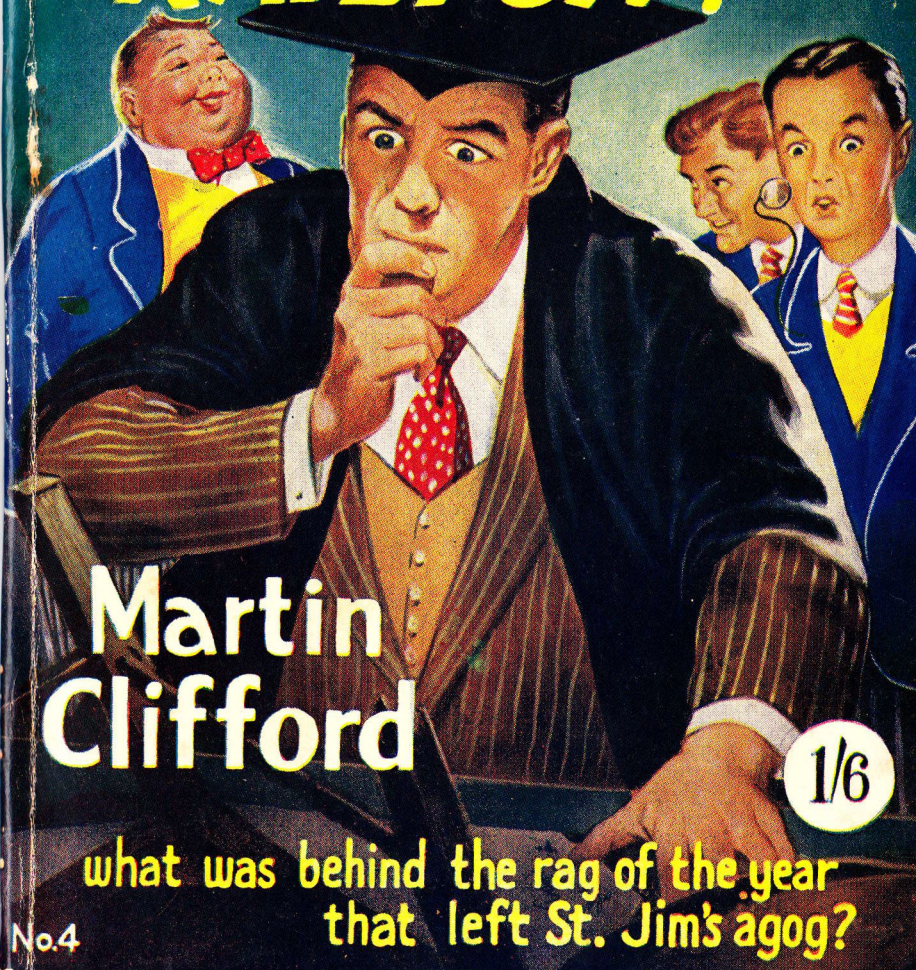




a brand-new adventure of  
Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's

# WHO RAGGED RAILTON?



Martin  
Clifford

1/6

what was behind the rag of the year  
that left St. Jim's agog?

# WHO RAGGED RAILTON?

Martin Clifford



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## **Our Cover Picture**

The Juniors hardly looked at Railton. They stared into the study in blank horror and amazement. The room was wrecked.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, faintly.

"Somebody will be sacked for this!" muttered Monty Lowther.

Mr. Railton looked across at the crowd in the doorway. Seldom had the juniors seen such intense anger in their House-master's face. They did not envy the ragger when Railton found him out.

# Who Ragged Railton?

*by Martin Clifford*

Only four boys at St. Jim's could possibly have wrecked Mr. Railton's study that afternoon when the whole school was watching a cricket match against Greyfriars.

And all the evidence pointed to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy! It meant the "sack" for the swell of St. Jim's, as everyone knew, and there were long faces among Gussy's friends as he waited for that dreaded interview with the Head.

But D'Arcy's impulsive gesture to help Cardew the Cad who was also in serious trouble, stirred the heart of that scapegrace of St. Jim's—and Arthur Augustus was surprisingly saved from the "sack" by a last-minute answer to that question: Who Ragged Railton?

By special arrangement with Frank Richards (Martin Clifford), also creator of Billy Bunter and the Chums of Greyfriars. Other titles in this series are :

TOM MERRY'S SECRET

TOM MERRY'S RIVAL

THE MAN FROM THE PAST

*All characters in this story are imaginary and no reference is intended to any living person. (Copyright March, 1952).*

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# 1

## The Black Sheep !

“STOP!”

“Come on, fathead!”

“Weally, Tom Mewwy—”

“Buck up, ass!”

“Weally, Blake—”

“Come on, Gussy, you chump!” shouted six St. Jim’s juniors, all at once.

But Arthur Augustus D’Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form at St. Jim’s, did not come on.

He braked, and jumped down from his bicycle.

Six juniors, who did not brake, surged onward. They left Arthur Augustus behind them on the tow-path by the rippling Ryll.

The fact was, that it was injudicious to stop there. Cycling on the tow-path was strictly forbidden. Tom Merry and Co. ought not to have been there at all on their jiggers.

Having somewhat recklessly taken the tow-path as a short cut back to the school, they were in a hurry to get clear of it. Railton, their House-master, sometimes took a walk along the Ryll after class, and if Railton had walked into that bunch of cyclists, there would have been Extra School all round.

And there was another reason for pushing on, quite a good one. At the spot where Arthur Augustus suddenly halted, there was a fence at the back of the tow-path, half hidden by willows. It was the garden-fence of the Green Man, a somewhat insalubrious spot strictly out of bounds for all St. Jim’s.

To stop on the tow-path at all was injudicious. To stop just opposite the back gate of a pub was doubly so. There were black sheep at St. Jim’s, like Cardew of the Fourth and Racke of the

Shell, who sometimes slipped in surreptitiously by that back gate to see a man about a horse. Tom Merry and Co. certainly would not have liked to be suspected of such equine interests.

Nevertheless, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did stop.

Six exasperated juniors came to a halt a dozen yards further on, jumped down, and wheeled their bikes back: wondering what Arthur Augustus fancied he was up to, and looking rather as if they regarded him as a proper object for boiling in oil.

"You unutterable ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry, "What are you stopping here for? Do you want Extra School on Wednesday if a beak happens to blow along?"

"Wathah not, Tom Merry. But—"

"Dropping into the Green Man for a drink?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"We were silly asses to ride on the tow-path at all," said Manners. "The sooner we get off it the better, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"Oh, let's stand here while Gussy exercises his chin!" said Jack Blake. "Extra School on Wednesday will be a pleasant change from cricket."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come on!" howled Digby.

"Weally, Dig—"

"What are you stopping for?" bawled Herries. "What are you sticking your bike against that fence for, you lunatic?"

Really it was amazing as well as exasperating. Heedless of objurgations from his friends, Arthur Augustus was leaning his handsome jigger up against the Green Man fence, beside the little gate, as if he had no intention of remounting at all and riding on.

"Gone mad?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Hasn't far to go!" sighed Blake.

"Look here, are you coming on?" demanded Herries. "If you're not, we'll jolly well cut on without you. I don't want Extra if you do."

"Yaas, you fellows had bettah cut on," said Arthur Augustus, thoughtfully. "No good waitin' for me heah at the wisk of a wov."

"Waiting for you!" repeated Tom Merry, blankly. "Are you going to stick here, you fathead? Why?"

"I am goin' in at this gate—"

"What?" yelled six fellows in chorus.

"Weally, you fellows, I wish you would not woar at a fellow like that," expostulated Arthur Augustus. "It wathah thwows

me into a fluttah when fellows wear at me—”

“What are you stopping here for?” howled Blake.

“Pewwaps you fellows did not see what I saw as we came along,” said Arthur Augustus. “I was a little ahead of you, and I saw him disappearin’ in at that gate—”

“He! Who?”

“My wrelative, Cardew.”

“Oh!” said Tom Merry.

The juniors all looked round, at the gate and the fence and the willows. They were well aware that it was not an unaccustomed thing for Ralph Reckness Cardew, of the Fourth Form, to dodge in at that gate. They were aware, too, that Cardew’s wild ways were a matter of concern to his relative, the Honourable Arthur Augustus D’Arcy. But they did not see in all this any reason for remaining where they were, at the risk of Extra School if a “beak” spotted them with their bikes on the tow-path.

“That rat, Cardew!” growled Herries.

“Pway do not wefer to my wrelative as a wat, Hewwies,” said Arthur Augustus, mildly. “He is wathah a weckless young wascal, but not a wat.”

“Bother him, anyhow,” said Digby. “Nothing to do with us, what he does. Let him rip.”

“As he is my wrelative, Dig, I cannot let him wip!” said Arthur Augustus. “I am goin’ to follow him in, and fetch him out.”

“What?” yelled six fellows.

“Weally, you fellows, I have already wemarked that I stwongly dislike bein’ woared at—”

“You’re going into that show!” gasped Tom Merry. “Why, a fellow might be sacked for it.”

“That is why I am goin’ to get Cardew out, Tom Mewwy.”

“Do you think he would listen to a word from you?” bawled Blake.

“I twust so, Blake.”

“Mad as a hatter,” said Monty Lowther. “Take him by the ears and sling him on his bike.”

“Good egg!”

“Collar the howling ass!”

“Bai Jove!” Arthur Augustus backed away, hastily, to the gate. “You fellows cut on—I am not goin’ on without Cardew. I do not want you to get into a wow, so pway cut on, and—”

“Collar him!”

Six juniors closed in on Arthur Augustus. That anything he might say to Cardew would produce any effect on that black



sheep, they did not suppose for one moment. In any case they were not going to allow him to break bounds in so very questionable a spot, if they could help it.

But, as it happened, they could not help it.

Before they could grasp him, Arthur Augustus, moving with very unusual celerity, whipped the gate open and whipped in. The closing gate almost banged on six noses.

"Gussy!" yelled Blake.

"D'Arcy, you ass! Come back!" shouted Tom Merry.

But answer there came none! Leaving his bike leaning on the fence, and his friends raging on the tow-path, Arthur Augustus disappeared through the bushes in the ill-kept garden of the Green Man. Tom Merry and Co. gazed at one another, with feelings almost too deep for words.

"The blithering ass!" breathed Herries.

"If he's spotted there—!" muttered Manners.

"Oh, the chump!"

"That rotter Cardew ought to be kicked—"

"We'll jolly well kick him."

"What are we going to do?" said Tom Merry. "We can't hunt through that den for him—"

"We can't go on and leave him there!" hissed Blake. "Oh, won't I punch his silly head for this!"

"Better wait," said Lowther, dubiously.

"Oh, you Shell-fish cut on," said Blake. "We'll wait—that prize ass is our pal, and we can't leave him to it. You cut on and get clear."

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther shook their heads. They would gladly have booted Arthur Augustus all the way to school. But they did not feel like cutting on and leaving him where he was.

Six fellows stood in an exasperated group, staring over the gate into the weedy, tangled garden. What they could do, in the peculiar circumstances, was a problem.

But they were not given much time to solve that problem, if soluble it was. A sharp voice rapped out behind them, from the tow-path.

"What are you doing here?"

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

"Oh, crumbs!" breathed Blake.

"Railton!"

And the six whirled round, in dismay, to face the stern eyes of Mr. Railton, House-master of the School House at St. Jim's.

## Where is D'Arcy ?

MR. RAILTON stood looking at the dismayed six, his brows knitted. Generally Railton had a kindly look. He was a kind and popular House-master, liked by all, or almost all, the fellows in his House. Every one of the six juniors, in fact liked him: but certainly they were not glad to see him, at that moment. They had been speeding along the tow-path, to get clear of it in haste, lest Railton might walk that way after class, as he often did. Now they were fairly caught. There they stood, six juniors, with seven bikes leaning on the fence under his severe eyes.

"Merry!" rapped Mr. Railton.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" stammered Tom.

"You are well aware that cycling on the tow-path is prohibited, not only by the Head-master's order, but by the local bye-laws."

"Oh! Yes, sir."

"Yet you are here, with your bicycles, six of you."

Tom made no reply to that. There was, in fact, no reply to be made. It was only too evident that they were there, the six of them, with their bicycles.

"You are junior captain of your House, Merry! You should know better than this."

Tom's face crimsoned. It was a true bill! He should have known better—in fact, he did know better, only the temptation to take the short cut back to St. Jim's had caused a little lapse.

"It's a short cut, sir," ventured Blake.

"That is no excuse, Blake.

"Oh! Yes, sir! No, sir."

"I cannot allow such thoughtless disregard of the rules to pass

unpunished," said Mr. Railton. "You, Merry, as the most responsible, will go into Extra School on Wednesday afternoon."

"Yes, sir!" mumbled Tom.

"The others will take two hundred<sup>e</sup> lines each!" said Mr. Railton. "I shall speak to your Form-masters when I return to the school. You will wheel your bicycles back to the school. I forbid you to mount them on the tow-path."

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Now go!" rapped Mr. Railton.

The hapless juniors hoped that he would walk on, with that. So far, he did not seem to have noted the number of bikes against the fence—seven bikes to six juniors. But if they took their machines, under his eyes, it was quite certain that he would note that one cyclist was missing—at the very gate of the Green Man! Deeply and zealously as they would have liked to boot Arthur Augustus for landing them in this, they did not want his House-master to guess where he was.

But Mr. Railton did not walk on. He stood frowning at the six, evidently intending to see them off before he pursued his walk.

Slowly, very slowly, they turned to their machines. There was no help for it. Railton was already looking impatient.

So far he had no suspicion that their halt at that particular spot had any connection with the Green Man. They were not fellows to be easily suspected of pub-visiting. But what was he going to think, when he noted that the owner of one machine was missing, at that spot?

There was no help for it. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, Blake and Herries and Digby, detached their machines from the fence, to wheel them away. Blake even put a hand on D'Arcy's handsome jigger, with a faint—a very faint—hope that he might wheel it off with the rest unnoticed. That faint hope was very speedily obliterated.

"Stop!" rapped Mr. Railton. He had quite a startled look, for a moment, and then his face darkened. "Blake, whose bicycle is that?"

"D'Arcy's, sir," stammered Blake.

"Where is D'Arcy?"

"He—he—he isn't with us just now, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Railton.

Seldom had the House-master of the School House been seen to look seriously angry. But he looked very angry indeed now.

"This must be explained," he said, grimly. "I find you here at the back gate of a disreputable place out of bounds to the

school, and one of you has left his bicycle and disappeared. He is not to be seen. Where is he?"

Silence!

The House-master's face set harder and darker. Up to that moment, he had supposed that he had to deal merely with a careless and thoughtless infraction of the rules. Now the affair was taking a more serious turn. A much less keen man than Victor Railton would have seen how the matter stood.

"Merry!" he rapped.

"Yes, sir," almost groaned Tom.

"D'Arcy was riding with your party?"

"Ye-ee-es, sir."

"He has left his bicycle here. He is not on the tow-path. Am I to understand that he has gone in at that gate?"

No reply.

"I understand!" said the House-master. "D'Arcy, a boy whom I should never have dreamed of suspecting of such conduct, had gone in there, and you were all waiting for him."

Tom's face was burning.

"It—it isn't exactly like that, sir," he stammered. "We—we were waiting for D'Arcy, but—but—but—"

"Has he gone through that gate or not?"

"It was because—because—" Tom stammered helplessly. He could not tell why D'Arcy had gone in at that gate, without giving Cardew away.

"Yes or no?" rapped Mr. Railton, sharply.

"Yee e—es, sir, but—but—"

"He is there now?"

"I—I suppose so, but—but—"

"And you are all parties to his action?"

"Oh! No! Yes! You—you see, sir—"

"I think I see only too clearly," said Mr. Railton, and there was a note of contempt in his voice that struck all the juniors almost like a lash. "This is a matter for the Head-master to deal with, and you will all—"

"It isn't like that, sir," blurted out Jack Blake, desperately. "Gussy—I mean D'Arcy—he's only playing the giddy ox as usual—I—I mean, he's only gone in because—because—"

"He can have but one reason, I suppose, to enter such a place, Blake. It is because he has disreputable acquaintances there," said Mr. Railton, sternly.

"Nothing of the kind, sir," said Tom Merry. "Look here, you fellows, we've got to tell him. Please listen to me, sir. D'Arcy went in, because he saw another fellow go in, and he

wanted to persuade him to come out again."

"He should have done nothing of the kind, if that be so."

"I know, sir! But—but that's all he did."

Mr. Railton scanned six crimson faces intently. He seemed to reflect for a few moments before he spoke again.

"Who was the boy that went in, Merry?"

"We—we didn't see him, sir."

"Only D'Arcy saw him, sir—he was a bit ahead of us," said Blake. "We never knew why he had stopped, till he told us."

"Never saw a sign of him, sir," said Monty Lowther.

It was strictly true: they had seen nothing whatever of Ralph Reckness Cardew on the spot. Only Arthur Augustus had seen him. But though it was strictly true, it savoured a little more of the wisdom of the serpent than of the innocence of the dove. It was soon clear, however, that such wisdom was of no use in dealing with Railton.

"None of you saw him?" asked the House-master.

"No, sir."

"Did not D'Arcy, who saw him, tell you who he was?"

Silence!

Mr. Railton compressed his lips.

"Very well," he said, "I shall question you no further. I shall question D'Arcy. I hope and believe that what you have told me is true, and that D'Arcy has been guilty of nothing but an act of thoughtless folly. But he will require to make that very clear, if he is not to be sent up to Dr. Holmes for judgment. Now you may go!"

In grim silence, the six juniors wheeled their machines away along the tow-path. Mr. Railton remained where he was. Evidently, he did not intend to continue his walk.

Looking back, from a little distance, Tom Merry and Co. could see the athletic figure of their House-master, standing there, like a ramrod, close by the back gate of the Green Man—plainly waiting for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to emerge.—They wheeled on glumly, and left the tow-path behind. Six faces were clouded as they wheeled the bikes in at the bike shed at the school.

"Oh, that ass!" breathed Blake. "He will get it this time where the chicken got the chopper—right in the neck."

"Railton will believe—!" said Manners, hesitating.

"Yes, if Gussy gives Cardew away. But think he will?" said Blake, savagely. "He wouldn't give a man away, if they were going to boil him in oil. Gussy will have to take the knock for this."

"Oh, the silly ass!" said Herries.

"Might be bunked," muttered Dig.

"Rotten!" said Lowther. "The ass—the chump—"

Six fellows with clouded faces headed for the School House. In the quad they came on Levison and Clive—Cardew's friends in No. 9 Study in the Fourth. Levison called to them.

"Seen anything of Cardew, you fellows?"

"No—and don't want to!" snorted Blake.

"He went out—!" said Clive.

"Oh, if you want to know where he is, I can put you wise," snapped Blake. "Look for him in the pub at Rylcombe, backing a horse with Bill Lodgey. I hope Railton will spot him there, and St. Jim's will get shot of him."

And the juniors went on to the House, leaving Levison and Clive staring after them rather blankly.

### 3

## Hop it!

“**B**AI Jove! Cardew—!”

“Oh, gad! You here?” said Cardew.

He smiled.

Bill Lodgey stared.

At some distance from the gate of the tow-path, there was a summer-house in the Green Man garden, half-hidden by clambering wistaria. In that summer-house, on a bench, sat two figures which met the eyes, and eyeglass, of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he came up the weedy path through the trees and bushes.

One was thickset, squat, with a red face, and greasy head on which a bowler hat slanted. The other was an extremely well-dressed junior of St. Jim's, almost as elegant as Arthur Augustus himself.

Bill Lodgey stared at D'Arcy, in blank astonishment, amazed to see him there. Cardew smiled, as if amused. He was probably as surprised as the racing man, but his face indicated only a mocking amusement.

“So you are heah, Cardew?” said Arthur Augustus, sternly.

Cardew nodded pleasantly.

“Quite! Trickle in, dear man—there's room on this bench. You never told me you were expecting to see a relative of mine, Bill.”

“My eye!” muttered Bill.

“If your business is pressing, I can wait, D'Arcy,” said Cardew. “What did you want to see Bill about?”

“Weally, Cardew—”

“If it's the two-thirty at Abbotsford on Wednesday, Bill's the man to give you the odds,” said Cardew. “What's your fancy?”

“You uttah wottah—!”

"Mine's Naughty Ninny," said Cardew. "I was just talking it over with Bill. You can get three to one, and I don't mind telling you, D'Arcy, as you're a relation of mine, that he's a good horse. A dark horse, old boy, and it's my opinion that he will leave the field standing on Wednesday."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed at his relative, in speechless indignation.

It was hardly possible that Cardew could imagine that the swell of St. Jim's was there on business like his own. It amused him to pull Arthur Augustus's noble leg.

Bill Lodgey blinked from one to the other, puzzled. Cardew drew a cigarette case from his pocket. He extended it to his relative.

"Smoke?" he asked, affably.

"My eye!" repeated Mr. Lodgey.

"You uttah wottah and wapscallion!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, finding his voice. "I saw you come in at the gate by the wivah, Cardew, and I followed you in to take you away fwom this wotten, wascally place."

"Kind of you," said Cardew. "I'll walk home with you, with pleasure, when I'm through here, Gussy. We'll discuss Naughty Ninny on our way back to the school, shall we? A very good horse—"

"I wefuse to listen to your wubbish, Cardew."

"You think I don't know a gee's form?" asked Cardew. "Naughty Ninny's all right, old boy, and you could put your shirt on him. Ask Bill! You'll tell my relation all about Naughty Ninny's chances, Bill?"

"My eye!" said Bill, for the third time.

Arthur Augustus's face was very pink.

"I have come into this wotten show, Cardew, entiahly on your account. As you are vewy well awah," he exclaimed. "I will not allow a relative of mine to go on the woad to wuin if I can stop him."

"If!" repeated Cardew, pleasantly. "But that's rather a big 'if', isn't it?"

"Pway come away at once, Cardew."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! What are you laughin' at, Cardew?"

"Your little joke," said Cardew, blandly. "I don't know whether you've met my relative before, Bill—but he's no end of a funny man. Carry on, Gussy! Clean wholesome fun, what?"

"I was not jokin', Cardew!"

"You were!" assured Cardew. "One of your best! Keep it up!"



"I wequest you to come away fwom this wotten place immediately," said Arthur Augustus, breathing hard. "You would be sacked fwom the school if you were spotted heah, Cardew, and I object vewy much to a relative of mine bein' sacked. Get up at once, and come away."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you are goin' to cackle at everythin' I say, Cardew—"

"You shouldn't be so funny," said Cardew. "You're the man to keep fellows in a roar. But if you've finished your funny turn, mind blowing away? I'm talking business with Mr. Lodgey, and you're interrupting."

"I shall not go without you, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus, firmly. "I have come heah for you, and shall not go without you."

"O.K.," drawled Cardew, "Take a pew, and dry up, then."

"Will you come away with me at once, you wottah?"

"Not so's you'd notice it," grinned Cardew.

"I twust, Cardew, that you will not dwive me to use wuff measures," said Arthur Augustus, "But if you wefuse to come away, I am pwepared to dwag you away by your yahs!

"Ha, ha, ha,!" roared Cardew.

"My eye!" said Mr. Lodgey, "Look 'ere, young gent, you'd better get out. Don't you come kicking up a shindy here."

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle a little more firmly into his eye, and gave the racing man a look of ineffable scorn.

"Pway do not butt into this, Mr. Lodgey," he said, "I desiah to have nothin' whatever to do with you. I am heah to take away my welative who is disgwacin' himself and his school. You will have the extweme kindness to mind your own business. Now, Cardew. Are you comin', or must I make you?"

Cardew yawned.

Arthur Augustus stepped into the summer-house. There, he pushed back his cuffs. The expression on his aristocratic face was one of grim determination. If Cardew would not leave the precincts of the Green Man of his own accord, Arthur Augustus was going to help him!

Arthur Augustus, with all his elegant ways, was a tough customer in a scrap. Whether he could have handled Cardew to the extent of compelling him to quit the Green Man, was perhaps a moot point. But Cardew, who was there to talk racing matters, and not for scrapping, was not disposed to put it to the test. He whispered to Bill Lodgey, who nodded and grinned.

"O.K, sir," said Bill, "Leave 'im to me."

Mr. Lodgey rose to his feet, and intervened between Arthur

Augustus and his relative. He juttet out a bristly jaw, and dropped a large and far from cleanly hand on D'Arcy's shoulder.

"Now you 'op it, young 'un," said Mr. Lodgey, "You 'op it afore you get 'urt."

Arthur Augustus crimsoned with angry indignation.

"Bai Jove! Take your paw off my shouldah at once!" he exclaimed.

Instead of removing his "paw," Mr. Lodgey gripped with it and twisted the junior out of the summer-house. Cardew sat and smiled.

"You wuffian!" gasped Arthur Augustus, "Welease me at once, or I shall stwike you!"

"Kim on!" said Mr. Lodgey.

"You wascally wuffin—Cardew, you wottah—Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus resisted manfully as Mr. Lodgey dragged and shoved. He hit out, landing his fist on Lodgey's chest, and hit out again, catching him on his bristly chin. Lodgey, scowling, grasped him with both hands, twisted him round, and fairly pushed him along the path towards the river-gate.

Cardew sat grining, evidently highly amused by the scene. Arthur Augustus had no chance of "making" him quit the Green Man. He had his hands full with Bill Lodgey—more than full. Arthur Augustus was really a stout lad when it came to scrapping, and he had unlimited pluck. But he was little more than an infant in the grasp of the racing man. Bill Lodgey had been through many a scrap in his time, with much tougher opponents than Gussy. The swell of St. Jim's, manfully as he resisted, was wax in his hands.

He went stumbling and tumbling along the weedy path, in Lodgey's grip, resisting at every step, panting—but going all the time. There was no help for it: he had to go. A laugh followed them from the summer-house as they disappeared through the bushes. That was the last Arthur Augustus heard or saw of his relative. Ralph Reckness Cardew. Indeed he almost forgot Cardew, in the stress of his struggle in Lodgey's muscular grasp.

"You uttah wuffian!" he panted, "I ordah you to welease me! You fwightful wuffian and wapscallion—wow! Leave off twistin' my arm! Ow!"

"Are you going to 'op it?" demanded Mr. Lodgey, when he had hustled and dragged and pushed the swell of St. Jim's half-way to the gate.

"Certainly not, without my welative."

Lodgey scowled, and twisted him from the path, towards the edge of a muddy, weedy pond.

"That's enough from you!" he snarled, "You're trespassin' 'ere, as well you knows! You're going into that pond, you are, as a warning to you!"

"Oh, cwumbs!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

He stared at the muddy, slimy patch of water in horror. What his clothes would be like, after a dip in that foul pond, staggered his imagination! And there was no doubt that Bill Lodgey could pitch him in, if he liked. Arthur Augustus had bitten off much more than he could chew, in tackling the racing man.

"In you go, if you don't 'op it at once!" snapped Bill, "Now, then, are you 'opping it, or goin' into that there pond? Sharp!"

"I—I—I will leave these pwemises, wathah than have my clobbah wuined in that howwid pond," gasped Arthur Augustus.

There really was no help for it! The racing man was much too much for him, and Arthur Augustus had no choice but to yield the point. He was very reluctant to go without Cardew: but between him and Cardew was Bill Lodgey, whom he could not begin to handle.

Bill jerked him back to the path, where he released his grip, and pointed through the trees and bushes towards the gate.

"Ook it," he snapped.

Arthur Augustus gave him one look, which spoke volumes of contempt, scorn, and disdain, but did not produce the slightest effect on Bill. Then, with deep feelings, and without a word, he walked along the weedy path through the trees. Bill, with a grunt, turned and tramped back to the summer-house to continue his talk with Cardew there. Arthur Augustus, considerably breathless and rumped, and almost on the boil with wrath and indignation, walked to the gate, and opened it.

He passed out and the gate clanged behind him.

"D'Arcy!"

"Oh!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

He was about to reach for his bicycle. Instead of which, he jumped almost clear of the ground, his eyes popping at Mr. Railton, standing on the tow-path, with eyes fixed on him.

"Oh!" he repeated, blankly.

"You have been out of bounds, D'Arcy."

"Oh! Yaas! No Yaas!" stammered Arthur Augustus, "I—I—"

"Your friends have explained to me that you went into the disreputable place to fetch out another St. Jim's boy who had gone in. Is that the fact?"

"Oh! Yaas, wathah, sir."

"Who was it?"

"Weally, Mr. Wailton—"

## WHO RAGGED RAILTON ?

"I have asked you a question, D'Arcy," rapped Mr. Railton. Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"I am sowwy, sir, that I cannot weply to that question," he answered, quietly and firmly, "A fellow is not bound to give anothah fellow away, sir."

The School House-master looked at him long and hard. Then he spoke quietly.

"Go back to the school now, D'Arcy! You will wheel your bicycle till you leave the towing-path. I shall question you later—if it is necessary."

"Vewy well, sir."

Arthur Augustus lifted his bicycle from the fence, and wheeled it away. Mr. Railton remained where he was. If what the juniors had told him was true, there was some St. Jim's fellow still in the precincts of the Green Man, who had gone in by that gate. Arthur Augustus had walked into his hands. The other fellow—so far unknown—would walk into his hands also—if he was there! Whether he was there, or whether Tom Merry and Co. had been "telling the tale," was what the School House-master had to learn—and he waited, patiently. But though he waited till it was past the hour of calling-over at St. Jim's, no one emerged on the tow-path from the back gate of the Green Man: and Mr. Railton, at last, gave up his vigil, and walked back to the school with a very grim brow.

## Quite a Surprise !

“**H**ERE’S the silly ass !”  
 “Weally, Blake—”

“Here’s the prize idiot !”

“Weally Tom Merry—”

“Did Railton bag you ?”

“Yaas, wathah.”

Six very worried juniors were gathered in Study No. 6, in the School House, when Arthur Augustus walked into that celebrated study. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, of the Shell, were as much worried as Blake and Herries and Digby of the Fourth. All of them were deeply concerned about the fate of Arthur Augustus D’Arcy: and not a little concerned about themselves.

Arthur Augustus himself did not look worried, as he came in. He was somewhat serious, that was all. Even Arthur Augustus’s aristocratic intellect could realise that the affair had a serious aspect.

“So Railton bagged you, coming out ?” asked Tom.

“Yaas !”

“Did he think you’d been pub-visiting ?” asked Lowther.

Arthur Augustus fixed his eye, and his eyeglass, on Monty Lowther.

“I twust not, Lowthah,” he answered, stiffly, “I certainly twust that Wailton would nevah harbour such a suspish.”

“Did you tell him— ?” began Manners.

“Natuwally, I explained that I had gone in to hook out anothat fellow, as it was the twuth.”

“Did he believe you ?” asked Herries.

The fixed stare of Arthur Augustus’s eyeglass was transferred to George Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies, I twust that Wailton would not be likely to doubt my word," he answered, "Pway do not be widiculous."

"You howling ass," said Blake. "Any fellow caught coming out of a pub could spin the same yarn, couldn't he?"

"Wailton will hardly doubt my word, Blake! I should be vewy much surprised, and vewy much enwaged, if he did."

"Did he ask you the fellow's name?" asked Manners.

"Yaas, and I told him I was sowwy I could not give it. That is all wight—Wailton undahstands quite well that a St. Jim's man cannot sneak. He said that he was goin' to question me latah, if it was necessawy. I do not quite see what he meant by that," added Arthur Augustus, thoughtfully.

"You left him there?" asked Tom.

"Yaas, wathah."

"Waiting for another catch, I suppose," said Tom, "If Cardew went in by that gate, he will come out by it, and Railton will nail him."

"Bai Jove! I never thought of that!"

"Do you ever think of anything?" inquired Blake, "Have you anything to do it with, if you tried it on?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Serve the rotter right, if Railton gets him," grunted Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies, I do not want a welative of mine bunked from St. Jim's, howevah much he may mewwit it."

"You precious ass!" said Blake, "You've landed us all, and Cardew too. Why couldn't you mind your own business, and let that rat rip?"

"I wegarded it as bein' my business, Blake! I could not stand idly by and see my welative on the woad to wuin—"

"You howling ass!" roared Blake, "You've got Tom Merry Extra School on Wednesday, and all of us lines all round. We should have been off that dashed tow-path before Railton came along, if you hadn't—"

"That's not the worst," said Tom, "If Railton doesn't nail Cardew, he will want to know who it was. We can't tell him, and that will look just as if we were spinning a yarn all the time—"

"Well, we never saw him," said Blake, "Gussy told us he saw the rat go in—we couldn't say it was Cardew, off our own bat. It's Gussy that will be up for spinning a yarn, if Railton doesn't get the rat."

"Wubbish!" said Arthur Augustus.

"You're sure Railton stayed on there?" asked Tom.

"Yaas, wathah! I looked back once, and saw him standin' there just like a wamwod! Now I come to think of it, pwobably he was waitin' for the othah fellow to come out!" Arthur Augustus's face became very grave. "That will mean that Cardew will have to go up to the head."

"Serve him right!" growled Herries.

"If he's there at all!" snorted Blake, "Sure you saw him go in, Gussy, or were you just dreaming it?"

"Pway do not be an ass, Blake! He was there all wight, as I found him in the summah-house with that wuffian Lodgey, talkin' about horses. He wefused to come away with me, and I was goin' to dwag him out, but that wuffian Lodgey gwabbed me, and—and—and I—I didn't—"

"Lodgey chucked you out?" asked Dig.

"I should have wefused to be chucked out, Dig. Howevah, as he was wathah too hefty for me, I had to wetire fwom the scene. I twust that I wetired with some dignity."

"Well, Railton's bound to get Cardew, as he got Gussy," said Blake. "He will be up before the Big Beak, and sacked as likely as not—and he can thank Gussy for it. Nobody would have known a thing if Gussy hadn't barged in."

"I wegarded it as my duty as a wrelative, Blake, and I do not wegwet what I did," said Arthur Augustus.

"Bet you Cardew will, when Railton drops a hand on his shoulder," said Blake. "Well, he's risked it often enough: and it looks as if he will get what he's asked for, this time."

"His number's up!" agreed Herries.

There was a general nodding of heads in Study No. 6. So far as Tom Merry and Co, could see, there was no escape for the scapegrace of the Fourth. Knowing nothing of the House-master, waiting and watching on the tow-path outside the Green Man back-gate, he would walk into official hands just as Arthur Augustus had done.

That, certainly, would see Tom Merry and Co. through. Railton, if he nailed Cardew, would know that they had told the exact truth: and that Arthur Augustus's exploit had not been "pub-visiting," though it looked like it.

But that was not wholly comforting to the School House juniors. Cardew, no doubt, deserved what came to him: but if it came to the "sack", they did not like the idea of even a black sheep like Cardew being expelled from the school—and still less did they like the idea of having been partly the cause of his disaster.

"They mayn't sack him," said Blake, slowly. "After all the

beaks don't know him as we do—they may think it was just this once, and let him off with a whopping. If he can lie himself out of it—he's pretty good in that line."

There was a step in the passage, and Levison of the Fourth looked in. Sidney Clive looked in over his shoulder. Both of them had grave faces.

"Look here, you fellows, we're rather in a flap about Cardew," said Ernest Levison, abruptly, "It's close on calling-over, and he hasn't come in. You said something in the quad when you came in, Blake—"

"He's our pal, you know," said Clive, quietly. "Is there anything in what you said in the quad, Blake?"

Blake shrugged his shoulders.

"Lots," he answered, "So far as we know, Cardew's in the Green Man, and Railton's waiting for him at the gate where he went in."

"Oh!" breathed Levison.

"Must have bagged him by this time," said Herries, "Cardew wouldn't leave it as late as this to go. He would want to be in for calling-over."

"Must have walked right into Railton's hands," said Manners, "Well, he's only got himself to thank. He knew the risk."

"Oh, the fool!" muttered Levison, "I knew he would play the goat once too often—now it looks as if he's done it."

"But how could Railton know that he was there?" asked Clive.

"He doesn't—he only knows that some St. Jim's chap was there," said Tom, "But he would know when Cardew walked out, into his hands."

"Oh, the fathead!" muttered Clive.

"Hallo, there's the bell!" said Manners.

The bell for calling-over began to ring. Tom Merry and Co. left Study No. 6, and went down the passage with Levison and Clive. The latter two juniors were looking deeply disturbed. Cardew, no doubt, was a good deal of a black sheep and a "bad hat": but he was their pal, and little as they liked his ways, they felt concern and alarm for him. Tom Merry and Co. shared their feelings to some extent. It really looked as if Arthur Augustus's well-meant intervention had landed his relative in disaster. So far as they could see, there was no hope for Ralph Reckness Cardew.

Baggy Trimble was rolling into the House when they came down, and Levison called to him.



"Know if Railton's come in yet, Trimble?"

"Haven't seen him," answered Baggy, and he rolled on.

"He won't come in till Cardew does," muttered Blake, "They will walk in together, you bet."

The juniors joined the crowd pouring into hall. A good many fellows were in hall already: but they had no hope that Cardew was among them. Ridd, the new boy in the Fourth, was in the doorway, and Tom Merry touched him on the elbow.

"Seen anything of Cardew?" he asked.

Ridd shook his head.

"No—he's not in hall: I should have seen him come in."

The juniors went to their places: Blake and Herries and Dig and D'Arcy, Levison and Clive in the Fourth: Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther in the Shell. Hall filled up, and nine pairs of eyes watched the door, in the hope of seeing Cardew appear among the late-comers. But he did not appear.

"Railton's not here," muttered Manners, "Linton's going to take the roll."

"Watching that gate like Sister Anne!" said Lowther, "Well, Cardew's asked for what he's getting."

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, had the House list in hand, and was glancing at the clock. Kildare of the Sixth was standing at the door, to close it. Anyone who arrived after the door was closed, had to remain outside, and take the penalty of "cutting roll".

But the door was not yet closed, there was still a minute to spare, when a slim figure strolled in: and nine fellows fairly jumped at the sight of him.

"Cardew!" breathed Tom Merry, staring. It was quite a surprise

"Bai Jove! He's heah aftah all," ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

And the faces of Levison and Clive registered relief.

Cardew strolled in carelessly, apparently quite unaware that anyone had been concerned about him. His manner was casual, as usual. Certainly he did not look like a fellow who had been "nailed" by his House-master out of bounds in a disreputable resort and was booked to go up to the Head. He gave Levison and Clive a nod, as he joined the ranks of the Fourth, and bestowed a wink on his relative, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, which caused that noble youth to colour with indignation.

Levison nudged his arm.

"You got in all right?" he whispered.

Cardew raised his eyebrows.

"Why not?" he answered.

"Didn't you see Railton—?" muttered Clive.

"Railton? No! Isn't he here?"

"Silence!" called out Kildare.

Mr. Linton was beginning to call the names. Nine fellows were glad enough to see Cardew there, though they could not begin to guess how he had escaped. Cardew, when his name was called, drawled "Adsum," evidently without a care in the world on his volatile mind.

## 5

### All right for Cardew !

“HA, ha, ha !” roared Cardew.

He was in Study No. 9 with Levison and Clive, after roll. They had told him what they had heard from Tom Merry and Co. He listened, at first, in surprise, and then burst into a roar of laughter.

“Oh, gad !” he exclaimed. “A beak on the watch, and I never knew ! Might have walked right into his paws ! I wonder if Railton’s still keepin’ it up ! Wish him joy of it, if he is ! Ha, ha, ha !”

“It wouldn’t have been a laughing matter, if he had nailed you !” snapped Levison.

“Not at all, dear man ! But, you see, he didn’t ! A miss is as good as a mile ! Sure he was there, or were those fellows pulling your leg ?”

“He was there all right,” growled Clive, “and I’m blessed if I see how you got clear. How did you, if you come to that ?”

Cardew chuckled.

“Elementary, my dear Watson !” he answered. “You see, I went in by the gate on the tow-path, and my beloved relative Gussy followed me in to give me a sermon, and Bill Lodgey chucked him out. I should have come out the same way—it’s the safest, as a rule—but I rather fancied that the good old Gussy might be waitin’ for me there, breathing vengeance, see ?”

“Oh !” exclaimed Levison and Clive together.

“Quite simple, you see,” grinned Cardew, “Gussy was in no end of a bait—I rather think he didn’t like Bill laying paws on his noble person, comin’ between the wind and his nobility, and all that. I expect he would have waited there to punch my head, if Railton hadn’t been on the spot.”

"Very likely, and serve you right," said Clive.

"Quite!" agreed Cardew, with a nod. "How right you always are, Clivey! Right as rain! Right on the wicket every time! I expect that's why you're such a bore, old fellow."

"Then you didn't come out by the tow-path gate?" asked Levison.

"I should have—but for Gussy!" grinned Cardew, "I never dreamed that Railton was there, but I fancied that Gussy most likely was! I was not lookin' for a scrap with him on the tow-path, so when I went, I cleared off by the fence, and across the fields, and never went anywhere near that jolly old gate! And Railton was there all the time! Ha, ha, ha!"

Cardew roared again.

The picture of Mr. Railton, waiting and watching on the tow-path, for the delinquent who was not coming out, seemed to amuse him immensely.

"Think he's still there?" chuckled Cardew, "Railton's a sticker! He wasn't in hall for roll—Linton took roll! Fancy our jolly old House-beak, still stickin' there on the tow-path, while the shades of night are fallin' fast, as the poet remarks. Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison and Clive did not join in his merriment. They were glad and relieved at his unexpected escape, but they were very far from regarding the matter as a joke. Cardew grinned at their serious faces.

"Hallo, here's the one and only," chuckled Cardew, as an eyeglass gleamed in at the doorway. "Trot in, Gussy! Welcome as the flowers in May! You were rather interrupted the last time we met, but if you'd like to get on with sixthly or seventhly now, I'm sure these fellows won't mind. Spill it."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stepped into No. 9, and stood regarding his relative with an expression of ineffable scorn, which had as much effect on Ralph Reckness Cardew, as a shower of water on a duck.

"Don't say you've come here for a scrap!" urged Cardew. "Bad form for relatives to scrap at school. I've given you lots of time to cool down! Let dogs delight to bark and bite—"

"I wegard you with uttah contempt, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus, "But I have not come heah to scrap, I have just seen Wailton come in—"

"Has he chucked it already?" sighed Cardew, "The dear man! I rather hoped that he would make an evening of it."

"I expect to heah fwom Wailton, Cardew."

"Always pleasant to get a word from Railton!" agreed Cardew. "He's rather a nice chap really!"

Wailton caught me comin' out of that gate, Cardew, and of course I had to tell him why I went in—"

Cardew's mocking face became suddenly grave. He almost bounded from the armchair in which he was lazily stretched.

"What?" he shouted, "You told him—"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Why, you fool—you idiot—you toad—you worm!" Cardew almost yelled, "You've given me away to a beak—!"

"Weally, Cardew—"

All Cardew's careless negligence was gone now. He came towards the swell of St. Jim's with clenched fists and glinting eyes.

"You rotter! You worm! You—"

Levison caught his arm, and dragged him back.

"Chuck that," he snapped.

"Leave me alone! I'll smash him!" hissed Cardew, "I'll—"

"You need not take the twouble to hold Cardew back, Levison," said Arthur Augustus, calmly, "I am quite pwepared to give him a feahful thwashin', if that is what he wants."

"Will you let me go, Levison?" shouted Cardew.

"No, I won't!" answered Levison, quietly. "Keep cool, you dummy. D'Arcy hasn't given you away to Railton, as you'd know if you had half as much decency as he has."

"He has said so! He—"

"Tell us what's happened, D'Arcy," said Levison. "There's not going to be any scrapping here—I'll keep this fool quiet."

"Look here, Levison—"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Levison, savagely. Tell us, D'Arcy—"

"It is weally vewy simple, Levison. Wailton nabbed me comin' out of the gate, and I could scarcely allow him to suppose that I had been pub-visitin' like that wottah. Natuwally I had to explain that I had gone in to hook anothah fellow out of that disweputable den."

"You hear him—!" breathed Cardew.

"Shut up, I tell you. Go on, D'Arcy. You didn't mention Cardew's name?"

"Weally, Levison—"

"Oh!" Cardew panted. "Did you or not, D'Arcy?"

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Yes or no, you dolt. Will you answer me?"

"Certainly I shall not answah you, Cardew, or any fellow who addresses me in such terms."

"You didn't give Cardew's name," said Sidney Clive.

"I should hardly be likely to give any fellow away to a beak, Clive, even a fellow whom I wegard with uttah scorn."

Cardew breathed again. For the moment, he had fancied that all was known: that a call to his House-master's study impended to be followed by his being taken to the Head-master. That could have meant nothing less than a flogging: and quite possibly the "sack." But it had been only a false alarm.

He unclenched his hands: but he gave Arthur Augustus a black and bitter look. Arthur Augustus had not, after all, given him away: but he could not forgive him those moments of terror.

"You fool!" he muttered, "You fool! Then no harm's done?"

"As you appeah to have eluded Mr. Wailton aftah all, Cardew, no harm has been done so fah as you are concerned. But now that Wailton has come in, he will want to see me. I certainly twust that he will believe that I have told him the twuth, and let it drop. But he asked me on the tow-path for the name of the fellow I went in to look for—"

"And what did you say?"

"Natuwally I weplied that I could not give the name, Cardew."

"Oh!" gasped Cardew.

"I feah that he will wepeat the question, when I see him. I came heah," added Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "to assuah you that whatevah may happen, I shall not give your name."

"Oh!" repeated Cardew, rather blankly.

"I shall pwobably get into a wow, unless—"

"Unless what?" snapped Cardew.

"Unless you go to Wailton and own up that it was you who were in that den. That would be the wight and pwopah thing to do."

"Fool!"

"Vewy well," said Arthur Augustus, quietly, "We will leave it at that. I will only add that I wegard you as a wat. Only this aftahnoon I objected to Hewwies descwibin' you as a wat, Cardew, but I wealise now that old Hewwies was right—you are a wat!"

With that, Arthur Augustus turned to the door. At the same moment, Tompkins of the Fourth put his head in at the doorway.

"D'Arcy here?" he asked, "Oh, here you are, D'Arcy! I've been hunting for you all over the shop—"

"I am sowwy you had the twouble, Tompkins! Am I wanted?"

"Railton sent me to tell you to go to his study."

"Oh! Vewy well!"

"Looks like a row," added Tompkins, "Railton was jolly grim."

## WHO RAGGED RAILTON?

"Thank you, Tompkins! I am pwepared for a wow," sighed Arthur Augustus, and he walked away, to report to his House-master's study.

Tompkins gave Levison and Co. a stare, and went. Cardew kicked the door shut.

"That's that!" he grunted.

"Unless—!" said Clive.

"Unless what?"

"Unless you do as D'Arcy suggested."

Cardew gave him a bitter look.

"Go to Railton, and ask him to take me to the Head to be bunked, because that silly chump couldn't mind his own business, and had to butt into what didn't concern him?" he snarled.

"Don't talk piffle."

And nothing more was said on the subject in No. 9 Study. Whatever might be the doubtful outcome of Arthur Augustus's interview with his House-master, one thing at least was certain: he could expect no help from his relative, Ralph Reckness Cardew.

## 6

### Six of the Best!

“COME in, D’Arcy!”

Mr. Railton’s tone was brusque, his face grim. Arthur Augustus could read the signs! Obviously, trouble awaited him in his House-master’s study.

But his manner was calm and composed as he entered. His eyes did not falter before Railton’s grim, searching look.

“You sent for me, sir!” he said, quietly.

“I have to question you, D’Arcy.”

“Vewy well, sir.”

“You were caught by me coming out of a disreputable place, which you know to be strictly out of bounds for boys of this school,” said Mr. Railton. “It was explained to me that you have gone in to persuade another boy to leave. You should have done nothing of the kind.”

“Weally, sir—”

“However if that was your motive, there is some excuse for your thoughtless action. Was that your motive?”

“I have said so, sir!” answered Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

“I waited on the tow-path till after roll-call at the school,” said Mr. Railton. “But no one came out of the gate, D’Arcy.”

Arthur Augustus was silent.

“No one!” repeated Mr. Railton, with emphasis. “If a St. Jim’s boy was there, he could have known nothing of my presence on the tow-path. He had gone in by that gate, and would have left by it. He did not do so. But no boy of this House missed calling-over—I have inquired of Mr. Linton, who took the roll, and he tells me that no one was missing from roll.”

Silence.



"If the boy was there, he cannot be still there, yet he did not come out," said Mr. Railton. "What have you to say to this, D'Arcy?"

"He must have left anotheah way, sir."

"Why should he have done so, when he could not have had the remotest suspicion that I was on the spot?"

"I—I don't know, sir."

"Your friends, who were with you, saw nothing of this boy," went on Mr. Railton. "Only you saw him enter at that gate, D'Arcy."

"That is cowwect, sir."

"Did you in fact see him, D'Arcy, or had you some business at the Green Man which you did not venture to confide to boys like Tom Merry and Blake and the others?"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

Lord Eastwood's hopeful son was not, perhaps, particularly bright. But Arthur Augustus could see what it all looked like. There was no evidence of any kind in his favour, unless he gave the name of the breaker of bounds. That, certainly, he was not going to do.

"Now tell me the exact truth, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton, sternly.

"I have done so, sir."

"You repeat that you went into the disreputable place to persuade another St. Jim's boy to leave?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir."

"There is no proof of any kind that such was the case, D'Arcy."

"There is my word, sir," said Arthur Augustus, calmly. "My fwriends would wegard that as pwactically pwoof."

"Something more than that is required, when a boy of this school has disregarded his Head-master's orders, in a very important matter," said Mr. Railton. "A boy who forms undesirable acquaintances outside the school, would hardly hesitate to answer untruthfully when questioned."

"I can only wepeat that I have told you the exact twuth, sir."

"Who was this boy?"

Silence.

"I have asked you a question, D'Arcy. You can clear yourself only by answering it," rapped Mr. Railton.

"I am sowwy, sir, but I cannot give the name," said Arthur Augustus, firmly, though his heart was beating fast. It is not custumawy at this school, sir, for a fellow to be expected to tell on anotheah."

"That is true, D'Arcy, but the circumstances are exceptional.

Unless you can prove your statement, which can be done only by giving the name, you must be judged on the evidence."

"I quite undahstand that, sir, if you cannot wely on my assuwanse. But I cannot help it."

"I shall be as patient as I can with you, D'Arcy. As you were so concerned about the boy in question—if he exists—I must take it that he is a very close friend of yours. Is that the case?"

"No, sir."

"He is not a friend of yours?"

"Nothin' of the kind. I do not like him at all."

"You ask me to believe that you took the risk of severe punishment, even of expulsion, for the sake of a boy whom you do not even like?" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "A boy who is not a friend of yours at all?"

"Yaas, sir."

Mr. Railton sat looking at him. That the "boy in question"—if he existed—had not been one of D'Arcy's nearest friends, he knew, as Blake and Herries and Digby, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, had been on the tow-path. But Arthur Augustus had many friends—indeed their names were legion. Among them, perhaps, Railton had thought that he might pick out the delinquent—if any. But it appeared that that was not a trail to follow.

"I scarcely understand you, D'Arcy," he said, at last. "You must be aware that what you say can only sound incredible."

"I twust not, sir."

"If this boy is no friend of yours, D'Arcy, why are you concerned about him at all, to the extent of placing yourself in so questionable a position?"

"I wegarded it as my dutay, sir."

"Your duty?" repeated Mr. Railton.

"Yaas, sir."

"You regard it as your duty to watch over the conduct of every boy in this House, to the extent of placing yourself under suspicion of doing wrong?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

Arthur Augustus coloured.

"Nothin' of the kind, sir! I should wegard that as meddlesome and widiculous. It is not like that at all."

"Then for what reason did you interfere, in this instance, on behalf of a boy with whom you have no particular concern?"

"I—I had a weason, sir—"

"What was the reason?"

"I—I would wathah not say, sir."

Mr. Railton set his lips. He had been very patient with Arthur

## WHO RAGGED RAILTON?

Augustus, but he seemed at the end of his patience now. He rose to his feet.

"You have nothing more to say to me, D'Arcy?"

"No, sir."

"Very well! I must act, in this matter, on the evidence of my own eyes. You were caught leaving the precincts of a public house which is strictly out of bounds. From my knowledge of your character, I hope and believe that your conduct is due rather to thoughtless foolishness than to any worse motive. I shall not report you to Dr. Holmes, but shall deal with you myself—severely."

Railton picked up a cane from the table, and pointed with it to a chair.

Arthur Augustus drew a deep, deep breath.

"Bend over that chair, D'Arcy."

"Vewy well, sir."

Arthur Augustus bent over the chair. What followed was extremely painful for the hapless swell of St. Jim's. Railton, as a matter of fact, hardly knew whether to believe him or not, but hoped for the best. But in any case Arthur Augustus had broken a very strict rule of the school, taking the law into his own hands: and on that subject he had been warned—and six of the very best constituted the warning.

He was, in fact, getting off very cheaply with "six" from his House-master, instead of an interview with the Head. But he did not feel that he was getting off cheaply, as the swipes descended.

He set his lips hard, determined not to utter a sound. That, he felt, was up to him, and to his personal dignity! But at the third swipe dignity seemed to fade out, and he uttered an involuntary yelp. At the fourth, the yelp became a yell. At the fifth, he roared. At the sixth, anyone passing the study might have fancied that the celebrated Bull of Bashan was there!

Arthur Augustus's aristocratic countenance was quite pale, when he rose after the infliction. He wriggled painfully. At that moment, doubtless he regretted that his sense of duty to an erring relative had impelled him to follow Ralph Reckness Cardew into the precincts of the Green Man.

Mr. Railton laid down the cane.

"You may go!" he rapped.

Arthur Augustus almost tottered to the door.

## WHO RAGGED RAILTON?

When he was gone, Mr. Railton sat for some time in deep thought. He was troubled in mind. Of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's intellectual powers he had not, perhaps, a very high opinion: but he had never had any doubts hitherto of his character. Was it possible, however, that D'Arcy's extraordinary story was true? Had he believed it to be false, he must have taken the junior to his Head-master. But could he believe it to be true? A school-boy might run some reckless risk for a friend—but for someone who was not his friend, and whom he did not even like—was that credible?

Victor Railton sat for quite some time thinking it over—though only to come to the somewhat disconcerting conclusion that he could not make up his mind one way or another!

## 7

### Cardew is Amused

CARDEW smiled.  
Levison and Clive frowned.

Cardew was amused: an amusement that did not seem to be shared in the least by his friends.

It was the following day: and all the forms were "out" after Third School. Among the fellows in the sunny quad was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He was talking to Blake and Herries and Dig when Levison and Co. came along. There was a faint frown on his noble face, and he was not standing with his usual ease. Even after the lapse of time, there were some lingering twinges from the "six" he had had in his House-master's study the day before. His voice floated to the ears of the three, causing Cardew to smile, and his friends to frown.

"It was vevy tough, you fellows. Wailton laid it on vevy hard! I am afwaid that Wailton is not quite the sportsman I considahed him."

"Rot!" said Blake. "You got off cheap."

"It was six of the vevy best, Blake."

"Might have been a Head's flogging," said Herries. "What do you expect, when you go out of bounds, and walk into a beak's hands after it?"

"I had a vevy good weason for goin' out of bounds, as you know vevy well, Hewwies."

"Railton didn't," said Dig.

"I could not vevy well tell Wailton, as I could not land anothah fellow in a wow, Dig. I wegarded it as bein' up to Wailton to take my word, and let the matter dwop. I do not think so much of him as I did," said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of his noble head. "I wegard him as havin' acted vevy hastily and unjustly."

"Bosh!" said Blake. "You asked for it and got it."

"If you are goin' to chawactewise my wemarks as bosh, Blake—"

"Piffle, if you like that better."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, don't be an ass," said Blake. "It was jolly decent of Railton to make it six! Did you want to go to the Head?"

"I did not want to go to the Head, Blake! I should not have been able to explain the mattah to Dr. Holmes, any more than I could to Wailton. But givin' a fellow six for havin' done what he wegarded as his duty to a wrelative, is wathah thick—in fact, vewy thick indeed."

"Better let your jolly old relative rip, in future," said Blake. "There he is—grinning like a Cheshire cat! Fat lot of good getting yourself into a row for a worm like that."

Arthur Augustus glanced round, at Cardew.

Cardew gave him a nod and a smile. Arthur Augustus neither nodded nor smiled. All the scorn that could be expressed in his eyes, with the aid of his eyeglass, was concentrated in the glance he bestowed on Ralph Reckness Cardew.

At that moment, Mr. Railton came along by the path under the elms, and passed the Fourth-Formers. Evidently the expression on Arthur Augustus's speaking countenance arrested his attention, for he gave the swell of St. Jim's a very curious look. Then, glancing round to see upon whom Arthur Augustus was concentrating the stare of ineffable scorn, he saw Levison, Clive and Cardew—the last-named grinning derisively.

The House-master gave a little start.

He paused for a moment, glancing from Cardew to D'Arcy, and then back from D'Arcy to Cardew. Then he walked on, with an extremely thoughtful expression on his face.

Arthur Augustus, who had not noticed him, went on speaking, after that withering stare at Cardew. Apparently he was experiencing another twinge.

"Wow! Bai Jove, Wailton did weally lay it on, you know! It was vewy wotten of him—"

"Shut up, you ass!" breathed Blake. He had caught sight of the House-master in the offing, if Arthur Augustus had not.

"I wefuse to shut up, Blake! I wepeat that Wailton was vewy hasty and vewy unjust in givin' a fellow six for nothin', and I cannot continue to wegard him with the wespect due to a House-mastah—"

"D'Arcy!"

"Oh, cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus spun round, and stared, so startled by his House-master's voice, at that unfortunate moment, that his eye-glass dropped from his eye, and dangled at the end of its silk cord.

Blake and Herries and Dig exchanged hopeless glances. Levison and Clive looked rather alarmed. Cardew smiled with amusement. It was rather like Arthur Augustus, already in his House-master's black books, to make matters worse.

"D'Arcy!" he rapped, "I heard what you said."

"I did not know you were there, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"I imagine not, or you would not have ventured to speak as you did," exclaimed Mr. Railton. "You have described your House-master as hasty and unjust, D'Arcy, in punishing you for nothing."

"I am sowwy you heard me, sir."

"No doubt! But that does not alter the fact that you have uttered such words," said Mr. Railton. "You have added that you no longer feel the respect for me due to a House-master."

"Yaas, sir."

"I hardly know how to deal with you, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton. "I cannot take note of words heard by chance, or I should send you to your Head-master to be dealt with for such disrespect."

"I—I did not mean to be diswespectful, sir—"

"That will do, D'Arcy! I shall take note of this," said Mr. Railton. "But I warn you to be more careful in your speech, as well as in your conduct. You were punished yesterday for a very serious breach of the rules, as you should be able to realise. You are a very foolish boy, D'Arcy."

"Weally, sir—"

"That will do."

Still frowning, Mr. Railton walked on, and went into the House. Arthur Augustus watched him as he went, quite an uncompromising expression on his face. He was not pleased with Railton and did not care if all St. Jim's became aware of that fact.

"Oh, you ass!" breathed Blake. "You had to wait till Railton was only a yard away, before you blew off steam."

"I was quite unawah that Wailton was anywhah about, Blake, or I should certainly not have made that wemark," said Arthur Augustus, calmly. "Nevahtheless, he knows now what I think of him."

"You blithering ass—!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"You've got Railton's rag out," said Digby.

"I am quite indiffewent whethah I have got Wailton's wag out or not, Dig. I am not, on weflection, sowwy that he has heard my opinion."

"Fathead!" hissed Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"It's all that grinning monkey's fault," said Blake, with a glare, at Cardew. "Look here, you men, we owe him a booting—"

Cardew, laughing, walked away with his friends. Study No. 6 glared after him as he went, tempted to follow him and administer the booting. However, they did not want a "row" with Levison and Co., whom they liked, little as they liked the thirid tenant of No. 9 Study.

"Gussy's the jolly old limit, isn't he?" remarked Cardew, as he strolled away with Levison and Clive. "Isn't he the man to ask for it Six on the bags yesterday for pub-crawlin', and now he asks for more."

Levison looked at him.

"You've landed him in all of it, with your rotten ways," he said. "No wonder the fellows have nicknamed you "Cardew the Cad."

"Thanks!" drawled Cardew. "But did I land him in it? I never asked him to meddle in my affairs, did I? A fellow who pokes his silly nose into what doesn't concern him, must expect to get it pulled. He shouldn't be such a silly ass."

"I suppose he's an ass to care a straw whether you're bunked from the school or not," grunted Clive.

"No bizney of his," yawned Cardew.

"You're his relation—"

"That's my misfortune, not my fault, old bean."

"Oh, rats!"

"Blake's got a relation here—that ginger-headed chap Ridd—but he doesn't watch over him like a Dutch uncle," said Cardew.

"Ridd's decent," growled Clive.

"Implyin' that I am not?" sighed Cardew. "Is that what you mean, Clivey?"

"Yes—like it or lump it."

"My dear chap, how well you know me!" said Cardew, pleasantly. "But don't let's row—rows are a bore. Comin' with me to-morrow afternoon?"

"Where?" asked Levison.

"Abbotsford—"

"Cricket match there?" asked Clive.

Cardew laughed.



"Shouldn't wonder—but I haven't heard of it. Quite another attraction—the sport of kings."

"Do you mean the races at Abbotsford?" asked Clive, staring at him.

"You're getting quite quick on the up-take, Clivey! You've got my exact meanin' in one jump."

The South African junior gave him a grim look, turned, and left him, without speaking another word. Cardew laughed.

"Clivey seems to have got his back up about something, Levison. Got any idea what it might be?"

Levison, without answering, walked after Clive.

Cardew was left alone—not in the least disconcerted thereby. He laughed, and strolled on by himself. It amused his impish nature to irritate his friends, and he was too careless to give a thought to the possibility of loosing their friendship. But the mocking smile died off his face as Kildare of the Sixth came out of the House, and called to him.

"Cardew! You're wanted."

"Yes, Kildare!" Cardew was wary at once. "What—"

"Railton's study."

"Railton!" repeated Cardew. "Got any idea what he wants me for, Kildare?"

"Only that you're to go in at once."

"Pleasure!" drawled Cardew.

And he went in. But he did not look as if he found it a pleasure, as he made his way to Railton's study. It was only yesterday that Railton had waited on the tow-path, and very nearly caught him coming out of the Green Man gate—as narrow an escape as he had ever had. But he had escaped—and Arthur Augustus had said nothing—Railton could not know a thing. How could he? On the other hand, he was well aware that his House-master was very keen, and his heart was beating a little faster than usual, though his manner was perfectly cool, as he tapped at the study door and entered.

## Going Through It !

“CARDEW!”

“Yes, sir.”

“I have some questions to put to you.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Where were you after class yesterday afternoon?”

Cardew did not answer immediately.

His heart gave a little jump. He repeated to himself that Railton knew nothing—could know nothing. But that the House-master was suspicious, was clear—though what had made him suspicious was not clear.

Mr. Railton’s eyes were fixed on his face, with keen scrutiny. Cardew was not a boy in whom he had very much trust. He had had, in fact, doubts about him, more than once. Cardew was too wary to be caught out: but there had been doubt and suspicion—for which he cared nothing, so long as he could not be “nailed.” But they had helped Railton to jump to a certain conclusion, in the quad, when he had seen Arthur Augustus’s scornful look concentrated on his relative. Railton had remembered, then, that Cardew was D’Arcy’s relative—though obviously they were on far from friendly terms. And that fact had seemed to him to let in some light on the peculiar proceedings of Arthur Augustus.

“Kindly answer me at once, Cardew,” said Mr. Railton, as the junior did not reply.

“I was just tryin’ to think, sir,” answered Cardew, outwardly quite calm, though his heart was beating unpleasantly. “I remember now—I went down to the cricket nets with my friends.”

“Their names?”

“Levison and Clive, sir.”

“How long did you remain there with them?”

"Until we came in to tea, sir."

"After that?"

"After that we went out for a stroll in the quad, sir."

"Did you go out of gates?"

"Yes, sir," said Cardew, breathing a little hard.

"With your friends?"

Cardew hesitated a second. He would have been glad to answer in the affirmative. But even if Levison and Clive would have backed him up in a false story, which was extremely doubtful, there was no opportunity to warn them. He had to tell the truth.

"No, sir."

"You went out of gates alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long were you out of gates?"

"About an hour, I should think, sir," said Cardew. "I came back for calling-over, of course. I did not miss roll, sir."

"I am aware of that," said Mr. Railton. "No boy of this House missed roll. How did you spend your time out of gates, Cardew?"

"Just a ramble, sir. Nowhere in particular."

"I will be plain with you, Cardew," said Mr. Railton, quietly. "I have certain reasons to think, or at least to suspect, that you were out of school bounds yesterday afternoon."

"Oh, sir!" murmured Cardew.

"You will be required to account for the time you spent out of gates," said Mr. Railton. "If this inquiry clears away the doubt in my mind, Cardew, I shall be very glad. But it is my intention to elicit the facts, whatever they may be. You are a relative of D'Arcy, of your form?"

"A very distant one, sir," said Cardew, biting his lip,

"You are not, I think, on very friendly terms with him."

"Not very, sir."

"Yesterday D'Arcy acted, according to his own account, in a very thoughtless and irresponsible way, following a boy into a certain disreputable resort to persuade him to leave."

"Did he, sir?"

"He has said so, at all events," said Mr. Railton. "But he has admitted that the boy is no friend of his, which made his statement seem scarcely credible. He may, however, have felt concern about a relative, even one whom he did not like."

Cardew breathed very hard. He began to see how even his House-master had picked up "sign", as it were, on this trail.

"In a word," said Mr. Railton. "Were you the St. Jim's boy,

Cardew, whom D'Arcy, as he states, followed in at the gate of the Green Man "

Cardew stood very still. He had little scruple, when dealing with "beaks" or "pre's," in "telling the tale." Prevarication, in such circumstances, cost him little. But a lie direct was not easy for even the reckless scapegrace of St. Jim's to utter.

But he had left himself no choice. What he had done, he dared not admit. The falsehood came against the grain: but it came.

"No, sir!"

His voice was quite clear and steady as he answered. If Railton thought that he was going to ask for the "sack". Railton had another guess coming. That was how he looked at it.

"I trust," said Mr. Railton, quietly, "that that is the truth, Cardew. You say that you did not visit the resort called the Green Man?"

"No, sir!" Cardew answered without hesitation this time: no doubt on the principle of "in for a penny, in for a pound!"

"You say that you went for a ramble?"

"Just that, sir."

"Very many boys must have been out of gates at the time, in such fine summer weather. Did you speak to any of them during your ramble?"

"I—I don't think so, sir."

"You must search your memory, Cardew, and answer me with a direct yes or no."

"I did not, sir."

"You did not!" said Mr. Railton. "Very well. But you must, at least, have passed a good many—you must have seen them, and they must have seen you—and can bear witness to your movements if questioned."

Again Cardew breathed very hard. Probably a score of St. Jim's fellows had seen him go along the tow-path in the direction of the Green Man. He had not cared at the time. He cared now!

He remembered some of them. Trimble of the Fourth had been loafing near the boat-house, and had squeaked to him as he passed, without getting an answer. Dick Julian and Kit Wildrake had been sitting under a tree by the tow-path.

Talbot of the Shell had been on the Ryll in a boat. Ridd and Tomkins had passed him on his way. A good many other fellows must have seen him. Swiftly, he realised that it would be futile to deny the direction he had taken in his "ramble."

Railton's eyes were on him like points of steel. He had not much time for reflection.

"I—I suppose so, sir," he said. "I remember passing some of the fellows by the river."

"By the river?" repeated Mr. Railton. "In what direction, Cardew, did you take this ramble?"

There was no help for it, with at least twenty potential witnesses for Railton to call upon.

"On the tow-path, sir."

"Up or down the Ryll, Cardew?"

"Down, sir—towards Rylcombe."

"In that case, you must have passed the back gate of the Green man in your ramble, Cardew."

"I suppose so, sir! We have to pass that gate, going down the river."

"Quite so. You did not stop at that gate?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"How far did you walk on?"

"To the bridge sir."

"You walked on to Rylcombe Bridge?" said Mr. Railton. "A number of boys of this House have been punished for riding on the tow-path yesterday: Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, and some Fourth-Form boys. They came from the direction of Rylcombe Bridge, on their way back to the school. Did you pass them?"

Cardew's heart gave an unpleasant jolt.

"No sir."

He was beginning to feel a little sick. That incident of the junior cyclists riding on the tow-path seemed likely to be his undoing. Had Cardew continued his walk along the river, passing the Green Man gate, he must have passed that bunch of cyclists.

The House-master's face was growing very grim.

"You did not see these boys on the tow-path, Cardew?"

"No, sir."

"That is very singular," said Mr. Railton, dryly, "as you could scarcely have walked on to the bridge without seeing them."

"I—I—I—"

"Well?"

"As it happens sir, I stepped into the wood, thinking I saw a birds' nest, and they must have passed then."

"Indeed! So you walked on to the bridge. Was anyone on the bridge when you arrived there?"

"I don't remember—"

"You must endeavour to remember, Cardew," said Mr. Railton, grimly.

"I—I think a man crossed the bridge, when I came up from the tow-path—"

"A man you knew by sight?"

"Oh, no, sir—a stranger."

"Not a person who could be asked to corroborate your statements?"

"I—I suppose not, sir."

"That is unfortunate," said Mr. Railton. "From the bridge, where did you walk, Cardew?"

"I came back, sir"

"Through the village of Rylcombe?"

Cardew had to think again, quickly. There must have been a dozen St. Jim's fellows in Rylcombe then, and certainly none of them had seen him there. He had to play for safety.

"No, sir! By the lanes."

"You must have fallen in with some boys belonging to this school!"

"Not till I was quite near the gates, sir. It was getting towards calling-over, and the fellows were going in."

"Then there is no boy in this school, Cardew, who can bear witness to your movements, after you started walking along the tow-path in the direction of the Green Man gate."

"I—I suppose not, sir."

"That is very singular, Cardew. In the course of this very long ramble, you did not meet a single person who could testify that you were not out of bounds."

Cardew stood silent. He knew that it was palpable, in his House-master's mind. Still, there was no proof. He clung to that.

There was a long pause. Mr. Railton sat with his eyes on Cardew's face, with so penetrating a gaze, that it seemed almost to pierce to the thoughts behind. In spite of his nerve, Cardew could not meet that look, and his own eyes fell, and the crimson surged into his cheeks, and his proud head drooped a little. Never had he felt so despicable as at that moment. He had lied, and he knew that Railton knew that he had lied—it was palpable. He almost cringed under that steady gaze. At that moment he hated himself, hated Railton, hated the whole world: and was tempted to blurt out the truth, facing anything rather than his own self-contempt. But he did not speak.

Mr. Railton broke the silence at last.

"You have nothing more to tell me, Cardew?"

"No, sir," muttered Cardew.

## WHO RAGGED RAILTON ?

"Very well! I need hardly tell you, Cardew, that what further inquiries may be possible, will be made, and that if they prove that you have answered me falsely, you will be expelled from this school. For the present, you may leave my study."

Cardew left, without another word.

At the end of the passage he found Levison and Clive. They had evidently heard that he had been called before his Housemaster. They eyed him anxiously as he came, with downcast face and burning cheeks.

"Cardew, old man—!" muttered Clive.

Cardew gave them an almost evil look.

"Oh, let me alone," he muttered.

"Does Railton know—?" breathed Levison.

"I said leave me alone."

Cardew tramped past his friends, and went up the staircase. He went into his own study and slammed the door. He was not seen again till the dinner-bell rang.

## 9

### Smack !

TOM MERRY frowned.

"Keep out," he said, curtly.

There was tea in No. 10 Study in the Shell. The "Terrible Three" of the Shell had four guests to tea: Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, from Study No. 6 in the Fourth. Seven juniors, collected round the study table, were winding up tea with a handsome plum cake, received that day by Tom from his old guardian, Miss Priscilla. And they were, as a matter of fact, discussing Cardew of the Fourth, when that youth looked into the study, with a glint in his eyes.

All the House knew that Cardew had been up before the Housemaster that morning. There were many surmises as to what would be the outcome. Nobody would have been surprised to hear that the scapegrace of St. Jim's had gone up to the Head, to be "bunked."

But that had not happened. Cardew had not been up to the Head: and he certainly was not "bunked," for he was in class as usual that day, and was seen afterwards strolling in the quadrangle. That was rather a relief to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who did not want a relative of his expelled from St. Jim's, much as he might deserve it. At the same time it was clear that if Cardew had been questioned in Railton's study, he could only have pulled through by a considerable amount of actual lying, which was a painful reflection to Arthur Augustus—and, if he could have known it, to Cardew himself.

Nobody in No. 10 Study was expecting to see Cardew there, and when he presented himself in the doorway extremely unwelcoming looks were cast on him. Grimmiest of all was the glance of Arthur Augustus. Gussy might be willing to run risks to keep his relative out of mischief, but that was the limit: he



did not want his company, or anything to do with him.

In reply to Tom Merry's curt injunction to "Keep out," Cardew smiled sarcastically, and instead of keeping out, stepped in.

"Sorry to intrude," he remarked, sarcastically.

"Well, don't!" said Monty Lowther.

"Isn't plain English good enough for you, Cardew?" asked Manners. "You're not wanted in this study."

"Hear, hear!" remarked Jack Blake.

"What about booting him, now he's here?" suggested George Herries. "He ought to be jolly well booted for getting Gussy six yesterday."

"Good egg!" said Digby.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a reminiscent wriggle, as he was reminded of the "six". Even yet the final twinges had not departed. He turned his eyeglass on the scapegrace of the Fourth.

"Pway wetire fwom this study, Cardew," he said. "I am weally surprised that you should entah it, aftah bein' told that you are not wanted. Weally, you must have a skin as thick as a whinocewos."

Cardew stood smiling, apparently waiting for them all to finish their remarks. But there was bitterness in his smile, and the glint in his eyes was like steel. He looked cool, calm, and outwardly nonchalant as usual: but it was easy to see that there was a smouldering fire within. The careless, volatile scapegrace of St. Jim's was not in his usual mood.

"Well, what are you standing there for, Cardew?" asked Tom Merry, restively.

"Listenin' in," said Cardew. "But if you've all done chewin' the rag for a minute, I'll say what I came to say."

"Any news?" asked Monty Lowther. "Railton found out that you were at the Green Man yesterday?"

"Exactly."

"Oh!" Lowther jumped at that answer. "Railton knows?"

"As well as you do."

"Phew!" Lowther whistled. "Going up to the Head, then?"

"Not at all."

"Not!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Oh, no," said Cardew, easily. "Dr. Holmes is a good old bean, and I've no end of respect for him, but I'm not yearnin' for his company. A bit of a bore, if you ask me."

"Bai Jove! If Wailton knows, you will have to go up to the Head, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus. "I am sowwy! But you will admit that I did my vevy best to get you out of mischief yestahday."

"You meddlin' fool—"

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Look here, what are you driving at, Cardew?" exclaimed Blake. "If Railton knows, you're as good as bunked—and you say he knows. If you're bunked, we're all sorry it's come to that—but you asked for it, and can't kick."

"But it hasn't come to that, my dear man," said Cardew, smoothly. "You see, there's a lot of difference between knowin' a thing, and bein' able to prove it—between those two, you see, there's a great gulf fixed! They can't sack a man on what they know, without any evidence."

"Oh!" said Tom Merry. "You mean that Railton only guesses."

"I mean that he knows," answered Cardew, coolly. "I was standin' up to him, streaming out lies at a rate that would make Baggy Trimble's hair stand on end, and he knew it all the time—and looked it. But what can he do? He knows where I was yesterday afternoon, and he knows I've lied about it—but there isn't a particle of proof to go before a Head-master. Railton jolly well knows—but I'm safe as you are Tom Merry—no more likely to be sacked than our good, clean-livin', highly-moral Thomas."

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Tom.

"My dear man, mayn't I pay my little tribute to your well-known spotless character?"

Tom rose to his feet.

"Do you mind if I chuck your relation out on his neck, Gussy?" he asked.

"Not at all, deah boy! I wegard him with uttah despision—I mean contempt. I considah him a wat."

"Hold on," said Cardew. "I haven't come here for a row with you, Tom Merry. Quite another object in view."

"You'll get the row, whether you want it or not, if you don't clear," said Tom. "Every man here's fed up with you, Cardew."

"Right up to the chin," agreed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah."

"If you've really anything to say—!" said Manners, with a curious look at Cardew's face.

"I have," said Cardew. "I looked in at Study 6 in the Fourth, to speak to my dear relative D'Arcy. As he was not there, I came on here. I've just a few words to say to him, to express my deep appreciation of what he's done for me."

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus's frowning brow cleared. "If that is what you want, Cardew, of course you may wun on. I am

vey glad that you wealise that I was doin' my duty as your wrelative yestahday."

"Oh, quite!" said Cardew, blandly, though with smouldering eyes. "Nothin' at all would have happened, if you hadn't butted in. But you had to butt in, and that put Railton on the track. You never gave Railton my name, but you might as well have given it, as Railton tumbled to it that I was the man, through you. I owe it to you that I had to stand up before him and roll out lies, or else go up to the Head to be bunked. I rolled out lies—"

"That wouldn't worry you much," said Herries, with a grunt.

"Think not?" smiled Cardew. "Well, we all have a limit, you know. Mine may be a rather wide one, but it's there somewhere. If you're interested, I never felt such a worm in my life, as when I stood there lying to Railton. I'd almost rather have been sacked—almost! I'd much rather have stopped his questions by crashing my knuckles in his face—if a fellow could! But I had to go through it—lying in a way that Trimble would jib at! And I owe it all to you D'Arcy, and your silly meddlin'."

"Weally, Cardew—!"

"After what you've done for me, I couldn't fail to let you know how I appreciate it," went on Cardew. "That's why I'm here."

"Weally, I quite fail to undahstand—"

"Perhaps you can understand this!"

As he uttered the words, Cardew made a swift stride towards Arthur Augustus. His hand flashed up and landed full in the startled face of the swell of St. Jim's, with a resounding smack that rang like a pistol-shot.

Smack!

"Oh!" gasped Arthur Augustus, taken quite by surprise.

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Blake, springing up. "I'll—"

Cardew stepped back to the door.

"That's for you, meddler!" he said, between his teeth. "That's for your meddlin'. If you want more, I shall be waitin' for you after tea—gloves or no gloves, just as you like. Behind the gym."

He stepped out of the study and walked away down the passage. A dead silence followed, in Tom Merry's study: while Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, quietly, wiped the red mark the smack had left on his face: a face that was growing harder and grimmer than any St. Jim's fellow had ever seen it before.

## 10

### The Fight !

“TWO to one on Cardew !” said Racke of the Shell. Crooke, of that form, shook his head.

“Not for me ! D’Arcy’s tougher than he looks.”

“That tailor’s dummy !” said Aubrey Racke, derisively.

The sportsman of the S’ell was not the only fellow who discounted the chances of Arthur Augustus in the coming combat. Cardew, with all his slack and dubious ways, was hard and fit, and he was known to be a good boxer. Arthur Augustus was the glass of fashion and the mould of form in his House. Senior men, like Cutts of the Fifth, were said to envy the cut of his clothes. But that was not precisely what was wanted for a hard, determined bout of fisticuffs.

Indeed, his own pals had secret doubts. Jack Blake had even tried to persuade his noble chum to leave Cardew to him : only to be cut short by a frigid stare from the Honourable Arthur Augustus.

Quite a crowd gathered in that quiet spot behind the gym, screened from general observation : which was rather necessary, as beaks and prefects were certainly not wanted on the scene.

Blake, who would gladly have been a principal, was D’Arcy’s second. Herries and Dig had smuggled along a basin and a sponge. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, Talbot and Kangaroo and Glyn, and other fellows, gathered round them. It was easy to see which was the popular man in the affair.

Levison was Cardew’s second, and Clive was with them. But neither of them felt, or looked, keen, or proud of their champion. They stood by him because they were his pals, and he needed them, but their hearts certainly were not in it. In fact Cardew was putting a very severe strain on their friendship.

"Weady, you fellows," said Arthur Augustus.

"You howling ass—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Take that pane out of your eye, image."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that." Arthur Augustus detached his celebrated monocle, and handed it to Tom. "Pway take care of that, Tom Mewwy."

"Like the apple of my eye," promised Tom.

Arthur Augustus's elegant jacket was peeled off. He pushed back his cuffs, and donned the gloves. Cardew, in his bitter rancour, would have been glad to carry on with the bare knuckles. In his present mood, he looked forward with savage anticipation to punching his relative right and left, and leaving his aristocratic countenance a striking picture for days to come. It was possible, however, that a little later he might be glad that the gloves were on.

Talbot of the Shell was to keep time. He had his watch in hand. Two-minute rounds, with one-minute rests was the programme. He glanced across at Levison.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Waitin'!" snapped Cardew.

"Clear the ring, you fellows," said Talbot.

News had spread far and wide that a fight was on behind the gym. A crowd of School House juniors had arrived to watch, and the news having reached the New House, Figgins and Co. had come along with a crowd of New House fellows. The crowd formed a thick ring. Cardew was keen and eager to begin—Arthur Augustus, as usual, leisurely in all his movements.

"Is that fool ever goin' to be ready?" muttered Cardew. "Cold-feet, I daresay."

"Don't be an ass!" snapped Levison. "You'll find he has plenty of pluck, when you get going. But—"

"But what—?"

"It's not too late," muttered Ernest Levison, in a low voice. "You're in the wrong, Cardew, and you know it—"

"What difference does that make?"

Levison breathed hard.

"Why not call it off? It's not too late! It's pretty rotten bad form for relations to scrap. Call it off, like a decent chap."

Cardew laughed.

"Think D'Arcy would call it off, after a smack in the face?"

"You can apologize!"

"I can see myself doing it!"

"It's up to you," growled Clive.

"Dear man, if D'Arcy would call it off, I wouldn't. I'm going to smash him." Cardew's voice quivered, and his eyes flashed. "I'm going to give him the hiding of his life! He's put me through it—and now I'm going to put him through it. I'm going to smash him."

"Oh, that's enough," snapped Levison, in disgust. "Here Blake, we're ready when your man is."

"Ready," said Blake. "Feeling fit, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Knock the cad into a cocked hat, old chap," said Herries.

"I shall certainly twy vewy hard, Hewwies."

"Seconds out of the ring!" said Talbot. "Ready! Time!"

There was something almost tigerish in Cardew's manner, as he faced up to his opponent. His eagerness was very apparent. Arthur Augustus was cool and calm: but his face had an expression of set determination: and his friends did not need telling that the fight would go on as long as he could stand. Seldom had Gussy's ire been roused to such an extent: but that smack in the face, in Tom Merry's study, had done it: and Gussy's resolution was like iron. And with all his elegant ways, he was sturdy and strong, and his pluck was absolutely unlimited. Whatever might be the result of the combat, it certainly was not going to be a walk-over.

"Go it, Gussy," chirruped Figgins, of the New House, as the fighting-men closed in combat.

Cardew came on hard and fast, hitting hard. His desire to "smash" his opponent was only too evident. And Arthur Augustus was hard pressed. He had to give ground, and Cardew's lashing fists drove him round the ring. It was perhaps fortunate for him that the call of time came.

"Time!"

Cardew almost snarled, as he had to drop his hands. A few moments more, and he had no doubt that he would have knocked his adversary out, in the first round. Arthur Augustus was breathing rather hard, as Blake made a knee for him, and Dig sponged his heated face.

"Feeling all right, old chap?" muttered Herries.

"Wight as wain, Hewwies."

"Don't jaw, old scout—save your breath," said Blake. "Stall that cad off in the next round, Gussy. You've got more wind than he has, at any rate—you don't smoke cigarettes in the study."

"Time!" called Talbot.

Arthur Augustus stepped up quite briskly. Cardew came on

as eagerly as ever. But he did not gain ground in the second round. Arthur Augustus succeeded in stalling him off, and did not yield an inch under a furious attack. And just before time was called again, Cardew, in his anger and excitement, left himself open to a right-hander, which landed fairly in his face and sent him staggering helplessly backwards.

"Time!" called Talbot, and this time it came as a relief to Cardew, as he staggered against Levison.

"Good man!" grinned Blake. "That's the stuff to give the troops, Gussy! A few more like that, old scout."

"Mind you keep your temper," murmured Dig. "Cardew's loosing his."

"I twust that I am not likely to lose my tempah, Dig! I am certainly goin' to give that wat a feahful thwashin', if I can, but I quite wefuse to get excited about it."

"That's the ticket, old man," said Blake. "The more the cad boils over, the more you keep cool, and he's your mutton."

Levison, in the opposite corner, was of the same opinion. Cardew leaned on him, breathing hard, a little dizzy from that staggering drive, and only too plainly in the worst temper ever. Clive, with a wet sponge, wiped a stream of red from his nose. The fact that that nose was obviously going to show signs of damage afterwards, added to Cardew's smouldering rage. He had plenty of pluck to stand up to punishment, but he was very particular indeed about his personal appearance. Gussy seemed to have forgotten that important detail, but Cardew had not. He had no desire whatever to parade a red, swollen nose under innumerable eyes for several days. And that nose was certainly going to be red and swollen. And so far from "smashing" the swell of St. Jim's, he could not fancy that he had gained any advantage at all so far. Neither was losing his temper, in a contest where coolness was required, likely to help him.

"Keep cool, old man," muttered Levison. "You asked for that punch—and it was a good one! Keep cool."

"Oh, shut up!" snarled Cardew. In his present mood he was ready to snarl at friend or foe. "I'm going to lick him."

"Not if you don't keep cool," said Clive.

"That tailor's dummy—that stuffed suit of clothes—that ninny—that brainless ass—don't be a fool!" hissed Cardew.

Levison and Clive said no more.

"Time!"

The third round began. It was hammer and tongs from start to finish. But all the onlookers could see that the advantage was with Arthur Augustus, who was cool as ice, while Cardew

was very far from cool. There was punishment for both, and both were glad of a rest when time was called.

In the fourth round Cardew's wildcat tactics seemed to pay a dividend at last. Under a whirlwind attack, Arthur Augustus went down, with a bump, and sprawled on his back, spluttering.

Cardew stood, panting, watching like a cat as Talbot began to count.

"One, two, three, four, five, six—"

Arthur Augustus made an effort, and half-rose. But he sank back again, unable to get on his feet. His friends watched him in tense anxiety; Cardew with a savage grin. He had no mercy to show: he was ready to knock his adversary spinning if he gained his feet. And if he did not, he would be counted out and beaten.

"—seven, eight—!" counted Talbot.

Another effort, and D'Arcy was on one knee.

"Nine—"

"Oh, good man, Gussy!" breathed Blake, as Arthur Augustus fairly hurled himself up, just in time to avoid being counted out.

Cardew was on him at once. But Gussy, hard as he was hit, was still cool. Somehow he fended off the fierce attack, keeping his feet: but never had the call of "time" come more gladly to his ears.

"Time!"

Arthur Augustus tottered to his corner. He sank on Blake's ready knee, and Dig, in sympathetic silence, bathed his flaming face.

"What price that?" sneered Cardew, in his corner. "Do you think the tailor's dummy has a chance left, after that?"

"Don't count your chickens too early," said Levison, quietly. "Tailor's dummy or not, that chap is steel all through—he will fight till he drops."

"Let him! He will drop pretty hard."

Cardew had no doubts. In the next round the "smashing" process was to come. And he anticipated it with savage pleasure. That bitter humiliation in Railton's study was fresh in his mind. Somehow, he was going to get back on Railton himself for that, if he could. Anyhow, he was going to get back on D'Arcy for it—and he was doing so. He was going to leave him on the ground breathless and beaten—beaten to the wide. He was feeling the effects of four hard rounds, but he was grinning as he came up at the call of time.

But a minute's rest had done D'Arcy worlds of good. He was still as cool as an iceberg, and he had his wind again. Once more



Cardew tried the whirlwind game: this time to his sorrow. He came on with a reckless fury that landed him fairly on Arthur Augustus's fists, and Gussy's right came home with a crash on his chin, followed up by the left, as he staggered, on his already damaged nose. Cardew went down like a sack of coke.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "Who'd have thought Gussy packed a punch like that?"

"Good man!" murmured Lowther.

"Cardew's out!" said Lowther.

It looked like it! Cardew was seeking to struggle up, but that "postman's knock" had utterly dazed him, and he fell like a log again. Talbot was counting.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—"

A second more—but in that second Cardew somehow struggled up. He reeled drunkenly on his feet. The merest tap from his adversary would have sent him crashing again. But Arthur Augustus's tactics were not like his. Arthur Augustus stood back and gave him a chance. It would have been the knock-out—but the swell of St. Jim's disdained to hit a man who could hardly lift his hands in defence, and the opportunity passed.

"Gussy all over!" sighed Blake.

How Cardew kept his feet till the round ended, he did not know. But he was still on them, when time was called, and he staggered to his corner.

His friends did what they could for him. But they did not speak. Only a savage snarl would have answered them.

"You think I'm licked," muttered Cardew, thickly.

Neither of them answered. They did not "think" so—they knew it, as everyone on the spot knew it. Cardew could go on, but he was already beaten—largely by his own faults of temper. Perhaps he realised it himself, but if so, it only added to his bitter rage. At all events, he went on again at the call of time, though his head was spinning.

"Time!"

In the sixth round, there was nothing left in Cardew for whirlwind tactics. In spite of himself, in spite of his fury and his desperate determination, he had to defend all the time. It was Arthur Augustus's turn to attack, and he did so—and the round ended with Cardew on his back.

Levison had to pick him up and help him to his corner. He sagged on Clive's knee.

"Better chuck it, old man!" muttered Levison. "No good going on."

"Fool!"

Cardew was not the man to admit the facts. And when Talbot

called time again, he tottered forward. Then he gathered what remained of his strength and energy, and hurled himself at Arthur Augustus. What he hurled himself upon was a fist that seemed like a lump of iron, crashing on his jaw. He crumpled on the ground.

"That's done it!" breathed Blake.

It had! Talbot counted to ten, but he might as well have counted to fifty. Cardew could hardly stir.

"Out!"

"Good old Gussy!" grinned Blake.

"Good old one and only!" chuckled Figgins.

"By gum," said Tom Merry. "You'd better get your face bathed, Gussy—you look a picture."

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Come on," said Blake. "Here's your jacket! Good old Gussy!"

His friends led him away. The crowd dispersed, some casting curious glances back at Cardew. Levison had raised him from the ground, and he stood leaning on him, unable to keep his feet without assistance. If ever a man had been thoroughly "licked" it was Ralph Reckness Cardew. The "smashing" had taken place, but it was not Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who had been "smashed". Cardew had asked for it, and he had received it. Arthur Augustus, the "tailor's dummy", had walked off, victor in the fray, leaving him utterly beaten, and the cup of his humiliation and bitterness was full to overflowing.

## Left Alone !

“COMING out?” asked Levison.  
“No!”

“Better come !” said Clive.

“Leave me alone !”

Cardew’s answers were short, if not sweet.

Wednesday afternoon was a half-holiday at St. Jims, and most of the fellows were enjoying that half-holiday, in one way or another. Cardew did not look as if he were enjoying it.

The first eleven, on Big Side, were playing a visiting team from Greyfriars, and most of the seniors, and an innumerable crowd of juniors, were watching the game. Other fellows had taken out their jiggers, or pushed out boats on the rippling Ryll.

But there were a few who were not wholly enjoying life that bright afternoon. Tom Merry was one of them, sitting in Extra School with several other delinquents. But the most darkly clouded face at St. Jim’s was easily Cardew’s.

He was in the armchair in his study, No. 9 in the Fourth, when Levison and Clive looked for him, and found him. He gave them a dark look as they appeared in the doorway, and did not speak. And when they spoke to him, his answers came snapping, almost snarling.

There were a good many signs on Cardew’s handsome face of the fight behind the gym the previous day. Arthur Augustus D’Arcy bore a good many signs of battle : but Cardew’s certainly were more prominent. But particular as the dandy of the Fourth was about his looks, he hardly cared. It was the defeat that rankled bitterly.

He had set out to “smash” Arthur Augustus, and had had no doubt of his ability so to do. And he had been left beaten on the

ground—beaten by the “tailor’s dummy” whom he affected to despise. That bitter humiliation rankled too deeply for Cardew to recover from it soon. He had been in a black and bitter mood ever since.

Those signs of combat were too marked to escape official eyes. Both the combatants had been called up by Mr. Lathom, their Form-master, and awarded two hundred lines, with orders to hand them in by tea-time on Wednesday. Cardew cared little or nothing for that. He was not thinking of his lines, as he sat with a black brow in his study.

He eyed his friends, in the doorway, rather as if they had been enemies. He was in a mood to quarrel at a word.

“Doing your lines now?” asked Levison.

“No.”

“Why not come out, then?” asked Clive. “What’s the good of sticking here in the study?”

“Find out!”

“Oh, rats!” grunted Clive, and he turned and walked away down the passage, leaving Levison to carry on, if he liked.

Ernest Levison hesitated, in the doorway. He was unwilling to leave a friend to solitude and black and bitter reflections. And he was a little uneasy, too. He hardly knew what the reckless scapegrace might or might not do, in his present mood.

“Look here, old chap,” he said, at last. “Lathom will expect those lines by tea-time.”

“Let him expect!”

“I’ll lend you a hand with them, if you like, if you’re staying in.”

“I don’t like.”

“Look here, Cardew—”

“Oh, give it a rest! Lathom can whistle for his lines.” Cardew gave a sneering laugh. “Am I a good little boy like Tompkins, or that new fellow Ridd? They’ve got lines, and they’re gone to their study to write them out, like dear good little boys—pa! Lathom can whistle for his lines, so far as I’m concerned.”

“I expect they’re squinting out of the window now and then, to see how Kildare’s getting on at the wickets.”

“Well, you needn’t squint from a window—you can cut off, if you want to see the cricket.”

“Why not come with me?”

“I won’t.”

“Then get on with your lines.”

“Same answer.”

“No good asking for more trouble.”

"Do I ever ask for anything else?" sneered Cardew.

"Look here, it's no good brooding over that licking," exclaimed Levison, more than a little impatiently. "It was a fair fight, and you got the worst of it, and that's all about it. You forced it on D'Arcy—I suppose you don't expect to smack a fellow's face, and nothing said? And you got licked as much as anything else because you couldn't keep your temper. Have a little sense, and put it right out of your head."

"When I've made him sorry for it, perhaps."

"Oh, rot. If D'Arcy had had the worst of it, do you think he would be brooding over it?" snapped Levison. "He's got too much sense. He would be in his study doing his lines just as he's doing now."

Cardew's eyes glinted.

"Oh! He's in his study doing his lines, is he?"

"Yes—he doesn't want a row with Lathom, if you do. Think he didn't want to go down to the cricket with Blake and Herries and Digby?"

"They're gone down, are they?"

"Like everybody else." Levison gave Cardew a rather grim look. "Look here, if you're thinking of going along to Study No. 6 and kicking up a row with D'Arcy—"

"Not at all."

"Well, come on," said Levison. "Every fellow's out of the House—and you sticking here like Robinson Crusoe on his island, sulking."

"I should have to stick here if I were doing my lines."

"Do them, then."

"I've said that Lathom can whistle for them," said Cardew. "If you're interested in the Sixth-Form noodles doing their stunts, hike along and watch them—and leave a fellow alone."

"If you're not interested too, you ought to be," snapped Levison. "Wingate and his men from Greyfriars are putting up a jolly good game, and giving Kildare's team all they can handle. You were keen enough on cricket not long ago, when you started a feud with Tom Merry for dropping you out of the junior eleven."

"I'm not keen now."

"You're as changeable as the wind," growled Levison. "If you'd been at the nets with us on Monday, instead of sneaking in at the back gate of the Green Man, there wouldn't have been any trouble at all."

"Oh, shut up on that."

"Will you come out?"

"No!"

"Or do your lines?"

"No!"

"Please yourself, and bother you, then," said Levison, and he turned to follow Sidney Clive down the passage.

"Hold on a minute," said Cardew, suddenly.

Levison turned back.

"I suppose most of the fellows are on Big Side, watching Kildare and the rest?" said Cardew.

"Almost everybody."

"Any beaks there?"

"Well, Railton wouldn't be likely to miss it," said Levison.

"He's never been known to miss a first-eleven match yet."

"Is he there now?"

"He wasn't when I came away with Clive to look for you. But he will be there, of course. Catch him missing it." Levison's manner was amicable again. "Look here, Cardew, it's a great game. Do come."

"Shut the door after you."

Ernest Levison gave him an expressive look—a very expressive look—banged the door, and walked away. Cardew was left alone.

He sat in the armchair, thinking.

He was not thinking of cricket, or anything like it. In a happier mood, he would probably have been as interested as any other St. Jim's fellow in the match between St. Jim's and Greyfriars School. But he gave it no thought now. He was thinking of other things—of that bitterly humiliating scene in Railton's study, when he had cringed under his House-master's steady gaze, and felt like a worm—and of the defeat behind the gym, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had walked off victor, leaving him on the ground. Darker and darker grew his face as he sat in black thought.

He rose at last, and left the study, quietly. He paused at the door of No. 6. From within that study came the sound of a scratching pen, and then a murmuring voice:

"Bothah these beastly lines! Bothah Lathom! Oh, bothah!"

Then the scratching resumed. Arthur Augustus, undoubtedly, was in Study No. 6, writing lines, if that was what Cardew wanted to know.

He passed on, and paused again at No. 4—the only other study in the Fourth occupied just then. He heard two voices from within: Ridd's and Tompkins'.

"How many have you done, Ridd?"

"Fifty."

## WHO RAGGED RAILTON ?

"I've done only forty."

"Slow-coach!"

Cardew walked on, and crossed the study landing to the window. There he stood looking out into the quadrangle below.

What he was looking for, it would have been hard to say. His face expressed nothing, if any fellow had noticed him there—which no fellow did. He was not looking in the direction of the cricket ground. He was watching the quad.

From the distance, four strokes came from the old clock-tower. And a few minutes later, an athletic figure emerged from the House, under Cardew's eyes, and walked away towards the cricket ground.

Cardew's eyes glittered, as he watched Mr. Railton disappear in the distance.

Levison had said that Railton would not miss it, and Cardew had had no doubt that he was right. The School-master, a very keen cricketer himself, was very unlikely to miss a first-eleven match on the home ground. He had been occupied in his study till four o'clock. A House-master was a busy man. But he had got away at last, and there he was—heading for Big Side: safe there, Cardew had no doubt, for some time to come.

Cardew left the landing window and went down the stairs. He strolled into the junior lobby, and smiled—a very unpleasant smile—as he stopped there and looked at a coat on a peg, the property of his relative, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He was hardly a few moments in the lobby. He strolled out again with his hands in his pockets.

Levison had said that "every fellow" was out of the House, and it seemed like it. The House seemed absolutely deserted, and not an eye fell on Ralph Reckness Cardew as he strolled away towards Masters' Studies.

## A Visitor in No. 4 Study

“BUSY?”

Jimmy Ridd and Clarence York Tompkins looked up as a drawling voice asked that question in the doorway of No. 4 Study in the Fourth.

Ridd was hard at work on his lines, the sunlight from the window glinting on his bent red head. Tompkins was proceeding more slowly, with a painstaking concentration.

No two fellows could have been more different than the two occupants of No. 4 in the Fourth. Ridd, with his bright face and red head, was full of life and vigour, quite a live-wire. Tompkins, slow and hesitating and lacking in self-confidence, was an insignificant and disregarded nobody. Ridd had received his lines for sliding down the banisters at the risk of his limbs—Tompkins, for having been late in class—poor Tompkins was often late. He never slid down banisters, but he could hardly ever be on time.

Ridd was slogging at his lines, keen to get through, and to get down to Big Side to see the cricket. Tompkins was also anxious to get through, but he had spoilt a sheet by dropping blots—blot-dropping was one of his gifts—and so he was hopelessly behind. They had started together at “*conticuere omnes*” while Ridd was now at “*Cuncta equidem tibi*,” the hapless Tompkins was at “*equo ne credite*.” Indeed he had suggested to Ridd that the new fellow might do a few for him—a suggestion that Ridd turned a deaf ear to, being more interested in Virgil.

Neither seemed pleased to see Ralph Reckness Cardew looking in at the door. Ridd did not like him, and Tompkins regarded him with timid awe.

“Yes!” answered Ridd, briefly, and he resumed scribbling.

Cardew, smiling, strolled into the Study, and shut the door.

Ridd did not look up again, but Tompkins’ eyes were on Cardew, curiously. He wondered what the dandy of the Fourth wanted.



"Jolly good game going on, on Big Side," said Cardew. "Aren't you fellows going down to give it the once-over?"

"When we're through," answered Ridd, over his shoulder. "Lathom wants these lines by tea-time. I heard you had lines, too, for fighting."

"Oh, I'm chancing it with Lathom."

"More ass you!" said Ridd.

"Oh, quite!"

"Do you want anything, Cardew?" asked Tompkins, in his timid way.

"Not at all! Just looked in because I'm tired of my own company, and you seem to be the only fellows in the House," drawled Cardew.

He stood looking from the study window.

Ridd scribbled on. Tompkins eyed Cardew's back, as he stood at the window, doubtfully. As it appeared that a lazy fellow had nothing to do, and was only killing time, Tompkins wondered whether he could venture to ask him for a little help with the lines.

He had asked Ridd, in vain: but then, Ridd had his own lines to do. Ridd, as a rule, was very kind to poor Tompkins, who was glad enough that the new fellow had been put in his study. He had had it to himself for a long time, nobody being keen on sharing it with a disregarded nonentity like Tompkins. Ridd was a relation of Jack Blake's, and when he had come to St. Jim's, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in the kindness of his heart, had arranged for him to share Study No. 6—much to the dismay of Blake and Herries and Dig, who did not want to be crowded. But, as it happened, neither did Ridd want to be crowded, five fellows to a study, and he had elected to go to No. 4—much to the relief of Blake and Co. and to the satisfaction of Tompkins.

But kind as Ridd generally was to his ineffectual study-mate, there was a limit—he wanted to get out, and had no time for extra lines. Evidently, Cardew had, if he chose: and Tompkins eyed him, wondering whether he dared to ask.

"By gad! Kildare's going strong!" exclaimed Cardew, suddenly. "Chuck that for a minute, you fellows, and look!"

Ridd jumped up from the table. He had had a good many peeps from that window already, rather slowing down his lines. He ran to the window.

Kildare and Darrell were running, the Greyfriars field hunting the ball. Ridd was deeply interested, and he forgot lines for the moment. Tompkins had not risen from the table, and Cardew,

with a grin, caught him by the shoulder and hooked him off his chair.

"Look!" he said.

"Oh, all right!" assented Tompkins. Tompkins seldom or never said "No" to anyone: and he was flattered, too, by the attention of so superb and enviable a youth as the grandson of Lord Reckness. Poor Tompkins would have given much for Cardew's notice at any time: but Cardew, hitherto, had seemed unconscious of his existence in the House. This was quite a happy change.

Ridd and Tompkins, at the study window, had their eyes on the cricket ground in the distance. The batsmen were still running, and Mr. Railton, among others at the pavilion, was looking on as keenly as any fellow in the swarming crowd. Cardew, behind the two juniors in No. 4, stepped back swiftly to the mantelpiece.

On that mantelpiece stood a cheap little clock, which now indicated twenty minutes past four. The glass face of that clock had long ago disappeared, as articles of such fragile material were rather wont to do in junior studies. But it kept good time, which after all was the chief thing. In a matter of seconds, Cardew had pushed back the minute hand, from twenty past four, to five minutes to four. The clock was now twenty-five minutes slow.

Neither of the juniors at the window had the remotest suspicion of what he had done.

Having done it, Cardew stepped after them to the window, and looked out between them.

"Fine!" said Ridd. "By gum, they can't touch old Kildare. That Greyfriars man Sykes can bowl—but he can't touch Kildare."

"They're piling 'em up," drawled Cardew. "Jolly good game."

"Blow those lines." Ridd went back to the table. "I've just got to get through! Blow."

He sat down to his lines again. Tompkins followed his example, with a lingering hopeful eye on Cardew.

"Got many to do?" asked Cardew.

Twenty more," said Ridd.

"I've still got fifty to do," bleated Tompkins. "I—I—I say, Cardew, if you've got nothing to do—" He hesitated.

Cardew gave him a genial smile.

"Like a hand with them?" he asked.

"Oh! If you would—!" gasped Tompkins.

"Why not?" said Cardew. "Lathom never notices—my pal

Levison has often done lines for me, and Lathom never noticed a thing. I daresay I could drop a few blots, and make a few smears, so that it would look like your fist."

Tompkins giggled feebly.

"How far have you got?" Cardew glanced at Tompkins' scrawl. "I see! Well, I'll take another sheet, and begin twenty-five lines further on, see—we'll do twenty-five each and get through, what?"

"I say, that's jolly decent of you, Cardew," bleated Tompkins.

"Glad to help, old chap."

Tompkins beamed. "Old chap" from Cardew was almost as gratifying as help with those troublesome lines.

Cardew sat down at the table. Then he glanced at his wrist-watch.

"I've got to see a man in the New House at half-past four," he remarked. "Lots of time, I think! Hallo, my watch has stopped! Does that clock of yours go?"

"Oh, yes, it keeps quite good time," said Tompkins. He looked at the clock. "Three minutes to four."

Ridd looked up.

"I thought it was later than that," he said. And he too looked at the clock. There was no doubt that it indicated three minutes to the hour of four. "Good! We'll jolly well get out soon after four."

He resumed scribbling. Tompkins re-started, and Cardew's pen ran swiftly over the paper. No more was said, as the three concentrated on lines.

"Done!" exclaimed Ridd, in great relief, when he had written his last, and he jumped up from the table.

"Done!" echoed Cardew. He was a quick worker. "How have you got on, Tompkins?"

"I've still twelve to do," moaned Tompkins. "I say, Ridd, wait for me, will you—I shan't be long now."

"Bow-wow!" said Ridd, and he gathered up his lines, and shot out of the study.

Tompkins glanced at Cardew. He did not expect that superb youth to wait for him. But Cardew sat on the corner of the study table, with a smiling face.

"I'll see you through, old man," he said, genially.

And Clarence York Tompkins laboured on till the imposition was at last finished. He rose and gathered it up, including the lines written by Cardew.

They left the study together.

Tompkins crossed the study-landing, to go down the stairs and deliver his lines to Mr. Lathom's study. Cardew stopped at the landing window, and stood looking out, apparently for another glimpse of the cricket. Tompkins disappeared down the staircase.

Then Cardew walked quickly back to No. 4 Study.

He stepped into that study, and across to the mantelpiece. With a steady finger he pushed the minute-hand on twenty-five minutes, setting the clock right again.

He was hardly more than a moment in the study. He walked out with a smile on his face—a rather feline smile. He was still smiling as he arrived at the door of Mr. Lathom's study, on the ground floor, where Tompkins was just coming out after delivering his lines to his Form-master.

"Comin' down to the cricket?" asked Cardew, affably.

Tompkins grinned with pleasure. He had always regarded Cardew as a rather uppish fellow, with altogether too good an opinion of himself. Certainly he had never expected him to be pally. Now nothing could have been more affably friendly than Cardew's manner.

"Yes, rather," said Tompkins. "But didn't you say you were going to see a man in the New House?" he added.

"Oh, he can wait. I want to see how the first eleven are gettin' on. Come on, old fellow."

Tompkins beamed and came on. They walked down to Big Side together, and joined Levison and Clive in the crowd. And Cardew remained there, in numerous company, till the match was over.

## 13

### Rag on Railton !

“SOMETHING’S up!” remarked Arthur Augustus D’Arcy, sagely.

Tom Merry and Co. did not need Arthur Augustus to tell them that.

It was obvious that something was up.

A group of juniors were standing by the staircase, discussing the cricket. Tom Merry had been out of “Extra” in time to see the finish of the great match. Arthur Augustus, who was not a rapid worker, had finished his lines later, but he had been in time for the end, and he had had the satisfaction of seeing St. Jim’s win by a hatful of runs. Kildare’s and Darrell’s batting, and Langton’s bowling, furnished an interesting and inexhaustible topic for the juniors, and they were playing the senior match over again, as it were, when they became aware that something was up.

Study No. 6, and the Terrible Three, and Cardew and Levison and Clive and Talbot, and several other fellows, were in the group, most of them talking at once, when Mr. Railton came in, passing them and going to his study. From that direction, a minute later, they heard a sharp, startled voice :

“Good heavens! Who has done this?”

It was Railton’s voice.

It was very unusual for the School House-master to speak in a loud or excited voice. But this time it was both loud and excited. In fact, he almost shouted!

Every fellow in the group heard him, and a score of other fellows too, and they exchanged rather startled glances. And Arthur Augustus D’Arcy remarked that something was up: as undoubtedly something was!

"That's Railton!" said Tom Merry. "What—?"

"What the dickens—!" said Lowther.

"Something's happened—" said Levison.

"Something in Railton's study—!" said Manners.

"There he goes again!" breathed Blake.

"Upon my word!" It was Railton's startled, angry voice again. "Upon my word! Who has done this?"

"Somebody's done something!" murmured Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Not a rag, surely," drawled Cardew. "Man must have had a nerve to rag in the House beak's study."

Levison gave him a quick, startled look. He was well aware of the deep bitterness Cardew had been feeling towards his House-master of late.

"Cardew!" he whispered. "You mad ass, you haven't—"

"Cardew!" muttered Clive.

"Bai Jove! There's somethin' w'ong, you fellows," said Arthur Augustus. "I wondah what has happened."

"Let's go and see," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah."

The whole group moved off towards Masters' Studies. A rather excited crowd stared down the passage towards Railton's study.

The door of that study was open. Railton was not to be seen. Apparently he had gone into the study. That something—and something of a startling nature—must have happened in that study, was only too evident—and a rag was all that the juniors could think of, though, as Cardew had remarked, a man must have had a nerve to rag in a House-master's quarters.

"Come on," said Blake.

The juniors moved on towards Railton's door. As they looked into the study, there was a general gasp.

Mr. Railton was standing there, with an expression of thunder on his face. But the juniors hardly looked at Railton. They stared into the study—in blank amazement and horror.

There had been a rag in Railton's study—there was no mistake about that. And it was such a rag as had seldom been perpetrated at St. Jim's, even in a junior study.

The room was wrecked.

The study table was up-ended, its legs sticking up in the air. Books and papers were scattered everywhere.

Over the legs of the table was draped the carpet. On it were piled the fender and fire-irons, and several chairs.

The armchair lay on its back. It was smothered with soot,

apparently raked down from the chimney. Pictures from the walls were piled in the grate. The bookcase slanted over the armchair, and its contents were scattered far and wide.

On the walls were long smears of ink. Evidently a folded handkerchief had been dipped in ink, for the smearing. Levison, in the crowd at the doorway, involuntarily glanced down at Cardew's fingers. But those fingers were spotless. Cardew smiled. He could read his chum's doubt, but it did not seem to worry him.

"Great pip!" murmured Blake, as he stared in.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus faintly.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Oh, scissors!"

"Somebody will be sacked for this!" muttered Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And serve him right!" said Tom Merry.

Mr. Railton looked across at the crowd in the doorway. Seldom had the juniors seen such intense anger in their House-master's face. They did not envy the ragger when Railton found him out.

"Merry!" rapped Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir," answered Tom.

"Please go to Kildare and ask him to step here. The rest of you go away at once."

"Yes, sir," said Tom, and he went. The other fellows followed. Railton, evidently, did not want an audience. But Arthur Augustus lingered for a moment.

"I am vewy sowwy to see this, sir!" he said.

The House-master stared at him.

"Do you know anything about it, D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Oh! No! Nothin' at all, sir," he gasped. "I was only expwessin' my wegwet that such a thing had occurred, sir."

"Go away at once."

"Vewy well, sir."

Arthur Augustus followed the rest, his face a little pink. Railton, apparently, was not in a receptive mood for respectful sympathy!

In a matter of minutes, all the House knew what had happened. It was really almost incredible, but it had happened! While Railton had been watching the first-eleven match from the pavilion, some person unknown had entered his study and ragged it—ragged it thoroughly—ragged it with a deadly determination

## WHO RAGGED RAILTON ?

to do as much damage as he possibly could. Manners, who had a taste for classical tags, remarked that Railton in his study had been like Marius in the ruins of Carthage, and certainly the House-master could hardly have looked round on a more complete and total wreck.

The House buzzed with it.

Every fellow, from the Sixth to the Third, thought and talked of nothing else. And the great question was, who had done it.

Whoever had done it, was going to be tracked out by masters and prefects, and sacked! That was certain. As soon as he was found, the gates of St. Jim's would close behind him, forever.

But who was it?

Almost every fellow had been out of the House, watching the cricket, or out of gates. Almost every fellow had an "alibi" ready-made. Crowds of fellows could testify that they had seen one another on the cricket ground at the time the rag must have taken place. Fellows who had been out of gates could make it clear enough. Tom Merry and other fellows who had been in Extra, were outside suspicion. Yet someone had done it.

In passages and studies, in the day-room and the Prefects' Room, in the locker-room where the fags of the Third congregated, up and down and round about, all over the House, one question was on every tongue. Who had ragged Railton?



## 14

### Who Was It?

“CARDEW!” said Manners, quietly.

“But—!” said Tom Merry.

“No proof!” said Monty Lowther.

“None!” agreed Manners. “So far at any rate. But look at it!”

“But why—?” said Tom.

Manners shrugged his shoulders.

“You remember him coming into our study yesterday, when he smacked Gussy’s face. He was spitting like a cat. Railton had put him through it.”

“He didn’t lick him—”

“He made him feel like a crawling worm, and Cardew would feel that more than a dozen lickings. He was going to take it out of Gussy—and you know how that ended. This was Cardew’s handiwork.”

Manners spoke with conviction.

“Can’t say so, old chap,” muttered Tom. “Can’t put it on any fellow. If it was Cardew, they’ll get him.”

“I’m not going to say anything. But that’s what I think! Look at him now—grinning like a Cheshire cat.”

They were in the junior day-room, after prep that evening. The Terrible Three, in the bay window, were speaking in low tones. Convinced as he was, Manners certainly did not mean to say anything outside his own circle of three, and only Tom and Monty heard him.

Blake and Co. at a little distance, were discussing the same topic. Levison, Clive and Cardew were together, and Cardew was smiling—not exactly grinning like a Cheshire cat, as Manners described it, but certainly looking quite cheerful and at

his ease. Levison and Clive looked very grave. Both of them, probably, had the same suspicion as Manners.

A crowd of other fellows were there, mostly discussing the rag in Railton's study, and surmising whether any discovery had been made.

Kildare, Darrell, Langton, and the other prefects had been on the trail. That was known. But it was not known if they had made any discovery.

Indeed, it did not seem easy to make one. Hardly a fellow had been in the House when the rag had taken place, and the ragger certainly had not been seen anywhere near Masters' Studies. Only one of the masters, it transpired, had been in his study—Lathom, the master of the Fourth. And he had had his door shut and had heard and seen nothing. That it had happened after four o'clock was known, for Railton had left his study at four to go down to the cricket ground. Obviously suspicion must fall on the few fellows who had not turned up for the cricket match by four. Ralph Reckness Cardew was one of these—a circumstance that satisfied Manners that his suspicion was well-founded, and worried Clive and Levison considerably. The voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy floated to the ears of the "Terrible Three" in the bay window

"They are weally bound to spot him, you fellows! Weally, it is not vewy difficult to get on the twack."

"How's that, Sherlock Holmes?" asked Blake.

"Pwactically ewevybody was at the Gweyfwiahs match," explained Arthur Augustus. "If I were a pwefect, I should go aftah any fellow who wasn't there by four o'clock, see? Not vewy many, I think."

"Wonderful!" said Blake, sarcastically.

"Weally, Blake—"

"You howling ass," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"You weren't on Big Side at four o'clock," hooted Herries. "You didn't come ambling along till well after five. Would you get on your own track if you were a pre?"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. Apparently he had not thought of that.

"Just like Gussy to be around, when a thing like this happens," said Dig.

"Oh, just!" sighed Blake.

"I was in my study writin' lines," said Arthur Augustus. "I could hardly help bein' awound, you fellows, as I had my lines to

do for Lathom. I twust that no one would suspect me of waggin' Wailton."

Cardew glanced round.

"What a trustin' nature!" he remarked.

"What?" Arthur Augustus's eye, and eyeglass, turned on Cardew. "What do you mean, Cardew?"

"What I say!" drawled Cardew.

"Bai Jove! If you mean to imply, Cardew, that I could be capable of such a wotten action as waggin' old Wailton—"

"Didn't you?" yawned Cardew.

"You uttah wottah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "You are perfectly well awah that I did not. You know that quite well, Cardew."

"I know that you were cheeking him in the quad yesterday, and that he called you to order for it," said Cardew, coolly. "I know that you had six from Railton, and were doing a song and a dance about it."

"Oh, gum!" exclaimed Gore of the Shell. "It wasn't you, was it, D'Arcy?"

"I wegard that question as asinine, Goah."

"Well, Railton may remember giving you that six, and wonder!" grinned Gore.

"Wubbish!"

Arthur Augustus's aristocratic face expressed utter disdain. But Blake and Herries and Dig looked rather startled. They remembered that "six", and what Arthur Augustus had said in the quad, unfortunately in Railton's hearing. And it was certain that D'Arcy had been in the House at the time the rag had taken place. It was very probable that Railton might remember those hasty words.

In the bay window, Manners gave his chums a significant look.

"Did you hear that?" he murmured. "Is it Cardew's game to get Gussy talked about in connection with it?"

"Phew!" murmured Tom. "It couldn't have been Gussy—"

"It couldn't," said Lowther.

"A good many fellows will wonder, after that from Cardew," growled Manners. "And the more they think of Gussy, the less they'll think of him."

"Hallo, here's Railton!" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

The buzz in the junior day-room died down, as Mr. Railton appeared in the doorway. All eyes were turned on his face—sterner than the School House juniors had ever seen it before.

He came in, and glanced over a crowd of faces. All the fellows knew why he was there. It was some move in the inquiry for the unknown ragger of the study. A pin might have been heard to drop, for a few moments. Then Mr. Railton spoke, quietly, but in a deep voice.

"D'Arcy! Cardew! Tompkins! Ridd!"

"Here, sir!" answered all four. And they came forward, standing in a row in front of the House-master.

The breathless hush continued. The four were to be questioned, and all the others knew why. No doubt the prefects had discovered, what all the juniors knew already, that only these four fellows had been in the House at the time of the rag in Railton's study. It could hardly be doubted that one of the four was the guilty man.

Railton eyed them, with keen scrutiny. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was quite calm, Jimmy Ridd perfectly self-possessed, and Cardew as cool as ice. Only Tompkins displayed uneasiness. But poor Tompkins always did display uneasiness if called up by a beak, and he certainly was the least likely of the four to have ragged a master's study. Indeed, the idea of Tompkins performing such a feat would have made the fellows smile. Four might be under suspicion, but only three of them were at all likely.

"I have to question you four boys," said Mr. Railton, not at all unkindly. "Very careful investigation has been made, and it transpires that you four were in the House this afternoon after four o'clock, when I left my study. You must not assume that you are suspected. At present I am simply making inquiries."

"Thank you, sir," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"D'Arcy!" Perhaps Railton remembered the "six", and the words he had heard in the quad. "Where were you after four o'clock?"

"In my study, sir."

"Until what time?"

"I think about a quarter past five, sir."

"Why?"

"I had lines to do for my Form-master, sir. Mr. Lathom gave me two hundwed for fightin'."

"You remained in your study all the time?"

"Yaas, sir."

"And when you left it—?"

"I went down at once with my lines for Mr. Lathom, sir, and then down to the cwicket gwound, where my fwiends were?"

"Did anyone come to your study?"

"No, sir."

"You were alone all the time?"

"Yaas, sir. Everyone else was at the cwicket."

"Ridd! Where were you after four o'clock?"

"In my study, sir. I had lines, like D'Arcy," answered Ridd.

"Where were you, Tompkins?"

"In my study, sir," stammered Tompkins. "I—I had lines for Mr. Lathom, sir, for being late in class, and—and—"

"You were together in your study, Ridd?"

"Yes, sir."

There was a pause. Only Ralph Reckness Cardew remained to be questioned. Ridd and Tompkins had as good as cleared one another. Each was a witness to the other's "alibi". D'Arcy certainly, had no alibi. He had been alone in Study No. 6. It looked as if it was between D'Arcy and Cardew, if it was any of the four at all. There was a deep silence, as Mr. Railton turned to Cardew.

"Cardew!"

"Yes, sir."

"Where were you at four o'clock and afterwards?"

"In No. 4 Study in the Fourth, sir, with Ridd and Tompkins," answered Cardew, calmly. And there was a murmur in the day-room as he made that answer. Cardew, it seemed, had an alibi, as well as Ridd and Tompkins. And if what he stated was true, it could not have been Cardew who had ragged in the House-master's study.

## 15

### Not Cardew !

MR. RAILTON paused.

What he was thinking could not be read in his face, by the anxious eyes that were upon him. But a good many fellows could guess, at least, that the House-master, in his own mind, regarded Ralph Reckness Cardew as the likeliest of the four. Ridd, a new fellow in the House, could hardly have been supposed to have had a motive for such an act: Tompkins was no more likely to have done it, than a tame rabbit: and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, though he might perhaps be supposed to have had a motive, was a very much less likely "suspect" than a wildly reckless fellow like Cardew. Yet if Cardew's answer was true, he had an "alibi" as good as Ridd's or Tompkins'. And could it be anything but true, when a few more questions could not fail to elicit the facts?

Railton's eyes were very keenly on the scapegrace's face—which was perfectly cool. Guilty or innocent, Cardew had the courage and the nerve to go through the ordeal without turning a hair. A couple of days ago, he had cringed in Railton's study under that steady gaze, feeling as he had said, "like a worm." But he was cool as ice now.

"You were in No. 4 Study, with Tompkins and Ridd?" said Mr. Railton, breaking the silence at last.

"Yes, sir."

"Why were you in the study, Cardew?"

"These two chaps were stickin' in to do lines, sir, and I thought I'd give them a look-in."

"When did you go to the study?"

"I think about a quarter to four, sir."

"Did you stay in the study while Ridd and Tompkins were writing their lines?"

"I did, sir."

"Do you corroborate this, Ridd?"

"Oh, yes, sir," answered Ridd, at once. "I know Cardew came in sometime before four, and he stayed till I had finished my lines, and cut off to see the cricket. I was finished before Tompkins."

"Tompkins?"

"Yee-es, sir," stammered the nervous Clarence York.

"After Ridd left, did Cardew stay with you?"

"Yes, sir, till I had finished my lines."

"And then?"

"Then we went down, sir! Cardew waited for me while I took my lines in to Mr. Lathom, and then we went down to the cricket together, and stayed till the finish." Tompkins blinked uneasily at his House-master. "Lots of fellows know, sir—and Julian—lot of fellows, sir—"

"That will do, Tompkins."

"Yes, sir! Thank you, sir," gasped Tompkins.

"Cardew!"

"Yes, sir."

"If what you have stated is correct, your time is fully accounted for when the outrage occurred in my study. But I must be satisfied on one point. "You say you went to Ridd's study about a quarter to four?"

"About that, I think, sir."

"Can you make it quite clear that it was before four o'clock?"

Cardew did not answer for a moment. In a breathless hush, the crowd in the day-room hung on his answer. The dandy of the Fourth seemed to be thinking it over calmly and methodically.

"Yes, I think so, sir," he answered, at length. "As it happens, Tompkins mentioned the time after I'd been in the study a little while."

"Is that a fact, Tompkins?"

"Oh, yes, sir," bleated Tompkins. "I remember looking at the clock, and it was three minutes to four. Ridd knows."

"Yes, sir, that is so," said Ridd. "I remember thinking that it was later but it was not quite four."

"Cardew was in the study then?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"He had been in the study some time?"

"More than five minutes, sir."

"Your study clock keeps good time, Ridd?"

"It's Tompkins', sir. It keeps jolly good time. It hasn't gone wrong since I've been here."

"And from at least eight minutes to four, then, Cardew was in the company of one or both of you?"

"Yes, sir," answered Ridd and Tompkins together.

There was another pause.

The crowded day-room had listened in deep silence. Levison and Clive were looking greatly relieved. They had known nothing of this—Cardew had not said a word. Doubt and suspicion had to be driven from their minds now. For if Cardew had been with Tompkins and Ridd all the while, from before four o'clock till the finish of the cricket match, obviously he could not have been the unknown person who had ragged in Railton's study—unless on the theory that all three of them were in a tale together, which it was scarcely possible to suppose. Tompkins was far too timid and hesitating to be drawn into any such scheme, while Ridd, though he was civil to Cardew, was well known to have little liking for him. It was, in fact, perfectly clear that Ridd and Tompkins were telling the truth—at least so far as they knew. And their evidence completely exonerated Ralph Reckness Cardew.

Railton, it was clear, was puzzled.

His glance turned again on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, though he did not speak to him. Blake and Co. noted it uneasily.

Cardew, Ridd, and Tompkins were cleared of suspicion—mutually, they cleared one another. Only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had no witness in his favour. Only Arthur Augustus could have perpetrated that "rag" without some other fellow being aware of it.

That thought, certainly, was in Railton's mind, as it was in many other minds in the room.

"Very well!" said Mr. Railton, at last. "I have no more questions to ask you—at present."

With that, the House-master left the day room.

A buzz of voices broke out, immediately he was gone. In the bay window, Manners had quite a curious expression on his face. He had been as good as sure that the delinquent would turn out to be Cardew. Now he had heard convincing evidence that it could not have been Cardew. It was rather a blow for Harry Manners to find that he had made such a mistake: and he was feeling remorseful about it, too. He did not like Cardew, but he did not want to do him wrong.

"Not Cardew, after all," said Tom Merry, in a low voice. "If he was with Ridd and Tompkins at the time—"

"And he was," said Lowther.



"No doubt about that," assented Tom. "Neither of them would tell lies about it—especially for Cardew. He's nothing to them."

"I—I seem to have jumped to it a bit too quickly," said Manners, slowly. "I'd have sworn that it was Cardew or nobody. But—but—who was it?"

"Goodness knows."

"It couldn't have been Gussy—!" muttered Lowther.

"Never!" said Tom.

Cardew rejoined Levison and Clive, when the House-master was gone. He was smiling.

"Quite an ordeal," he said, lightly. "Do you know, my beloved 'earers, I rather think that Railton had some doubts about me."

"All right now, if he had," said Clive. "Thank goodness you dropped in on those chaps in No. 4, Cardew. If you'd stayed alone in our study—"

"Yes, thank goodness for that," said Levison. "I—I'm sorry, Cardew, but—but I couldn't help thinking—at least fearing—that—that—"

Cardew laughed.

"That I'd ragged Railton?" he asked.

"Well, yes! I'm more glad than I can say that it's proved now that you didn't and couldn't have."

Cardew laughed again.

"Got any idea who the happy man was?" he asked.

Levison and Clive shook their heads.

"Not the one and only?" grinned Cardew.

"Rot!" said Levison. "D'Arcy wouldnt! He blew off steam over that six, but he wouldn't rag Railton. That's rot."

"Somebody did," said Cardew.

"Not D'Arcy," said Clive, rather sharply.

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

Manners came over from the bay window, and touched Cardew on the arm. The dandy of the Fourth looked round at him.

"Sorry," said Manners, flushing a little. "I thought it was you, Cardew—now I know that it was not. Sorry I thought so."

"Oh, don't mench," said Cardew, airily. "I fancy a lot of fellows might have thought so, includin' dear old Railton, if I hadn't had such a jolly good alibi. Even my own pals here had their doubts—hadn't you, old beans?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice was heard, in puzzled tones.

"Weally, you fellows, it is vevy mystewious. I wathah

thought, as I wemarked, that if the pwe's got on the twack of the fellows who were in the House at the time, they would get the man. But it is perfectly cleah now that it was not Widd or Tompkins or Cardew, so it is vevy mystewious. Pewwaps there was some othah fellow in the House at the time they don't know about!"

"He, he, he!" came a squeak from Baggy Trimble.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass on the fat Baggy.

"I fail to see any weason for cacklin' at that wemark, Twimble!" he said, sternly.

"He, he!" chuckled Baggy. "Perhaps there was another fellow in the House that they do know about! He, he!"

"Kick him!" said Blake.

"Look here, you know—yaroooooh!" roared Baggy, as Blake and Herries and Dig all kicked him together. "Wow! Oh, crikey! Ow!"

Baggy dodged out of the day-room, yelling. That was an end to Baggy's surmises on the subject for the moment. But there was little doubt that the same thought was in many other minds, and by the time the School House fellows went to their dormitories that night, at least half the House were wondering whether it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who had ragged Railton.

## Merely a Misunderstanding!

“I WONDAH—!” remarked Arthur Augustus D’Arcy, thoughtfully.

The bell was ringing for morning School, and the Fourth Form were assembling at the door of their Form-room. It was noticed that there was a thoughtful wrinkle in the noble brow of Arthur Augustus—a good many eyes were upon him. Half the Fourth, at least, took it for granted that Gussy was the unknown ragger, since it seemed impossible to point the finger of suspicion at anyone else in the House, and that the only question was whether he would be found out. So it was natural for him to look unusually thoughtful that morning—with the possibility of the “sack” looming over his aristocratic head.

“I wondah—!” repeated Arthur Augustus.

“What and which?” asked Blake.

“I wondah whethah it is up to me to go and apologise to Wailton,” said Arthur Augustus. “What do you fellows think?”

“Oh, my hat!” murmured Cardew.

All the juniors at the Form-door stared at Arthur Augustus. Blake and Herries and Dig regarded him almost in horror.

Certainly they did not believe that their noble chum was the ragger of Railton’s study. It looked a good deal like it. They had to admit that. But it was not what it looked like. As it seemed to have been proved that Cardew was not the man, they could not begin to guess who it was—but it was not Gussy, whatever it looked like.

But that unexpected remark from Arthur Augustus staggered them.

Baggy Trimble emitted a fat chuckle.

“Think that would be any good?” he asked.

"I twust so, Twimble."

"Oh, crumbs!" said Blake, blankly. "Are you off your nut, Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Wandering in your mind?" asked Dig.

"Weally, Dig—"

"Got one to wander in?" snorted Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Apologize to Railton?" said Levison. "My dear chap, that wouldn't be any good. Better say nothing."

"Much better," said Clive.

Cardew was regarding the swell of St. Jim's with a mixture of curiosity and amazement. To everyone else, Arthur Augustus's remark sounded like an admission. Cardew had his own reasons for thinking otherwise. But what was in Gussy's noble mind was a mystery to him.

"Weally, you fellows, I wathah think it is up to me," said Arthur Augustus, in the same thoughtful way. "A House-mastah is a person to be wespected. I had a vevy tough six fwom Wailton, the othah day, and it made me vevy watty. I was vevy watty indeed. I wegwet to say that it caused me to be lackin' in propah wespect for my House-mastah—"

"Dry up, you ass," muttered Blake.

"Lathom may be along any minute," said Dig.

"I am awah that Lathom may be along any minute, Dig, as the bell has stopped. What does it mattah?"

"Do you want him to hear you?" hissed Herries.

"Why not, Hewwies?"

"Mad?" asked Blake.

"I wefuse to weply to such a widiculous question, Blake. I was wemarkin' that I wondah whethah it is up to me to go and apologize to Wailton for what must have seemed to him vevy sewious diswespect—"

"Here comes Lathom," said Levison.

"Quiet, for goodness sake," whispered Ridd.

"Shut up, Gussy!"

"Keep mum, you ass."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass on the fellows round him, in surprise. Apparently he saw no reason for shutting up, simply because Mr. Lathom, the Master of the Fourth, had appeared in the corridor, coming towards his Form-room.

"Weally, I fail to undahstand you fellows," he said. "I have

no objection to Lathom hearin' my wemarks, if he happens to heah them."

"Oh, you image!" groaned Blake. "If Lathom hears you—"

"It's the sack, you ass!" breathed Dig.

"Wubbish!"

"For goodness sake, dry up, and don't let Lathom hear a word," muttered Levison.

"Weally, Levison—"

"Quiet!" said Clive.

"Wats!" Arthur Augustus went on, regardless of the fact that Mr. Lathom was drawing near. "I wepeat that I wathah think that it is up to me to go and apologize to Mr. Wailton, as othah-wise he will wegard me as havin' tweeked him with diswespect—"

"D'Arcy!" It was Mr. Lathoms voice. The Master of the Fourth could hardly have helped hearing what Arthur Augustus was saying. And the words seemed to have quiet an electrical effect on him. He stared at the swell of St. Jim's over his glasses, his eyes almost popping.

"Yaas sir," said Arthur Augustus, calmly. Blake and Herries and Dig exchanged a hopeless look. The game was up, now—Lathom had heard!

"I heard what you said, D'Arcy," Mr. Lathom almost gasped.

"Did you, sir?"

"I did, D'Arcy. What you have said amounts to a confession. So it was you who have been guilty of an act of gross disrespect to your House-master!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom.

"Weally, sir, I should not call it gwoss disrespect," protested Arthur Augustus, colouring. "I admit that it was wantin' in pwopah wespect, and I have made up my mind to apologize to Mr. Wailton, sir. I should be vewy sowwy indeed for him to suppose that I do not wegard him with the wespect due to a House-master."

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Lathom. "You admit, then, that you were guilty of the disrespectful act in Mr. Railton's study—"

"Not in his study, sir! In the quadwangle," said Arthur Augustus.

"What? What do you mean, D'Arcy?"

Mr. Lathom blinked at him. Everyone else stared at him. Really, it rather looked as if Gussy was wandering in his noble mind.

"I mean just what I have said, sir," said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "It occurred in the quad, sir, not in Mr. Wailton's study."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Lathom. "Were you not alluding,

D'Arcy, to the outrage in Mr. Railton's study yesterday afternoon?"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Bai Jove! Certainly not, sir."

"Oh, cwumbs!" murmured Blake. "Mad as a hatter."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Then to what were you alluding, D'Arcy?" exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "Explain yourself at once."

"I was alludin' to some unwelectin' words I uttached in the quad the day befoah yestahday, sir. Mr. Wailton happened to heah them, in passin'—"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Dig.

"Oh you chump!" breathed Blake.

"Oh, you image!" muttered Herries.

It was a relief to Blake and Co. that Arthur Augustus was not, after all, confessing to the rag in Railton's study. He was alluding to the incident in the quad, when Railton had passed the juniors and heard his remarks—an incident which everyone but Gussy had long forgotten.

Mr. Lathom was staring blankly at the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus went on calmly.

"I was feelin' wathah watty at the time, sir, and I feah that Mr. Wailton wegarded my remarks as vewy diswespectful, though I should not descwibe them as gwossly diswespectful. I was thinkin', sir, that it was up to me to go to Mr. Wailton and apologize for those thoughtless wemarks, as othahwise he might considah me lackin' in pwopah wespect, sir. That is all."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Lathom, again. "D'Arcy, you are a very stupid boy."

"Weally, sir—"

"Very stupid indeed," said Mr. Lathom.

"I weally do not see, sir—"

"That will do, D'Arcy."

Mr. Lathom unlocked the Form-room door, and the Fourth went in. Many of them were grinning. Arthur Augustus could see nothing at which to grin. Having reflected over the matter, and having completely recovered from the effects of the "six," he considered that an apology was due for the remarks Railton had heard in the quad. That was all—and there was nothing, so far as Arthur Augustus could see, to grin about.

He was about to take his place in Form, when there was a tap at the door, and Toby, the House-page, looked in.

Mr. Lathom glanced at him inquiringly.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Mr. Railton wishes to see Master D'Arcy in his study, sir."

"Oh! Very well! D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir."

"Your House-master desires to see you in his study. Go at once."

"Yaas, sir."

Lathom's glance followed Arthur Augustus, rather intently, as he went back to the door. Every eye in the Fourth-Form room was on him—Blake and Herries and Dig in some anxiety. Cardew winked at Levison and Clive. He, at least, had no doubt why D'Arcy was sent for. Few other fellows in the Form could have any doubt that it was in connection with the rag on Railton. But Arthur Augustus himself did not seem to realise it. His manner was perfectly calm as he left the Form-room, and his noble face quite cheerful. Certainly he displayed no signs of alarm.

"What does Railton want him for?" muttered Blake, as the door closed after the most elegant figure in the School House. "Is it—?"

"Must be!" muttered Herries.

"Gussy never did it—!" muttered Dig.

"No! But it looks—!"

"Silence in the class!" rapped Mr. Lathom.

The lesson commenced, with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's place vacant. Cardew whispered to Levison:

"Looks as if the tailor's dummy is for it, what?"

"I hope not."

"D'Arcy never did it," muttered Sidney Clive. "There's no proof, at any rate."

"May have found some proof!" suggested Cardew.

"Oh, rot!"

"Silence!" repeated Mr. Lathom, sharply.

And there was silence, and the lesson proceeded, though certainly most, if not all, of the fellows in the Fourth-Form room were thinking more of what might be going on in Railton's study, than of the valuable instruction they were receiving from their Form-master.

# 17

## Proof ?

MR. RAILTON sat at the table in his study, his eyes upon a small object that lay on the table before him.

It was a twisted, inky handkerchief. A very unusual object to be found in a House-master's study.

Railton's study was rather improved in appearance since Tom Merry and Co. had looked into it the day before. He was no longer, as Manners had expressed it, like Marius amid the ruins of Carthage. The room was in order, and Railton was able to use it again, though there still lingered many traces of the reckless hand of the ragger.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stepped in, and met the eyes of his House-Master. He did not, for the moment, notice the inky object on the table, in which Railton seemed deeply interested. If he had noticed it, he could little have guessed what that twisted, inky handkerchief meant for him. The swell of St. Jim's was quite calm and cheerful.

"You sent for me, sir!" he said.

"Yes, D'Arcy, I sent for you," said Mr. Railton. He paused, at that, with his eyes seachingly on D'Arcy's face. As he did not speak, Arthur Augustus went cheerfully on.

"I am wathah glad you sent for me, sir, as there is somethin' I wish to say to you, with your leave, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Railton.

"I desiah to apologize, sir."

"To apologize!" repeated Mr. Railton.

"Yaas, sir! The othah day you happened to heah me make



some wemarks which seemed to you vewy diswespectful."

"I did!" said Mr. Railton, rather grimly.

"I was feelin' wathah watty at the time, sir," explained Arthur Augustus. "But on weflection I wealised that my wemarks were vewy hasty, and lackin' in pwopah wespect."

Mr. Railton looked at him very hard.

"Is that what you desired to say to me, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir! I twust you will accept my apology for my thoughtless words, sir, and that you will not think that I weally meant any diswespect, sir."

"Upon my word," said Mr. Railton. "In other circumstances, D'Arcy, I should have been very glad to hear your apology, and certainly I should have dismissed your hasty and unconsidered words from my mind. In the present circumstances, it is scarcely possible for me to do so, in view of your action in this study yesterday."

Arthur Augustus raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"I was not in this study yestahday, sir," he pointed out.

"You came here yesterday afternoon, D'Arcy—"

"I came as fah as the door with the othah fellows, sir, to look in, when we heard that somethin' was up—"

"I am not speaking of that, D'Arcy! I am speaking of the outrage that was perpetrated in wrecking my study during my absence," said Mr. Railton, sternly.

"Bai Jove!"

"The most careful investigations have been made," went on Mr. Railton. "So far as can be ascertained, D'Arcy, you were the only boy in the House who had the opportunity of committing that outrage unobserved by others. That alone would not have caused me to send for you. But proof has now been discovered."

"Pwoof, sir?" repeated Arthur Augustus, blankly. "Am I to undahstand, sir, that you think it was I who wagged this study yestahday?"

"I am quite assured of that, D'Arcy. Proof has been found—"

"Imposs, sir!" said Arthur Augustus, firmly. "Pwoof cannot be found of somethin' that nevah happened."

"Do you still deny that you were guilty of that outrage, D'Arcy?"

"Certainly, sir! I am surprised that you should think of me in such a connection. I admit that I spoke in somewhat diswespectful terms, sir, on the occasion when you heard me in the quad. But I am vewy much surprised that you should think

me capable of waggin' your study."

Mr. Railton lifted his hand, and pointed to the inky object on the table.

"Look at that handkerchief, D'Arcy! Is it yours?"

Arthur Augustus, at last, noticed the inky, twisted handkerchief. He looked at it, with considerable distaste.

"I hardly think that it can be mine, sir. I have nevah had a handkerchief in so vewy wevoltin' a state."

"The person who wrecked this study yesterday, D'Arcy, smeared ink over the walls, using some kind of folded rag for the purpose—or a handkerchief! That handkerchief was found here when the study was cleaned this morning, and it is evidently the article that was used for smearing the walls."

"Then the fellow must have left it behind, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"Precisely," said Mr. Railton. "No doubt he was in haste, as he could not have ventured to remain long in the study, and in his haste he overlooked the handkerchief, and left it behind him. Probably he dropped it, and forgot to pick it up, as it was found on the floor."

"Yaas, sir."

"That is why I have sent for you, D'Arcy."

Arthur Augustus looked a little bewildered.

"I am sowwy, sir, but I quite fail to see why," he answered.

"I do not know anythin' about it, sir."

"D'Arcy!"

"Pewwaps it has not occurred to you, sir, that that hanky is a clue," suggested Arthur Augustus, brightly.

"A clue?" repeated Mr. Railton.

"Yaas, wathah, sir! We all have our initials or monogwams on our handkerchiefs," explained Arthur Augustus. "It would be vewy easy, I should think, sir, to twace the ownah of that hanky."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "That handkerchief, D'Arcy, is yours."

"Weally, Mr. Wailton—"

"Your monogram is upon it, D'Arcy."

"Imposs, sir."

"Look at it!" snapped Mr. Railton.

Arthur Augustus looked. He did not like touching that inky object: but he did touch it, and he examined it. Amazement and bewilderment were depicted in his face as he discerned his own

monogram in the corner. That handkerchief, indubitably and unmistakably, was the property of the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form. It was in such a state that Arthur Augustus certainly never would have recognised it as his own property, without a very close examination. But it was his—undoubtedly his.

"Well?" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "You do not deny that that handkerchief belongs to you, D'Arcy?"

"No, sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"It was used to smear these walls with ink, by the person who wrecked my study during my absence yesterday."

"Oh, cwikey!"

"It is, as you have yourself said, a clue, and it has led to the perpetrator of that outrage," said Mr. Railton.

"Nothin' of the kind, sir," stammered Arthur Augustus. "It certainly is my hanky—but I weally cannot undahstand how it came to be heah—"

"D'Arcy!"

"I certainly did not dip it into ink, and I certainly nevah made it inky, and I don't know anythin' about it—"

"That will do, D'Arcy! Now that your act has been discovered, I advise you to be frank," said Mr. Railton, sternly. "I am shocked and pained, more than I can say, to discover this—I could not have supposed you capable of such an act of revenge for a caning. But now there is no doubt—"

"I wepeat that I know nothin' about it, sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I cannot undahstand in the least how my hanky came heah, in this howwid inky state, but I certainly never wagged your study, sir—"

"Silence!"

"Weally, Mr. Wailton—"

"I will hear no more of this! You may now go back to your Form-room. After class to-day I shall take you to your Headmaster, and Dr. Holmes will deal with you. I can hold out no hope that you will escape expulsion from the School, D'Arcy. You must have known that that would be the penalty if you were discovered, and that is the penalty! Now go."

"But weally, sir—!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"I have told you to go, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, sir, but weally—"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Railton. He was at the end of his patience.

"I wepeat, sir—!"

Arthur Augustus got no further than that. Mr. Railton stepped round the table, grasped him by the shoulder, and twirled him out of the study, and then shut the door on him.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

And in a dazed and dizzy state, he made his way back to his Form-room.

## Up for the Sack!

**RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW** smiled.

He stood leaning on one of the old elms, his hands in his pockets, his eyes on a crowd of juniors in the quad.

Class was over at St. Jim's for the day, and in the bright summer weather Tom Merry and Co. would naturally have headed for the cricket ground. But few fellows were thinking of cricket after class that day. One topic reigned supreme—what was going to happen to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form.

All the School knew now of the discovery that had been made in Railton's study and of the conclusion the House-master drew from it—a conclusion that he could scarcely fail to draw. Many fellows had wondered whether D'Arcy was the man. They knew now, or at all events, had no doubt that they knew. It was no longer a question of who had ragged Railton. Everyone knew the answer—it was D'Arcy of the Fourth.

Even his own chums were staggered. Arthur Augustus certainly persisted in denying that he had anything to do with the ragging or knew a single thing about it. Blake and Herries and Diby, automatically as it were, took his word for it. But they were staggered. Circumstantial evidence had pointed to Arthur Augustus all along. Now proof, or what looked like proof, had been found.

How was any fellow to doubt that on Wednesday afternoon, Arthur Augustus had not been wholly occupied with lines in No. 6—that he had gone down to Railton's study and ragged it in retaliation for the "six" from his House-master, about which he had been so indignant? And was it not exactly like him, engaged in a rag, to leave behind him a clue to the culprit? That was Gussy, all over!

That was how it was. If Arthur Augustus's own friends doubted it, it was not because there was any real doubt in the matter, but simply because they were his friends. The prospect of the "sack" for Arthur Augustus was overwhelming to Study No. 6: and almost as much so to the Terrible Three. Most fellows, in fact, were sympathetic: but few would or could believe D'Arcy's denials.

Cardew's smile, as he looked on, and listened to the excited talk among the little crowd of juniors near at hand, had something very unpleasant in it. He passed his hand over his nose—still a little red and bulbous from the fight behind the gym. There was neither sympathy nor compassion in Cardew's heart. He had his good qualities—he was not wholly "Cardew the Cad"—as he had been nicknamed. But if any feeling of remorse came, he hardened his heart, like Pharaoh of old. His relative, who had barged into his affairs, who had brought him in peril of expulsion, who had caused that bitter humiliation in his House-master's study, who had defeated him and left him gasping on the ground—was going to be sacked from the School, and Cardew was glad of it.

Arthur Augustus was not to be seen in the quad. He seemed to have retired from the public gaze. Cardew wondered whether he was in his study waiting for the call from his House-master to be taken to the Head. That afternoon he was to go to Dr. Holmes, and no one had any doubt what the result would be—an early morning train for the swell of St. Jim's.

"Oh, it's rotten!" Tom Merry's voice came to Cardew's ears, as he stood there, leaning on the tree, with a sardonically smiling face. "Poor old Gussy!"

"What an ass to leave his hanky there!" said Manners.

"Gussy all over!" muttered Monty Lowther.

"It wasn't Gussy!" exclaimed Jack Blake, angrily. "I tell you Gussy says that he had nothing to do with it, and I believe him."

"Same here," said Herries. "I know how it looks! But I'd take old Gussy's word, if they'd found a dozen of his hankies there.

"So would I," said Dig, loyally.

"I'm dashed if I make it out," said Tom Merry. "Gussy's word is as good as gold, I know that. But the hanky—"

"It was there," said Levison.

"Just as it had been used to smear the ink about," said Clive.

"What a fathead to use his hanky—"

"Oh, that's Gussy!" said Lowther. "Just like him to drop it

and forget it, too—just what he would do.”

It's pretty plain proof,” said Ridd.

“I shouldn't call it proof,” said Talbot of the Shell, in his quiet way. “D'Arcy may have dropped that hanky about somewhere, and somebody else may have picked it up.”

“Rot!” said Gore.

“Oh, you shut up, Gore!” snapped Blake. “It's jolly likely, now that Talbot mentions it. Gussy's always losing something or other. Wasn't he losing his wrist-watch about the place, a week or two ago, because the buckle was loose? Ten to one he dropped that hanky somewhere, and somebody happened to pick it up.”

“It's possible!” said Tom Merry, slowly.

“I tell you it's jolly likely,” hooted Blake, “and I'll jolly well tell him to put it to the Head when he sees him. Anybody know where he is?”

“In the study, most likely,” said Dig.

“Well, come on,” said Blake. And Blake and Herries and Digby went into the House, to look for Arthur Augustus, and give him the “tip.” There was not much in it, perhaps. But it might mean a spot of hope when he came before his Headmaster.

The other fellows were left in excited discussion. Tom Merry and Co. were trying their hardest to believe as Blake and Co. somehow succeeded in believing. But most of the School House fellows took the view that the matter was now beyond doubt, as it was known that Railton regarded it.

Levison and Clive left the group, and joined Cardew under the elm. He looked at them with a smile.

“Quite a thrill, isn't it?” he yawned.

“It's pretty rotten,” said Levison. “D'Arcy must have been off his chump to do it. But—I suppose there's really no doubt.”

“Looks clear enough,” said Clive. “Nothing to grin about, Cardew,” he added, sharply. “It's not funny, a fellow being up for the sack.”

“Isn't it?” drawled Cardew. “My mistake—I thought it was!”

“Don't be a rotter!” growled Clive.

Cardew laughed, and detached himself from the elm. He glanced at his watch, and made a movement to go.

“Going out?” asked Levison.

“Yes, just for a stroll in the jolly old leafy lanes,” drawled Cardew. “You can tell me the latest news when I come in.”

“Oh, we'll come,” said Clive.

Cardew paused.

"Aren't you fellows going down to the nets?" he asked. "Mustn't neglect your cricket practice, you know. 'Member Tom Merry booted me out of the eleven for cuttin' games practice. Be good boys!"

Levison gave him a sharp look.

"Does that mean that you don't want us to come?" he asked.

"Ernest, old bean, you're always quick on the up-take," Cardew nodded. "I'd like your company no end—I always do—but I'm rather afraid you wouldn't like the company I may find myself in. Stick to the cricket, old bean."

"You mad ass," breathed Levison. "Are you mad enough to go out of bounds again, so soon after—"

"Why not?"

"You're asking for it! Railton's suspicious of you—the pre's have their eye on you—you're mad to run such a risk—"

"What's life without a spot of excitement?" drawled Cardew. "I haven't been nailed yet—"

"You jolly nearly were, on Monday."

"A miss is as good as a mile, old bean. Besides, that was owin' to my kind and dear relative, who couldn't help buttin' into what didn't concern him. He won't butt into my affairs again, I fancy!" added Cardew, with a bitter sneer.

"Look here, Cardew—!" began Clive.

"Speech taken as read!"

"Well, I think you're a rotter and a fool, too!"

"Thanks a lot! Cheerio," said Cardew, and he nodded to his friends, and strolled away to the gates.

Levison and Clive gave him dark looks as he went. Not for the first time they were feeling fed up with their scapegoat pal. They were uneasy for him, too, for since what had happened on Monday, it was no secret that the School House prefects had very wary and suspicious eyes on the sportsman of the Fourth. But they knew that it was useless to argue with him. He had to be left to go his own reckless way, whithersoever it might lead him.

What they thought of him, and what they might fear for him, did not trouble Cardew in the least. The risk added a zest to his disreputable adventures, and he hummed a tune as he sauntered down Rylcombe Lane, and dodged across the fields to a gap in the fence of the Green Man.



## 19

### Just Like Gussy !

“THAT young rotter !” growled Kildare.  
“Bother him !” said Darrell.

Arthur Augustus D’Arcy started a little, as he heard those remarks from the two Sixth-Form prefects. The colour flushed into his face at the idea that they might refer to him. From the prefectorial point of view, no doubt, the fellow who had ragged Railton was a rotter, and the whole House seemed to have made up its mind that Arthur Augustus was the fellow who had ragged Railton.

“Dingy little beast !” came a third voice ; that of Langton of the Sixth.

Which relieved Arthur Augustus. This could not possibly refer to him. They might think him a rotter, but nobody could possibly think him dingy.

Tom Merry and Co. and many other fellows had wondered where Arthur Augustus was, while they were discussing him and his probable fate. In point of fact, he had retired to a secluded spot, unwilling to face the curious stares of crowds of fellows. He had been told to report to Mr. Railton’s study at five o’clock, when he was to be taken to the Head-master. Until that time came, Arthur Augustus preferred to shun the public gaze.

He had been in a bewildered state, since his interview with the House-master that morning.

He was suspected, in fact accused, of the rag in Railton’s study. The evidence was sufficiently strong to satisfy Railton, a just and kindly man. The ragger had left a clue behind him, and that clue pointed inevitably to D’Arcy. Indeed he had him-

self suggested that the inky handkerchief, if examined, might furnish a clue to the ragger—and it had proved to be his own. How it could have happened, he could not begin to guess. But it *had* happened, and what had satisfied Mr. Railton, could hardly fail to satisfy the Head. He was going before Dr. Holmes to be “bunked,” and this was his last day at St. Jim’s. It was overwhelming and bewildering, and poor Gussy’s aristocratic brain fairly reeled under it.

He had been glad to get out of sight of staring eyes, out of the sound of excited, buzzing voices. He was trying to think it out—to think of some way out of this strange and overwhelming tangle. But thinking was not, perhaps, Gussy’s long suit: and the more he pondered over it, the more he felt like a bird caught in a net. There seemed no way out. If there was anything in evidence, he was the man! Yet he had been sitting in No. 6 writing his lines for Lathom, when the rag had taken place in Railton’s study downstairs. It was truly bewildering.

He was leaning on the wall behind the gym, not far from the spot where he had left Cardew, a couple of days ago, gasping on the ground after the fight. He was not thinking of Cardew now. He might have thought of him, but for the complete and unassailable “alibi” which proved that Cardew had been in No. 4 Study with Ridd and Tompkins at the material time. As it was, he could not possibly think of any fellow who might have done this—all he knew was that he himself hadn’t, though all St. Jim’s might believe that he had.

A little distance from him, above the level of his head, was an open window. It was from that window that the voices of the Sixth-Form prefects floated to his ears.

Kildare, Darrell and Langton were in the gym, apparently in a group near that open window. Their voices were audible to the junior outside, as they spoke to one another. All three seemed to be in an annoyed state. But that they were not alluding to Arthur Augustus, was quite clear, as Kildare went on.

“It’s a clear case, I think—only a matter of catching the young rascal out. Railton has talked to me about it—and it’s pretty clear that he was there on Monday—the dingy little sweep.”

“The Green Man?” said Darrell.

“Yes! He told Railton a string of lies, and it couldn’t be fastened on him, but Railton had no doubt. It can’t go on. It’s up to the prefects to put a stop to it, and we’ve got to see to it.”

“Where is the young sweep now, do you know?” asked Langton.

"I don't—but I can guess." There was a grim note in Kildare's voice. "He went out—by himself—half an hour ago. He's usually in a gang with two other fellows in his Form—Levison and Clive. But he was out alone on Monday—and he's out alone to-day. Taggles has been told to keep an eye open, and he noticed that Cardew went in the direction of Rylcombe."

Arthur Augustus jumped a little.

He knew now of whom the prefects were speaking.

"Then you think, Kildare—!" said Darrell.

"I think it's very likely. If that's where he's gone, we've got to nail him, and have done."

"Bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus.

His first impulse had been to move away—he did not want to play the eavesdropper. But he forgot that now. From what the three prefects were saying, it was plain that Cardew had gone out of gates, that they suspected that he had repeated his Monday's visit to the Green Man, and that they were going to catch him there, if they could.

Cardew's number was up, if they did.

Arthur Augustus was under the shadow of the "sack." But it was like him, in the midst of his own disaster, to think of others. He had tried, on Monday, to save the scapegrace from his own folly, and that had resulted, though he did not know it, in the position in which he now stood. For the moment, he ceased to think of that position, and of the coming dreaded interview with the Head.

"But what's the idea?" asked Darrell. "We can't go rooting over the Green Man for a St. Jim's junior, Kildare."

"No! We catch him as he comes out, if he's there—and I'm fairly certain that he is."

"More than one way out of that den," said Langton.

"I know! There's the side door on Rylcombe Lane, a gap in the fence by the fields, and the back-gate on the tow-path. He may dodge out by any of them. We're going to stop all the fox-holes, see?"

"Then if he's there—"

"I'm willing to bank on it that he's there. You go along Rylcombe Lane, Darrell, and keep an eye open there. Langton will watch the gap in the fence from the fields. I shall cut along the tow-path and watch the back gate. He won't get out without being nailed by one of us."

"Looks like a catch!" said Darrell.

"Dingy little sweep!" said Langton.

"Looks as if we've got him this time," said Kildare. "The sooner he's nailed and sacked, the better. Now, get it clear—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy moved quietly away from the wall of the gym. He heard no more of the talk of the prefects within.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured, as he went. "That uttah wottah—he's for it, this time. Wailton jolly well knows—he knew the wottah was lyin' to him on Monday. But—but—but!"

Over the tree-tops came the chime of four. One hour more, and Arthur Augustus was due to go before his Head-master. But it was like him to relegate that to the back of his mind, as he thought of the ruin and disgrace that impended over his relative—the relative whom he certainly did not like, whom he disdained, but who was, at all events, a St. Jim's fellow in danger of expulsion. Cardew was a "bad hat," and if ever any fellow deserved to be sacked, he did. But he was not all bad—and it was not for a junior to judge like a master or a prefect. And blood was thicker than water. Arthur Augustus was not long in making up his mind what he was going to do. Quietly, he went down to the bike-shed and wheeled out his machine.

He knew how risky it was. But that did not make him hesitate, or think of hesitating.

When the three prefects would start, he did not know, but he knew it would be soon. He had time to get ahead of them, on a bike, before they settled down to watch the "fox-holes." But to find Cardew, and warn him, he had to enter the precincts of the Green Man again, and if he was caught there, along with Cardew—! He was going up to the Head at five o'clock to face the charge of ragging Railton. If there was a chance of getting through that, it was lost if they caught him out of bounds—that would be the finishing blow. He knew it well enough, but he drove at his pedals, and went down Rylcombe Lane at whizzing speed. He was going to find Cardew, and warn him, and save him, if he could—and then—then he was going up to the Head to take what was coming to him. It was quixotic—but it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy all over.

## Saving An Enemy !

“YOU fool!”

Cardew almost spat out the words.

“Weally, Cardew—”

“You fool! You meddlin’ fool! Haven’t you had enough of meddlin’ in my affairs? Get out!”

Cardew rose to his feet, his eyes blazing. Arthur Augustus D’Arcy jammed his eyeglass a little more firmly into his eye, and regarded him with calm disdain.

He had found the fellow he sought easily enough. He had cut across the meadows on his bike, the quickest way to his destination, and leaving the machine outside the gap in the Green Man fence, where it bordered the meadow, he had squeezed in. He was far ahead of the St. Jim’s prefects, for he had made the ground fly under whizzing wheels, but all depended on how soon he could find Cardew, warn him, and get clear again. Where the fellow might be, he did not know, but he looked first in the summer-house in the unkempt garden, where he had seen him before. And there, luckily, he found him.

Cardew was alone. He was stretched on the bench in the little summer-house, smoking a cigarette, and looking over a racing paper. No doubt he was waiting for Mr. Lodgey to join him there, but Bill had not yet arrived. At a footstep he looked up, expecting to see Bill Lodgey; and his face almost whitened with rage at the sight of his relative

“You fool!” He clenched his hands as he made a step towards Arthur Augustus. “This is the second time you’ve butted in here—by gad, I’ll have you ducked in the pond this time—”

“I should wefuse to be ducked in the pond, Cardew,” answered

Arthur Augustus, calmly, "and if you will listen for one moment I will explain—"

"Oh, shut up!" snarled Cardew. "Think I want your sermonizing, you fool? Get out before Lodgey comes along—I tell you, I'll make him pitch you head first into the pond. If you're not gone—"

"Will you listen to me—?"

"No, I won't! I've had more than enough of your pi-jaw, you babbling ass. Get out of it, I tell you."

"I have come heah—"

"I can see that, idiot! What I want to see is your back! Haven't you enough to think about now, without meddling with me?" snarled Cardew. "You're going up to the Head to be bunked—"

Arthur Augustus winced.

"You need not wub that in Cardew! Besides, I twust that I am not goin' to be bunked for somethin' I nevah did—"

"Tell that to the Head!" sneered Cardew.

"I shall certainly do so, Cardew! But at the pwesent moment—"

"At the present moment, get out of this, before you're chucked out."

"I have come heah to warn you—"

"Haven't I said that I don't want any pi-jaw?" exclaimed Cardew. "Pack it up! Keep it for your pals, or for the old folks at home when you're turfed out of St. Jim's. They may like it. I don't."

"To warn you—"

"Get out!"

"That the pwefects are aftah you, Cardew," continued Arthur Augustus, calmly. "And you have not many minutes to save your neck, you wotten wascal."

"What?"

"They are comin'—"

"Who are coming?" exclaimed Cardew, staring at him blankly, hardly able, indeed, to believe his ears.

"Kildare, and Dawwell, and Langton—"

"Coming here?" gasped Cardew.

"Yaas."

"Rot! If the pres were after me, think I believe that you're taking the trouble and the risk, to come and warn me? Pack it up."

"You uttah wottah—!"

"Oh, get out."

"I wepeat, Cardew, that the pwefects are aftah you, and they will be heah befoah long. I cut ahead on my bike—"

"And how do you know?"

"I heard them talkin'—Kildare guesses that you are heah, and they are comin' to nail you—"

"Oh, gad!" Cardew would have liked to disbelieve it. He certainly had no desire to be under obligation to his relative. But he had to believe it. The rage died out of his face as he stared at Arthur Augustus. "By gad! And—and—and you came to tip me—"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Why?"

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Oh, I needn't ask why," sneered Cardew. "You're that kind of ass! Look here, which way are they coming?"

"All thwee ways—they are goin' to watch for you, one of them in Wylcombe and one of them on the tow-path, and the othah at the gap in the meadow fence—"

"Phew!"

Cardew whistled. If that plan was carried out, before he escaped from the precincts of the Green Man, his game was up. He would be marched back to St. Jim's in the custody of a prefect, to be handed over to a scornful and indignant House-master, and taken to the Head to be "sacked." He had lied his way out of it a few days ago, but he would not be able to lie his way out of it now—caught red-handed, as it were. And he had been sitting coolly in the summer-house, smoking a cigarette, waiting for Bill Lodgey, while this net was closing round him! He drew a deep breath.

He was quite cool now.

"How long since you left the School?" he asked.

"Hardly ten minutes! I wathah wushed it."

"Must have! They'll be walking, I suppose?"

"I suppose so."

Cardew chuckled.

"Yes, they don't know there's any hurry! O.K.—we'll beat them all right. Let's get out of this."

"Yaas, wathah."

Cardew cut across the weedy garden to the fence, and ran along the fence to the gap. Arthur Augustus at his heels. There was a calling voice at a distance—Bill Lodgey's voice. Apparently Bill was looking for his young sporting friend. Cardew did not heed him.

He put his head out of the gap in the fence, and scanned the

green meadows beyond. Save for a grazing cow, no living creature was in sight. He turned to Arthur Augustus, with a grin.

"O.K. All clear! Come one."

He pushed through the gap, into the meadow. Arthur Augustus followed him, and lifted his bike from the fence. Cardew gave him rather a strange look, as he took the handle-bars and put his leg over the machine.

"Look here, D'Arcy—"

"Bettah cut off," said Arthur Augustus. "You haven't much time to waste, as you're on foot—"

"That's all right! But look here, you've saved my bacon. I—I—" Cardew hesitated, a flush coming into his face.

"I would wathah not see you sacked, Cardew, wottah as you are!" said Arthur Augustus, quietly. "We are welations, and blood is thickah than watah. I wegard you, howevah, as an uttah wottah—"

"Look here—"

"I twust that a nawwow escape like this will be a warnin' to you, Cardew. But I have vevy little hope of it. You are a wottah! I wegard you with disdain. Pway say no more—I have no use for you whatevah."

"But look here—"

"Wats!"

With that, Arthur Augustus drove at the pedals, and the bike shot away across the meadow.

Cardew stood looking after him, till the cyclist turned into Rylcombe Lane, and disappeared. Then he walked quickly away, cutting across the fields to get out into the lane at a safe distance.

It was ten minutes later that three Sixth-Form prefects of St. Jim's arrived in the offing, and took up their various stations to watch the "fox-holes." They were not likely to make a "catch" now! While they were keeping watch and ward, little dreaming that the bird had flown, Ralph Reckness Cardew was strolling in at the gates of St. Jim's, as cool and careless as if he had never been within an ace of the "long jump."



## Quite Unexpected!

“TOM MERRY—”

“Well?” Tom almost snapped.

He did not want to hear anything from Ralph Reckness Cardew. Neither did the other fellows in the group near the School House steps. They were too worried and troubled about Arthur Augustus D’Arcy, to have any use for the light and flippant fellow who came strolling up, with his hands in his pockets, looking as if he had not a care in the world.

Cardew smiled.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, Blake and Herries and Dig, gave him hostile looks. Even Levison and Clive looked grim. It was a quarter to five, and in a quarter of an hour, D’Arcy was due in Railton’s study, to be taken to the Head. And whether Arthur Augustus had ragged Railton or not, all the juniors were deeply concerned about his fate. Cardew’s light and airy manner touched a very discordant note.

“Don’t bite a fellow’s head off, old bean,” protested Cardew. “Only want to ask a question! Has the one and only gone to Railton yet?”

“If you mean D’Arcy, he goes to Railton at five o’clock,” snapped Tom, and he turned his back on the dandy of the Fourth.

“Lots of time, then,” remarked Cardew, meditatively. “Clivey, old man, you’re lookin’ like a boiled owl.”

Clive gave a grunt by way of reply.

“So are you, Ernest, old bean,” said Cardew. “In fact, everybody here seems to be settin’ up in the boiled-owl line. Never saw such a solemn lot.”

“Do you want to be kicked across the quad, Cardew?” asked Jack Blake, with a glint in his eyes.

"Not at all!"

"Then you'd better shut up."

"I've got some information on the subject of that raggin', and I was just wonderin' whether to drop in on Railton and put him wise," drawled Cardew.

"What?"

Every fellow in the anxious group turned to Cardew at once. He had the general attention now, if he wanted it.

"You've found out something—?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Not exactly found it out," answered Cardew. "I knew all along."

"Rubbish!" said Levison.

"Honest Injun!"

"Look here, Cardew," said Tom Merry, breathing hard. "If you think this is a time for joking, when a fellow we all like is up for the sack, you're asking for it."

"Sober as a judge, old man. I happen to know that it wasn't the one and only who ragged Railton's study yesterday. That's all.

"It was not D'Arcy!" exclaimed Clive.

"Not the ghost of him."

"How do you know?" asked Levison.

"I know the man!"

"You know who did it?" exclaimed Tom, blankly.

"Quite."

The juniors regarded him, dubiously, and angrily. His manner was too light and airy for them to take him quite seriously.

"You know the man, do you?" said Tom. "And you say you haven't found it out, but knew all along."

"Exactly."

"And you've let the whole House believe that it was D'Arcy, and he's up for the sack, and you haven't said a word."

"You've got it."

Tom clenched his hands.

"If that's true—!" he began.

"Frozen truth!" drawled Cardew. "I know the man! But he's up for the sack instead of D'Arcy, if it comes out—and he happens to be a man I like an awful lot—better than I like *any* other fellow in the wide world. I'm very much concerned about him—much more than I could be about the one and only. I just hate the idea of giving him away."

"Gammon!" growled Blake.

"Look here, kick that cad across the quad," growled Herries.

"I'm fed up with his funny stories."

"Same here," said Dig.

"Cardew the Cad!" said Tom Merry, bitterly. "It's a good name for you, Cardew. You're not fit to black D'Arcy's boots, and you can stand there grinning like a monkey when he's up for the sack—and you say you could clear him if you liked! Cardew the Cad!"

"But I'm goin' to clear him," said Cardew. "I'm goin' to Railton now to tell him who did it."

The juniors could only stare at him. If this was true, it meant that Arthur Augustus was saved, almost at the last moment. But was it true?

"If you're not talking out of your hat, how do you know?" demanded Monty Lowther. "We all believe it was not D'Arcy, as he says so—"

"Tryin' to believe it, you mean," grinned Cardew. "You can't quite get it down, with the evidence so strong."

"Who was it, if you know?" snapped Manners.

"Oh, I know all right! Knew all along," drawled Cardew. "It's all been quite amusin', really. I wonder whether you'll believe me if I give the right man's name!" He laughed.

"It's not easy to believe anything you say," said Tom Merry. "But if you really know who ragged Railton's study, who was it?"

"You'd be surprised!" said Cardew. "You see, he just couldn't be spotted—he covered up his tracks so carefully. Cast-iron alibi and all that. Proved right up to the hilt that he was nowhere near Railton's study when it happened."

"If he proved that, he never did it," said Levison.

"Oh, yes, he did! You see, that alibi was a fake," yawned Cardew, "and I'm the only man in the School that can knock it on the head."

"Who was it?"

"Still guessin'?" grinned Cardew. "Not a very bright lot, are you? Manners, I think, is about the brightest—he guessed, though he fancied afterwards that he had guessed wrong—owin' to that jolly old alibi."

Manners gave a jump.

"Cardew! You don't mean—"

"But I do," smiled Cardew. "And I'm just goin' to Railton to tell him that it was little me!"

"You!" roared Blake.

"Little me as ever was!" said Cardew. "Railton put me-

through it, and I made up my mind to get back on him—and did! Now I'm goin' to be sacked for it, instead of the one and only. If you have tears, prepare to shed them now, as Mark Antony remarked. You're goin' to lose me."

Cardew walked into the House leaving Tom Merry and Co. staring blankly. Even yet they could hardly believe this.

Cardew's face was smiling, as he went to Masters' Studies. That little scene at the door of the School House amused his peculiar nature. He was flippant to the last.

But his face was grave, as he tapped at Mr. Railton's door.

He had made up his mind. Why, he could not quite have told himself. D'Arcy, round whom he had woven that cunning tangle, had forgotten his own danger, or rather added to it, to save him from the penalty of his own dingy folly—and he did not choose to be under an obligation unrepaid. That was partly his motive. But that was not all. Like many another, when it came to the point, Cardew had found that he was not so bad as he had believed himself to be—conscience, at which he mocked, was there all the same. Even without what D'Arcy had done for him, he might not have let his dastardly scheme go on to the finish—he was not sure! Now, at all events, he knew what he was going to do—and he was going to tell the truth, and take what was coming to him. And take it with his chin up. His face was grave, but his manner quite cool and self-possessed, as he tapped at Mr. Railton's door, opened it, and walked into the study.

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## All's Well That Ends Well !

MR. RAILTON frowned as Cardew came in. In a few minutes more, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was due to arrive at that study.

"Cardew! What do you want here?" he rapped.

"May I speak to you, sir?" asked Cardew, meekly.

"Another time! I am occupied now."

"If you'd let me speak, sir—"

"I have said that I am occupied. Leave my study at once."

"It's about D'Arcy, sir."

"You can have nothing to say to me about D'Arcy! Leave this study."

"You are goin' to take him to the Head, sir, about that rag in this study," said Cardew, unmoved. "I thought you'd like me to tell you what I know about that, sir."

The School House-master gave him a sharp look.

"If you know anything about the matter that is not known to me, Cardew, you may speak. Be brief."

"I know that it was not D'Arcy who ragged the study, sir," said Cardew. "I've come here to own up, sir."

"To own up!" repeated Mr. Railton, staring at him.

"It was I, sir."

"You!" the House-master almost stuttered. "You! Cardew!"

"Yes, sir!"

There was a brief silence. The House-master's eyes were fixed on Cardew's face. Cardew stood before him, calm, quiet, and grave, with as penitent an expression as he could contrive. He did not feel penitent in the very least, but it was his cue to look as much so as he could.

Mr. Railton spoke at last.

"Cardew! I scarcely understand this! You confess that it was you who were guilty of the outrage in this study?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Two boys in the Fourth-Form gave evidence that you were in their company at the time, in their study—"

"They believed so, sir," said Cardew, quietly. "Ridd and Tompkins only told you what they believed, sir. I had altered the clock in the study, without their knowledge, when I went up after the ragging here."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"They were looking at the cricket, from the study window, when I put the clock back twenty-five minutes, sir. They never knew. I put it right afterwards, when they were out of the study."

"Good heavens!" repeated Mr. Railton. He stared at Cardew as if he could not believe his ears. "But—but—but—but D'Arcy's handkerchief was found here, drenched with ink. It had been used with the ink here—"

"I happened to pick it up, sir."

Cardew did not add that he had "picked it up" from an overcoat pocket in the junior lobby! He was confessing to what he had done, but he had no intention of revealing that the whole thing had been done deliberately as an unscrupulous plot against the junior he chose to regard as an enemy. He was not going to paint himself blacker than he could help.

"Then—then—then." It seemed hard for Railton to assimilate this. "Then D'Arcy had nothing to do with the affair at all?"

"Nothin' at all, sir."

"And I—I was about to take him to his Head-master—!" breathed Mr. Railton.

"That's why I came here, sir," said Cardew, meekly. "I—I—I couldn't let it go on sir. I—I'm sorry—"

He was wondering whether, after all, there might be a chance for him. He had done the right thing—he had owned up entirely of his own accord—that would count in his favour. And if penitence would help, he was ready to throw that in, as a make-weight!

"I—I—I am amazed!" said Mr. Railton. "But I am glad, at least, that you had the common honesty, Cardew, to come and tell me this before an act of injustice was done—I am very glad of that. I—"

Tap!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered the study. His aristocratic face was a little pale, but it was calm. Five was chiming from the clock-tower.

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

"Oh!" Mr. Railton gasped, "Oh! Yes! D'Arcy, I—I shall not, after all, take you to Dr. Holmes. I am glad to tell you, my boy, that the truth has now been made known, and—and I am now aware that you had nothing to do with what occurred in this study yesterday."

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

"I am sorry, D'Arcy, that you ever were suspected," said Mr. Railton. "The matter is now wholly cleared up."

"I am vewy glad to heah it, sir!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps you will wemembah, sir, that I assuahed you that I knew nothin' whatevah about it—"

"Yes, yes—"

"And I twust, sir," added Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "that on anothah occasion—"

"Yes, yes, yes."

"—that on anothah occasion, sir, you will be pwepared to take a fellow's word, sir."

"Oh! Yes! Yes! You need say no more, D'Arcy! Cardew has confessed that it was his act—"

"Bai Jove! Cardew!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. He stared at his relative. "Was it you all the time, Cardew?"

"Sort of!" murmured Cardew.

"Then I am vewy glad you have been found out, you wottah."

"Cardew was not found out, D'Arcy, as you express it. He came here to confess of his own accord," said Mr. Railton.

"Bai Jove! You are not such a wat aftah all, it seems, Cardew! It was wathah wippin' of you to own up, and put Mr. Wailton wight—"

"That will do, D'Arcy."

"As Mr. Wailton was makin' a vewy sewious mistake—"

"I have said that will do, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Railton, in a deep voice. "You may leave my study! Cardew, you will come with me to the Head-master."

"Very well, sir."

Cardew followed the House-master. Arthur Augustus screwed his eyeglass into his eye, and stared after them as they went. Then he ejaculated "Bai Jove!" again, and went out to tell his friends the good news.

"Gussy!" It was a shout, as he emerged into the quad. "Gussy, old man—"

Blake grabbed him by the arm.

"What's the verdict? What—?"



"Cough it up, Gussy," gasped Tom Merry.

"You are wufflin' my sleeve, Blake, old chap—"

"You howling ass—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"What's the verdict?" yelled all the juniors.

"Wight as wain," said Arthur Augustus, cheerfully. "Cardew is the man, and he has owned up—"

"Then—then he did own up?" exclaimed Tom.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Where is he now?" muttered Levison.

"Wailton has taken him to the Head! I twust the Head will go wathah easy with him—as easy as possible," said Arthur Augustus. "It was weally wippin' of him to own up—and I no longah wegard him as a wat!"

"Which should make him happy for life!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Thank goodness it's come out," said Blake. "We're not going to lose you, Gussy—and there will be a lot of dry eyes if we lose Cardew."

"Weally, Blake, I twust that the Head will go easy with him, aftah ownin' up like that! It was wathah wippin', you know."

"He's a good chap, really," muttered Levison. "It was jolly decent—"

"Yaas, wathah! I have wegarded him as a wat—"

"Oh, you're an ass!"

"Weally, Levison—"

"Fathead!" said Clive.

"Weally, Clive—"

Levison and Clive left the group, anxious about their chum who was now with the Head. But they left everyone else rejoicing.

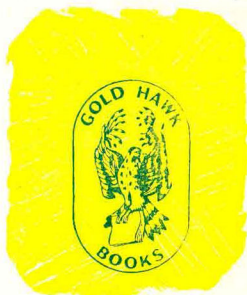
ARTHUR AUGUSTUS'S trust that the Head would "go easy" with the delinquent was not unfounded. "Owning up," even at the eleventh hour, told very much in his favour. Levison and Clive, at least, were greatly relieved to learn that he was not to be "sacked," and Tom Merry and Co. shared their feelings more or less. There was a flogging in the Head's study, and with that it ended. "Cardew the Cad" was still at St. Jim's, though how long he would remain if he did not mend his ways, was, perhaps, a little uncertain.

## REMEMBER TOM MERRY ?

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