

"THE MYSTERY OF THE NEW MASTER!" GRIPPING YARN OF **FRANK RICHARDS' SCHOOL DAYS—** **INSIDE!**

The **GEM** 2[¢]

THE CHOPPER COMES DOWN!—
A Thrilling Moment in "CARDEW CUTS
LOOSE!"—This Week's Great St. Jim's Story.





Blake Answers Back!

Jack Blake's here to answer your letters and deal with your queries. Write to him c/o The GEM, Fleetway House, Farrington Street, London, E.C.4. Be as candid as you like—Jack Blake likes a plain speaker, being by nature a John Bull himself! But keep your letter SHORT, and enclose if possible a photo of yourself for reproduction on this page. No photos can be returned and no replies given by post.

A. S. R. A., of Bath, writes:

I didn't write at first because I thought the letters were all swizzles, but here goes: 1. Can you send me a copy of "Tom Merry's Weekly"? 2. If Gussy is taller than Levison and Levison is younger than Gussy, where do flies go in winter? 3. How much do they pay you to do this article? 4. Can I send an article on "Birds' Eggs" for "Tom Merry's Weekly"? I don't mind the bother. Shall I write again? P.S.—I don't enclose a photo, because the only one I could find was when I was three months old.

ANSWER: Swizzles, hey? Look out, brother! 1. "Tom Merry's Weekly" was published in the GEM for some time, but for school use we issue only a limited number of copies, and these are snapped up pretty quickly. 2. Um. Let me see, you've got it all wrong. Gussy is half an inch shorter than Levison, who is three months older than Gussy, so obviously the man to ask re flies, etc., is Flat Foot Floogie or nearest relative. 3. You'll find him playing ludo for tin tacks under the spreading chestnut-tree. Oh, sorry! How much is this article worth? Suppose you tell me, and I'll tell the Editor! 4. Re your article on "Birds' Eggs," while it would be a rare treat to fry (sorry, pry) into this, Tom Merry, as Editor, decides what goes into the "Weekly." By all means "swizzle" at me again.

P.S.—Swap one of Skimpole in his pram for yours!

"Anonymous," of Millbank, London, S.W.1, writes:

This list of questions from my exam paper?

1. What was the capital of England before London?
2. Where is Kabul?
3. What were the dates of Queen Victoria's two Jubilees?
4. Who was the "Incorruptible"?
5. What is the meaning of: "Lesen sie das bitte noch einmal"?

ANSWER: 1. Winchester was the old Saxon capital.
2. Kabul is the capital of Afghanistan.

3. 1887 and 1897.
4. Robespierre, French revolutionist, Dictator

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"Anonymous," of London, tests Blake with some leasers.

during the Terror, executed 1794, was called by Carlyle "The Sea Green Incorruptible."
5. Translation (all on my own, too): "Read this once more, please."

Don't you have easy exams?

Frank Coackley, of Cheadle, Cheshire, writes:

How is it that when I send in an advert for the "Pen Pals" column it doesn't appear until three months later? Don't make excuses. Better wake up and snap out of it. Photo enclosed. Will this letter appear before August? I wonder!

ANSWER: Three months may seem a long time, but it's a free advert, you know, and everybody has to wait his or her turn. Of course, the Editor could devote one whole issue to "Pen Pal" notices, but the 999,999 other readers might object! I'd send this reply down to the printer marked URGENT, but he always keeps the urgent ones back another six months. He's like that.



Frank Coackley, of Cheadle, has a grouse.

John Reynolds, of Allbrook, Eastleigh, Hants, writes:

How many houses are there at Greyfriars? And why don't the St. Jim's fellows go up to the next Form? And why isn't "Tom Merry's Weekly" published in the GEM? Sincerely yours.

ANSWER: There is only one house at Greyfriars—the School House—to which everybody belongs. And it's rather alarming of you to switch over to St. Jim's so suddenly and expect us to go up to the next Form when you haven't asked the Greyfriars fellows, or the Higheliffians, or the Grammarians. And, lastly, many thanks for your request for "Tom Merry's Weekly," which I have passed to Tom Merry, who says he will pass it on to the Editor of the GEM, who, as you know, has a simply awful job fitting all the stories and features into the space, but who can certainly be relied upon to do his best, and—Oh, that's all for now, is it? Just as sincerely yours.

The din in the passage caused several juniors to look out of their studies. Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy were in the doorway of Study No. 6, chatting with the Terrible Three of the Shell, and they gave Levison their amused attention. Sidney Clive, with a smudge on his nose and a kipper in his hand, looked out from behind Blake & Co.

"What's the row, Levison?" he called out.

"That idiot Cardew has locked himself in the study, and I want my football boots!" exclaimed Ernest Levison, in exasperation.

"You won't get in," said Clive. "Cardew's up to something."

"Eh? What is he up to?"

"Blessed if I know! But he asked me to get my tea somewhere else, as he didn't want to be interrupted, so I've planted myself on these chaps. You'd better do the same."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We are well pprovided with kippahs, deah boy, and you are vewy welcome."

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"Thanks; but I've come in for my boots. Kildare's going to give me some tips," said Levison. "Cardew, you lunatic, let me in! Do you hear?"

"Jolly deaf if he doesn't hear!" grinned Dick Julian, looking out of Study No. 5.

Thump, thump!

A voice came from the study at last.

"Who's there?"

The drawling tones were those of Ralph Reckness Cardew, the dandy of the Fourth.

"I'm here!" roared Levison.

"Well, run away."

"I want my footer boots."

"What rot! What can you possibly want footer boots for? Go away and play marbles instead!"

Thump, thump!

"You're makin' a thunderin' row out there, Levison!"

"Will you let me in?" raved Levison.

"Can't be done; I'm busy."

"Give me out my boots, then."

"Can't open the door."

"Why not, you fathead?"

"Impossible."

Thump, thump!

Ernest Levison was getting a little excited.

Ralph Reckness Cardew sometimes tried the patience of his studymates a little. He had many whimsical ways, and many ways that did not wholly meet with their approval. But Study No. 9 pulled very well together, considering. But really it looked just now as if it would have come to the punching of noses if the locked door had not stood between.

"You crass ass!" shouted Levison through the keyhole. "Kildare's waiting for me!"

"Let him wait!"

"What?"

"He also serves who only stands and waits, you know. Tell Kildare that."

"You—you—you—"

"Run away, old bean; you're worrying me!"

Levison breathed hard through his nose.

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Kildare of the Sixth was captain of St. Jim's, and for him to dispose his valuable time on a junior, and give him tips about footer, was a tremendous honour. To keep Kildare waiting was not to be thought of by anyone, unless it was Cardew.

"I—I—I'll mop up the study with you when I get in!" gasped Levison, thumping on the door. "What are you playing the goat for? Let me in!"

No reply.

There was the sound of a pen scratching in Study No. 9, and that was all. Cardew of the Fourth had resumed his occupation, whatever it was, and he manifestly did not mean to let it be interrupted.

"Bai Jove, it is too bad!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "In the cires I should weally give Cardew a feahful thwashin'."

"Through a locked door?" asked Digby.

"Weally, Dig—"

Thump, thump!

"Great Scott! Are you still there, Levison?" exclaimed Cardew from within. "Can't you run away? You're distracting my thoughts."

"What are you doing, chump?"

"Swottin'."

There was a laugh in the passage. Swotting was about the last occupation Cardew was likely to be found at.

Thump! Kick! Bang!

"Run away, old nut! You're not comin' in. I'm deep in figures."

"I—I—I'll—"

"Levison, deah boy, pway allow me to suggest—"

"I'll mop him up!" gasped Levison. "Kildare's actually waiting for me at the door, and this idiot—this maniac—"

"I was goin' to suggest—"

"Oh bother! Let me in, Cardew, you worm!"

"But weally, Levison, I was goin' to suggest—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" snapped Levison.

"Cardew, you rotter—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Levison," said Arthur Augustus warmly, "and I fail to see anythin' asinine in offewin' to lend you my footah boots. Howevah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" said Levison, turning round. "All right. Thanks! Ohuck 'em out!"

"If you wegard the offah as asinine, I had bettah withdwaw it, Levison, but I weally do not see—"

"Will you lend me your boots, or won't you?" howled Levison.

"Certainly, deah boy. But I considah—"

"Here they are!" grinned Blake, tossing the boots out of the study. "Catch!"

Levison caught them, and dashed away to the stairs. He disappeared in a moment.

"What is that thumping ass Cardew up to?" said Lowther, in surprise. "He can't be swotting. He never works unless a Form-master is standing over him with a pointer."

"He's scribbling something," said Baggy Trimble, who had already glued himself to the keyhole of Study No. 9. "I can hear his pen going. He's talking to himself. My hat! He must be doing maths. What does he mean by saying, 'Six, six, six, and seven'?"

"What?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"That's what he was saying," said the astounded Trimble. "'Six, six, six, and seven.' He must be potty!"

"Well, that's not maths, whatever it is," commented the captain of the Shell.

"There he goes again!" said Trumble, who had his ear to the keyhole now. "Six, five, four, and four! He's potty."

"He must be, I should think, if he's burbling like that," said Tom, in wonder.

Three or four juniors gathered round Cardew's door in wonder, and they could hear his voice drawing within.

"Five, four, four, six, five, five again, two, one, one, and nine!"

The juniors looked at one another blankly. Tom Merry tapped at the door.

"Cardew! Have you gone off your rocker?"

"Not at all! It's not catchin', or I might have picked it up from you, old nat!"

"What are you burbling about, then?"

"Figures."

"What for?"

"I'm afraid it would be a bit above your intellect, if I explain, old man. Besides, I'm busy! Run away!"

"Fathead!" replied Tom Merry.

"These kippers are done!" called out Sidney Clive from Study No. 6.

There was a general movement of the Terrible Three and Blake & Co. to No. 6, and Ralph Reckness Cardew and his mysterious occupation were dismissed from their minds—for the present, at least.

CHAPTER 2.

A Peculiar Problem!

"HALLO!"

Tom Merry and his chums stayed rather long in Study No. 6, chatting footer after tea was over. When they came along to their own quarters, Study No. 10 in the Shell, they found Ralph Reckness Cardew there.

Cardew was reclining gracefully in the study armchair, with his feet on another chair, and a cigarette in his mouth. He had a sheet of paper in his hand, which he appeared to be studying; but at the sound of footsteps he closed his hand over it, and it disappeared from sight.

The Terrible Three stood in the doorway staring at the Fourth Former.

Cardew was always a rather cool customer, and a fellow never knew quite where to have him, so to speak, or what to make of him. But to carry his coolness to the extent of smoking cigarettes in Tom Merry's study was rather beyond the limit.

The chums of the Shell looked grim.

"Hallo!" repeated Cardew, taking the cigarette from his mouth and blowing out a little cloud of smoke.

"Put that muck away!" said Tom Merry curtly.

Cardew laughed.

"Sorry—old bad habits!" he said. "Simply absentmindedness, I assure you. I used to be everything that was bad, and have only lately become very good and an example to you. There it goes!"

He threw the half-smoked cigarette into the grate.

"You young ass!" said Tom Merry. "What sort of footer do you think you'll play if you spoil your wind with that rubbish?"

"None at all, old bean! I'm not keen on footer!" yawned Cardew. "But go on—I like to hear you! Uncle Thomas in a moral vein is entertainin'!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Tom.

"My dear man, don't be ratty!" said Cardew. "Smile and look your own bonnie self. There, that's better! You're not bad-lookin' when you look good-tempered."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Not at all! I haven't come here to poach on your preserves. I suppose you fellows are thinkin' about footer, and haven't a moment to get off the subject?" asked Cardew. "But if Manners has a few moments to spare, I'd like to speak to him. I've come here lookin' for brains."

"Taking up photography?" asked Manners, quite genially. "My dear chap, I'll give you any tips you like. You've come to the right shop."

"Ahem! Not exactly that. The fact is, Manners, you're supposed to be good at mathematics."

"I am good at mathematics," answered Manners. "No supposition about it."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet!"

"If you're going to jaw maths with Manners, I think I'll get along and have a jaw with Talbot," remarked Tom Merry.

"Oh, I shan't keep Manners long!" said Cardew.

"You won't!" agreed Manners. "I've got some films to develop before I do my prep. Speaking quite candidly, Cardew, I'm not looking for a job at coaching a Fourth Form chap in maths. Why don't you ask Levison, your studymate? He's quite as good as I am, though he's only in the Fourth."

"I am afraid of shockin' Levison."

"What?"

"Accordin' to what I hear, Levison used to paint the town red before I came to St. Jim's," yawned Cardew. "He turned over a merry new leaf just in time to set an example to me. Now, I never dare mention gee-gees to Levison, and I pretend to think there aren't such things as cards or bridge-markers in existence. I'm improvin' in the society of Levison and Clive; but—"

"I don't understand you," said Manners sharply. "You were speaking of mathematics, weren't you?"

"I was referrin' to your knowledge of that difficult and dashed bisney, but I'm not askin' you for coachin', old bean. I want your opinion on a certain matter, because you've got such a powerful brain—see? Chap who walks through mathematics, and who can play chess with his eyes shut, is the chap I want. If I'm not borin' you too severely, will you give me a hearin' and your valuable opinion?"

"Yes, if you like," said the astonished Manners. "But I'm blessed if I see what you're getting at."

Manners sat down, and Tom Merry and Lowther perched themselves on the table to look on. They were surprised and rather interested. It occurred to them that Cardew had come to ask Manners' opinion about the mysterious occupation he had been pursuing in Study No. 9 behind a locked door.

"You'll give me a hearin'?" inquired Cardew.

"Yes, of course. Get on!"

"Without flyin' out at me?"

"Why should I fly out at you?" exclaimed Manners impatiently.

"Well, this study has such a dashed high moral atmosphere," said Cardew pathetically. "Chap's afraid of puttin' his foot in it. Mind, I'm not askin' you to take a hand in the business I'm goin' to refer to—I wouldn't dream of it. I

should expect you to punch my nose. Bear that in mind. I'm simply goin' to ask your opinion on a certain matter of figures, from the point of view of a chap with a mathematical brain."

"If it's a matter of figures, or anything in the way of a problem, I'm your man," said Manners. "Go it!"

"Look at that," said Cardew.

He tossed a sheet of paper to Manners. The Terrible Three looked at it together. They looked—and stared and blinked. The paper contained a list of figures, and even to Manners' mathematical brain it represented nothing. It ran:

33569665443131161891471135789

That was not all. The numbers were continued to a great length, in any and every kind of order.

"Do you call that a problem?" asked Manners.

"What-ho!"

"Well, what's its bearing, then?—What do you want me to make of it? Do the numbers mean anything?"

"Sure you won't get ratty if I explain?"

"Yes, you ass!"

"Then I'll pile in! Those numbers were taken down at a green table."

"A green table?" repeated Manners.

"Exactly!"

"It's some game?" asked Tom Merry.

"You've hit it!"

"Blessed if I catch on!" said Lowther. "I can't see any game in taking down a list of silly numbers that don't mean anything."

"The question is—do they mean anything? That's the problem. Have you chaps ever visited the country across the Channel?"

"Yes."

"Well, if you've been in a French seaside resort you must have noticed that there was a building there called a casino. You wouldn't enter it, I'm sure; but you couldn't fail to hear that they play a naughty game in the casino called *petits-chevaux*—little horses, in English. The dinky little horses work on a machine, spinning round. They're numbered, and the number that comes nearest the line when they stop is the winning number. Naughty people gamble by stakin' money on the number they fancy."

"We've heard all about that!" said Tom Merry curtly. "Do you mean to say that these numbers were taken down at a gaming-table?"

"Horrid, isn't it? Yes; that's how the numbers ran on a certain occasion," said Cardew. "It's really a modified form of the great game of roulette, which they play at Monte Carlo and such places. This game is played at all the French seaside places—or was. No doubt it is still goin' merrily on in some quiet spot even now. Who knows?"

Cardew winked at the ceiling.

Manners looked fixedly at the dandy of the Fourth.

"Were these numbers taken down recently?" he asked.

"Last week, I believe."

"In this country, then?"

"Evidently, my dear fellow."

"That swindling game is illegal in England."

"I know—I know! Are we not the salt of the earth in this country, settin' an example to benighted foreigners, with the triflin' exceptions of horse racing, dog racing, and the football pools?" yawned Cardew. "It's sad to relate, but there's

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a naughty man not a hundred miles from here with a *petits-chevaux* machine complete—smuggled over from France, I believe. Those numbers were taken down by a chap I knew—a reckless sort of rotter, who's certainly old enough to know better."

"Oh!" said Tom.

"I've been goin' over the numbers," continued Cardew negligently. "Merely as a sort of mental exercise, of course. It's a problem, as I said."

"I don't see where the problem comes in," said Manners.

"A terrific problem, old nut! The question is—can those numbers be worked out into a system?"

"A—a system?"

"That's the idea. Naughty people who play the naughty game generally chuck their money on the green cloth and trust to luck. Of course, that comes to the same thing as chuckin' it down the nearest gratin', or puttin' it on horses."

"I should think so."

"But lots of people think there is such a thing as a system," said Cardew. "With a system you can catch the winnin' numbers if the system's any good. You put on a single piece, and if you get the right number you get seven pieces back; but as there are nine numbers, the chances are, of course, nine to one against you. So, on the face of it, the bank must win. But if there's a system for catchin' the winnin' numbers—"

In spite of Cardew's careless tone and manner his eyes were gleaming now, and they were fixed eagerly on Manners' face. It was pretty clear that the dandy of the Fourth took more than an impersonal interest in the matter.

"What utter rot!" said Manners abruptly.

"You think so?"

"I know!" grunted Manners. "Of course, there's no system on such a game. If there was the banker would take jolly good care that it did not work; he would cheat. I suppose that kind of man doesn't go into that kind of business for amusement. He does it for a living, and he couldn't live on losses."

"Right on the wicket, old bean. But the banker mightn't be cute enough to spot the system. With ninety-nine in a hundred of the punters playin' by luck, one wise man might play the system unnoticed and scoop in the dibs—what?"

Manners threw the paper back to Cardew.

"There's your rubbish!" he said. "If you want my opinion it's this—there can't be a system in such a game. And to go a bit further, I think you'd better keep clear of the chap who gave you that list of numbers. He's a bad egg!"

"Really?"

"Yes," said Manners warmly. "I suppose you know that everybody going to such a place in this country is liable to arrest if the police find him there? It's breaking the law, and it's acting like a blackguard."

"Horrid!" said Cardew.

"If it's a St. Jim's chap he ought to be jolly well kicked out of the school. He will be if he's found out!"

"Ynns, very likely!" Cardew rose to his feet.

"I haven't gained much by consultin' your mathematical brain, that's clear. Thanks all the same!"

"But seriously, Cardew," exclaimed Tom Merry, "you ought to keep clear of a chap who goes to a gaming den. If there's such a place in the neighbourhood, the police ought to be told."

"Old man, I'll remember your advice," said

Cardew solemnly. "I can't very well break with the chap I've mentioned, but I'll keep my eye upon him very carefully."

"Oh, don't talk rot!" broke in Monty Lowther. "Tommy, you ass, can't you see that it's Cardew himself?"

"What?" exclaimed Tom.

"Isn't it plain enough?" said Lowther impatiently. "It was Cardew who took those numbers down at the table."

"My hat! Is that so, Cardew?"

"Of all the rascals, you mean!" growled Lowther.

"The utter duffer!" said Tom Merry. "He ought to be stopped. It's no business of ours, I suppose; but—but think of the disgrace to the school if it ever came out. The Head would have a fit of apoplexy, I think!"

The Terrible Three had food enough for thought after Cardew had left them. But it was not clear that they could interfere in any way, especially as Cardew had not actually admitted that he was



"Playing the goat isn't in it," said Baggy Trimble. "Cardew goes gambling at a casino!"
 "A—a what?" exclaimed Blake. "Well, a sort of casino," explained Baggy. "Place where they play games for money!"

The Terrible Three looked at Cardew, Tom Merry quite aghast. He would never have suspected even Ralph Cardew of recklessness to this extent.

Cardew did not look at all disturbed. He gazed at Monty Lowther with great admiration.

"This," he said, "shows what it does for a chap's intellect when he gets into the Shell. I congratulate you, Lowther. Ta-ta, old beans!"

And Cardew sauntered from the study, leaving the chums of the Shell silent and grim.

"Well," said Manners at last, "that's a corker. It's Cardew himself, and the utter idiot has been playing that game at some gaming-den that might be raided by the police any minute! Of all the fools——"

himself the reckless young rascal who had visited the petits-chevaux den. It was quite possible that he had been pulling their leg in leaving them with that impression. In any case, Cardew was his own master and had to go his own way. But Tom Merry & Co. felt very troubled and uneasy.

CHAPTER 3.

Trimble Knows Something!

LEVISON and Clive were in Study No. 9 when Cardew returned there; and Levison minor of the Third was present.

Levison and his brother were going through
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Cæsar together, Clive watching them with a rather amused smile. Cardew gave a deep yawn as he glanced at the book on the table over which the brothers' heads were bent.

"Dear old Julius!" he murmured. "How you fellows must be enjoyin' yourselves! What are you scowlin' at me for, Levison?"

"I wasn't scowling," said Ernest Levison. "But I've a jolly good mind to punch your head for keeping me out of the study as you did!"

"No end sorry! But I couldn't be interrupted just then," said Cardew. "I was frightfully hard at work."

"I don't see any signs of work about the study."

"Fact, dear boy, all the same! I've been workin' like a nigger, sweatin' my poor old brain on a deep problem."

"Hallo! What's the problem?" asked Clive.

"Suppose two fives were followed by a four and a seven, what number would be likely to come next?"

"Eh?"

"Don't I make myself clear?" yawned Cardew.

"About as clear as mud," said the South African junior, with a stare. "You're not talking sense so far as I can see!"

"Which isn't very far, old top!" said Cardew affably. "Can you spare me an inch or two of the table, kids? Prep's to be done! Yaw-aw-aw!"

"I'll cut off!" said Frank, rising.

It was time for prep, and the fog took his book and left the study. Levison, Clive, and Cardew turned to their work—the latter with deep yawns, partly affected and partly real, for anything in the nature of work was a painful bore to Ralph Cardew.

A little later the fat face of Baggy Trimble of the Fourth grinned in at the door.

"Cut!" said Levison.

"No, don't cut! Come in!" said Cardew.

"What on earth do you want that fat duffer for?" asked Ernest Levison impatiently.

"Anythin' to interrupt work," answered Cardew. "Besides, Trimble's got a good joke. I can see it by the gleam in his eye. Trot it out, Trimble!"

"He, he, he!" came from Baggy. "I know all about it. He, he, he!"

"What do you mean, you cachinnating ass?" asked Levison.

Baggy winked.

"I know what I know," he replied.

"Precious little, I should say," grunted Clive. "What on earth's the matter with the fellow? What's he chortling about?"

"Oh, come off!" said Trimble. "I don't mind mentioning that I happened to be near Tom Merry's door a short time ago."

Cardew started.

"You needn't tell us you've been listening at the door," said Clive, with a curl of the lip. "We know your habits."

"I wasn't listening!" exclaimed Baggy indignantly. "I stopped to—to rest—just leaning against the wall to rest. It was sheer chance that I heard Cardew talking about the numbers."

"Numbers?" repeated Clive and Levison together.

"He, he, he!"

Cardew's expression had changed. He rose to his feet quietly and crossed to the corner of the study to a walking-stick that stood there.

"The fact is," said Trimble, "I want to go. Mind, I'm keeping it dark! For why shouldn't a fellow have a flutter once in a way? What I mean

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you to understand is, I'm not going to be left out—see?"

"Potty, I suppose," said Clive, in wonder.

"Mad as a hatter!" said Levison. "Will you go and gibber in your own study, Trimble? You're interrupting."

"Come off, you know!" grinned Trimble. "Don't tell me that you're not on to Cardew's little game. I know better. What I want is to go with you next time, as I don't know where the place is."

"What place?" yelled Levison.

"He, he, he!"

Cardew strode towards the fat junior and caught him by the collar.

"You're too funny, Trimble," he said. "You mustn't be too funny in this study. Now to reduce you to a state of proper seriousness—"

"Leggo!" howled Trimble, as the stick whacked on his plump person. "Why, you rotter, I'll jolly well—Yaroooh! Look here—Yooop!"

Whack, whack!

Trimble wrenched himself away and fled. He stopped half-way down the passage to yell back "Yah!" and vanished as Cardew made a motion to pursue him.

Cardew went back to the study table and sat down quietly and resumed his work. He did not seem to be aware of the fact that his studymates were both looking at him anxiously and rather grimly.

"Will you tell us what Trimble means, Cardew?" asked Levison at last.

"My dear man, who could possibly understand what Trimble might or might not mean?" yawned Cardew.

"He was going to let out something when you licked him and made him bunk," said Clive abruptly.

"Well, if you want to know what he was goin' to tell you you can cut after him and ask him," said Cardew carelessly.

"Oh rats!"

And prep was resumed in Study No. 9 in a slightly troubled atmosphere.

Meanwhile, Trimble, under the impression that Cardew was pursuing him, had bolted along the passage and dodged into Study No. 6 for safety. In Study No. 6 Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy were at prep. They did not give the Falstaff of the Fourth a welcome. Blake pointed to the door.

"Hook it!" he said briefly.

Instead of hooking it, Trimble closed the study door.

"That beast Cardew's after me with a stick," he said. "I'll stay here a few minutes, if you fellows don't mind."

"But we do mind!" grunted Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies, it would be only obligin' to give Twimble wefuge for a few minutes," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy mildly.

"I expect he's been asking for a licking, fat-head! Bagging a chap's grub, most likely."

"Bai Jove! If that is the case, Twimble—"

"It isn't!" exclaimed Baggy indignantly. "I don't mind telling you fellows—in confidence, of course. If they won't let me go with them, I don't see why I should keep it dark. I—I mean, I don't see why I should keep Cardew's disgraceful secret. I'm shocked at him! I felt it my duty to go to him and remonstrate. I intended to point out to him the error of his ways. Some fellows," added Baggy, with dignity, "think about

the good name of the school, and that sort of thing, you know. I do."

"Do you mean that Cardew's playing the goat?" said Digby.

"Playing the goat isn't in it," said Baggy. "What do you think of playing a swindling game at a gaming place?"

"What!" yelled Study No. 6 with one voice.

"That's it," said Baggy, swelling with importance at the impression he had made. "Cardew goes gambling at a casino!"

"A—a what?" exclaimed Blake.

"Well, a sort of casino—place where they play games, and you put money on a green cloth," said Trimble.

"Rubbish!"

"Gammon!"

"Wats!"

"I heard him tell Tom Merry so!" said Trimble. "It's a fact, right enough. And he got waxy when I pointed out to him that he was acting—ahem!—in a very unworthy manner."

"Cheese it!" said Blake.

"He's making up a system," persisted Baggy. "That's what he was doing in the study when he was mumbling over numbers. I think it ought to be stopped myself. Would you fellows advise me to go to the Housemaster?"

"I advise you not to be a fat sneak!" growled Herries.

"But this is wathah sewious, if twue," said Arthur Augustus, with a very grave expression.

"If!" snorted Blake.

"Cardew certainly was mumblin' ovah numbals in his study, Blake. The fellow is a distant connection of my family, and, weally, I feel that I ought to speak to him. If it is not twue, I shall advise him to thwash Twimble for tellin' such a yarn about him."

"Oh, that's all right! We'll thrash him," said Blake, jumping up. "Hand me that ruler, Digby!"

The door opened and slammed again. Baggy Trimble was gone, without waiting for the ruler.

Blake grinned, and sat down again. But Arthur Augustus did not resume his seat. He was shocked and very grave.

"Where are you going?" demanded Blake, as the swell of St. Jim's turned to the door.

"I'm goin' to speak to Cardew, deah boy."

"Rot! There's nothing in it; only Trimble's gas."

"I weally do not see how Twimble came to think of such a vewy extwaordinawy thing if there is nothin' in it, Blake. He must have heard somethin'."

"Well, that's so," admitted Blake. "But it isn't your bisney, Cussy."

"Cardew is a distant welation of mine."

"Distant enough to be let alone," suggested Dig.

"Wats! I cannot have that youngstah wunin' into feahful twouble without at least speakin' a word of warnin'."

"Good old Grandfather Gus!" grinned Blake. "Mind Cardew doesn't chase you with a stick as well as Trimble."

"I should uttably wefuse to be chased with a stick, Blake."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy left the study, and headed for Study No. 9, with a grave and solemn expression on his face.

It was just like the good-hearted swell of St. Jim's to offer a little fatherly advice. But it was doubtful whether it would have much effect on Cardew.

CHAPTER 4.

The Black Sheep 1

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY tapped at the door of Study No. 9, opened it, and looked in

Levison & Co. were working there, in a rather uncomfortable silence.

The swell of St. Jim's stepped quietly into the study. Levison and Olive went on working, but Cardew gave him an affable nod. He was quite prepared to change work for a chat with the swell of the Fourth.

"Take a seat, old man," he said. "Welcome as the flowers in May."

"I twust I am not intewwuptin' you?"

"You are!" came from Levison. "Leave off interrupting till we've finished prep, old chap."

"I am sowwy, that is imposa. I came here to speak to Cardew vewy sewiously!"

"Soriously!" ejaculated Cardew.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then don't do it, old nut! Couldn't you make some jolly little jokes instead?"

"It is not a jokin' mattah, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus seriously. "I have heard a vewy wemarkable statement fivom Twimble."

Cardew yawned.

But at the mention of Trimble's name Clive and Levison ceased work, and fixed their eyes on D'Arcy.

"Accordin' to Twimble," continued Arthur Augustus, "you have been gamblin' at some wascally wesort, where they play some game of chance, Cardew. You are makin' up a system."

"Go hon!"

"Is it twue?"

"Hadn't you better ask Trimble?"

Revenge is Sweet!

When Randolph Crocker was kicked out of Greyfriars in disgrace twenty years ago, nobody even thought that he would turn up at his old school again. But the one-time sportsman of Greyfriars does turn up—and what's more, he's determined to get even with Dr. Locke, the headmaster who expelled him! Read all about it in

"AN OLD BOY'S VENGEANCE!"

Frank Richards' super 35,000-word school story of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars, appearing in this week's issue of

The MAGNET

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"I am afraid I can't wholly rely on his word."
 "And you can on mine?" smiled Cardew.
 "That's very flatterin' You want me to confess my sins?"

"I want you to tell me whether you have landed yourself in some wascally scrape, and I will do my best to help you out of it. P'way make a clean breast of it, dear boy," added D'Arcy encouragingly. "You cannot do better than rely on a fellow of tact and judgment."

"I suppose I had better tell you all the sad story," said Cardew, with an air of owl-like seriousness.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, here goes! Feelin' the need of a flutter to liven things up, I ran across to Monte Carlo yesterday afternoon."

"What?"

"I lost a hundred thousand pounds at the tables——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"And I'm goin' again this evenin'."

Olive and Levison chuckled at the expression that came over Arthur Augustus' face.

"You are not speakin' the twuth, Cardew. It would be quite imposs for you to wun ovah to Monte Carlo for an afternoon."

"Go hon!"

"Besides, you could not do it, even if it was poss to go there."

"You don't say so?"

"If you are attemptin' to pull my leg, Cardew, you uttah ass——"

"Dear me, has that dawned upon you at last?" said Cardew pleasantly.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard through his nose.

"Cardew, will you tell me the twuth, or will you not tell me the twuth?" he demanded.

"I'll try again," said Cardew, with a sigh. "There really seems to be no satisfyin' you, D'Arcy. Feelin' the need of a little excitement, I went to Paris this mornin'——"

"What?"

"And played baccarat at one of those cheery places in the Etoile quarter. I lost ten million francs——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Olive and Levison.

"You uttah ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Do you think I'm goin' to believe that ridiculous statement?"

"Don't you believe me?" asked Cardew in a pained voice.

"Certainly not!"

"Then I'm blessed if I know how to satisfy you," said Cardew. "I give it up. Hold on, though——another try, since you're so anxious about me. Feelin' the need of a little excitement, I——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I refuse to listen to any more of your uttah wubbish, Cardew!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "You are simply pwevawicatin'."

"Go hon!"

"I take it for gwanted that Twimble's statement is twue and that you are mixed up in a gamblin' wesort."

"What a mix up!" sighed Cardew.

"For your own sake, Cardew, I urge you to dwop it at once."

"Thanks!"

"Othahwise, you must expect to be wegarded with uttah contempt by ewevy decent fellow," said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"You horrify me," said Cardew.

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"I mean what I say, Cardew—ewevy word!"

"Now, let's have this plain," said Cardew plainly. "If I don't mend my ways you will regard me with terrible disdain——"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And perhaps refuse to speak to me."

"I should certainly refuse to speak to you."

"Honest?"

"Yaas!"

"Good! Then I'll keep up my naughty ways," said Cardew cheerfully. "You've put a premium on my wickedness now, D'Arcy. To avoid being bored by your delightful conversation, old chap, I would plunge up to the neck in almost any variety of naughtiness. You've done it!"

"You uttah chump——"

"Remember, if I go to the giddy bow-wows, you've done it!" said Cardew. "You've tempted me—you're the dark tempter, Gussy! The responsibility is yours!"

Slam!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy departed and closed the door after him forcibly. Ralph Cardew smiled at his studymates.

"Dear old Gussy," he said. "What an entertainin' chap he is! Hallo! What are you blinkin' at me like a pair of owls for?"

"So it's true?" said Levison quietly.

"Dear man, you are not goin' to begin, are you?" said Cardew pathetically. "Do you want me to spin you yarns?"

"No, I don't," said Levison. "I want you to stop playing the fool!"

"Couldn't be done, old scout. Fools are born, not made."

"Look here," said Sidney Olive abruptly, "is it true there's a gambling place in this neighbourhood, and that you go there, Cardew?"

"Suppose it is?"

"Then you're a dashed blackguard!" exclaimed the South African junior hotly.

Cardew nodded.

"That remark, dear boy, shows what an observant chap you are!" he replied. "What beats me is that you never discovered it before."

"Oh, dry up!" snapped Clive.

He resumed his work with a knitted brow, evidently disturbed. Levison opened his lips to speak, but closed them again and dropped his eyes to his books. It was not much use talking to Ralph Reckness Cardew. When the reckless mood was upon him he was sure to go his own wild way, wherever it led to.

Cardew yawned and gave some desultory attention to his work; but he soon threw that up, and sat in the armchair conning over a sheet of paper. When Clive had finished his work he rose to his feet and glanced at Cardew, and as he saw that the paper in the junior's hand was covered with columns of figures, he set his lips and walked out of the study without a word.

Levison hesitated as he was about to follow, and Cardew gave him a curious smile.

"Like to go into this with me, old chap?" he asked.

"No!" said Levison curtly.

"Pleaso yourself," said Cardew, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Cardew," said Levison quietly, "if you're really playing such a rotten game, you know the risk you're running."

"That's what makes it excitin', dear boy."

"It would mean the sack, if it came out."

"Quite so."

"What would your people say?"

LAUGH THESE OFF!

with Monty Lowther



Hallo, Everybody!

"Clean Fun for Clean-limbed Chaps," runs a headline. Baggy Trimble had to have a bath before he could read it. Yes, really.

Story: "I caught a fish this big," said the angler, stretching out his arms, "but I threw it back. Then I caught another this big"—stretching his arms wider—"but I threw it back. Then I caught one this big"—stretching his arms wider still—"but I throw that back, too." "But why did you throw big fish like those back?" asked his listener, amazed. "Well, I've only got a frying-pan this size!" explained the angler, holding his hands a few inches apart.

On holiday in a remote part of Wales, Mr. Ratcliff approached the stationmaster of a very small station. "No, there isn't really a train coming," explained the stationmaster, "but we sell more tickets if the signal's down!"

Friend of mine at an art school says he has painted a portrait of the art master so natural-looking it has to be shaved every day!

"Lady Burglar Scares Rylcombe," runs a local headline. Rylcombe householders are now swapping their watch-dogs for mice!

Story: The famous film star on board ship was accosted by a Frenchman, who flourished a camera and exclaimed: "Picturo! Picturo!"

"I wonder," said Cardew calmly.

"It's not good enough, Cardew," said Levison patiently. "I've been through that kind of rot, and I can tell you it leaves a bad taste in the mouth. Have a little sense, and chuck it."

"Five—four—four—five—three!"

"What?"

"Six—four—four—two—one—one—"

Levison compressed his lips. Cardew was murmuring over the figures, as if no longer conscious of his presence. Levison looked at him for some moments, and then quitted the study without speaking again.

CHAPTER 5.

A Loyal Chum!

TOM MERRY knitted his brows.

It was the following day—a half-holiday—and Tom Merry was waiting at the door of the School House for his chums, footer being on that afternoon.

Obligingly the film star posed. "But, no," exclaimed the Frenchman, "you take picture of me!"

Then there was the Scot who when the question of his club subscription was raised, wouldn't even give it a thought. (Acknowledgments to Kerr.)

They say Grundy is so positive he is going to have his own way that he writes his diary a week in advance. Believe it or not!

Story: "This," said the radio fan, introducing the crooner to his friend at the acro-drome, "is the idol of the air!" "Is that so?" exclaimed his friend. "Well, I'd prefer to have one of the usual pilots, if you don't mind!"

Time in to Schenectady WSKUVWXYZ any time you can. Well, it will keep you occupied, anyhow.

Late Extra: "The Band Wagon" will be "In Town To-Night," "Monday Night at Seven," and will be parked by the "Music Hall," "Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree" where "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" will be doing "The Lambeth Walk." Tickets 100 guineas each, proceeds to buy buns for Baggy Trimble and his seven appetites!

"Gosh, I wish I were an iceberg," sighed Fatty Wynn, after receiving a wigging from Mr. Ratcliff. "Why?" asked Figgins. "Well, icebergs never get into hot water," replied Wynn.

Everybody comfy now? Just tuck up your feet and lay your head back. Now go off for a nice snooze. That will get me down to the bottom of the column without a soul noticing.

Just a tick: Remember, the fellow who knows most about international issues is undoubtedly the stamp collector.

Yippee!

Racke, Crooke, and Scrope of the Shell came out together, and with them was Cardew of the Fourth.

Racke & Co. were smiling, and evidently in great spirits.

The three black sheep of St. Jim's plainly had something very entertaining on that afternoon, and Tom could guess that it was something to do with gambling and smoking. The reputation of Racke & Co. was pretty well known among the juniors.

Of Racke & Co. Tom was not accustomed to take much notice. They went their own way without interference from him, though they were in no doubt as to what he thought of them. But he was sorry to see Cardew in company with the young rascals, evidently going out with them for the afternoon.

Cardew, in spite of his reckless ways, had much good in him, and he had lately shown good form as a footballer, with all his slacking. Tom re-

flected a moment or two, and then he stepped towards the quartet as they came down the steps.

"Cardew, hold on a minute!"

"Certainly, old bean!" said Cardew.

"Oh, come on!" growled Racke, with a glance of strong disfavour at the captain of the Shell. "There's no time to waste, Cardew!"

"Dear old nut, politeness before everythin'. Thomas is goin' to lecture me—I can see it in his eye."

"I'm not going to lecture you," said Tom Merry gruffly. "I was going to suggest that you should come down to the footer. We've got a trial match on, and Levison and Clive are both in the scratch eleven. There's a place in it for you, too, if you like."

"Thanks awfully! What a chance—with the additional advantage of keepin' me out of bad company!" remarked Cardew thoughtfully.

"Look here——" began Crooke hotly.

"My dear man, you don't deny that you are bad company for an innocent youth like me," said Cardew. "Facts are facts, you know. It would be ever so much better for me to give you the go-by, and put myself under the highly moral influence of our friend Thomas."

Tom Merry flushed angrily, and Racke & Co. grinned.

"You can please yourself, Cardew!" snapped Tom Merry. "You're a fool to get mixed up with those cads. You can be decent when you like."

"And we can't, I suppose?" sneered Racke.

"Well, you never like, at all events," said Tom.

"How well he knows you, Aubrey, old bird!" said Cardew.

"Look here, you cheeky dummy——"

"Shush!" said Cardew reprovingly. "The question is, shall I go round with these bad eggs, or shall I accept the generous offer of Thomas?"

"Oh, don't be a fool!" said Tom Merry, and he turned on his heel.

"Abandoned!" sighed Cardew. "Thomas has left me in the lurch. I shall have to put up with you bad eggs!"

"Come on, and not so much jaw!" said Scrope.

"Comin', dear boy."

The four sauntered down to the gates. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was just coming in, and he stopped to speak.

"I am surprised to see you going out with these fellows, Cardew!" he said severely.

"It's a surprisin' world, isn't it?" said Cardew.

"Weally, Cardew, you would do bettah to come and join in the footah," said Arthur Augustus. "Old Talbot is captainin' the sewatch team, and he hasn't made up the eleven yet. I will put in a word for you."

"Another kind offer!" said Cardew. "It breaks my heart to refuse you, Gussy——"

"Oh wats!"

"Everybody's awfully good to me, I know. I'll tell you what, Gussy, you come along with us instead!"

"Look here——" began Crooke.

"We don't want him!" growled Racke.

"Whethah you want me or not makes no difference, Wacke. I should certainly wefuse to pass an afternoon in your shady company," said Arthur Augustus disdainfully. "There is somethin' wotten on, or you would not be havin' anythin' to do with it. Go and eat coke!"

The swell of St. Jim's walked in at the gates,

and Racke & Co. walked down the lane towards Rylcombe.

"Look here, Cardew, you talk too much!" said Racke abruptly. "That fat fool Trimble has already got hold of something, and is gassing it about. I warned you that it had to be kept dark."

"I couldn't prevent Trimble puttin' his ear to the keyhole, old scout!"

"You shouldn't have talked about the thing at all."

"But I didn't! I was askin' Manners' opinion, as a mathematician, on the idea of a system, quite impersonally."

"You fool! That gang, of all people!"

"Perhaps it was careless," smiled Cardew. "Not quite so careless as what we're doin' now, come to think of it. My dear man, Trimble knows nothin', and Tom Merry wouldn't give a chap away, whatever they might guess. By the way, don't call me names!"

"I'll call you what I like!" snarled Racke.

"You're liable to be strewn in the road if you do! That's a tip."

Racke growled, but he said no more, and they tramped on in silence, none of the party looking good-tempered. There was a sound of quick footsteps behind them a few minutes later.

"Hallo! Is that Gussy again?" yawned Cardew. "No, Levison, by Jove!"

"Blow Levison!" exclaimed Racke, with a scowl at the Fourth Former, who was hurrying up the road. "Look here, we've got no time to waste while you jaw to Levison."

"Well, I must wait for a chap. You can see he wants to speak to me, and he's my pal, after all. Go on, and I'll follow you."

"Oh, all right!"

Racke & Co. walked on, while Cardew stood in the road waiting for Ernest Levison to come up. Levison of the Fourth was rather out of breath when he joined his studymate.

"Aren't you playin' footer?" asked Cardew.

"I've asked Julian to take my place."

"Chuckin' it up for the afternoon?" asked Cardew, in wonder.

"Yes. I'm coming with you."

Cardew started.

"Comin' with me!" he ejaculated.

Levison nodded quietly.

"Look here, Levison," said Cardew, in perplexity. "I'm goin' somewhere where you wouldn't like."

"I know that."

"To be quite plain, it's shady."

"I know."

"My only hat!" Cardew whistled. "Levison, old man, are you breakin' out at last, and goin' in for the old game?"

"No."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it," said Cardew quite frankly. "I'd really be sorry to see you playin' the goat. The game's not worth the candle."

"You're doing it."

"Oh, I'm past prayin' for," said Cardew lazily. "Taint of blackguardism in the blood, you know. But look here, you can't come with me, Levison. I'm with Racke and his gang."

"After quarrelling with them several times?"

"Yes, they're always willin' to make it up," grinned Cardew. "That's the advantage of havin' a giddy nobleman as a grandfather."



"Look here!" said Sidney Clive abruptly. "Is it true there's a gambling place in this neighbourhood, and that you go there, Cardew?" "Suppose it is?" replied Cardew. "Then you're a dashed blackguard!" exclaimed the South African junior hotly.

"Well, I'm coming with you, Cardew, unless you come back with me and play footer."

"Can't be done!"

"Let's go on, then."

Cardew looked perplexed.

"Look here, kid! If anythin' should crop up where I'm goin', it means the merry sack," he said.

"I can guess that."

"Well, that's what you're riskin'."

"I'm waiting for you," was Levison's answer.

"What are you doin' this for, Levison?"

"Never mind that. I'm doing it, and I mean business."

"You'd better turn back."

Levison shook his head.

"Well, come on, then," said Cardew resignedly.

"Too much fog to argue. If you will, you will. Don't say I haven't warned you."

Levison did not answer that, and the two Fourth Formers walked on after Racke & Co. in silence. Levison's face was very quiet and grave. Whether he was doing right or wrong he hardly knew, but he knew that he would not let his chum be led into risky rascality by Racke & Co. without doing his best to see him through. Whether Cardew liked it or not, he was to be under his chum's eye that afternoon, while Tom Merry & Co. played football on Little Side at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 6.

A Little Flutter!

"HERE we are!" said Cardew suddenly, as he opened a garden gate of a villa called the Laurels on the outskirts of Rylcombe.

Levison looked oddly at his chum as they went up the path in the shadow of the thick shrubbery.

"What goes on here, Cardew? Is it gambling?" said Levison abruptly.

"I warned you not to come, old bird."

"I'd guessed it before," said Levison. "I'd noticed you've been thick with Racke and Crooke lately, and I know what that means. But I don't see what that list of figures meant. That sort of thing only applies to the games played in Continental casinos."

"Which might be imported even into this delectable island," said Cardew lazily. "Such things have happened."

Levison frowned.

"Do you mean to say that someone is keeping a gaming-place here?" he breathed.

"I don't mean to say anythin', old fellow. You'll see for yourself, if you insist on comin' in."

"Well, I'm coming."

"Suit yourself."

They went round the house to the porch at the back. There Cardew paused.

"Look here, Levison," he said, in a low voice. "When I was let into this I undertook to keep my mouth shut, of course. I take it for granted that you'll do the same."

"I shan't go to the police, if that's what you mean, Cardew."

"Or babble at St. Jim's?"

"No."

"I knew I could trust you, of course; but I was bound to mention it, as I've given Racke my word."

"Racke, of course!" said Levison, setting his teeth.

"My dear man, don't put it on Racke. I'm old enough to look after myself. Racke let me into it like a good fellow, because I was bored stiff with bein' good. There's still time to go back."

"Let's get in."

"Right-ho!"

They entered the porch, and Cardew tapped at the door. He tapped with his knuckles thrice in a rather peculiar manner, and then, after a pause, tapped again. Levison's lip curled as he watched him. He understood that it was necessary for the gamblers to take precautions, for what was going on at the Laurels was not only rascally, but it was illegal, and the heavy hand of the law would have descended upon the place if the facts had become known.

It was rather surprising to Levison that even Aubrey Racke had fallen to such a depth as this. But the cad of the Shell was a rascal to his fingertips, and doubtless he found great excitement in this form of pleasure.

The door was opened on the chain by a man who looked out with one keen, sharp eye, the other—a glass eye—being strangely fixed, almost uncanny in contrast with the one that glittered watchfully.

"All serene, Scaife!" said Cardew carelessly.

Scaife nodded and unchained the door.

"Come in, sir!" he said respectfully.

The grandson of Lord Reckness was evidently a welcome person. Levison followed Cardew into the house, and the door was closed again and chained.

Cardew led the way up carpeted stairs and stopped outside a big door. He opened the door quietly, and Levison looked in.

The room was a large one. There were two big windows, but both of them were thickly curtained, excluding the daylight—and prying eyes. What was going on in the room was not the kind of thing to bear inspection.

There was a large table, spread with a green baize cloth that was marked off in oblong spaces numbered one to nine.

In the centre was a curious contrivance.

A kind of large bowl, with circular slits in it, and from each slit protruded a rod with a little coloured wooden horse fastened upon it.

At the side was a kind of handle, and when the handle was turned the nine wooden horses raced round and round the large bowl.

When the handle was left alone the horses continued to race on, so long as any force remained in the machine under the table, slowing down one after another. Each horse was numbered one to nine.

Across the bowl was drawn a line, marking the winning-post. The horse that stopped nearest that line when the mechanism ran down was the winner, and the number he carried was the winning number.

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The whole contrivance was simple enough, and looked little more than a child's toy upon a large scale.

Round the table were a number of fellows, and Levison recognised Racke, Crooke, Scrope, Clampe, Mellish, and Chowle—all St. Jim's fellows, and friends of the festive Aubrey.

There were other fellows present, too, whom Levison did not know. There was also Mr. Griggs, of the estate agent's office in Wayland—a local "knot."

Presiding over the table was a hard-featured man, rather loudly dressed. Levison recognised him; he had seen the man before.

"Tickey Tapp!" he muttered.

"You know that merchant?" asked Cardew, in surprise.

"I've seen him before," said Levison curtly. "A rotten sharper, if you want to know. Some fellows at St. Jim's used to know him, and were sorry for it."

"I dare say," assented Cardew. "From what I hear, this isn't the first time the chap's run this kind of business, and in this quarter, too."

"That's so. He ran a roulette bank once, and it was broken up for him," said Levison.

"You had a hand in that?"

Levison coloured.

"No," he said, in a low voice. "I was as big a fool then, Cardew, as you are now."

"Oho!" said Cardew, with a grin. "That was before you turned over your new leaf—what?"

"Yes," muttered Levison. "Never mind that. Are you going to play?"

"What do you think I've come here for?"

They advanced to the table, Cardew receiving genial nods on all sides, and Levison getting rather curious looks.

Tickey Tapp nodded agreeably to Levison, evidently recognising him as an old acquaintance.

Ernest Levison gave him the curtest of nods in response.

Much water had passed under the bridges since Levison had come into contact with the sharper, and he was not pleased to find Tickey Tapp at his old game again near St. Jim's.

The sharper evidently remembered the profits he had made at that time, before Tom Merry & Co. had raided his precious "casino," and smashed up his roulette table. He was making a second harvest now.

The game he was presiding over was called *petits-chevaux*, from the little wooden horses used.

It was a game played in the casinos at all the French seaside resorts, such things being within the law on the other side of the Channel.

Probably Tickey Tapp had picked up that table at a bargain price in France. Now he was presiding over it, and his young friends were enjoying the unaccustomed pleasure of dabbling in a variety of gambling previously reserved for Continental trippers.

"Make your game, gentlemen!" said Tickey Tapp.

Cardew threw a piece of money on the table at once.

Levison stood and watched with a gloomy brow.

The game did not appeal to him in the least. Even if he had been inclined for a "flutter," he would not have put his money on that green cloth, for he had not the slightest doubt that the machine could be manipulated at the sweet will of the banker.

It was called a game of chance, but Levison was quite sure that there was not much chance about it.

Detective Kerr Investigates

7.48	5.00	9.58	3.02
2.57	2.00	6.45	2.38
11.00	4.01	9.45	6.49
4.59	10.00	5.29	12.15
11.20	6.15	12 NOON	1.00
7.45	9.34	8.46	5.55
1.00	3.00	2.15	3.15
7.34	10.24	8.56	6.59
10.45	9.00	12.55	7.57

No. 33.

THE MESSAGE IN CODE.

GLYN: It's really quite simple, Crump, old man. It's a clock code, you see.

P.-c. CRUMP: And what do you mean by a clock code, Master Glyn?

GLYN: It's based on the clock. Look at the message again. It's a series of clock times:

7.48	5.00	9.58	3.02	2.57	2.00	6.45
2.38	11.00	4.01	9.45	6.49	4.59	10.00
5.29	12.15	11.20	6.15	12 NOON		1.00
7.45	9.34	8.46	5.55	1.00	3.00	2.15
3.15	7.34	10.24	8.56	6.59	10.45	9.00
12.55	7.57					

WHEN Bernard Glyn, the inventor of the Shell, told Noble and Dane, his study-mates, that he had evolved a code which nobody could decipher, Noble and Dane laughed. Experts could decipher any code, however ingenious, they said. Later, a mysterious message, obviously in code, appeared in the "Personal Column" of the "Wayland Gazette," and Glyn tossed it across to Noble with an enigmatic smile. "Can't make head or tail of it," admitted Noble. "Perhaps P.-c. Crump will have better luck," said Glyn, with a chuckle; and he left the study before Noble could question him further. Meanwhile "Detective" Kerr, in the quad, was speaking to P.-c. Crump, whom Glyn had seen through the window.

P.-c. CRUMP: Yes, I can see that. The point is, just what do they mean?

GLYN: That's what I asked your superintendent to tell me when I wrote to him. I claim to have invented a cipher that will take a bit of solving. If you think you can do it, go right ahead.

P.-c. CRUMP: All right, Master Glyn, we'll solve it. We aren't beaten yet, not by a long chalk. We'll solve it. Good-day to you, young gentlemen!

P.-c. CRUMP: Excuse me, Master Kerr, but could you tell me where I can find a boy named Glyn, in the Shell Form?

KERR: Study No. 11, constable. Have you come about the new air raid shelter Glyn has invented?

P.-c. CRUMP: No, Master Kerr. It concerns a mysterious code message which Master Glyn says he inserted in the "Wayland Gazette." I have a copy 'ere, Master Kerr.

KERR: Oh, I've heard something about Glyn's inventing a secret code which he claims nobody can fathom.

P.-c. CRUMP: That's just it. You see, Master Glyn has written to the police headquarters at Wayland, and challenged us to decode the message. Of course, we're experts at that sort of thing, and it won't be long before we find the key—

KERR: But just at present you're completely baffled?

P.-c. CRUMP: The Wayland police are never baffled, Master Kerr. But at the moment we're just a little—ahem!—mystified. That's why I've come to see Master Glyn.

KERR: Fellows will be getting a headache trying to solve your code, Glyn. Won't you give us a clue?

GLYN: Well, I've told you the system I've used is based on the figures on the clock.

KERR: Clear enough. Most fellows have a clock in their studies, or own a watch, at any rate, so everybody has an equal chance.

GLYN: That's right.

KERR: When did you work out this code, by the way?

GLYN: Yesterday afternoon, here in the study. The study clock gave me the idea.

KERR: I see. Well, I can imagine a good many of us watching the hands go round to-night and trying to connect them in some way with your code, Glyn.

GLYN: Yes, rather. I wish you the best of luck in solving it, Kerr.

KERR: Thanks. By the way, what is the exact time now?

GLYN: Quarter-past seven by my watch. The clock on the mantelpiece hasn't gone since Kangaroo threw a boot at Trimble and hit the clock by mistake!

KERR: Cheerio, Glyn! Perhaps I'll call back and see you later.

(Can you decipher Glyn's secret message? Kerr solves it, and his solution will be found on page 33.)

A gentleman of Tickey Tapp's description was not in the business for his health. When Fortune did not smile on him it was pretty certain that he had ways and means of assisting Fortune, in the manner of a Continental croupier.

Aubrey Racke was evidently enjoying himself. The cad of the Shell was, as usual, flush with money, and he was playing with pound notes, while the rest of the punters generally contented themselves with half-crowns.

Under the electric light their faces did not look

pleasant, most of them having a sharp and hawkish expression.

They would have described their occupation as "sporting," but it was easy to see by their looks that they were on the make.

It was money they wanted, and money they hoped to win—a hope that was very delusive with Tickey Tapp presiding over the "game of chance."

"Make your game, gents!"

Coins and notes fluttered on the table.

Tickey Tapp grasped the handle of the machine and ground at it as if he were grinding coffee.

The numbered chevaux raced round and round the big circular bowl, and all eyes were fixed upon them.

Tickey Tapp released the handle and sat watching the racing horses with a placid grin.

Whichever wooden horse stopped at the line he was pretty certain to score, for nearly all the numbers on the table had money on them.

One number had a pound note on it belonging to Racke, and if that number—nine—won Tickey Tapp had to pay out seven pounds to Racke, according to the rules of the game.

Levison thought it probable that nine would not win, as seven pounds was a large sum to pay out, considering that the other stakes were of a much smaller variety.

Levison was right.

It was No. 5 that stopped at the line, and Racke muttered a curse under his breath. But on No. 5 Cardew had thrown a half-crown, and he consequently received seven half-crowns from Tapp.

Cardew's eyes glittered.

It was not the money that appealed to him. He had plenty of that. But the excitement of gambling and the feeling of being a winner had seized upon him. He dropped into an empty chair at the table and took out his pocket-book, with the evident intention of going in deep. He seemed to have forgotten that Levison was with him.

At the door Mr. Scaife was standing, having followed the latest comer up. Mr. Scaife's single eye had a mocking glitter in it. Levison glanced at him moodily. He could guess that Scaife had not allowed Mr. Tapp to establish the precious game in his house for nothing. No doubt he stood in with the sharper for a good percentage of the winnings.

Levison stood silent and watched the game as it went on. He had a feeling of sick disgust within him, which intensified as he saw the keen, almost savage expression that was coming over Cardew's handsome face.

The cool, aristocratic Cardew looked quite unlike himself now, and Levison thought, with a miserable feeling, how like Racke he looked at that moment.

Cardew was losing. He was playing for quids now, and Mr. Tapp could not afford to lose seven pounds a time. It was so apparent to Levison that the man was cheating all the players of big stakes that he marvelled that the punters could not see it, too. But they had come there to gamble, not to suspect or criticise; and, moreover, there are none so blind as those who will not see.

And this was the game for which Cardew had been trying to make a system! A system! Levison felt a kind of compassion for his chum, angry as he was. A system—to beat a game which depended upon the will of the banker! He felt at that moment as if Cardew were a child—a wilful child—and he could not be angry.

Cardew seemed to remember his existence suddenly. He turned to him with his face so sharp and keen that it gave Levison a shock to see him.

"Got any money?"

"What?"

"Lend me some money."

"Stony?" asked Levison.

He knew that Cardew had had more than ten pounds about him that day.

"Yes; lend me some tin."

Levison shook his head.

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"Not for that!" he said, with a jerk of the head towards the green table.

Cardew gave him a fierce look.

"You're not playin'. You don't want your money. Do you think I won't pay you, you fool?" he said in a shrill whisper.

"I know you would, but——"

"Lend it to me, then."

"Come away, old chap."

"Don't be a fool! Will you lend me some money, or won't you?"

"No, I won't!"

Cardew looked at him bitterly and savagely. Then he watched the little horses that were racing round again.

It was too late for him to stake on that round now, and he watched with feverish eyes. No. 7 won.

"That was my number," said Cardew huskily. "You fool! If you'd lent me a quid I should have had it on seven."

"Then it wouldn't have come up!" said Levison.

"What?"

"Cardew, old chap, can't you see that Tickey Tapp is wangling the game?" muttered Levison. "How many times have you seen a quid win since you've been here? Once or twice—by accident. The half-crowns or shillings win and the quids go to the bank."

"Oh, don't be a fool!"

"Look here, Cardew——"

"Will you lend me some money?" muttered Cardew in concentrated tones of bitterness.

"No!"

"Then go and eat coke! Hang you! Don't ever speak to me again, you cad!" said Cardew fiercely.

Levison drew a deep breath. But Cardew's tone changed the next moment. He seemed as if his very life itself depended upon his going on with the game. He caught Levison by the arm.

"Old fellow, lend me a couple of quid. Don't be a cad! I'm asking you a favour. I don't often ask favours. Lend it me. Suppose I lose it—well, it's fun, you know. Lend it me, there's a brick!"

His tone was pleading, entreating. Levison breathed hard, and then, feeling in his pockets, he took out all the money he had, placed it in Cardew's eager hand, and, turning, walked out of the room.

CHAPTER 7.

Trouble in Study No. 9.

"HALLO, slacker!"

"Bai Jove! You are lookin' down, Levison, deah boy!"

Tom Merry & Co. had come off the footer ground after the trial match and were heading for the School House, when they came on Levison of the Fourth.

Levison had just come in, and he was tramping along with his hands in his pockets, his eyes on the ground, and a dark expression on his face.

Tom Merry had been a little surprised at Levison cutting the footer that afternoon. He was usually keen on the game. Levison had said that he was going out, but it was pretty clear that, wherever he had been, he had not enjoyed his outing.

Levison glanced up and coloured, as he found himself among the cheery footballers.

The contrast between their ruddy, healthy faces and the sharp looks he had left behind him at Scaife's den struck him very strongly.

"Anything up?" asked Tom Merry good-naturedly.

Levison smiled faintly.

"How did you get on with Racke?" chimed in Baggy Trimble, with a fat chuckle. "Had any luck Levison?"

Levison went to the School House without taking heed of Baggy Trimble, except that his colour deepened. Tom Merry & Co. glanced after him rather curiously.

"Alas!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Has our young friend been looking on the wine when it is red and the smoke when it is blue? Gussy, old scout, here's a chance for you. Go after Levison and speak to him like a Dutch uncle."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Give him one of your sermons in your well-known seventhly style," urged Lowther. "We'll all come and hear you."

"I wegard you as an ass, Lowthah, and I wefuse to believe for a moment that Levison has been playin' the goat!"

"I should jolly well think so!" growled Sidney Clive. "What the thump do you mean, Monty Lowther?"

"Don't get ratty, dear child!" said Lowther chidingly.

"Oh rats!"

Sidney Clive strode in with a knitted brow. As a matter of fact, Levison's dark looks made him feel a little uneasy himself, which was the reason why he had—rather unreasonably, perhaps—snapped at the humorous Lowther.

"Don't be so funny, Monty!" said Tom Merry, as he went in with his chums. "There's nothing in Trimble's gas, anyway."

"There's something in Cardew's list of many figures, and the precious system he was asking Manners about," answered Lowther dryly. "Looks to me as if it's catching in Study No. 9."

"And to me," said Manners.

"Oh, rot!" said Tom cheerily. "Cardew may be a howling ass—is, in fact; but Levison's got too much hoss-sense. Come and let's get some of this mud off."

The Terrible Three changed in the dormitory, and when they came down they met a party coming from the big staircase.

Racke & Co. had returned, and with them came Ralph Reckness Cardew.

Aubrey Racke was looking grim and savage, and Scropo was moody, while Crooke seemed in high feather. Crooke had had better luck than his comrades, probably due to the fact that he had played for shillings at Tickey Tapp's table. Racke's pound notes had taken unto themselves wings and flown away, so to speak, and the festive Aubrey was feeling annoyed. Wealthy as he was, twenty pounds was a good sum, and that was the sum Aubrey Racke had left in Tickey Tapp's charge.

Cardew unusually enough for him, was looking tired and depressed.

Racke scowled at the Terrible Three, and went to his study savagely. Cardew spoke to Tom Merry.

"Has Levison come in, do you know?" he asked.

"Yes, some time back," said Tom. "You look a bit lown, Cardew."

"Do I?"

"You do," said Tom. "I fancy you'd have done better to play football, kid. Make it footer next time."

Cardew smiled faintly, and went his way. He was quite well aware that he would have done

better to play footer; it was rather a better and a more decent game than *petits-chevaux*. But his evil genius was in the ascendant now, and he did not think of following Tom Merry's good advice.

Sidney Clive and Levison were at tea in Study No. 9 when Cardew came in, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a guest in the study. Possibly the great Gussy thought that his presence and his uplifting conversation, might have a good effect upon the reckless Cardew; but tea in Study No. 9 was nearly over when the prodigal came in.

Cardew nodded and smiled as he entered, but it was with an effort, and could be seen plainly enough. The dandy of the Fourth was not feeling himself, and he could not quite disguise the fact. Hours of unhealthy excitement in a close atmosphere had told upon him, fit as he was, and the feverish excitement of the green table had left its mark.

Levison pulled the chair to the table for him.

"Thanks; I won't have any tea," said Cardew, dropping into the armchair. "In fact, I've had a snack. D'Arcy, it's a pleasure to see you here."

"You are vevy flattewin', Cardew."

"You reminded me yesterday that I'm a distant relation of yours," remarked Cardew.

"Yaas."

"Bein' a relation, I feel that it's up to me to act like an affectionate member of the family," said Cardew. "That is to say, I'm willin' to come to you for help in a difficulty."

"You could not do bettah, deah boy," said D'Arcy cordially. "As a fellow of tact and judgment—"

"You'll give me some advice?"

"With pleasuah, deah boy!"

"I'll put it to you, then," said Cardew, unheeding the curious glances of his studymates. "There's a fellow I'm rather concerned about, and he's hard up for money. He needs ten quid. I'd stand it like a shot, but I happen to be stony broke. Next week I shall be in funds again. Will you shell out ten quid till next week, to help the chap I'm speakin' of out of a difficulty?"

"Bah Jove!"

Levison compressed his lips, but he did not speak. Clive looked astonished. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was considerably taken aback.

"I suppose you can rely on my word to settle up?" added Cardew, with a slight curl of his lip.

"Yaas, wathah! That's all wight. But—"

"But you don't want to lend me the tin?"

"If it is to help a chap out of a difficult posish, Cardew, I should be vevy happy to lend you the money. But as—"

"Well, that's what it's for."

"Yaas; but—"

"Shell out, then."

"It is quite imposs for me to shell out, Cardew, as I have only six pounds," said Arthur Augustus. "You are vevy welcome to that, howevah."

"Oh!" said Cardew, as Arthur Augustus opened his natty little pocket-book, and took out a five-pound and a pound note. "I—I say, is that all the tin you've got, Gussy?"

"Yaas."

"I'll settle next week, honour bright. My grandfather will send me the tin."

"That's all wight, deah boy. I am vevy glad to be able to help you help a fellow who is in a fix," answered Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "Pway don't mensh, deah boy!"

There was a faint trace of shame in Cardew's

face as he took the money. He avoided meeting Levison's eyes.

Sidney Clive's brow was like a thundercloud, but he did not speak.

Arthur Augustus chatted away cheerily, quite blissfully unconscious of the suppressed storm in Study No. 9. It burst when Arthur Augustus had taken his departure, and the door had closed behind him.

"Cardew!" broke out Clive and Levison together.

"Hallo!"

"I asked D'Arcy here to tea, not for you to stick him for his money!" exclaimed Clive angrily. "I know what it's for, if D'Arcy doesn't."

"He wouldn't have lent it to me if he'd known," said Cardew coolly. "Bein' an innocent old duck, he didn't suspect that the chap I was alludin' to was my honourable self. Nice boy, Gussy!"

"I wonder you've the neck!" exclaimed Clive.

"My bisney, I suppose, not yours."

"I think it's blackguardly!" said Clive, with a flash in his eyes. "You're practically dragging us into your shady rot like this!"

"You're not bound to continue my acquaintance, dear man, if you don't want to," drawled Cardew.

"Oh, chuck that!" broke in Levison. "That's enough. I really think you might draw the line somewhere, Cardew. This is pretty thick."

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"This means that you're going again——"

Levison broke off, remembering that Clive was not in the secret.

"Precisely. Same old place—same old game," said Cardew coolly. "I'm goin' to try that system again, or bust. Come along with me again, Levison, and try your luck yourself."

Clive started.

"Levison, you haven't——"

"Oh, yes he has!" said Cardew, with a mocking grin. "He came with me this afternoon, where the wine is red and the table green."

"Don't be an ass, Clive!" muttered Levison, as the South African junior stared at him blankly. "I went to keep this silly fool out of mischief if I could. I wasn't able to, as you see."

"You shouldn't have gone," said Clive curtly.

"Perhaps I shouldn't; but I did. It wasn't much good."

"None at all. I lost Levison's money as well as my own," yawned Cardew. "Now I'm goin' to lose Gussy's. What a life!"

Clive rose to his feet, his face set.

"I don't set up to preach to you, Cardew," he said. "You've been my chum. But I draw the line at this, and I tell you so plainly. You're risking getting expelled and disgracing the school you belong to. I wonder you've the nerve to face a decent chap when you're playing that rotten game!"

"I've never lacked nerve, I believe," said Cardew calmly. "I can stand even your highfalutin morality, Clive, though it makes me a wee bit tired."

"Well, I'm not going to stand it," said Clive. "Racke's got you into this, I can see. Well, I'm not going to drop you——"

"Don't mind me, dear man!"

"That isn't what I mean. I'm going to stop you!" said Clive grimly.

Cardew raised his eyebrows.

"You're goin' to—what?" he asked.

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"Stop you."

"Really, I don't see how you're goin' to do it," said Cardew, with a sneer. "Has it ever occurred to you that it's a rippin' idea to mind your own bisney?"

"Clive, old chap!" muttered Levison uneasily.

"You're a blackguard, Ralph Cardew!" said Clive. "That's plain. But you're not going to be kicked out of the school and bring disgrace on St. Jim's and this study. If you can't look after yourself, you'll get looked after."

"Are you askin' me to punch your head, Clive?"

"You can try if you like; I dare say you'd get most of the punching!" grunted Clive.

"For goodness' sake——" began Levison, in alarm.

Clive was looking savage, and Cardew's eyes were glittering dangerously.

But the dandy of the Fourth did not rise from the armchair. He shrugged his shoulders with an air of disdain.

"There's nothing to row about, you chaps!" muttered Levison. "Leave him alone, Clive; he'll chuck it when he's tired of it. He's played the giddy goat before now, and it's never lasted."

Clive gulped down his wrath.

"Let him chuck it now, then," he said, more quietly.

"Rats!" yawned Cardew.



"They can call in the police if they like!" said Clive coolly. Crash, crash! The next moment splinters flew under the edge

"Look here, Cardew," said Clive, in a softened tone. "You know you're too good for that rotten kind of game. You're not like Racke, but you're jolly likely to get like him if you keep on in his company and in his pursuits."

"What an awful fate!"

"Can't you see what it looks like to others?" asked Clive. "As I make it out, some rotter has started a gambling den in Rylcombe."

"Yes, a nice gentlemen by the name of Tickey Tapp," smiled Cardew. "It's run at the Laurels, the respectable residence of a Mr. Scaife."

"It can't go on for long without getting known. Some fellow who has lost money will begin to talk."

"Very likely."

"The police will get to hear of it, and drop on the place."

"Likely enough."

"Well," exclaimed Clive, "don't you know what that means? Every chap found there will be marched off to the police station."

"Quite so."

"It may happen to you with the rest."

"Why not?" smiled Cardew. "But I'm sure you'd come and bail me out, Clive, old pippin'!"

"It isn't a joking matter, Cardew."

"Your mistake. It is! You don't know how

entertainin' you are when you mount the high horse."

Clive set his lips.

"Well, I've said that I'll stop it," he said.

"You won't talk about what I've let out?" said Cardew quietly. "I promised Racke when he let me into it. I think it's understood that anythin' said in this study goes no farther?"

"I am not going to act the informer, if that's what you mean," said Clive scornfully.

"Good man! But I don't quite see how you're goin' to stop it otherwise."

"You will see," said Clive.

With that he left the study.

"Dear old man! How comic he is when he gets excited!" drawled Cardew. "Levison, old duck, can you lend me some quids to make this up to ten?"

"No, I can't!"

"And won't?"

"And won't!" assented Levison.

"Now, I wonder whom I could stick for a few pounds?" said Cardew, unmoved. "Talbot of the Shell would squeeze out a quid, I think; and young Julian's got lots of oof. The question arises, however, whether he would lend me any? Figgins of the New House is a good-natured chap. Do you think Figgy's got any money to lend, Levison?"

There was a tap at the door, and Levison minor walked in.

Frank Levison glanced rather in surprise at the moody face of his brother, and then at the mocking Cardew. He made a movement to retreat from the study.

"Come in, kid!" said Levison.

"Yes, come in!" smiled Cardew. "Glad to see you, Franky. Can you lend me any money?"

"Lend you money!" said Frank, laughing. "You've got lots!"

"Alas! That's a thing of the past, dear child! Riches take unto themselves wings and fly away, you know! Behold me on my uppers. I'll tell you how the money went—"

"Hold your tongue, Cardew!" broke out Levison fiercely.

"My mistake!" said Cardew urbanely. "I forgot that Franky's youthful ears must not be polluted with such things. You wouldn't like me to take him along with me to-morrow, Ernest?"

Levison clenched his hands.

Cardew burst into a laugh and quitted the study. Levison and his minor sat down with their books. Ernest Levison uttered no word of explanation, and Frank asked no questions, though he was feeling uneasy. It was easy enough for the fag to see that there was a rift in the lute in Study No. 9, and it troubled him.

CHAPTER 8.
Clive's Way!

"CHEERIO!" Tom Merry clapped Clive of the Fourth on the shoulder the following day after lessons.

Sidney Clive was walking in the quadrangle by himself, with his hands in his pockets and a deep line between his brows.

He was in deep reflection, and not happy reflection, when Tom Merry came along and greeted him cheerily.

Clive looked up, colouring a little.

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"There's plenty of law in this country, if they want it!"
Edge of the axe as the South African wielded it upon the door.

"Tell your Uncle Thomas!" said the captain of the Shell, with a smile.

"Eh?"

"What's the row? Has Knox of the Sixth been ragging you?"

"Oh, no!"

"Not off your form for footer?" asked Tom. "We want you in the House match on Saturday, you know."

"Fit as a fiddle!" said Clive. "I was thinking, I—I wonder if you'd give me your opinion and advice?"

"Go it!" said Tom encouragingly. "Although laying no claim to such tact and judgment as Gussy, I keep advice on tap for little boys in difficulties. Pile in!"

"It's rather a serious matter," said Clive.

"All serene, old chap!" said Tom, becoming serious at once. "If there's anything I can do I'm your man! Go ahead!"

"I can't give you the particulars," said Clive slowly. "It's a kind of confidence—I mean, I'm bound not to repeat what I happen to know about the matter. I'll put a case. Suppose a friend of yours was a reckless ass—a real good fellow at bottom but liable to have fits of silly recklessness—"

"Yes," said Tom. "No need to mention names."

"Suppose that chap got in with a gang of shady rotters—"

Tom Merry nodded. He recognised Racke & Co. by that description.

"Suppose, partly through their influence and partly through being a wilful duffer, the fellow got into a shady den where a gambling game was being played?"

"Yes?"

"Well, what would you do in that case?" asked Clive. "You wouldn't let him quarrel with you, and stand aside while he went to the dogs, would you?"

"No."

"You'd chip in?"

"Certainly I would!" said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I'd do my best to yank him out, and let him quarrel with me afterwards if he liked."

"I thought you'd agree with me," said Clive, the remark showing that his mind was pretty well made up in any case. "Oh, there he goes!"

Tom Merry glanced round.

Racke & Co. were sauntering down to the gates, and with them went Ralph Reekness Cardew.

Cardew passed Sidney Clive without even a look.

"Well," resumed Clive, in a harder voice, "such a place as I've mentioned—a gambling resort, practically—is against the law in this country, isn't it?"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry. "The police would drop on it pretty quick if they knew."

"I can't give information, of course; nothing would have been said to me, except on that understanding. And—and a chap can't inform, anyway. But the place is against the law. Suppose—suppose that by taking a high hand you could stop the whole show, you'd do it, in my place?"

"I jolly well should!" said Tom Merry emphatically. "I'd knock the whole concern sky-high if I could!"

"I thought you'd agree with me," said Clive, relieved. "What I'm thinking of is—is a bit high-handed, and I am glad to have your opinion. I don't see why I should stand on ceremony in

dealing with a professional sharper who's getting schoolboys into blackguardly ways."

"No fear! I'll help you, if you want me," said Tom at once.

Clive shook his head.

"I'd be glad of your help, but I'm bound not to tell you anything about the place, in the circumstances—I mean, so far as letting out where it is and who runs it," he said. "Cardew—I—I mean, it was understood that I should say nothing on those points; but I'm at liberty to act as I think best on what I know, and I'm going to do it!"

"Good luck!" said Tom Merry cordially. "I think you're quite right. Don't bite off more than you can chew, though. If there's a tussle—"

"That's not likely. They'd hardly dare to use violence, considering that I could get them all sent to choky if I chose to give them away. I'm going to chance it, anyhow."

"Well, good luck to you," said Tom Merry; and he forbore to ask any questions curious as he felt.

He joined Manners and Lowther to go down to footer practice, and Sidney Clive resumed his thoughtful pacing under the elms till Levison came out.

"Well?" said Levison, as he joined him.

"I've decided," said Clive. "Tom Merry thinks as I do—"

"You haven't told him?" exclaimed Levison.

"No, no; only enough to get his advice. I think a lot of his opinion," said Clive, "and he thinks as I do. You can please yourself about lending me a hand, of course."

"I'm going with you, if you're going," said Levison quietly. "I—I say, it's a bit thick, though!"

Clive's eyes gleamed.

"It may be; but it's going through, all the same. If we don't do something to stop it, it's our duty to give information to the authorities, and we can't do that, as the matter stands. You know that Cardew's gone there now, with Racke and the rest?"

"I know."

"He's been borrowing money up and down the House," said Clive bitterly. "Not only D'Arcy, but two or three other fellows, to my knowledge, and perhaps half a dozen more I don't know of. I know he's writing to his grandfather for money to settle up; but suppose he loses that, too, when it comes—as is jolly likely when the fit's on him. He's getting deeper and deeper into the mud, and it's going to stop."

"He will cut up rusty."

"Let him! If he chooses to quarrel with me he can—after I've stopped those rascals at their game," said Clive grimly.

"Well, I'm with you," said Levison.

"Wait for me at the gate while I go round to the woodshed."

"Right-ho!"

When Sidney Clive joined Levison at the gate he had something concealed under his coat.

The two juniors walked down to Rylcombe together, and stopped at the gate of the Laurels. Their destination was the headquarters of Mr. Scaife and his worthy friend Tickey Tapp. Levison led the way round to the porch at the back, with some uncertainty in his looks. But there was no uncertainty about Clive. The South African junior was grimly determined.

He knocked loudly at the door, and it opened on the chain, as on the occasion of Levison's previous visit with Cardew. Scaife's single eye gleamed out at the juniors.

He recognised Levison, but blinked dubiously

at Clive, and he did not remove the chain from the door.

"Let us in!" said Clive abruptly.

"I think I'd better speak to Master Racke first," said Scaife doubtfully. "He hasn't said—"

"Let us in at once!"

Clive's manner was a sufficient indication that he had not come there to join the sportive circle round the petits-chevaux table; and instead of opening the door, Scaife jammed it shut again.

"He won't let us in now," said Levison.

"He needn't!" Clive's hand came from under his coat; it held a heavy wood-chopper. Without any ceremony, he struck a powerful blow at the lock. Levison caught his breath.

"Clive," he muttered, "it's too thick—"

"They can call in the police if they like," answered Clive coolly. "There's plenty of law in this country, if they want it!"

Crash, crash!

Splinters flew under the edge of the axe, and the door opened hastily, still on the chain. Scaife's scared face glared out.

"What are you up to?" he panted. "Are you mad? Do you want me to telephone for the police?"

"Please yourself," answered Clive. "You'll let me in, my man, or I'll back through the door!"

"You can't come in, you fool! You—"

Crash, crash!

That was Clive's answer. The shoddy door of the Laurels was not built to resist an assault like that. The door flew in great splinters, and the chain flew loose and hung to the door-post. Clive crashed his boot on the shattered door, and it flew open, and Scaife jumped back just in time to avoid catching it with his face. Clive strode in, followed by Levison, but the one-eyed man barred his way.

"Stand aside!" said Clive, between his teeth, and as Scaife did not move, he struck at him with his empty hand.

The man swerved aside then, evidently astounded and scared. The knowledge of what was going on upstairs made Scaife too alarmed to think of putting up a fight. It was wiser to let the juniors come in by themselves than accompanied by the police.

Levison led the way up the stairs, and Clive followed him, leaving Scaife pale and scared in the hall.

Clive throw open the door above, and entered the gaming-room.

The apartment was just as Levison had seen it before; the windows thickly curtained, the electric light burning, the green table and the yellow numbers glimmering in the light, and a score of punters standing by or sitting round. Tickey Tapp was raking in money with a long-handled rake, a round just being over.

He started and half rose at the sight of Clive's set face and the wood-chopper in his hand.

Racke stared round; Cardew's eyes were on the board, where his stake had just been raked in by Mr. Tapp. But at the buzz of surprise that arose among the players Cardew turned his head, and he stood transfixed at the sight of Clive and Levison.

Sidney Clive strode up to the table.

"What do you want here?" gasped Tickey Tapp, finding his voice at last.

Clive raised his chopper and brought it down with all his force upon the set of little wooden horses. There was a terrific crash, and a yell

from Tickey Tapp. Those petits-chevaux were not likely to run again.

Tapp sprang to his feet, black with fury.

"You young hooligan!" he roared. "What are you up to? Why, I'll break every bone in your body!"

"Smash him!" yelled Racke furiously.

"Clive, you mad idiot!" shouted Cardew.

There was a fierce movement on all sides towards Clive. He faced the angry crowd coolly.

"Hands off, my man!" he said, as Tickey Tapp strode at him. "I warn you that you're as near prison at this minute as you'll ever be without going inside."

Tickey Tapp halted.

(Continued on the next page.)

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"Clive," yelled Cardew fiercely, "what are you up to? What have you come here for, you fool?"

"I've come here," answered Clive quietly and steadily, "to smash up this swindling machine, Cardew, into little pieces."

"Wha-a-at?"

"You cheeky fool!" shouted Crooke.

"Kick him out!" raved Racke. "Throw him out!"

"If that man"—Clive made a gesture towards the enraged Tickey Tapp—"tries to stop me, I'll get assistance that he won't be able to stop. I'll go further. I tell you plainly, my man, that if you don't get out of this house at once, I'll call in the police to deal with you."

The sharper seemed to be thunderstruck.

Scaife was at the door now, and he made a scared sign to Tickey Tapp. There was no doubting Clive's grim earnestness, and the matter was quite in his hands. The two rascals dared not touch him.

Racke & Co. stared wolfishly at the South African junior. The other punters, alarmed by the turn of affairs, were already slipping quietly from the room, and from the house.

Cardew stepped towards his chum. His hands were clenched, and his eyes glittered. His rage was so great that he could scarcely speak.

"Get out!" he said thickly. "Get out, you cur! I'll smash you if you don't get out!"

"I told you what I'm here for," answered Clive calmly. "I'm not going till it's done."

Cardew did not speak again, but he sprang at him. Levison interposed and grasped him, and the two closed.

While they struggled, Levison quiet and cool, and Cardew panting with rage, Sidney Clive struck again and again at the petits-chevaux machine.

He struck with all the force of his sinewy arms, and the mechanism crashed and shattered under the blows.

Tickey Tapp, almost foaming with rage, came towards him at once, but Scaife caught him by the arm and pulled him back. With a face of fury, the sharper grabbed up the money from the table and quitted the room, making no further attempt to interfere with Clive. Neither did Racke & Co. attempt to interfere, enraged as they were; Clive was rather too hefty for the slackers of St. Jim's to tackle.

Scrope and Mellish and Chowle, indeed, were grinning. They had lost all their money, and they appeared to have derived some solace from the South African junior's drastic action.

"Better clear!" muttered Crooke. "Somebody may hear the din and look in, and—"

The suggestion was enough. Racke & Co. promptly cleared. Clive, Levison, and Cardew remained in the room and Cardew was helpless in Levison's strong grip. He was still struggling, white with rage, but Levison held him.

Crash, crash, crash!

The little wooden horses, the mechanical contrivance that worked them, the green cloth, the table itself flew into fragments under Clive's doughty blows. Mr. Tapp's petits-chevaux required more putting together after that than Humpty Dumpty after his fall from the wall.

Clive stopped at last, a little breathless.

"That finishes it," he said. "We can clear now, Levison."

Levison released Cardew, who sank, exhausted

and panting, into a seat. Clive slipped the chopper under his coat, and they left the room together. Levison paused in the doorway and looked back.

"Coming, Cardew?" he asked.

"Hang you! No!"

"Come on!" said Clive, and they went downstairs.

In the hall they found Scaife pale and scared. Tickey Tapp had vanished. Scaife came towards the juniors, but not in a hostile way.

"What do you want?" snapped Clive.

"No offence, sir," stammered Scaife. "I—I'm sorry I ever let that fellow start his game here. I'll see that he never comes here again. May I take it, sir, that you—you haven't given the show away, and that you won't mention this at—at the police station? It would get a good many of your schoolfellows into bad trouble, sir."

"I've said nothing, and I intend to say nothing!" snapped Clive. "I came here to smash up the game, and I've done it—that's all."

"Thank you, sir!" mumbled Scaife.

Clive turned his back on the rascal and left the house with his chum, and they returned to St. Jim's.

Tom Merry met Clive and Levison as they came in.

His look was inquiring; and Clive nodded to him, with a smile, and showed the blunted chopper under his coat.

"All serene!" said Tom. "You're a corker, Clive! It was a jolly good idea! That game's put an end to, then?"

"Quite—for good!"

"Good man!" said Tom Merry.

Clive and Levison were at tea in the study when Cardew came in some time later. They gave him grim looks when he came into Study No. 9, fully prepared for bitter words.

To their surprise, Cardew was humming a tune, and he gave them a cheery nod.

"Hallo! Anythin' for tea?" he asked. "I'm famished! You might have waited for a chap."

He sat down at the table, his studymates staring at him blankly. Cardew's volatile moods sometimes puzzled them. Evidently his humour had changed in the last hour or so.

He met their astonished looks and burst into a laugh.

"Clive, old man," he said, "you're A 1! You're a gilt-edged jewel, old man! Tickey Tapp's face was worth a guinea a box when you started on the petits-chevaux, and dear old Scaife was all in a tremble. What a life!"

"Well, I'm glad you take it like that," said Clive. "I did what I thought was my duty."

"You always do, old bird: it's your only failin'," said Cardew. "I believe I was a bit annoyed at the time. I hope I didn't hurt you, Levison?"

"Same to you!" said Levison, laughing, in spite of himself.

"And now the game's gone sky-high, and I shall never try that merry old system!" said Cardew, with a sigh. "What a life! It's rather a relief to a fellow's mind, though, come to think of it. Do you know, it was growin' quite a worry. Do you want all those sardines, Levison? If not, pass a few this way."

And tea in Study No. 9 ended quite jovially—very unexpectedly so.

Next Wednesday: "THE MISDEEDS OF MICKY!"

The MYSTERY of the NEW MASTER!



By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**

Two different men! That's Vere Beauclerc's fixed belief of the Philip Trevelyan he meets in thrilling circumstances and the Philip Trevelyan he sees later as the new master of Cedar Creek. What does it mean?

Back Again!

FRANK RICHARDS' usually sunny face was very glum. Bob Lawless looked much less cheery than usual. That bright, sunny morning they both felt, as Bob expressed it, as if they had lost a Canadian cent and found a Mexican dollar.

They mounted their ponies outside the porch of the ranch-house and trotted away on the trail to Cedar Creek School in silence. The clouds deepened on their faces as they entered the belt of timber that lay between them and Cedar Creek.

At the fork of the trail, in the timber, they were accustomed to meet their chum, Vere Beauclerc, on his way to school. But this morning there was to be no meeting—and on no morning in the future. The Canadian Pacific Railway had borne their chum away eastward to take the steamer for the Old Country.

Frank and Bob knew that they would miss him sorely. It was not long that the three chums had known one another, but they had become almost inseparable. Frank and Bob felt as if a gap had been left in their lives; they could not imagine Cedar Creek without the "Cherub."

"It's rotten, Franky!" Bob Lawless remarked at last, breaking a long silence.

"Rotten isn't the word!" grunted Frank.

"I guess I don't feel so spry as usual," confessed Bob. "We shall have to get used to the old Cherub being away. I wonder where he is now?"

"Half-way to Quebec," said Frank.

"I guess so. I dare say he will have a good time when he gets home, with a blessed family of noble lords waiting for him!"

"I hope so, Bob."

"I dare say it's a good thing for him. His father will be lonely now he's gone, though."

"He's bound to miss him."

"It will be pretty rotten for him, alone at the shack."

Frank Richards nodded glumly. The remittance man of Cedar Camp was likely to miss his son as much as Frank missed his chum.

"I hear there's a new master coming to Cedar Creek," Bob remarked, after a time.

"Is there?" said Frank carelessly. He wasn't much interested in new masters just then.

"I heard Chunky Todgers saying so. Man coming up from New Westminster, I think."

The chums were drawing near to the fork in the trail now, hidden from sight at present by thick trees.

"I say, Franky, what wouldn't you give to see the old Cherub waiting for us at the fork, just as he used to, on his black horse?" said Bob.

"I'd give all the gold-mines in British Columbia, Bob!" said Frank.

"So would I, with the ranches thrown in!"

They rode on, and as they came in sight of the fork their glances turned into the trail that led away to Cedar Camp.

"Great Scott!"

"My hat!"

A simultaneous exclamation burst from both of them. For the spot was not vacant, as they had expected. At the fork of the trail a pale and handsome schoolboy sat in the saddle of a big black horse, evidently waiting for them. The chums could scarcely believe their eyes.

"Vere!" gasped Frank.

"The Cherub!" yelled Bob Lawless.

It was Vere Beauclerc!

The chums put spurs to their ponies and dashed on, in amazement and delight. Beauclerc smiled as they approached.

"Beau!" shouted Frank Richards. "It's really you?"

"Not your ghost?" exclaimed Bob.

"Myself in the flesh!" said Beauclerc, laughing. "Glad to see me?"

"You bet!" grinned Bob, shaking hands with the Cherub three or four times in his exuberance. "It's a sight for sore eyes, and no mistake! But what in thunder are you doing here?"

"You've come back, Beau?" exclaimed Frank, in great astonishment.

Beauclerc nodded.

"Yes, I've come back."

"And you're not——"

"I'm not going to England, after all."

"Hurrah!" roared Bob.

"Hip-pip!" laughed Frank Richards. "That's jolly good news, Beau—for us, at any rate! But you started yesterday from Kamloops, didn't you, on the railroad?"

"Yes. But——"

"And you got off the train and came back?" said Bob, in wonder.

"As you see."

"Well, I'm jolly glad! You couldn't make up your mind to leave Canada—eh? Shows your sense, old hoss!"

"But your father?" asked Frank.

Beauclerc's smiling face clouded for a moment.

"My father's agreed for me to stay with him," he said. "He's written to Lord St. Austell to-day to say that I shall not come. I never wanted to leave him, you know, or you fellows, either. And I—I thought he needed me with him, and he does. And I'm staying."

Frank gave him a curious look for a moment. He could guess that something had passed at the shack by the creek that Vere Beauclerc did not explain.

"You must have travelled all night back from the railway," said Bob. "You look a bit done, Cherub."

"I'm quite done," said Beauclerc. "I'm not going to school to-day, but I couldn't resist meeting you fellows on the trail as usual to let you know."

"Happy thought!" chuckled Bob. "Franky was just offering all the gold-mines in British Columbia to meet you on the trail as usual!"

Beauclerc laughed. His face, though pale and worn, was very bright. It was evident that all his great prospects in the Old Country did not weigh with him in the balance with losing his chums at Cedar Creek.

"This will be jolly good news for the fellows at the school," said Bob. "And the girls, too; they all adore the Cherub."

"Ass!" said Beauclerc, laughing.

"Well, they do," said Bob. "Frank and I have to take a back seat when you're around, Cherub. I say, isn't this ripping! I'll tell Miss Meadows you're coming back, Cherub—when?"

"To-morrow, as usual. I'm too fagged out to-day."

"Right! Come a bit along the trail."

"Yes, rather!"

In great spirits the three chums rode away along the trail towards the school. Frank and Bob did not ask questions, surprised as they were at the change in the plans of the remittance man and his son. They were only too glad to have their chum back again. They understood that something must have happened to cause the change, but they were not inquisitive.

Within sight of the creek the chums parted, Beauclerc riding back through the timber, and Frank Richards and Bob Lawless went on to school, to acquaint the other fellows with the glad tidings.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,620.

A Strange Adventure!

VERE BEAUCLERC rode back through the timber with a bright and happy face. He was feeling the strain of his hard exertions of the night before, when he had ridden back from the railroad to the Thompson Valley.

But physical fatigue could not dash his high spirits. He should really have been in his bunk at the shack, resting—the rest he sorely needed; but, as he had said, he had not been able to resist meeting his old chums on the trail that morning.

Their delight in his return went straight to his heart. He gave little thought—or, rather, none—to what he had lost by his final refusal of his uncle's offer. He did not want to leave Canada. The great house of Lord St. Austell's was open to receive him. The old nobleman would have given him a kind welcome, and a prosperous career had been before him in the Old Country. But he did not want to leave Canada.

Beauclerc trotted on contentedly on the lone trail, and turned at the fork to ride on to his home. He pulled rein as a sudden sound came from the depths of the wood on his right.

It was the sharp, sudden report of a revolver, and it rang with a thousand echoes among the trees. Beauclerc looked quickly towards the wood. It was not likely that a sportsman after game would be using a revolver, and he wondered why that sudden pistol-shot had been fired.

From the wood there came a distant sound of crashing and trampling. The schoolboy's brows knitted. Someone at a distance from him was running—fleeing, as if for his life, through the tangled larches and thickets.

Beauclerc jumped from his horse. The wood was too thick at that point to ride among the trees. Someone was in danger; he knew that. He was unarmed, but he did not think twice about chipping in. He threw his reins over a low bough and plunged into the wood.

"Help!"

Breathless and panting, the cry came from the distance through the wood.

"This way!" shouted Beauclerc.

A minute later a man came bursting through a clump of larches that crackled as he forced a way through. He was a man of about forty-five, in town clothes, evidently a stranger in the section. His hat was gone, and his clothes and hands were torn by brambles. He was plainly in an exhausted state.

Behind him there sounded a loud trampling in the wood.

"Help!" he panted, as he caught sight of Beauclerc. "They're after me!"

A lithe form came rushing through the larches. A dusky hand gripped the panting man, and he went to the ground in the grasp of 'Frisco Jo, the Mexican loafer of Thompson.

"Help!"

Beauclerc ran forward.

"You scoundrel!" he shouted.

'Frisco Jo, with his knee planted on the struggling man, keeping him down, glared round in enraged surprise. Plainly he had not expected to be interrupted in his rascally work in the lonely timber.

"Stand back!" he shouted, as Beauclerc rushed towards him.

"Let that man go, you scoundrel!"

"Stand back, seniorito!"

There was a crash in the larches, and a burly man came panting up. Another joined him a moment later.

"Keep that lino away!" panted 'Frisco Jo. "He will spoil all!"

Beauclerc halted.

The two rustlers had run between him and the Mexican, and one of them had a still-smoking revolver in his hand.

"Stand back!" he snarled. "You brat, what are you doing here?"

"What are you doing to that man?" answered Beauclerc, his eyes blazing.

There was a cry from the struggling man.

"Run for it! Get help! I am Philip Trevelyan, and these scoundrels— Ah!"

He choked into silence as the Mexican grasped his throat.

"Seize the boy, too!" yelled the Mexican. "He will talk! Seize him, too! Fools, do not let him escape! Caramba! Seize him, I say!"

The two rustlers made a rush at Beauclerc. The latter dodged them promptly. Unarmed as he was, a boy against two grown men, he was helpless to aid the traveller, but he could obey the struggling man's despairing appeal. He dodged into the trees and ran for the trail.

"Stop!"

He ran on without heeding.

"Stop, or I'll plug you!" came a shout behind him.

Crack! The bullet sang past the schoolboy's head.

Another bound and he was in the trail and springing for his horse. He tore the reins from the branch and flung himself into the saddle with breathless haste. Without even stopping to catch the stirrups with his feet, he dashed away towards the fork, and thundered down the main trail. A shot rang from the distance, but the two ruffians were out of sight in a twinkling.

Beauclerc rode on desperately towards the Lawless Ranch. He knew that the cattlemen would be out on the plains, and his only thought was to bring help for the hapless stranger who had fallen among thieves.

As he came out of the timber he caught sight of Billy Cook, the ranch foreman, on the plain, and he shouted to him. There were a couple of Kootenay cattlemen with Billy Cook, and all three turned in their saddles to stare at the schoolboy as he came thundering up.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the ranch foreman. "I reckoned you was off on the railroad, sonny."

"Help!" panted Beauclerc. "There's a man being robbed in the wood! 'Frisco Jo and two other rustlers—"

"By gum!"

"Come—come quick!"

Beauclerc wheeled his horse and rode back into the wood, and Billy Cook, after a stare of surprise, rode after him, calling to the cattlemen to follow. They rode hard, and in a few minutes reached the spot where Beauclerc had heard the pistol-shot. Leaving their horses in the trail, they plunged into the wood.

"Here's the place!" panted Beauclerc.

"But where's the rustlers?" demanded Billy Cook.

Beauclerc stared round him. In the grass and the thickets there were plenty of signs of the struggle. A spent cartridge lay in the grass, and Billy Cook picked it up and examined it curiously. But there was no sign of the rustlers or of their victim.

"Listen!" exclaimed Beauclerc suddenly.

Faintly, from the far distance, came the echo of the beat of horses' hoofs. Billy Cook shrugged his shoulders.

"That's on the lower creek trail," he said. "They've got hosses. We'll never get them. But where's the pilgrim they were handling?"

"They've taken him!" panted Beauclerc.

"By gum! Why should they?"

"I don't know. But they were kidnapping him, and they would have kidnapped me, too, to keep my mouth shut. He called to me that his name was Philip Trevelyan."

"Never heard the name," said the ranchman.

"Stranger in this section, I reckon. I reckon 'Frisco Jo is none too good to rob any galoot down to the skin; but why he should want to rope in a stranger, and carry him off, beats me! They're gone, sonny, and I calculate you'd better get to the sheriff about it."

Beauclerc nodded.

The distant hoof-beats had died away, and pursuit was evidently out of the question. Long before the cattlemen could have forced a way for their horses through the wood the rustlers would have been miles out of sight.

"I'll go to the sheriff at once," said Beauclerc.

He went back to his horse and rode away towards Thompson, much puzzled by the strange occurrence, and concerned for the stranger who had fallen into the hands of 'Frisco Jo and his gang.

Billy Cook went back to his duties on the ranch, equally puzzled.

The New Master!

"YOU fellows heard?"

Chunky Todgers asked the question as the Cedar Creek fellows came out of the lumber schoolhouse after morning lessons.

"Heard what?" asked Frank Richards.

"About the new master," said Chunky.

"Oh, he's here, is he?" asked Bob Lawless.

"Not yet," said Chunky Todgers. "He's coming to-day. I heard Miss Meadows say to Mr. Slimmey that he was coming this morning."

"He doesn't seem to have materialised," remarked Eben Hacke.

"What sort of bloke is he?" asked Harold Hopkins. "You ain't seen 'im, Todgers, but you know all about it, of course."

"No, I ain't seen 'im," answered Chunky, with a playful imitation of the Cockney schoolboy's speech. "But I know something about 'im. He's coming up from New Westminster, where he's been a master in a school. The committee made him the offer last month, and he accepted it. He's an Englishman, like old Slimmey."

"Oh, Jerusalem!" said Eben Hacke. "One Slimmey is enough!"

"What's his name?" asked Bob.

"Trevelyan."

"Well, that's a nice name, anyway! But why hasn't he come, if he was coming this morning?"

"I guess I don't know that!" answered Chunky. "P'r'aps the post-wagon's broken down. It does sometimes."

"He didn't come by the post-wagon from Kamloops yesterday," said Gunten. "That stops at my popper's store in Thompson. There was only one passenger last night, and that was Old Man Beauclerc."

"More likely ride up on horseback from the railroad," said Bob Lawless. "It's no joke bumping about in that wagon. Perhaps he's lost his way in the woods. Let's ask Miss Meadows for a half-holiday to look for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was some curiosity among the Cedar Creek fellows on the subject of the new master. A change in the school naturally interested them. Cedar Creek School was not an old establishment. It had grown up, like all the lumber schools of the Canadian West, to meet the wants of the district, and it was still growing.

The new master, according to Chunky Todgers, who seemed to have gathered a good deal of information, was to take charge of a class, and relieve Miss Meadows of some of her work.

But Mr. Trevelyan had not arrived by the time Cedar Creek went in to afternoon lessons.

Frank Richards noticed that Miss Meadows looked very thoughtful once or twice during the afternoon. Perhaps she was surprised at the delay of Mr. Trevelyan in making his appearance.

It was just as lessons came to an end that the sound of hoofs and the wheels of a buggy were heard in the school-ground.

"That's him, you bet!" whispered Chunky Todgers.

The Cedar Creek fellows came out in time to see Black Sam taking the buggy away and a tall stranger coming into the porch. They saluted him respectfully, at the same time "taking stock" of him with some curiosity.

He was a tall, well-built man, dressed in town clothes. His face, though not handsome, was well-cut, and his eyes very keen in their glance. He wore a dark moustache, but his chin was clean-shaven. An eyeglass gleamed in his right eye.

He glanced at the boys pouring out, and called to Bob Lawless.

"Is Miss Meadows about, my lad?"

"Certainly, sir. I'll show you in if you like."

"Thank you!"

Bob Lawless took the stranger in, and tapped at the door of Miss Meadows' study.

"Come in!"

Bob opened the door.

"There you are, sir."

The stranger passed in, and Miss Meadows rose to meet him.

"Mr. Trevelyan?" she asked.

"Yes, madam."

"Please be seated. I was expecting you earlier, and had really begun to fear that some mischance had happened to you."

"I must apologise, madam," said Mr. Trevelyan. "Somewhat recklessly, I undertook to drive myself here in a buggy I hired at Lone Wolf, and I missed the way."

Bob Lawless had closed the door, but he could not help hearing that much as he went. He was grinning as he came out of the schoolhouse, leaving Mr. Trevelyan in conversation with the schoolmistress.

"It's the new galoot?" asked Tom Lawrence.

"You bet—Trevelyan," said Bob, with a grin. "I heard him tell Miss Meadows that he'd missed his way here from Lone Wolf."

"I guess he must be a jay!" said Eben Hacke. "How the thunder could he miss a trail like that?"

"You never know what a tenderfoot can do," said Bob, laughing. "It's lucky he didn't miss Cedar Creek altogether, and keep on to the mountains."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He looks a decent sort," remarked Frank Richards.

"What's the thing he wears stuck in his eye?" demanded Eben Hacke.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,620.

"Ha, ha!"

"Like a blessed-dude from Noo Yark, with store clothes and a glass eye!" said Hacke, in great disgust.

"Perhaps he needs the eyeglass to help his sight," suggested Frank Richards.

"Then why doesn't he wear barnacles like old man Gunten?"

"Perhaps only one eye wants help."

"Oh, gammon! He's a dude!" said Hacke disparagingly. "A dude from Dudeville, I tell you. He won't go down hyer."

There were a good many eyes on Mr. Trevelyan when he came out of the lumber schoolhouse a little later with Miss Meadows. His eyeglass afforded considerable entertainment. It was probably the only one in the Thompson Valley, and it was certain to be remarked upon if the new master showed it in the streets of Thompson or Cedar Camp.

"Come on, Franky," said Bob Lawless. "We'll drop in and see Beauclere at the shack on the way home."

"Tell Beauclere we'll all be glad to see him here to-morrow," said Tom Lawrence.

"You bet!"

The new master was passing with Miss Meadows as the schoolboys were speaking, and he paused and glanced quickly at Bob. He seemed about to speak to him, but checked himself and walked on with the schoolmistress.

Bob looked after him in surprise.

"What's the matter with the galoot?" he said in wonder. "He fairly jumped. I didn't say anything to startle him, did I?"

"He may know Mr. Beauclere," said Frank, also surprised. "It's a rather uncommon name. Let's get off, Bob."

The chums rode away on the homeward trail, giving the incident no further thought.

Mr. Trevelyan was apparently giving it further thought, for as he walked on with Miss Meadows he remarked:

"You have a pupil named Beauclere here, it seems?"

"Yes," answered Miss Meadows. "He is not at school to-day."

"A very uncommon name."

"Yes; very uncommon," agreed Miss Meadows. She glanced at the tall man by her side. "You may know Mr. Beauclere. He is from England like yourself, Mr. Trevelyan."

"No; I do not remember meeting anyone of that name," said Mr. Trevelyan carelessly. "Ah! This is the corral, is it not?"

And Mr. Trevelyan showed great interest in Cedar Creek and its surroundings, and did not refer to the subject again.

Mysterious!

SHERIFF HENDERSON, of Thompson, was enjoying his after-dinner pipe on his veranda when Vere Beauclere rode up to the house.

Beauclere spotted the sheriff on the veranda, and, leaving his horse tethered to a post, he came up the steps.

"Afternoon!" said Mr. Henderson, glancing at him.

"Good-afternoon, sir! I've got something rather important to report to you," said Beauclere.

"Go ahead!" said the sheriff tersely.

Beauclere explained what had happened in the

timber. The sheriff of Thompson listened in growing surprise, taking his pipe out of his mouth and, in his interest, letting it go out.

"Jerusalem!" commented the sheriff, when the schoolboy had finished. "You're sure you've got it right, sonny?"

"I've told you exactly what happened, Mr. Henderson."

"The name the pilgrim gave you——"

"Philip Trevelyan."

"That's the galoot, I reckon."

Beauclerc looked at him.

"I thought he was a stranger in this section," he said.

"I guess he is, but his name isn't," explained Mr. Henderson. "Trevelyan is the name of the new master for the school. He came up on the railroad yesterday, or should have done so, and was expected at Cedar Creek to-day."

"Oh!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"You see, I know, as I'm on the school committee," explained the sheriff. "It's Mr. Trevelyan from New Westminster, as sure as a gun. You say it was 'Frisco Jo who was manhandling him?"

"Yes; and two other rough fellows whom I did not know by sight."

The sheriff rose.

"I guess I'll look into this," he said. "It beats me! If they robbed him, that's not surprising. But why should they take him off? It's a puzzle. But thank you for coming to me, sonny. I'll look into it."

Beauclerc returned to his horse and rode away from the town. He was as puzzled as the sheriff by the strange occurrence. Had Mr. Trevelyan been some rich mine-owner or prosperous rancher

he could have understood it better. Such a victim might have been worth holding to ransom if 'Frisco Jo had dared to play such a game in the Thompson Valley.

But a school teacher was not worth the trouble. Unless the ruffians were his personal enemies, there was no accounting for it.

Vere had done all he could in the matter now, and he rode back to the shack. He found his father, the remittance man, at work in the clearing. Mr. Beauclerc greeted him with a smile.

"You have stayed a long time, Vere. I thought you were only going to meet your friends on the trail. You ought to be resting."

Beauclerc explained. His father listened in astonishment. The strange story perplexed him, as it had perplexed Billy Cook and the sheriff.

"I've been to Mr. Henderson to tell him," added Vere. "It's in his hands now. I suppose he will soon get those rascals run down."

"Now you had better go in and sleep, my boy."

"Yes, dad."

In a few minutes Beauclerc was in his bunk, sleeping the sound sleep of healthy youth. It was long since his eyes had closed.

The sun was sinking towards the far Pacific, and the shadows lengthening along the creek, when he was awakened by the clatter of hoofs outside the shack. He came out to find his chums there.

"I guess we thought we'd give you a look-in, Cherub!" announced Bob Lawless cheerily.

"And jolly welcome!" said Beauclerc, with a smile. "You'll come in to supper?"

"Right-ho!"

The remittance man was still at work in the fields in the fading light, and the three chums sat down to supper together in the shack.



"Help!" panted the stranger as he caught sight of Beauclerc. "They're after me!" The lithe form of 'Frisco Jo came rushing after the fugitive, and his dusky hand gripped the panting man.

"There's news at school," said Bob, as he helped himself to his fourth egg. "We've got a new johnny there from the Old Country. Did you know there was going to be a new master?"

Beauclerc started.

"Mr. Trevelyan hasn't arrived?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Bob, in wonder. "How the dickens did you know his name? Do you know the Trevelyan galoot? That accounts," he added. "He jumped when I mentioned your name in his hearing."

"He doesn't know my name," answered Beauclerc.

"He looked as if he did."

"Well he can't. But I know his. I'll tell you how."

Once more the story was told of the strange happening in the timber. Frank Richards and Bob Lawless listened, wide-eyed.

"Great gophers!" ejaculated Bob Lawless. "That beats everything, and no mistake! He said nothing about that at the school."

"That's why he was late, though," said Frank Richards.

"But I heard him tell Miss Meadows that he was late because he had missed the trail from Lone Wolf in his buggy!" almost shouted Bob.

It was Beauclerc's turn to look astonished.

"In a buggy?" he repeated.

"Yes, he drove up to Cedar Creek in a buggy."

"He was on foot in the wood when I came on him—I suppose he must have got away from 'Frisco Jo later, then," said Beauclerc. "It's odd that he never mentioned it to Miss Meadows. He must be the same man, I suppose?"

"Well, there can't be two Trevelyans in the section both strangers in town clothes," said Frank Richards.

"I guess not!" said Bob emphatically. "Was your johnny in the timber wearing an eyeglass, Cherub?"

"I did not see it; but he was struggling with 'Frisco Jo when I saw him."

"Mr. Trevelyan at the school wears a monocle," said Frank. "He must be the same man. The trail from Lone Wolf joins our own trail near the timber, so he would pass that way."

"Then he got away from 'Frisco Jo, after all, and got back to his buggy somehow," said Beauclerc. "I shall have to drop in on the sheriff to-morrow and tell him. He's taken the matter in hand. It's very odd that Mr. Trevelyan has not made any complaint to the sheriff himself."

"Dashed odd!" said Bob Lawless. "A chap doesn't usually let himself be handled by a gang of rustlers and say nary a word about it."

"I shall be glad to see the man to-morrow," said Beauclerc. "I don't understand it at all."

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless were thinking over the matter in great perplexity as they rode home to the ranch after supper. It was impossible to doubt that Mr. Trevelyan at Cedar Creek was the same Philip Trevelyan who had called for help in the wood. But, in that case, why had he deliberately kept secret the fact that he had been waylaid in the timber by a gang of rustlers? His explanation to Miss Meadows might have been true so far as it went; perhaps he had missed the trail. But why had he made no mention of his adventure in the timber—certainly an exciting one to befall a stranger?

The schoolboys could not account for it, and they wondered.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,620

Face to Face!

FRANK RICHARDS and Bob Lawless met Beauclerc on the trail as usual the next morning, and they rode on in company to school.

"What about seeing the sheriff, Cherub?" Bob asked. "You want to let him know that it's all serene."

"Yes; but on second thoughts I want to see Mr. Trevelyan first," said Beauclerc. "He may not be the man I saw in the wood."

"But he must be. The same name——"

"Better see him first, though," agreed Frank Richards. "You can ride over to Thompson after morning lessons."

Beauclerc nodded, and they entered the school together.

Mr. Trevelyan was not to be seen; it was yet early for school. Miss Meadows had just come in from an early morning ride, and Beauclerc ran towards her as she went into the porch.

"Miss Meadows——"

"I am glad to see you back again, Beauclerc," said the schoolmistress, with a kind smile.

"Thank you, ma'am! I'm very glad to be back," said Beauclerc. "Can I see Mr. Trevelyan, ma'am?"

"I suppose so, if you wish to," said Miss Meadows in surprise. "Why——"

"I think I met him yesterday, ma'am, on his way to the school," said Beauclerc. "If it were he, I saw him being attacked by a gang of rustlers in the timber, and I went to the sheriff to tell him about it. If he got away from them, Mr. Henderson ought to be told."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Miss Meadows in astonishment. "It can scarcely have been Mr. Trevelyan you saw, Beauclerc, or he would certainly have mentioned such an occurrence."

"Here he comes!" murmured Frank Richards.

The tall figure of Mr. Trevelyan was seen approaching from Mr. Slimmey's cabin, where the new master was putting up till his own quarters were ready. He raised his hat gracefully to Miss Meadows.

Beauclerc's eyes were fixed on him. He was trying to ascertain whether this was the man he had seen in the timber the previous day. That man, he remembered, was tall, and looked about Mr. Trevelyan's age, and was similarly clad. Indeed, the "store" clothes were exactly alike.

Vere had had only one glimpse of the features of the man in the wood, and had only a dim picture of the face in his mind. But such as it was, it did not quite seem to fit in with Mr. Trevelyan's looks. Off-hand, he would have said that the new master was not the man he had seen struggling with 'Frisco Jo in the timber. But he did not feel at all sure. It was for Mr. Trevelyan himself to settle that point.

Certainly the new master gave no sign of knowing Beauclerc by sight.

"Good-morning, Mr. Trevelyan," said Miss Meadows. "This lad is Beauclerc, whom I mentioned to you yesterday."

The new master's keen glance turned on Beauclerc then sharply enough.

"Beauclerc has just told me a strange story," continued Miss Meadows. "He thinks he met you on your way here yesterday."

Mr. Trevelyan started.

"He met me!" he repeated.

"He thinks so."

"That is if you were the man I saw attacked by 'Frisco Jo and his gang, sir," said Beauclerc.

"I want to know, so that I can tell the sheriff it is all right; otherwise he will be searching for you."

"Ah!" Mr. Trevelyan drew a quick breath. "I—I think I understand. You were the boy on the trail who—"

He paused.

"Then it was you, sir," said Beauclerc. "You called out your name to me, and were going to tell me something when 'Frisco Jo stopped you."

Mr. Trevelyan smiled.

"Yes, that's right," he said. "I remember you now, my lad. You were on the trail—"

"I went for help," said Beauclerc. "I came back in a few minutes with some of the Lawless Ranch men, but you were gone and the rustlers, too. So I went to the sheriff at Thompson to report what had happened."

"I—I see! And the sheriff is hunting for this—this 'Frisco Jo, as you call him?" asked Mr. Trevelyan quickly.

"I suppose so; he said he would."

"He ought to be warned at once that there is no occasion to trouble," said Mr. Trevelyan.

"I can send word to him," said Miss Meadows. "Sam is going to Thompson this morning, and I can send a message by him to Mr. Henderson. But if the Mexican were guilty of such an outrage as Beauclerc describes, he should be found and punished."

Mr. Trevelyan shook his head, with a smile.

"I fear you must be surprised, Miss Meadows, that I did not mention the matter to you," he said. Miss Meadows did not conceal her surprise, though she had made no remark on that point. "The fact is, I preferred not to mention it. I was the victim of a rather rough joke, and was very much alarmed, owing to my being a stranger in the vicinity."

"A joke?" echoed Beauclerc.

"Yes," said Mr. Trevelyan, still smiling. "On my way here my buggy was stopped by three rough-looking men, who made me accompany them into the wood. They told me they were going to ride me on a rail as a greenhorn; and one of them actually fired a revolver to scare me, as he supposed. Being a stranger here—what you call a tenderfoot, I suppose—I believed the fellows were in earnest, and I broke away from them and ran—for my life, as I believed."

"Dear me!" said Miss Meadows, smiling slightly.

"Then this lad came on the scene," said Mr. Trevelyan. "He very kindly tried to interfere—doubtless you thought I was in real danger, Beauclerc."

"I did," said Beauclerc very quietly. "You called for help, and one of the men fired after me as I went."

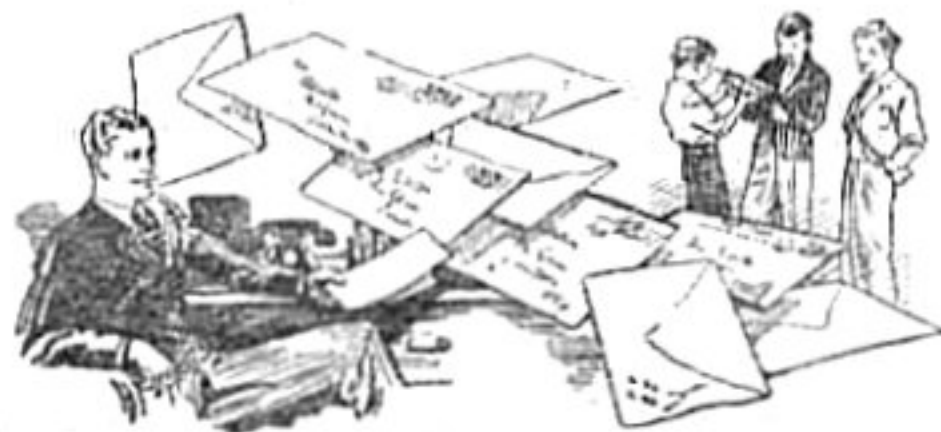
"That was all part of the rough game," said Mr. Trevelyan, laughing. "After you had gone they owned up that they had only been stuffing me, as they called it, and let me go. I believe such pranks are not seldom played on unsuspecting newcomers in the settlements."

"It certainly has happened," said Miss Meadows, with a smile. "Then the whole affair was only a rough joke?"

"That is all, ma'am. I left the three rascals roaring with laughter; and, having recovered from my alarm, I was somewhat ashamed of it, and did not intend to refer to the matter to anyone."

Bob Lawless grinned.

(Continued on page 36.)



THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Let the Editor be your pal. Drop him a line to-day, addressing your letter: The Editor, The GEM, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! At the beginning of the New Year I said I had some fine yarns up my sleeve. Well, we have certainly had many good ones up to now, but, believe me, you "ain't seen nothin' yet," to put it elegantly. In the course of a week or two I shall have some grand news for you concerning special new St. Jim's stories. I have recently been in conference with Martin Clifford, talking over plots and discussing the details of a magnificent new series, and now Mr. Clifford's going right ahead. He promises that the coming yarns will be the very best he's ever written—and you know what that means—something super.

Meanwhile, following on the gripping Cedar Creek series starting in this number, a thrilling series of the boys of the Benbow commences next Wednesday. The first story is called:

"ALL ABOARD FOR THE SPANISH MAIN!"

You can probably guess from the title what is happening to the good old Benbow. Yes, it's off on a voyage, and great is the excitement in the floating school when the news leaks out. An exciting cruise to the Spanish Main, Barbados, Trinidad, and South America! When Tuckey Toodles spreads the good news—having been doing a bit of eavesdropping at a governors' meeting—it seems to the juniors too wonderful to be true. But it is true, and preparations are put in hand right away for sailing. Don't miss the boat—make sure you set sail with the boys of the Benbow.

"THE MISDEEDS OF MICKY!"

Our next St. Jim's yarn is a real scream—a laugh in every line! It features mischievous Micky Mulvaney, the Irish junior of the Fourth. Micky has an irrepressible sense of humour, which is why he is the favourite and heir of his Uncle O'Toole. But Micky wishes devoutly that he wasn't! For his uncle, being so fond of him, comes to St. Jim's to take him back to Ireland. The old boy wants his dear nephew to be nearer him. But Micky doesn't want to leave St. Jim's, and he hasn't the heart to be ungracious to his dotting uncle. What's to be done? Micky solves the problem in his own humorous way, and he will keep you in roars of laughter. Look out for the fun!

"THE IMPOSTOR!"

As you have read this week, there is certainly some mystery connected with the new master of Cedar Creek. He is not what he seems—as Vere Beauclerc suspects. But if he is not the real Mr. Trevelyan, what is the man's game in masquerading as the new master? There is little to gain as an assistant master in a backwoods school. And where is the real Mr. Trevelyan? These are problems which give Vere a deal of hard thinking, but he little dreams what high stakes the impostor is playing for, or that his father is to become involved in the impostor's game!

As usual, Lowther, Blake, and Kerr are their cheerful selves again next week, giving you more amusement and laughs.

All the best!

THE EDITOR.
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,620.



Tuckey upended the pail and the ink and water shot down upon the figure below. Swoosh! "Grooooch!" came a choked exclamation from the unfortunate victim.

Fag!

"DRAKE!" Jack Drake was coming off the gangway from the Benbow when Daubeny of the Shell called to him.

It was Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday at St. Winifred's, and Drake and Rodney were heading for Little Side, with their bats under their arms. Drake did not stop as he called back to Daubeny.

"Can't stay now."

"Ransome wants you."

"Rats!"

Daubeny smiled.

"Well, that's his message," he said. "You can please yourself about going, of course."

Jack Drake stopped then, fixing his eyes upon Vernon Daubeny, his brows knitting in a frown.

"More boat fagging—what?" he asked. "I should have thought that Ransome was fed up with that, after what happened last time."

"I think not," smiled Daubeny. "Ransome's at the nets now, and he wants you to fag at bowling."

And Daubeny of the Shell strolled away and walked down to the cricket ground with Egan and Torrence. The three knuts were grinning as they walked away together.

Drake and Rodney looked at one another rather grimly.

"There goes my cricket for the afternoon," said Drake at last. "That is, if I go."

"Well, it's good practice, bowling to a Sixth Former," remarked Rodney comfortingly.

"That isn't what I want. Daub has put him up to this to keep me away from Little Side."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,620

TUCKEY'S WONDERFUL WHEEZE!

By Owen Conquest.

said Drake savagely. "Ransome was in Daub's study last evening. Toodles says. But—"

"You'd better go, old chap. After all, it's rather a compliment in a way. Only good men are called upon to fag at bowling for the seniors."

"Ransome doesn't mean it as a compliment, though. And what's he at the nets for at all? He doesn't care for cricket; he dodges it all he can. He can't bat for toffee against anything like bowling. I—I suppose I shall have to go. Toodles, old porpoise, take my bat in, will you?"

"Certainly, old chap!" said Tuckey Toodles, relieving Jack Drake of the willow; and Drake, with a rather glum brow, started for Big Side.

Ransome of the Sixth was there, with his chum Steyne, and two or three other Sixth Formers. The bully of the Sixth smiled as the junior came up.

"Come here, Drake. I hear that you're a fairly good bowler, for a fag," he said.

Drake made no reply. He was quite well aware

All went well with Tuckey Toodles' wheeze for making the bullying Ransome squirm . . . until Tuckey applied the finishing touch!

that Ransome was fagging him for reasons quite apart from cricket, and that the senior did not care in the least what his bowling was like.

"Take the ball—catch!"

Ransome tossed the cricket ball to Drake quite suddenly; but Drake's hand came up quickly and he caught it.

"Sold again!" he said sarcastically.

"What do you mean?" snapped Ransome.

"You intended that for my face," said Drake coolly. "I mean what I said."

"Don't bandy words with me, you young sweep! Send me down a few, and don't be a clumsy young ass than you can help."

And Ransome stepped to the wicket.

Drake's brows were knitted as he went on to bowl. The sense of injustice was strong upon him. That Ransome was hand-in-glove with Daubeny of the Shell, his old enemy, he knew well enough, though he had, of course, no proof of it. The prefect was acting within his rights, technically, at least. It was his privilege to call upon any junior to fag at bowling for him, so long as the said junior was not engaged in a

match. And Drake was never likely to be booked for a match so long as Vernon Daubeny was junior captain of St. Winny's.

He sent down a couple of balls carelessly, and Ransome knocked them away. Lovelace of the Sixth came strolling on the field with Oliphant.

"Hallo, young 'un, do you call that bowling?" called out the captain of St. Winifred's good-naturedly. "You can do better than that."

"The young sweep's sulking," said Ransome.

"Eh—what? What are you sulking about, Drake?"

Lovelace had apparently forgotten the prefect's licking which had been administered to Drake in his study a few days before. Drake, as the recipient of the licking, naturally had a longer memory.

"I'm not sulking, Lovelace," he said. "I don't want to fag for Ransome, that's all."

"Stuff! Put your beef into it and don't slack."

Drake gave it up. Lovelace was not likely to understand or to sympathise with his private feud against Hubert Ransome.

"Don't keep me waiting, Drake!" called out Ransome impatiently.

"Right!"

Drake's eyes glittered as he grasped the ball to bowl again. This time he could not be accused of slacking. The ball he sent down would have beaten some good batsmen, and Ransome was very far from being a good bat. The Sixth Former, in fact, never knew where the ball was till he saw his middle stump down.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Lovelace heartily. "That's better."

Drake grinned as he caught the expression of Ransome's face. The bully of the Sixth had not bargained for this.

Steyne set the bails up again, and tossed the ball back to Drake.

"Pull up your socks, old man," he murmured to Ransome. "You won't get into the first eleven at this rate."

Ransome scowled.

"That was a fluke, of course," he said. "You don't think that little sweep can really take my wicket, do you?"

"Ahem!"

Drake put all he knew into the next ball. It had occurred to him that this was a very convenient way of taking down the Sixth Former a peg or two, and making him as tired of cricket fagging as of boat fagging. The ball came down like a bullet, and Ransome swiped at where he thought it was, but where it certainly wasn't. His middle stump was whipped out, and again his wicket had a toothless look.

Some of the Sixth Formers on the ground chuckled aloud. Ransome stared at his wicket, and his teeth came together.

"Another fluke, old man?" murmured Steyne. "Flukes are cheap to-day."

"Oh, shut up!"

"Keep your wool on, old top. Accidents will happen," grinned Steyne.

"By Jove, that kid knows how to bowl!" remarked Oliphant. "You ought to be in the junior eleven, Drake."

"Better tell Daubeny that," answered Drake.

Sawyer major of the Fourth, who was fagging in the field, tossed the ball back to Drake, with a wink.

Drake was in quite a good humour now. He had fully taken Ransome's measure, and he knew that the feeble bat could not put up a defence

against his bowling. That afternoon's fagging was likely to turn out an entertainment.

Ransome was sorry by this time that he had called Drake away from Little Side. His wretched cricket had never been so completely shown up before. He took his stand again in a mood almost of desperation, determined to stop the ball by hook or by crook.

He stopped it barely. But the next ball caught him napping. The bails went down for the third time.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovelace and his companions burst into a laugh. They could not help it. Drake grinned cheerfully.

"Shall I send down some more, Ransome?" he called out.

Ransome stepped away from the wicket, almost choking.

"Done?" asked Lovelace. "Well, really, the kid seems to be a bit above your weight, Ransome. Drake, you can send me down a few if you like."

"Like a shot, Lovelace!" answered Drake readily.

Ransome walked away with his bat under his arm, his brow black. Jack Drake went on cheerfully bowling for the Sixth Formers, while Ransome strode back to the Benbow. He was not likely to fag Drake at bowling again.

The Wolf and the Lamb!

"TEA ready?"

Jack Drake and Rodney asked that question simultaneously as they came into Study No. 8 on the Benbow.

Tuckey Toodles was busy in the study.

Tuckey was not much of a hand at cricket, but he was an adept at cooking and getting meals. He had expended five shillings—provided by Drake—in the school canteen to the best advantage, and the study table looked very inviting to the two hungry cricketers.

"Just on," said Tuckey brightly. "Only got to make the coffee. You open the sardines, Rodney. I say, Drake, Ransome came in here asking for you a few minutes ago."

"What did he want?"

"I don't know. I think he's coming back, though. He seemed to be rather waxy."

"He's been no end chipped about his batting this afternoon," Rodney remarked. "He's never been shown up like that before. But I suppose even Ransome can't lick a chap for taking his wicket."

"He'll find some other excuse, though," said Tuckey Toodles sagely. "I know Ransome. He'll cane you for the way you do your back hair if he can't find any other reason."

"Well, let's have tea," said Drake.

The chums of the Fourth sat down to tea. They were only half-way through that cheery meal when there was a heavy footstep in the passage and the door was thrown open. The juniors rose quickly to their feet as Ransome of the Sixth entered. The prefect had his ashplant under his arm, and his look evidently boded trouble.

"Oh, here you are!" he said, his eyes gleaming at Drake.

"Yes, here I am," said Drake coolly. "Have you come to tea?"

"Have you done your lines?" asked Ransome, taking no notice of Drake's humorous question.

"My lines! What lines?"

"I gave you fifty lines yesterday for kicking up a row in the Common-room."

"Any excuse was better than none, wasn't it?" said Drake.

"I haven't come here to argue with you, Drake. Have you done the lines or not?"

"Certainly."

"Where are they, then?"

"I put them on your study table, as you told me."

"They're not there now."

"Then somebody's bagged them."

"I'm not likely to believe that," sneered Ransome. "You haven't done your lines, and I'm going to cane you. Hold out your hand."

Jack Drake did not hold out his hand; he clenched it instead.

"You know the lines are there," he said. "You're making this an excuse to pitch into me because I made you look a fool at the wicket. You're not going to cane me, Ransome."

"Will you hold out your hand?"

"No I won't."

"Then I shall take you to your Form-master."

Drake breathed hard.

"Follow me!" said Ransome curtly. "I'm going to report the matter to Mr. Packe at once."

He left the study.

"My hat!" murmured Rodney. "You'll have to go to Packe, Drake. You can tell him the facts."

"And Ransome will tell him the reverse," said Drake. "Which is Packe going to believe?"

"I say, I saw Daubeny hanging round Ransome's study," said Tuckey Toodles. "Just like him to bag your lines and get you into a scrape."

"You'd better go, old chap," said Rodney.

"Packe will come here if you don't, and—"

"I'm not going."

Drake sat down again. The cheeriness of the tea-party had departed. The three juniors sat in anxious silence, waiting for what was to happen. It was not long in happening. Before ten minutes had elapsed, Mr. Packe, the master of the Fourth, rustled into the study, with a frowning brow.

"Drake, why did you not come to my study?" he exclaimed angrily. "Did not Ransome tell you to do so?"

"Yes, sir; but—"

"Then you should have come. Do you think that my time is to be wasted in this manner?" exclaimed the Form-master.

Drake was silent. He had placed himself in the wrong again, and there was nothing to say.

"It appears that you have neglected to write out an imposition," said Mr. Packe irritably, "and you have also refused to be caned by a prefect, and refused to obey his order to come to my study. This kind of insubordination, Drake, will not be allowed at St. Winifred's. I can assure you on that point. I shall cane you myself, and with severity. Hold out your hand!"

Mr. Packe had thoughtfully brought his cane with him. Drake obeyed in silence.

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

"There," said Mr. Packe, "I trust that will be a lesson to you, Drake. You must keep your rebellious temper in control, my boy."

And Mr. Packe whisked out of the study, evidently in a state of great annoyance.

Drake sat down again, squeezing his hands hard, in grim silence.

"Have some jam, old chap?" said Tuckey Toodles comfortingly.

Drake shook his head.

"It's all right," he said. "Tuck in and don't mind me. Ow!"

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"Well, I'll go on, if you don't mind," said Toodles. And he went on, with undiminished appetite.

"Ransome's scored again," said Drake, breaking the silence at last. "But I'm not going to stand this. It's no good talking to Packe. I'm going to make Ransome sorry for this somehow."

Tuckey Toodles looked up, with his mouth full.

"Leave it to me, old boy," he said. "I'll think of a wheeze to make him sit up. You know what a chap I am for wheezes."

"Br-r-r-r!"

Tea in Study No. 8 finished rather uncomfortably.

A Wonderful Wheeze!

"I'VE got it!"

Drake and Rodney were in the Common-room after prep, when Rupert de Vere Toodles came up with a most mysterious look and addressed them in a deep whisper.

Drake looked up, not very good-temperedly.

"What have you got, you ass?"

"The wheeze."

"Eh? What wheeze?"

"Fixing Ransome, you know."

"Ass!"

Drake turned away with that brief and uncomplimentary rejoinder. It really looked as if he lacked faith in Tuckey Toodles and his wheezes.

Tuckey stared at him, breathless with wrath and indignation.

"Why, you—you cheeky ass!" he stuttered. "You—you ungrateful bounder! After I've been thinking it out no end—"

"Oh dear! Give us a rest, Toodles!"

"If you call that gentlemanly—"

"Look here—"

"If you call it decent—"

"Let's hear the wheeze, old chap!" said Drake, breaking into a laugh. "Sit down and try this toffee, and tell us all about it."

Tuckey Toodles' indignant wrath disappeared at once.

"Certainly, old chap," he said. "I knew you were only joking, of course. The fact is, Drake, I'm going to back you up, and anybody who is down on you will have to reckon with me! See?"

"Which is more than enough to make Ransome tremble in his shoes," said Dick Rodney solemnly.

"Exactly! Now, it's dark on deck," said Toodles, with a return of his mysterious manner.

"It generally is at night-time, isn't it?" said Drake.

"Of course; I was only mentioning the fact. There's a light on the gangway, and another on the poop, but, as there's a lot of cloud, the stars don't show much. It's quite dark—dark enough for the deed!" said Tuckey Toodles, with a dramatic intensity.

"What deed?"

"Going for Ransome, you know," said Tuckey. "Now this is the wheeze. Any more toffee?"

"That's the lot."

"Oh, all right! Well, the wheeze is this: We can get that tin pail from the canteen without being noticed—"

"What on earth for?"

"And tie a piece of string to the handle," said Toodles.

"Eh?"

"I get into the maintop," said Toodles, "and I lower the string. You tie it on the pail, full of

water, you know, and I pull it up into the maintop. See? Then you get Ransome underneath—"

"Oh!" said Drake, beginning to understand.

Tuckey Toodles grinned expansively.

"See? You can easily get Ransome on deck somehow, and get him close to the mainmast. Then I swamp the pail of water right down on his napper. That's the wheeze! I say, we'll put some ink in it, you know. He, he, he!"

Drake laughed.

"Jolly good idea—if we can get Ransome under the maintop all ready for you," he said.

"Well, you fellows can do that part of the business," said Toodles. "I can't do it all, you know. I'll be in the maintop ready with the pail. You do the rest. As soon as he comes by, I swamp him. I shall shin down the shrouds and get away long before he's finished spluttering. He will never know who mopped him! Of course, that's important!"

Drake and Rodney exchanged a grin.

"Might be worked," said Rodney.

"The notice-board's on the mainmast," said Drake. "Ransome might be got to go and look at it."

"Good! That's easy! We can fix that. There's an electric light over the notice-board—that can be put out."

"Yes, rather," said Toodles. "I don't want Ransome to see me in the maintop if he looks up. If you think you can get Ransome there—"

"Quite easy," said Rodney. "Come on; it's a good stunt."

The three juniors strolled out of the Common-room, and repaired to the deck of the Benbow. Lights gleamed from the sides of the old warship upon the river, but on deck it was very dusky. Rodney strolled along to the mainmast, and stood looking at the notice-board there for a few minutes, while he made sure that he was not observed. Then he quietly detached the electric lamp, and the mast and board were plunged into darkness.

A minute or two later Drake joined him with the pail from the canteen.

"Now, Toodles—"

"I'm ready!" murmured Toodles. "I say, Drake—"

"Yes—quick!"

"I shall expect you to stand me a spread in the canteen for this—"

"All right! Buzz off!"

Tuckey was not much of a hand in the rigging, and he never ventured up to the cross-trees; but even Tuckey was quite at home in the maintop. In a few minutes he had swarmed up the ratlines and was peering down at the deck from the round top.

A string fluttered down, and Drake caught it. He jerked it to show Tuckey that he had caught it, and then tied it to the handle of the pail, which had been filled from the tap outside the canteen.

Tuckey Toodles drew up the pail on the cord.

It disappeared into the darkness above the heads of the two juniors, and Tuckey laboriously landed it in the top.

"All ready now!" said Rodney.

"Yes, come on!" muttered Drake. "We'd better get through before some ass of a prefect notices that the light's out."

The two juniors walked away quickly. They had to look for Ransome of the Sixth now. They ran into Sawyer major of the Fourth, close by

the poop, and there was an exclamation from Sawyer.

"Yow! What's that thumping light out for?"

"Shush!"

"That you, Drake?"

"Yes. Hush! Have you seen Ransome?"

"Yes, he's in the canteen now," said Sawyer major. "I saw him go in with Steyne. After some supper, I suppose."

"Good! Keep clear of the maintop for a bit, Sawyer."

"What on earth for?"

"Something's going to happen there."

"You stay here, Drake," whispered Rodney. "I'll go into the canteen with Sawyer. Ransome's less likely to smell a rat then."

"Oh, all right!"

"But what on earth's the game?" demanded the mystified Sawyer.

"I'll explain. Come along."

By the time Rodney and Sawyer major reached the canteen the latter was apprised of the wheeze, into which he entered with great enjoyment. The two Fourth Formers strolled into the canteen, which was closing. Ransome and Steyne were seated at a little table, with supper before them, and the two juniors carefully avoided approaching them. They came up to Mr. Capps' counter as if they had not observed the two seniors.

Ransome and his chum were discussing the important subject of racing over their supper, and they did not notice the juniors, till Ransome's name reached their ears, and made Ransome start and look up.

"Not after the show he made to-day, Sawyer! Lovelace wouldn't think of putting in Ransome for the match on Saturday."

Ransome pricked up his ears. Feeble cricketer as he was, he was very keen on having a chance to show his form—or his want of it—in a senior school match.

"Well, look on the notice-board, that's all," said Sawyer, in reply to Rodney's remark. "The cricket list is up."

DETECTIVE KERR INVESTIGATES.

Solution:

KERR: While most fellows were doing their best to connect the faces of their clocks or watches with Glyn's code, I know from Glyn's statement that, though it was a "clock" code, a clock would be of no aid in its solution. Glyn said the study clock gave him the idea. But the study clock had been stopped for days, so it was merely the figures on the clock face that Glyn meant. Taking the figures alone, I tried adding each little group of digits together. The result was to make the message read: 19. 5. 22. 5. 14. 2. 15. 13. 2. 5. 18. 19. 18. 1. 16. 9. 4. 12. 12 NOON. 1. 16. 16. 18. 15. 1. 3. 8. 9. 14. 7. 19. 20. 10. 9. 13. 19. Numbering the letters of the alphabet simply from 1 to 26, the message immediately resolved itself into: "SEVEN BOMBERS RAPIDLY APPROACHING ST JIM'S." "12 NOON," which had puzzled me, was obviously a "Y." By Glyn's clock system I found it possible to make up any total up to 23—(9.59). X, Y, or Z had to be represented otherwise—12 NOON doing duty for each letter. I think Glyn was quite astonished when I presented him with my rendering of the message—but, so far, we have not heard whether P.-c. Crump has succeeded in unravelling it or not!



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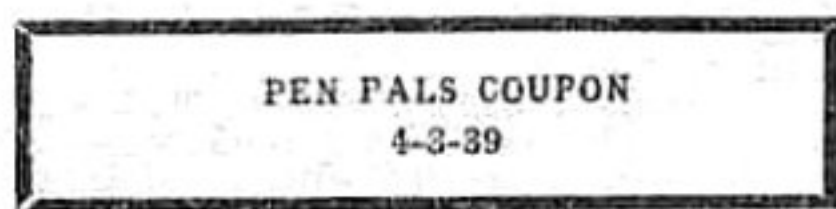
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TUCKEY'S WONDERFUL WHEEZE!

(Continued from page 34.)

But there was no answer to that question.

Drake, Rodney, and Sawyer major scuttled below to Study No. 8, very disinclined to join in the excited discussion of the subject. As they came into Study No. 8 an agonised voice squeaked from under the table:

"Ow! Go away! I'm not here! I don't know anything about it!"

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, is that you, Drake, old chap?" Tuckey Toodles crawled out, blinking with anguish. "I—I say, old top, keep it dark! The—The Head got it! I—I shall be sacked for this! Oh dear!"

"You utter idiot! Keep your silly mouth closed, and it won't get out," said Drake.

"Oh dear! There'll be an inquiry to-morrow!"

"Mum's the word!" said Rodney.

But the next day the Head was in no state for making inquiries. The school learned that he was laid up with a severe cold. And, sympathetic as the juniors were, they could not help feeling a little relieved. They were sorry for Dr. Goring; but if the Head's inquiry had brought the facts to light, they would certainly have been sorer for themselves!

Next Week: "ALL ABOARD FOR THE SPANISH MAIN!"

THE MYSTERY OF THE NEW MASTER!

(Continued from page 29.)

The mysterious affair had resolved itself, after all, into a rough joke of the rustlers upon a tenderfoot—not at all an uncommon happening in the Thompson Valley.

"Unfortunately, I found difficulty in finding my way out of the wood, and so I was a long time getting back to the buggy, which had been left on the trail," said Mr. Trevelyan. "And that, Miss Meadows, is how I came to miss the trail coming here yesterday."

"I will send an explanation to the sheriff," said Miss Meadows, smiling. "But you did quite right, Beauclerc, in acting as you did."

Mr. Trevelyan passed into the lumber school-house with Miss Meadows, and the three chums left the spot.

"So that's the long and short of it, Cherub," said Bob. "Only one of the rustlers' little jokes on the tenderfoot."

"You believe him?" asked Beauclerc quietly.

Bob stared.

"Of course! Don't you?"

"No!"

"Beau!" exclaimed Frank in astonishment.

The school bell called the chums in to lessons before anything more could be said. But the chums of Cedar Creek had plenty of food for thought that morning.

Next Wednesday: "THE IMPOSTOR!"

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