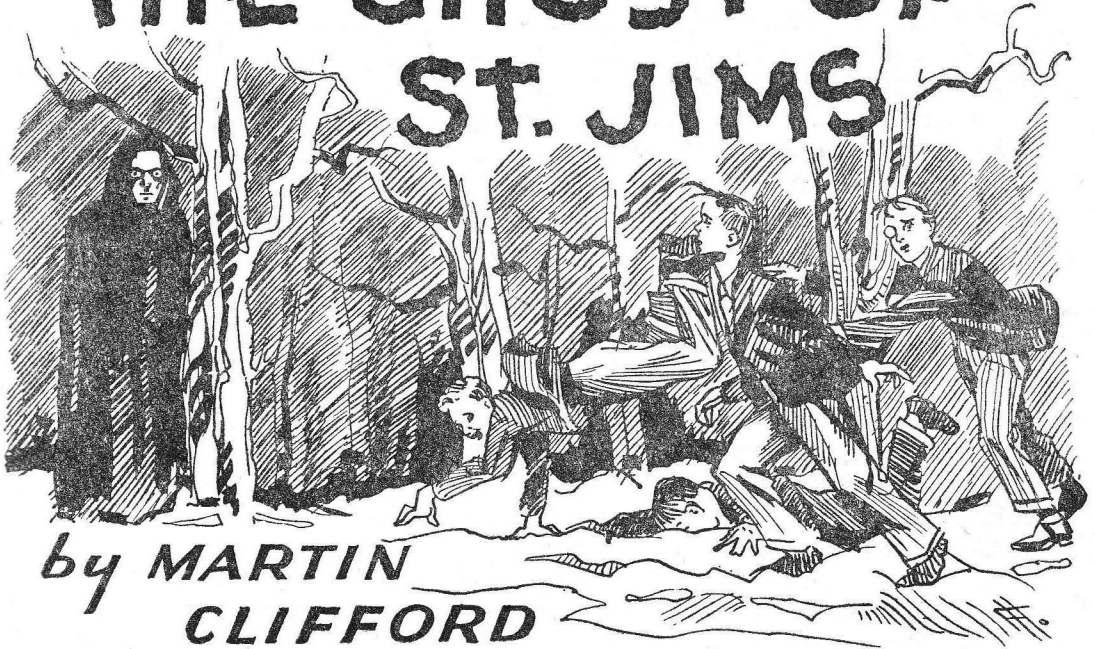


# THE GHOST OF ST. JIMS



by **MARTIN  
CLIFFORD**

## CHAPTER I

### CALLED OVER THE COALS

"CARDEW!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Stand out before the form!"

Mr. Lathom, master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, rapped out the words sharply. All the St. Jim's Fourth sat up, as it were, and took notice.

Generally, Lathom was placid and mild. Now he was frowning, and his voice had an edge on it. Obviously he was not in his usual benignant mood.

And all the St. Jim's Fourth knew that Cardew was booked for trouble again. That was nothing new: for Ralph Reckness Cardew, the scapegrace of the School House, seemed born for trouble as the sparks fly upward.

The juniors had just taken their places in form. But it appeared that there was some other matter to which their form-master was going to attend, before the lesson commenced.

Cardew rose in his place, very slowly, his lips set.

All the other fellows looked at him: his chums, Clive and Levison, rather anxiously; and his noble relative, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with some concern.

"Bai Jove! I wondah what's up now!" Arthur Augustus murmured to Jack Blake. "Looks like a wow!"

Blake shrugged his shoulders.

"Spotted out of bounds, very likely," he answered.

"Or smoking in his study," said Digby.

"Or backing his fancy!" grunted Herries.

"It is wathah wotten to land in a wow, just befoah bweakin' up for Chwistmas. I twust——"

"Silence in the form!" rapped out Mr. Lathom. The whispered words did not reach his ears: but he caught the murmur of voices. Plainly he was in an unusually sharp mood. Whispering among the juniors very often passed unheeded in Lathom's form-room.

"Lathom's in a bait!" whispered Figgins, to Kerr and Wynn. "What has that smudge been doing this time?"

"Figgins!" rapped Mr. Lathom.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"Did you speak, Figgins?"

"Oh! Yes! No! Yes," stammered Figgins.

"Take fifty lines."

Figgins did not speak again. Neither did anyone else. Only too clearly, Lathom was in a 'bait.' Nobody else wanted fifty lines. The juniors watched Cardew in silence, as he slowly—very slowly—left his place in form.

He had to pass Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Arthur Augustus gave him a sympathetic look in passing. They were relatives: but they had nothing in common, and little to do with one another, although they were in the same form and the same House at school. Arthur Augustus disapproved, with a lofty disapproval, of Cardew's shady ways, and had indeed sometimes spoken to him quite severely on the subject. Cardew, for his part, made no secret of his opinion that Arthur Augustus was the most complete ass at St. Jim's or anywhere else. With lofty scorn on one side, and derision on the other, they were not likely to be friends. All the same, Arthur Augustus could feel sympathy for a fellow who was up for trouble with a 'beak': even if it was the fellow's own fault.

"Sowwy, deah boy," he murmured, as Cardew came within hearing of a whisper: at the risk of fifty lines from Lathom. Fortunately, this time the Fourth Form-master did not hear.

Cardew looked at him. The next moment he stumbled over Arthur Augustus's foot and tottered. Apparently he lost his balance, for he fell against his relative, catching at him for support.

"Oh!" gasped Arthur Augustus, almost pushed off his form by the sudden and unexpected impact. He did not even notice that Cardew's hand dived, for a split second, into his handkerchief-pocket, and left something there as it was swiftly withdrawn.

"Clumsy ass!" murmured Herries.

Jack Blake stared at Cardew. His impression was that that stumble was no accident, though he did not detect Cardew's action in so swiftly transferring something from his hand to D'Arcy's pocket.

"Silly ass—larking!" grunted Blake.

Cardew straightened up almost in a moment.

"Keep your feet out of the way, D'Arcy," he snapped.

"Weally, Cardew, my feet were not in the way," exclaimed Arthur Augustus, indignantly. "You twod on my foot——"

"Silence in the form! Cardew, come here at once," rapped Mr. Lathom.

"Yes, sir!"

Cardew went out, before the form. He had been slow—very slow—in leaving his place. But now he seemed quite brisk.

He stood before his form-master, his manner meek and respectful, yet with a hint of impertinence in it.

Mr. Lathom frowned at him over his glasses. All eyes in the Fourth Form fixed on him. Cardew's ways were well known in his form: and it was a mystery to many fellows why he had never been found out and 'sacked.' But it was clear now that some one of his many delinquencies had come to the knowledge of his form-master.

"Cardew," said Mr. Lathom, sternly.

"Yes, sir," murmured Cardew.

"You were on the path under the school wall shortly before class."

"Yes, sir! We're allowed to walk there," said Cardew, meekly. "Or is there a new rule on the subject, sir?"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Some of the juniors grinned. Cardew was being meekly and coolly impertinent. He was the only fellow in the Fourth who would have ventured to be "cheeky" in such circumstances.

"What? What?" rapped Mr. Lathom. "Cardew, you were seen to pick up a packet of some sort, tossed over the wall by someone in the road. You were seen by a prefect, who reported to me."

"Indeed, sir!"

"So that's it!" muttered Levison to Clive. Levison and Clive, who chummed with Cardew in No. 9 Study in the Fourth, knew how he obtained his surreptitious supplies of cigarettes. He had been spotted at last. But they were relieved that the matter was no worse. Certainly, smoking among the juniors was an offence. But it was a light matter, in comparison with some of Cardew's little secrets.

"You have been punished for smoking several times this term," went on Mr. Lathom. "I require to know, Cardew, what that packet contains. You will turn out your pockets on my desk."

"Copped!" murmured Blake.

"Serve him jolly well right!" grunted Herries.

"Oh, certainly, sir," said Cardew, quite coolly. He was, as Blake said, 'copped': all the form knew, or guessed, what that packet contained, and Mr. Lathom evidently had no doubt. But the scapegrace of the Fourth was quite cool about it. He might not have been so cool, perhaps, had he still been in possession of the article, whatever it was, that he had so cunningly slipped into Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's jacket pocket. But he was prepared to face the music for smuggling smokes into the school.

He proceeded to turn out his pockets on Mr. Lathom's desk. One article to come to light was a cardboard carton, and the master of the Fourth picked it up, frowning.

The frown intensified on his brow as he examined it.

"Cardew! This packet contains cigarettes."

Cardew made no reply to that. The fact was evident to all eyes.

Mr. Lathom tossed the packet of cigarettes into the form-room fire. They went up in smoke: not in the way intended by the manufacturer. Then he fixed his eyes on Cardew's cool face.

"Cardew! You will be given detention for every remaining day in the term," he rapped.

"Very well, sir."

"You will remain in the form-room for two hours after class every day, and write out the first book of the *Æneid*."

Cardew's cool face changed, as he heard that. Obviously he was disconcerted. It was a fairly heavy penalty, for there was still a week to run of the term before St. Jim's broke up for the Christmas holidays. Two hours daily, writing Virgil in the deserted form-room after the others were gone, was far from an attractive prospect. But the punishment might have been more severe: some of the juniors had expected Lathom to send him up to the Head. It was rather hard to understand why he was so dismayed. But there was no doubt that his face registered dismay.

"You may now go back to your place, Cardew," snapped Mr. Lathom.

Cardew hesitated.

"If—if you please, sir——"

"What? What?"

"If—you'd cane me instead, sir——"

"What? What? I shall cane you in addition, if you speak another word, Cardew! Go back to your place this instant!"

Cardew, breathing hard, went back to his place.

Lessons began in the Fourth Form-room. Cardew sat through them with a black look. When the form were dismissed, he had to remain behind—his eyes following the graceful figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as it disappeared with the rest. But there was no help for it—whatever it was that he had so cunningly and surreptitiously slipped into D'Arcy's pocket, to keep from his form-master's eyes, had to stay there, for two hours at least—unless, indeed, it was found there by Arthur Augustus before Cardew could get out of the form-room.

## CHAPTER 2

### TEA IN TOM MERRY'S STUDY

TOM MERRY came into No. 10 Study in the Shell with a bundle under his arm. He slammed it down on the study table: and there was a howl from Monty Lowther, who was sitting at that table, pen in hand, with a scribbled sheet before him. About a dozen blots scattered from the pen, which did not improve the appearance of that scribbled sheet.

"Fathead!" howled Lowther.

"Oh, my hat! Lines?" asked Tom.

"No, you ass! My verses——"

"Oh, that's all right," said Tom, cheerily. "Never mind your verses, old man. Clear the table——"

"You silly ass!"

"Tea-time," said Tom. "And we've got visitors coming——"

"Blow tea!"

"Can't blow tea when we've got visitors——"

"Blow the visitors."

"Manners has gone along to Study 6 to fetch Blake's gang——"

"Blow Blake's gang."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Blow everything and everybody you like," he agreed, "but let's get tea ready. I've got sosses——"

"Bother the sosses."

"And eggs——"

"Bust the eggs."

"And jam——"

"Blow the jam."

"Well, what is it?" asked Tom. "Anything important?"

"Br-r-r-r!" growled Lowther. "It's my poem for the *Carcroft Chronicle*. Just like you to interrupt when I'm cracking my nut for a rhyme. I'll read you out what I've written, if you like."

"Oh!" said Tom. "Much of it?"

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

"Oh, read it out, old chap," said Tom. "I don't mind—I—I mean, I'll be jolly glad to hear it. Cut on."

The clouds rolled away from Monty Lowther's brow. Monty was always ready to read out verses. The difficulty was to find listeners.

They differed a good deal in No. 10 in the Shell. Tom Merry seemed to his comrades to live for little but football; Manners, for little but his camera; Lowther, for little but writing comic verses and limericks and planning japes. But they bore with one another very tolerantly, as good chums should. If the Greyfriars match was in the offing, Lowther and Manners 'enthused' in tune with Tom. Tom and Monty took, or at least seemed to take, a deep interest in Manners' photographs. And Manners and Tom Merry would often listen while Monty told them his jokes, and laugh quite industriously. 'Give and take' all round worked very well indeed in No. 10.

As Tom had just come in with supplies for tea, and was expecting Manners to arrive any minute with four guests, it was possible that he could have dispensed with Lowther's verses, with considerable fortitude. However, he prepared to listen to Monty's burlblings, and to laugh in the right place—if he happened to detect the right place.

"Cut on, old chap," he said. "Blake and his gang may be here any minute——"

"I said blow Blake and his gang."

"Oh! Yes! Cut on."

Monty Lowther cut on.

*When deep the snow lies piled upon the ground,  
And wild winds fill the air with wintry sound,  
While frosty branches crackle in the trees,  
And streams, in summer swift, congeal and freeze.*

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"What are you laughing at?" he yelled.

Tom Merry ceased to laugh, suddenly. Only too evidently, this wasn't the right place!

"Oh! I—I—it's rather funny, you know," he stammered.

"You silly ass!"

"Well, cut on, and get to the funny part."

"You benighted idiot, this isn't a funny poem!" shrieked Lowther. "This is serious!"

"Oh!" gasped Tom. "I thought——"

"You thought!" snorted Lowther. "I'd like to know what you did it with. I'm writing a serious poem for the Christmas number of the *Carcroft Chronicle*, you blithering ass! It's about the ghost that haunts St. Jim's at Christmas time, and it's serious—if you know what serious means."

"Oh! My mistake!" said Tom. "Cut on."

"If you're going to cackle——"

"Sober as a judge, old man. Cut on."

Lowther gave a snort. However, he cut on.

*While snowflakes on the air are lightly whirled,  
And darkness deep enwraps the sleeping world,  
'Tis then that from his unknown hidden den,  
The Phantom Monk emerges to our ken,  
A spectre haunting still the scene of crime,  
When all is silent save the midnight chime.  
With terror's eyes we view the spectre monk,*

"That's as far as I've got," said Lowther. "I want a rhyme for monk. What do you think?"

"What about funk?" suggested Tom.

"You howling ass!"

"Well, it rhymes with monk——"

"Think you can use a word like 'funk' in poetry?" hooted Lowther.

"Sounds all right to me," said Tom. "What about this?"

*With terror's eyes we view the spectre monk,  
And can't help getting rather in a funk.*

"Idiot!" answered Lowther, ungratefully.

"Well, what about this?" asked Tom.

*With terror's eyes we view the spectre monk,  
And turn our backs on him, and do a bunk.*

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the doorway. Manners had arrived with Study No. 6, and five grinning faces looked into No. 10 in the Shell.

"Bai Jove! That sounds vevy funnay," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Is that one of your funnay poems, Lowthah? If it is all as funnay as that, you might wead it out to us ovah tea."

Monty Lowther, breathing hard and deep, tossed his verses on a shelf. The search for a rhyme to 'monk' had to be left till after tea: neither 'funk' nor 'bunk' seemed to satisfy the poet.

Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, came into the study with Manners. They had been improving the shining hour, after class, by snowballing Figgins and Co. of the New House, and brought in good appetites from the keen frosty air. Tom's bundle was unpacked: revealing sosses, eggs, jam, cake, and several other good things, welcome to all eyes. Even Monty Lowther forgot, for the nonce, that he was a poet, and remembered that he was a hungry schoolboy, quite ready for tea.

Tom stirred the fire, and Manners sorted out the frying-pan. An appetising aroma spread through No. 10 Study.

Seven was rather a crowd in a junior study: but hosts and guests made room somehow, and seven faces were cheery and bright as the 'Terrible Three' and their four guests sat down round the table, to dispose of the good things thereon.

Outside, the December dusk had fallen, and there was a flutter of snowflakes against the window-panes. Within, the fire burned cheerily, and all was merry and bright.

It was, perhaps, that early fall of snow that had put Lowther in mind of the legend of the Phantom Monk of St. Jim's. According to that legend, the ancient monk had been slain in the snow at Christmastide: and the first snowfall was the signal for him to revisit the glimpses of the moon. So now was the time for the shadowy phantom to glide noiselessly in the dim old passages of the School House—though it was not on record that any human eye had ever beheld it doing so.

However, the tea-party in No. 10 Study were not thinking of ghosts, phantoms, spectres or spooks. Their cheery talk ran chiefly on the approaching Christmas holidays: a rather more attractive subject. Only on the aristocratic brow of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was there a shade of thought.

"It's wathah wuff," Arthur Augustus remarked at last. Blake had just remarked that the snow was coming down: but Arthur Augustus was following his own line of thought.

"Seasonable, anyhow," said Blake.

"Eh? I wemarked that it was wathah wuff, Blake."

"Well, it's generally a bit rough in December, isn't it?"

"You misappwehend me, deah boy! I was not alludin' to the weathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I was thinkin' about that ass Cardew——"

"Oh, bother Cardew," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"What does Cardew matter?" yawned Dig.

"Weally, Dig——"

"Cardew in the wars again?" asked Tom Merry. "What a chap he is for butting into trouble."

"Yaas, wathah! He is stickin' in form while we're havin' this jolly tea, Tom Mewwy—w'itin' wotten lines."

"Hard luck," said Manners.

"He asked for it," growled Herries. "Lathom found cigarettes on him. Might have sent him up to the Head."

"Silly ass!" commented Tom Merry.

"Yaas, he is a silly ass, but it is wathah wuff luck to get detention ewevy day till the end of the term," said Arthur Augustus. "I have spoken to him several times, quite severely you know, about that silly smokin'. Pewwaps I had bettah speak to him again."

"Guard with your left, if you do," grinned Blake. "Cardew won't be in the best of tempers when he comes out after two hours of Virgil."

"I shall speak to him wegardless of his tempah, Blake. I think I will wait in the cowwidah when he comes out, and go up to him immediately and say—oh! Cwikey! Wow!"



"What?" ejaculated Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus's hand shot up to his noble nose. On the tip of that noble nose was a blob of jam. Some playful member of the tea-party had interrupted his remarks by projecting a jam-ball across the table, and it had landed fair and square on the target.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus's fingers came away sticky from his nose. "What silly ass—what uttah wuffian—is chuckin' jam about? Look at my nose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Six fellows looked at it. It seemed to afford them entertainment. Tom Merry gave Monty Lowther a warning look. In the best circles hosts did not play practical jokes on their guests: a circumstance which Monty did not always remember.

Arthur Augustus breathed rather hard through his jammy nose. Then, in dignified silence, he jerked his handkerchief from his pocket to wipe away the stickiness therefrom.

A folded paper fluttered from the handkerchief, as it came out of the pocket, and fell on the table.

Arthur Augustus, busy rubbing a sticky nose, did not notice it. But six fellows saw it fall, and glanced at it. Cardew, grinding lines in the Fourth Form-room, was wondering savagely whether the article he had slipped into D'Arcy's pocket might come to light before he had a chance of recovering it.

It had!

### CHAPTER 3

### MYSTERIOUS!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY rubbed every speck of jam from his aristocratic proboscis. He restored the handkerchief to his pocket. Then he cast a severe glance round the table.

Schoolboys will be schoolboys: and ink-balls and jam-balls were really not uncommon phenomena in a junior study. But the swell of St. Jim's did not approve of such antics: especially when his own noble nose was the object thereof.

"Weally, you fellows," began Arthur Augustus, stiffly.

"You've dropped a letter, Gussy," interposed Tom Merry, hastily. Perhaps he hoped that a change of subject might head off the lecture which Gussy was evidently about to deliver.

"I have not dwopped a lettah, Tom Mewwy. I was goin' to wemark——"

"There it is beside your plate," said Blake.

"Wubbish! I was goin' to say——"

"It dropped out of your pocket, ass, when you lugged out your hanky," said Herries.

Arthur Augustus glanced at the folded paper beside his plate. But he did not pick it up.

"Weally, Hewwies, it could hardly have dwopped out of my pocket, as I nevah keep anythin' of the kind in that pocket," he said. "I keep my handkerchief in that pocket, and nothin' else. I was goin'——"

"It's yours!" said Digby.

"It is not mine, Dig. And I insist upon sayin'——"

"My dear chap," said Manners. "We all saw that letter fall from your hanky when you pulled it out. You must have shoved it into that handkerchief-pocket without thinking."

"Weally, Mannahs, I nevah do anythin' without thinkin'. I am not a thoughtless ass like some fellows heah pwesent. And I am bound to say that I considah——"

"But it did fall from your pocket!" roared Blake.

"Pway do not woar at a fellow, Blake——"

"I tell you——"

"I have mentioned several times that I dislike bein' woared at, Blake. I weally do not know where that lettah came fwom, but it could not have fallen from my pocket——"

"But it did, Gussy," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We all saw it fall. Hadn't you better field it?"

Arthur Augustus looked puzzled. He was assured that he had never had a letter in that pocket. Yet the evidence of the whole tea-party was to the opposite effect.

"Well, if that lettah dwopped fwom my pocket, I quite fail to undahstand it," he said. "Howevah, I will look at it, and see if it is mine."

He picked up the paper, unfolded it, and glanced at it. Quite an extraordinary expression came over his face as he did so. He stared at what was written on the paper quite blankly.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

"It's yours, ass," said Blake.

"It is not mine, Blake! It belongs to Cardew——"

"Cardew?"

"It is w'itten in his hand, at any wate. I quite fail to compwehend how a lettah written by Cardew came into my pocket. It must be some silly twick. Here—look at it."

Arthur Augustus held up the letter. It was a half-sheet of notepaper, and the writing on it was in Cardew's neat, elegant hand, which all the juniors knew. The whole tea-party, surprised and intrigued by the strange occurrence, stared at it. How a letter written by Cardew of the Fourth came to be in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's pocket, without his knowledge, was, for the moment at least, a mystery. It was very brief. It ran:

Dear Bill,  
O.K. Tuesday at 10.30.

C.

Obviously that brief note had not been written to D'Arcy, in whose possession it was: even if a Fourth Form fellow could be supposed to have any reason for writing to another Fourth Former whom he saw a dozen times a day. It was written to somebody whose first name was "Bill."

'Bill,' whoever Bill was, had not received it: somehow or other, in some inexplicable manner, it had found its way into Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's jacket pocket.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry.

"What the dickens——" said Monty Lowther.

"Who's Bill?" said Manners.

"Goodness knows," said Tom.

Blake gave a whistle.

"Bill?" he said. "Bill Lodgey, at the 'Green Man'—we all know that Cardew goes out of bounds, and why. He knows that man Lodgey."

"Bai Jove!"

"Looks like an appointment," said Manners, staring at the letter. "Ten thirty tomorrow—can't mean anything else."

"But we are in form at ten thirty, Mannahs. Bweak is at ten forty-five, you know," said Arthur Augustus.

Manners shrugged his shoulders.

"Cardew doesn't call on his sporting friends in the morning," he said, drily. "That means ten thirty p.m."

"But it is lights out at nine thirty, Mannahs. Cardew will be in bed at ten thirty p.m."

"Fathead!" said Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"That's what it means," said Tom Merry, with a nod. "Cardew's game is to break out tomorrow night, after lights out, and that note was written to tell Lodgey so. He must have meant to get out, and post it outside the school. How on earth did it come into Gussy's pocket?"

The juniors stared at the note and at one another.

The meaning of that note was clear enough. Probably Cardew had despatched dozens of such notes, in the term, to his sporting friends at various times. There was nothing surprising in that: they all knew the ways of the scapegrace of St. Jim's. But it was not merely surprising: it was absolutely amazing, for the letter to be in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's pocket instead of in Cardew's.

"Beats me hollow," said Tom.

"Better keep it out of sight, Gussy," said Manners. "That note's enough to get Cardew sacked, if the house-master saw it."

"Bai Jove! If Wailton saw it—bai Jove! But—but do you fellows weally think that it means that Cardew was fixing up an appointment to see that wotten smudge Lodgey after lights out tomowwow?"

"It's as plain as your face, old bean—and that's saying a lot," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"You didn't pick it up somewhere, Gussy?" asked Herries. "Cardew might have dropped it——"

"Of course I did not pick it up, Hewwies. I have never seen it befoah."

"Then how did it get into your pocket?"

"I haven't a clue, deah boy!"

Blake gave a sudden yell.

"I've got it! Cardew shoved it there, in form this afternoon. Lathom called him out, and he fell over Gussy's hoofs——"

"Weally, Blake, I wish you would not allude to my feet as hoofs——"

"He stumbled over Gussy," exclaimed Blake, in great excitement. "I jolly well knew he did it on purpose—I thought he was larking, just to cheek Lathom—but that was his game. He had that note in his pocket, and had to get rid of it somehow—and that's how he did it."

"Lathom made him turn out his pockets," said Digby, with a nod. "He had a packet of smokes. If that note had been there——"

"Lathom would have spotted it, when he turned out his pockets," said Herries. "He landed it on Gussy to keep it dark."

"Imposs., deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "I should certainly have noticed it——"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"He stumbled over Gussy, and clawed hold of him," said Blake, "and that's why he did it. He knew that Lathom was suspicious, and that he might have to turn out his pockets. He simply dared not chance it, with that note in his pocket——"

"By gum!" said Tom. "It looks like it! Cardew's pretty quick on the uptake."

"Oh, he's wide enough," snorted Herries. "If he wasn't jolly wide, he would have been sacked before this."

"Bai Jove! Do you fellows weally think——"

"Not much doubt about it," said Manners. "That letter got into your pocket somehow—and that was the how."

Arthur Augustus's brow set in a deep frown.

"You think that wottah was makin' use of me to keep out of a wov with Lathom——"

"It would have been more than a row with Lathom," said Blake. "If Lathom had seen that, he would have taken it with Cardew to the Head."

"The jolly old long jump for Cardew," said Lowther.

It was clear enough now to all the juniors in No. 10 Study. What had seemed an inexplicable mystery was solved.

"The uttah wottah!" said Arthur Augustus, in tones of deep indignation. "The howwid wapscallion! Stickin' his wotten lettah to a wacin' man in my pocket——"

"He would have got it back after class, somehow, if he hadn't been detained," said Blake. "Shove it out of sight, Gussy—'tain't our business to get your precious relative bunked, and if anyone saw it——"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus hastily put the letter into his pocket. There was only one opinion in No. 10 Study as to Cardew's deserts: but no fellow there wanted to have a hand in giving him away.

"Anyone might come in," said Tom. "Keep it dark, Gussy. If some tattling ass like Trimble saw it——"

Tap!

Tom was interrupted by a tap at the study door. Seven juniors looked round all at once as it opened.

#### CHAPTER 4

### ALL CLEAR!

"You may go, Cardew."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Lathom's look was grim, and his tone sharp. Neither the grimness nor the sharpness had any perceptible effect on Ralph Reckness Cardew. The fact that his form-master was deeply displeased with him mattered not a straw to the scapegrace of the Fourth. Lathom's frowning glance followed him as he left the form-room.

Cardew's lip curved in a sneering smile, as he went down the passage. Lathom was 'shirty' with him over a packet of cigarettes. What would he have been like if he had known the rest? Ralph Reckness Cardew had been within an ace of disaster that afternoon. Only his quick presence of mind had saved him. Right under Lathom's nose he had rid himself of that scrap of paper, which would have meant the 'long jump' for him if Lathom had seen it. His narrow escape had not perturbed him. He was rather inclined to pride himself upon his quickness of wit and promptness of action. To his mocking mind, it was amusing to have fooled his 'beak' under his very nose.

"Oh, here you are, old fellow."

"Waiting for you!"

Levison and Clive were waiting at the corner of the passage. They joined Cardew as he came along from the form-room.

He gave them a glance, apparently not particularly pleased to see them. The three were great friends, in spite of very wide differences of character. But Cardew

had no use for his friends just then. He was thinking of that tell-tale scrap of paper he had 'planted' on the unsuspecting Gussy, which he was very anxious to recover.

"We've waited tea for you," said Levison.

"All ready in the study," said Clive.

Cardew laughed. He knew what his two friends thought of his smokes, his racing stunts, his breaking out of bounds, and the rest of it: but he never seemed to tire out their patience. They carefully made no allusion to the scene in the form-room.

"Come on," said Levison. "I suppose you're ready for tea."

"Not quite! Seen D'Arcy?"

"Not since class. Do you want him?"

"Well, yes—I want a word with him. Just a friendly word—he's a relative of mine, you know," said Cardew, blandly. "Let's go up—I expect I shall find him in his study."

They went up to the Fourth Form studies together. Cardew stopped at the door of Study No. 6, and Levison and Clive went on to No. 9, where they expected their chum to join them at tea when he had had his 'word' with his relative. But he was not to join them quite so soon as expected.

Cardew tapped at the door of No. 6 and opened it. He stepped into the study, only to find it vacant. He stared round the study, frowning.

"Bother the silly ass! Where is he?" he grunted.

He came out of the study again, and looked up and down the passage. A fat junior loafing by the window blinked at him.

"Seen D'Arcy, Trimble?" called out Cardew.

"Tea-ing with Tom Merry," answered Trimble.

"Oh! All right."

Cardew hurried down the passage again to the landing, compressing his lips with annoyance. He did not want that scrap of paper to come to light, if he could help it, under the eyes of a crowd of fellows. But he was too deeply anxious about it to delay. D'Arcy might have pulled out his handkerchief—and that scrap of paper with it—anywhere, and he was ass enough not to notice it if it fell about the floor. The mere thought of his note to Bill Lodgey laying somewhere about the House, liable to catch any eye—perhaps a beak's—made Cardew feel cold down the back, in spite of his nerve. He had to assure himself about that scrap of paper.

He hurried up the Shell passage and tapped at the door of Tom Merry's study. Deeply anxious as he was, his face had its usual aspect of cool unconcern as he opened the door and looked in. He was not the fellow to give anything away by his looks.

Seven fellows, seated round the table, looked at him. He came in and shut the door after him.

"Sorry to butt in," he said, lightly. "I wanted to see you, D'Arcy."

Arthur Augustus did not reply. He screwed his celebrated monocle into his noble eye, and fixed it on Cardew, his look reminiscent of a refrigerator in its iciness.

Cardew glanced round the circle of faces. Not one of the seven spoke. Cardew

could not have fancied that he was *persona grata* in that study. That did not affect him in the least. But he was deeply anxious about that paper.

"Will you step out into the passage a minute, D'Arcy?" he asked.

Arthur Augustus broke his icy silence.

"If you have anythin' to say to me, Cardew, you can say it heah, in the presence of my fwiends," he answered.

"It's something private, really——"

"I have nōthin' pwivate with you, Cardew."

Cardew breathed hard.

"Well, look here, I shoved something into your pocket when I stumbled on you in form this afternoon. It was something I didn't want Lathom to see—a—a note to a friend."

Arthur Augustus's lip curled.

"Weally, I wondah you did not shove the cigawettes into my pocket as well," he said, sarcastically.

"No time, or I would have," said Cardew, coolly. "I couldn't quite have got away with that—but I did get away with the note. It's in your handkerchief pocket. Hand it over, will you?"

"Only a note to a friend?" said Monty Lowther.

"Yes—if you're interested."

"Friend named Bill?" asked Lowther.

Cardew caught his breath. The note had been seen! He knew that now. He would have preferred it otherwise: but after all, it mattered little. No one in that study was likely to give him away. And what they were thinking of him had about as much effect on Cardew as water on a duck.

"I see you know all about it," he sneered. "Well, I want that note, D'Arcy. I had written it when the bell went, and it was in my pocket when we went into form—that's how it was. I could see that Lathom was suspicious, and I had to get rid of it. Lucky I did, as it turned out. I suppose you don't want to keep it?"

"I would not willingly touch your wotten note to a wacin' man with a pokah, Cardew," answered Arthur Augustus, disdainfully.

"Well, hand it over."

"I wegard it as wotten cheek to land your wubbish on me, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus, "and I considah——"

"Speech taken as read!"

"I considah that you are an uttah wottah, and a wotten wapscallion, and a shockin' outsidah——"

"Oh, quite!" agreed Cardew. "How well you know me. Comes of being related to me, I suppose."

"Bai Jove! You are a disgwace to the House, Cardew, and it would have served you wight if Latham had seen that note and taken you to the Head to be bunked."

"Probably," assented Cardew, "but as jolly old Shakespeare remarks, if every

man had his deserts, who would escape whipping? But I came here for that note, old bean—not for a jaw.”

Arthur Augustus breathed hard through his noble nose. He took the note out and tossed it across to Cardew, who caught it and promptly slipped it into his pocket. It was an immense relief to him to have it safe in his own keeping again.

“Thanks, old tulip,” he drawled. “Thanks for minding it for me.”

“Bai Jove! I was not mindin’ it for you, you wottah—I had no ideah that you had put it into my pocket——”

“You wouldn’t,” agreed Cardew. “That’s why I picked on you, old bean—I knew I could rely on you.”

“You cheeky wottah!” exclaimed Arthur Augustus, wrathfully. “There is nothin’ to gwin at, you fellows, in Cardew’s cheek. I have a good mind to punch your cheeky head, Cardew.”

“You’ve a good mind?” asked Cardew.

“Yaas, wathah.”

“News to me! I never knew you had a mind at all,” said Cardew, affably. “Why don’t you use it sometimes?”

“Bai Jove—I—I——” Arthur Augustus jumped up from the table. Cardew, laughing, stepped out of the study and drew the door shut with a bang.

He walked away cheerily to his own study in the Fourth. Levison and Clive eyed him as he came in.

“Seen D’Arcy?” asked Levison.

“Oh, yes! We’ve had quite a pleasant chat,” drawled Cardew. “Tea ready?”

“It’s been ready a long time.”

“Well, I’m more than ready. I’ve got to cut out after tea, so let’s get going.”

“Oh, don’t be an ass,” growled Clive. “You can’t cut out after gates are closed.”

“Dear me!” said Cardew.

“Look here——” began Levison, frowning.

“Only to post a letter, dear man,” said Cardew. “Merely that and nothing more. Couldn’t get to it sooner, owing to Lathom and his dashed detentions. I want to catch the post at the box in the lane.”

“Why can’t you post it in the school box?” demanded Clive.

Cardew laughed. He was not likely to post a letter addressed to Mr. William Lodgey at the ‘Green Man’ in the school box.

“Never mind why,” he said. “Let’s have tea.”

After tea, Cardew addressed and stamped an envelope, slipped the note into it and disappeared. He was not seen again for some little time, but when he turned up in the junior day-room he was cheerful and smiling, and quite at his ease. His note to Bill Lodgey, after its curious vicissitudes, was on its way: and no doubt the scapegrace of St. Jim’s was looking forward to the reckless escapade planned for the morrow night.



## CHAPTER 5

### TROUBLE FOR THREE!

“WHEREFORE this thushness?”

It was Monty Lowther who asked that playful question.

The wintry morning was bright, with a gleam of sunshine on the snow that powdered the old quad and on the frosty branches of the elms. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came out in break in a cheery bunch: but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as they came on him in the quad, did not look so cheery. There was a wrinkle of thought on the noble brow of Gussy: he looked like a fellow with a problem on his mind. Hence Monty's question.

In a corner of the quad, Blake and Herries and Dig, Levison and Clive, and a dozen other School House men, were exchanging snowballs with Figgins and Co. of the New House. But Arthur Augustus seemed in no mood for snowballing.

Neither, it seemed, was his relative, Ralph Reckness Cardew, who was sauntering under the frosty elms with his hands in his pockets, regardless of the snow-battle raging at a distance.

Several times Arthur Augustus's glance was turned on Cardew: and every glance was accompanied by a frown. Once Cardew, catching that frowning glance, gave him a wink, which caused Gussy to colour with indignation.

“What's the trouble, old scout?” asked Tom Merry, cheerily. “Thinking out something knotty in maths?”

“Not at all, deah boy,” answered Arthur Augustus. “I was just thinkin'——”

“Thinking of coming along and giving those New House ticks a few?” asked Tom.

“Wathah not! The fact is, I am wathah wowwied,” confessed Arthur Augustus. “Pewwaps you fellows could advise a fellow.”

“What-ho,” said Tom. “Tell it to your Uncle Thomas! Lathom on your track for skewing in con?”

“It is wathah more sewious than con, Tom Mewwy.”

“Anything happened to your top-hat?” asked Monty Lowther, with great gravity.

“Nothin', deah boy,” answered Arthur Augustus, innocently: and the Shell fellows grinned.

“Not so bad as that?” asked Lowther. “Well, give it a name—what's the jolly old worry? We're the fellows who know all the answers.”

“It's that wottah Cardew,” said Arthur Augustus, with a glance of disfavour at his relative sauntering under the elms. “You are awah that he is welated to me. I am not pwoud of it—but there it is.”

"These things can't be helped," said Lowther, consolingly. "We've all got relations not quite up to the mark of our noble selves."

"Pwavy be sewious, Lowthah, on a sewious subject. Fwom that wotten note that was in my pocket yestahday, it is perfectly cleah that that tick Cardew is goin' to bweak out tonight, goin' to see some wacin' man. It is fwightfully wotten, and vevy wisky. A fellow doesn't want a welation to be bunked from the school, you know."

"Oh, Cardew won't be bunked," said Manners, with a curl of the lip. "He's too jolly wide. Look how he wriggled out yesterday when any other fellow would have been nailed."

"It's rotten, Gussy," said Tom Merry, "but you can't do anything."

"That is what I was twyin' to think out, Tom Mewwy. I have consulted Blake and Hewwies and Dig, and they said I had bettah mind my own business——"

"Oh!"

"But weally, you know, it is wathah my business, as the wottah is welated to me, and he is askin' for the sack."

"Um!" said Tom.

"He will be sneakin' out of the dorm tonight in the dark, cweepin' on tiptoe out of the House, and hikin' off to that disweputable den, the 'Green Man,'" continued Arthur Augustus. "The pwefects would stop him fast enough, but of course a man can't give a chap away. But—he ought to be stopped."

Evidently, Arthur Augustus was considerably worried and troubled. But the problem of keeping his scapegrace relative to the straight and narrow path was too much for his noble brain.

"Talkin' to him's no good," went on Arthur Augustus. "I've twied that! I have spoken to him vevy sewiously, and what do you think he said?"

"What?" asked Tom.

"He told me to put a sock in it," said Arthur Augustus, with deep indignation. "Bai Jove! What are you gwinnin' at?"

"Oh! Nothing!" gasped Tom. "Not much good talking to him, Gussy! Come along and give the New House smudges a few."

"Wubbish!" said Arthur Augustus, and he walked on his way, still with the wrinkle of deep thought on his noble brow. Evidently he was too much concerned about his scapegrace relative to find any attraction in a snow fight with Figgins and Co. of the New House.

Tom Merry frowned.

"It's rotten," he said. "That fellow Cardew ought to be kicked."

"Let's go and kick him," suggested Lowther.

"Let's mind our own business," said Manners.

"I think I'll speak to him," said Tom, and he crossed over to where the dandy of the Fourth was lounging under the elms, followed by his chums.

Cardew gave them a nod and a smile. He was very well aware what the 'Terrible

Three' thought of him: but it did not seem to perturb him in any way. Probably it amused him.

"Toppin' mornin'," he remarked. "Why aren't you fellows joinin' in the snowballin'? You generally set us an example of the strenuous life."

"Never mind that," said Tom. "D'Arcy's just been speaking to us——"

"Yes, I saw his chin waggin'," assented Cardew. "Has he been borin' you?"

"Look here, Cardew——"

"Lookin'."

"A good many fellows know what you've got on for tonight," said Tom Merry, abruptly.

"So glad they're interested."

"Don't you think you'd better chuck it?" said Tom.

"Why?" drawled Cardew.

"You don't care what fellows think of you," said Tom, scornfully.

"Not a lot," admitted Cardew. "Even if I lost your good opinion, Thomas, I think I could bear it with some fortitude."

Tom Merry breathed hard.

"Well, you are a rotter," he said.

"Thanks."

"Half a dozen fellows know that you're going to sneak out after lights out tonight, to see a welsher in a pub, and you don't care!" snapped Tom.

Cardew's eyes gleamed for a moment. Put like that, he did not seem quite to like it. But the next moment he shrugged his shoulders.

"Not my fault if half a dozen fellows know," he drawled. "I can't help fellows readin' another fellow's letter."

Tom's face flamed.

"Who read another fellow's letter?" he almost shouted.

"Didn't you? You seem to know all about it?"

"You—you—you worm!" gasped Tom. "You know perfectly well that that letter fell out of D'Arcy's pocket, where you put it, and that nobody knew what it was till it was looked at——"

"I know you read it."

"You cheeky cad!" exclaimed Lowther.

"That's enough from you, Cardew." Even the quiet and sedate Manners was roused to wrath. "Collar the cad."

Cardew jumped back.

"Hands off! I—I—oh, gad! Oh!"

The next moment he was whirling in the grasp of the 'Terrible Three.' He came down on the snowy earth with a bump and a yell.

"Leggo! By gad, I—I—I'll—oh!"

"Roll him over," said Lowther, savagely.

Cardew yelled as he was rolled over in the snow. His well-cut clothes, almost

as elegant as those of his relative, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, were sadly rumpled and crumpled. He yelled and struggled and kicked, but there was no help for him. He had not been able to restrain that sneer: but he wished now, perhaps, that he had, as he rolled and yelled. But there came a sudden interruption.

"Merry! Manners! Lowther!"

It was a sharp angry voice: the voice of Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell. The 'Terrible Three' had not noticed their form-master in the offing. But he had noticed them, and he hurried to the spot, with thunder in his brow.

"Merry! Manners! Lowther! Release Cardew at once! Cease this horse-play immediately! Do you hear me?"

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

Cardew was released. He sprawled in the snow, while Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther turned flushed faces to their form-master.

Mr. Linton gave them a stern frown.

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed. "How dare you! Merry, Manners, Lowther, go into the House at once. Remain there till third school. And take one hundred lines each. You will bring me the lines by tea-time. Go!"

In silence, but with deep feelings, Tom Merry and Co. tramped away. Mr. Linton walked away, frowning. Cardew scrambled to his feet. He was snowy and damp and rumpled and crumpled: but there was a grin on his face as he watched the chums of the Shell trail away to the House.

## CHAPTER 6

### BIG IDEA!

"HA, ha, ha!"

It was a sudden burst of merriment in No. 10 Study in the Shell.

It proceeded from Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry and Manners stared at him, across the table. They did not look much in a mood for merriment. Neither had Lowther, till now. The 'Terrible Three,' in fact, had been considerably disgruntled when they sat down round the study table after class to write lines for Mr. Linton.

No fellow liked lines. There were so many things to do, after class, so much more entertaining than transcribing Virgil.

But that imposition really was undeserved. It was all Cardew's fault. Mr. Linton, of course, could only judge by what he saw: and what he had seen, in the quad, was three fellows of his form suddenly collaring a Fourth Form fellow and rolling him over headlong in the snow. They did not blame Linton. But their feelings towards the scapegrace of the Fourth were deep.

Indeed, Tom Merry had felt very much inclined to look for Cardew and punch him right and left. However, he restrained that impulse. Moreover, Cardew, after class, was detained in the Fourth Form-room, by his form-master's sentence: and was writing Virgil there while the Shell fellows did the same in their study.

Why Monty Lowther burst into that sudden explosion of mirth, neither Tom nor Manners knew. They stared at him.

"Enjoying lines?" asked Manners, sarcastically.

"Having a good time with Virgil?" asked Tom, also sarcastic.

Lowther chuckled.

"Not exactly, old scouts! But I've got an idea——"

"Oh, crumbs!" said Manners. "One of your japes?"

"Just that!"

"Take it away and boil it, then," grunted Manners, and he resumed Virgil: evidently not in the least interested in the bright idea, whatever it was, that had germinated in Lowther's fertile brain.

"The jape of the term," said Lowther, impressively. "Chuck that scribbling for a minute or two, and I'll tell you——"

"Forget it," said Tom.

"Now look here, Tom——"

"Oh, don't be a goat," said Tom. "We've got to hand in these lines to Linton before tea. Like him to double them?"

"I tell you it's priceless," urged Monty. "Absolutely IT! That rat Cardew got us these lines——"

"Yes; bother him!"

"And he's worrying poor old Gussy——"

"What about it?"

"And he's a tick, and a smudge, and a smear, and——"

"All that, and more," said Tom. "Now get on with your impot——"

"And he's going out of bounds tonight," went on Lowther, unheeding. "Gussy said that he ought to be stopped. Well, so he ought to be. Now, you remember those verses I was reading out to you yesterday——"

"Eh? Yes! Blow 'em!" said Tom. "For goodness' sake don't recite them to us now, Monty! Get through your lines."

"Bother the lines! Will you let a fellow speak or not?" hooted Lowther. "The verses about the Phantom Monk——"

"Bless the Phantom Monk."

"Now the snow's falling it's time for the ghost to walk, according to the legend," said Monty Lowther. "Might walk tonight."

"What rot!"

"Suppose——"

"Suppose rats! Let's get these dashed lines done."

"Suppose——"

"Lines!" said Manners.

"Suppose," howled Lowther. "Suppose the ghost was walking in the dormitory passages and Cardew ran into him when he got out of his dorm tonight. Think he would get a scare?"

"I suppose so! But the ghost won't walk, and Cardew won't run into him, and if we don't get through these lines, Linton will double them."

"The ghost will walk," said Monty Lowther, "and Cardew will run into him! That's the big idea."

Keen as they were to get through those lines, Tom Merry and Manners suspended operations for the moment to stare at Monty.

"The ghost will walk?" repeated Tom.

"Just that."

"How?" demanded Manners.

"On his feet."

"You silly ass——"

"Don't you get it?" asked Lowther, impatiently. "You're a bit slow on the uptake. I've told you it's a jape—the jape of the term. It will make that smudge Cardew sit up for his sins, and it will send him scuttling back to his dorm instead of sneaking out to play banker at the 'Green Man.' I know that the ghost will walk, because——"

"Because what?"

"Because I'm going to be the ghost!" grinned Lowther.

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom and Manners together. They caught on now.

"Some jape!" said Lowther. "Cardew couldn't begin to have a suspish. All he will know is that when he's sneaking down a dark passage, the ghastly phantom will suddenly appear before him, out of the dark, enough to put the wind up a stouter lad than Cardew."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I fancy that would put the wind up anybody," he said. "But——"

"We can fix it up as easy as falling off a form," said Lowther, eagerly. "We know what that jolly old phantom is supposed to look like—monk's robe and cowl, face deathly white and unearthly eyes—we've done enough amateur theatricals to be able to fix up a thing like that. You can make a face as white as chalk by rubbing chalk on it, and a circle of luminous paint round the eyes will make them look unearthly enough, in the dark——"

Manners chuckled.

"Keep it dark, of course," said Lowther. "If Cardew got a whisper of it, it would be no go. But taking him by surprise——"

"But——" said Tom.

"Oh, blow your butts! Is it the jape of the term or isn't it?" demanded Lowther.

"Has Cardew asked for it, or hasn't he?"

"Well, yes; but——"

"We can fix up the robe and cowl easily enough—that old curtain in the box-room will do all right, with a few stitches and some safety-pins. The ghost walks without a sound—well, he won't make a sound, in my old rubber shoes. I've got it all cut and dried."

"But——"

"Any billy-goats in your family?" asked Lowther. "You keep on butting like one! You fellows can help me make up, in our dorm, after lights out——"

"All the chaps in the Shell will know——"

"That won't matter, after lights out. Nobody will go along to the Fourth Form dorm to put Cardew wise."

"That's so," assented Tom, "but——"

"But what?" yapped Lowther.

"Well, it would serve Cardew right, and would keep him from playing the giddy ox, but——"

"But—but—but——" mimicked Monty.

"But playing ghost is too thick," said Tom, shaking his head. "Might give a chap an awful fright——"

"Serve him right," said Lowther.

"Well, yes; but——" said Manners.

Monty Lowther snorted. He had thought out that jape. The bright idea had flashed into his active mind, and he found it good. If Cardew had a scare, he deserved to have a scare, in Monty's opinion, for sneaking out of bounds after lights out. And a scare would send him scuttling back to his dormitory, instead of paying his intended visit to the 'Green Man': which was ever so much better for him. But probably it was the jape that appealed to Monty most. He was a born japer, and could never resist the lure of a practical joke. His two chums were a little more thoughtful than Monty: and they saw drawbacks to the scheme which Monty quite failed to see.

"Now, look here," said Lowther, "the ghost is going to walk tonight, and I'm going to be the ghost. All you fellows have got to do is to back me up. If you won't——"

"But——" said Tom.

"Billy-goating again!" snorted Lowther. "Never mind your butting. Will you fellows back me up or not?"

There was a moment's pause. To both Tom and Manners it seemed that Monty's big idea was a little over the limit. But when it came to a question of backing him up or not, there was only one answer for Monty's chums to make. No. 10 Study were accustomed to back one another up through thick and thin. Cardew, after all, deserved little consideration, if any: and certainly they were not going to have a dispute with their chum on his account.

"Well, if you're set on it——" said Tom, hesitantly. He did not like to go ahead with such a jape, but Monty seemed set on it.

"Fixed and immutable as the jolly old laws of the jolly old Medes and Persians!" said Monty Lowther, emphatically.

"If you won't listen to a more sensible chap——" said Manners.

"Haven't met one in this study yet."

"Well, it's a go," said Tom, at last.

"It's a go," agreed Manners.

And that point being settled, the 'Terrible Three' restarted on their lines for Mr. Linton. But the scratching of pens was interrupted, from time to time, by a chuckle from Monty Lowther.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE GHOST WALKS!

KILDARE of the Sixth saw lights out in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House. The St. Jim's captain certainly had no suspicion that one member of that form had no intention of closing his eyes, or of remaining in bed till rising-bell. Cardew turned in with the rest, and Kildare bade the juniors a cheery good-night, turned off the light, and departed.

It was not till after the door had closed on him that a voice was heard from D'Arcy's bed.

"Cardew!"

Cardew made no reply. There were seven fellows in the House who knew his plans for that night, but they had said nothing on the subject, except among themselves: and his own chums, Levison and Clive, knew nothing so far. He would have preferred them not to know. Certainly he would have taken no heed of what they thought on the subject, but he was not wholly regardless of their opinion. His eyes gleamed in the dark as Arthur Augustus called to him. He remained silent in the hope that D'Arcy would leave it at that and go to sleep. But Arthur Augustus did not leave it at that.

"Cardew!" he repeated.

Still no reply.

"Dry up and let a chap go to sleep if he wants to, D'Arcy," called out Clive.

"Weally, Clive, I am quite suah that Cardew does not want to go to sleep," answered Arthur Augustus.

"That's usually the idea, I've always believed, when a fellow turns in," remarked Levison.

"Yaas, wathah, as a wule," agreed Arthur Augustus, "but circumstances altah cases, Levison. Cardew!"

"Oh, shut up, D'Arcy," snapped Cardew, at last.



"I wefuse to shut up, Cardew! You need not pwetend that you are goin' to sleep, when I am quite awah that you are doin' nothin' of the sort."

"Dry up, Gussy," said Blake. "No good burbling."

"Weally, Blake, I object to havin' my wemarks descwibed as burblin'. Cardew is a welation of mine, and I cannot see him goin' on the woad to wuin without wemonstwatin', at least."

"The what to which?" ejaculated Clive.

"The woad to wuin, Clive."

"Fathead!"

"Will you shut up, you gabbling ass?" breathed Cardew.

"No, nothin' of the kind. I have spoken to you befoah on this subject, and you had the cheek to tell me to put a sock in it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' to cackle at in Cardew's cheek," said Arthur Augustus, warmly. "I am goin' to speak to you again, Cardew, befoah it is too late, and I twust that you will dwop the ideah of bweakin' out tonight."

Cardew, in silence, breathed fury. There were exclamations up and down the row of beds. All the Fourth were interested now.

"Cardew at it again!" said Mellish.

"Shady sweep!" said Wildrake.

"He, he, he!" from Baggy Trimble.

"Some fellows keep on hunting for trouble till they find it," said Roylance. "You're a silly ass, Cardew."

"Chuck it, Cardew, and don't be a goat," said Dick Julian.

Cardew listened in silent rage. He would gladly have turned out of bed and punched his well-meaning relative right and left. But a row in the dormitory after lights out would hardly have suited his plans for the night.

"Do you heah me, Cardew?" went on Arthur Augustus's voice in the dark. "I am quite awah that you have not gone to sleep, Cardew. I feah that you are quite indiffewent to the opinion of decent fellows, but even if you cannot help bein' a wottah and a worm, Cardew, you might at least wecollect the wisk. Soonah or latah you will be caught out. Have you thought of that?"

"Will you shut up, you meddlin' fool?" hissed Cardew.

"Certainly not! I considah it my duty to wemonstwate with a fellow who is disgwacin' his House and his welations," answered Arthur Augustus. "It would be vewy disagweeable to me, Cardew, to see you taken up to the Head to be sacked."

Cardew sat up in bed and groped for his pillow. He was fed up to the teeth with his relative.

Levison and Clive had said nothing. They did not hope, like the optimistic Gussy, that remonstrating with Cardew would produce any effect. But Cardew knew what they must be thinking, and he was not wholly without a sense of shame. His feelings towards his cheery relative, at that moment, were almost homicidal.

"Pway give up the ideah, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus, persuasively. "Even you must have a wag of decency in you somewhah——"

Whiz!

"And I weally must say—yawooooooh!"

Arthur Augustus broke off, with a sudden startled howl, as a whizzing pillow landed on his noble head. It took him quite by surprise.

"Oh, cwikey! Oh, cwumbs! What is that?" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Somethin' has bumped on my head——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! It is a pillow——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What silly ass is chuckin' pillows about in the dark?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, wrathfully. "Oh! Was it you, Cardew? You cheeky wottah, your wotten pillow is comin' back."

And Arthur Augustus, grasping the missile with both hands, whirled it in the air, and hurled it in the direction of Cardew's bed.

But Arthur Augustus's aim in the dark was not quite so accurate as Cardew's. There was a fiendish yell from Baggy Trimble.

"Yoooo-hooooop! Wow! Whooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Is that Twimble——"

"You silly owl," yelled Trimble. "What are you chucking pillows at me for?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I weally beg your pardon, Twimble! I was chuckin' it at Cardew——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You potty fathead!" yelled Trimble.

"Weally, Twimble——"

"Ow! Wow! You jolly nearly bowled me out of bed," howled Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am weally vevy sowwy, Twimble. I have a gweat mind to turn out of bed and give you a feahful thwashin', Cardew. I shall say nothin' more to you, you wottah—I wegard you as an uttah wepwobate, and if you are caught out and bunked, so much the bettah."

And Arthur Augustus laid his indignant head on his pillow and left it at that: which was, at least, a relief to his relative. But for a good ten minutes there was talk up and down the dormitory, to which Cardew listened with burning ears and glinting eyes.

It died away at last, and there was silence when the hour of ten boomed from the clock-tower. Cardew hoped that the others were asleep, but he had little doubt that some, at least, were still awake, and his feelings were bitter. To slip quietly from the dormitory in the dark, unseen and unheard, was one thing; to go leaving the other fellows in a buzz behind him was quite another. But his determination

was quite unchanged. If only to demonstrate that he was a law unto himself and would carry on exactly as he chose to do, he was going.

He was very silent, as he slipped from his bed and dressed in the dark. But silent as he was, he was not unheard.

"Is that you, Cardew?" came a quiet voice from Levison's bed.

Cardew gritted his teeth.

"Keep your mouth shut," he breathed.

"Won't you chuck it?"

"No!"

"Look here, Cardew——" came Sidney Clive's voice.

"Do you want to wake that babbling fool, D'Arcy?" hissed Cardew.

"I am not asleep, Cardew, and I wefuse to be chawactewised as a babblin' fool!" came another voice. "I wegard you——"

"Don't make a row, for goodness' sake, D'Arcy," said Levison, anxiously.

"I am not goin' to make a wow, Levison. But I considah——"

"Mind Railton doesn't cop you, Cardew," came a squeak from Baggy Trimble.



As the phantom glided nearer, a choked cry broke from him.

"Jolly good thing if he does," growled Herries.

Evidently, a good many fellows were awake! Cardew, breathing hard, finished dressing, hurriedly, and cut across to the door. There was hardly a sound as it opened and shut: but the juniors knew that Cardew was gone.

Outside the dormitory, Cardew stood in the darkness of the passage and listened. A faint murmur came to him of voices from within, which he did not regard. He was listening for other sounds, such as the footsteps of a master or prefect on a late round.

But there was no sound in the silence of the December night. Masters, no doubt, were still up, in their studies or Common Room: some of the Sixth, perhaps, had not yet gone to bed. But in the junior dormitories all was dark and silent and still. The passage was black as a hat: the landing beyond was almost as dark. All was clear for the breaker of bounds.

He had done this before, more than once—it was no new experience to him. All he had to do was to creep silently down the passage, across the dormitory landing, and down the staircase to the study landing below. There was a window by which he had left, and re-entered, the House more than once. It was deeply irritating to have left a crowd of wakeful fellows behind him in the dormitory: surreptitious silence was his cue, on such an excursion as this. But that could not be helped: and he dismissed that from his mind. With soft and silent footsteps he crept down the passage and came out on the wide landing.

It was dark there, but not quite so dark, as there were tall windows from which came a glimmer of wintry starlight and snow. He paused for a moment, looking about him and listening: and then started across the landing towards the stairs, and his way out.

Suddenly he stopped.

There was no sound. He had heard no movement. But something stirred in the darkness and a strange glimmer came to his eyes.

He stood, his heart pulsating.

Was he dreaming?

What was that strange, eerie, unearthly figure that loomed dimly out of the dark?

He had feared masters and prefects. He had never dreamed of this. The legend of the phantom monk was to his mind a childish fable.

But what—what was this?

His feet were rooted to the floor. His heart beat in great throbs. His eyes, dilated, started at the gliding figure. If he was not dreaming, or mad, he saw a figure in monkish robe and cowl, the cowl drawn back, revealing a face white as death, with a strange phosphorescent glimmer on it. Was he dreaming, or out of his senses?

He hardly breathed.

He was not dreaming—he was not mad—it was there—there, and gliding slowly towards him! The phantom monk—the unearthly phantom that was said to haunt

the old House when the snow fell—it was there, and it was gliding soundlessly towards him.

For a long, long moment he stood petrified, appalled, almost stunned. Then, as the phantom glided nearer, a choked cry broke from him: he turned and ran as if for his life.

## CHAPTER 8

## A MYSTERY!

“BAI Jove!”

“What——”

“Cardew——”

“Great pip!”

Cardew had been gone hardly more than a minute from the dormitory. Nobody there had expected to see him return. He was not likely to return before the chimes of midnight, softly and silently. There were startled exclamations as the door was hurled open from without, regardless of noise, and Cardew rushed in: breathless, panting, his face white as a sheet, his eyes starting. Even in the dim glimmer from the high windows, his face showed up, a patch of ghastly white.

His wild panting could be heard in the gloom. He had come in with a frantic rush: now he seemed to be tottering.

Levison was out of bed with a bound. In a moment he reached the staggering junior and grasped him by the arm.

“Cardew! What—what has happened?”

“Oh, heaven! I’ve seen it.” Cardew’s voice was a croak. He spun round, staring back at the dark doorway. “I’ve seen it.”

“You’ve seen—what?”

“The monk!” breathed Cardew, shuddering.

“The monk!” repeated Levison, in wonder.

“The—the phantom!” breathed Cardew. “I—I saw it—gliding on the landing—it came towards me—oh!” His voice trailed off.

“The phantom!”

A dozen voices repeated the words in wonder and amazement. Baggy Trimble gave a startled squeak and dived his head under the bedclothes. If the phantom of St. Jim’s was on the prowl, Baggy did not want to see it.

“Great Scott!” ejaculated Arthur Augustus. “Is the fellow dweamin’?”

“Scared in the dark!” grunted Herries.

“Some shadow——” said Digby.

“Not a jolly old spook, anyway,” said Jack Blake. “Cut it out, Cardew! More

likely a pre looking for some shady sweep going out of bounds, and you jolly well fancied the rest."

"Yaas, wathah."

But many of the juniors had serious and startled faces. Ghosts in the day time might seem absurd: but it was not quite so in deep December darkness. Nor was Cardew a fellow to be scared by a shadow. Baggy Trimble might have taken a shifting shadow for a ghost in the dark and bolted yelling. But Cardew, as every man in the Fourth knew, was a cool, clear-headed fellow, with plenty of nerve. And that he had been badly scared was very clear.

Sidney Clive scratched a match and lighted a candle. There were few in the dormitory who did not feel relief at the glimmer of a light.

"Pull yourself together, old chap," whispered Clive. "You can't have seen anything of the kind, really——"

"I tell you I did."

"But—but what——"

"The phantom monk, in robe and cowl—a face like death, and eyes like—like——" Cardew's voice trailed off and he shivered.

"Impossible," said Levison. "You've seen something—goodness know what—but——"

"I did! I did!"

"Get back to bed, old chap," said Levison, soothingly, hardly knowing what to make of the strange affair. "I'll help you get your things off—come."

Jack Blake stepped out of bed. He groped for a pocket torch in his jacket.

"Where did you see it, Cardew, if you saw anything?" he asked.

"On the dormitory landing—it came towards me——"

"Rot!" said Blake. "But if there's a jolly old ghost walking, I'll jolly well put salt on his tail."

"You fool! You fool! I tell you I saw it," said Cardew, huskily. "Keep where you are—don't go out of the dorm——"

"Rot!"

Blake went coolly towards the door. He was startled, but he did not believe for one moment that the phantom of St. Jim's was walking. He went out into the passage, flashing the light of the pocket torch before him, and Herries and Dig and D'Arcy followed, and then Julian and Roylance and Hammond and Wildrake and Tompkins, and several more fellows.

Cardew watched them as they went, but nothing would have induced him to take a single step outside the dormitory. He was not thinking now of breaking bounds, of tramping down the snowy lane to Rylcombe, of meeting his sporting friends at the 'Green Man.' He had forgotten all that. He was thinking of that dread figure he had seen gliding soundlessly in the dark, and he was still shivering.

Blake marched down the passage to the landing with the rest at his heels. The gleam of the torch flashed over the wide dark space: revealing doors, the opening

likely a pre looking for some shady sweep going out of bounds, and you jolly well fancied the rest."

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Blake marched down the passage to the landing with the rest at his heels. The gleam of the torch flashed over the wide dark space: revealing doors, the opening

of passages, the banisters, the stairs. But it revealed nothing else. If the phantom of St. Jim's had been there, it had vanished now.

He gave a grunt.

"Rot, as I said. Nothing here."

"Well, ghosts are all wot, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, "but Cardew must have seen somethin'. He is not a funk like Twimble; he wouldn't be fwightened by nothin'."

"Nothing here to scare him, anyway," growled Herries. "Let's get back—it's jolly parky here."

They returned to the dormitory. Cardew gave them a look as they came in. He was beginning to recover a little now. Yet he knew what he had seen—he had not fancied or dreamed that phantom figure. He had seen it: and if it was not the ghost of St. Jim's—what was it?

"Seen anything, you fellows?" asked Levison.

"Nothing," answered Blake.

"I—I saw it——" breathed Cardew.

"Bosh!" said Blake, tersely. "I'm going back to bed. Better put your head under the blankets, if you fancy you see spooks."

Cardew's face crimsoned.

He had seen it—he knew that he had seen it. Yet not another fellow in the room believed that he had seen it. He could not have been deceived—his fancy could not have played him such a trick. Yet—— He was recovering now from that sudden panic scare, and he was keenly sensitive to the derision in many faces and the contempt in others. He had been frightened in the dark—as if he had been a weak-kneed, flabby funk like Baggy Trimble—his face burned at the thought.

"Turn in, old chap," muttered Levison, uncomfortably. He was conscious that his chum, who was accustomed to carry his head so high, was cutting a ridiculous figure—a fellow scared by a shadow in the dark!

Cardew gave him an almost fierce look.

"I tell you I saw it," he breathed.

"Yes, yes, but——" Levison hardly knew what to say. "Better turn in now—we shall have Railton up here if there's much more jaw in this dorm."

Cardew set his lips hard. He turned in without another word. Now that his coolness had returned, he was beginning to wonder if not to doubt. But nothing would have induced him to leave the dormitory and cross that dark landing again. Bill Lodgey was not destined to see his young friend at the 'Green Man' that night.

The other fellows were back in bed. But Levison and Clive lingered by Cardew's bedside, uneasy about him.

His eyes turned on them, glinting.

"You don't believe I saw anything?" he muttered.

"Well——" said Clive, slowly.



"You saw something, goodness knows what," said Levison, "but—have a little sense, old fellow. It wasn't a ghost because it couldn't be."

"No!" Cardew muttered. "It—it couldn't, I—I suppose! But what was it?"

"Somebody larking, perhaps," said Clive.

"At this time of night?"

"Well, that's more likely than a ghost."

"Nobody was out of the dorm, excepting myself."

"Well, no. But——"

"You think I'm a frightened funk?" snarled Cardew. "Well, think what you like! Go to bed and leave me alone."

"But, old fellow——"

"Oh, leave me alone."

Levison went quietly to his bed. Clive, about to blow out the candle paused and glanced at Cardew.

"Like me to leave the light?" he asked.

There was a sound of a chuckle from several beds. Cardew's face burned. It was the last humiliation: to be offered a light after bedtime like a child.

"Blow it out, you fool!" he hissed.

"But——"

"Fool!"

"Oh, leave it on," said Blake, sarcastically. "We shall have Cardew yelling ghosts soon, if you leave him in the dark."

And there were more chuckles.

"Will you blow it out?" hissed Cardew.

"All right."

Clive blew out the candle. Darkness settled on the Fourth-form dormitory again. At that late hour the juniors were not long in falling asleep. But sleep came slowly to Cardew.

Had he seen what he believed that he had seen? Was it, could it be, the phantom of St. Jim's, the spectre of the school? Was there truth, after all, in that wild old tale? Was it some trick, some fool playing ghost in the dark, if so, it was not a Fourth-form man; Cardew had been the only Fourth-former out of the dormitory. Commonsense told him that it could not have been a phantom: there was some other explanation, but what? He thought it over, and over and over, wondering and puzzling and doubting. But one thing at least was very clear and certain, as he realised with burning cheeks, every man in the form knew that he had panicked and fled in terror, it was likely to be long before he was allowed to forget that! He could already see the derisive looks, and hear the mocking whispers: even Baggy Trimble would jeer—in the daylight. The feelings of the scapegrace of St. Jim's were far from enviable as he lay sleepless in the dark. But he fell into slumber at last, and his eyes did not open again till the rising-bell was ringing in the dim December morning.

## CHAPTER 9

### ONLY MONTY LOWTHER!

“HA, ha, ha!”

It was a roar of laughter in the junior day-room in the School House.

Cardew, coming along the passage, paused.

There was a crowd of fellows in the day-room. All of them seemed to be laughing. He paused, his cheeks burning.

Often, no doubt, there was laughter in the junior room. But that day Cardew was very sensitive to such a sound. He was, indeed, rather like the character in the old play, who was sure that ‘they must be talking of him because they laughed consumedly.’ And, in fact, he had cause, for the strange occurrence in the Fourth-form dormitory over-night had become a standing joke in the morning.

Nobody believed in the ghost. Even Baggy Trimble, who had ducked his fat head under the bedclothes at the alarm, chuckled at it in the morning. In form in the Fourth, Cardew had been bitterly and painfully aware of amused glances and mirthful whispers. News of his wild adventure had spread to the other House: Figgins and Co. in form, grinned at him: Redfern of the New House asked him in a whisper if he had been seeing more spooks: and seemed only amused by the savage look Cardew gave him in reply. Morning school had not been pleasant to Cardew, and he had given little attention to lessons: and had had the sharpest edge of Mr. Lathom’s tongue in consequence. At dinner, in the School House, there had been smiles up and down the table: and fellows at the Shell table had looked round at him and grinned: and fags of the Third had been grinning and whispering: and when they came out of hall, Wally of the Third, younger brother of Arthur Augustus, had whispered in passing “Ware ghosts!”

All of which was gall and wormwood to Cardew.

He had always held his head high. His reckless ways and shady scrapes had kept fellows like Tom Merry and Co. and Study No. 6, at arm’s length, but so far from wishing to conciliate their good opinion he found it amusing to affect to be worse than he was. To be regarded as a reckless contemner of authority, a fellow ready to risk the ‘sack’ merely for the sake of the excitement, rather flattered his vanity. But this was a very different matter, dislike, condemnation, scorn, glanced off him like hail from glass: but to be looked upon as a funky fellow, frightened in the dark, was too bitter. He had been so sore and savage that day that even his pals, Levison and Clive, had left him to himself. They certainly did not join in the general derision: but he suspected them of thinking what they did not utter: he was in a mood to quarrel with friend or foe.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon: but the weather was wild: high winds sweeping over the Sussex downs and snow falling steadily and heavily. Even strenuous fellows like Tom Merry and his friends were soon tired of braving the elements: and the junior room was crowded. Cardew had been up in his study; for once, perhaps for the first time in his life, he felt an unwillingness to face the public eye. But after a time, realising that the fellows would guess that he was intentionally keeping out of sight, he came down: and with the best assumption he could muster of his accustomed cool unconcern, strolled to the day-room. And that loud roar of merry laughter greeted his ears, and made him pause.

His cheeks burned as he stood outside the doorway.

Some joke was on, evidently. He could hardly doubt what it was. It was the ghost story that was making the juniors yell: he was sure of it.

Seldom did Cardew's cool self-assurance fail him. But it seemed like failing him now: for instead of walking coolly into the room, he hesitated outside the door. Voices and laughter came to him from within.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! You ass, Lowthah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That ass Lowther all the time——"

"Poor old Cardew!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But what a goat to be scared like that——"

"He bolted back into the dorm like a scared rabbit——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cardew's teeth came together hard. He had not been mistaken: it was the ghost story that was setting the room in a roar.

He almost made up his mind to walk away. But his angry pride came to the rescue: he would not slink off. He drew a deep breath and walked into the crowded room.

All eyes turned on him at once. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were there, and a dozen other Shell fellows. Blake and Co. were there, and a crowd more of the Fourth. They were all laughing. Even Levison and Clive were grinning. Quiet sedate fellows like Talbot of the Shell and Bernard Glyn were laughing with the rest. Even Skimpole was grinning under his big glasses. Baggy Trimble was chuckling like a series of Chinese crackers. And Cardew's appearance did not cause the merriment to cease. Rather it seemed to add to it.

He gave a glance round: a cold, bitter glance. He was puzzled as well as mortified. Fellows had been chuckling over the ghost and his panic ever since rising-bell. But it seemed to him that there must be something new to have caused this outbreak of Homeric mirth. From what he had heard at the door, his quick mind jumped to it that it was something to do with Monty Lowther, though he did not guess what. Perhaps the funny man of Shell had put it into one of his limericks or something

of the sort. At all events he could see that it was not merely the ghost story, there was some new development.

He was not left long in ignorance. Gore of the Shell shouted across to him.

"Look out, Cardew!"

"He, he, he! Look out!" squeaked Baggy Trimble.

"Lowther's here!" went on Gore.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ware ghosts!" chuckled Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!" chortled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pway look out, Cardew—heah's that ass Lowthah."

Quite mystified, Cardew stared at them. What had Lowther to do with it?

"Bolt, Cardew!" called out Dig.

"Run, rabbit, run!" chuckled Blake.

"Ain't you going to panic this time, Cardew?" squeaked Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was Lowther, Cardew," said Levison, in hasty explanation. "He's just been telling the fellows——"

Even yet Cardew did not understand. What had Lowther been telling the fellows? Why were they affecting to expect him to panic at the sight of Monty Lowther?

"He doesn't catch on," said Kangaroo. "It was Lowther last night, Cardew."

"The jolly old ghost!" chortled Blake.

"Got up in an old curtain——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"With a chalked face——"

"And a spot of phosphorous paint——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ain't you scared?" roared Herries. "Here's your jolly old ghost, only he's left off that old curtain out of the box-room, and washed his face——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

Cardew caught his breath.

He understood at last.

He stood quite still, his face pale with rage. Lowther, the funny ass of the Shell, Lowther, got up as the phantom monk—Lowther, playing ghost, and scaring him into panic flight, the whole thing a fantastic jape! It was Monty Lowther from whom he had fled: leaving him, no doubt, laughing. That was the truth about that dread figure in the dark: he had fled in unreasoning panic from nothing more or less than a practical joker! And now everybody knew! No wonder they were laughing. Only Monty Lowther!

"You!" he said, at last. "So it was one of your japes, Lowther."

Monty Lowther nodded cheerily.

"Guilty, my lord!"

"You—playing ghost after lights out——"

"For your special behoof," explained Monty, genially. "Naughty boys who break out at night need a lesson."

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"You didn't get quite so far as the 'Green Man' last night, I think," added Lowther. "I seem to remember that you went back to your dormitory in rather a hurry——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pressed for time, I thought," remarked Manners.

"Sort of," said Tom Merry, laughing.

Cardew's eyes burned at them. So all three of them had been there, though he had seen only the 'ghost.' They had planned this, to scare the breaker of bounds back to bed, and he had fallen for it like a baby! The rage in his heart was too deep for words. A silly trick, a jape by a practical joking ass, and he had panicked and fled, and made himself an object of derision to every man in the Lower School at St. Jim's.

His impulse was to spring at Monty Lowther, like a tiger. But he restrained that impulse. A fight with the funny man of the Shell would not set matters right: it would only make him, if possible, more ridiculous than he was already.

For a long moment he stood silent, looking at Lowther: the other fellows grinning round him. Then, without another word, he turned, and walked quietly out of the day-room. And another roar of laughter followed him as he went.

## CHAPTER 10

### THE GHOST WALKS AGAIN!

"BLACK as a hat!" grunted Jack Blake.

"Blackah, deah boy," agreed Arthur Augustus.

It was indeed as black as a hat, or blacker, in the old quadrangle of St. Jim's. Hardly a star glimmered in the wintry sky, and the snow that powdered the ground glimmered faintly. A few flakes were still coming down, fluttering on the December wind. A fellow had to be careful to keep to the path, to get from one House to the other, without bumping into a tree, or the fountain, or something or other, especially after just coming out of a lighted House.

Blake and Co. had been tea-ing with Figgins and Co. in the New House. They came out into the darkness, turning up their coat collars against the wind, and heading for the distant lighted windows of the School House. But that glimmer of lights in the distance only seemed to make the darkness close at hand darker and denser.

"Blow!" remarked Herries

"Bother!" concurred Digby.

"Wow!" ejaculated Blake, suddenly.

"Bai Jove! What are you spluttewin' about, deah boy?"

"Ass!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"I've banged into a tree," hissed Blake. "I've knocked my nose! Wow!"

"I am sowwy you have knocked your nose, Blake, but weally, that is no weason for callin' a fellow names," said Arthur Augustus, severely. "Pway be careful to keep to the path. Pewwaps you had bettah hold on to my sleeve and I will guide you, and—— wow! Ow! wow!"

"Well, what are you spluttering about?" snorted Blake.

"Oh, cwikey! I have banged my nose on a twee——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wow! There is nothin' to cackle at, Blake, in a fellow bangin' his nose on a twee! It is wathah painful! Wow."

"Careful to keep to the path," grinned Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Perhaps you'd better hold on to my sleeve, and I'll guide you," hooted Blake.

"Wats!"

The four juniors pushed on in the darkness. It was not really easy to keep to a path thick with snow, with snow blanketing the whole quad. A couple of minutes later Blake stopped just in time to escape walking into the granite rim of the fountain.

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

"What are you stoppin' for, Blake? It is wathah parky out heah—the soonah we get in the bettah——"

"Fathead! Think I can walk through the fountain?"

"I wegard that as a widiculous question, Blake. I do not suppose for one moment that you can walk thwough the fountain. Pway come on—I don't think we are vewy neah the fountain. Oh, cwumbs! What's that?" added Arthur Augustus, suddenly, as he bumped.

"Only the fountain," grinned Blake.

"Bothah! We shall have to go wound the beastly thing! Come on."

They circled an invisible fountain in the dark. Then Blake suddenly stopped again, with a gasping exclamation.

"Oh! What—what—what's that?"

"What is what, Blake? Are you wunnin' into somethin' again——"

"Look!" panted Blake.

"Oh!" exclaimed Digby.

"Oh!" repeated Herries, like an echo.

"Bai Jove! What—oh, cwumbs!"

The four juniors halted, staring into the darkness ahead. Something had become dimly visible in the gloom—a shadow that moved among shadows. They were not alone in the dark quad: someone, or something, was near at hand, though they had heard no sound. But what was that 'something'? There was a pale phosphorescent gleam of unearthly light, strange and eerie: a glimpse of a dark-robed form.

Blake felt his heart jump.

"What—who's that?" he panted.

There was no answer, no sound. But the half-glimpsed figure seemed to fade into the blackness.

"What—what——" muttered Herries.

"Who's that?" shouted Blake. "Who's there?"

Silence.

"It—it looked——" muttered Digby. "I—I say, it—it looked like a monk in his robe——"

"Rot!" breathed Blake, but his heart was pumping.

"Bai Jove! It weally looked——"

"Rot! Are you going to be scared like Cardew, last night?" hissed Blake. "I'll jolly soon see who it is! I've got some matches."

Blake groped in his pocket for a match-box. He was startled and had a creepy feeling: but he was not going to be scared as Cardew had been scared. He struck a match and it glimmered out in the gloom.

The next moment the wind blew it out. But that moment was enough! In that moment they saw the dark figure plainly: in a monk's dark robe, the cowl drawn back, showing the face, white as the snow that lay at their feet, the eyes strangely lighted.

Then all was black and they saw nothing more.

They stood still: for the moment petrified. Study No. 6 had plenty of pluck, and were not in the least given to 'nerves': but that strange and ghostly apparition sent an icy thrill through them. Quite probably they would have bolted, as Cardew had done the previous night, in sudden panic: had this been the phantom's first appearance. But even as they stood staring into the dark with bulging eyes, they remembered that Lowther of the Shell had played ghost the night before. Jack Blake recovered himself almost in a moment.

"That japing ass!" he breathed. "Lowther at it again! That fathead——"

"Oh!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "That is it, of course—that japin' ass Lowthah playin' twicks on us as he did on Cardew——"

"Come on," breathed Blake. "We'll jolly well show him whether he can frighten us. Get hold of him."

"Yaas, wathah."

They had been startled. There was no doubt about that. But neither was there any doubt in their minds that this was Monty Lowther playing ghost again. Monty

Lowther's exuberant sense of humour was often too much for him. He did not tire of his japing so soon as other fellows did. It was in fact like him, after his success with Cardew, to carry on the jape and give other fellows in the Fourth a scare. And Blake and Co., wrathfully determined to let him know exactly what they thought of his idiotic japes, rushed forward to collar the 'ghost,' knock him down and roll him in the snow.

It was rather reckless to rush on in such dense darkness. Blake, leading the way, rushed into something: but it was not the ghost. It was much more solid than a ghost, being the trunk of an old elm near the path. He crashed into it and stumbled back with a yell.

"Bai Jove! Have you got him, deah boy?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in great excitement. "Ow! Ow! What are you bumpin' into me for?"

Arthur Augustus staggered back, as Blake, stumbling, fell on him. He staggered into Herries, who stumbled against Digby. There was a clamouring chorus of exclamations.

"Look out——"

"Mind where you're barging——"

"Oh, cwikey!"

"Clumsy ass——"

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Oh, my nose!" moaned Blake. "I believe it's pushed right through my head! Oh, crumbs."

Blake extracted a handkerchief from his pocket and dabbed his nose. He could not see in the dark but he knew that that handkerchief was spotted with crimson. He breathed fury as he dabbed.

"Come on," exclaimed Herries. "He will get away."

"Ow! My boko!"

"Bai Jove! I twust that you have not hurt your nose, Blake."

"Idiot!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Think I can bang my nose on a tree without hurting it?" shrieked Blake.

"Pway do not yell at a fellow, Blake! Even if you have hurt your nose, that is no weason for yellin' at a fellow."

"You blithering owl——"

"I wefuse to be called a blithewin' owl, Blake! That wottah is gettin' away while you are wastin' time callin' a fellow names——"

Blake dabbed and dabbed.

"He's got away," he snapped. "I'm not charging into any more trees after him. We can get him in the House. I dare say he's indoors again by this time. Come on—by gum, we'll show the howling ass what we think of his ghost stunt! We'll strew him all over the House! Come on."

Evidently it was futile to hunt the 'ghost' in the darkness, now that 'it' had



vanished. Neither was it necessary—they had no doubt that the ‘ghost’ could be run down in No. 10 Study in the Shell. With deep feelings and with a deadly determination to make Monty Lowther tired of playing ghost; if not tired of life, they tramped on to the School House.

## CHAPTER 11

### ROUGH LUCK FOR LOWTHER!

“LABUNTUR anni——” murmured Manners.

“Who’s Annie?” asked Monty Lowther.

“Fathead!”

“Shut up while a fellow’s writing a letter,” said Tom Merry.

They were seated round the table in No. 10 in the Shell, all busy. It was not lines: and it was not yet prep. Monty Lowther was giving final touches to his poem on the subject of the Phantom of St. Jim’s, intended for the columns of the *Carcroft Chronicle*: Manners, who had a taste for the classics shared by few fellows in the Lower School, was having a ‘shot’ at Quintus Horatius Flaccus: and Tom Merry was writing a letter home, to his old guardian, Miss Priscilla Fawcett.

Monty, having completed his verses, had a natural desire to read them aloud to his studymates. He looked at Manners and he looked at Tom. Neither caught his eye: but Manners, as if he guessed what was coming, began to murmur Horatian verse aloud, as if to ward off Monty’s.

“Oh, chuck it,” said Monty. “Never mind Annie, whoever Annie is——”

“You howling ass,” said Manners, “I said anni——”

“Yes, I heard you! Know who Annie is, Tom?”

Tom Merry looked up.

“Eh? What? No! Who is she?”

“Somebody Manners knows. Is it the girl at the bun-shop in Wayland, Manners? Look here, you take care how you write to Annie—she’s walking out with the postman, and——”

“You burbling cuckoo!” roared Manners. “I’m doing Horace. Labuntur anni, you bleating blitherer.”

Tom Merry laughed.

“Cheese it, Monty,” he said. “You’re too funny to live, old man. Hallo, that sounds like somebody in a hurry.”

All three, for the moment, forgot their various occupations as there was a sound of hurried footsteps in the passage and of a voice calling. It was Blake’s voice, and it sounded breathless.

“Know where Lowther is, Talbot?”

"Have you seen that ass Lowthah?" came Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice, also a little breathless.

"In his study, I think," came Talbot's answer. "What——"

There was a rush of footsteps up the passage to No. 10.

"What on earth's up?" asked Manners in wonder.

"Looks as if they want me," said Lowther, puzzled. "Blessed if I know why."

"What have you been up to?" asked Tom Merry.

"Nothing that I know of. I wonder——"

Lowther was interrupted by the door crashing open. Four excited faces appeared in the doorway.

"Lowther here?" roared Herries.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Digby.

"Yaas, wathah."

"Collar him!" roared Blake.

Before the 'Terrible Three' knew what was happening, the four juniors rushed into the study, and Monty Lowther, greatly to his surprise, was collared right and left. He had no time to jump up: clutching hands closed on him, and he was dragged backwards off his chair, the chair spinning over the floor.

"Look here!" roared Lowther. "What the dickens—oh! Leggo! Oh!

Bump!

Lowther landed on the study carpet with an impact that caused the dust to rise from it. He yelled as he landed.

"Got him!" roared Herries.

"Bump him!" howled Dig.

"Wag him!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "Wag the sillay ass! Wag him wight and left, deah boys."

Manners and Tom Merry jumped to their feet in amazement. What that sudden and wrathful irruption into the study meant, they could not begin to guess.

"Hold on," exclaimed Tom. "What——"

"What on earth has Lowther been up to?" exclaimed Manners. "Some more of your japing, Monty?"

Whatever Lowther had, or had not, been 'up to,' it was clear that Study No. 6 were in a state of great excitement and wrath. Monty Lowther struggled and yelled in their grasp.

"Lend a fellow a hand, Tom! Back up, Manners! You silly asses, are you going to stand there like stuffed dummies? Wow!"

"You fellows keep clear!" exclaimed Blake. "We're going to give the silly ass a lesson about his japing——"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Bump him!" shouted Herries.

"Oh, crumbs! Will you lend a chap a hand?" shrieked Lowther, struggling frantically in the grasp of the excited four.

Tom Merry and Manners ran round the table to the rescue. They had little doubt that some playful jape by the funny man of the Shell had brought this upon him: otherwise it was quite unaccountable. But Fourth-form men could not rag in a Shell study, even for good cause. They rushed into the fray and caught hold of Monty to drag him out of the avenging hands.

But Blake and Co. held on to him. For some moments Monty Lowther was a bone of contention between the two parties, rather like the body of Patroclus between Greeks and Trojans.

Then his own efforts, backed up by his chums, dragged him loose, and he escaped from the avenging grasp in a rather breathless, rumped and dishevelled state.

"Collar him!" shouted Blake.

"Keep back, you fathead!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What's the row about?"

"That fathead——"

"That japing ass——"

"He hasn't had enough yet! Collar him!"

"Will you tell a fellow what the row's about?" roared Tom Merry.

"Kick them out of the study!" panted Lowther.

"You jolly well try it on!" hooted Blake. "Look here, Tom Merry, we don't want a row with you, or with Manners, but we're going to rag that japing lunatic. And if you stick in the way, you'll get some too."

"Yaas, wathah," gasped Arthur Augustus. "I shall be sowwy to give you a feahful thwashin', Tom Mewwy——"

"You will—if you begin!" agreed Tom. "What has Lowther done, you burbling fatheads? Can't you give it a name?"

"He jolly well knows what he's done," howled Herries. "Trying to scare chaps in the dark with his ghost stunts."

There was a pause in hostilities—but only a pause. Blake and Co. did not want a battle-royal in No. 10: but they were going to rag Monty Lowther, whether his pals intervened or not. They eyed him almost wolfishly as he stood gasping for breath between Tom and Manners.

"Ghost stunts!" repeated Tom. "Do you mean last night——"

"No, we don't!" hooted Blake. "We mean this evening, in the quad, as Lowther jolly well knows. He made us jump for a minute—and we'll jolly well make him jump, too——"

"Well, my hat!" said Manners. "Monty, you ass, have you been playing ghost again? Can't you ever give a jape a rest?"

"Dash it all, Monty," said Tom Merry. "You might chuck it! Even once was once too often: but to keep it up like that——"

"But I haven't!" yelled Lowther. "I don't know what they're talking about. Crackers, I expect."

"Oh, can it!" snorted Blake. "You rigged yourself up as the phantom monk, just as you did last night——"

"I didn't!" howled Lowther.

"Rubbish!" snorted Herries. "If you didn't, who did? Think we're going to believe that it was a real ghost?"

"Wathah not! It was Lowthah——"

"Of course it was Lowther," exclaimed Dig. "Look here, get out of the way—I tell you we're going to rag him——"

"Hold on," said Tom. "Lowther says he didn't——"

"Gammon!"

"He jolly well did!"

"Bag him!"

"Hold on, I tell you! Look here, Lowther, if you've been playing the giddy ox again——"

"Haven't I told you I haven't!" roared Lowther. "Kick those Fourth form ticks out of the study! I expect they've been frightened in the dark and fancied they saw something."

"Bai Jove! We saw you, you japin' wottah——"

"We're going to give him a tip about playing ghost. We——"

"Hold on! When did this happen?" asked Tom.

"Not more than ten minutes ago, in the quad, as we were coming back from the New House," snapped Blake. "Lowther, got up as a ghost——"

"Off-side," said Tom. "Whoever you saw, it wasn't Lowther. Lowther hasn't been outside this study for an hour."

"Wha-a-at?"

"We've been here, all together," said Manners, shaking his head. "Lowther hasn't been out of the House—or out of the study."

"Oh!" gasped Blake.

"You howling fatheads, frightened by a shadow!" hooted Lowther. "Barging in like a mob of wild Indians because you fancied——"

Blake stared blankly at the 'Terrible Three.' He was taken utterly aback. He knew, and his comrades knew, what they had seen in the dark quad. Not for a moment had they doubted that it was Monty Lowther playing ghost again, as he had played it on the dormitory landing the night before. Yet if he had been in No. 10 Study at the time with his friends, obviously it could not have been Lowther.

"Look here, is that straight?" said Blake, at last. "Of course we thought it was Lowther, after what happened last night——"

"It's straight, fathead," said Tom. "Lowther's been in the study an hour at least—we've all been here. If you saw anybody it wasn't Lowther."

"What did you see, anyway?" asked Manners.

"The phantom monk," answered Blake. "That is, somebody got up as the phantom monk, like Lowther last night. A dark figure in robe and cowl, with a white face and queer eyes—we—we might have fancied it was the ghost, if we hadn't known that Lowther——"

"Look here, if it wasn't Lowther, who was it?" growled Herries.

"Goodness knows," said Tom. "Somebody may have pinched Lowther's ghost outfit, to play tricks with it—where did you leave it, Monty?"

"Stuck in the bottom of the cupboard here," answered Lowther. He crossed to the cupboard and pulled open the door. "Why, it's here now."

"Oh!"

There it was—robe and cowl in a bundle. Evidently no one had 'pinched' that outfit to play ghost with it. Blake and Co. stared at the bundle and stared at the Shell fellows. They were nonplussed.

"Sure you've been in the study all the time?" asked Blake at last.

"A good hour," said Tom.

"Then—then it can't have been Lowther in the quad?"

"He was here with us, I tell you."

"And that outfit can't have been pinched by anyone while you were in the study——"

"It couldn't!"

Blake breathed hard.

"Well, it beats me," he said. "We saw it all right—I struck a match, and we saw it! If it wasn't Lowther—and I—I suppose it wasn't—who was it—what was it?"

Snort, from Monty Lowther. He was bumped and ruffled and not in the best of tempers: which was, perhaps, not surprising in the circumstances.

"Silly kids, fancying things in the dark——" he snorted.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"I'm not so jolly sure it wasn't Lowther," grunted Herries.

"Haven't I told you so?" roared Monty.

"Well, if it wasn't you, who was it?" demanded Herries. "Want us to believe that it was a real spook?"

"I don't suppose you saw anything," retorted Lowther. "Just fancy—silly kids scared in the dark——"

Hostilities looked like breaking out again at that. But Blake and Co. realised that Monty Lowther had rather a grievance. He had been bumped on the floor of his study, hard! And it had turned out that he was not the man! They had to admit that they had been a little hasty. Really it was rough luck for Lowther.

"Weally, you fellows, we wathah owe Lowthah an apology, in the circs.," said Arthur Augustus slowly.

"Keep it and get out!" snapped Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Oh, get out!"

Blake and Co. got out. They were puzzled, perplexed, and still wrathful: but it was clear that the 'ghost' was not to be found in No. 10 Study in the Shell. Lowther kicked the door shut after them.

"Blessed if I make this out," said Tom Merry, wrinkling his brows. "They saw it all right—the description's just like your make-up last night, Monty—but who—and what——"

"And why?" said Manners. "Lowther japed that smudge Cardew because he asked for it, and to scare him back to bed when he was going out of bounds. But nobody's got any reason for wandering about the quad got up as a ghost unless he's crackers."

"They fancied it—silly scared kids!" snapped Lowther.

Tom shook his head.

"They saw it all right," he said. "Goodness knows what it means—but they saw it——"

"Perhaps the ghost of St. Jim's is really walking this Christmas?" suggested Monty Lowther, sarcastically.

"Rot!" said Tom. "But—blessed if I make it out."

And it had to be left at that.

## CHAPTER 12

### WHAT DID TRIMBLE SEE?

"TRIMBLE!"

Mr. Railton almost shouted.

A dozen fellows stared round. Mr. Linton stared. Mr. Lathom blinked over his glasses.

Patter, patter, patter!

The house-master of the School House was standing near the foot of the big staircase, in conversation with Linton and Lathom. It was after prep., and most of the juniors had come down from the studies. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were on the stairs, coming down. All of a sudden a wild pattering of running feet was heard, on the study landing above, and Baggy Trimble of the Fourth came hurtling down the staircase. He was yelling as he came.

Trimble's mouth was open, and his eyes popping from his podgy face, which was as white as chalk. He charged down the stairs in blind haste, not even seeing the 'Terrible Three' in his way.

They looked round, but not in time to dodge Trimble as he came. He crashed into them, sending Manners spinning to the right and Lowther to the left, and Tom Merry rolling.

"Here, look out!" gasped Tom.

"You mad ass!" gasped Manners.

"You potty chump!" gurgled Lowther.

Trimble did not heed.

Leaving the three Shell fellows for dead, as it were, he charged on down the staircase, dozens of startled eyes from below fixed on him.

"Trimble!" repeated Mr. Railton, almost in a roar.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mr. Linton. "What is the matter with the boy?"

"Trimble!" gasped Mr. Lathom.

"Bai Jove! What on earth is the mattah with Twimble?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Has he gone cwakahs?"

On came Trimble, heedless even of his house-master. He careered down the stairs, and as he reached the bottom of the staircase, Mr. Railton grasped him by a fat shoulder.

"Trimble! Stop—upon my word!"

That strong grasp on his shoulder checked Trimble's frantic career. But it did not stop him: he was going too fast for that. He spun round the house-master, almost completely circling Mr. Railton. Then he came to a spluttering halt.

"Ooooooogh!" spluttered Trimble. "Save me!"

"Boy! What——"

"Keep it off!" yelled Trimble.

"Is this boy of your form out of his senses, Lathom?" inquired Mr. Linton.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Lathom.

"Trimble!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "How dare you race down the staircase in that manner? What——"

"Keep it off!" shrieked Trimble.

"The boy has been frightened," said Mr. Linton, staring at the fat Baggy.

"Really, most extraordinary——"

Baggy jerked at his shoulder. Apparently he was eager to continue his wild career. But the house-master's grip was like iron.

"Trimble, calm yourself," snapped Mr. Railton. "What is the matter?"

"Ow! Keep it off!"

"Keep what off, you stupid boy?"

"The gig-gig-gig-gig——"

"The what?"

"The gig-gig-gig——" stuttered Trimble. "I—I saw it——"

"You saw what?"

"The gig-gig-gig-ghost——" Trimble got it out at last. "Oh, lor'! Oh, crikey! Oooogh! The gig-gig-gig-ghost—oh, scissors!"

"Bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "Has that sillay ass Lowthah been at it again?"

"There's Lowther on the stairs," answered Blake. "Not Lowther this time."

"I—I—I say, leggo!" gasped Trimble. "It's coming after me—I—I saw it—the—the phantom monk—oh, crikey! Lemme go."

"Stay where you are, you foolish boy," exclaimed Mr. Railton, angrily. "Now tell me at once what you fancied you saw——"

"I—I didn't fancy it, it was there, when I came out of my study," gasped Baggy. "It—it came towards me—the ghost of the monk——"

"Absurd!" Mr. Railton frowned. "Someone has been frightening this stupid boy. Kildare!"

"Yes, sir!" The St. Jim's captain came up quickly.

"Please go up and see what has frightened this foolish boy."

"Certainly, sir."

Kildare ran up the staircase. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther had picked themselves up, considerably jolted and breathless. Kildare passed them at a run.

A crowd was already on the spot buzzing with excitement. Most of the School House juniors had heard by that time of Blake and Co's. strange adventure in the dark quad after tea and most of them had concluded that the funny man of the Shell was at his antics again. But that it was not Monty Lowther this time was clear to all, for there he was in full view—he had been on the staircase when Trimble came charging down. Whatever Baggy had seen, if he had seen anything, it certainly was not Monty in his ghost outfit.

Trimble was still shaking like a fat jelly. Evidently he had had the scare of his life. He had found it very amusing to jeer at Cardew's panic in similar circumstances: but Cardew's panic compared with Baggy's was as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine. Baggy was fairly scared out of his fat wits.

"Oooh! Ooogh! The gig-gig-gig-ghost——" mumbled the terrified Baggy.

"Silence!" rapped Railton.

"Oh! Yes, sir! But I saw it——"

"You absurd boy, if you saw anything, it must have been some foolish practical joker," snapped Mr. Railton. "Be silent."

"Oooooooh!"

"Come on, you men," muttered Tom Merry. "If there's a practical joker about, playing ghost, we'll root him out."

"Some silly ass like Monty——" muttered Manners.

"Look here——" hooted Lowther.

"Oh, come on!" said Tom.

The three ran up the staircase after Kildare of the Sixth. Blake and Co. ran up after them, and then Levison and Clive Talbot and Kangaroo, and five or six other fellows. Blake looked back over the banisters.

"Come up and show us just where you saw him, Trimble," he called out.

"Ooogh!!" gasped Baggy. He did not stir. All the king's horses and all the king's men could not have dragged Baggy up those stairs again, at present.

Kildare was already across the study landing, and running into the Fourth-form passage, where, if anywhere, Trimble had seen the 'ghost.' A mob of fellows hurried at his heels.



Nobody was to be seen in the passage except Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth, who was coming out of his study. He stared at the excited crowd.

"Have you seen anybody—anything—here, Lumley-Lumley?" called out Kildare. "Trimble has been frightened by something—the young ass fancies he's seen a ghost——"

"No: I've been in my study. I heard somebody running."

"That was Trimble, I suppose," grunted Kildare. "The young ass!" He stared round him, frowned, and then went back to the staircase. There was nothing unusual to be seen in the Fourth-form passage, and nothing to report to the house-master. If Baggy Trimble had, indeed, seen a ghost in the Fourth-form quarters, that ghost had vanished.

"Bettah look in the studies, you fellows," suggested Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "If somebody has been playin' twicks, he might have dodged into a study."

"Might as well look!" agreed Tom.

They looked into the studies, one after another. But there was nothing to be discovered in the nature of Baggy Trimble's ghost. They had just finished the round of the studies, when a junior came down the box-room stair at the end of the passage. It was Ralph Reckness Cardew, and he stared at the crowd and raised his eyebrows.

"Anythin' up?" he drawled.

"Ghosts!" answered Manners.

"Oh, give that a rest!" snapped Cardew.

Manners laughed.

"Not your ghost of last night—Trimble's seen it, or fancies he has——"

"What rot!"

"He thinks he has, at any rate," said Tom Merry. "He came bolting down the stairs a quarter of an hour ago like a scared rabbit. You've seen nothing?"

"If there's a ghost about, he wasn't in the box-room. I'd have offered him a smoke if I'd found him there. But if somebody's playing the giddy ox, you'd better ask Lowther—he knows all about ghost stunts."

"It wasn't Lowther this time," said Tom curtly. "Lowther was with Manners and me on the stairs when Trimble came bolting down."

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"Somethin' in that jolly old legend, perhaps!" he suggested. "The ghost of St. Jim's is walkin', what?"

"Oh, rot," said Tom.

Cardew laughed and went into his study.

"We know it wasn't Lowther this time," said Blake. "Some other silly ass like him, I suppose——"

"Bai Jove! Is there any othah fellow in the House such a silly ass as Lowthah?" asked Arthur Augustus, dubiously.

"Fathead!" said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Oh, let's get down," said Tom. "Nothing here, anyhow."

They went downstairs again: ghost or no ghost, there was nothing to be found. But until bedtime that night there was only one topic among the juniors of the School House—and a good many of the seniors. Trimble's scare had spread the ghost-story all over the House.

That somebody—not Lowther this time—was playing ghost, was the general view. But there was another possibility that made many fellows feel uneasy as bedtime drew near.

Nobody of course believed in ghosts: but—there was that old legend, of the phantom monk who walked the House when the snow was on the ground at Christmastide. There was hardly a fellow who would have admitted that he believed in that wild old tale: but there seemed to be a good many unwilling to go along dark passages and who cast uneasy glances into shadowy corners.

Whether real or unreal, flesh or phantom, the ghost of St. Jim's was causing a very creepy uneasiness in the School House that dark December night.



His eyes almost started from his head at what he saw.

## IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT!

“OH!” panted Monty Lowther.

His eyes opened, and he cried out, involuntarily.

It was black midnight. The December wind wailed round the old School House, rustling the ivy on the ancient walls, fluttering snow-flakes against the window-panes.

All St. Jim's slept. Some of the fellows had gone to bed in uneasy mood, and there had been talk from bed to bed in subdued tones: and many, half-asleep, had wakened again at the howl of the wind, or the dull thudding of masses of snow rolling from the roofs. But at midnight all were deep in slumber, till Monty Lowther awakened.

For a moment or two he hardly knew what had awakened him, whether he had dreamed an icy touch on his face. Then, as his eyes opened, he saw. And his eyes almost started from his head at what he saw.

Close by his bed, half-bending over him, a dark figure stood: draped in a monkish robe, the cowl drawn back: and a phosphorescent glimmer showed him the deathly white face that looked at him from the darkness.

He lay spell-bound, staring from his pillow.

He had been dreaming of the phantom of St. Jim's. Was he still dreaming? Or was that ghostly face looking at him in the deep gloom, scarcely an arm's length from his own? He could not move. He lay petrified. Was he dreaming?

Then, with an effort, he rose on his elbow, still staring at that face of death. The blood seemed to freeze in his veins.

A moment more and the phantom seemed to fade into the darkness. There was no footfall. If the strange apparition was a thing of flesh and blood, it made no sound as it moved. The spectral face faded into blackness.

“Oh!” repeated Lowther, in a panting, husky voice. “Oh, what—who—what——” His voice choked.

He sat up, his face in the darkness as white as the ghostly face he had seen so close at his bedside. He was shaking from head to foot.

It was no dream, he had seen it. Was it some trick, such a trick as he had himself played, or was it—could it be—— He shuddered from head to foot.

There was a stirring in the next bed. His panting cry had awakened Tom Merry.

“What's that? Anybody up? What——”

“Tom!” Lowther's voice sounded like a husky croak. “Tom—get a light—quick—quick——”

“But what— —”

"I've seen it—it's here——"

"Wha-a-a-t——"

"The ghost!" panted Lowther. "A light—a light—quick—quick—it's here, in the dorm.—I tell you it's here—it—it touched me—oh——"

"Monty, old man——"

"A light—quick!" Lowther almost shrieked. "Haven't you got a match, or something—quick——"

"I've got a flash-lamp in my jacket pocket." It was Manners' quiet voice. "I'll get it in a jiffy."

"Quick—quick——"

"Who's that?" came Gore's voice. "Somebody getting up?"

"What's the row?" came a sleepy voice from Kangaroo's bed. Harry Noble was awake, and so were six or seven other fellows now.

Manners groped for his flash-lamp and flashed it on. He circled the light round the dark dormitory.

It gleamed on many startled faces. It revealed Lowther's face, white as the driven snow, the eyes starting, drops of sweat on the forehead. But apart from wakeful and startled faces, it revealed nothing unusual in the Shell dormitory.

"Nobody here," said Manners.

"I—I—I saw it——" muttered Lowther, in choked tones. "It—it touched me—it woke me up—a touch like ice——"

"Dreaming, old man," said Kangaroo.

"I tell you it was here, bending over me——"

"Well, what was it, and where is it now?" asked Glyn.

"It—it was what Blake saw in the quad—what Trimble saw in the study passage—it—it—it was—was——" "Lowther's teeth chattered. "But it's gone—vanished——"

Manners flashed the light on the door. It was shut. No one had heard it: if there had been a midnight intruder in the dormitory, he had gone without a sound. Tom Merry slipped out of bed, crossed to the door, and switched on the electric light.

There was a sudden flood of illumination in the long, lofty room. It came as a relief to all. Every fellow was awake now, sitting up in bed, staring and uneasy.

"Better look round," said Tom. "If anybody's here——"

"Nobody's here," muttered Gore. "Only Lowther dreaming of his own silly ghost stunts——"

"I wasn't dreaming," Lowther's voice shook. "I—I tell you it touched me—it was here, bending over my bed——" He shuddered.

Lowther tried to pull himself together. But he shuddered at the recollection of that icy touch and of the deathly face that had looked down at him in the dark.

Now that the room was lighted, it was easily seen that no one was there, excepting the Shell fellows themselves.

"Somebody's playing ghost!" said Talbot, quietly. "He must have got out before Manners turned his flash-lamp on."

Tom Merry threw the door wide open. He stared out into the corridor. In the light that streamed from the doorway there was nothing to be seen. Beyond that radius was deep darkness.

"See anything, Tom?" called out Lowther. His voice was unsteady.

"Nothing."

"Of course there's nothing," grunted Gore, "only that ass Lowther scared like Cardew last night."

Lowther's pale face crimsoned. Cardew's scare had made him an object of derision and ridicule in the House. It looked as if Monty Lowther might have the same experience.

"Oh, shut up, Gore," said Tom Merry, sharply. "Somebody's been here——"

"Rot!" said Gore. "Go to sleep and dream again, Lowther."

"I tell you—oh!" Lowther broke off, his staring eyes on the doorway. "Oh! Look! Look!"

"What——" exclaimed Tom.

"Look!" Lowther almost shrieked. He pointed with a shaking hand to the doorway. All eyes turned on it.

Framed in the doorway stood a strange, startling figure, visible in the light to every eye—that of a monk in robe and cowl, with a deathly face and strangely staring eyes.

It was only for a moment that it stood there. But in that moment every eye saw it. Then it glided back and vanished in darkness.

"That—that was it." Lowther panted. "That was what I saw——"

Tom Merry set his teeth.

"It's a trick!" he panted. "I'm going after it."

"Tom!" shouted Lowther.

Tom did not heed. He caught the flash-lamp from Manners' hand and ran into the corridor. But the phantom, if it was a phantom, had vanished: if it was a thing of flesh and blood it had gone swiftly and silently. It was gone—there was nothing to be seen.

"Tom!" Manners called anxiously from the doorway.

Tom Merry came back into the dormitory, his lips set.

"It's gone," he said.

"What—what was it?" stammered Lowther.

"Oh, don't be an ass," said Tom, gruffly. "Are you going to begin believing in ghosts, after playing ghosts yourself?"

Manners closed the door quietly.

"I—I say, hadn't we better call the house-master?" stammered Gore.

"And let Railton think us a set of funks!" snapped Tom Merry. "Forget it! I'm going back to bed." He put his hand to the switch to shut off the light.

"Leave the light on, Tom!" breathed Monty Lowther.

"You ass, Monty! Look here——"

"Leave it on, I tell you," muttered Lowther.

"Better, Tom," said Manners, quietly. "We're all pretty jumpy—after that."

"Oh, all right!"

Tom Merry went back to bed, leaving the light burning, glimmering from the high windows into the wintry night and the falling snow. It was very much against the rules: but no one was thinking of the rules just then: all were thinking of that strange, eerie, unearthly apparition. There were few fellows in the Shell dormitory that night to whom sleep came easily.

## CHAPTER 14

### RUBBING IT IN

"It's all rot!" snapped Tom Merry.

"I—I know. But——"

"Some ass larking," said Manners.

"Yes. But——"

"All your own fault, too! You started the ball rolling."

It was the following day and the 'Terrible Three' were in their study after class. They did not seem to be in their usual cheery mood.

One of the three was looking far from his usual self. No one, just then, would have taken Monty Lowther for the funny man of the House. Nobody could have looked more serious.

He could not forget his experience of the night. It had been too disturbing for that. It was all very well for Tom to say that it was all rot, and for Manners to affirm that it was some ass larking, following Monty's own example. Common-sense told Lowther that they were right. Nevertheless, he could not banish from his mind the recollection of that icy touch, or of the ghostly face that had looked at him in the dark. The coming night gave a good many fellows a feeling of uneasiness—Lowther not the least.

"Have a little sense, old chap," said Tom. "You played ghost yourself the night before last, and gave that smudge Cardew a scare——"

"Oh, let that rest," muttered Lowther.

"Now some other silly ass is at the same game," said Tom, impatiently. "And that's all there is to it."

"Who?" muttered Lowther.

"What's the good of asking me that? Plenty of silly asses about—you're not the only one in the House."

"It's touch was like ice——" Lowther shivered at the recollection. "I tell you, it was a hand like ice——"

"Well, a fellow's fingers would be cold, I suppose, wandering about at midnight in December," said Tom, practically.

"Might have dipped them in cold water on purpose," said Manners. "For goodness' sake, Monty, don't be a goat. How could there be ghosts?"

"Well, I—I don't believe in ghosts, of course," said Lowther. "I'm not such an ass as that. But——"

There was a tap at the door, and the chums of the Shell looked round impatiently as it opened and Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth appeared. They gave him far from welcoming looks. The scapegrace of the Fourth was not *persona grata* in that study, especially at present. Cardew was the cause of all the trouble, in the opinion of Tom Merry and Manners, at least. But for his nocturnal escapades, Monty Lowther would never have thought of playing ghost and put the idea into the head of the unknown practical joker who was following his example.

"Well?" rapped Tom.

Cardew smiled. Grim looks from the Shell fellows did not seem to perturb him in any way. He seemed amused.

"Just looked in——" he began.

"Look out again," suggested Manners.

"And shut the door after you," said Tom.

Lowther did not speak. But for the happenings of the night Monty would have been ready with some jest when Cardew came in. But he was not feeling like jesting on the subject of ghosts now!

"I don't seem to be very popular in this study," remarked Cardew: evidently quite unmoved, however, by his unpopularity. "I hear you fellows have been seein' spooks in your dorm. Were you badly scared?"

"Find out!" suggested Manners.

"Not Lowther this time," went on Cardew. "From what I hear, Lowther was the most badly scared of the lot."

Monty's face crimsoned. But he did not speak.

"I hear you kept the light on all night, because you were afraid of the dark," went on Cardew, with a chuckle. "Is that so?"

No reply. But Tom and Manners were red now, as well as Lowther. Tom's hand strayed to a cushion.

"Lucky for you it was a foul night, and nobody likely to be out of the House. If some beak had seen that light and come up to inquire, you'd have looked a pretty set of funks."

Tom Merry breathed hard.

"That will do," he snapped. "Travel."

"Tired of the subject?" grinned Cardew. "You seemed to think it quite funny yesterday for a fellow to be scared by a silly ass got up in an old curtain

with a chalked face and a spot of luminous paint. Doesn't it strike you as funny today?"

"Oh, get out."

Cardew chuckled.

"Are you goin' to keep the light on tonight?" he asked. "By gad, the New-House men will never let us hear the end of it when they find out that School-House men are afraid to sleep in the dark."

Tom gripped the cushion.

"Do you want this in your cheeky face?" he exclaimed, with some heat. "If you don't, get out."

There was another chuckle from Cardew.

"Not at all, dear man! I thought you'd find the subject amusin'—you certainly did yesterday. Queer how a fellow gets ratty when he gets the wrong end of the joke, isn't it?"

"Shut the door after you."

Cardew laughed, stepped back into the passage and shut the door. They heard him laugh again in the passage. Tom gave an angry grunt.

"This is pie to that rotter," he growled. "Nobody can say now that he's the only fellow scared by a fathead playing ghost."

"If that's all it was——" muttered Lowther.

"Of course that's all it was! Are you going to believe in spooks?" hooted Tom. "Only yesterday everybody was laughing at Cardew. Do you want the whole House to be laughing at this study instead?"

Tap!

The door opened and once more the smiling face of Ralph Reckness Cardew looked in. Evidently Cardew was bent on 'rubbing it in.' That, perhaps, was not surprising, considering how he had been made an object of derision and ridicule only the day before for his fancied ghost. It had been bitter enough to a proud and arrogant fellow like Cardew. Now it was his turn, and he was making the most of it.

"Will you keep out of this study?" snapped Tom Merry, his hand closing on the cushion again.

"Sorry to intrude, old beans," grinned Cardew. "But I've a suggestion to make, if you'll condescend to hear it."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, what about askin' the House-dame to sit up with you at night?" suggested Cardew. "She's a kind old soul, and I'm sure she'd sympathise with fellows frightened by the dark——"

Three crimson faces glared at Cardew. Tom's hand went up with the cushion in it. His eyes glinted at the grinning face in the doorway.

"Get out!" he said, between his set lips, "and keep out! If you put your face into this study again, you get this cushion."



Cardew, laughing, backed into the passage again and shut the door. He certainly wanted to 'rag' the 'Terrible Three': but he did not want the cushion.

"By gum!" muttered Tom. "I wish I knew who it was that's playing ghost. I'd like to give him a prize nose to take home for the Christmas holidays. We shall never hear the end of this. That cad enjoys rubbing it in."

Manners shrugged his shoulders.

"Can't wonder at it," he said. "Lowther pulled his leg, and everybody chortled at him—now he's getting his own back. I—I wish that dashed light hadn't been left on last night. Bother Cardew! He won't let us forget about that."

"If he puts his cheeky face into this study again he gets this cushion, right on it," growled Tom. "I'm fed up with him. My hat! There he is again!"

Tap!

The door opened.

The cushion flew. It crashed fair and square into the face that appeared in the door. An elegant figure staggered back and a wild yell woke the echoes of the Shell passage.

"Yawoooooh! Oh, cwikey! Wow!"

Bump!

The recipient of the cushion sat down in the passage. But it was not Cardew this time. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form, who sat on the floor outside the doorway, yelling in a state of great surprise.

## CHAPTER 15

### KILDARE WANTS TO KNOW!

"Oooooogh! Gwoooogh! Wooooogh!"

Arthur Augustus sat and spluttered.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry, staring blankly at the breathless, spluttering figure in the doorway.

Not for a moment had he doubted that it was Cardew coming back to the study for another gibe. He had taken that for granted. Only too evidently he had taken too much for granted!

"Ooogh! Oh, cwikey! Gwoogh."

"Gussy!" exclaimed Manners.

"Wow! I have been knocked ovah——"

"Oh, crumbs," said Tom, "I—I thought——"

Manners chuckled. Monty Lowther grinned. Tom jumped up, and ran to give the swell of St. Jim's a helping hand. Undoubtedly he had been rather too hasty with that cushion.

"Woogh! I have been knocked wight ovah," gasped Arthur Augustus. "Wight ovah, bai Jove——"

"Sorry, old man——"

"Did you buzz that cush at me, Tom Mewwy?" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Oh! Yes! But——"

"You uttah ass! You fwightful fathead! You burblin' blithewah!" Arthur Augustus seemed quite forgetful of the repose that stamps, or should stamp, the caste of Vere de Vere. "Knockin' a fellow ovah——"

"You—you see——"

"Wow!"

"I thought it was Cardew coming back," explained Tom. "That cheeky smudge has been here ragging——"

"Woogh! Weally, Tom Mewwy, you might make suah befoah you buzz a cush at a fellow's nappah."

"Mistakes will happen, old chap," grinned Manners.

Arthur Augustus tottered to his feet with a helping hand from Tom. He rubbed his noble nose with one hand and groped for his eyeglass with the other. He had had rather a shock. Really, it was quite an unexpected reception.

"Awfully sorry, old scout," said Tom. "That relation of yours is enough to get any fellow's goat. He was here a minute ago——"

"Yaas, I passed him in the passage," said Arthur Augustus. "He was gwinnin' like a Cheshire cheese—I mean a Cheshire cat——"

"Oh! Was he?" said Tom, gruffly.

"Yaas, wathah. He seemed feahfully amused about somethin'," said Arthur Augustus. "Wow! I have a pain in my nose! Wow! You are wathah a thoughtless ass, Tom Mewwy."

"You see——"

"Oh, all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "If it was an ewwah, all wight. You are wathah an ass, but nevah mind. I came to bwing a message from Kildare. He wants to see you in his study."

"Oh!" said Tom.

"I twust it is not a wow, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, kindly. "I thought Kildare was lookin' wathah watty when he spoke to me. Bettah cut off."

Tom Merry nodded and went down the passage. He thought he could guess why the St. Jim's captain wanted to see him. The ghost story was the one topic among the juniors of the House now, and could hardly have failed to reach the ears of the prefects. Kildare of the Sixth was not likely to believe that the phantom monk of St. Jim's was haunting the old School House: but he was very likely to believe that some practical joker was at work and that the prefectorial ashplant was needed.

Tom passed Cardew on the study landing as he crossed to the stairs. He was speaking to Wildrake of the Fourth, and he raised his voice a little as Tom came by.

"I hear that they're goin' to ask the House-dame to sit up with them o' nights in the Shell, or they'll be afraid to go to bed——"

Wildrake chuckled.

Tom Merry, with ears burning, passed on. Cardew, undoubtedly, was 'getting his own back.' The happening in the Shell dormitory was 'pie' to him, and he was not likely to let it rest.

Tom went down the stairs and tapped at the door of Kildare's study in the Sixth.

"Come in!" came a rasp from within. It did not sound as if the head-prefect of the School House was in the best of tempers.

Tom entered the study. Kildare's handsome, and usually good-tempered, face wore a frown.

"D'Arcy told me you wanted to see me, Kildare," said Tom.

"Yes. What's all this stuff about a ghost walking the House?" asked Kildare, gruffly. "The juniors seem to be full of it. Last evening that young ass Trimble of the Fourth fancied he saw something in the study passage and raised a hullabaloo. Now it seems that there was something in the Shell dorm. last night. Did anything happen?"

"Well, yes," said Tom, slowly.

"You didn't see the ghost of the old monk, I suppose?" asked Kildare, sarcastically.

"We—we saw something——"

"Oh, gad! Are you a scared young ass like Trimble?"

Tom Merry crimsoned.

"I hope not, Kildare," he answered. "I had no doubt that it was some silly goat playing tricks. But—we saw it—and some of the fellows were jumpy——"

"What was it like?"

"Just like what we've heard of the phantom monk—robe and cowl, and death-like face, and queer-looking eyes——"

"That's what Trimble fancied he saw from what he gabbled about it," grunted Kildare. "Some young sweep in the dormitory larking, I suppose?"

"It wasn't that," said Tom. "All the fellows were there when we saw it. It wasn't a Shell man."

"Some silly fag larking. All of you scared, I suppose?"

"I don't think I was scared," answered Tom, quietly. "But it was a bit startling, Kildare, in the middle of the night."

"You don't fancy it was a ghost, I suppose?" rapped Kildare.

"No! But—some of the fellows don't seem to know quite what to think about it. It was—was awfully uncanny."

"Not one of Lowther's practical jokes?" asked Kildare. "It sounds rather like it."

Tom shook his head.

"Lowther saw it first," he explained. "It touched him and woke him up, and he saw it in the dark. And—and he woke us all up. I put on the light. But there was nothing to be seen. But——"

"Well, what?"

"I opened the door and looked out. There was nothing. But—but—a minute or two later we all saw it in the doorway. Only for a moment, but—but we all saw it——"

"And then it vanished, I suppose?"

"Yes."

Kildare knitted his brows.

"Now, make sure you've got it right, Merry," he said. "You're sure that it was not one of your form?"

"Quite sure," answered Tom. "I tell you every fellow was present. Whatever it was—I mean, whoever it was—it wasn't a Shell fellow."

"I've heard that the light was left on all night. Is that so?"

"Ye-es."

"Young asses! Now, there's to be no more of that," said Kildare. "I shall see lights out for the Shell myself tonight. If the light's turned on again after I put it out, there'll be trouble. Got that?"

"Yes, Kildare."

"Better tip the others," said Kildare. "That will do, Merry, you can cut."

Tom Merry left the study. The Sixth-Form man was left with an extremely thoughtful expression on his face. Probably he was thinking out measures to be taken for dealing with the phantom monk that so strangely haunted the old School House of St. Jim's.

## CHAPTER 16

### THE GHOST'S LAST WALK!

"Tom!"

It was a whisper in the darkness.

All was dark in the Shell dormitory in the School House. All was silent, save for the wail of the winter wind over the old roofs: till that faint whisper came.

Tom Merry's eyes opened.

He had been sleeping: perhaps not quite so soundly as usual. A good many fellows were finding slumber uneasy. Many had been long in sinking into sleep, with recollection in their minds of the strange phantom figure that had appeared the previous night. Some would have liked to keep the light burning: but Kildare's order had settled that: and all was dark. And all, at last, were asleep, when the

chime of midnight sounded dully through the gloom. But one, at least, was awake again now.

"Eh?" murmured Tom, sleepily.

"Tom!"

The whisper came, faint and almost tremulous, from the next bed. Tom rubbed his eyes and sat up, peering towards Monty Lowther's bed.

"Is that you, Monty?"

"Yes."

"Go to sleep, old chap."

"It—it's here, Tom," breathed Lowther.

"Oh!"

Tom Merry felt a thrill run to his heart. With all his sturdy common-sense, he could not help feeling the eeriness of it. He had heard nothing but Lowther's faint whisper. But as he stared into the darkness, a pale glimmer came to his eyes: a ghostly phosphorescent gleam.

A shiver ran through him. In the daytime, or in the lighted study, or in the crowd in the dayroom, it was easy to laugh to scorn the idea of the legendary phantom walking the dim old corridors. But in the silence and darkness of midnight it was somehow different. Something like a superstitious chill came over him for the moment.

"It—it's here." Lowther's voice was shaking. "The door's open, Tom—I can feel the draught from the corridor. It—it's here."

Lowther's words helped Tom to pull himself together. A bodiless phantom could scarcely need to open a door. If the door-handle had been turned it had been turned by a human hand.

Tom set his teeth.

"Brace up, old chap! I've got a flash-lamp under my pillow," he whispered. "I'll have the light on in a tick."

He groped under the pillow for the flash-lamp, which he had placed there in readiness. A moment more and its light was gleaming out into the darkness, in a long bright beam.

Lowther was sitting up in bed, his eyes staring. There was a stirring from Manners' bed: he had awakened.

"What——" he began.

There was a loud cry from Monty Lowther.

"Look!"

"Oh!" gasped Manners.

Tom had circled the light, till it picked up a dark figure a little distance from the beds. The light fixed on that strange figure, revealing clearly the eerie shape the juniors knew only too well: the robe, the cowl, the deathly white face, the strangely gleaming eyes. The phantom monk was walking again. It was there—there in the gleam of the flash-lamp.

There was a stirring in every bed now. Lowther's startled cry had awakened the dormitory. Startled voices echoed on all sides.

"What——"

"Oh! Look!"

"The—the ghost!"

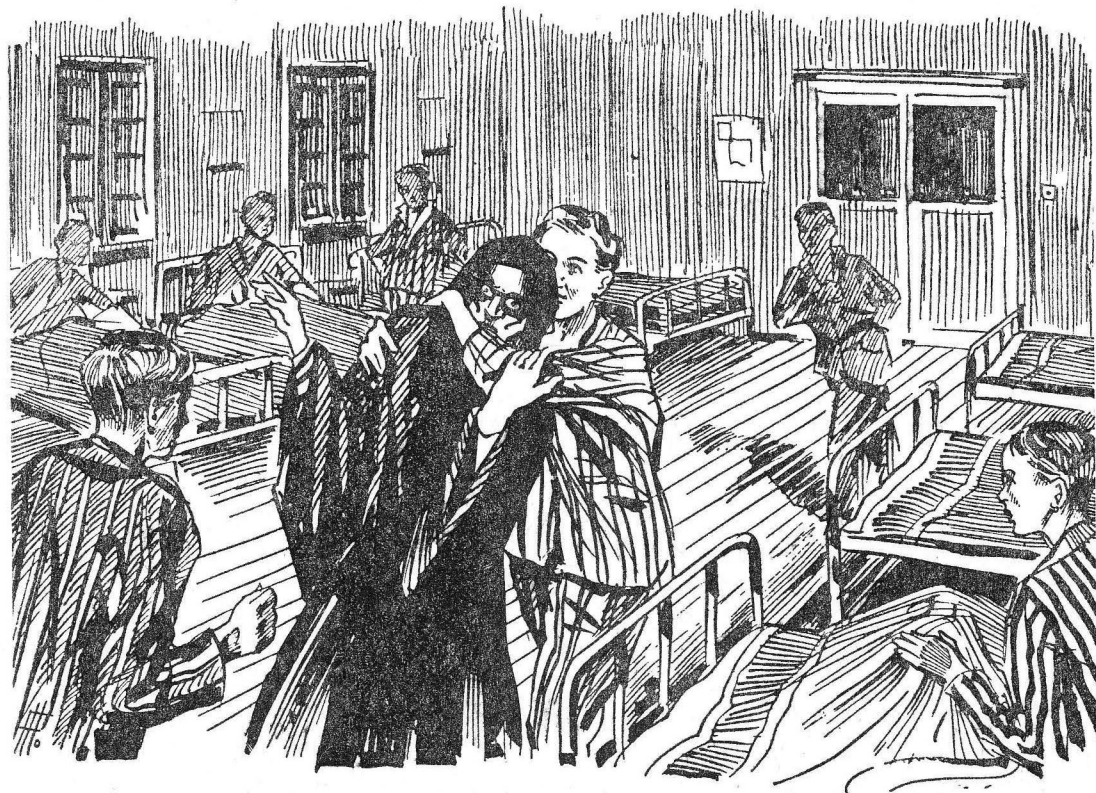
The light of the flash-lamp picked it out from the blackness. Every eye could see it. Every fellow in the Shell dormitory was sitting up in bed, staring at the apparition with starting eyes.

It moved, receding towards the wide-open doorway. Beyond that doorway was the blackness of the corridor.

For a long, long moment Tom Merry sat, as if spell-bound, the light in his hand, staring at the phantom form. Then, as he made a movement to throw off the bedclothes, the phantom vanished.

There was no sound. It was as if the eerie figure faded into the blackness without. There was deep silence.

But the silence was brief. It was broken, suddenly, unexpectedly, startlingly,



There was no escape for the ghost of the School House.

by sounds from the dark corridor into which the phantom had vanished. A sharp cry of alarm was heard, and the sound of a struggle followed.

"What—what's that?" exclaimed Manners. "You fellows hear——"

"Something's up!"

"But—what?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom. "Somebody's there—somebody's got him——"

There was a trampling of feet from the passage. In the light of the flash-lamp in Tom Merry's hand, a figure reappeared in the doorway—it was the figure of the phantom monk. But it was not gliding silently now with ghostly footfalls. It was panting, struggling, wrenching furiously, in the grasp of a taller figure behind, that gripped it round the neck and propelled it into the dormitory.

"Merry!" rapped out a voice. "You're awake, I suppose—Tom Merry!"

"Yes, Kildare." He knew that voice. It was Kildare of the Sixth in whose strong and sinewy grasp the 'phantom' was struggling frantically, panting as it strove to wrench itself free, and strove in vain. Very clearly now, the 'phantom' of St. Jim's was of flesh and blood!

"Get out and put on the light!"

Kildare's voice came breathlessly. He was more than a match, twice more than a match, for the unknown who struggled in his grasp: but those struggles were so fierce that he had plenty to do to hold his prisoner. But he held him. There was no escape for the ghost of the School House.

Tom threw back the blankets and leaped from his bed. Manners and Lowther jumped out the next moment. And all up and down the dormitory fellows turned out. Nobody was feeling anything like a superstitious thrill now. All knew that the 'ghost' was a trickster: and that the trickster was caught. Thrice the ghost of St. Jim's had walked, and vanished! But he was not to vanish this time! The phantom monk had taken his last walk!

Almost in a moment Tom Merry's hand was on the lighting switch and he flashed on the light. A crowd of fellows in pyjamas stared at the strange scene within the doorway. The St. Jim's captain, too, was in pyjamas. Kildare of the Sixth, a head taller than his prisoner, held him in a grip of iron, struggling, wrenching, panting.

"Oh!" gasped Monty Lowther. "You've got him, Kildare." He stared at the struggling prisoner, a flush in his cheeks. This was the 'phantom' that he had almost half-believed to be a visitant from another world. This was the 'ghost' whose icy touch had so haunted him! The monkish robe had been rent in the struggle and a trousered leg was visible! It was only too obviously a trickster playing ghost, as Lowther himself had played it only two nights ago. His cheeks burned.

"I've got him," said Kildare, grimly. "And now we'll see who he is! Who are you, you young rascal?"

The struggling prisoner ceased to struggle. Evidently he realised that the game was up and that there was no escape for him. A dozen fellows were ready to

grasp him if he broke away from Kildare—the phantom had no terrors for the juniors now.

Every eye was on his face. But that face was quite unrecognisable. That he was a St. Jim's fellow—a School House fellow—was certain: known by sight to all, in his normal state. But the face was so plastered with chalk and luminous paint that his identity could not even be guessed. Had he spoken, no doubt his voice would have been known. But he did not speak.

“So you—you were on the watch, Kildare?” asked Tom Merry. Kildare's sudden appearance was an amazement to all in the dormitory. But it was not difficult to guess how it came about. Evidently the St. Jim's captain had decided on the measures to be taken, after his talk with Tom Merry in his study.

“Yes, you young ass,” answered Kildare. “It was pretty plain that the young rascal was some fellow from another dormitory, who seemed to have set himself specially to scare fellows in this dormitory——”

“Oh!” muttered Lowther.

“And I stayed up tonight to wait for the ghost to walk again,” said Kildare. “I had a glimpse of him from a distance, when he got here, and was on the spot to grasp him as he came out again, and here he is! And how many of you think he's a real ghost now?”

Some of the juniors laughed. Even Baggy Trimble of the Fourth would hardly have been alarmed by that ‘ghost’ now!

“But who is he?” asked five or six voices.

“Goodness knows, with his face plastered like that!” Kildare gave his prisoner a shake. “Who are you?”

“May as well own up now, you tick,” said Tom.

“Oh, quite!” came a cool, drawling voice. “Right on the wicket, my good Thomas, as you always are! But would you mind lettin' go my neck, Kildare? You're rather chokin' a fellow.”

There was an exclamation from every fellow in the Shell dormitory. That cool voice was known, if the strangely disguised face was not.

“Cardew!”

## CHAPTER 17

### TIT FOR TAT!

“CARDEW!”

Tom Merry and Co. repeated the name, staring at the strange figure in Kildare's grasp.

“Cardew!”



Even now they knew who it was he was not to be recognised. But there was no doubt about it now. The 'ghost' of St. Jim's was Cardew—Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth Form.

"Cardew!" breathed Monty Lowther. "You tricky rotter—playing ghost——"

"I like that—from you!" drawled Cardew. "Who set the ball rollin'?"

"Oh!" muttered Lowther.

Kildare released the prisoner. The scapegrace of the Fourth rubbed the back of his neck. Kildare's grip had been rather like that of a vice. The captain of St. Jim's eyed him grimly.

"You're Cardew of the Fourth?" he snapped.

Cardew nodded, coolly. He was discovered and he knew that he was 'for it': but he was quite cool, indeed nonchalant. In fact he seemed to be rather amused.

"Quite!" he agreed. "You wouldn't recognise my classic features under this make-up, but it's little me! I had to pile it on rather thick, you know, to get away with the ghost stunt. Even Lowther wouldn't have been scared if he'd recognised me as a harmless and necessary Fourth-former."

Monty Lowther breathed hard.

"You young rascal!" said Kildare. "You've been scaring all the juniors in the House——"

Cardew nodded.

"That was the big idea," he explained. "And if you hadn't barged in, dear man, I was goin' to keep it up, right till the break-up for Christmas and give them the time of their lives."

"And why have you played this mad trick?" demanded Kildare.

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, I had a reason," he drawled. "I shouldn't wonder if these fellows could guess it, if they put wet towels round their heads and think very hard! You see, a silly ass played ghost and gave me a scare—and set the whole House grinnin' at me! I rather thought I'd give them somethin' else to grin at for a change! One good turn deserves another."

"Oh!" said Tom. "So that was it?"

"That, dear man, was exactly it!" assented Cardew. "Tit for tat, you know. A Roland for an Oliver! *Quid pro quo*, and all that! I rather fancy that the fellow who gave me a scare got a worse scare than I did! I seem to have heard that he couldn't sleep in the dark afterwards."

Monty Lowther crimsoned. Some of the Shell fellows grinned.

"You've spoiled the show, Kildare," went on Cardew. "I had it all mapped out to keep the jolly old ghost walkin' till break-up. I had this attractive outfit parked in the box-room, and only had to slip out of the dorm. and put it on. You've dished the programme."

"That will do!" said Kildare. "I'll take you back to your dormitory now—and after prayers in the morning you'll come to my study——"

"Always glad to see you," said Cardew, affably.

"And you'll get a six that you'll remember till the Christmas holidays!" said Kildare, grimly. "Come along, you young rascal!"

"After you, Cecil!" said Cardew, politely: and he walked out of the dormitory after the St. Jim's captain. In the doorway he looked back.

"Cheerio, Lowther," he called, "you can go to sleep now. No need to keep the light on any more."

And he chuckled and followed Kildare down the corridor, leaving Monty Lowther with a crimson face, and most of the other fellows laughing.

\* \* \*

THE ghost of St. Jim's was 'laid.'

The scare was over: and it was a relief to all, excepting no doubt Cardew, who was seen wriggling like an eel after his visit to Kildare's study in the morning.

Most of the fellows in the House, even Levison and Clive, told Cardew what they thought of him: and all that they thought seemed to be extremely unflattering. Which did not seem to disturb his equanimity very much.

But when, a few days later, the old school broke up for the Christmas holidays, and Cardew, with a grin, called out "Merry Christmas" to the 'Terrible Three,' even Monty Lowther joined with Tom Merry and Manners in the cheery reply "Merry Christmas!"