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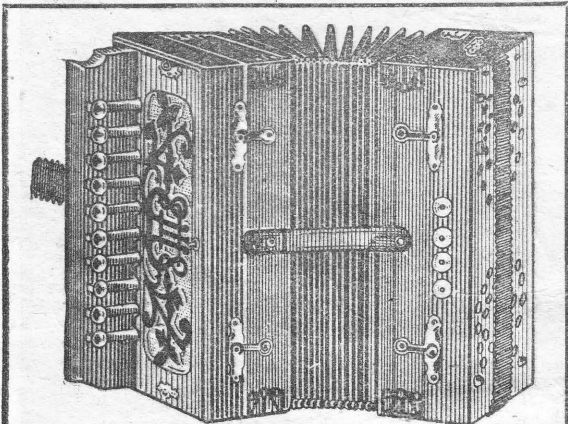
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PUT TO THE TEST.

You Will Like this Splendid Story of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's.

By ~~MARTIN CLIFFORD.~~

Let Down!

"WELL played, Cardew!"
"My hat! Cardew's playing up!"

There was a noticeable element of surprise in those cheers, as though the St. Jim's juniors, crowded round the touch-line, had not expected Cardew to play well. And, indeed, they had not.

Ralph Reckness Cardew was not a keen footballer, and it was surprising to see him now, tearing down the field, with the ball, well under control, at his feet.
"Shoot, man, shoot!"

But he did not take the advice of the sages in the crowd. Instead, he passed to his centre, Jack Blake, who banged the ball hard into the back of the net, leaving Fatty Wynn, the goalie, no chance.

It was Tuesday, the day before the Grammar School match, and Tom Merry had led his team down to the playing-fields to make sure that they were in fine trim.

Tom Merry cocked a thoughtful eye at Cardew, as the smiling Fourth-Former came trotting back.

"Well centred, Cardew!" he smiled encouragingly.

"Thanks, dear boy!"

The whimsical Fourth-Former smiled sardonically.

Although he was not a keen footballer, he could play a dashing game when he felt in the mood. Unfortunately, it was not often that he felt that way inclined. He was far too fond of a comfortable chair and a book to become a regular player. Besides, as he expressed it, "the strenuous life was rather a bore." This afternoon, apparently, he was willing to be bored.

Lefevre of the Fifth had condescended to referee, although it was only a junior match, and as he blew his whistle the ball rolled into play.

"By Jove, Cardew's playing up well, Tommy!"

Lowther of the Shell crossed to his chum, and the two watched Cardew as he took the ball from the feet of Dick Redfern, and dribbled his way through.

"He's almost good enough for the team," said Tom Merry slowly. "If Levison's knee isn't any better by the morning, I rather fancy—"

Lowther whistled.

"Rather sudden to put a slacker like Cardew into the team, isn't it?" he asked. "I don't think the fellows will like it."

"Oh, I can't help that. I want the best team. If Cardew can maintain his present form, he'll be as useful as Levison, and better than the reserves, anyway."

"Yes; but will he? You know Cardew."

The captain of the Shell nodded thoughtfully. Levison, the junior team's inside-left, had crooked his knee, and if by the morrow the knee were still in a "groggy" state, it was up to Tom Merry to find a suitable substitute. But who was the best man for the position? That question was worrying the captain of the Shell considerably.

He realised that Cardew might be a valuable man. At times brilliant, he was

of the dashing type of forward who gets goals—if he maintained his present form.

But Cardew was unreliable. He was whimsical and inconsistent. Moreover, he was not keen.

On this occasion, however, he was doing his best, and there was a roar as he sent the ball past Fatty Wynn.

"Goal! Goal!"

"By Jove, well shot, Cardew!"

Lowther looked quickly at his chum, and Tom Merry nodded.

"He's the man."

"Well played, Cardew, dear boy! Wippin'! I could not have done bettah myself!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, gave the smiling Cardew a patronising grin.

"Thank you, my noble kinsman, thank you!" Cardew made an elaborate bow, and there was a chuckle from the crowd.

"You jolly well couldn't have done that better, Gussy!" said Blake emphatically. "Good man, Cardew!"

Cardew smiled to himself. It was obvious that the whimsical fellow was pleased at the ovation he was receiving, and Tom Merry decided to strike while the iron was hot.

He walked across to the Fourth-Former, and patted him cheerily on the back.

"Jolly well done!" he laughed. "If you think you can do as well to-morrow, there's a place in the team for you."

Several fellows standing near looked at one another. But they could not pretend to be surprised. It must have been obvious to all present that Cardew

was the best man for the position. There would, of course, be some who would disagree with the choice. But they were not worth considering. George Alfred Grundy of the Shell, for instance, laboured under the impression that there was no one who played football as he did. He was quite right. As Lowther humorously remarked, if only there were eleven Grundys, he would start a circus and make his fortune. But George Alfred was not taken seriously.

"Yaas, Tom Mewwy, I quite agwee, dear boy. In fact, I would give up my position to Cardew. He played jollay well!" said D'Arcy patronisingly.

"He did—jolly well! Bravo, Cardew!"

It was a new state of affairs for the cynical Fourth-Former to be cheered—and cheered, too, for prowess on the football-field.

"Thanks!" he drawled. "I'd love to play, dear boy. I don't at all mind bein' bored for an afternoon—in such a splendid cause."

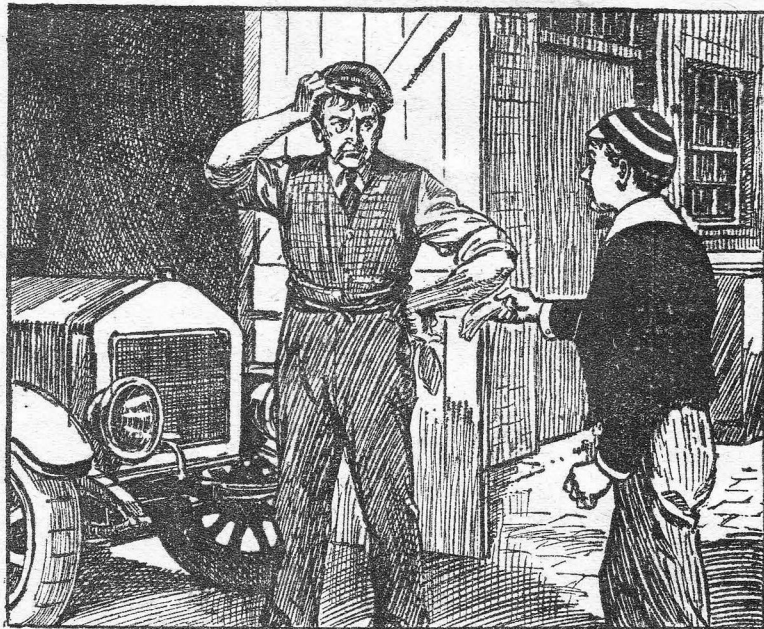
Tom Merry frowned.

"Don't look so beastly worried!" laughed Cardew. "I sha'n't let you down. To-morrow I shall be a roarin' tearin', muddied oaf wallowin' in mud and goals!"

"As long as you wallow in goals, you'll do!"

Tom Merry looked closely at the Fourth-Former. He was not sure that Cardew was serious. And his opinion was shared by many.

It was too dark to play now, and



Leaving his bike at the kerbstone, Cardew raced into the garage and clutched a greasy mechanic by the sleeve. "I want a car!" he panted. "So do I, young shaver, but we don't sell cars!" "Fool! I want to hire a car. Look, I've got the money. Hurry!" The man stared doubtfully at the excited junior. (See page 5.)

Lefevre blew his whistle. In a chattering group, the players crowded off.

But although everyone agreed that Cardew had played a capital game, some of the wiser heads of the lower school were shaken seriously. He was good; but for how long would he maintain his form? That was the question. They knew Cardew. As Digby expressed it, with a wise shake of the head, they had seen him before.

And Arthur Augustus chimed in: "Yaas, wathah!"

It was a matter that would not have to remain long unsettled, however; but when the morrow dawned, fair and bright, those doubts had increased. What had been done could not be undone. Much though Cardew might be doubted, he had been asked to play, and play he should.

There were many eyes fixed upon him as morning classes were over. "Feeling fit?" asked Tom Merry cheerily.

"Never fitter in my life, dear boy!"

He laughed somewhat sardonically.

"Ought I to feel otherwise?"

The captain of the Shell coloured.

"Nunno! Only yesterday was your first footer day for some time, and I thought you might be a little stiff."

"Not at all. Fit as the proverbial fiddle!"

"Good enough!"

And the captain of the Shell, his brow cleared of the worried lines, linked arms with Manners and Lowther, and marched off.

The Fourth-Former followed him with his eyes, and laughed.

Life seemed one huge joke to the cynical Cardew. Time had been when he had not trodden the straight and narrow path. But his chums, Clive and Levison, had placed his feet in the right groove. They had plucked him "like a brand from the burning," and Cardew was not wholly displeased. Sometimes, perhaps, he felt the call of the card-tables; but it was too much trouble even to backslide. The easier path was always to him the most agreeable.

"Hallo, Ralph!"

Levison limped up, and slapped his chum on the shoulder.

"Dreaming of the match?" he laughed.

"Dreaming of the giddy goals?"

"P'r'aps. But, as a matter of fact, I was thinkin' of dear old gran'dad."

"Oh!"

At that moment Jack Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy strolled up. They gave Cardew cheerful grins.

"How are you feeling? Fit for the match?"

"Weady to win, deah boy?"

"Ready, dear boys—ay, ready! I hope we win."

The old distant look came in his eye, and he peered anxiously through the porchway, as though expecting to see someone.

Jack Blake gave him a curious, penetrating glance.

"Dreaming of goals, or waiting for a policeman?"

"Eh? Oh, I'm waitin' for the post-man! You see, dear old gran'dad—"

"Lord Weckness, deah boy?"

"That's the old chappie. Well, gran'dad has asked me down to his place for a week-end. He's got a jolly toppin' place, and I shall have a splendid gay, old time!"

Cardew's eyes sparkled. Evidently the visions of the "high old times" to be had with Lord Reckness afforded the whimsical fellow a great deal of pleasure.

"But you wouldn't cut the match if he asked you this week-end?"

"Ha, ha! No dear boys. But I shall

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go one week-end. Hallo! Here's old Bloggs!"

Mr. Bloggs, the village postman, appeared in sight, and Cardew, without a word, left the group, and hurried through the doorway.

"Well, I'm blowed!" ejaculated Blake. "He's gone!"

They looked at one another in surprise.

Levison shrugged his shoulders. "It's no good worrying about him," he laughed. "You can never tell what Cardew's going to do."

"There may be a letter for me, deah boys. The patah may turn up twumps with a fivah!"

"Good old pater!" chortled Blake. "Come on! Let's see Bloggs!"

He trotted down the steps, and the others followed.

Cardew was talking to Bloggs; but Mr. Bloggs apparently had no letter for Cardew.

"No go!" chuckled Herries. "I hope Gussy will be more lucky!"

Cardew strolled down to the gates with frowning brow. He had expected a letter, and he was disappointed. As he leant against the gates a telegraph-boy entered, and glanced at the languid junior inquiringly.

"Master Cardew here?" he asked.

"Eh? I'm Cardew. That a telegram for me?"

"Yes, sir!"

The Fourth-Former took the telegram, and slit it open.

From a distance the group of juniors in the quadrangle watched him curiously; and his subsequent actions surprised them considerably.

Handing the boy a half-crown, he dashed to the bicycle-shed, to reappear almost instantly with his machine. In a second he was riding madly through the gates, leaving the telegraph-boy gasping.

"My hat!"

Levison gave a startled shout. "Where's the ass going?"

Tom Merry, who had watched the incident from the school doorway, dashed hurriedly forward. He arrived, panting, and grasped Blake by the arm.

"Where has Cardew gone?" he shouted.

Blake shook his head. "Dashed if I know!"

The captain of the Shell frowned angrily, and strode quickly in the direction of the gates. The others, with strange looks, followed him.

In the gateway the telegraph-boy was standing with wide-open mouth, staring after the reckless rider.

Tom Merry took his arm sharply. "Did that fellow leave a message?"

The boy shook his head slowly.

"Nunno. I jest brought a wire, like I always do, an' I said, 'Master Cardew,' and he said, 'that's me.' So I hands him the envelope. He gives a kind o' jump, and says, 'Oh, my heye, it's from gran'father—'"

"Yes, I can hear him saying that!" grinned Blake. "Go on!"

"There ain't much more. He 'ands me this 'ere half-dollar," resumed the boy, exhibiting a half-crown, "an' afore I knew where I was, he'd gone down the road on 'is bike, like a rabbit what'd seen a ferrit."

"Oh!"

"And didn't he leave a message?"

"No."

"Right-ho! Here's a bob, kid. It's all right, thanks!"

The boy eyed the coin doubtfully, then made off with all haste, lest it should be reclaimed.

"That's finished Cardew!" said Tom Merry angrily.

"Bai Jove! The cad!"

"The rotter!"

Clive and Levison shifted uneasily. They would have liked to defend their chum, but they felt his case was indefensible, and wisely held their peace.

Evidently there was trouble brewing for Cardew when he should return. But Cardew was far away, riding as though his life depended on it.

A Ride Against Time!

WHEN that telegram had arrived all thoughts of the Grammar School match had faded from Cardew's mind. It had all happened in a flash. The telegram had arrived with its curious message, and, without a second's hesitation, Cardew had rushed off.

It was only when the excitement had worn off a little, and he had time to think, that he realised the position in which he had placed his chums. But, even so, he had no regrets, for the telegram had borne a startling message. It ran:

"Cardew, St. Jim's, Sussex.—Motor accident. Grandfather injured.—WILE."

It was, in truth, a message that urgently needed an answer. Cardew was genuinely fond of his elderly relation, and he was anxious now that the old peer was injured. Many things may happen in a motor-accident, and in his ruminations Cardew forgot all about St. Jim's, and nothing was farther from his mind than the Grammar School match.

But as he rode along he remembered, and it occurred to him that he should have left a message. He had remembered too late, however.

He rode madly along, for the telegram bore the address of the Eastleigh Hospital. Eastleigh was over twenty-five miles from the school. The trains went there, but the service was lamentably limited, and the trains infrequent. It might, however, be the shorter way, and the Fourth-Former took the turning to the station. As he did so, a brake passed along the road he had just left.

Turning round, he caught sight of the Grammar School fellows. It was too late to turn back, however, and give them a message, so, hoping that a substitute would be found, he banished all thoughts of the game from his mind.

He had reached the station by this time, and, placing his bicycle against the wall, ran into the booking-hall.

"Next train to Eastleigh?" he asked, tapping the window-sill.

"Eh?"

"Next train to Eastleigh—what time?"

shouted Cardew.

All his usual tiredness was gone now; he was a new fellow. This was a side of his character never revealed to his school-chums; it was the Cardew of action and resource.

"Six twenty-three," came the response. "Hang!"

The window was slammed down.

The Fourth-Former stood thoughtfully in the doorway, calculating the time it would take to go on his cycle, and the time the train would arrive.

There was no time to waste, and, having made up his mind, he remounted his cycle, without further ado, and was soon whirling along the main road.

The cold air made his ears feel like icicles, and his nose seemed to have parted company with his face; but he kept riding, with a persistence that would have surprised the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

He slowed down through Wayland. He would have kept straight on, but he caught sight of the local garage, and

jumped from his cycle almost beneath a passing lorry.

The driver turned, and hurled a hurried imprecation. But Cardew merely laughed. Why hadn't he thought of it before? He had plenty of money, and nothing would be simpler than to hire a car.

Leaving his bike at the kerbstone, he raced into the garage, and clatched a greasy mechanic by the sleeve.

"I want a car—" he panted.
"So do I, young shaver. But we don't sell cars. Next—"

"Fool! I want to hire a car! Look, I've got the money! Hurry!"

The man stared doubtfully at the excited junior, then at the notes in his hand, and scratched his head dubiously.

"Bill!" he shouted. "Young gent wants the Panhard!"

Bill, it transpired, was a fussy little man with a bald head.

He came forward slowly, rubbing his hands. The sight of him made the Fourth-Former stamp with annoyance.

"It's a matter of life or death!" he shouted. "Hurry up! I want a car—"

"Yes, sir; a car, certainly!"

He stared at Cardew, and the Fourth-Former waved the currency notes in his startled face.

"Hang you! Any old car, as long as it moves. Quick!"

The little man turned on his heel, and gave some orders huffily to the mechanic.

Ralph Reckness Cardew walked frantically up and down.

The little man came back agitatedly.
"There are three cars, sir," he said.

"A Panhard—"

"Yes, yes, that'll do, only for goodness' sake get a move on!"

"Panhard, sharp, Jim! Where to, sir?"

"Eastleigh Hospital."

The little man consulted his notebook thoughtfully.

"That'll be five pounds, sir—"

"What, for twenty-five miles?"

"Yes, sir. Can't do it under. Price of things now—"

"Blow the price of things! Is that the car?"

"Yes, sir. Five pounds—"

"All right—all right! Here you are!"

Hurriedly Cardew counted the notes, and, leaving the little man gasping, jumped into the body of the landaulette.

Seeing that the junior was in a hurry, the chauffeur exhibited signs of life, and, with a purr, the car shot forward.

Cardew leaned back in the comfortable upholstery and sighed. His bicycle, forgotten, remained where he had left it until the little man at the garage, awakened from his lethargy, took it inside.

Slightly more at his ease now, Cardew took the telegram from his pocket.

"Wile," he muttered. "Wile — Stanley Wile. By Jove, I remember the bounder!"

He looked thoughtfully out of the window at the passing hedges. The car was going at a good speed, for the road was clear. In an hour, or perhaps less, the journey would be completed.

The Fourth-Former, as he sat there with the telegram, was recalling what he remembered of Wile. Stanley Wile was the companion and private secretary of the old peer, and, from what Cardew remembered, was somewhat of a black sheep. He had been in business, until an unfortunate misunderstanding about money that had gone astray necessitated his hurried resignation. And Cardew remembered quite clearly that his grandfather had offered the penitent Wile his present position. As a secretary Wile

was quite capable, and as a companion he was all that a man could want. His knowledge of the world, like Sam Weller's knowledge of London, was extensive and peculiar. There was no card game at which he was not an adept; there was no form of gambling with which he was not fully conversant. These things Cardew knew; for in those days, when he himself had been a merry "blade," he had played many a game with his grandfather's secretary.

Those days were over now, and Cardew smiled bitterly as he recalled them. Oft-times he would give anything for a game of banker, for the old smoky atmosphere tense with the gambler's excitement, unbroken save for the flick of the cards or the occasional clink of a coin. Cardew had changed, but he felt sure, as he was ever sure of anything, that it was the same reckless Wile that he would now find at his journey's end.

Cardew laughed. Should his grandfather prove to be well, and only suffering from shock, he would not be adverse to a taste of the old life. But he would soon know, for already they were in Denway. It would soon be Eastleigh. The car was doing a steady eighteen miles an hour, now that the little village of Denway was passed, but as Eastleigh was neared it dropped to ten.

Cardew raised the speaking-tube.

"Do you know the hospital?" he asked.

"Yessir!"

The village inn was passed, and almost immediately the car drew to a halt.

"Hallo! Are we here?"

"Yessir."

Cardew jumped lightly from the car, and was about to enter the hospital—a small, red-brick building—when a smartly-liveried chauffeur approached him.

Cardew gave a slight start as he recognised his grandfather's livery.

"Smithson!" he exclaimed.

The chauffeur smiled.

"His lordship wishes to see you, sir."

"Oh, where is he, Smithson?"

"Home, sir!"

"Home? Does he live near here now?"

"Yes; the Hall is his lordship's present abode."

"Oh!" Cardew looked thoughtfully at the chauffeur. "So that's where he abides?"

The chauffeur politely inclined his head.

"Have you the car?"

"Yes, sir. All ready."

The chauffeur winked at the man in uniform, who leaned against the bonnet of the twelve horse-power Panhard, and commenced to "swing" his engine.

Cardew turned round.

"I've paid them at the garage," he said curtly, and handed the waiting man a tip.

Smithson opened the door, and the Fourth-Former stepped inside.

As he leaned back in the car Cardew frowned doubtfully. It all seemed rather strange, but perhaps the old peer had been moved to his own home. The accident may have occurred when Wile was taking him out in the coupe. It was obvious to the junior that he was expected, however.

The journey was quite short, and soon the car swung between the pillars of the huge entrance to the Hall, and went smoothly up the drive.

Quite Funny!

"HALLO, Ralph!"
As the panting car drew to a standstill, a sharp-featured, dark-haired young man of about thirty came down the steps.

"Hallo, Wile! Where's gran'dad?"

Stanley Wile held out his hand, and the St. Jim's junior shook it mechanically.

"Lord Reckness is in the library. James will show you the way, old boy. I want to talk to Smithson, but I'll be in a sec."

Cardew nodded, and followed James, the footman, who gave him a cold look of recognition. The junior was puzzled, and not a little huffed.

Mr. Perkins, the butler, was outside the library, and the footman returned to his place in the hall.

Mr. Perkins bestowed on the junior a stately nod of the head.

"Good-afternoon, Master Ralph!" he said, in his deep tones. There was something about Perkins that seemed thoroughly in harmony with the atmosphere of the Hall. Lord Reckness had not long been the owner of the Hall, but the atmosphere suggested that it was property that had been in the family since the Crusades.

Cardew tapped on the door, and, in response to the answering call in the well-known voice of his grandfather, entered.

As he did so, a cry of amazement left his lips. So staggered was he that he almost bowled over the oncoming Perkins, who, by great dexterity, avoided a catastrophe.

"Well, Ralph," drawled Lord Reckness, in his smooth, well-cultured tones, "you look somewhat surprised—what?"

"By Jove! I—I thought you were ill—injured!"

"Ha, ha! A little test, my boy!"

"The telegram—"

"The telegram was sent to test you. Perhaps I had no right to do so—but I did! You don't bear a grudge—shake!"

The old peer genially extended his hand.

Cardew, as in a dream, took it.

Lord Reckness gave his grandson the whimsical smile that appeared to be an heirloom, a smile that so often lit up the face of Ralph Reckness.

"Why—why test me?" queried the bewildered junior, as he sank into an easy chair. He looked rather ruffled. "I've had to cut a footer match—probably I've let the school down, sir!"

"Ahem! I'm sorry, Ralph, but, you see—"

The door of the library opened, and Stanley Wile entered. With the inborn familiarity and self-assurance of the bounder, he leaned against the old Queen Anne cabinet, and lit a cigarette. He puffed out a cloud of smoke, then motioned to a siphon of soda-water that stood on the small table.

"Drink?" he asked lightly. "Some soda there?"

Cardew nodded.

"Yes, thanks, I will!"

As he filled the glass, he watched Wile closely, and noted that the secretary looked none too pleased.

"You see, Ralph," murmured Lord Reckness, looking thoughtfully at the glowing end of his cigar, "Wile and I had a—er—a little wager, shall we say—yes, a wager." He paused thoughtfully, and Cardew shifted irritably in his chair. "Yes, we made a wager, and I have won!"

"I'm exceedingly glad to hear it, sir!" observed Cardew sarcastically. "Have you brought me here this afternoon to make that interestin' announcement?"

"Ahem! The wager concerned you—"

"Concerned me! How so?"

"I wagered that, if you heard I was ill, you'd be concerned enough to come and see me, even though it meant a twenty-five miles cycle ride!"

"You have certainly won, sir!"

"And I am delighted; extremely so—"

"Wile has unfortunately lost," breathed Cardew, his eyes glittering.

"Yes; I hadn't thought of the possibility of your hiring a car!" sneered Wile.

The atmosphere was electric, and Perkins coughed discreetly.

Cardew's active brain was working quickly. He was relieved to find that his grandfather was not ill, that he was, in fact, enjoying the best of health; but to learn that the whole affair was nothing more than a joke was exasperating.

He drew the telegram from his pocket, and handed it to the secretary, who smiled agreeably.

"The wording was quite good," said Cardew. "A very ingenious joke—"

Wile took the telegram and crumpled it in his hand.

"Yes, I hope I am a good loser," he smiled.

"A good loser! Ha, ha! But you can't take a joke, Ralph!" broke in Lord Reckness.

"A joke?" Cardew almost choked. He breathed hard, then sat up and gazed thoughtfully across the room to where a cheerful fire blazed in the wide, open grate.

"If it's a joke to bring a fellow twenty-five miles to make him lose a match from his school in order to win a wager," he mused bitterly, "I'm inclined to agree, sir! I cannot take a joke, not of that kind!"

Lord Reckness coughed. In point of fact, he rather regretted that little joke; but he would not have admitted it for worlds. Stanley Wile had made the wager, and the old peer had wagered, readily enough, that his grandson would walk the breadth of England, if necessary, to see him. And now that he had won the wager, he felt uncomfortable.

"Quite apart from the anxiety," resumed Cardew, "I call it a silly joke, myself, although lacking a sense of humour, I may not be a great or reliable judge!"

He rose to his feet.

"I think I'll be going now. I'm glad that the accident was only a joke. Ha, ha!"

Lord Reckness remained silent, but he looked worried. Stanley Wile's face was impenetrable, although the St. Jim's junior was certain that something sinister lay at the back of the secretary's cunning brain.

"Good-bye, granddad!" said Cardew, extending his hand.

"I—I say, Ralph—er—don't take it like that!" said the old man. His lined face wore a worried look, and he stroked his white side-whiskers perplexedly. "You know a joke—I mean, won't you stay for tea? Perkins will get you some!"

"Sorry, sir, I can't! My bike's in Wayland, and it's a long walk back!"

"Oh, nonsense! Why walk? You can have the car! Wile, see that the car's ready, there's a good chap!"

The old man gave his grandson a somewhat puzzled look, which Cardew returned fearlessly.

"Thank you, sir! Calling-over is at seven-thirty, and if I go now I shall just be in by six!"

"Yes, that's so. Only—"

Wile left the room, and returned a few moments later with the information that the car was ready.

The old man rose to his feet, and shook his nephew's hand.

"Good-bye, Ralph!" he murmured. "I hope that you—er—won't get into hot water about this. If you do, let me know, and I'll put things straight!"

"That's all right! I'm only too sorry that I cannot see the point of the joke,"

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answered Cardew bitterly. "It must seem very laughable to you, and to—Wile!"

He nodded a short good-bye to the secretary, turned on his heel, and moved towards the door.

"Ralph!"

Cardew turned again, and saw the old man fumbling with his notecase. With trembling hands he extracted a ten-pound note.

"This—er—may soften the blow. I mean—"

"Thank you, sir," said Cardew stiffly, "I did not come for that!"

His mind, filled with bitter thoughts, he strode from the room. The car stood outside in the drive, and without a word, he stepped inside, and flung himself on the seat.

Smithson poked in his head.

"Where to, sir?" he asked.

"Oh, St. Jim's, please, and drive like thunder! Have you a sense of humour, Smithson?"

"Well, yes, sir, I suppose I 'ave!"

"Well, dash into a brick wall, and have a jolly old accident; that seems to be the type of joke that's appreciated here!"

For a moment the chauffeur stared at him. But Cardew made no reply other than a mirthless laugh. And Smithson afterwards confided to the second footman that it was his opinion that Master Ralph was a little bit "dopey." "Sat in that there car," he explained, "for all the world like a boiled owl; and when we got to the school there was a crowd o' young gents a-callin' him names. Barmy! You mark my words!"

Smithson hadn't apparently the humour requisite to understand the particular joke alluded to by Cardew, for the car arrived back at the Hall in first-class condition, unimpaired by an accident.

Lord Reckness himself had now considerable misgivings about the wisdom of the little joke. But, as in many things, he had been "led by the nose" by Stanley Wile. Wile was a cunning young gentleman, as befits a complete black-guard, and behind the apparent innocence of that little joke lay any amount of forethought.

"I rather fancy we went too far, Wile," mused the old peer, placing his glass on the little table.

"H'm! P'raps so! But you were right about the journey, although I'm not quite convinced. You see, sir, I know Ralph rather well. I've played cards with him, and he always wanted to gamble. Well, a youngster who smokes and plays cards for money, is not—well, not quite an fair."

"H'm!"

"He may have altered; but these converts are not what they appear to be. I wonder if he were tempted just a little?"

"You think he'd fall—eh?"

"Well, he might! A convert is not a real convert unless he's proof against temptation, is he?"

"I don't know. Against fair temptation, perhaps not! But, look here, Wile, you've got a 'down' on that youngster, and to prove once again that he is O.K., I give you permission to tempt him. Get him to gamble if you can. He has the money and the opportunity to play now."

"He has. But if he loses, he knows he can expect a tip from you, sir! You keep him well supplied. If he had no money to fall back on when he lost—"

"You think he'd steal?"

"Oh, no! I wouldn't say that."

"But you think it?"

"Well, no."

Lord Reckness puffed savagely at his cigar.

"There was a time," he murmured, "when you—"

"Ahem! I hope the past can bury its dead, sir!"

"Perhaps. What about his past?"

That's dead. But you do your worst. Tempt him, and, if he falls—well, I'll admit you're right. But if at the end of a week you have not tempted him, then—"

"Yes?"

"Well, I am afraid I must ask you for your resignation. This carping at Ralph cannot proceed indefinitely."

Stanley Wile gritted his teeth, and threw the stump of his cigarette in the fire.

"It's a bet!" he said, rather huskily.

Shunned by His Pals!

"HERE'S the bouncer!"

"In a blessed car, too!"

"Like his cheek!"

A crowd of angry, excited juniors surrounded the huge car as it drove through the school gates with Ralph Reckness Cardew inside. Cardew was smiling grimly. He had inadvertently called the tune, and now he must face the music. The prelude was not inviting, and something inside him told him that the worst had yet to come.

Tom Merry opened the door.

"His lordship has arrived!" sneered Mellish.

Mellish was not a footballer, and he would have cut the match for a game of cards, but he believed in swimming with the tide. As a matter of fact, Mellish would have given untold gold, had he possessed it, to receive an invitation to Lord Reckness's stately mansion.

Cardew, as he stepped from the car, gave Mellish a cheery grin.

Mellish returned it with a sneer.

"Yah! Who let the school down?"

Cardew shrugged his shoulders, and turned to the chauffeur.

"It's all right, Smithson," he said. "I know it must sound like feeding-time in the aviary at the Zoo, but it's merely the welcome home!"

Smithson gave a faint smile, and swung the huge car round. As it whirred down the drive the juniors turned on the unperturbed Cardew.

"You beastly rotter!"

Tom Merry pushed Trimble and Mellish aside.

"We don't want a scene on the steps, Mellish," he said curtly. "You are not exactly a credit to the school yourself!"

"And I suppose I am not?" smiled Cardew cynically.

"Well, to be quite candid, you are not!"

"Delightful candour, dear boy!"

It was the same old Cardew—the same irresponsible levity they knew of old.

If Cardew had thought of making explanations, this welcome decided him. Not for the world would he explain, when explanations would not be believed, and would be regarded as excuses. Moreover, he had no telegram to show.

"Do you mind me entering the school which I have so deeply disgraced?" he asked ironically, as he attempted to force a passage.

"No need to be funny!" snapped Manners. "This isn't a joke. We lost the match—"

"By four to three!"

"And all your fault!"

Cardew arched his well-shaped eyebrows.

"I'm sorry you lost, dear boy!"

"You'll be sorrier soon!" growled Herries.

The small crowd in the school porch increased with the rapidity of a snowball travelling downhill.

"Hallo, you kids! What's all this about?"

Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, stared at the crowd in no little amazement.

The fellows broke away from Cardew as though he had suddenly become red-hot.

"Good-evenin'!" smiled Cardew serenely. "Just a little welcome home! The Fourth greet their 'young man'!" "Oh! Well, they had better greet more quietly!" grinned Kildare. "I'll give you two minutes to disperse!"

The juniors looked at one another, and there was a general scurrying.

Eric Kildare's word was law. Prefects had a nasty little way of bringing canes into arguments; and canes were not pleasant things to argue with.

Cardew, however, was not to escape. Tom Merry and Manners took an arm each, and Jack Blake followed as a rear-guard.

"You'd better come quietly," said Tom Merry sternly. "This matter has got to be thrashed out!"

"It has!" growled Blake. "You rotter!"

"Always the little gentleman!" smiled Cardew. "I'll come quietly. Only please don't shout, there's good fellows."

"This way!"

Cardew was led up the stairs to the Shell passage. Outside Study No. 10 a small crowd had gathered.

"A Daniel come to judgment, yea, a Daniel!" quoted Cardew. "This is indeed a welcome!"

In silence, Lowther threw open the study door, and, followed by a dozen or so juniors, Cardew was thrust inside.

Tom Merry seated himself in the arm-chair. Manners and Lowther, it being their study as well as Tom Merry's, appointed themselves his right-hand men.

Cardew smiled blandly as he was forcibly seated on the coalscuttle in front of the table.

"Shut the door, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus closed the door, and turned the key.

There were over a dozen fellows in the room, but there was not room for half of them to sit down. That, however, did not worry them considerably. They had important business on hand, and seating accommodation was immaterial.

Tom Merry rapped the table sharply. "Bring the boulder forward!" he said sternly.

"Here I am!" grinned Cardew. "Get a move on with the funny stuff, dear old bean!"

"Shut up!"

"This isn't a joke!"

Cardew laughed.

"I'm sorry! I thought it was!"

The captain of the Shell frowned darkly.

"You have been brought here——"

"Dragged here!" interposed Cardew.

"Let us have the facts."

"Shut up!"

"Yaas, wathah—shut up!"

"And you shut up, too, Gussy!"

"Weally——"

Jack Blake caught his chum by the arm, and Digby placed his hand over the swell of St. Jim's mouth.

"Now Gussy has been muzzled, we can begin!" grinned Tom Merry. "But, gentlemen, this meeting has not been called in the connection of muzzling; it has——"

"Cut the cackle!" growled Clive.

Although his chum was in the wrong, Clive had still some sympathy for him, and he wanted to get the painful business over as quickly as possible.

"This meeting," resumed Tom, ignoring the interruption, "has been called to sit in judgment on Ralph Reckness Cardew, who, although wanted to play for his school, deliberately cut the match, without giving due warning."

He paused for breath, and Arthur Augustus breathed a muffled "Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Rag the rotter!"

"Scrag the cad bald-headed!"

"Cheery chappies!" yawned Cardew.

"But hurry up; I've got to do my prep."

"It isn't a joke, Cardew!"

"All right, dear boy; you've said that bit before. You're forgettin' the words!"

"It isn't a joke," glared Tom; "it's jolly serious!"

"Yaas, wathah! It——"

"Shut up, Gussy!"

"But I was onlay goin' to say——"

"Shut up!" howled eleven angry voices.

"Fair's fair!" smiled Cardew. "Let Gussy have his say."

"All right," conceded Tom wearily.

"Say on, fathead!"

"I wefuse to be called a 'fathead,' and

"He can't!"

"If you can give a good excuse we will pardon you. You will get justice."

Tom Merry sat down.

But Cardew did not rise to his feet.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The study rang with his rather forced laugh.

"Explain," he said scornfully. "You seem to have pre-judged me, and you are quite satisfied that you are right, so why should I disappoint you?"

He smiled bitterly at the twelve angry faces that surrounded him, and he gave another short laugh.

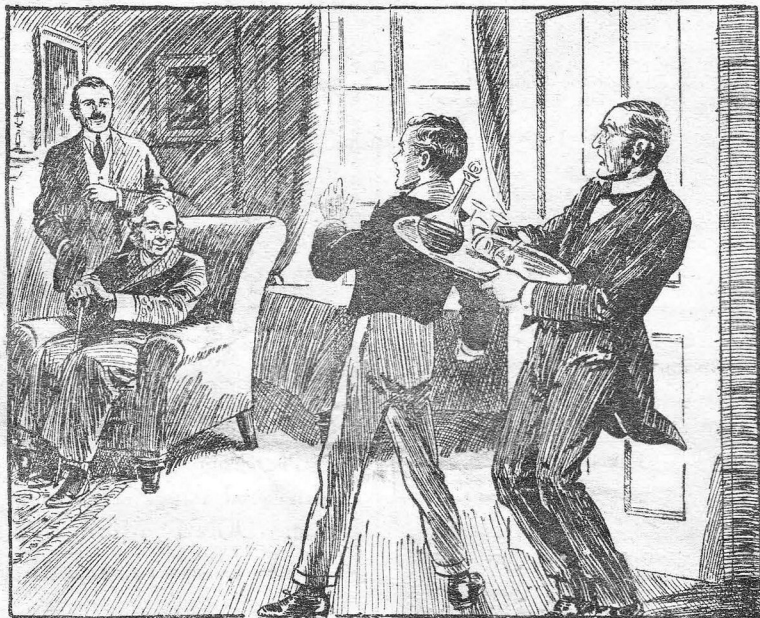
"That means, I suppose, that you have no explanation to offer?" said Tom Merry grimly.

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"Bluffing's no good!" snapped Blake.

"You might perhaps say you are sorry!" growled Clive.

The whimsical Fourth-Former gave another shrug of the shoulders, but made no reply.



Cardew tapped on the door, and, in response to the answering call, entered. As he did so, a cry of amazement left his lips. So staggered was he that he almost bowled over the oncoming Perkins, who, by great dexterity, avoided a catastrophe. (See page 5.)

unless you withdraw that opprobrious remark——"

"Get on with it, ass!" shrieked Tom Merry.

"Pway don't shout. I was merely going to remark to Cardew that it is not at all funny."

"What!"

Tom Merry glared.

Ralph Reckness Cardew, highly amused, gave a delighted chortle.

"If you make any more funny remarks, D'Arcy," breathed Tom Merry angrily, "you'll get thrown out——"

"Bai Jove!"

"On your neck!"

"I wefuse—I—— Leggo, Blake, you wottah!"

But Blake did not leave go, and D'Arcy, for the second time, was successfully "muzzled."

"Cardew," said Tom sternly, wagging an admonishing forefinger at the smiling and urbane Cardew; "you have now the opportunity to explain your conduct. If you can give a good excuse——"

Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"Cardew," he said steadily, "I asked you to play because I thought you were the best man, I thought you could be a sportsman. I find that you are not. And never again will you be asked to play in a team of which I am the captain!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Rag him!"

There were excited shouts on all sides.

Cardew remained with the same bland smile on his face. But, behind it all, he looked uneasy. He did not feel comfortable. In his heart he knew that he should have made a clean breast of things, but, in his usual manner, he did not feel inclined to explain to people who might not believe the explanations.

"Mob him!"

"Yaas——"

"Silence!"

Tom Merry thumped the table vigorously.

"Gentlemen, are we agreed that Cardew, in deserting the team, behaved in

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a manner contrary to the high principles and traditions of St. Jim's?"

"Yes."

There was a perfect roar.

"And I now ask that he shall be punished in a fitting manner. But how?"

"Boil him in oil!"

"Tar and feather him!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"I am rather afraid that we cannot boil the prisoner in oil. However, I suggest that, we might send him to Coventry—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Cut him dead!"

"Yaas, wathah, I—"

"Then, Ralph Reckness Cardew, until this day week you will be under sentence. You will be in Coventry. You know what that means?"

"Yes, dear boy. I once read a jolly old book, by some johnny. I forget his name. He wrote about some other johnny, who lived—I forget where."

Tom Merry silenced him curtly.

"It may seem a joke now, Cardew," he said, "but you may fail to see the humour of it in a day or two."

"Hear, hear!"

"For the space of a week no one in either the Shell or the Fourth will speak to you. If one does he will be sent to Coventry, too!"

Cardew turned to Levison and Clive, his special chums. Clive coloured slightly, and dropped his eyes.

"Et tu, Brute," smiled Cardew bitterly.

So even his own chums had turned against him! Even they thought him unable to explain the escapade of that unfortunate afternoon. Cardew smiled bitterly. All would be well, if he explained. But Cardew had made up his mind. He was not trusted, so he would not explain. And, in silence, the meeting broke up.

Sent to Coventry by all the decent fellows. But there were others.

New Friends!

TAP! Aubrey Racker, the black sheep of the Shell, gave a guilty start, while George Gerald Crooke, greatly agitated, jumped to his feet.

The atmosphere of Study No. 7 was heavy with smoke, and at the table in the centre were four juniors. Racker & Co. rather prided themselves on being "up-to-date." Being up-to-date apparently meant that Racker & Co. were thorough-going blackguards, for behind the locked door of Study No. 7 went on many things unseen by the eye of authority, things which, had they become known to Dr. Holmes, the headmaster, would have meant instant expulsion for Aubrey Racker. Card-playing for money and smoking were not looked upon with a kindly eye by the headmaster of St. Jim's.

So when that tap came at the door Racker became agitated.

"Hallo!" he said loudly.

Clampe of the New House, Mellish, and Crooke hastily waved sheets of paper in the air to clear away the smoke.

"Put the cards away—quick!" said Racker hoarsely. "It may be a master."

"Hallo, there!"

From outside the locked door came the sound of a chuckle.

"It is I—Cardew."

Racker gave a sigh of relief.

"All right, ass; come in!"

He crossed to the door, and turned the key in the lock.

Ralph Reckness Cardew sniffed, and entered.

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"Gippys!" he said. "Can you still run to Gippys, Racker?"

Racker stared at him doubtfully.

Time had been when he could number Cardew as one of his gang of "merry blades." But those times were in the past, and Cardew was now changed for the better. Yet Racker could never quite believe that Cardew had reformed, and, as he had told the whimsical Fourth-Former many times, the door of Study No. 7 was always open whenever he chose to enter.

And now, apparently, he had chosen.

But Racker wanted to make quite sure.

"Have a little flutter?" he asked.

Cardew nodded, and pulled a chair up to the table.

"Wherefore that stare, friend Clampe?" he smiled. "Am I not welcome in the pen with the other black sheep?"

"Ahem!"

Racker gave the Fourth-Former a genial smile.

"Welcome as the flowers in May!" he chuckled. "Give it a name! Nap?"

"Any old thing, dear boy! But I

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don't want to accept your hospitality under false pretences. I am an outcast, an exile. I have been turned adrift, sent to Coventry, what you will! But under the penalty of death—I mean silence—no fellow must speak to me!"

"Oh!" Racker placed the cards on the table. "Why?" he asked.

Cardew laughed easily.

"Oh, I've given no explanation of my amazing conduct! I cut the match, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Racker gave a nasty, jarring laugh.

"Jolly good!" he answered. "Serve the rotters right! We can be a happy crowd. I might be a parasite," he added bitterly, "for all the notice the rotters take of me. But I'm dashed if I care!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Cardew. "Give it a name! What jolly old form of blackguardism shall we indulge in?"

Cardew had a somewhat unhappy knack of calling a spade a spade. Racker & Co. tried to convince themselves that they were being men to smoke and gamble, and it was not pleasant to have their little game dubbed as blackguardly, more especially by one of their own clique.

Mellish shifted uneasily in his chair.

"Hallo, Mellish, old weasle!" said Cardew cheerily. "I didn't see you at the jolly old trial."

"Nunno."

Mellish hung his head slightly. After his particularly biting remarks of a few minutes previous in the school porch, he felt somewhat uncomfortable.

"Cheer up!" smiled Cardew. "I know you didn't mean what you said. You did it to please the others—what?"

"Well, you see—"

Mellish licked his lips.

"What's wrong?"

Racker looked from Mellish to Cardew. "Oh, nothin'" said Cardew lightly. "Only Mellish didn't at first like my cutting the match. It upset him. The honour of the Form, an' all that, you know."

"Honour of the Form! That's good!" chuckled Racker. "Dashed lot he cares about the Form!"

Mellish shifted uncomfortably.

"If the fellows get to know I—I'll be cut, too!"

Racker stared at him.

"All right!" he answered. "If you're frightened of those cads you can jolly well buzz. We don't want you. Four is better than five. And I haven't any more money to lend you!"

"It's not that, but—"

"Buzz!" said Racker curtly, and unlocked the door.

Mellish looked round, then buzzed, or, more correctly, slunk out.

"White-livered skunk!" growled Racker.

He drew a chair up to the table.

"Cut for deal!" he said. "Let's make it banker! Cigarette, Cardew!"

Cardew nodded assent.

And soon the four young rascals were deep in the toils of banker.

Cardew's thoughts were far away from the smoky study, however, and though he was winning he raked in the money with indifference and a far-away look. He was thinking of Stanley Wile.

That Wile had some ulterior motive in sending that telegram he was quite assured. But what was the motive? That question was tormenting him, as he sat playing cards.

Racker stared at him curiously several times.

"Your card, Cardew," he said.

Cardew started.

"I'm sorry, I was thinkin'."

"Not lettin' those rotters worry you?" sneered Racker.

"Eh? Oh dear, no! Somethin' quite different!"

"By the way," continued Racker smoothly, "where did you get to this afternoon? No harm in telling pals. Did you go to your grandfather's place?"

Cardew nodded.

"Well, I'm blowed! You've got a nerve," said Racker, in no small admiration.

Crooke whistled.

"It was rather thick to cut a match," he said slowly.

"Oho, friend Crooke, the judge!" smiled Cardew. "So you, too, have been appointed the guardian of our morals. Ha, ha!"

Crooke went red.

"I didn't say I wouldn't have done the same!" he retorted. "But—"

"You wouldn't have had the nerve, old man. Nor should I. But I had a reason."

"What was it?" Racker asked, leaning forward. Racker was rather curious.

Cardew turned up his card.

"That's telling," he answered. "I think you owe me sixpence, Racker."

Racker paid up cheerfully enough; but, try as he would, he could not get Cardew on to the subject of that afternoon's trip. And when that far-away look came once more into Cardew's eyes, Racker almost shivered with excitement; but Cardew was not to be pumped,

In the Toils of the Tempter.

MASTER CARDEW 'ere?" Toby, the school page, poked his head into Study No. 9 of the Fourth Form passage, and asked that question.

It was the evening following the day of the Grammar School match, and Clive and Levison, in none too cheerful mood, were engaged on "prep." They missed Cardew's company, and the fact that he had gone to find solace in the company of Aubrey Racke did not add to their joy.

"No," answered Clive huffily. "He's in Study No. 7, on the Shell passage."

He bowed his head to his work again, but as Toby closed the door, Levison sprang to his feet.

"Toby!" he shouted. "Toby!" The page returned.

"Did you call, Master Levison?"

"Yes. It's all right, Toby, wait here. I'll fetch him for you. What is it, anyway?"

"Only a visitor. Gentleman named Wile wants to see Master Cardew."

"Oh!"

Levison looked at Clive. Although there was a rift in the late, Levison did not want to get his former friend in trouble. He knew—or, at any rate, had shrewd suspicions—that smoking and gambling might be in progress in Study No. 7, and he had no wish that Toby should find the "bad blades" so engaged. About Racke, Levison did not care a rap, but Cardew might suffer; for Toby could not be trusted to keep a still tongue.

"All right," Levison said. "You wait here, Toby. I'll get Cardew."

He walked quickly from the study, and made his way up the Shell passage. From inside Study No. 7 came the familiar clink of money.

"Pass!"

It was Cardew's voice, and Levison frowned. Evidently Cardew had fallen.

"Hallo!"

Racke's startled voice replied.

"Is Cardew there?" asked Levison impatiently. "It is I—Levison!"

"Yes, I'm here," answered Cardew quickly. "What's wrong?"

"A man wants to see Cardew. Man named Wile."

Silence followed this announcement. Cardew was thinking rapidly, while the others looked at their cards.

"Show him up!" he said abruptly.

"What, here?"

"Yes. Why not? He's a naughty boy, too!"

As Levison's footsteps died away, Cardew chuckled serenely.

"You fool!" said Racke nervously. "We don't want a stranger here."

The "blades" were gambling again, this time at nap.

"Sit down, deah boy. Don't lose your head. He's all right. He's my grandfather's sec. I know him. He plays cards for money, he smokes, and he won't 'blow the gaff,' deah boys. Carry on!"

Much perturbed, Racke & Co. continued the game.

It was some moments that footsteps sounded in the passage. It was the firm tread of a man, and Racke looked up from the table anxiously.

Cardew laughed scoffingly.

"Don't be a funk, Racke." Then, raising his voice slightly as the footsteps stopped: "That you, Wile?"

"Yes, Ralph!"

"Right-ho! Wait a second! I'll open the door!"

As he flung the door open, Wile entered, and stared round the study curiously.

"Nice room," he said. "Hallo, who

are your friends? Not the two fellows I met before—what were their names?"

"You mean Clive and Levison?"

"That's it."

"Oh," Cardew laughed shortly, "they cut me, you know, since I cut the match! We are no longer friends." He struck a melodramatic attitude. "Henceforth we pass as strangers. Ha, ha!"

"Oh, like that, is it?"

Wile's eyes glittered.

"So. But these are different fellows."

Cardew smiled whimsically. "These are men of our own mettle."

Racke, Croke, and Clampe looked rather sheepish. They felt that Cardew was making fun at their expense.

"Oh, good!" laughed Wile.

"This is Racke, Croke, and Clampe. Friend of mine, Mr. Wile, dear boys."

Stanley Wile took the chair that Cardew offered him, and as he looked round the room, Cardew eyed him narrowly. He felt that there was something behind all this.

"Not the same old study, surely?" queried Wile, seating himself, and lighting the cigarette that Racke offered him.

"No. The other study is on the Fourth Form passage, No. 9."

"Oh, yes! Well, what's the game?"

"We were playing nap," said Racke, shuffling the cards; "but we'll make it poker, if you like!"

"Oh, any old thing! Nap will do!"

He turned to Cardew, with a somewhat apologetic smile.

"As a matter of fact, Ralph," he said smoothly, "I've come to apologise for that so-called joke. I hadn't realised what it might mean, you know. It was all done on the spur of the moment—"

"Oh, that's all right, old chap. 'Nuff said."

Wile nodded. It was obvious that Cardew did not want to discuss the matter, and he wisely let the subject drop.

Racke dealt the cards, and the game of nap commenced.

Stanley Wile looked at his cards thoughtfully.

"Sixpenny points," said Racke. "And sixpence in the pool."

Stanley Wile shrugged his shoulders.

"Nap's all right," he said. "But for real excitement, give me roulette!"

"Roulette!"

Racke raised his eyebrows.

"That's the game they play at Monte Carlo, isn't it?"

"Yes, rather! And, for gambling, nothing can touch it." He lowered his voice. "Now, I don't mind telling you chaps there's a night club in Wayland—a place where they play roulette."

"My hat!"

The juniors gasped. A night club in Wayland!

"But, of course, under the rose, dear boys." He laughed. "Still, I don't suppose you'd have the nerve to break bounds—"

Cardew's eyes gleamed, but the other merry blades looked doubtful.

"I'd do it, like a shot!"

"You would?" The secretary eyed Cardew narrowly. "I'll bet a level fiver that you don't!"

"Done!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew threw down his cards, and Wile laughed.

"If you wish it, then! I'll have the car outside at eleven, and I'll wager that you won't come to-night."

Racke and Croke stared at their companion aghast. His nerve surprised them. Not for a thousand pounds would they have risked it. For the risk was great. One false step—or, if the club were raided, the police-court.

Racke shivered, but Cardew laughed mockingly.

"Your call, Racke," he said. "You'll stay a little longer, Wile?"

"Oh, yes; all right. But I can't stay long, you know. Suppose we say until the pool is cleared? I only dropped in to apologise, Ralph."

"Right-ho!" said Cardew cheerily.

Aubrey Racke went three, and secured them. He collected the seven shillings and sixpence, and another hand commenced.

Half an hour slipped by before a nap hand cleared the pool. When it did, Croke's eyes gleamed, for he collected the spoils. Stanley Wile rose to go.

"Thanks for the game, Ralph!" he said. "I hope it's all right about yesterday."

"Oh, yes, that's all right. Shall I see you down?"

"No, old boy, don't trouble. I've been here before. I can find my way."

Cardew looked at him suspiciously. It was evident that Wile wanted to go down alone. Why, Cardew did not know, but he had a very shrewd suspicion.

"Good-night, Mr. Wile—till eleven o'clock!"

Racke shook the secretary by the hand.

"Perhaps we'll see you again shortly," he smiled.

"Yes, rather!" grinned Croke. "The more, the merrier."

"Good-night, all!"

Stanley Wile closed the door quietly behind him, and strode down the corridor.

To reach the Fourth Form passage was simplicity itself, but his movements there would have greatly surprised Ralph Reckness Cardew, for he halted outside Study No. 9, and tapped on the door.

"Come in!" called Levison. "Don't stand there, fathead!"

Wile opened the door, and entered. Levison was alone.

"I—I'm awfully sorry!" stammered Levison, starting to his feet. "I didn't know."

"Quite all right!" answered Wile easily, shutting the door. "I believe we've met before?"

Levison stared.

"I can't say that I remember you," he replied doubtfully. "Where did we meet, sir?"

"You're Levison, aren't you?"

"Yes; but—"

"My name's Wile," explained the man hurriedly. "I'm Lord Reckness' secretary. You must remember."

"Bai Jove!"

Levison's lips tightened. He remembered Wile, and recollected that he was, from all accounts, a blackguard. Before he could say more, however, the secretary broke in quickly:

"I believe you and Cardew have—er—severed your friendship?"

The Fourth-Former was about to make a stinging rejoinder, but he choked back the words before they reached his lips.

"Won't you sit down?" he said quietly.

"Thanks!"

Ernest Levison looked at the man's face closely. Levison was very keen, and he suspected that the man's motives might not be all that they should.

"Well?" he asked at length.

Wile leaned forward, and spoke in a confidential undertone:

"I'm glad you're alone. Look here, if you've got a grudge against Cardew I can help you pay him back!"

Levison started. So that was the man's game! Many another fellow would have burst out with temper, and ordered the secretary from the room; but Levison, with his keener perception,

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decided to let the man have his head, as it were.

"Well?" he answered, breathing hard.

"I've dared Cardew to go to a certain gambling den in Wayland. Wayland's a smallish place, but it's up to date, and there's a Johnny who runs a gaming-table there. Now, I've got an idea whereby we can get Cardew bagged by the police!"

Wile's eyes glittered.

"Go on!" said Levison coldly.

"All I want you to do is to let a master, or someone, know that Cardew is breaking bounds to-night. Can you do it?"

"It should be easy," answered Levison. "When is the police raid to take place?"

"At one o'clock. I shall meet Cardew outside here at eleven."

"I see. Yes?"

"And when the police arrive at one I shall be gone, but he will be there. I mean to say—"

He spread out his hands and chuckled.

"I see," said Levison slowly. "And, of course, Cardew will be bagged?"

"Of course. The police will be ready. I told them that the club starts at one, so the raid may be later, but not earlier."

Levison nodded thoughtfully.

"Well, you'd better hurry away," he answered. "It might not do for them to see you here. I shouldn't like Cardew to think I'd given him away."

"No, no, of course not. It'll be all right, then. Don't forget."

He rose to go.

"I sha'n't forget."

"All serene, old boy. Night-night!"

He picked up his hat and stick, and walked cheerily down the passage, confident that now he had left no stone unturned, and that by the morning Cardew's downfall would be complete.

But he had not reckoned with Ernest Levison. A pal momentarily shunned is not a pal deserted. But a man of Wile's type could not be expected to understand such a fine point as that.

Had he seen Ernest Levison ten minutes later his mind might not have been so easy.

But, fortunately, for his peace of mind, he was sitting in the back of a luxurious car, while Levison thought hard to save his chum.

Not as per Programme!

BOOM!
Ralph Reckness Cardew sat up in bed, and yawned. It was a cold night, and he huddled the bedclothes round him while he counted the booms. The old clock in the school tower ponderously boomed forth the hour.

Eleven! An hour to midnight!

Cardew shivered. By now he almost half regretted his over readiness to take up the gauntlet which Stanley Wile had so cunningly thrown down. But Cardew was not afraid. He had nerve enough for a dozen, and had often been placed in tight corners, out of which he had managed to wriggle merely by reason of his own resource and daring.

He had no doubt that, even if Wile had laid a trap, he would in some manner manage to steer clear.

As he sat there thinking, there was a slight rustling on his left, and Ernest Levison's voice broke in upon his meditations.

"Cardew!"

Ralph Reckness turned his head in the direction of the speaker.

"Hallo! I didn't know you were awake. Anyway, I thought you were

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under pledge not to speak to me? Don't be a naughty boy. I'm not the kind of chap for a respectable schoolboy to speak to!"

He laughed.

"Don't be an ass!" snapped Levison.

He flung back the bedclothes, and crossed to Cardew's bed.

"Look here," he continued abruptly, "you're going out to-night, aren't you?"

Cardew gazed thoughtfully at the clouds that were slowly eclipsing the moon.

"It all depends."

"Well, take my advice, and don't!"

"Thank you, dear boy! I am only too highly delighted to receive your advice. But you'd better get back to bed. It's rather cold." Then, as an after thought, he added sarcastically: "I suppose you wouldn't care to come with me?"

"Don't be a chump!"

They sat in silence for a moment, until Levison, taking his chum's arm, decided to tell all. It was the best way.

"Look here, Cardew, that fellow Wile is no good—"

"Hear, hear! No jolly good whatever!"

"He came to me with a rotten suggestion."

Cardew set his lips.

"The dickens he did! What did he want you to do?"

Levison took a deep breath.

"He thought, the rotter, that, as you were sent to Coventry, I was your enemy, and—and he wanted me to tell a master that you were going on the razzle to-night—"

"What?"

"It's the truth. Of course, he's a first-rate rotter himself, and he'd just as soon stab a friend as an enemy in the back."

"Nice man! An' he had a reason, I suppose?"

"Yes. At one o'clock the police are going to raid the beastly gaming den in Wayland."

Cardew gave a prolonged whistle.

"My hat! So that's his dirty game! Well, I'm jiggered! Cheery old Stanley, always up to somethin'. Nice man—what?"

"You're not going, surely?"

Levison stared anxiously at his chum. He knew that, in his present mood, Cardew was ready for any folly. Surely, however, he would not be madman enough to risk the possibility—the almost certainty—of a police raid?

"Ralph, you're not going?"

For answer, Ralph Reckness Cardew gave a short, mocking laugh, and threw back the bedclothes.

"I'm out to win the wager," he chuckled, "and if the chopper falls, I'm unlucky."

He stood for a second, staring thoughtfully out of window.

"It's a fight!" he mused. "And to the giddy teeth!"

Levison gave his chum a searching look.

"What's a fight?" he asked abruptly.

Cardew shrugged his slender shoulders. The cold night air made itself felt through his thin attire, and he shivered.

"There's more in this than I know of," frowned Levison. "What is it?"

Cardew seated himself gingerly on the bed, drew his knees up under his chin, and linked his arms around them.

"It has all happened very quickly,"

he mused. "And it's quite clear now. Yesterday afternoon I received a telegram from Wile to say that my grandfather was lyn' in hospital, having been injured in a motor smash. It was a lie, Wile had trapped gran'dad into sendin' it. He wants to blacken me in gran'dad's eyes. You see, Wile has got his merry peepers on the old chap's money. Of course, he can't get the jolly estate, but he wants to have a share in the will, which he can only do by putting me out of favour with gran'dad."

"I see."

"And now he hopes to get me bagged by the police. Probably he'll pretend to save me."

"The rotter!"

"Precisely, dear boy. The only way to prevent further trouble of the same kind is to meet him on his own ground, and wipe the rotter up—"

"Yes; but if you go to-night?"

"If I go to-night it will be the police-court for one of us—and I'm determined it shall be Wile."

"Quite. But—"

Cardew waved a delicately-manicured hand.

"No 'buts,' dear boy. It's a fight to a finish, and may the better man win."

"But, Ralph—"

Cardew shook himself free of the detaining hand, and hurriedly dressed.

Levison watched him in moody silence.

"It's no jolly good, old boy," resumed Cardew, with a short laugh. "I'm goin'."

He crossed to the door on tiptoe, boots in hand. As he reached it, he turned.

"I sha'n't sleep until you return, Ralph—"

"You'd better, old scout. If I'm not back by rising-time, you might ask the Head to bail me out."

And the door closed upon his chuckle. His footsteps died away, and Levison was left alone with his thoughts. Would Cardew return by daylight? He had his doubts.

But Ralph Reckness Cardew, as he sidled across the quad, had none. He was quite confident that he was the better man. Moreover, he was at a distinct advantage, for he knew the other man's plans.

Outside the school he found Wile walking up and down in a fever of excitement.

"Here you are," he growled impatiently. "I thought you were never coming."

"I'm here. An' now for a jolly evenin'."

COMING SOON!

THE STORY OF
A THOUSAND THRILLS

"THE
INVISIBLE
HAND!"

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most amazing tale ever written!

The junior watched his companion's face closely. Stanley Wile was obviously ill at ease. Something was troubling him, and the Fourth-Former chuckled inwardly.

The fight had begun!

"Where's the car, Wile?"

"Just round the corner. I couldn't bring it to near the school. If old Crump sees it, he'll probably think that it's a breakdown."

"Probably."

P.-c. Crump, the zealous and officious arm of the law, was not over-gifted with powers of observation or deduction. It was possible, however, that a huge car standing in the vicinity of a large school, while a man walked up and down in a state of agitation, might have aroused even his powers. But P.-c. Crump was far away, and the two were able to get into the car unobserved.

"Of course, we're not drivin' right there, I suppose?" observed Cardew.

"No. As a matter of fact, we shall leave the car just round the corner, ready for when we leave." His lips twitched slightly, and the St. Jim's junior gritted his teeth. It was obvious that Levison had spoken the truth.

What bitter thoughts tormented Wile's brain as he sat there in the back of the car! Suppose his plan failed? Suppose—horrible thought!—that the police arrived too soon? By the time they arrived Wile hoped to be miles away in the car, while Cardew—while Cardew was left behind to the tender mercies of the men in blue.

"Penny for 'em, old gun!"

Cardew's mocking voice broke in upon the secretary's meditation, and he started abruptly.

A penny!

To him those thoughts were worth thousands, and he laughed outright.

"Oh, they're not worth a penny!"

He looked keenly at the junior, and rose to his feet.

"Here we are," he said, in steady tones. "Mind your step now, old boy."

The car had halted in a small side street. Wile, alighting, stepped up to the chauffeur.

"Sha'n't be long," he remarked curtly. "Keep here. We'll be back here by two, anyway."

Smithson nodded his head. He wondered what was the business that the two had on hand so late at night. But it was no business of his. He was under Wile's orders, and he was paid well.

"This way."

Stanley Wile walked quickly forward, with Cardew at his side.

As they approached a dark, gloomy-looking empty shop, he motioned his companion to a halt.

"This the place?"

Wile shook his head.

"No; I thought I heard footsteps."

"Oh, rot! You're gettin' neivy!"

"Well, it's very necessary to be careful. If the police knew, there'd be trouble."

"Really?"

Cardew chuckled inwardly. Wile was acting his part well, and the Fourth-Former gave him an admiring glance that was wholly undeserved.

"Well, lead on, Macduff!"

Without a word Wile walked on. The two turned a corner, and Wile pulled up before a dingy-looking house with a long front garden. The house looked bare and deserted, the garden was over-run with weeds; but as the secretary, after looking cautiously up and down, opened the gate, Cardew noted that the hinges had been recently oiled.

Through the high grass and weed was a newly-beaten path that led to the

door. In the ordinary course of events, it would not have taken the police long to find out the place for themselves.

Wile looked right and left with anxious, white face as he approached the door. He started, as the moon, coming from behind a cloud, threw ghostlike shadows. The wind rustled through the trees, and Cardew shivered.

"What's the programme?" he whispered.

"Shush!"

A Game for Two to Play!

TAP, tap, tap!
The secretary approached the door and tapped three times.

"What's the time?" came a voice through the letter-box.

"Seven thirty-six."

Evidently that was the pre-arranged password.

There was a slight click as the well-oiled bolts were drawn, and the door noiselessly opened.

Wile entered, and Cardew followed him.

He turned as he got inside, and took a quick survey of the door. There were two bolts—one at the top, the other at the bottom. Behind the door, on a chair, sat an old man. His face was masked, and the Fourth-Former grinned.

In the daytime the doorkeeper might have been a respectable Wayland citizen.

"A stranger?" queried the masked man.

Wile nodded.

"Yes, a friend of mine," he answered.

"Two masks, please."

The doorkeeper handed them over in silence.

"This is to prevent blackmail," explained Wile. "There may be blackmailers here. All sorts of low types come here."

"So I imagine, dear boy!" answered Cardew ironically. "But carry on. I'm dying to see the cheery fellows!"

The secretary opened a door at the end of the passage.

No one inside the badly-lit room looked up, yet the room was crowded. They were all too intent on their game to notice anything save the wheel.

"Make your game, gents!"

Cardew started. He knew that voice. But he had no time to place voices. The greatest danger he had now to fight was the lure of the gaming-table. He was fully alive to its lure, for he had played the game before.

Out of the corner of his eye he watched the secretary's face. Through the blackness of the mask he noted the greedy glitter of the cold grey eyes. Wile was a gambler. It was written in his eyes. The little piles of money and the notes, which were spread on the green cloth, touched some chord in his being, and under the influence of the gaming atmosphere he was a different man.

The St. Jim's junior smiled grimly.

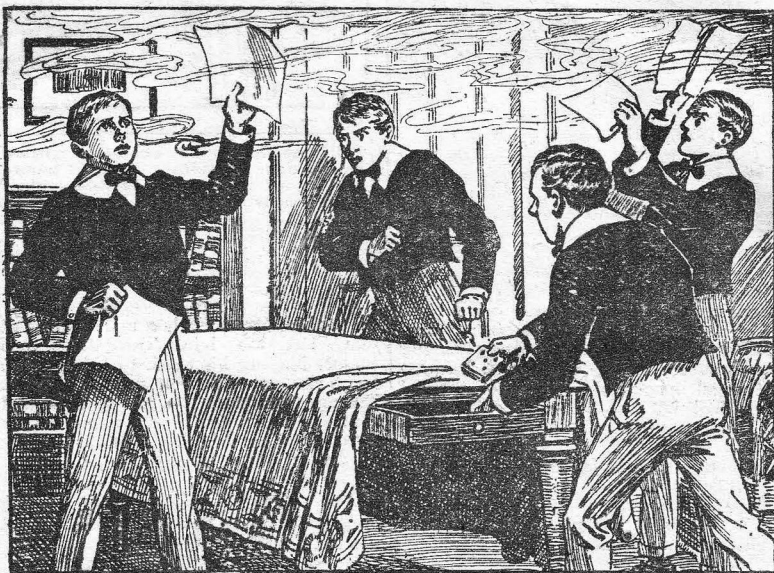
His keen eyes took in the scene. The atmosphere was heavily laden with foul tobacco-smoke. The gaslights above, shaded with thick green cardboard, gave a sickly yellow light, while round the table were gathered men of all descriptions. Their eyes glittered strangely through their masks, and their lips showed as thin, tight lines beneath.

All heads were turned towards the little wheel that revolved rapidly. It was a Fortune's wheel, backed without skill.

There were men there who staked money that they could ill afford, in the faint hope that they might win more. It was a very faint hope, for the croupier controlled the wheel, and numbers appeared at his will. Yet not one of that throng realised it. They backed chance, and the croupier, with more wisdom, backed his skill.

"Seventeen, black, impair, and manque!"

The croupier's droning voice broke the deathly silence, and Cardew, with a sardonic smile on his well-cut lips, watched him rake in the money. A grey-haired man, who had placed a ten-shilling note



When that tap came at the door, Racke became agitated. "Hallo!" he said loudly. Clampe of the New House, Mellish and Crooke hastily waved sheets of paper in the air to clear away the smoke. "Put the cards away, quick!" said Racke. "It may be a master!" (See page 8.)

on sixteen, gave a groan. It was his last note, probably money he could ill-afford. He rose from his chair, but no sympathetic glances followed him. He was merely one of the many who went under. Not one of the players took a lesson; they had every confidence that they could break the bank.

Wile dropped into the vacant seat. "Join in!" he said, looking at the St. Jim's junior. "You know the game."

Cardew nodded shortly, but made no reply. He knew the game, and that is why he didn't play. In a few seconds the secretary was deep in the toils of the great game Luck.

His eyes glittered, and his usual debonair manner dropped from him as a cloak.

The grey-haired man, his lips twitching, brushed past Cardew, and the junior gave him a compassionate look that was not tinged with contempt.

"Make your game, gentlemen!" Wile placed a pound note on "pair." It was an "even" chance, and meant that if an even number turned up he would receive back his stake and an even amount as winnings. That is to say, he would receive a pound note from the croupier.

"Five, red, impair, manque!" Five being an odd number, Wile had lost. With an angry exclamation he watched his note raked in. But nobody heeded him. The man opposite had had ten shillings on five, and his face, with parted lips, and the love of wealth and greed of gold emblazoned in his eyes, made a strange contrast to the secretary's sullen, chagrined glare. Seventeen pounds ten the man had won, and all in the turn of the wheel! Wile drew a sharp breath. He was deep in the toils—very deep.

And if in that crowded room the word police were breathed? Cardew's lips wreathed in a cynical smile at the thought. He pictured the panic of those panting men who momentarily had lost their sanity, and he laughed softly. But no one heeded him. All eyes were on the spinning wheel.

Twenty minutes to one! Cardew looked at his watch. There was no time to waste. Wile, he suspected, had intended to creep out at a quarter to the hour, hoping that the junior, lost in the lure of the wheel, would be too intent to notice his movements.

But the positions were reversed. Cardew opened the door softly and slipped out. The air in the passage was close, but after the crowded room it cooled his head and eased his smarting eyes.

His plans were made. Already he suspected that the police were without. They would be unprepared for a sudden rush, however, and he could escape now with ease. But he wanted his revenge. He had no compunction about leaving the secretary in the snare that he himself had planned. But the others! they had not much chance. If they escaped now the police would be unprepared.

He crept silently up to the doorkeeper. "Who's that?"

The man started to his feet. He had been dozing at his post, but Cardew's light step had awakened him.

"Hush, you fool! The police are outside. I'm not fooling you; it's the truth! If you go now you can escape. I have found out—they will raid at one! Tell the others!"

"Look here—" The man trembled visibly. "Well, look for yourself! Go into that front room and peer through the blinds."

For a moment the man stood in doubt. Then, lest the junior's words might prove true, and action be delayed, he walked quickly into the room.

Cardew parted the venetian blinds and peered out.

"Look!" he whispered tensely. "There's a man behind that bush!"

His whole frame shaking with fear and excitement, the man peered out. He started back with a sharp cry.

"My stars! The police!" He rushed wildly from the room and into the gaming den.

As the St. Jim's junior silently withdrew the bolts of the door he heard that word, pregnant with horror, echoed by the panting men within.

The engine purred, and the big car shot forward.

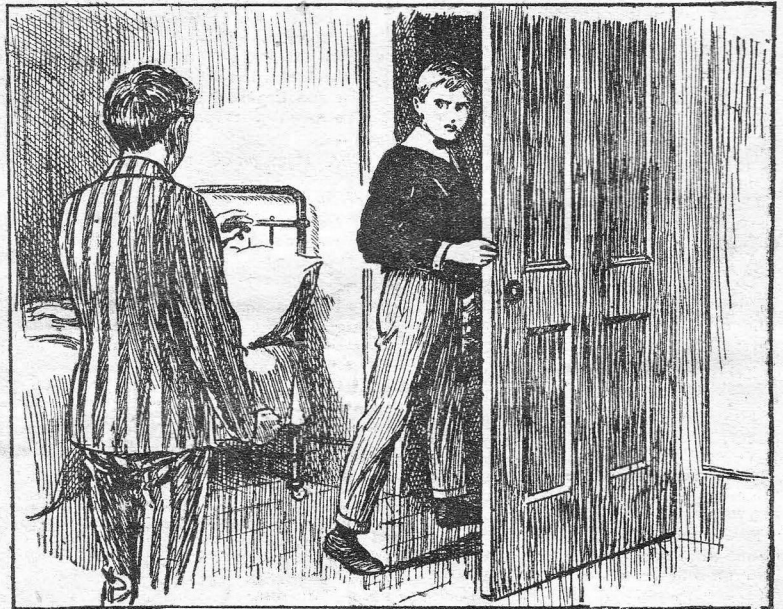
"Hallo, dear boys!" It was the next morning, and Cardew sat up in bed and yawned.

Silence greeted his remark now. He had forgotten. He was still under sentence.

But Cardew's sentence was soon expurgated when Levison related the true facts of that unfortunate afternoon's adventure. That it had been Cardew's own fault was generally agreed, but he was forgiven. And Cardew only laughed.

That morning brought exciting news of a police raid on a gaming den in Wayland. Taggles had heard all about it from P.-c. Crump, and the strange thing about it all was that the private secretary and companion of Lord Reckness was amongst those arrested by the police!

It was strange news indeed, and practically every fellow in the school mentioned the matter to Cardew. As the grandson of the man whose secretary had been arrested, they felt that he ought



"It's no jolly good, old boy," answered Cardew. "I'm going!" He crossed to the door on tiptoe, boots in hand. As he reached it, he turned. "I sha'n't sleep until you return, Ralph—" "You'd better, old scout. If I'm not back by rising-time, you might ask the Head to bail me out." (See page 10.)

"Police!"

With a swift movement he opened the door, and, slamming it behind him, dashed headlong down the drive.

From behind a bush a man rushed at him, but too late. The fleet-footed junior, flinging his mask to the ground, leapt the gate and ran down the road. Turning his head, he saw a helmeted man open the gate and commence the chase, then turned swiftly back.

Light flooded the front garden, and the junior, for the space of a second, halted and looked back. Running figures could be seen in the garden, wild shouts filled the air.

He was free. But what of Wile? That was the secretary's business. Having called the piper, in the form of the police, he was compelled to face the music.

But Cardew, as he jumped into the waiting car, could have shouted with joy.

to know something. But apparently he didn't, not until later in the day, when an excited letter, brought by special messenger, related the circumstances in full.

With a sardonic smile, the whimsical Cardew read the last lines aloud to himself:

"I am gratified to learn that you have come through the villainous acid test safely and with a clean character. Wile was a villain, and I have sacked him, of course. He tried hard to get you down, but you, as I was fully confident you would, proved yourself the better man.

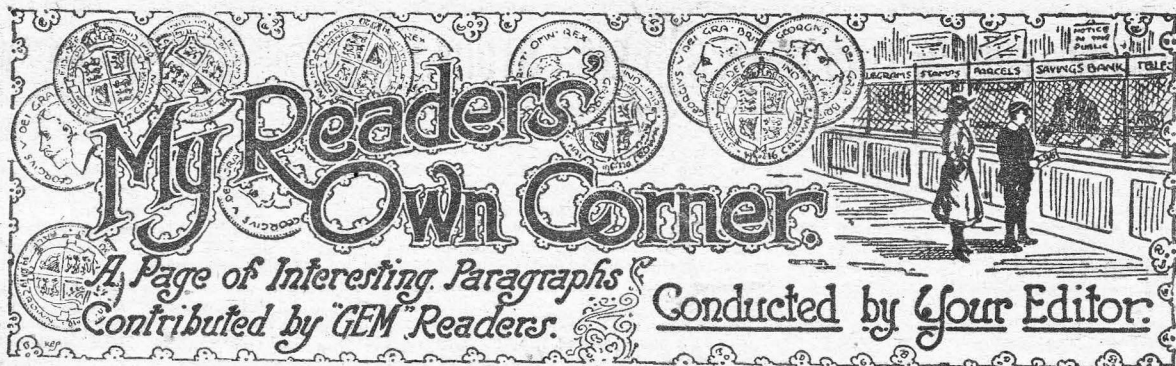
"Your over-joyed grandfather,
"RECKNESS."

And Cardew laughed again.

THE END.

(Another grand long story of Tom Merry & Co., the Chums of St. Jim's, next week. Make a point of ordering your copy EARLY.)

LEND THIS COPY TO A FRIEND, IT WILL PLEASE HIM.



A NOBLE AMBITION.

Old Gentleman (to boy): "Do you know, my boy, that every British lad has a chance of becoming Prime Minister?" Youngster: "Well, I'll sell my chance for a shilling!"—James Edward Hanley, 136, Lodge Street, Miles Platting, Manchester.

LIGHTNING'S QUEER FREAK.

Lightning apparently photographed a perfect likeness of a tree, branches, twigs and leaves, in minutest detail, on the breast of Edwin Liesman, who was instantly killed in the Magnolia Club-house on Mount Penn, near Reading, Pennsylvania, in a violent electrical storm. Liesman was sitting at a window next to a telephone. The bolt followed the telephone wire, and the tree outside the window was almost exactly reproduced on Liesman's body. The tragedy occurred during four brilliant flashes in swift succession, putting out all the lights in the club. Medical men and photographers were, and are still, puzzled by the strange features wrought on the dead man.—C. W. Hadley, Eastwood House, Macaulay Street, Leicester.

THAT PLATE OF BISCUITS.

At a village church the rector saw there was only one alms-dish, so he sent a rustic to the rectory for a dish, and told him to take it down the side aisle. The man did as desired, and afterwards approached the rector. "I did as you asked me, sir," he said; "but they would none of them have any." He had not been told to empty the dish, and it was full of biscuits!—Miss Mary Robertson, 17, Water Lane, Ospringe, near Faversham, Kent.

FROM SHOREHAM.

I have been taking in the GEM for a long time now, and think it is the finest paper out. When I have a good few I sew them together. At Shoreham we have a film-studio, and we see them take films, and we were specially interested in the "Little Dorrit" piece. Sometimes the company acts in the town. Have you heard this joke about one of the new poor? A gentleman asked for a pound of sausages, and said, "Er—please wrap them up to look like a bunch of violets."—Miss Elsie Suter, 39, May Terrace, Shoreham-by-Sea.

SENSELESS.

Monty Lowther: "Well, some dogs have got more sense than their masters." Herries: "Yes, my dog is like that." Yet he could not understand why everybody laughed.—L. G. Scoulding, 72, Lawrence Hill, Bristol.

STUCK FAST.

The amateur theatrical society of the village was giving a performance, in which the hero was supposed to escape from his pursuers by means of a skylight. The hero was dressed in kilts, and he had not the forethought to test the skylight before the opening night. The critical moment came, and the actor, who was in complete ignorance of the width of the skylight, began to climb through. His head and shoulders passed out of sight, but then he stuck, with his legs dangling in the air. The police, who were pursuing, delayed and delayed, but finally they had to enter. The audience tittered, and the police grew desperate, while the hero continued his struggles to get away. At last one of the police grew desperate, and said to his comrade, the local butcher: "Ah! What is that hanging there?" "Oh," replied the butcher, "that's a pair of hams!"—Ian Hamilton, 13, Leslie Place, Edinburgh.

PROFITEERING.

A man, when offered the other day a penny for his thoughts, said that, owing to the high price of fish and other raw materials for brain building, he was compelled to raise the price to twopenny.—Thomas Reid, 65, Exeter Drive, Partick, Glasgow.

FILM ACTING.

Hero meets heroine, falls in love with her, and he with him. Villain spies her, and swears vengeance on her for cutting him. Heroine goes motoring, and is kidnapped by villain, is bound and gagged, and is to be kept a prisoner until she marries villain. She stoutly refuses. More swearing by villain.—Plot thickens. Hero finds villain's hiding-place, and follows. Terrific fight ensues. Hero wins. (He has to!) Heroine is released, and, of course, all is well!—G. F. Winkinson, 105, St. George's Road, Redditch.

SIXTY MILLIONS.

The London and North-Western Railway Company sell an enormous number of tickets in the course of a year. The number is estimated at sixty millions. The tickets issued during a space of ten years would make a belt round the earth one and a quarter inches in width.—C. Hindson, 16, Ella Street, Hull.

DO ANTS KEEP GARDENS?

The mounds made by the white ants of the Philippines are blunt cones a yard high. The outer wall is of fine earth manufactured into concrete by the ants. The wall is so strong that the ants have no fear of a grass fire. Inside are mushroom gardens, where certain varieties of mushroom are cultivated and greatly enjoyed by the clever little inhabitants of the stronghold.—George Webb, Royston, Cecil Park, Pinner, Middlesex.

FINDING THE WAY.

Here are one or two points which will help you to find your way, should you be out in unknown country without a compass. Churches are generally built with their chancels pointing east. Trees always lean away from the sea. Hold your watch with hour-hand pointed at the sun—the point midway between the hour-hand and XII. is due south in our hemisphere. Best wishes to the noble trio—GEM, Pop, and Mag.—T. Townsend, 2/173, Gooch Street, Birmingham.

THE REASON HE SMILED.

Noticing one of her pupils nibbling at some lunch in school, the teacher called the offender to the front. "It is forbidden to eat in class," she said. "As a punishment, you shall sit there in front of the class and eat your dinner." The small boy did as he was told, a curious grin on his countenance which the teacher did not understand, until the last scrap of food had vanished; and then from down the class a small voice hailed: "Please, teacher, that wasn't my lunch Tommy was eatin'—It was mine!"—T. M. Jennings, 14, Gloster Buildings, Swainswick, near Bath.

EXACTLY.

Why is a horse the richest of animals? Because it has always plenty of oof!—H. V. Marshall, 99, Newland Avenue, Hull.

Contributions are invited from readers of the "GEM" for publication on this page. Anything will do, so long as it is interesting, short, and concise—a good joke, a description of a holiday, a bright idea for increasing the popularity of the "Gem," a good anecdote. "Pars" should not be more than three hundred words long—the shorter the better. They can be sent in on a postcard. Address all contributions to The Editor, The "Gem" Library, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and mark them "Readers' Own Corner."

WHO'S WHO IN THIS WEEK'S "GEM" STORY.

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW, grandson of Lord Reckness, and in every way a remarkable character. At times good, sometimes bad. Some of his tricks have caused the decent fellows of the school to despise him. When acting the man, he is most likeable and popular.

JACK BLAKE, considered to be the leader of the Fourth in the School House. Always ready to stand against tyranny, and to help a fellow down on his luck. Good at heart, and a staunch friend of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the same study.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, known as the "Swell of St. Jim's." The famous aristocrat is liked and respected by all. Immaculate in attire, and as interested as any in the latest fashions. Is the recipient of a large number of "fivahs" sent by his "patah," Lord Eastwood.

FATTY WYNN, a popular character commonly known as the "Falstaff of

St. Jim's." He is of Welsh nationality. A splendid goalkeeper, and a like bowler. A shocking large eater; but, in his own estimation, not a "glutton." Is very much liked by his two study-mates, Figgins and Kerr.

TOM MERRY, the respected junior captain of the school, and leader of the Terrible Three. Liked and respected by all the decent fellows. Interested in sport of all sorts, and is clever with his fists. Can take a joke, and is always ready to give one. A real nice fellow all round.

HARRY MANNERS, another member of the Terrible Three. More studious than either of his chums. A good photographer and a very clever mathematician. Always bright and cheerful, and interesting in his conversation. Perhaps not much of an athlete.

MONTY LOWTHER, a further member of the Terrible Three, known as the humorist of the Shell. His jokes and puns are most remarkable. Very fond of impersonating, and can always carry

same out to effect. Always ready to give others a helping hand.

RICHARD REDFERN, a member of the New House and a staunch backer of Figgins, their leader. Takes part in all kinds of sport, and has the makings of a fine journalist. A fellow of character and marked ability. Takes part in all japes upon the School House.

ERNEST LEVISON, formerly at Greyfriars, from which school he was disgraced. First of all, curried favour with all the cads. Has reformed now, and is a good fellow in every way. Has a minor in the Third.

BLOGGS, the St. Jim's postman. A real, jovial "old stick." Has seen service in the Great War. Liked by all the juniors at the school. Has received numerous tips from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

MRS. TAGGLES, an old dame who takes charge of the school tuckshop. Extremely clever in the making of pastries. Does rather a good trade, but will not hear of "tick!"

AUBREY RACKE, the son of a war-profiteer, purse-proud, snobbish, cunning, unscrupulous and dissipated. He is known to be the leader among the rotters. Will partake in any low-down and shady trick.

£10 IN PRIZES EVERY WEEK. "BOYS' HEROES" COMPETITION. No. 1.

1st. PRIZE £5. 3 PRIZES OF HAMPERS, FILLED WITH DELICIOUS TUCK. 8 PRIZES OF 5s. EACH.

On this page you will find a picture-puzzle, dealing with some famous boys' heroes, which you are invited to solve. Bear in mind that each of the pictures may represent part of a word—one, two, or three words, but not more than three words. There is nothing unusual about the wording, and the sense of the sentence will guide you. Solutions containing alternatives will be disqualified.

When you have solved the pictures to your satisfaction, write your solution in ink on one side of a clean sheet of paper, then sign the coupon beneath the picture; cut out the picture and the coupon—do not sever the coupon from the picture—pin your solution to the picture, and post to:

"Boys' Heroes" Competition No. 1, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4,

so as to reach that address not later than Thursday, December 30th.

This competition appears in the Greyfriars "Boys' Herald," but "Gem" readers may compete and use the coupon below. The result of the competition will be published in the Greyfriars "Boys' Herald," so competitors should watch that paper.

READ THESE RULES CAREFULLY.

The First Prize of Five Pounds will be awarded to the competitor who complies with the above conditions, and sends a solution exactly the same as the Editor's original paragraph. In the event of no competitor's solution being exactly the same as the original paragraph, the prize will be awarded to the competitor whose solution is the nearest.

The Second and other prizes will be awarded to the readers whose solutions are next in order of merit. In the event of ties, the right to add together and divide any or all of the prizes is reserved, but the full amount will be awarded. No competitor will be awarded more than one share of any prize.

No responsibility can be undertaken for any effort lost, delayed, or mislaid, and proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of delivery or receipt.

The Editor reserves the right to disqualify any competitor's solution for reasons which he considers good and sufficient. The decision of the Editor must be accepted as final and legally binding in all matters concerning the competition, and entries are only accepted on this express condition. Correspondence must not be enclosed with efforts, neither will any be entered into in connection with this competition. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

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I enter this competition and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

NAME

ADDRESS

B.H.

Closing date of Competition December 30th.

The result will be published in the Greyfriars "Boys' Herald."

THE FEUD at St. Katie's

BY
Michael
Poole



CHAPTER I.

Jolly Roger Returns!

"NOW, gentlemen!"

Mr. Roger Blunt, master of the *Transitus* Form at St. Katherine's School, brought his pointer down with a crash on the desk at which he sat. If you didn't happen to be looking his way at the time, the shock of the crash made you sit up quickly and take notice, and that pleased Jolly Roger, because, of course, you ought to have been looking.

Jolly Roger was bright and beaming. His face looked as though he had been away for a long holiday, and had just been freshly scrubbed and towelled on top of that. He was sitting very upright, and his eyes were simply sparkling with the joy of being alive.

"I have examined most carefully the test papers you were good enough to do for me yesterday," Mr. Blunt went on, when he was quite sure that thirty pairs of eyes were intently fixed on him. "But with all my knowledge of the English language I am utterly unable to express my feelings. I am amazed! Is this a foolish jest?"

He tapped the pile of half-sheets of foolscap before him, and the smile on his lips hardened, while the gleam in his eyes was the kind of light you see in a boxer's when he is just going to settle the business one and for all.

"Did you want to give me a shock on my return?" he demanded. "Is this your idea of a hoax? Dexter! Is this a practical joke you have planned for my benefit? Tell me, Dexter!"

The boy sitting at the end of the middle desk looked at Roger in pained wonder. He was the smallest boy in the Form, and you would never have thought that he was fifteen. His big blue eyes opened wider, and he really seemed to be very hurt that Roger had asked him such a foolish question.

"Sir?" he murmured pathetically; and it sounded like the bleating of a poor little lamb.

"Is it a joke, Dexter?" Roger flashed out instantly.

"No, sir!" Richard Dexter wailed gently. "We all did our best, sir!"

They say that a soft answer turneth away wrath; but not with Roger. Right

there and then he went off at the deep end, and told the *Transitus* just what he thought about them. It wasn't so much a fireworks display as a cold, cutting attack with barbed icicles. They just sat and shivered as Roger went through them, personally and separately, and said what was in his mind.

You see, Mr. Blunt had been away from the school for three months on a special job, preparing certain fellows for an important exam. Just as luck would have it, Mr. Bird, the headmaster of St. Katie's, had also been away for the past month or two. In those glad weeks the whole school had gone out to enjoy themselves, while the *Transitus* simply had the time of their lives.

Long ago the *Transitus* was considered the prize collection of the school when it came to real enjoyment and work-dodging stunts. For which reason the Head had got Mr. Roger Blunt to come and handle the Form. He had set out to reform them, and in about a couple of terms the *Trans* had become the quietest lot of boys ever seen at a Speech Day.

Gently, but firmly, Jolly Roger had taught them how to work. He had made their brains rotate until it was a sort of habit with them, and they couldn't help learning anything they were told to learn.

And now, in three brief months, they had dropped back until they could make a hopeless mess of the simplest test exam Roger had ever set them.

"I know exactly how you have behaved during my absence," Roger told them towards the end of his heart-to-heart talk. "You cannot keep these things secret from me. Even your practical jokes on the prefects are known to me. Yes! Don't look surprised, Dexter! I know all. It is merely foolish to stare at the wall, Duff. Your guilt is as plain to me as it is to Curtis or Strong. Let me assure you that in the next few weeks—"

But you'd want quite a big book to write down all the things Roger raked up against them. It was pretty plain that he knew everything about everybody, although he had only been back two or three days. It was also plain that this term wasn't going to be a giddy jamboree. Jolly Roger was going to reform

the *Transitus* all over again. And the *Transitus* didn't like the idea at all.

Morning school came to an end at last. Gladly, yet meekly, the Form filed out. Young Richard Dexter, otherwise known as the Kid, waited for his chums to join him. In the company of Bill Strong, Curtis, and Duff, he felt that he could relieve his mind.

"Going to be a jolly old holiday this term, isn't it?" moaned Jimmy Curtis. He was a tall, graceful Australian, and whenever Dexter was in any trouble, which was quite often, you could bet anything you liked that Curtis was in it somewhere, too.

"My hat!" said Bill Strong, captain and prize athlete of the *Trans*. "Somebody's been telling Roger some gentle yarns about us. Notice how he dragged us all into that bit about the prefects? How's he know? Mean to say, nobody but—"

"It was Grimsditch!" Dexter suddenly jerked out, and his voice was shriller and more emphatic than the others. "The little beast has told his own yarn to Jolly Roger, and now Roger's got it up against us! Right! Grimmy thinks he's got level with us. But we'll make him sorry his name's Grimsditch before we've finished. We'll dust the earth with him. You leave it to your uncle—"

"Sh!" Duff suddenly nudged the Kid. He was about twice the size of Dexter, but he always looked rather tired and bored. Yet on occasions he could act swiftly, as in the present instance.

For, just as he nudged Dexter, Jolly Roger himself came striding past them. He smiled joyfully upon the little mob, as though he were the best friend they had in the world. Whether he had overheard what Dickie Dexter was saying no one could tell. In any case, he didn't take the slightest notice of it.

After Roger had passed on, they talked of many matters, but the question of Grimsditch was never mentioned again. When all was said and done, what did it matter? Grimmy was a prefect, but he was also a worm and a toad, and it wasn't likely that he would try his weight against Dickie Dexter and his chums in the future. They taught him a lesson the last time, and even if he had sneaked to

Roger as soon as the latter came back, it was pretty certain that Jolly Roger would never mention it again.

Roger wasn't that sort. With all his faults, such as making fellows swot, and knowing exactly what you were going to do even before you'd really thought of doing it, Jolly Roger did play the game, and he didn't sneak or even encourage sneaking.

Anyhow, there were more important things to think about than reptiles such as Grimsditch. There was, for instance, a special meeting of the Noble and Secret Society of Dusters that night. And neither Jolly Roger nor Grimsditch, nor any other master or prefect was going to upset the arrangements of the Dusters. Not likely!

The Big Shock Comes!

THE Dusters was one of the most select and secret societies ever invented. Its members numbered six, and it had only been founded a few weeks. There was Dexter, Strong, and Curtis, who now occupied Study No. 10, and Duff, Dobbin, and Curtis, who shared Study No. 9.

Dexter had had the first brain-wave about the Dusters, but it was Duff who brought it down to the dead certainty it was to-day. Dexter didn't care twopence how much trouble he went to or how much risk he ran so long as he had his fun, but Duff was one of the sort who prefer to dodge the limelight, and he wasn't keen on asking for trouble at any time.

As it happened, there had recently come to St. Katie's a new assistant-porter and general handyman, whose name was Scrimgore. It turned out that he had been a soldier under some relative of the Duffer's, and thought no end of the family all round. He had a bedroom of his own in the servants' quarters, and, next door to him, right at the end of the corridor, was a sort of queer store-room, where they kept all manner of oddments.

Old Duff had a little talk with Scrimgore. Everyone knew that Duff had a quiet sort of way with him which made you think that anything he did couldn't be wrong at all; and, anyhow, they all promised Scrimgore that whatever happened they'd never let him down, provided he didn't go and kick up a fuss and talk about reporting them.

So that was how the store-room place, right in the school itself, became the headquarters of the Duff-Dexter Society, called for short the Dusters. One of the objects of the society was to dust the earth with anyone who interfered with them in any way, but the main object was to have midnight feasts, this being one of Dexter's little weaknesses, though it also appealed strongly to the others.

On the night of the very day when Roger had said so many unkind things to his Form, the Dusters held a meeting. Both Bunting and Duff had had hampers sent them, and the principal item on the night's programme was to dust away the contents of these hampers.

Just about eleven o'clock the Noble Six, having carefully arranged their beds beforehand, left the dormitory and stole by various stairs and corridors to the meeting-place.

Imagine a room stacked with boxes along two of the walls and furnished with a couple of tables, which were too rickety for general use; there were also one or two broken chairs, which were going to be repaired some day perhaps. An old rug lay in front of the little fireplace, and there were also one or two small bales lying around which could be used as back-rests. A small oil-stove

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was already burning, though the place was fairly warm, as the hot-water pipes ran through the room. On the mantel-shelf were three or four home-made candlesticks, and from these came the gentle light which threw queer shadows and gave the place quite a mysterious appearance.

"Evening, gentlemen!"

Good old Scrimgore himself crept quietly in just after the six had begun to arrange the feast. He was dressed in a wonderful but faded dressing-gown, and his lean, tanned face, with its grey-black moustache, had a different look from the day-time, when it merely served as an ornament for a blue uniform.

You would have liked Scrimgore, just as Dickie Dexter and his chums did. He was the sort of man who had been a boy about thirty years ago, and had never really noticed that he'd grown up into a man. Probably if the governors and the Head had known this they would never have given him his present job, but they didn't know it, because Scrimgore looked quite a fierce man, and was always very respectful.

He often joined the Dusters when they had a special meeting, and he told them stories, very quietly, while he helped them to dust the cakes into the dim

report that all was well, because they jolly well knew that there wasn't the least chance of any of them being seen.

What they didn't know was that Mr. Roger Blunt had made a point of going round certain parts of the school on the past three nights just to satisfy himself that there wasn't any truth in some of the wild stories he had heard of boys going out at night, and so on.

At about half-past twelve to-night, Roger was examining the emergency-exit door in that part of the school over which he was now House-master. It happened to be at the end of a corridor which ran from the Transitus studies to one of the main landings, and on this landing was a dim light.

The door was all right, and Roger walked back. Then, suddenly, he glued himself against the side of the wall. In the pale light of the half-turned gas-jet he saw a small figure, wearing an overcoat over pyjamas, creeping quietly round the stairs and across towards the other corridor.

"Dexter!" murmured Roger to himself, and smiled grimly. "Again, my young friend! I wonder what the game is this time?"

He watched him pass on, but did not move. Roger had a swift and calculating brain, and he guessed that where Dexter led others would follow. He waited.

One by one in the next few minutes five others passed across the gentle circle of light and disappeared into the blackness of the corridor beyond. And Roger recognised every one of the overcoat-clad figures.

"Dexter, Curtis, Strong, Duff, Bunting, and Dobbin," he murmured softly to himself. "A pretty combination! So the Transitus still wanders forth at nights. Very well, my young friends. Unless my mind has grown feeble in the past few months, I fancy you are in for a very violent shock in the course of the next few days!"

Which just shows you that it doesn't do to prophesy, because it wasn't Dexter and his chums who were going to have the big shock, but Jolly Roger himself. And he was going to get it much earlier than he expected.

You see, Mr. Roger Blunt had his own ideas about handling a job of this kind. He knew Richard Dexter and his chums of old. Wherefore, Jolly Roger meant to watch patiently and find out all about their evening trips, and, in due course, he would let them know that he knew. He wouldn't report it to the Head, or anything of that sort, and he wouldn't start handing out terrific punishments.

Roger would simply work it so that they would all realise that nothing was hidden from his eagle eye, and that he was merely out to do them good. By the time he had finished with them, they would, quite of their own accord, decide that goodness and hard work were the two things they really liked.

"I'm out to make a real man of every boy who passes under me," Roger would tell you, and he went about it in his own way.

Thus, for instance, after this morning's wretched performance, Roger hadn't set the Transitus huge impots, or anything like that. He told them that they would begin gently, and that the first thing was to get quite fit. So tomorrow morning the whole of the Trans was due to turn out a quarter of an hour earlier than usual, in order to join Roger in his morning run.

Roger did that sort of thing himself because he liked it. He always had a run, or some physical exercise, quite early in the morning.

To-night, after making his interesting discovery about Dexter and his friends, Mr. Blunt didn't worry about making



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background. They all sat round the stove while they helped themselves to the meat-pies, tinned apricots, and sweets which were arrayed on the sheet on the floor.

This was the sort of thing old Duff simply revelled in. It was doing the giddy jaunt business in peace and comfort, and you didn't have to gulp everything down and wonder if you'd get caught. When it was all over they just packed up some of the things and knew that old Scrimgore would put everything quite all right in the morning.

Did they talk of Jolly Roger and the sad times ahead? Not a bit! They scarcely mentioned his name, and even when the time came to wind up the glad meeting, they didn't think about him.

Of course, they didn't leave in a bunch, but went one by one. Dickie Dexter went first to-night, and made about as much noise as a mouse with rubber-heels as he wandered down one corridor, then up a flight of stairs, across a broad landing, and along another corridor till he came at last to dormitory D. The others followed him, and there was no need to

any further search. He went to bed, and slept happily and peacefully.

He was up shortly after six o'clock in the morning, and precisely at a quarter to seven he stepped out into the court, lightly clad, and looking as full of vim as ever. Thirty boys, hurriedly clad in sweaters or sports-coats, were standing about already, and they were shivering a little, for the morning was distinctly chilly.

"This is a bright game," Curtis was saying. "Scarcely light yet, and dragged out like this!"

When you come to think of it, the whole business was rather rich. There was a thin mist hanging over the ground, and you couldn't even see the end of the school in the miserable light.

"Morning, boys!" Roger called to them jocosely. "Come along, Strong and Curtis! We'll lead the pack. Ready?"

They'd had this sort of thing before. There was no fuss about it, and Roger was so amazingly cheerful himself that you couldn't help laughing about it—when it was over. And Roger would make jokes, showing that he knew they didn't like it, but hinting that they would soon grow fond of it if they stuck it.

Roger's eagle eye had picked out Dexter and the other five, but they didn't seem any the worse for last night's frivolity. He was laughing to himself as he started off on the run across the court and towards the drive, with Curtis on one side and Strong on the other.

"Had a good night's sleep, Strong?" Roger asked as they ran.

"Yes, sir," Bill panted, because he was a bit out of condition this morning, and Roger set a very good pace.

"Good!" Roger laughed back. "I was wondering—"

Then he stopped abruptly, and it was at that precise moment he got the big shock.

They had come fairly close to the flag-staff which stood at the top of the long drive from the school. In the mist and the dim light they had scarcely noticed the pole until quite near it, and only by chance did Roger look at it.

Standing with his back to the post was a Katie's boy, and he didn't move anything except his head, which was moving slowly backwards and forwards. His face was marked with dirt, and his mouth and cheeks seemed to be bulging. Not until he was quite close did Roger recognise Grimsditch, one of the prefects of the Sixth.

Just for an instant even Roger was staggered by this amazing apparition. You don't expect to meet this sort of thing when you're out for a pleasant morning run. Yet, despite the shock, Roger grasped the main facts of the situation in about one and four-fifths seconds.

"Lend a hand, Strong!" he barked out, and jumped forward. "Got a knife on you?"

Inside a minute they had unfastened the prefect's hands, which were fastened behind him, and tied to the flag-pole. His legs were also securely tied, and his mouth had been stuffed with something so that he could not call out.

Roger's face was set and grim as he released the unfortunate prefect, but he never said a word until he commanded Strong to lend a hand in carrying him in. The *Transitus* fellows were crowding round and staring at the extraordinary spectacle, but no one spoke. This was something beyond talking about.

Not until Roger and Strong had

Grimsditch on the hand-seat they made between them did the master speak.

"How long have you been there?" he asked.

"Since—oh, since last night!" Grimsditch moaned.

He was in a pretty hopeless state, and Strong felt that his hands were like ice. Probably he could have staggered across the ground, and indeed he did walk the last few steps, but he seemed absolutely beaten and played out.

"Dismiss!" Roger called to the *Transitus*, and the fellows began to race backwards towards the school.

Behind them, very slowly, came Mr. Blunt and Bill Strong, carrying between them the limp form of Grimsditch.

War to the Knife!

BEFORE morning school began the whole story about Grimsditch was known to everybody.

The prefect had admitted that he was out of the school long after hours without permission. He had been anxious to see a friend of his who was staying in Dulchester for the night, and he had only had a note from him when it was too late to ask for a special permit.

He had stayed rather later than he expected, and it was just on midnight, or possibly a little later, when he came up the drive. It was very dark, but a light had been suddenly flashed on him, and the next moment he was seized. It seemed to him that there were at least half a dozen on him, but he had no idea who they could be.

They never spoke, and never gave him a chance to cry out. At first he thought it was some silly practical joke, but they crammed something into his mouth, and the next thing he really grasped was that he was tied up to the flag-pole, and that everywhere was very quiet.

And there he had stuck through the whole night, struggling in vain to get free, until the *Transitus* Form, led by Jolly Roger, had come trotting along for their morning run. He had tried to shout out, but the sounds he managed to make would not carry more than a few yards.

There was not a fellow in the whole of Katie's, so far as could be judged, who didn't think that this was the absolute frozen limit. No one was particularly fond of Grimsditch, but in this case he had the sympathy of every decent fellow. A joke was a joke, but if it had been anyone in Katie's who had played this miserable, low-down trick, the sooner they were cleared out the better.

"It couldn't be anyone at Katie's," Bill Strong said. "It was some dirty outsider, and we ought to get to the bottom of it."

"We ought, Bill," the Kid agreed emphatically. "I'm no pal of old Grimmy, but this is simply spoiling everything. They've had to get the doctor to him, and the Beak's been to see him already, and there's going to be no end of a fuss about this business!"

Everywhere fellows talked of it in the same way. It couldn't be anyone in the school. There was going to be a most terrific inquiry into the whole thing. It was jolly hard lines on poor old Grimmy, who wasn't such a frightfully bad sort, after all. If it were anyone in the school who had done it—well, they'd be cleared out like a shot, and a jolly good thing, too!

Mr. Blunt had, of course, reported the whole thing to the Head. This was something which was altogether too important to keep in his own hands.

"Have you the faintest suspicion of what lies behind it all?" the Head asked, and looked into Roger's face.

For once in a way there was no smile about Roger's eyes or lips. Almost he was wishing his mind wasn't so keen and his brain didn't rotate so swiftly. But he couldn't dodge hard facts, and this business was bad enough to make even Jolly Roger worry over it.

"I have certain ideas in my mind, sir," Roger told the Head very slowly and carefully. "I should be absolutely unjustified in mentioning them yet, but you can rest assured that I will get to the bottom of the matter in some way or other. At present I think it was a boyish prank—"

"A prank?" the Head interrupted sharply. "You don't call it a prank to leave a boy out in the cold all night, bound and gagged?"

"No!" Roger answered quickly. "It was intended to be a prank, but in the darkness—so I am assuming—the perpetrators overdid the joke. I imagine that it was only intended to tie Grimsditch lightly, leaving him to struggle free of his own accord. Unfortunately, he was fastened very securely. I know it is a very serious matter; but will you leave it to me for twenty-four hours? In that time I hope to learn the full truth."

"Very good," the Head agreed, and Roger left him.

He walked back to the Form-room slowly, because he wanted to think about this complication. Once upon a time there had been a similar case of a fellow being tied and having something pushed in his mouth. But on that occasion it was a summer evening, and the boy was free inside ten minutes, and, anyhow, it was nothing more than a lark—for which Dexter and Curtis had duly paid.

This was quite different; but Roger couldn't help thinking that the same ingenious mind was behind both jokes. Then he remembered that yesterday a certain boy had expressed his intention of wiping the earth with Grimsditch.

He remembered, too, very clearly, just what he had seen last night. Six boys of the *Transitus*, who had obviously been out of the school, creeping silently back to the dormitory. They were the boys who had a special grudge against Grimsditch.

No! You didn't need to be a quick thinker or have a swift mind to do the detective business in this act. Dexter & Co. had obviously found out that Grimsditch was going into the town, and would be returning late, and they had taken the first chance that came to pay him out for sneaking. Doubtless they had never intended it to go quite so far, and had relied on the fact that Grimsditch daren't complain because he himself was breaking rules.

Jolly Roger felt very sick about the whole thing. He liked Dexter, Curtis, Strong, Duff, as well as Dobbin and Bunting, and he was really looking forward to the job of bringing them up properly. But this was beyond the limit. How could he handle the case?

"I must get them to come to me of their own accord, and tell the full story," Roger decided. "Then I could put the matter carefully before the Head, and persuade him to treat them leniently. I'll take care of them after that! Yes!"

There was just a hint of a smile on Jolly Roger's face as he marched into his Form-room. The fellows quietly broke up from the little groups, and sat down. By the time Roger had taken his place everyone was ready, chiefly because they were wondering if he

would say anything about the Grimsditch business.

"Now, gentlemen!" Roger rapped his desk sharply; but somehow it lacked the usual crash, and the gleam wasn't in his eyes.

"Before we begin this morning's work," he went on, "I should like to refer to the unfortunate incident of which we were all witnesses this morning. There is no doubt that someone has played a foolish hoax. Personally I am quite sure that it was never intended to be so serious. I have already a very good idea of just what took place; but I would prefer that those who were responsible for this joke came forward at once, of their own accord, and frankly confessed their share in it."

He stopped sharply. For a second or two everyone simply sat very still, and stared back at him. Then Grubb, the Worm, who always was a silly ass, blurted out:

"Please, sir, you don't think anyone in the Transitus would do a thing of that sort?"

"I am casting no suspicion on anyone at the moment, Grubb," Roger answered icily. "I have no doubt that each master in the school will take such steps as he considers wise to find out whether anyone in his Form can throw any light on the matter. I simply ask now that any boy in this Form who can give any information will either speak now or remain behind at the ten o'clock interval. I need scarcely add that in those circumstances the most lenient view possible will be taken. That is all."

He waited for a few seconds, but no one moved.

"Very well!" Roger snapped out. "We will now proceed with the morning's lesson."

The ten o'clock interval came, and the Form filed out for an hour with the drawing-master. They returned at twenty-past eleven for the last hour with Roger.

"As no one answered my appeal," Roger began, as soon as they had taken their places, "I must make the position clearer. If any boy or boys in this Form had any hand in the practical joke played on Grimsditch, I assure you that I shall do my best to help them in explaining the circumstances to the headmaster. But until the full truth has been discovered, the whole of this Form is in special detention. There will be no half-holidays, and we shall work every afternoon from two till four-thirty. Preparation will also be extended for this Form for half an hour. You will be under my strict supervision the whole time. That is quite understood?"

Somehow there was a harsh, unpleasant note in Roger's voice, and his eyes were steely. The Form shivered and felt hopeless. It wasn't fair!

For an hour they ploughed miserably, and not very successfully, through history. Every fellow in the Trans had the same feeling. They all felt disappointed in Roger, because at least he had always played the game fairly. But this was going too far. He wouldn't even allow them to ask questions.

By the time morning school ended, the disappointment had turned to resentment. They filed out sullenly, and Roger watched them go anxiously and painfully, though he didn't show it. He waited for ten minutes after they had gone, but the boys he expected did not return.

Well away from the Form-room, the Transitus began to talk.

"It's not good enough!" Half a dozen fellows said the same thing together.

"We ought to see the Head about it!" "Find out if all the other Forms have got the same," Strong suggested.

They rushed round, and returned presently to meet together in the Upper School Common-room. By the time they were all in, the excitement was running high.

"Never a word said!" Curtis yelled out. "Why should the Trans have to stand it all again?"

"All stand in rows!" Bill Strong ordered; and you would have admired Bill at that moment, because he really was the captain of the Form. "Now, then, you chaps! I, Bill Strong, know nothing at all about the Grimmy business. That's my solemn word. Duff, do you know anything?"

"I know nothing!" said Duff firmly. Bill Strong went through the Form—every one of them—and the answer was straight and clear in each case:

"I know nothing!" "Then"—Bill looked towards Dexter, to give him the tip now—"what's the programme, Kid?"

A dozen fellows were shouting out. Some were for going to the Head; others for tackling Roger again; while others wanted to keep away this afternoon, and let Roger do what he liked.

But Dickie Dexter was on a chair, and was calling out, and they listened to him, because you could always rely on the Kid to hit the right scheme.

"We'll bring Roger to his knees!" the Kid cried. "We've got to stick together over this, and the Trans is the Form to do it! We'll beat Roger! He's insulted us! It's war—war to the knife—now! There's a feud against Jolly Roger! The Transitus declares a feud!"

"A feud!" Somehow the very name appealed, and they took it up so that their shouts went echoing through the corridors outside the room. "A feud against Roger! Down with Jolly Roger! Tell us all about it! We declare a feud!"

(Another instalment of this Grand New Serial next week. Don't forget to let your friends know all about it.)

A SEASONABLE SUGGESTION.

What are you going to give your small brother, sister, or chum for Christmas?

That may be a difficult question to answer, for it is not easy to choose a present that will suit your pocket and at the same time be bound to please the recipient.

THEREFORE, this suggestion should be of the greatest help to you:

A GRAND COLOURED CHRISTMAS PANTOMIME MODEL,

With Book of the Words,

that will keep boys and girls amused for hours, can be obtained by asking your newsagent for

"CHUCKLES,"

The Children's Champion Coloured Comic. Out on Friday. Price Three-halfpence.

BOTTLED BUZZES.

It is Rumoured—

That Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looks quite up-to-date in his new "Sandringham" hat. He feels quite indebted to the "Daily Mail" on their great achievement, and sincerely hopes their next competition will be for the betterment of fancy waistcoats.

That Boggs, the postman, has been made the happy recipient of a "Bradbury" for the delivery of the thirteen letters to D'Arcy containing "fivahs." P.S.—This is to be kept "mum" from the Postmaster-General.

That Wally D'Arcy has suggested a "whip round" among his Form-fellows to pay for the forthcoming licence in respect of his pet dog Pongo. We hear, prior to going to press, that the said mongrel's life still hangs in the balance. Arthur Augustus has strongly resented the idea. "The bwute has no respect whatevah for a fellah's twousahs!" is his retort.

That the total number of jam-tarts made by Mrs. Taggies numbered six thousand. The Falstaff of St. Jim's can answer for having found accommodation for a third of this number. As Fatty has not had medical treatment during the last twelve months, praise must surely be due to the keeper of the famous tuckshop.

That Blake & Co. still try to out rival Tom Merry & Co. They must find the "Shell" hard to crack.

That the number of "toppahs" worn by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy during the last year numbered twelve. A monthly instalment, surely?

That during a recent encounter with the St. Jim's boot-boy, Baggy Trimble received the O.B.E. (A distinction known as "The Order of the Boot Entirely.")

That there was great jubilation at St. Jim's the other day, when one of a party of Third-Formers, engaged in the dribbling of a football, happened to send the leather flying through the window of Mrs. Taggies' tuckshop. Incidentally, it had knocked down the price of her four-penny cream-buns.

That the circulation of the GEM and the Gre-friars "Boys' Herald," like the cost of living, is rising up in leaps and bounds. (It seems likely to beat all records.—Ed.)

That cinema shows are likely to be instituted in the schools in the near future for the purposes of instructional training. It undoubtedly will be met with a regular attendance.



The Editor's Chat.



Note:—Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Address: Editor, The "Gem," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

My Dear Chums,—

There will be another excellent number of the "Gem" next week. Our long complete school tale will be entitled: "Champions of the Cause," and I am certain you will vote it one of the very best you have ever read in the pages of your favourite paper. "Champions of the Cause" deals with a subject you are all interested in, and this wonderful and entertaining story will grip your interest from first to last. You must not miss next week's "Gem" on any account, and my advice to you is to buy your copy early.

I anticipate a big demand for our next issue, and I do not wish that any of my regular readers should meet with disappointment, and be greeted with the dread words, "Sold out, sir!" The next instalment of "The Fand at St. Katie's" is also thoroughly interesting, and I hope you all like this great school serial. In a few weeks' time, I am starting in the "Gem" a new serial story, entitled: "The Invisible Hand." This story is undoubtedly one of the most amazing ever written. There is a thrill in every line of it, and the characters introduced, will interest you to an extraordinary degree. It will please you to know that "The Invisible Hand" has also been filmed, and you will be able to see the story on the screen in addition to reading it in the pages of the "Gem." Tell your chums about "The Invisible Hand," they will thank you for doing them this good turn. By the way, there is a splendid number of the Greyfriars "Boys' Herald" this week. Readers of that jolly little paper continually write to the Editor to say that it "gets better and better" each week, and this, I may say, appears to be the verdict of everybody. If you have not seen the "Boys' Herald" lately, get a copy this week. You will like it!

Your Editor

ANSWERS TO READERS.

"INQUISITIVE" (Paisley).—Giacomo Con-
tarini is an Italian. The last story in which
he played a leading part was "A Pal in
Peril," No. 467 of the GEM. He shares Study
No. 7 at present with Dick Roynance and
Smith minor. I would prefer you to send in
your list of questions a few at a time. You
are much more likely to get them answered.
Baggy Trimble blew his undesirable person
into St. Jim's in No. 414 of the GEM, called
the "Bouncer of St. Jim's." When Grundy
came from Redcliffe he came on the distinct
understanding that he was a very peaceable
fellow, but never stood any rot. The great
Figgins is quite a popular character, in spite
of the fact that he irritates you.

"GROWLER" (London).—Our model of St.
Jim's in "Chuckles" has proved immensely
popular, and I can suggest one or two things
for improving its finished appearance. Part 13
appears on January 8th, and finishes the
square of buildings. The model should be laid
on a sheet of paper, and the flaps glued down.
For gravel paths and ordinary ground, paint
the paper with a thin layer of gum, and
sprinkle it with yellow sand. The rest,
painted green, will do for trees and grass.

"GRUNT" (Victoria, Australia).—Arthur
Augustus D'Arcy is the second son of the
Earl of Eastwood. I can't give you the
exact whereabouts of his elder brother, Lord
Conway, at the present moment. Both
Cardew and Durrance are distantly related to
the D'Arcys. Ethel Cleveland is his first
cousin. Neither Percy Pander or Fingo stayed
very long at St. Jim's. There was not
sufficient incident in their leaving for it to
be mentioned in a story.

"Gussy" (Peebles).—Is your name really
"Gussy"? Oh, I see! It is meant to be your
nom-de-plume. Now, what is your trouble?
You have a friend who is ready to fight you.
Can't see anything very friendly in that. But
let us proceed! You have a friend who is
ready to fight you on the way the name
D'Arcy should be pronounced. He says it
should be "De Arcy," and you are positive it
should be "Darcy." Ah! Well, it isn't worth
fighting out.

JIMMY R. (Repton).—Roller-skating is very
much in favour at St. Jim's now I can't say
whether it will be introduced into any of
the coming stories, though. Figgins is a good
skater; likewise Clifton Dane and Harry
Noble. Cardew is an excellent teacher. Can
I tell you of any yarns wherein roller-skating
has been mentioned prominently. I can, but
they are very old. No. 101 of the GEM was
"The St. Jim's Rinkeries," and "Tom Merry
on the Rinks" was No. 90. Blake is naturally
interested in the account Rhodes gives of
himself in the cricket tour, Blake coming, as
we know, from Yorkshire. I don't think there
is a captain of the Fourth yet, and I don't
think there is likely to be one. Jack Blake
is leader in Study No. 8, but he isn't allowed
to lead anything or anybody else.

"AMATEUR DETECTIVE" (London).—Glad to
hear you have been the winner of a tuck-
lamper in the "Boys' Herald." I expect it
was good, as you say. Kerr has red hair,
commonly known as "ginger," and he is
several inches shorter in height than Figgins.
Sifton, late of the Sixth Form at St. Jim's,
received the sack when Sidney Clive arrived
from South Africa. By all means write and
let me know what kind of serial you would
prefer best in the "Boys' Herald." The
Cinema Page will stay as long as it is as
popular as it is now

COMPETITION RESULT.

In this competition one competitor sent in
a correct solution of all the pictures. The
first prize of 10s. a week for one year has
therefore been awarded to:

V. Robinson,
Hall Lane,
Elmswell, Suffolk.

The second prize of 5s. a week for one
year, and the third prize of 2s. 6d. a week
for one year have been added together and
divided among the following five competitors,
whose solutions came next nearest, containing
two errors each:

John Standing, 27, Water Street, Atherton,
near Manchester; Tom Hamilton, 850, London
Road, Bridgeton, Glasgow; H. Chilton, 179,
Levenshulme Road, Gorton, Manchester;
L. Boucher, Park Lane, Gurnsey, C.I.; G.
Freedman, 220a, Amburst Road, Hackney,
London, E.8.

Consolation prizes have been awarded to
the following twenty-seven competitors, whose
solutions contained three errors each:

Benjamin Kemp, 8, Morton Street, West
Hartlepool; F. W. Smith, 18, Southbrook
Gardens, Ellison Road, Streatham, S.W.16;
J. Jackson, 4, Ribble Street, Blackburn,
Lancs.; W. Hodges, 14, Lebury Mews, W.11;
D. Barr, 72, Fulhar Street, Renfrew, Scot-
land; W. Palfreyman, 29, Holland Street,
Denton, Manchester; Joseph Keoncki, 28,
Cromwell Street, Widnes; Tom R. Schofield,
15, Colne Road, Burnley, Lancs.; F. Hutchings,
48, Rosebery Avenue, South Shields; H. E.
Williams, 23, Cemetery Road, Treconyn,
Aberdare; Dick Wallis, 12, Rupert Street,
Stockton-on-Tees; M. Landry, 82, Avondale
Terrace, Keyham, Devonport; Wm. Hopkins,
73, Carter Road, Wolverhampton; Eileen
Evans, "Oferton" Dillwyn Road, Sketty,
Swansea; Alfred Crowhurst, 148, Prince of
Wales Road, Kentish Town, N.W.; J. Fair,
6, Inverlil Road, Kircaldy, Fife; David
Kidd, 538, Calder Street, Glasgow; C. H.
Vernon, Lynnmouth, London Road, Reigate,
Surrey; Fred Gibbons, 7, Paisley Street,
Bradford; A. W. Boast, 74, Moody Street,
Mile End, London, E.; Walter Carr, 35,
Duncan Street, St. Helen's, Lancs.; A.
Collins, 3, Maria Street, Shoreditch, London,
E.; Amy Emmett, 13, Glee Street, Bockett
Street, Leeds; James Crafter, 25, Waldo
Road, Bromley, Kent; Miss Cope, 156, Priory
Park Road, Kilburn, N.W.; Alex. Pepper,
6, Rose Street, Aberdeen; Mark McLaughlin,
40, Greenhill Lane, Bradford, Yorks.

CORRECT SOLUTIONS:

1. Knife. 2. Crown. 3. Fish. 4. Duck.
5. Mountain. 6. Girl. 7. Pipe. 8. Volume.
9. Hand. 10. Cliff. 11. Boat. 12. Boot.
13. Card. 14. Chair. 15. Pencil. 16. Bloom.
17. Bridge. 18. Smile. 19. Compass. 20. Frame.
21. Port. 22. Florin. 23. Officer. 24. Slice.
25. Cigar. 26. Basket. 27. Leak. 28. Heap.
29. Subtract. 30. Bound. 31. Scissors.
32. Harp. 33. Name. 34. Flare. 35. Weight.
36. Animal. 37. Broom. 38. Paint. 39. Hive.
40. Tent. 41. Land. 42. Hut. 43. Knot.
44. Spire. 45. Torn. 46. Stick. 47. Rag.
48. Sack.

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prizes offered in this week's "BOYS'
HERALD"?

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1½d



Pictures For Your Den!

No. 3. FIGHTING HAIG.

Another Splendid Portrait of a Great Popular Hero in next week's "Gem." Don't miss it!