem Stephenson, now the manager of Sunderland, is one of the many footballers who have been brought up at Seaham Harbour.

And as the usual full-backs of the team there is an English player in James Oakley, and a Scot in William Murray. Oakley is one of the long-distance runners of the present team, having been brought out of the mine, as it were, to play for Sunderland some eight years ago.

The Scot of Scots is Johnny McDougall, which I think you will admit is a very good name. He is comparatively new to the Sunderland side, having been obtained last summer from the Airdrieonians.

Johnny has taken over the role of skipper, a position held for some time by another Scot in the side—Billy Clunas. The latter, however, is now almost English, having been at Sunderland for quite a long time. He started his football career as a centre-forward, and he gave me a bit of good advice which he asked me to pass on to the boys who read my notes. It was that they should not necessarily think that the position in which they start playing football suits them best. An experiment is worth while. Clunas has a reputation of being among the most deadly penalty-kick takers in football, and when he takes one you can get ready to shout "Goal!"

The Young Fighters!

IT took the Sunderland manager quite a long time to decide how his forward line should be made up, but the attack which pulled the club round from a bad patch about Christmas time is a subtle mixture of young England and experienced Scotland. Outside-right Billy Eden is a bright youngster who can go like the wind, and also shoot straight and true while on the run. He got into football by his cheek, so he says, in going to Durham and asking the manager of the City club there to give him a trial. "I didn't so much ask him to give me a trial as make him give me one." But the Durham City manager didn't regret the boy's insistence, for when he was transferred to Sunderland, Durham got a nice little cheque—that is a little cheque with big figures on it. Bob McKay has had experience with Newcastle United, among other clubs, and Evelyn Morrison is the big noise centre-forward.

Sunderland were so keen to get him from Falkirk that they agreed to his continuing to live in his native Lanarkshire, and he travels to England weekly to play for the side. He has a briquette works "at home," which keeps him busy in mid-week.

The "Geo-Gees" of the side—they call them that—play on the left wing—Gordon Gunson, and Robert Gurney, and they are making good. "Put your money on our left wing," was the advice I got from another player, "because they are the goods." However, the mention of putting money on anything rather upset me, and I thought that was the time to be "off."

"NOSEY."

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Sent To Coventry!

(Continued from page 10.)

To and fro—endlessly, it seemed.

His face was pale and haggard, his head sunk forward on his chest. To and fro, with a heart tormented and tortured.

The ticking of a clock on the chimneypiece sounded unnaturally loud in the silence. No other sound, but for his pacing footsteps on the floor.

And in the next room lay Ernest Levison, hovering between life and death.

A groan escaped Cardew.

He could not rid his mind of the memory of that look in Levison's eyes—the look that he had seen there after delivering that cowardly blow as the train had roared to its destruction between Wayland and Rylcombe.

He was wracked with remorse—now, when it was too late. What was the use of remorse? Suppose Levison never recovered consciousness? Suppose he died, with his last memory of his chum being of that blow?

Round and round that terrible theme Cardew's thoughts revolved.

It seemed like hours to him since Levison had been brought to St. Jim's in the ambulance. Actually, it was little more than half an hour.

By now he knew all St. Jim's must be aware of the fact that Levison was lying in the sanatorium, terribly injured. All St. Jim's would be waiting for news, as he was waiting.

What would that news be?

Cardew shuddered.

Then he turned his head swiftly. The door of the room was opening. He started forward with a breathless cry as Dr. Holmes entered, accompanied by a grave-faced little medical man.

Cardew seized the doctor by the arm.

"Well?" he whispered. "How—how is he, now?"

The medical man glanced at Dr. Holmes. The old Head laid a sympathetic hand on Cardew's shoulder.

"This is the friend of the injured boy who dragged him from the wreckage," he said quietly.

"Indeed! You are the boy who showed so much presence of mind and pluck."

The eyes of the medical man were fixed upon Cardew's face. Cardew stared at him wildly. He shook his head.

"I only pulled him out," he muttered; somehow he could not bear to feel their commendation. "As a matter of fact, we—we'd quarrelled—"

His voice choked. A quick look of astonishment sprang into the face of the kindly old Head.

"We'd been quarrelling—" began Cardew again, stumblingly. But the Head checked him.

"Never mind that, my boy," said Dr. Holmes quietly, with sympathetic understanding. "You must not worry about that. You will be glad to hear that Levison has recovered consciousness. And his first words—his very first words—were of you. He wanted to know that you were safe."

"He—he wanted to know that?" breathed Cardew.

A queer misty light came into his eyes.

"How is he?" he muttered.

"I am afraid your friend's injuries are grave," said the little medical man quietly. "Yes, he is gravely injured. But there is every hope that he will recover."

"You—you mean there's a chance that—that he may—"

Cardew's lips would not frame the word "die." He broke off, his eyes riveted on the doctor's face.

"I think he will live," answered the doctor, in a quiet tone.

There was a moment or two of silence in the little room. Cardew's voice was steady again when he spoke.

"May I see him?"

"I'm afraid that is impossible to-night," said the little doctor, shaking his head. "To-morrow, perhaps—perhaps some time to-morrow."

"Thank you!"

Cardew turned, and went slowly from the room.

He made his way down the stairs. It seemed strangely quiet in the sanatorium building—horribly quiet. The quietness almost unnerved him. Levison lying there, in the silence.

A group of juniors was gathered in the hall of the sanatorium, below. Cardew became suddenly conscious of them as he crossed from the stairs towards the door. Someone touched him on the arm.

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It was Tom Merry.

"What's the news?" asked Tom, in a voice that was oddly strained.

"The doctor thinks he will live," answered Cardew dully.

He glanced round, in a dazed way. Monty Lowther and Manners were there, and Bernard Glyn and Clifton Dane, and Herries and Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Figgins of the New House—Figgins, walking with the aid of a stick. For a moment Cardew wondered why. Then he remembered that Figgins had hurt his ankle in that practice game. And Figgins was not able to play in the Greyfriars match.

The Greyfriars match!

The fellows were watching Cardew rather queerly, he thought. No doubt they were wondering what he felt like now, after having quarrelled so bitterly with the chum who was lying between life and death in one of the rooms above.

Cardew turned again to Tom Merry.

He said hoarsely:

"Can I play to-morrow? Against Greyfriars?"

He was conscious of a stir among the silent juniors. But his eyes were on Tom Merry.

"You've got to let me. Old Levison wanted me to, you see."

"Of course you can," answered Tom.

Cardew's face lit up for a moment.

"If I see old Levison in the morning, if they let me see him, I can tell him I'm playing?" he breathed.

"Of course, Cardew! Of course you can!" repeated Tom Merry.

Cardew gave him a faint smile. Then he turned and strode out into the dark quad.

CHAPTER 9.

Off to Greyfriars!

THERE seemed to be a shadow over the school next morning when the fellows awoke. Juniors and seniors alike found their thoughts flying instantly to the sanatorium and Ernest Levison.

Breakfast was usually a cheery meal at the junior tables. But this morning the fellows were quiet and subdued.

As a rule, most of the fellows spent the time between breakfast and morning classes in the fresh air of the quad noisily enough. But this morning they stood about in silent groups.

Soon after breakfast, however, there was wonderful news!

Levison was making an amazing recovery. Thanks to his athletic constitution, that grim fight during the night hours between life and death had been won! He was very ill; but he was on the road to a complete recovery, the doctor announced.

There were joyful faces on all sides when the bell sounded for morning classes.

Cardew looked like a fellow awakened from an evil dream. He looked thoroughly light-hearted as he entered Mr. Lathom's Form-room with his books under his arm. His eyes were shining and his step was light.

He had visited the sanatorium, and had been allowed to see Levison, though no one else had been permitted to do so.

What had taken place between them no one knew. But from Cardew's face, when he had emerged from the sanatorium, it was clear that everything was well again between the injured junior and the slacker of the Fourth.

"It must have bucked old Levison no end to hear that Cardew's playing in the big match this afternoon, after all," said Monty Lowther to Manners, as they entered the Shell Form room. "Knowing that will be the best medicine in the world for him!"

"Rather!" agreed Manners cheerfully. "Do him a world of good!"

And when, during first break, Cardew was seen walking arm-in-arm with Clive in the quad, it was evident enough that the trouble in Study No. 9 was over. As soon as possible, without a doubt, Cardew would be returning to his old home, after his brief, bitter period of residence in Study No. 12.

Herries, standing at the top of the School House steps, with Digby and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and the Terrible Three, waiting for second lesson, grinned as he saw Cardew and Clive together.

"If only Cardew shows the same form this afternoon as he did on Little Side last Wednesday, Greyfriars will have to look out!" he remarked.

"Rather!" nodded Digby.

"It's wotten luck, poor old Levison bein' out of the match," said Arthur Augustus, staring across at the sanatorium. "But with Cardew takin' his place, things look pweety hopeful, deah boys!"

"I think we shall give Wharton & Co. something to worry about," agreed Tom Merry. "By the way, you chaps," he added, glancing at Manners and Lowther and the swell of St. Jim's, "don't forget the team has to catch the one-thirty train at Rylcombe. I've arranged for the eleven to have an early dinner in Hall."

"Good egg!"

There was further news from the sanatorium when the fellows came out at the finish of morning classes. Levison was reported to be making splendid progress, though it would still be many days before the juniors would have him amongst them again.

As soon as they had been freed from their class-rooms, the football eleven hurried into Hall, for their early meal. As they came out afterwards, Cardew tapped Tom Merry on the arm.

"Do you mind if I don't go with the rest of the arm to Rylcombe Station?" he asked.

Tom stared at him.

"Why not? What do you mean? We've all got to catch the one-thirty."

"I know," said Cardew. "But it goes through Wayland, and I want to join the train there."

"I see. Yes, that'll be all right, I suppose. But—"

"I—I've got some business to see to in Wayland," explained Cardew. "That's all. Thought I'd get it done and pick up the train there."

"All right, then. Only don't miss it, whatever happens."

"Rather not!" answered Cardew, with a smile.

Five minutes later Ralph Reckness Cardew was cycling out of gates. He took the road to Wayland.

Though his request had caused some surprise among the other footballers, no one knew what his business was in the town. Cardew had kept that to himself.

"I suppose it's all right," said Manners thoughtfully to Tom Merry. "Cardew is such a rum beggar—"

"Oh, he won't let us down!" answered Tom confidently. "He's keen as mustard to play in the match, for Levison's sake."

He glanced at his watch.

"Come on! Time we got changed, unless we're to miss the giddy train ourselves!"

A short while after Cardew's departure ten figures in footer kit cycled out of the quad on their way to Rylcombe.

The team that had caused so much excitement and heart-burning at St. Jim's was off to Greyfriars at last!

CHAPTER 10.

Through the Flames!

CARDEW'S business in Wayland had been kept to himself because the slacker of the Fourth felt that it was not likely to meet with the approval of Tom Merry and the other footballers!

Before the railway accident and Levison's injuries had caused him to change his whole outlook, Cardew had arranged to play a billiards match that afternoon with Slade, the marker at the Duke of Bedford Hotel.

Though he had given up all idea of playing that match now, Cardew had told himself that it was due to Slade that he should be informed of the fact.

Consequently, the Fourth-Former intended to visit the Duke of Bedford on his way to the railway station, and see the man, to tell him that the arranged game was "off."

He had plenty of time to make the visit. Glancing at his watch as he cycled into the old-fashioned High Street, he saw that there was still more than a quarter of an hour before the train he had to catch stopped at the station.

The Duke of Bedford stood a hundred yards or so down a side road off the High Street.

Cardew found Slade, the marker, inclined to be indignant.

"But hang it, Master Cardew, you fixed to play!" he complained. "Several of the crowd have had a little bet on the result. They're all coming in to watch—"

Cardew gave an impatient exclamation.

"Well, I'm not playing!"

Slade was a weedy-looking man, with a sallow face. He looked dejected.

"Why, this ain't like you, Master Cardew, best if it is—"

"Oh, rot! The game's off, Slade!"

"Very well sir! If you say it is, it is, I s'pose. But if you should 'ppen to change your mind, we'll be glad to see you this afternoon, after all—"

"You've no chance of that!" interrupted Cardew impatiently. He looked at his watch. "I must be gettin' along."

He left the building, and cycled quickly up the street. The interview with Slade had taken him longer than he

had intended. But there was still plenty of time for him to catch the train.

He did not turn towards the High Street. He knew of a short cut to the station, through the back streets of the old town.

He turned a corner, and a quick exclamation escaped him.

Some distance down the street a big crowd was collected, held back by two or three policemen. Smoke was pouring from the upper windows of a house on the left. Cardew could see the red paint and brass of a stationary fire-engine, and glimpsed the gleaming helmets of firemen.

"Gad!"

He pedalled faster, dismounting at last on the outskirts of the excited crowd.

"'Ouse on fire!" explained a fat, red-faced man, as Cardew came up.

"Not really?" murmured Cardew ironically, below his breath.

Peering above the heads of the crowd, he could see that the fire had got a strong hold on the burning house. Behind the blackened, broken windows he could make out the lurid glare of leaping flames, which the streams of water from the fire-hoses seemed to be doing little towards checking.

Then suddenly he caught his breath.

At one of the windows of the top floor a face had appeared, white with terror, staring down from behind the glass. It was a little girl.

Even as he caught sight of the child the fat man beside him was remarking:

"Nobody in the 'ouse, luckily. Everybody out somewhere, they say—"

"But look!" cried Cardew hoarsely.

He flung out a pointing hand. The fat man stared at the top window, and his eyes went wide. Other people near also stared up, at Cardew's shout. There were exclamations and cries of horror.

"There's a child up at the top there!" yelled a man excitedly.

Cardew's face was white and set. He dropped his cycle and thrust his way through the crowd. A policeman tried to stop him, but Cardew slipped past the man and grasped the arm of a fireman standing by one of the hoses.

(Continued on next page.)

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(Continued from previous page.)

"What are you going to do?" he panted. "There's a kid in the house. at that top window!"

"We can't do anything yet," answered the man roughly. "Not till the escape comes! It's been delayed; there's been a breakdown! When it comes—"

"It may be too late then!" panted Cardew.

"Can't do anything now, anyway!" muttered the fireman. "Poor kiddie! No one could get up to her. The inside of that house is a mass o' flame!"

"Rats!" snapped Cardew. "Somethin' must be done! We can't stand here and—"

"I tell you it's impossible to get to her!"

"I don't believe it is!" said Cardew, between his teeth. "Anyway, I'm going to try!"

"You're mad!" gasped the fireman. "Come back, you young fool!"

He made a grab at Cardew, but the St. Jim's junior was too quick for him. There was an excited shout from the crowd as they saw the schoolboy dart past the other firemen before they had time to realise his intention, and plunge in through the whirling smoke of the blackened doorway.

"He's crazy!" breathed a man in the crowd. "He'll never come out alive!"

"Bless him!" sobbed a woman.

The crowd was increasing rapidly, blocking the road across on either side of the burning building. The smoke, beaten down by the wind, came swirling over their heads in acrid clouds. The child's face had vanished from the window. From within the house came the dull roaring of the flames.

And somewhere within that raging inferno Ralph Rockness Cardew, the slacker of the Fourth, was fighting his way through fire and smoke up to the rescue of the trapped child!

Spellbound, the crowd watched and waited, blanched faces raised to the windows of the burning building.

The minutes dragged by. But of Cardew there was no sign.

His reckless bravery had led him into an inferno from which it seemed impossible that he could ever return alive!

CHAPTER 11.

Left Behind!

"HELP! Help!"

Staggering blindly up the narrow topmost flight of stairs, through the choking smoke, Cardew heard faintly the sound of a child's cry for help.

It came from beyond a door to the right. He turned towards it.

The top landing was still free from the flames. But the floors below seemed a mass of burning. How he had succeeded in fighting through it, up the blazing lower stairs, Cardew hardly knew.

Whether he would ever be able to get down them again, he knew even less!

Above the roar of the flames he could hear the faint sound of a child's sobs. Frantically he groped for the handle of the door that evidently separated him from her. But his eyes were blinded with smoke, and he could not find it. Raising his foot, he dealt the door a smashing blow, and it flew open. He staggered through into the room beyond.

There was drifting smoke in the room, but the air was clear compared with that of the landing. A little girl was standing by the window, sobbing and frightened. She stared at Cardew in a bewildered way.

Cardew grinned cheerfully. It was an effort, but he managed it.

"Come on," he said. "It's all right! I've come to take you out of this!"

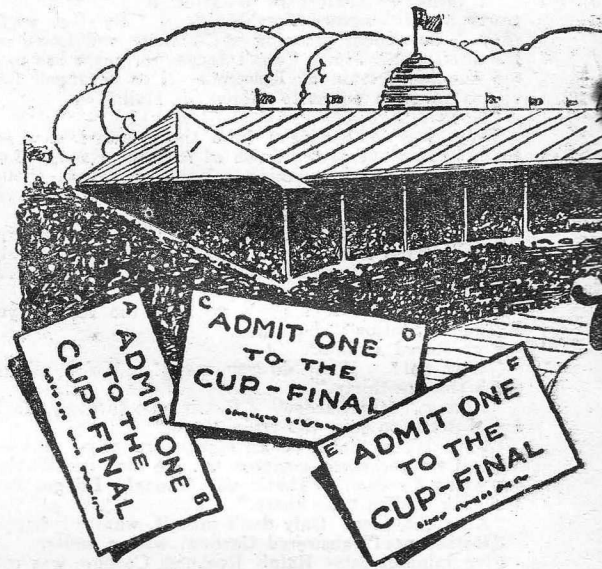
He snatched her up and turned, darting from the room with his trembling burden.

A billowing cloud of smoke came rolling up the stairs to meet him.

The little girl clung with her arms round Cardew's neck,

(Continued on page 16.)

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We have now come to the fourth and final week of our grand competition. Below you will find the Fourth Puzzle-Set to solve. In each of them is a picture-puzzle representing a well-known football club, but in any case a list of names is given on the right which you must solve.

As you find the answers, write them IN INK against the correct number. Here, sign your name and address, also in ink, and cut out the whole puzzle.

Now gather together the three previous entry forms, see that they are in order so as to form one complete entry. Place the entry in a proper envelope.

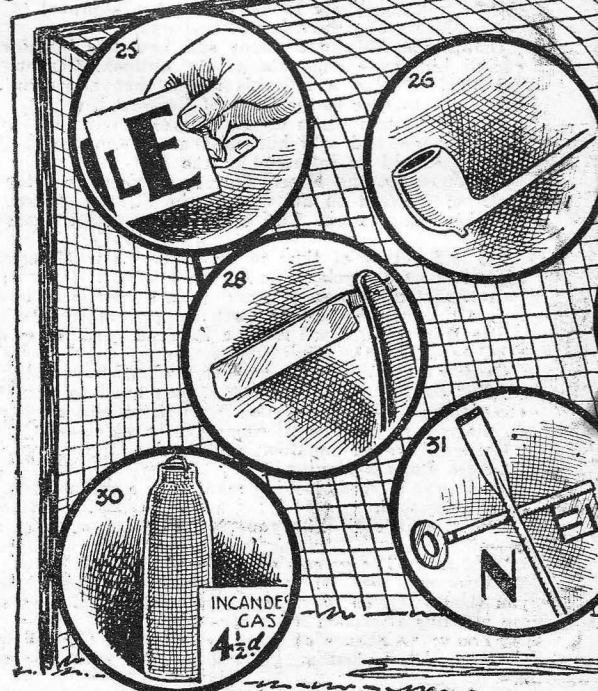
The GEM,

"Who Kicked Them?"

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so as to reach there NOT LATER THAN FRIDAY, MARCH 10th, 1911. Entries received after this date will be disqualified.

Who Kicked Them?



Who Scored those Goals?"

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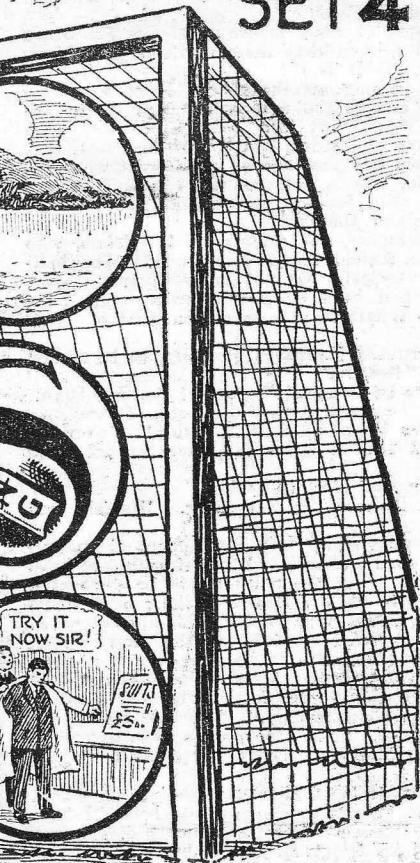
LAST WEEK—

—POST NOW!

You must send in your entries without delay. You see there are eight circles, and, as before, in each you should have no difficulty in solving the answers to *all this week's* puzzles. Numbers on the Entry Form given on the right are filled in; then pin all four together in an envelope and post it early to:

Any entries arriving after that date will

SET 4



OUR COMPETITION RULES.

The Six "Mead" Bicycles will be awarded to the six readers whose solutions of the four sets of puzzles are correct or most nearly correct, the other prizes of Twelve Cup-Final Tickets following in order of merit.

In case of ties, the Editor may divide the prizes, or their value, as he considers necessary, but in any case the full value will be awarded.

Any number of entries may be sent, but each must be made out on a separate set of the "Who Kicked Them?" Entry Forms (Nos. 1 to 4, inclusive, that is). No responsibility can be taken for entries lost, mislaid, or delayed in the post, or otherwise, and no correspondence will be allowed.

The Editor's decision will be final and legally binding throughout. Entries mutilated or bearing alterations or alternative solutions will be disqualified. Employees of the proprietors of GEM and of "Nelson Lee," whose readers are also taking part in this contest, must not compete.

YOU CAN FIND THE ANSWERS HERE.

NOTE:—This list is for use with this week's puzzles only, a separate list having been given with each picture-set.

- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| Andrews | Lindsay |
| Astley | Lowe |
| Attwood | |
| Bedford | Mallock |
| Beresford | Mantle |
| Bradford | Martin |
| Bruce | Morrall |
| | Nairn |
| Cape | Nimmo |
| Chandler | |
| Clay | Osborne |
| Cook | |
| | Parker |
| Deacon | Pipe |
| Dimmock | Porter |
| Dutton | Price |
| | Robson |
| Easton | Rocke |
| Edmonds | Ruffell |
| | Russell |
| Fitton | |
| | Seed |
| Gibbins | Sharp |
| Goddard | Slicer |
| Goodall | Smart |
| Graham | Steel |
| | Talbot |
| Haden | Taylor |
| Handley | Thackeray |
| Hine | Thomas |
| | Thompson |
| Jack | |
| James | Vallance |
| John | |
| Johnson | Wade |
| | Walters |
| Keen | Waterfield |
| Keenor | Watson |
| Kennedy | Wilson |
| | Yardley |
| Lambert | Yews |
| Lane | |

"Who Kicked Them?"

FREE ENTRY FORM No. 4

25

26

27

28

29

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31

32

"GEM."

I agree to accept the Editor's decision as final and binding.

Signed

Address

4

Sent To Coventry!

(Continued from page 14.)

her face buried in his shoulder, as he sprang down the staircase. The landing below was burning in places, Orange flame danced in the smoke-laden gloom around him as he fought his way across to the second flight of stairs.

He heard the crash of a falling ceiling.

A fit of coughing seized him, rendering him helpless for some moments. Then he managed to get his breath, and went on down the stairs.

The banisters fell away in a blazing mass from beside him, and the stifling air was filled with flying sparks that stung his hands. He leapt over some burning treads of the staircase, and reeled on down towards the inferno of flame in the hall below.

He was choked and blinded, and his ears were filled with the roar of the burning building around him. His senses seemed to be going. The very air seemed too hot to breathe. And then suddenly he felt a cold wind on his cheeks, and knew that he was out in the street once more. Helmeted figures surrounded him, and the sobbing figure in his arms was lifted from him.

A tremendous cheer was ringing in his ears, and he realised that it was he whom the crowd was cheering.

One of the firemen was wringing his hand.

And at that moment Cardew's eyes fell on a clock outside a shop almost opposite.

A sharp exclamation escaped him.

The cold air had revived him from the half-suffocated stupor that had almost overcome him, and the sight of that clock brought him back in a moment to realities.

All thoughts of the Greyfriars match had been banished from his mind for a while. But now he realised that he had to play in it that afternoon—and his train went in two minutes!

"Oh gad!"

Cardew wrenched his hand free from the man who was shaking it so vigorously. He ran to the edge of the crowd, pushing his way through, despite the enthusiastic efforts to hold him on the part of people who wanted to shake him by the hand. He found his cycle where he had left it, and his footer boots still safely tied to the handlebars, and snatched it up.

The crowd did not want him to go. They tried to stop him; but Cardew was not to be stopped! He fought free of his admirers, and a minute later was pedalling furiously down the street in the direction of the railway station.

He was still bare-headed, for he had removed his cap before visiting the Duke of Bedford, in case anyone should see him entering that establishment; and he had not replaced it before coming upon the scene of the fire. He took his cap from his pocket now, and put it on, as he sped along.

Cardew cycled into the station yard at such a break-neck speed that the waiting cabbies on the rank stared at him. He leapt off, hastily untied his footer boots, and ran into the booking hall, leaving his cycle where it was.

He had intended to leave it in the cloak-room, but as it was it would have to look after itself!

"Am I in time?" he gasped to the ticket-collector.

"Whaffor?"

"The train for Greyfriars School—to Friardale?" panted Cardew breathlessly.

The man grinned, and led him a few steps through the gate, on to the platform. He flung out a pointing hand.

Dwindling in the distance down the gleaming railway lines could be seen a fast-vanishing train.

"There it goes!" said the ticket-collector. "Missed it by half a minute!"

He surveyed Cardew curiously.

"You look a bit upset!" he remarked.

"When is the next train?" asked Cardew quietly.

"Not another till the evening!"

A twisted smile appeared on Cardew's face.

"Gad!" he breathed. "Talk about the irony of giddy Fate!"

It was utterly impossible for him to get to Greyfriars now in time for the match. It would be played without him.

Tom Merry and the rest of the Junior Eleven were speeding on their way—and he was left behind!

There was a curious expression on the face of Ralph Reckness Cardew as he stood staring after the vanishing train.

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CHAPTER 12.

The Big Match!

CARDEW entered the post office in the High Street a few minutes later, looking his usual elegant self once more.

He had a wash and brush-up at the station, removing the grimy traces of smoke from his face and hands.

With a twisted smile, he wrote out a telegram, addressing it to Tom Merry at Greyfriars.

Though he was bitterly chagrined at having been left behind, it was a typically nonchalant wire that he scribbled: "Missed train. Annoying, what?—CARDEW." The girl behind the counter smiled when he handed it in.

Outside the post office, Cardew paused uncertain.

He had intended, on leaving the railway station, to cycle back to St. Jim's. But now a fresh idea occurred to him.

After all, there was no reason now, in his opinion, why he should not return to the Duke of Bedford, and keep his appointment there after all!

"May as well!" he told himself coolly. "It'll be something to do, anyway."

He jumped on his cycle, and made his way by back streets to his destination—carefully avoiding the scene of the fire.

In the billiards-room of the little hotel, Slade welcomed him with pleasure and surprise.

"So you've changed your mind after all, Master Cardew?"

"Looks like it, what?" drawled Cardew.

"Did you see the fire in North Street?" went on Slade chattily. "There's been a big mess there!"

"Really? How interestin'!" yawned Cardew.

Pheeeeeep!

The shrill blast of the referee's whistle announced half-time, on Little Side at Greyfriars.

Up to the present it had been anything but a fortunate match, from the point of view of the St. Jim's team!

Playing a man short—thanks to the absence of Cardew—Tom Merry and his nine companions had struggled desperately to keep Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, at bay.

But there were only ten of them, against the full Greyfriars team. And Manners, Clive, and Bernard Glyn, though they were playing up valiantly, were nowhere near as good as the fellows whose places they were taking—Talbot, Blake, and Figgins.

Added to the sum of their misfortunes, the St. Jim's team had soon discovered that their rivals of Greyfriars were on the top of their form!

Thanks to the dashing attacks of the home forwards, most of the play during the first half had been in the St. Jim's area. When they had had the chance, Tom Merry's forward line had shown equally brilliant football—but they had seldom had the chance! The great weakness of the visiting team was in defence, and consequently the Greyfriars eleven were forcing the play all the time, to take full advantage of the fact.

When George Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, who was refereeing the match, sounded the whistle for half-time, despite the wonderful skill of Fatty Wynn, in goal, the visitors' goal had been penetrated twice—once from the foot of Harry Wharton, and once from that of Mark Linley.

"Two down!" grunted Kangaroo gloomily, as he sucked a slice of lemon. "Rotten!"

"Cardew ought to be scragged!" growled Bernard Glyn.

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in grim tones. "Fancy lettin' us down like this! I considah Cardew deserves a feahful thwashin' when we get back to St. Jim's!"

"Same here!" growled Monty Lowther.

Clive coloured a little, but said nothing. His face was deeply troubled.

Clive could not understand why his missing chum had failed them. He hoped and believed that it could not have been Cardew's fault. But the truth would be discovered when they returned to St. Jim's, and in the meantime he could not blame the others from feeling angry and resentful.

"Looks to me," growled Redfern, of the New House, "as if all Cardew wanted was to be able to tell Levison he was playing this afternoon. Once he had been able to tell Levison that, he didn't mind letting the team down."

"Oh, rot!" put in Clive quietly. "Cardew can't have let us down on purpose. Something must have happened." He glanced at Tom Merry. "Don't you think so?"

Tom frowned.

"I don't know what to think about Cardew," he answered curtly. "He's an enigma to me—always has been. I hope it's not his fault he missed that train. But I don't much care for the tone of his telegram, anyway!"

Cardew's nonchalant wire—"Missed train. Annoying, what?—CARDEW"—though it had caused the girl in the post office at Wayland to smile, had only brought a very dark frown to Tom Merry's face when he had found it awaiting him upon the arrival of the depleted team at Greyfriars.

The referee's whistle sounded for the start of the second half.

"Come on, you chaps," said Tom grimly. "We're two down, remember. We've got to pull our giddy socks up this half! We may be a man short, but we'll show these Greyfriars chaps what we're made of, all the same!"

"What-ho!"

"Yaas, wathah, bai Jove!"

The teams lined up.

But despite their grim determination to do or die, it looked as though the St. Jim's team would have to suffer the latter alternative. Almost at once, the Greyfriars forwards made a dashing raid on the visitors' goal, bearing down on Fatty Wynn's citadel in fine style.

Manners had been brought up into the St. Jim's front line to take Cardew's vacant place at inside-left, and Kangaroo, who was supposed to be playing at right back, had the difficult task of trying to fill the right-half position as well. Despite his valiant efforts, however, the left wing of the Greyfriars attack broke through, and a brilliant shot from the foot of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Greyfriars junior who hailed from India's sunny clime, and who was playing outside-left for Greyfriars, crashed past Fatty Wynn and came to rest in the back of the net.

"Hurrah!"

"Well shot, Inky!"

The Greyfriars spectators on the touch-line yelled and cheered, as Fatty Wynn disconsolately fished the ball out of the net and punted it up the field to the centre.

"Three-nil!" muttered Clive. "My hat!"

Tom Merry's brow was dark.

"Play up, St. Jim's!" he said quietly, as the footballers took up their positions again. "Never say die!"

The whistle sounded, and Tom Merry tapped the ball to Monty Lowther at inside-right. Monty passed out to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, on the wing, and the swell of St. Jim's sped up the edge of the field with an almost desperate determination on his aristocratic countenance.

Tom Brown of Greyfriars tackled him, but Arthur Augustus flashed the ball back to Monty Lowther. Lowther was tackled, and in turn got the ball away to Tom Merry.

"Now then, you beggars!" gasped Fatty Wynn, watching eagerly from the other end of the field.

Bob Cherry, the Greyfriars centre-half, came tearing up in an attempt to rob Tom Merry of the ball. The two met in a shoulder-to-shoulder charge.

Bob Cherry was a hefty, athletic junior, and Tom staggered. But he kept his feet though Bob Cherry went down. Tom sped on, the ball at his feet.

The Greyfriars backs were closing in. Tom swerved out to the left, but he could not escape the attentions of Johnny Bull, the Greyfriars right-back.

As Bull came alongside, however, in a desperate attempt to rob Tom Merry, he was knocked flying by a powerful charge, and Tom was heading for the goal.

The Greyfriars goalie was crouching, tense and ready. Tom Merry paused for the fraction of a second, feinted, as if to shoot for the left-hand corner of the net, then sent the ball smashing for the other corner with a brilliant left-foot kick.

The goalie leapt across the goal-mouth, but he was too late.

The ball whizzed past, just within the post.

It had been a brilliant goal on Tom Merry's part, and the Greyfriars spectators gave him a generous cheer. The faces of the St. Jim's team had lit up wonderfully as they took up their positions for the fresh kick-off.

The tide had turned!

"Now we'll show 'em something!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"What-ho!"

The whistle sounded, and Harry Wharton kicked off.

The St. Jim's hopes were short-lived!

For some time there was a long mid-field battle, neither set of forwards being able to get well away. But at last St. Jim's made a raid on the Greyfriars goal, only to be repulsed in the end. And shortly after that, Vernon-Smith added yet another goal for Greyfriars.

When the final whistle sounded, the score was four one against the visitors.

It was a smashing defeat, and though, in the circumstances, defeat was scarcely surprising, the faces of the St. Jim's juniors were long, despite themselves, as they came off the field.

Harry Wharton came up to Tom Merry with a friendly grin.

"You chaps put up a ripping show, considering you were a man short," he said frankly. "It was bad luck, your man missing the train."

"Oh, can't be helped," said Tom, in as cheerful a voice as he could assume. "Wait until the return match, Wharton! Well try to get our own back then!"

Wharton laughed, and they shook hands.

"We'll look forward to visiting St. Jim's for the return," nodded the Greyfriars skipper.

As the juniors returned to the station to catch the train back to Rylcombe, most of them were entertaining very bitter thoughts of Ralph Redfern Cardew of St. Jim's.

Although Talbot, Blake, Figgins, and Ernest Levison had all been missing from the team that afternoon, had Cardew not let them down, the result of the match would undoubtedly have been very different.

"We've got Cardew to thank for this, all right," said Tom Merry bitterly, as the juniors took their seats in the train at Friaradale station.

There was an angry frown on Tom's usually sunny face. It was not the defeat by Greyfriars that angered him, bad though it had been. Tom Merry was a thorough sports-

man, and he never lost his temper at defeat. It was Cardew's defection that was angering him.

"Might have expected something of this sort from that slacker!" grunted Kangaroo.

"I'm sure Cardew must have some explanation—" began Clive, in troubled tones.

"Oh, he'll have some explanation all right," interrupted Redfern ironically. "Most likely he preferred to play billiards at the Duke of Bedford, after all!"

Redfern had heard, like most of the juniors, of Cardew's original intention of playing billiards that afternoon.

Clive went crimson. "Look here, Redfern—" he began hotly.

"Oh, chuck rowing, for goodness' sake!" broke in Tom Merry impatiently. "We'll see what Cardew has to say for himself when we get back. But I'm hanged if I can see why he should have missed that train, if he had cared to take the trouble to catch it! If he'd had a bike accident, or something of that sort, it would have been understandable; but he would have told us of it in his telegram. He simply says he missed the train, and I've no use for a chap who misses the train when there's an important match on!"

Clive was silent. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,151.

'SKUSE ME LAUGHING, BUT—

A good laugh is better than a
doctor's bill any time.

Tommy arrived home an hour late one day with a nice new golf-ball in his pocket, and, delighted with his find, proceeded to show it to each member of the family in turn. Father looked at the ball rather suspiciously. "Are you sure that it was really lost, Tommy?" he asked severely. "Oh, quite!" replied the young hopeful, with a merry twinkle in his eye. "I saw the golfer and his caddie looking for it!"

A school inspector had been questioning the class, and afterwards he told the pupils they could ask him any question they liked, and he would answer it. The class looked dubious. At last one little boy's hand shot up. "Please, sir," he asked solemnly, "if you were standing up to your chin in mud and I threw a brick at you, would you duck?"

Jinks: "Hallo! What's the matter?"

Binks: "I've just had one of those lightning lunches."

Jinks: "Well?"

Binks: "And now I've got thundering pains!"

She (to her husband, suffering with sea-sickness): "Shall I have your lunch brought up to you here, dear?"

He (feebly): "No, love; have it thrown straight overboard. It will save time and trouble!"

A gentleman was travelling to his office in the City, and he cursed inwardly as the train pulled up for the sixth time. "Guard! Guard! What's up?" he shouted. "Signal, sir!" replied the guard.

There was still an angry frown on Tom Merry's face as the train steamed out of Friardale station.

Tom Merry had trusted Cardew—and Cardew had betrayed that trust.

It was scarcely surprising that Tom Merry, and the rest of the footballers, felt angry and bitter with the slacker of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 13.

Barred!

"OH gad! 'It's rainin'!" Ralph Reckness Cardew gave that muttered exclamation as he emerged from the side entrance of the Duke of Bedford Hotel.

It was past tea-time, and from the lighted entrance of a cinema a little way down the street on the opposite side, several people were emerging, as Cardew jumped quickly on to his cycle and pedalled off towards the High Street.

Head down to the rapidly falling rain, Cardew did not notice a familiar, fat figure that had come out of the cinema, and had been standing in the shelter of the entrance, watching the rain with a very disconsolate expression.

Baggy Trimble, the Falstaff of the Fourth, had been spending the afternoon at the pictures—a favourite occupation of his when he was able to raise the necessary funds. A shilling borrowed that morning from Clarence York Tompkins, the meekest junior at St. Jim's, had provided him with the "necessary" on this occasion.

But though Cardew had not seen Baggy, Baggy had seen Cardew.

And the sight of Cardew emerging from the Duke of Bedford Hotel had caused Baggy Trimble's eyes to become round as saucers.

"Here he is!"

"Here's the rotter!"

A big, excited, angry crowd was waiting in the Hall of the School House at St. Jim's—waiting for Ralph Reckness Cardew.

The football team had returned from Greyfriars, to find Cardew absent. The amazement of the other juniors at learning that Cardew had not been to Greyfriars with the rest of the eleven was only exceeded by their hot indignation against him.

Many of them were angry with Tom Merry, too. The fellows who had been disappointed of a place in the team gave vent to their resentment by declaring that Tom Merry was largely to blame for the trouncing of the team by Greyfriars for having put an untrustworthy individual like Cardew into the eleven, in the first place.

But even so, they were angrier still with Cardew, and the slacker of the Fourth looked like having a rough time when he returned to the school.

"Here he comes!"

The sight of Cardew strolling towards the School House doorway from the direction of the cycle-shed brought a yell from half a dozen fellows.

"Now we'll see what he's got to say for himself," muttered Manners grimly.

Cardew sauntered up the steps.

He stared in astonishment for a moment as he found himself faced by the hostile crowd in the Hall. A curious gleam came into his eyes, as though he guessed the reason. But he shrugged coolly enough.

"Hallo!" he murmured. "What's all the excitement?"

"You know jolly well!" roared Grundy. "Tom Merry was an ass ever to put a chap like you in the blessed team, of course, but that's no reason why you should let St. Jim's down!"

"I see!" smiled Cardew. "You're referrin' to the fact that I failed to put in an appearance at Greyfriars, what?"

"You know jolly well I am!" hooted Grundy.

"What have you got to say for yourself, you outsiders?" demanded Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Cardew shrugged.

"What would you like me to say?" he inquired.

"Half a minute, you chaps!" Tom Merry had just come up; he was frowning. "We can't make all this row out here; Kildare will drop on us. Come into the Common-room, Cardew."

"Oh, certainly!" drawled Cardew.

The fellows crowded into the Common-room, with angry faces. Cardew himself appeared cool and nonchalant. But in his eyes there was a faint gleam of resentment for a moment or two; then he veiled it with an ironical smile.

"I take it I'm in the position of the prisoner in the jolly old dock, what?" he murmured blandly, as the door of the Common-room was closed, and the crowd of angry juniors faced him.

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"You certainly are, Cardew!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We want to know why you missed that train!"

"I simply missed it, dear man," said Cardew coolly.

"Annoyin', wasn't it?"

"But, hang it, Cardew, you left the school with heaps of time to catch it!" said Tom quietly. "You must have some reason for having missed it!"

"The reason I missed the train," murmured Cardew, "was that it went out of the station before I got there. A mean trick to play on a chap!"

Tom's brow darkened.

The rest of the juniors were glaring at Cardew. His cool, ironical replies were increasing their indignation every moment. Cardew grinned at them.

"Any more questions?" he inquired.

Tom Merry was about to speak, when the door of the Common-room burst open.

Baggy Trimble came scuttling in. His fat face was alight with excitement.

"I say, you chaps, what do you think?" he gasped. "I saw Cardew come out of the Duke of Bedford this evening! He can't have been to Greyfriars, after all! He must have been playing billiards, as he said he would——"

Baggy broke off abruptly as he caught sight of Cardew himself in the room; his jaw dropped.

"Oh! I—I say, Cardew, I didn't mean to split on you, you know!" mumbled Baggy nervously. "I—I——"

A very queer expression had come into Cardew's face. He suddenly smiled. It was a curious smile, however.

"That's all right, Baggy," he answered quietly. "It's true enough what you were saying. I did play pills at the Duke of Bedford this afternoon."

There was a deathly silence in the Common-room. Then from Arthur Augustus there broke a startled, breathless exclamation:

"Gweat Scott!"

The juniors were staring from Baggy Trimble to Ralph Reckness Cardew as though they could scarcely believe their ears.

"You—you mean to say that you went to that rotten place and played billiards?" breathed Tom Merry half incredulously.

A faint pinkness came into Cardew's cheeks. He faced his accusers with a calm quietness, however.

For some moments he was silent; then he nodded.

"Yes."

There was a note of bitterness and defiance in his voice. His eyes were gleaming as he faced Tom Merry squarely.

Cardew's proud nature had revolted at once, on his arrival back at the school, at finding himself the object of the juniors' angry contempt. If he had had any idea of explaining about the fire and the true reason of his failure to catch the train to Greyfriars he had now banished it.

His face hardened; a bitter smile appeared on his lips.

He could not deny that Baggy had seen him leaving the Duke of Bedford; could not deny that he had played billiards there. And if the fellows chose to jump to the conclusion that it had been in order to do that that he had missed the train, let them think it!

All his wayward pride had risen to the surface.

If the juniors chose to think the worst of him—why, let them!

"Now the virtuous Tommy will read me a lecture on the error of the ways, I suppose?" he yawned.

Tom Merry's fists had clenched. So had the fists of several of the others. There were menacing looks on the faces of the juniors as they surveyed the coolly nonchalant figure of Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"You cur!" breathed Tom Merry.

"Thanks!" murmured Cardew derisively.

"So once you had been able to tell Levison you were playing in the Greyfriars match you were satisfied?" went on Tom contemptuously. "That was all you wanted! You deliberately let us down in order to play off some dingy game of billiards at one of your shady haunts! I suppose you were amused all along that I trusted you?"

Cardew went scarlet. His eyes blazed; then he shrugged his shoulders.

He was bitterly hurt and angry; but his perverse pride would not let him defend himself now.

"Got any more to say, Thomas, dear man?"

"No," said Tom Merry, after a pause. "You're not even worth talking to!"

Tom was quivering with indignation. In his present mood he did not trust himself to remain in Cardew's presence.

Abruptly the captain of the Shell swung on his heel and strode from the room. Manners and Monty Lowther followed him. Cardew smiled sardonically as he glanced round the crowd remaining.

He knew that he was in danger of very rough handling; but he was no coward.

"Anybody else want to lecture me?" he inquired, with cool insolence.

A tremendous cheer went up as Ralph Reckness Cardew staggered from the burning house with the sobbing figure of a little girl in his arms!



"Scrag him!" panted Roylance. "Scrag the rotter!" There was a rush.

Cardew put up his fists, and hit out as the angry juniors closed on him. Wilkins staggered back before a lightning straight left, and Clifton Dane reeled against the table as Cardew's right fist smashed on to his jaw. But then Cardew, fighting desperately, was swung off his feet.

"You rotters!" he panted.

Struggling furiously, Cardew was bumped till he had not a breath left in his body. Then his head was jammed in the coal-box, and when it was withdrawn he was as black as a sweep and choking with rage. After that he was frog-marched several times round the Common-room before being carried to the door and hurled out into the passage in a gasping, furious, struggling heap.

The door slammed. Cardew struggled up. The door opened again, and the face of Roylance appeared.

"And remember, you're barred, Cardew!" he shouted. "You're sent to Coventry! No decent chap will speak to you!"

Again the door closed with a slam. Cardew stood panting and breathless, livid beneath the coaldust that blackened his usually handsome countenance.

"You—you hounds!" he hissed.

For a moment he looked as though he contemplated opening the door and rushing in, to attack his enemies single-handed. But even Cardew, in his reckless rage, saw the uselessness of that.

Sore and aching, he turned and stumbled away towards the stairs.

A figure was coming down them. It was Sidney Clive.

At sight of the dishevelled figure of Ralph Reckness Cardew, the South African junior halted. His face went grim and stern.

"So they've been ragging you, Cardew?" he said quietly. "I'm not surprised. Tom Merry has just told me how you spent your afternoon!"

Clive's lips curled contemptuously.

"I hear you don't deny that you deliberately decided to play billiards instead of coming with us to Greyfriars! Well, I've finished with you! I expected you had some fairly good reason for missing that train, but it seems I was wrong."

He strode past Cardew without another glance at the quivering, furious slacker of the Fourth.

For a moment Cardew stared after him. Then a laugh broke from his lips—not a pleasant laugh.

CHAPTER 14.

Learning the Truth!

"A VISITOR for you!"

Marie Rivers, the pretty school nurse, smiled brightly as she opened the door of the room where Ernest Levison lay staring out of the window opposite the foot of his bed, at the grey roofs of the School House, across the quad. His head was heavily bandaged, and his left arm was in a sling. His face was very pale.

He turned his head with a faint smile.

"Who is it, Miss Marie?"

"It's me, old hoss!" sang out a cheery voice; and Cardew stepped past Marie into the room.

It was the following day—Sunday morning, after chapel.

There was nothing in Cardew's face or manner as he approached the bed to betray to Levison that the slacker of the Fourth had reason to be anything other than thoroughly cheerful.

Marie withdrew, and Cardew sat down in the chair by the bed and gripped Levison's hand.

"Well, old scout, how are you feelin'?"

"Heaps better, thanks, old chap!" said Levison, smiling.

"I hoped you'd come in. I want to hear all about the Greyfriars match yesterday."

"Oh!" Cardew looked a trifle taken aback for a moment. "Well, we lost, you know."

"I know!" Levison frowned. "Marie was telling me. Four—one, wasn't it? Rotten luck!"

"Yes," said Cardew.

"It was Tom Merry who scored, she told me."

"Yes."

"Harry Wharton & Co. were on form, I expect?"

"Yes."

"How did you get on, old chap? I—I was sorry you didn't score, but, still—"

Cardew smiled faintly.

"Doris was in here yesterday afternoon," went on Levison. "She was ever so bucked to hear that you were over at Greyfriars, playing."

Cardew did not speak.

"How did old Clivey play?"

"Oh, he played well!" Cardew changed the subject abruptly. "How long do you expect 'em to be keepin' you here, old chap?"

"Goodness knows!" said Levison ruefully. "Till they've got me properly patched up, I s'pose. But, I say, tell me about the match!"

"There's nothing much to tell," answered Cardew, after a moment's hesitation. His eyes met his chum's, but he glanced away. "Blow the match!" he went on cheerfully. "A lickin' like that is best forgotten—"

There was a tap on the door, and Marie Rivers appeared again.

"Another visitor to see you!" she announced smilingly.

And Tom Merry walked into the room.

At sight of Cardew Tom started. He had not known that Cardew was with Levison. Had he known, he would certainly not have visited Levison just then!

But it was too late now. Already he noticed, with momentary confusion, Levison seemed to be a little surprised at the expression on his face as he stared at Cardew.

"Hallo, Tom!" exclaimed Levison. "What's up?"

"Nothing!" said Tom hastily. He moved across to the bed and held out his hand. Levison took it with a smile.

"How are you to-day, old chap?"

"Getting fitter every minute, thanks," answered Levison cheerfully. "Jolly good of you to look me up. Cardew has just been telling me about the match. He says Clivey played well."

For a moment Tom Merry's eyes met Cardew's.

"Rather!" said Tom.

"Where did you play, Cardew?" asked Levison. "Inside-left, I suppose?"

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Those are ripping grapes you've got there, Levison, old hoss! Blessed if there aren't some good points about being a giddy invalid, after all!"

Levison glanced from Tom to Cardew. There was a faintly puzzled look on his pale face.

"Hanged if you two don't seem to be in conspiracy not to say anything about the Greyfriars match!" he exclaimed.

There was a moment's silence. Levison's light remark had struck too unpleasantly near the truth for the comfort of either of his visitors. Tom coloured, despite himself.

He forced a laugh.

"Why, what on earth do you mean, Levison?"

Cardew rose abruptly to his feet.

"Afraid I must buzz along," he said, in rather a strained voice. "Hanged if I hadn't been forgettin' I've got to go to the Head with a message from Railton! So long, old chap! I'll see you again later."

He nodded brightly to the surprised Levison, and went quickly from the room.

Levison stared at Tom Merry intently, as the door closed behind Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"I say," he demanded bluntly. "what's up? Hanged if I don't think I must have been right, about you two not wanting to talk about the match! What's in the wind?"

Tom Merry, with his blunt, honest nature, hated deception in any form. But for Levison's sake he was determined to keep his promise to Cardew that nothing should come to the ears of Ernest Levison concerning Cardew's absence from the match of the previous afternoon, however unpleasant he found it to conceal the truth. Though he could not tell an actual lie, he could at any rate do his utmost to prevaricate.

"How did Cardew play yesterday?" asked Levison, staring at him, with a puzzled look.

"Very well," said Tom.

He knew that Cardew had been playing billiards—and he knew that Cardew was good at billiards. He was safe enough in declaring that Cardew had played very well!

But though he had answered to the letter, he had

certainly not answered in the spirit of the truth. And he coloured despite himself.

"What are you looking so guilty about?" exclaimed Levison curiously.

All Levison's suspicions were aroused by now.

"Cardew was inside-left?" he went on.

It was impossible for Tom to reply except in the negative.

"No," he replied, in as casual a manner as he could assume. "By the way, how's Doris? I—I—"

"Look here," said Levison quietly, "it's clear enough there is something in the wind, and I'd like to know what it is. Cardew's done something! I can guess that, or you wouldn't be so jolly anxious to change the subject! If he didn't play inside-left, where did he play?"

Tom was silent.

His face was scarlet. But he could not answer that question.

"Oh, what does it matter?" he stammered. "Blow the Greyfriars match, anyway!"

A sudden startled gleam sprang into Levison's eyes. His white hand grasped Tom Merry's wrist with a tight clutch.

"Cardew did play in the match, didn't he?" he muttered. "He didn't let you down? He did play against Greyfriars?"

Tom Merry would have given a good deal just then for the floor to open and swallow him.

He could not meet Levison's eyes. But he could not answer. His heart was pounding unpleasantly—for he knew that Levison was on the threshold of the truth, and that he was powerless to ward him off. And what the truth would mean to the injured junior he knew only too well.

He felt Levison's fingers tighten queerly on his wrist, then Levison dropped back upon the pillows, his eyes burning up into Tom Merry's.

The look on Tom's face had been enough. Levison knew!

"You needn't answer now," Tom heard the injured junior mutter. "Your face tells me. He never played. He let you down—let St. Jim's down!"

The fingers of his free hand closed convulsively on the coverlet.

"And he let me think he had played," he breathed. "The—the cad!"

"You—you mustn't worry about it, old chap," stammered Tom. His heart was miserable, though it was not his fault that Levison knew. He had done his best to keep the ugly secret from him. "Cardew missed the train, you see—"

For a moment a gleam of hope leapt into Levison's eyes. But then it died away.

"That's not much excuse," he said bitterly. "Why did he miss it?"

Tom did not reply.

"You don't answer that, I notice!" muttered Levison. "It's clear enough it was through something caddish! Tell me—"

"I—I'd sooner not."

"I want to know."

Tom hesitated. But he realised now that Levison knew so much, in his present state of grave illness it would be unwise to torment him with uncertainties. Better for Levison to know the worse than to wonder and worry feverishly.

"I insist on being told!" cried Levison, with sudden violence, sitting up abruptly. "I—I want to know! I will know! Tell me—"

Tom pushed him gently back on to the pillows. Levison lay staring up at him, breathing fast.

"Very well," said Tom quietly. He saw that Levison was already making himself bad. "You'll know in the end, of course, anyhow. The fact is, Cardew—"

But he broke off, the words choking in his throat. When it came to it, he found he could not bring himself to tell of Cardew's supposed infamy.

"No," he muttered. "I'll go. Let Cardew tell you himself, if he cares to—"

But a sudden flash of intuition came to Ernest Levison. He caught his breath. His face was very white.

"Did Cardew stick to his first intention, after all?" he whispered hoarsely. "Did he play that billiards match at the—the Duke of Bedford?"

Tom Merry looked quickly away from those feverishly-burning eyes. He heard Levison give a low, mirthless laugh.

"So that is what you were trying to keep from me, Tom! But the fact that you can't deny it shows it's true. The rotter!"

He lay staring with unseeing eyes at the window. His hand, on the coverlet, was trembling.

In his present state of illness, the shock was doing Levison incalculable harm, it was evident.

Tom opened his mouth to speak, but shut it again. What could he say in Cardew's defence? Nothing!

"I'll go," he said.

Levison glanced at him, and smiled faintly, then closed his eyes.

Tom went softly from the room. In the passage outside he met Marie Rivers.

"Levison's not very well," he said quietly. "I—I believe he's worrying about—about the Greyfriars match. You'd better see him, I think."

He watched Marie vanish quickly into Levison's room, then turned towards the stairs.

Tom's face was dark as he left the sanatorium. Levison knew! And the knowledge was harming him, was a terrible set-back in his fight for health.

"My heavens!" muttered Tom Merry bitterly. "I hope Cardew is satisfied with his work!"

CHAPTER 15.

Tom Merry's Foe!

"SEEN Tom Merry?"

Cardew asked that question.

It was early that afternoon, and Cardew had put his head in at the door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage.

Herries was in there alone, getting a book from the book-

case, to take it down to the Common-room. It was raining hard, and most of the fellows intended to spend their Sunday afternoon indoors.

Herries glanced at Cardew, and did not reply.

Cardew was barred! A pariah, a fellow not to be spoken to!

An ironical smile appeared on Cardew's face. He shrugged.

"I was forgettin'!" he exclaimed derisively. "I'm not on speakin' terms with St. Jim's, I remember!"

He vanished, closing the door abruptly. Herries smiled grimly.

In the passage, Cardew turned towards the stairs. He had not yet looked in the Common-room for Tom Merry.

There was a look in his face, as he descended the stairs, that scared Baggy Trimble, coming up. But Cardew passed him without a word.

"Whew!" gasped Baggy, staring after him down the stairs. "Cardew looks as if he's going to pretty well murder somebody!"

There was a big crowd in the Common-room when Cardew entered a minute later.

(Continued on next page.)

ASK THE ORACLE!

Why did the chicken cross the road? Who killed Cock Robin? and where do flies go in the winter-time?—are questions which the Oracle has been called upon to answer. Those published below are just a sample of his ready wit and enormous knowledge!

Q.—How is pigeon's milk obtained?

A.—It isn't often I have occasion to reprimand Gem readers for their ignorance, and most of the questions I am asked display a very praiseworthy desire for knowledge and a proper respect for my colossal brain-power. But P. Parker, of Plumstead, ought to know that the best way is to keep the pigeons in an airy run at the bottom of a well. The run should be made of gas-piping, put together with rubber nails and a glass-headed hammer.

Q.—What is a harpy?

A.—A bird resembling an eagle, Harry Gates, of Muswell Hill. It lives in Central America, and is able to attack quite large animals, as it possesses tremendous talons and a huge curved bill. It gets its name from a Greek word meaning "swift robber."



Who would like to meet this eagle on a dark night? Nice chap! He's called a harpy, and lives in Central America.

Q.—What is a lacrosse stick like?

A.—By "lacrosse stick," George Bishop, of Hastings, you doubtless mean the "crosse" itself. This is made of hickory wood, and is in the form of a staff bent at one end, making a kind of hook. From the tip of the hooked end is a thong, joined on to the shaft about two feet from

the handle. The triangle thus formed is filled with a network of gut, loose, but not baggy. The crosse can be any reasonable length, but it must not contain any metal in its manufacture.

Q.—What American invented the saxophone?

A.—George Hill sends me this query from Blackpool. George says he's going to the States shortly, and if he could find this Johnny he would ask him to sign his autograph album. I'm sorry, George, but we can't fix the blame on America. The saxophone was invented by a gentleman named Sax, who was born in Belgium over 100 years ago. He also patented the saxhorn and the saxotromba. He died in 1894, after a miss-spent life.

Q.—What is whale-oil like?

A.—I've never tasted it, my dear "Nemo," of Northampton. In appearance it varies from honey-yellow to dark brown, according to the condition of the blubber. Its effect on the nasal orifice is not pleasant. It's used to oil woools for combing, for machinery, and in chamois leather making.

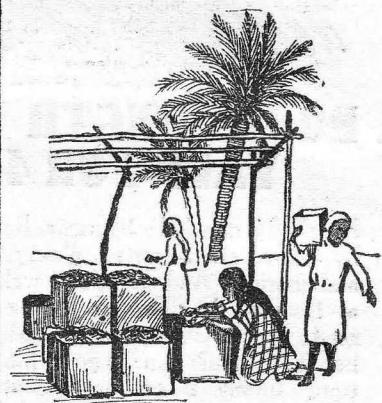
Q.—How do dates grow?

A.—On date-palms, Harry Cox, of Lower Sydenham, and not in boxes. Actually, Harry, the dates we see in greengrocers' shops here are not a bit like the dates you could have to eat in Central Arabia (if you happened to be going that way). Gathered from the palm, the dates are soft and fleshy, very refreshing, and not sugary and sickly like the dates we get over here.

Q.—Why have stamps often got strips of white paper at the sides?

A.—It is a pleasure to answer a reader who writes so well and politely as my chum Egbert Freud, of Wallasey. "Solomon in all his wisdom," writes Egbert, "couldn't hold a candle to you." And I'm glad he couldn't, chum; my brand of whiskers singe easily. But to answer your query: After consultation with the

Postmaster-General and our office-boy, who ticks the stamps for all letters sent from this editorial department, I have arrived at the solution of what many chaps regard as a complete mystery. When you buy a lot of stamps, you often find that there are strips of perforated white paper at the sides. This superfluous paper is not because the Post Office wish to give you more than your money's worth, nor is it supplied for sticking on to cut fingers or the dome of your bald-headed uncle when he is having his after-dinner nap. No, I will explain. Were we to buy £1's worth of id. stamps, we should get 240 and would find a white strip of paper of varying width all round the edges. You see, the 240 stamps are printed together—the same with other stamp values—and on paper rather larger than required for the complete batch. This is to give the printer a certain latitude, or margin for error. Thus, after the printing of the stamps, there is always a certain amount of white edging left.



Here are seen natives packing dates to be exported to England for your dinner-table. A date-palm shows up in the background.

Q.—What does "Eureka" mean?

A.—This is a Greek word, W.H., of Plumstead, meaning "I have found it." When I went to the barber's the other day for a hair-cut he looked at my cranium for a long time and then shouted out, "Eureka!" I thought he had gone dotty until I realised that he was just letting me know that he had found the hair that needed cutting.

Some of the fellows were reading, others were staring disconsolately out of the window at the rain. But most were gathered in a big group by the fire, chatting. Tom Merry was amongst them, with Manners and Monty Lowther, Digby and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Talbot and Blake.

Reginald Talbot of the Shell and Jack Blake of the Fourth had come out of the sanny that morning, after their brief bout of 'flu.

There was quite a cheery noise of talk and laughter in the Common-room. But it ceased abruptly at the entry of Ralph Reckness Cardew.

Cardew crossed straight towards Tom Merry.

"So I've found you!" he said, between his teeth.

Tom Merry glanced at him coolly, but did not speak.

The other juniors watched Cardew in astonishment.

"I've just been to see Levison," said Cardew, evidently controlling himself with an effort. But his fists were clenched, and he was quivering in a queer way. "I find you told him this morning that I did not play in the Greyfriars match."

He took another step towards Tom Merry.

"It's harmed Levison, hearing that!" he went on savagely. "I don't care for my own sake, but for his sake, I do! You cad! You unspeakable hound! Levison told me he had finished with me—wouldn't listen to anything I had to say. You did it! You did it on purpose, despite what you told me last night! You cur!"

Tom Merry's face had whitened. His fists tightened. But his voice was quite cool.

"I'll speak to you on this occasion," he said quietly, "although you're supposed to be in Coventry. I can tell you that you are quite wrong in thinking I told Levison that—"

"You liar!"

Tom Merry's face went paler still with anger. He took

a step forward. But Manners laid a restraining hand upon his arm.

"No one shall call me a liar!" said Tom fiercely. "I—I—"

A contemptuous smile appeared on Cardew's livid face. "I'm calling you one now," he said in a quivering voice, "I repeat it. Tom Merry, you're a liar!"

The next moment Cardew had raised his hand and delivered a stinging blow with his palm on Tom Merry's cheek.

"Take that—from me!" he panted.

Tom staggered back, a red mark springing up on his white cheek. His eyes blazed, and he tried to hurl himself at Cardew. But Manners and Monty Lowther and Digby held him back.

"Let me get at him!" gasped Tom. "I'll—I'll—"

"Hold him!" breathed Manners.

"Let me go!"

"Rats! Keep back, you ass!"

Manners' face was alarmed. He realised that if Tom were allowed to get at Cardew just then, things would be serious.

"Let him go!" sneered Cardew. "I'm not afraid of the cad!"

"Shut up, hang you!"

Cardew shrugged and smiled.

Tom Merry ceased to struggle. The colour had returned to his face now.

"All right!" he muttered. "Let me go. I won't touch him. I promise. Not now. But afterwards."

His chums released him. Tom Merry faced Cardew with blazing eyes.

"Cardew," he said quietly, "you'll pay for that blow."

"Any time you like!" drawled Cardew.

"Wednesday afternoon, then," said Tom. "By the big oak in Rylcombe Wood—you know where I mean. At two o'clock."

CHAPTER 16.

The Fight!

THE news that a fight had been arranged between Tom Merry and Ralph Reckness Cardew, spread like wildfire through St. Jim's.

Cardew had deliberately provoked the fight, in front of most of the Shell and Fourth. But that he had bitten off a good deal more than he would be able to chew was the general opinion among the juniors.

Cardew, however, during the intervening days, strolled about with a cool serenity that seemed to indicate that he held a different opinion!

In his heart he must have been perfectly aware that Tom Merry was more than his match. But, apparently he believed that he would be able to give something for what he got before he was licked by the captain of the Shell.

At any rate, he was certainly betraying no perturbation.

A good many of the juniors, however, realised that Cardew's easy nonchalance was little more than a mask, hiding a bitter vindictiveness that burned within him against Tom Merry—the fellow who, so Cardew believed, had betrayed his guilty secret to his injured chum.

Cardew was not visiting Levison any more now.

Levison had made it clear enough that he had no desire to see Cardew in his room again. And Cardew, with his embittered pride, would not tell even Levison, now, of the true reason for his having missed the Greyfriars match.

With his strange, wayward nature, Ralph Reckness Cardew seemed to take a queer, malicious pride in being an outcast among his fellows.

And Tom, for his part, did not bother to let Cardew know how wrong he was in believing that he had told Levison anything—that it was Levison who had guessed, despite Tom's vain efforts to steer him clear of the truth.

Wednesday came, and by five minutes to two the big clearing in Rylcombe Wood that had been agreed upon for the fight was crowded with excited juniors.

A square in the centre had been roughly roped off—the size of the crowd necessitated that.

Talbot of the Shell had agreed to undertake the job of timekeeper for the fight.

"Here comes Tom Merry!"

It was Wally D'Arcy of the Third who gave that excited exclamation, a few minutes before two o'clock, as Tom Merry appeared through the trees in company with Harry Manners and Monty Lowther.

Wally, together with Reggie Manners, Frank Levison, Curly Gibson, and several others of the fag fraternity, had arrived early and secured points of vantage against the ropes.

Tom Merry entered the clearing with a face that was quiet and set.

There was a cheer.

Jimmy Joins Up!

by Owen Conquest



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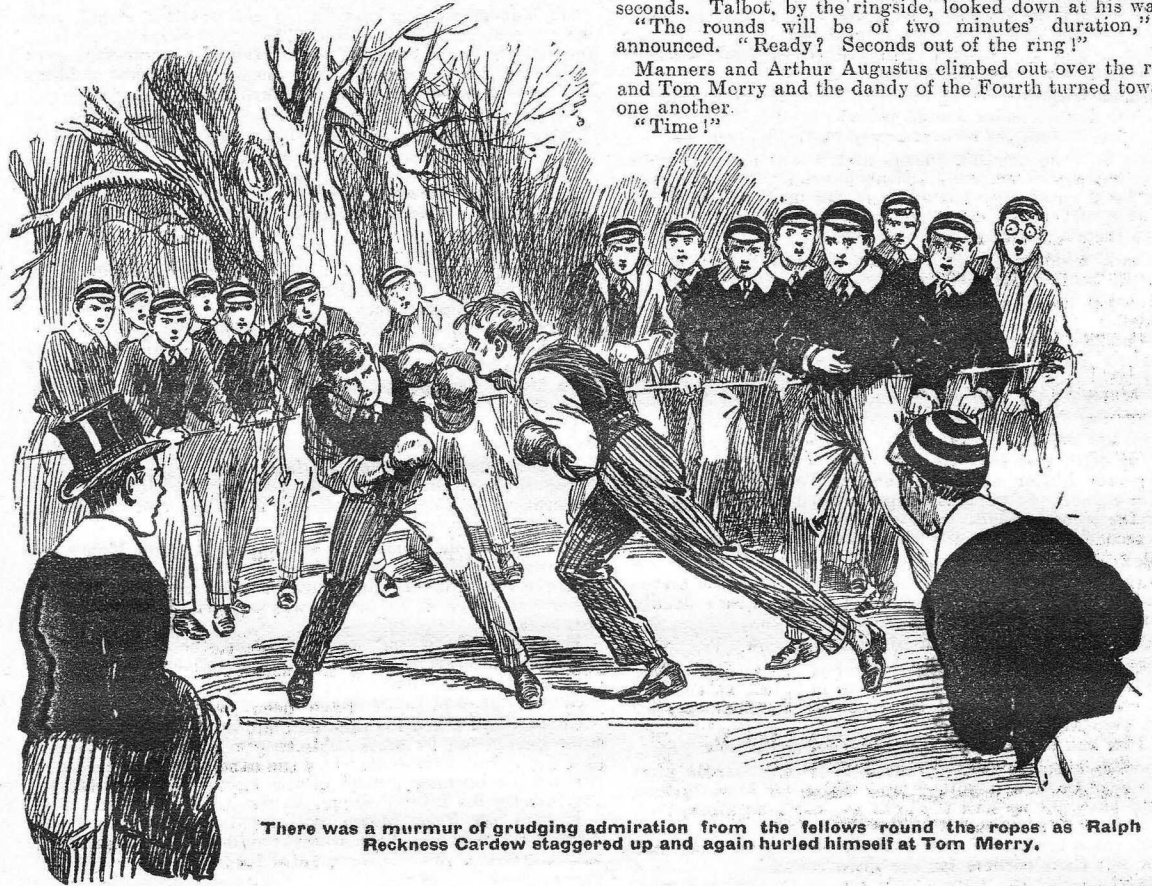
Nearly all the fellows were anxious to see Tom give Cardew the thrashing of his life. The personal quarrel that had arisen between the two did not particularly interest them; it was the fact that Cardew had let the school down on the previous Saturday that made them want to see him given a thorough lesson.

"Thwoc ceehahs for Tom Mewwy!" shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Hurrah!"
The cheers rang out in the leafless clearing. Tom smiled faintly and glanced at his watch.

There were still two minutes to go before the hour fixed for the commencement of the fight. But as the first minute passed, the fellows began to glance at one another.

"I s'pose Cardew'll turn up?" muttered Kerruish.



There was a murmur of grudging admiration from the fellows round the ropes as Ralph Reckness Cardew staggered up and again hurled himself at Tom Merry.

"Sure to," nodded Dick Julian.

Another half-minute passed, but still there was no sign of the dandy of the Fourth. Talbot was looking at his watch now, and the fellows had begun to murmur.

Then there came a sudden ejaculation from Jack Blake: "Here he is!"

The sauntering figure of Cardew had come into sight among the trees—alone.

Cardew strolled into the clearing, with an easy smile on his handsome face.

"Here comes the jolly old lamb for the slaughter!" he drawled, with a nod to Talbot. "I'm in time?"

"Just," said Talbot. "Have you a second?" he added, after a moment's pause.

Cardew's lips curled ironically.

"None! All on my little own!"

"If you would like a second I'll provide you with one, Cardew."

Cardew glanced round mockingly at the silent ring of juniors. He shrugged his shoulders.

"I happen to be barred," he said, with a drawl.

Talbot turned to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He selected the swell of St. Jim's because he was Cardew's cousin, even though there was little love lost between the two.

"D'Arcy, will you second Cardew?"

"Yaas, certainly."

Arthur Augustus crossed to Cardew's side at once.

"Pway allow me to second you, Cardew," said the swell of St. Jim's stiffly.

"You're amazin'ly kind!" grinned Cardew sardonically.

"Buck up and get ready," said Talbot. "It's almost two."

Tom Merry and Cardew climbed into the ring without a glance at one another, Cardew followed by Arthur Augustus and Manners accompanying Tom Merry.

The two principals took off their coats and rolled up their sleeves. Talbot handed a pair of boxing-gloves to each of the seconds.

Cardew raised his eyebrows.

"Do we need gloves?" he inquired coolly.

"Yes," said Talbot shortly.

"Gad! Is Thomas afraid of gettin' hurt?" grinned Cardew.

Tom Merry, drawing on his gloves, heard the mocking taunt, but he did not look up. A few moments later the gloves were fastened, and had been examined by the seconds. Talbot, by the ringside, looked down at his watch.

"The rounds will be of two minutes' duration," he announced. "Ready? Seconds out of the ring!"

Manners and Arthur Augustus climbed out over the rope, and Tom Merry and the dandy of the Fourth turned towards one another.

"Time!"

In a breathless hush, Tom Merry and Ralph Reckness Cardew stepped quickly forward.

The great fight had begun

CHAPTER 17.

Licked!

TOM MERRY'S face was quiet and normal as he put up his hands. Only a faint gleam somewhere at the back of his eyes showed that this was something more than a friendly bout in the gym.

Cardew's face was pale and set—very different from Tom Merry's. There was an ugly smouldering light in his eyes, and his lips were drawn in a thin line. There was bitter hatred revealed in every feature, and he sprang forward as though burning to get at his foe.

Thud!

Like lightning, Cardew's fist had flashed out. It crashed into Tom Merry's ribs before Tom had time to ward off the blow, and the captain of the Shell staggered.

Cardew followed up with panther-like swiftness. Before Tom had time to recover, Cardew's fist had landed on his mouth with smashing force.

"My hat!" breathed Digby, standing by Tom Merry's corner.

It was quite obvious that Tom Merry was not going to have things all his own way. Already his lips were cut and bleeding from that terrible blow.

But before Cardew could land again, Tom had recovered himself.

He drove Cardew back with a straight left that jerked up Cardew's chin, and the next moment the pair were at it, hitting out fiercely in the centre of the ring.

The fight had started at a red-hot pace! Cardew, evidently, had resolved to try and force the fighting while he could. But Tom Merry was every inch a fighting man, and if Cardew had hoped to rush him off his feet, the slacker of the Fourth was realising that it was a vain hope indeed.

Not that Tom Merry was finding Cardew easy game.

More than once Cardew's fists got home, and once Tom Merry went reeling against the ropes from a lightning upper-cut that brought a murmur of admiration even from Cardew's bitterest enemies. But a few moments later Cardew went down on the grass from Tom's powerful left, and lay gasping and panting, utterly dazed.

Talbot began the count. But before he had reached "six," Cardew was scrambling up.

Again he leapt to the attack, but Tom Merry gradually drove him back. Then Talbot called out the finish of the round, and the fighters returned gasping to their corners.

It had been an exciting round, and it was already quite clear that Ralph Reckness Cardew, aided by his malignant hatred for Tom Merry, was going to put up the fight of his life. It would be by no means a repetition of the scrap between them a week ago in Study No. 9.

Manners, making a knee for Tom, dabbed at his chum's broken lip with a handkerchief.

"Give the hound the lesson he deserves, old chap!" he muttered.

Tom nodded without speaking.

Cardew's face, too, was bearing signs of punishment. Arthur Augustus, bathing his face with a sponge, saw that Cardew's right eye was rapidly swelling up, and his nose was anything but its usual well-chiselled self!

As he sat on the swell of St. Jim's supporting knee, breathing hard and fast, Cardew's eyes were fastened with a malignant glitter upon the face of Tom Merry in the opposite corner. It was with eager alacrity that he sprang up for the second round.

The second round, like the first, was a breathless one.

Cardew was fighting as he had never fought in his life before, and for a while he seemed to be getting the better of things. But he went down at last before Tom's deadly left, and crashed to the earth.

Tom Merry stood over him with gleaming eyes.

But Cardew rose promptly, dazed though he seemed. The fight went on, hard and fast, relentless in pace. At the end of the round, Cardew's battered face was matched only by that of Tom Merry himself.

For Tom had taken as much punishment as Cardew.

"Honours even, so far," grunted Herries. "Great pip! What a fight Cardew is putting up! I'd never have thought he could have put up half the fight against Tom Merry!"

"Same here," muttered Blake.

There was a breathless silence in the clearing as Tom and Cardew left their corners for the third round.

Though most of the fellows still felt convinced that Tom Merry would win, they were beginning to alter their first opinion that he would win in a few rounds. Cardew looked like lasting many rounds yet—and there were even one or two among the juniors who were beginning to wonder if a

lucky blow of Cardew's might not bring victory to the dandy of the Fourth.

In the third and fourth rounds, Cardew was still fighting magnificently, battered and gasping though he was.

But he had not the stamina of his opponent. At the beginning of the fifth round, Cardew was showing signs of wear and tear, whereas Tom Merry was evidently feeling as full of energy as ever.

By now Tom felt that he had faced the worst that Cardew could show him. Cardew, he realised, had pinned all his hopes upon a furious attack in the first few rounds. Tom had survived it, however, although he had plenty of marks to show for the fury of Cardew's onslaught—and now Cardew had shot his bolt.

But still the dandy of the Fourth fought on.

He was staggering wearily in the seventh round, and one eye was completely closed. There was blood on his face, and he was not a pleasant sight. But the indomitable will within him kept him on his feet, despite the shower of blows that he was almost helpless to guard against.

"He's got pluck, anyway!" growled Clifton Dane, as Cardew staggered up, reeling, after being floored again, and hurled himself blindly at Tom Merry.

Crash!

A swinging blow of Tom's left landed on Cardew's battered face. Cardew dropped, with outflung arms, and lay groaning.

"One, two, three—"

He tried to raise himself as Talbot began the count. But he was incapable of rising again. The count finished, and Tom Merry stepped back.

He had won!

Arthur Augustus hurried forward, and with the aid of Talbot, carried Cardew to the corner. In the opposite corner Tom Merry was sponging his own face for himself, and slipping on his coat.

Cardew's eyes flickered open. His swollen lips moved. But his muttered words were incoherent.

Arthur Augustus bathed his face.

The swell of St. Jim's could not help but feel reluctant admiration for Cardew just then. The slacker of the Fourth had put up a magnificent fight.

Without another glance at his opponent, Tom Merry left the ring, and hurried away through the trees, as if anxious to leave the spot. He had thrashed Cardew; and now, all resentment over as far as he was concerned, he wanted to forget it.

But as Tom Merry vanished from the clearing, with Manners and Lowther, Cardew's gaze followed him.

A faint, bitter smile appeared for a moment on his battered lips, and there was venom in his eyes.

Cardew had asked for the fight, and he had got it. He had been beaten—as he must have known he would be beaten. But his defeat had evidently done nothing towards ridding him of his burning hatred of the fellow whom he blamed for turning his injured chum, Ernest Levison, against him.

Hatred for Tom Merry still lived in Cardew's heart. From now onwards, Tom Merry would find in Ralph Reckness Cardew a relentless, vengeful foe!

THE END.

(Don't miss next week's GEM containing the sequel to this grand yarn of Tom Merry & Co., entitled: "COCK O' THE WALK!" It's a real corker, chums!)

A CHAT WITH YOUR EDITOR.

This is the last week of our competition, you fellows, and that means your last chance of winning one of the spanking MEAD cycles or Cup-Final tickets that are being offered as prizes. Most of you, I know, are taking care not to let this golden opportunity slip, but there may still be some of my readers who can't make up their minds to "have a shot at it," and they're the chaps I want to speak to.

Perhaps you think there's no earthly chance of your collaring a prize. Rot! Somebody's going to win them—why not YOU? Come on, my sons! Get busy—and good luck to all of you!

I could enthuse at great length about the collection of good things that you'll be provided with in next Wednesday's GEM, but on second thoughts I think I'll leave that for you to do when you've devoured them! No. 1 of the star attractions is—

"COCK O' THE WALK!"

—a story of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, that you'll
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,351.

remember for many a long day. It's the second of Martin Clifford's splendid series of yarns dealing with Ralph Reckness Cardew's bitter feud against Tom Merry. It also introduces Frederick Burkett, an amazing new boy whose one idea is to make himself—

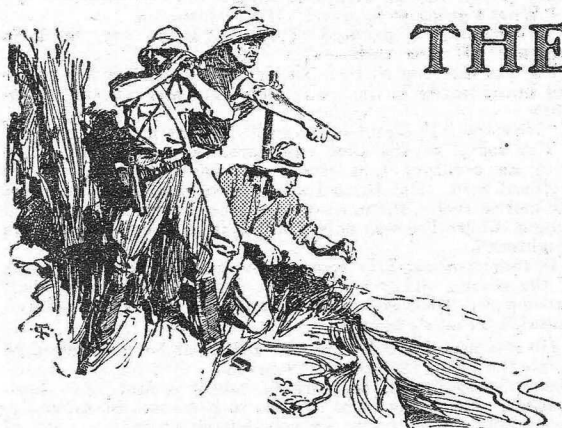
"COCK O' THE WALK!"

without any waste of time. And this toughest of tough customers looks like doing it, too, for he's the possessor of a pair of leg-o'-mutton fists that mow down all opposition. There's only one fellow who welcomes his coming, and that is— Well, I'll leave you to guess, and await in keen anticipation this tiptop story of your favourite schoolboy characters.

The rest of our fine features are well up to their usual high standard. With another gripping instalment of our serial, the ORACLE's sprightly answer corner, to say nothing of an interesting behind-the-scenes footer chat from MR. "NOSEY" PARKER, I think you'll agree that the good old GEM is delivering the "goods"!

So long, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.



THE VALLEY of FORTUNE!

By JOHN SYLVESTER.

(See page 26 for introduction to opening chapters.)

Dom Lopez in a New Role!

THAT doesn't alter the fact that they may have nasty habits," persisted Dick, who couldn't quite share this scientific enthusiasm for knowledge for its own sake.

"You make the common mistake of regarding our ancestors as bloodthirsty savages. But it simply isn't true."

Dick stared and rubbed his chin. When West talked like this he had an uncomfortable feeling of being back at school again, with the difference that he could answer back without getting his ears boxed.

"I wouldn't trust 'em," he said, plainly unconvinced. West, however, had got astride his favourite subject. He was much more excited than he had ever been when, according to Dick, there was something to get excited about.

"Thirty years ago even experts," he continued "believed primitive man was a horrible fellow. They thought he was rather like an ordinary savage, only worse. But nowadays they are altering their opinion. It is beginning to be held that really primitive man was quite nice to know. I don't say he had drawing-room manners. But it wasn't for thousands of years that he took to waging war, for example.

As for human sacrifice, that began comparatively late in history. So if these are primitive men, we have nothing to fear."

"But are they? We aren't sure about it."

"I wish I was as sure about the success of the whole expedition. Look at the shape of their heads, the hair on their bodies, their absence of anything but the rudest kind of weapon. Again, look at where we are. This swamp is cut off from all intercourse with the world outside. The whole pageant of history can have flowed on, and yet made no more difference to the creatures on this swamp than to men in the moon. This swamp probably became the last refuge of prehistoric monsters that used to roam over the plains. There are, probably, underneath its mud, bones of great mammoths, of mastodons, brontosauri, ichyosauri, pterodactyls, dinosauri—"

"Help!" gasped Dick feebly. "I'm not arguing. I give in. But what are we going to do for the rest of the night? Do you feel like sleeping, with these gentle, sweet-natured beggars squatting around?"

"Why not? I'll just see how Trent is getting on." West rose and went over to Trent. He no sooner bent over him than the other man rubbed his eyes, blinked at West, and suddenly jerked himself up on his elbows.

"Christmas!" He blinked again and rubbed his eyes.

"Are you better?" asked West eagerly.

"No. I'm off my head." Trent suddenly clutched at the scientist. "Can you see 'em? If you can't—"

West smiled in relief. There was no longer any doubt about Trent's recovery. But he took a long time to explain.

Dawn came, piercing the mists that rolled over the great swamp. It was a magnificent spectacle. Within a surprisingly short time the sky was a burning blue, and underneath an incredible waste of flat, marshy land with no more than an occasional tree. In the west the snow-capped peaks of the Andes floated in the sky like fairy clouds.

The shrill cry of a bird broke the silence. High overhead

an eagle swooped, rose again, and sped through the golden air in the direction of the mountains.

Dick opened his eyes, and he was surprised to see that the others were not only awake but standing up. One of the cave men—as he obstinately insisted on calling them—was rubbing Trent's ankles with the juice oozing from a whitish root that looked somewhat like an onion, and had an even more pungent smell.

"Come on, Dick!" called West. "It's your turn!"

"What for?" queried Dick, rising to his feet.

"I'm not absolutely clear. But, so far as I can read the language of signs, this stuff will prevent snake bite. It smells vilely, and they don't like the taste of it."

"Lucky it's so plentiful," commented Trent, who was watching the process.

Dick turned to Trent, quickly noticing the contrast between his appearance now and what he looked like last night.

"Then you've completely recovered?"

"Yes; I never felt better. It's an astounding thing." His eyes clouded slightly. "I thought I was done for last night. Looking back, though, I'm not altogether proud of my part of the performance. It looks as though I started squealing before I was hurt."

"Nothing of the sort!" retorted West. "I was the real coward. I was afraid to put you out of your agony. Although," he added, "it's fortunate I didn't act more quickly, as things have turned out."

"Dashed fortunate!" said Dick, eyeing their queer-looking rescuers with less suspicion. "But what's the next move?"

"To get out of this place as quickly as possible," replied West. "I've just been studying the map, and on the other side we reach our destination."

"Will it take us long?"

"Anything from two to six days. The instructions are very clear. But, of course, there may be unforeseen obstacles."

"We can't meet with anything worse than what we've already encountered," remarked Trent philosophically. "Lopez is out of the running; we've got plenty of ammunition; and in an area that is alive with snakes we are immune from bites. It's possible we shall have trouble with Indians later on. But we are prepared this time."

Dick went up to be rubbed with the juice of the unknown root. When that was done, West made signs indicating that they intended to go straight across the marsh. The cave men seemed to understand, and consulted among themselves, talking in a guttural language to which the scientist listened in absorption. Afterwards he declared his belief that this must be the original language of mankind, from which all other more complicated forms of speech were derived.

They filed out of the cul-de-sac, Trent following the man who had saved his life the night before, the others keeping in the rear. Suddenly they paused. Trent's attention was caught by something on the ground. It was a narrow footprint, and in the mud the formation of the nails could be clearly seen.

"That wasn't there last night!" he exclaimed in astonish-

The power of life and death rests in the unscrupulous hands of Dom Lopez, for the natives worship him as a god . . . and coming towards Lopez are his three hated enemies — white men who stand 'twixt him and a fortune!

ment. "It doesn't belong to either of us. But that boot—I know the pattern—was made in London, and the print was left since we passed this way."

He looked up, straight into the coldly-gleaming eyes of West. Both had the same thought; but neither could bring himself to utter it aloud.

There were other similar footprints; then abruptly they disappeared. Nor were they seen again. Neither, for the rest of that long, strange march through the swamp, did a single snake approach them, and they saw hundreds, although the second night they could not sleep, so loud was the noise of the hissing. On the third day, as the ground became firmer, their guides left them.

There were no farewells, no possibility of persuasion. When they woke from their troubled slumber, the cave men had gone.

West was crestfallen. He could talk of nothing else. He vowed that on their return journey they must find one of those friendly troglodytes, and take him back as a specimen to display to a sceptical world.

Meanwhile, they continued as directed by the plan. Towards the end of that day they approached a kind of ravine, with luxuriant vegetation on each precipitous side. They were half a mile away when darkness suddenly smote the world. But the strange part was that there was a light between the trees ahead.

"Listen!" exclaimed Trent, halting.

The sound that reached them was weird. It began with a thunderous rumble, and was broken by a shrill piping and a loud, bassoon-like note, all merging and becoming lost in a sudden burst of exultant, chanting voices.

"Indians!"

They crept nearer. Through the trees they could see a procession of torches illuminating painted faces. The narrow gorge was packed with Indians. They were walking in ritualistic procession, and in front four witch-doctors, wearing animal masks, were carrying a litter, the poles of which were slung across their shoulders.

Seated cross-legged on the litter, receiving the homage of a god, was a white-clad figure. As he came closer, Dick could see his face. To his utter stupefaction, it was the face of Dom Lopez!

"Trent, d'you see—"

He got no further. A branch cracked overhead, and as he looked up he saw a native, with a sort of tomahawk in his hand, hurtling towards him through the air. Blindly he grabbed his revolver, but at the same time he realised that if he fired they would be discovered. He had barely a second to decide what to do before that murderous impact.

A Marvellous Escape!

A REVOLVER cracked. It was not Dick who fired it. He felt the whistle of sharp iron against his forehead. Then he received the full impact of a dead man. The boy was knocked flat, and before his dazed senses recovered, someone was lifting the inert weight that nearly smothered him.

"A miss is as good as a mile," Dick heard Trent murmur.

"But it wasn't a miss. It was a perfect shot from the hip," remarked West. "All the same, the fat is in the fire."

"Thank goodness it's dark!"

Dick blinked and struggled to his feet. His hands had become wet. He looked down at them.

"Ugh!"

He gave a slight shiver of disgust. It wasn't pleasant at all. But a moment later his partially-stunned faculties recovered. He realised why he had not fired himself; and the danger Trent had incurred.

The chanting had suddenly stopped. The silence that had fallen had a strained, ominous quality. That long, fantastic procession, which they could still glimpse through the trees, had been arrested.

In the light of the torches and the moon, the

figure of Lopez on a palanquin, had become strangely immobile, as though turned to stone.

"What's going to happen?" West whispered.

"Everything!" grunted Trent. "Don't try to keep together. If they rush—"

He was interrupted by a ringing voice. Lopez was pointing dramatically in their direction. He was shouting something.

"Now for it!" Trent exclaimed, drawing a sharp breath.

The sound of the shot had revealed their whereabouts with an accuracy that would not have been possible to civilised men. But these Indians were trained to interpret the merest rustle, the most distant echo, in the death-infested jungle, where life was only possible if all the faculties were heightened.

Instantly, about fifty warriors swarmed towards the edge of the ravine. They were armed with blowpipes and small battle-axes. Dick saw them start to run, and he turned and imitated Trent's example.

He was astonished by his own agility as he commenced to climb the steep cliff that rose behind. But for the luxuriance of vegetation, no sort of ascent would have been possible. He swung from bamboo to bamboo. Occasionally, he grasped some thorny branch, letting go with a gasp of pain.

He could see Chica worming in front. West and Trent had disappeared. But from behind he could hear the cries of the pursuers. They were very close now. If he had looked back he would have expected to see their faces.

Near the top of the ravine the youngster noticed a black wall, which was the jungle proper. If he could only reach it he would be relatively safe. But the heavy equipment he was carrying impeded his progress, although it would be madness to drop it.

Dick clenched his teeth and struggled upwards. He was near the top when he caught his foot in a root and fell flat on his face. But as he did so there was a humming sound. In the moonlight the boy could distinctly see a bursting cloud of tiny darts. They fell harmlessly on the bushes in front, but if he had been standing he could not have avoided being hit.

"And I bet they are poisoned!" the youngster thought. "Can I risk getting up?"

There was little choice. If Dick remained where he was, the enemy would surround him in another minute. But if he stood up he would be a target for those poisoned darts.

He rolled over on his back, drew his revolver, and then jerked himself up on his elbows and waited. From a thicket on his left came a couple of shots. That would be either West or Trent. So they were in difficulties as well!

His eyes never left the black ridge of bush and bamboo ahead. Something moved, and so did his finger. As he pressed the trigger, there was a roar, and simultaneously a yell.

But the Indians were no cowards. Unaccustomed as they were to gun-fire, a motive—which was hidden from him then—supplied them with fanatical courage. Three heads appeared.

Dick fired again. He was not a good revolver-shot, but at such a distance it was impossible to miss. The Indians went down like ninepins,

"That should put on the brake!" the boy muttered.

But it didn't. The immediate result was a further shower of darts. They looked weird as they crossed the disk of the enormous moon—rather like elongated bacteria in a microscope slide. They descended with a series of pings.

To Dick's surprise, he was still unhurt. A startling war-cry put him again on his guard. Other Indians had reached the spot. Heedless of the fate of their companions they rushed forward.

There were not less than ten, springing up from the under-wood, putting their blowpipes to their mouths, like long, grotesque trumpets. Ten—and only two bullets remained in Dick's revolver!

HOW THE ADVENTURE STARTED.

Knowing that Pedro Lopez, a Brazilian adventurer, has stolen their map which holds the key to the whereabouts of a fortune in radium, Robert West, a scientist, and his companion, John Trent, together with a plucky youngster named Dick Blackwood, determine to follow the arch-villain to Brazil. On reaching a desolate plateau in the Andes, Dick is captured by Lopez and offered as human sacrifice to the God of the Shrieking Pit. He is saved, however, by Chica, a faithful Indian, who, to revenge the death of his father, dynamites the caves and puts Lopez and his villainous crew to rout. Later, the radium seekers fall into the hands of a Huascan tribe of head hunters, as does Lopez himself. Having no other alternative, the Brazilian calls a truce and fights side by side with his old enemies against the savages, who are eventually beaten off. Releasing the Brazilian in exchange for the precious map, the adventurers continue their journey, eventually reaching a vast marsh which, to their amazement and horror, is infested with poisonous snakes. In the ensuing scramble that follows, Trent is bitten by one of the reptiles, but is saved from death by the timely intervention of a grotesque, hairy creature with protruding jaws, squintulate nose, sunken eyes, and receding forehead, reminiscent of a gorilla. It's my firm opinion," says West, "that we have come face to face with the first men who appeared on this earth!"

(Now read on.)

"Well, here goes!" he exclaimed. He fired twice. The two figures in front collapsed, but others jumped recklessly into their places. In Dick's hand a revolver smoked uselessly.

He had a rifle. That would take time, when every second was precious. He couldn't fire it lying down. Despite the risk, he must rise.

As he stood up he realised still more vividly the way in which he was exposing himself. Even as he moved, reinforcements panted up the side of the cliff. He was poised for a moment in the full glare of the moonlight. Confronting him, in a semicircle, were maddened savages, about to send a volley of deadly darts.

Dick stiffened as he swung the rifle from his shoulder. He might never be able to use it. He couldn't last against such odds. But he was mistaken.

What happened was so astounding that the boy thought at first he must be suffering from some optical delusion. Instead of the shower of darts as expected, suddenly every one of those natives confronting him gave a peculiar, wailing cry, and threw himself flat on the ground.

"J-jumping gollywogs!" stammered Dick, and for a moment he fancied it must be some ruse, the object of which he hadn't discovered.

But apparently not. They remained flat on their faces without moving. It was as though some mysterious hand had struck them all dead.

Dick stared for fully a minute in bewilderment. Then he came to his senses and started to run.

Under cover of the jungle he was safe for at least as long as darkness lasted, although the jungle itself might have dangers of its own.

An astounding night! He couldn't make sense of any of it! To think that Lopez should have got ahead of them after all, and won over the Indians! Still more remarkable, the behaviour of the Indians.

His ruminations were abruptly checked by a stealthy sound close behind him. He wheeled round, reloaded revolver on the alert. Was it another of those uncanny blighters creeping after him?

A tiny shiver, like cold water trickling down his spine, was impossible to suppress. He wasn't afraid in the ordinary sense. But it was so confoundingly eerie, standing in pitch darkness amid this lush, motionless tropical undergrowth, with eyes trying to make out something that kept moving, although it made no further sound.

"Don't shoot, senor!" said a soft voice.

"Chica!" cried the boy, in relief, wiping the sweat from his face. "What the blazes do you mean by giving me the jumps like that?"

"I thought you were an Indian!" declared Chica solemnly. "I had my knife ready."

"And I had my gun ready. But how the dickens did you recognise me?"

"By your breathing, senor. I can tell any man I know in the dark if I hear him breathe. I can tell most animals, also. It is one of the things we learn—the sort of learning that never comes to the white man, in spite of his books."

"A pretty useful accomplishment," commented Dick, after a moment's pause. "Where are the others?"

"Close to us, senor. They are up a tree."

"So was I a short time ago," Dick chuckled. "A gum tree, I think. I can tell, Chica, old scout, by your breathing that you don't know what I mean. One of the things a white man learns—not out of books, either—is to have a sense of humour. However, lead on!"

Chica hesitated, as though mystified, but Dick put his order more bluntly.

"Take hold of one end of my gun. Then we shan't lose each other," he added.

It was not many minutes before they came to a colossal banyan. In the daylight it was like a petrified fountain, with no less than forty branches rising from the main trunk, and falling to take root in the earth again. But in the darkness, its magnificence was merely something to knock your shin against.

Chica hoisted himself up first, and Dick followed. It was ticklish work, crawling along that network of heavy cables



Seated on the litter, receiving the homage of a god, was none other than Dom Lopez!

in the darkness, but at last they were greeted by Trent's voice.

"Any damage, Dick?" said Dick. "I kept grabbing spikes on the way up the cliff. Otherwise O.K."

"Same here. But we had a marvellous escape. For some reason the devils stopped when we were at their mercy."

"That's exactly what happened to me!" Dick ejaculated. "Any idea what it means?"

"Isn't it obvious?" observed West.

"Well, that isn't exactly the word I should have used with the whole dictionary to choose from."

"Think again," said West, with a faint smile. "Doesn't what we saw of Lopez explain it?"

"I'll get a headache if I think any harder. The fact of Lopez being here makes two puzzles instead of one."

"They are connected," replied the scientist. "At least, if my theory is correct, Lopez has been apotheosised."

"Gosh!" said Dick, with a gulp. "That makes everything clear as daylight. Doesn't it, Trent?"

"It sounds fine!" Trent grinned.

"The custom is a common one among primitive tribes," West continued imperturbably. "It is simply treating a man as though he were a god. Lopez is looked upon by these Indians as a god. That was why he was being carried around in the procession with flowers and torches."

Dick was now listening intently. West was too cautious a man to put forward an opinion unless it had been thoroughly tested.

"You both seem to have forgotten the old manuscript which brought us here," he went on. "The Spanish missionary distinctly speaks of being treated with reverence, as though he were a being from another world. He writes about it contemptuously, but clearly he owed his life to the fact. He remained with the Indians a long time, completely failing to change their faith, but teaching them many useful things, and to all intents and purposes ruling them."

"You don't surely think there's a chance of Lopez ruling them?" put in Trent, alarmed at the drift.

"I am afraid," said West solemnly, "that is precisely what will happen. By this time the memory of that old missionary has faded into legend. Some muddled account of what he tried to teach them has been handed down through the centuries, with the result that they look forward to the day when another white man will come from the clouds and reign over them."

Dick whistled.

"Then if we had been first—"

"Yes, we should have been treated as gods."

"And that's why, when they saw us—"

"Exactly," agreed West. "The moment they saw our faces in the moonlight, and realised we were white, they prostrated themselves. Didn't you have the same experience, Dick?"

"Yes, I did!" Dick nodded eagerly. "That's what saved my life. But how long will they keep it up?"

"Until Lopez persuades them, by some fancy story, that there has been war among the gods, and that, although we are white, we are really demons."

"So you think he'll kill their superstitious fear of us?"

West nodded.

"We are reprieved," he said. "But by to-morrow I fancy they will have conquered their fear."

"But what on earth can we do to upset Lopez?"

"That," said West, with a shrug, "is the problem."

It was one of those problems to which an answer had to be found. To have reached their goal, after so many vicissitudes, and yet to be thwarted at the last moment, was intolerable. Nevertheless, they could make no use of their discovery so long as Lopez remained in that unique position. He would not be satisfied to leave them as mere helpless spectators.

"Either Lopez returns, or we do," as West put it. "We can't all go back."

"And another thing," Trent pointed out. "we mustn't antagonise the Indians. We've got to set to work with their help."

Dick listened with growing dismay. It was impossible to imagine a more tantalising situation. Or a more perilous one.

For a time they might avoid discovery. But sooner or later they were bound to be found. The Indians, with their wonderful woodcraft, that sort of sixth sense, would track them, however far they penetrated into the jungle. Besides, what was the point of playing an elaborate game of hide-and-peek?

After a long silence, West spoke again.

"I think Napoleon's maxim is a good one," he said abruptly. "Namely, when things are desperate—attack!"

"It sounds all right," admitted Trent grudgingly. "But it doesn't follow whenever you attack you are going to win. Napoleon had armies to play with. We can't afford to lose a single man."

"When things are desperate—attack!" repeated West. "I believe that is profoundly true. But in our case, it doesn't mean shooting at a pack of natives with whom we've no particular quarrel."

"Then what on earth does it mean?" cried Trent irritably.

"We might confine our attack to Lopez."

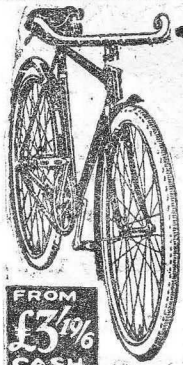
"You mean, pick him off?"

"If necessary—yes. I shouldn't feel any qualms. All the same, I'd rather take him alive."

"Jupiter! You mean we should kidnap him!" Trent paused, and Dick fancied he shook his head. "Easier said than done."

"Oh, it's not going to be like shelling peas!" retorted West, and for once he sounded rather testy. "But we've got to do something. We can't spend the rest of our lives climbing trees."

(West and his companions are undoubtedly faced with a big proposition. One false step, and Lopez will come out on top! You'll get the biggest thrill ever in next week's gripping instalment. Be sure you read it!)



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