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LOOKING AFTER LEVISON!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



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A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry and Co. at St. Jim's.

LOOKING AFTER LEVISON!

By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.
Up to Grundy.

"MERRY!"

Tom Merry had stopped before the notice-board in the School House, and had taken a pencil from his pocket, when Grundy of the Shell called to him.

The list of the St. Jim's Junior Eleven was pinned up on the board, and the junior captain was apparently going to make an alteration.

He paused, however, and looked round as Grundy spoke.

"Hallo?" he replied.

"Seen Levison?"

"Which?" asked Tom. "Levison of the Fourth, or Levison of the Third?"

"Levison major, I mean," said Grundy.

"I believe he's gone out," said Tom. "I saw him an hour ago, when he told me he wouldn't be playing on Saturday."

Tom turned to the board again, and drew the pencil through the name of Ernest Levison in the cricket list.

Grundy watched that action with great interest.

"Levison's not playing against the Grammar School on Saturday!" he exclaimed.

"Looks like it," said Tom.

"Then you'll want another man!" said Grundy eagerly.

Tom Merry smiled.

"Thanks, I've got one!" he said.

And he proceeded to scribble the name of Sidney Clive underneath the crossed-out name.

Grundy grunted.

"There's a better name I could suggest," he remarked.

"Oh, you're thinking of Cardew, perhaps?" said Tom Merry blandly.

"No, I'm not."

"Roylance, perhaps?"

"No!" snapped Grundy.

"That new chap, Durrance?" asked Tom, still misunderstanding.

"No!" roared Grundy. "What's the matter with my name?"

"Nothing the matter with your name, old scout," conceded Tom Merry. "But your name can't play cricket, can it?"

"I suppose it's no good talking sense to you, Tom Merry!" said Grundy, with a snort of disgust.

"You've never tried, old chap."

"But I was asking you about Levison," resumed Grundy. "You say he's gone out?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Where's he gone?"

"Blessed if I know! I didn't ask him!"

"Why isn't he playing on Saturday?"

"He's going out for the afternoon."

"Where?"

The captain of the Shell stared at Grundy. Grundy's inquisitiveness with regard to Levison was extraordinary. With all Grundy's faults he had never been looked upon as inquisitive, and Tom was surprised.

"I've got a reason for asking," added Grundy, understanding Tom Merry's expression.

"Well, I don't know where he's going," said Tom. "He told me he was off for the afternoon on Saturday, and asked me whether I'd mind filling his place for the Grammar School match. I didn't mind in the least. Anything else you want to know, Grundy?"

"Then he's keeping it secret, what he's doing on Saturday afternoon?" said Grundy thoughtfully.

"Not that I know of."

"But you say he didn't tell you where he was going!"

"Probably because I'm not ass enough to ask questions about things that don't concern me," explained Tom politely.

"This concerns me, Tom Merry!"

"Blessed if I see how! Hallo! Come on, you chaps!" added Tom, as Manners and Lowther came down the stairs.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Grundy, as the Terrible Three moved towards the doors together. "I haven't finished yet!"

"You never have finished," remarked Monty Lowther. "Life's too short to hear you finish, when you begin wagging your chin, Grundy!"

"About Levison——" went on Grundy, unheeding.

"Give Levison a rest," said Tom. "What the merry dickens are you so interested in Levison for, all of a sudden?"

"It looks bad," said Grundy.

"What looks bad?"

"About Levison."

The Terrible Three surveyed George Alfred Grundy in surprise. What was working in George Alfred's powerful brain was a mystery to them.

"Off your rocker?" queried Manners.

"Don't run away with the idea that I'm unfriendly to Levison," said Grundy. "I don't say I like the chap much. Too sly for me. He's really got my place in the Junior Eleven, no doubt; but that's the fault of the cricket skipper—a silly ass! You don't mind my speaking plainly, Merry?"

"Not at all. Run on!"

"In fact, in taking this matter up I'm actuated by quite friendly feelings towards Levison."

"Taking what matter up?" demanded Lowther.

"About Levison."

"But what about Levison?" howled Tom Merry, beginning to get exasperated. "Is he a German spy, or a member of the Forty Thieves, or the Man in the Iron Mask, and have you just found it out?"

"Be serious, please!" said Grundy reprovingly. "It's a serious matter, Merry. Don't be flippant! It isn't so long ago that Levison was an out-and-out bounder, as shady as Racke or Crooke, a sneaking, smoky waster——"

Tom Merry knitted his brows.

"Don't keep up the list," he said. "That's all over and done with, and it's caddish to drag it up again. Shut up!"

"I'm not dragging it up. I've told you that I'm actuated——"

"Good word!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"By friendly feelings towards the chap. I don't think that, after he's really reformed himself, he ought to be allowed to slip back into rotten ways for want of a helping and guiding hand. I think that a fellow's duty is to help him keep up to the mark when he's on the down-grade again," explained Grundy.

"Fathead!"

"Perhaps you don't see it, Merry. You're a bit dense, if you don't mind my saying so. But I have to consider my position in the school," said Grundy loftily. "I look on this as a duty. I always do my duty as I see it. Having thought the matter over, I decline to see Levison slipping back into shady rascality for want of a little friendly help."

"You howling ass!" said Tom Merry, in measured tones. "Levison's doing nothing of the sort. He's as straight as any chap in St. Jim's!"

"I hope so. But it looks bad to me. Yesterday I saw him hanging about the Green Man."

"Rot!"

"And Racke says——"

"Racke's a rotten fabricator!"

"Yes, I know. But it looks bad. Now Levison stands out of the cricket match on Saturday without giving a reason. Looks to me like one of his old engagements with those shady rotters——"

"Bosh!"

"You don't see it, Merry. You lack brains, you know. I'm going to take the matter up, and look after Levison a little. I'm not going to see a St. Jim's chap going to the dogs for want of a little friendly help and counsel."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I suppose you mean well, Grundy," he said. "You can't help being a born idiot. You'd better let Levison alone, though. If you start looking after him, he may cut up rusty."

"That wouldn't make any difference. I never stand any rot. I'm going to ascertain the facts, and then step in," said Grundy calmly. "Now, do you fellows know anything of the subject? Have you noticed——"

"Bow-wow!"

"I don't want any cheek!" said Grundy, his brow darkening. "I'm taking this matter up from a sense of duty."

The Terrible Three chuckled.

George Alfred Grundy never could mind his own business, and no doubt his intentions towards the one-time black sheep of the Fourth were very kindly. It was only one more instance of Grundy putting his foot in it. But, naturally, Tom Merry & Co. declined to take seriously his fatherly concern for Levison of the Fourth.

"It's not a laughing matter," said Grundy. "Levison's not a bad sort, in his way; his sister is a nice girl. I'm going to take him in hand. Don't walk away while I'm talking to you, you duffers!"

"Oh, bother! Get out of the way, Grundy!" said Tom Merry impatiently.

Grundy planted himself firmly in the way of the Terrible Three.

"I'm not done yet," he said. "I'm going to—— Here, hold on! I mean, let go!" roared Grundy. "Hands off, or—— Yaroooh!"

Grundy sat down on the floor, in the grasp of the Terrible Three. He sat down hard. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther strolled out of the School House, leaving him sitting there, and gasping.

"Ow! Oh! Yow! Cheeky rotters! Ow!" gasped Grundy breathlessly.

Mr. Railton came along the passage. He paused and looked at Grundy,

astonished to see the burly Shell fellow sitting on the floor.

"Grundy!" rapped out the Housemaster. "What are you doing? Cannot you find a chair if you wish to sit down? You utterly ridiculous boy! Get up at once!"

"I—I——" stuttered Grundy, scrambling to his feet. "I—I——"

"You should not play these absurd tricks, Grundy! I am surprised at you!" said Mr. Railton severely. "You should have some sense of dignity, Grundy, as becomes a boy in your Form, and not act like a child!"

The Housemaster walked on, leaving George Alfred Grundy quite speechless.

CHAPTER 2.
Startling News for Grundy.

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW was in his study, No. 9 in the Fourth, yawning.

His study-mates, Levison and Clive, were out. Levison was out of gates on affairs of his own, and Sidney Clive was at cricket. Cardew was not feeling inclined for cricket, nor for anything else in particular. He was slacking, and he was bored. He was yawning when George Alfred Grundy looked into Study No. 9, and he nodded cheerily to the great man of the Shell. It occurred to him that he might extract a little amusement for a few minutes from the harmless process of pulling Grundy's leg.

"Amble in, old bean!" said Cardew. "Have they put your name down for the Grammar School match?"

"They haven't," said Grundy.

"I wonder why? A lot of chaps would be jolly glad to see your name down for that match."

"You really think so?" asked Grundy, beaming.

"Yaas! Grammar School chaps, I mean."

"You silly ass!" roared Grundy. "I didn't come here for any of your silly jokes, Cardew! I'm after Levison. Where is he?"

"Yaw-aw-aw!"

"Don't yawn at me, you lazy slacker!" said Grundy, in disgust. "It's rather a serious matter about Levison. As his friend, you ought to be concerned about it!"

"Hallo! What's wrong with Levison?" asked Cardew.

"I'm afraid there's a lot wrong. I think it was before you came here that he had such a spicy reputation," said Grundy thoughtfully.

"Yaas!" sighed Cardew. "I came here expectin' to meet a kindred spirit, an' I found that Levison had turned over a new leaf, and was settin' up as a shinin' example to youth. It was heart-breakin'!"

"From what I hear, he started on a new tack when his minor came," remarked Grundy.

"Yaas. Young Frank's at the bottom of it. I shall never forgive him," said Cardew.

"Oh, don't be an ass! It would be rather a shock to young Frank if he found his brother was going the old way," said Grundy "Now, from some observations I've made, Cardew, I'm afraid that that's exactly what Levison's doing."

"You don't say so?"

"Yes, I do. It looks like it to me, and I'm not going to allow it! I'm going to step in and switch Levison back to the right path," explained Grundy. "I feel that it's up to me."

Ralph Cardew looked at him curiously. Grundy was evidently in great earnest, and actuated by very good motives; and evidently it did not occur to him that he was meddling where he had no concern. Cardew's eyes glimmered.

"That's just like you, Grundy," he remarked.

"Yes; I'm that sort of chap," said Grundy. "Always willing to help a lame dog over a stile, you know, and to look after the fags, and so on. Commonplace chaps like Tom Merry, or Talbot, or Blake, wouldn't see it as as I do. I have my position in the House to consider, you know."

"Quite so!" agreed Cardew solemnly.

How Grundy's position in the House differed from that of any other fellow in the Shell was a mystery to everybody but Grundy. But George Alfred seemed satisfied on the point. Grundy had his own methods of reasoning, which were not those of common mortals.

"Now, as Levison's friend, you'll naturally want to help," said Grundy. "If you can tell me anything on the subject, Cardew, it will help. Have you noticed anything about Levison lately—any sign of slipping back into Racke's way; I mean, cigarettes, and cards, and bets, and that kind of thing?"

"I—I suppose I ought to tell you, Grundy?" murmured Cardew.

"Certainly you ought. In fact, I order you to!"

"Oh!" gasped Cardew. "You—you order me?"

"Certainly!"

"Well, if you order me, I haven't got any choice in the matter, have I?" said Cardew innocently.

"That's so. I can see there's something," said Grundy. "Out with it!"

"Well, perhaps I ought to mention——" Cardew hesitated.

"Go ahead!"

"About Levison coming home squiffy——"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Grundy, greatly shocked. "Squiffy! Do you mean intoxicated?"

"Squiffy generally means intoxicated."

"This is blacker than I thought," said Grundy, looking quite distressed. You're sure of what you say, Cardew?"

"My dear man, I fully realise the seriousness of the matter," said Cardew, with owl-like gravity. "What do you think of Levison doin' a war-dance round the study, and tryin' to fight the bookcase under the impression that it was the Kaiser?"

"Awful!"

"Awful's the word," said Cardew, his voice faltering. "Clive an' I were shocked no end. Fortunately, we were able to keep it dark. We took away the bottle of whisky——"

"He—he had a bottle of whisky?" stuttered Grundy.

"We took it away and hid it," said Cardew. "The safest place I could think of was D'Arcy's hatbox."

"It ought to have been destroyed!" exclaimed Grundy warmly. "It might get D'Arcy into trouble, if a bottle of whiskey were found in his hatbox!"

"I never thought of that till this minute, old bean."

"I must see to that. I must say you are a silly ass, Cardew!"

"We can't all have your brain-power, old scout."

"Yes, that's so," admitted Grundy. "What else have you noticed?"

"I—I suppose it's rather serious, Levison going over to the Black Bull at Wayland to-day——"

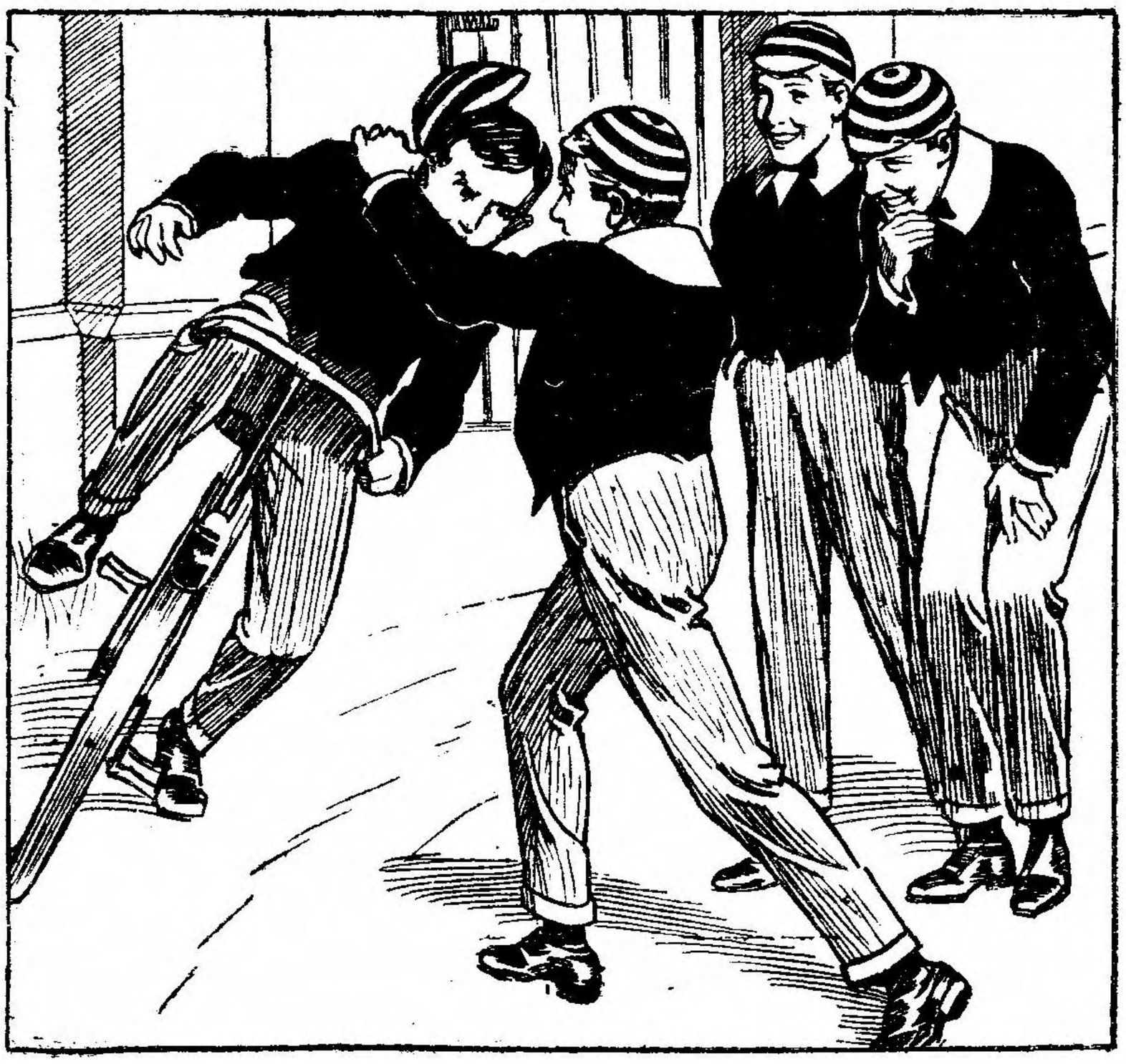
"The—the Black Bull! Why, that's a worse hole than the Green Man!" exclaimed Grundy, in horror. "You must be a rotter to let him go, Cardew!"

"What could I do, more than go down on my knees and beg him with tears in my eyes to reflect in time?" said Cardew.

"I'd have done more than that. But you're a silly, soft ass!" said Grundy scornfully. "So he's gone over there now, has he? Is he walking?"

"He went out on foot."

"Then he could be headed off easily



Grundy Is Dragged Off!
(See Chapter 3.)

enough by a chap on a bike," said Grundy thoughtfully. "I'll see to that. Anything else, Cardew?"

Cardew dabbed his eyes with his handkerchief, apparently in deep emotion.

"That's all I can think of at present, Grundy. Excuse these tears—the chap is my pal, you know!" Cardew sobbed.

"Your feelings do you credit," said Grundy kindly. "But Levison wants looking after, and I'm the chap to do it. Mind, I don't think he's really bad."

"Thank you for those kind words!" murmured Cardew.

"But he wants stopping sharp, and talking to plain," said Grundy. "Just another word. Has he any associates in these new ways of his?"

"I—I hardly like to say——"

"Out with it!" said Grundy commandingly.

"But—but it's jolly risky saying anythin' about a prefect——"

Grundy jumped.

"A prefect mixed up in it!" he ejaculated. "My hat! I seem to have got on to a pretty state of things! Jolly lucky I took the matter in hand, I think. Give me his name!"

"I—I say, Knox would be wild if—if——"

"Knox of the Sixth, is it? I've heard fellows saying things about Knox. I'm not surprised!" Grundy knitted his brows. "Knox is a bad egg, I know that. I dare say that young ass Levison is under his influence. I'll jolly well put a stopper on it!"

Grundy hurried out of the study, greatly excited.

Cardew's emotion vanished the moment George Alfred was gone. He strolled to the study window, and stood looking lazily out; and in a few minutes he spotted Grundy wheeling away his bicycle towards the gates. Cardew winked into space. Evidently the kind-hearted Grundy was biking over to Wayland to save Levison from himself, as it were.

Cardew reflected a few minutes, and then left the study and headed for the Sixth Form quarters. He tapped at the door of Gerald Knox, the bully of the Sixth. Knox's gruff voice bade him enter.

"Hallo! What do you want?" snapped Knox, as the dandy of the Fourth lounged into the doorway.

Knox did not look amiable. The black sheep of the Sixth had been prepared to take up Lord Reckness' grandson, who was rolling in money; and he had been ready to carry his condescension so far as to win some of his ample cash at nap and banker. But Cardew had coolly kept the senior at arm's length, and shown no desire whatever to be honoured with his notice. As a result, the prefect had sometimes made matters warm for the junior, finding many little opportunities of doing so.

"There's something I think I ought to tell you, Knox," said Cardew gravely.

"Have you come here sneaking?" sneered Knox.

"Well, I think I ought——"

"Out with it!"

"Suppose I knew that a junior of this House was going over to the Black Bull in Wayland——"

"What?" roared Knox.

"I suppose I ought to tell a prefect, oughtn't I?"

Knox looked at him. He did not want to hear any tales about his favourites, Racke and Crooke.

"What's the junior's name?" he snapped.

"Grundy."

"Oh!"

Knox rose to his feet. There was a gleam in his eyes now. Grundy of the Shell was so burly and so reckless that even the seniors did not like quarrelling with him, and Knox had been cheeked by the truculent George Alfred more than once, without dealing with him as he would have dealt with any other junior.

"Are you sure of it, Cardew?"

"He's just told me."

"Precious sneaking little cad to come here and give him away, then!" growled Knox.

"I thought I ought——"

"Oh, rats! I'll jolly well look into this! Has he started?"

"Yes: on his bike."

"All right!"

Knox hurried out of his study. The bully of the Sixth would have been very pleased to catch Grundy in an act that would have earned him a flogging from the Head, as Cardew well knew.

Ralph Reckness Cardew smiled as he sauntered away to the cricket-ground. Having sent George Alfred Grundy to Wayland after Levison—who was not there—he had sent Knox of the Sixth after George Alfred—who certainly would be there. He felt that he had killed two birds with one stone, and was feeling very satisfied with himself. What would happen to Grundy and Knox when they met at the Black Bull he did not know—or care.

"You're lookin' wathah chippay, deah boy," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he came off the pitch and met Cardew.

"Yes. I've been no end bucked this afternoon," smiled Cardew. "By the way, I suppose you don't keep whisky in your study, D'Arcy?"

D'Arcy looked at him.

"Is that a joke?" he asked stiffly.

"Not at all!"

"I certainly do nothin' of the kind, Cardew! I wegard the question as insultin'," said Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Well, Grundy seems to have an idea in his head that you've got a bottle of whisky in your hatbox," said Cardew calmly. "I believe he's coming to your study about it."

"Bai Jove! The cheekay wottah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Let him put his cheekay nose into my studay, bai Jove!"

Cardew smiled genially. He had been feeling inexpressibly bored a short time before, but he felt that things were moving now. Certainly he had done enough mischief for one day.

CHAPTER 3.
A Surprise for Tom Merry.

"LOOK out, fathead!"

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were chatting outside the gates of St. Jim's when Grundy rushed his bike out in a great hurry.

The Terrible Three jumped out of the way just in time.

Manners caught one of the whirling pedals with his calf, however, and he gave a wrathful yell.

"You clumsy ass!"

"Don't get in the way!" snapped Grundy angrily. "Buzz off!"

Grundy put one leg over his machine.

He had no time to waste on the Terrible Three, and no politeness, either, it seemed. But Tom Merry & Co. could not exactly be treated in that high-handed fashion.

As Grundy jammed down his pedal, Manners grasped him by the shoulders, and brought him off the bike with a crash.

"There, you ass!" he shouted. "Next time you lame a chap with your silly bike perhaps you'll say you're sorry!"

"Yah!" roared Grundy, as he sprawled in the road. "Why, I'll squash you! I'll spifficate you! I'll—I'll——"

He scrambled furiously to his feet. But instead of rushing at Manners, he rushed after his bike, which was curling up into a hedge. He dragged it out of the hedge, gasping and glaring at the chums of the Shell.

"I'd mop up the road with you if I had time!" he spluttered.

"Oh, find time!" said Manners.

"Do!" urged Monty Lowther.

"You silly chumps!" growled Grundy. "I haven't a minute if I'm to catch Levison before he gets to the Black Bull."

"Levison! The Black Bull!" ejaculated Tom Merry blankly.

"Yes. I've found out that that's where he's gone," said Grundy. "I'm after him to stop him. All very well for you fellows to let a chap go to the dogs! I'm not that sort. Where's that pump gone?"

Grundy glared round for his pump, which had fallen off his machine.

"Who's told you Levison's gone to the Black Bull, you shrieking ass?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Somebody's pulling your leg!"

"I got it from Cardew. Where's that dashed pump?"

"Cardew? He must have been spoofing!" exclaimed Tom.

"He was nearly crying with—with shame and horror when he told me," said Grundy. "Can you see my pump?"

"Cardew—crying! Oh, crumbs!"

"My dashed pump's lost, you silly asses! Where——"

"Under your silly hoof, fathead!" said Lowther.

"My hat! So it is!"

Grundy caught up his pump, jammed it on his machine, and mounted in hot haste. He had no time, just then, to mop up the road with the Terrible Three, which was perhaps fortunate for him.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another when he was gone.

"Cardew must have been pulling his leg," said Tom at last.

"Certain," said Lowther. "Grundy was born to have his leg pulled. It's one of Cardew's queer jokes; but I'd punch his head for it, if I were Levison."

"Well, Grundy goes about asking to have his leg pulled," said Tom Merry, laughing. "It's too bad, though—he believes it about Levison. Hallo, here's another silly ass with a bike!"

It was Knox of the Sixth this time, who was wheeling his machine out of gates. The prefect glanced at Tom Merry & Co.

"Have you seen Grundy go out?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Tom.

"Which way did he go?"

"On a bike," said Monty Lowther.

"I mean, which direction?" snapped Knox. The bully of the Sixth was not in need of playful remarks from the humorist of the Shell.

"Oh, which direction?" said Monty Lowther. "Towards Rylcombe."

The Shell fellows certainly did not intend to inform a prefect of Grundy's destination. Grundy had gone towards Rylcombe, certainly—it was necessary to do so to get into the lane leading to the Wayland road.

Knox grunted, and rode away on his machine.

"He's after Grundy!" said Manners.

"Looks like it! If that howling ass goes into the Black Bull, and Knox finds him there, there will be trouble," said Tom Merry, knitting his brows. "It's too bad of Cardew."

The Shell fellows sauntered down the road on the way to the village. Near

Rylcombe a junior came in sight, and they recognised Levison of the Fourth.

Ernest Levison had a bat under his arm—a new bat. He nodded to the Terrible Three, who stopped as they came up with him.

"So you've been to Rylcombe?" said Monty Lowther.

"Yes; getting my new bat," answered Levison. "Isn't it a beauty?"

He held the bat up for inspection.

"Topping!" said Tom Merry, perhaps a little relieved to find that Levison had been so harmlessly employed. "A pity you won't be able to use it on Saturday."

"I wish I could," said Levison. "I'd have liked to play in the Grammar School match, only——"

He paused, and coloured slightly.

"Another engagement?" said Monty Lowther blandly.

"Well, yes."

"At the Black Bull?" asked Lowther.

Levison started.

"What do you mean, Lowther? If that's a joke, I don't see the point."

"It isn't my joke, it's Grundy's, so, naturally, nobody could be expected to see the point, old nut. Weren't you aware that Grundy has taken you under his wing?"

"Eh?"

"He fears that you are falling from grace, and he is going to look after you, and see that you keep to the right path."

"My hat!"

"Somebody's stuffed him up that you were gone to the Black Bull, and he's gone to rescue you from bad associates."

"Wha-a-at?"

"So, if you ever feel tempted to look upon the wine when it is red, or the sporting paper when it is pink, remember that Grundy has an eye on you," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "As it is not Grundy's business, naturally, he has taken it in hand."

"The silly, frabjous ass!" exclaimed Levison indignantly. "I suppose you fellows don't believe——"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Of course not. We shouldn't look upon it as a joke if we did," he answered. "Grundy is always playing the goat, one way or another. He means well."

"He'd better let me alone, whether he means well or not!" growled Levison. "What's put the idea into his silly head? Somebody pulling his leg, I suppose."

"That's it. Don't get waxy," said Tom, laughing. "Grundy can't help it. Silly chumps are born, not made."

Levison nodded, and went on his way. He had not mentioned what it was that kept him from playing in the match on Saturday. It was rather a distinction to be selected for the eleven in the Grammar School match, and Tom Merry had been surprised when Levison asked to be excused. It was easy enough to fill his place, as Levison had given him plenty of time; but Tom wondered a little at his reticence. Levison was not bound to mention what he had on for Saturday, but it was rather odd to avoid doing so.

The three juniors walked on towards the village, where they had business at Mr. Wiggs' shop. After leaving Mr. Wiggs they walked home, chatting cricket by the way, having quite dismissed Levison from their minds. But they were to be reminded of him.

A man was leaning on the stile in Rylcombe Lane, and he detached himself from it as the three Shell fellows came up, and stepped towards them, touching his hat.

"'Skuse me," he said. "One of you young gents Master Levison?"

"No," answered Tom Merry.

"P'r'aps you know the young gentleman, sir?"

"Yes, quite well."

"Then maybe you'd give him a message?"

Tom Merry looked curiously at the man. He was a horsy-looking man, and he wore a bowler hat on the side of his head, and had a straw in his mouth.

"What's the message, then?" asked Tom. "I'll give it to him, certainly. I shall see him at calling-over."

"Thank you, sir!" said the man respectfully. "Tell him, if you don't mind, that Jimmy Pink says the 'orse is all right, and ten bob will do the trick."

The Terrible Three simply blinked at the man as he gave them that extraordinary message for Levison of the Fourth.

"The horse is all right," repeated Tom Merry, "and ten bob will do the trick."

"That's it, sir; from Jimmy Pink. Thank you kindly!"

The man touched his hat again, and crossed the stile and walked away through the fields.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry.

"He, he, he!"

The Terrible Three spun round as they heard that sudden unmusical cachinnation. Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth Form, had just come through a gap in the hedge on the other side of the lane, and he had evidently heard that curious message from Jimmy Pink.

"He, he, he!" Trimble of the Fourth chuckled again. "So Levison's got ten bob on a horse, has he? He, he, he!"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Tom Merry.

"He, he, he!"

The Terrible Three walked on with knitted brows, Baggy Trimble rolling after them, still chuckling. Unless Jimmy Pink's message bore the construction Baggy had put on it, the Terrible Three did not know what to make of it, certainly; but they were not disposed to discuss that with the Paul Pry of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 4.
Caught!

"I CAN'T miss him here!" murmured George Alfred Grundy.

The great Grundy had dismounted from his bicycle at the end of River Street in Wayland.

It was a low quarter of the town, near the river, and the Black Bull stood at the corner—a public-house that had an evil reputation.

Rough-looking men glanced at Grundy as he stood at the corner, with his hand resting on the saddle of his bicycle. Any well-dressed fellow was certain to attract attention if he stood about for very long in that quarter. Grundy was not thinking of that, however. He had taken up a position whence he could watch the approaches to the Black Bull, to spot Levison when he arrived, and turn him back. He intended to speak to Levison in a quiet, friendly way, and reason with him—talk to him like a Dutch uncle, in fact. But if that was not efficacious, Grundy was prepared to take him by the collar and march him back to St. Jim's by main force. Having set up as a censor of morals, Grundy would not fail to put his beef into his new task. Levison had been a decidedly hard case once upon a time, and Grundy was generously determined to spare no effort to prevent him from sinking back into his former disreputable pursuits. It was really very kind of Grundy; and he felt that that was so himself, and he experienced a glow of satisfaction.

The stares that were turned upon him did not disconcert him in the least. Some small boys, in a group near at hand, began to jeer at him, and Grundy looked at them. He was inclined to charge them; but he reflected that if he left his bike standing there it would probably be stolen, so he suppressed his wrath, and listened with reddening ears to the stream of opprobrious remarks from the small fry.

More and more of the urchins gathered round, greatly interested in Grundy, and in his unaccountable conduct in standing at the corner of the street, in a conspicuous position, without any apparent object.

Ere long the Shell fellow was the centre of a growing crowd, nearly all of whom were passing remarks upon his features or his clothes.

It was pretty certain that they would begin hustling him before long, and Grundy watched very anxiously for Levison.

He must certainly have got ahead of the Fourth-Former on his bike, so he was sure he was on the ground first. He only hoped that he would not have to wait too long. An ancient potato suddenly smote him on the side of the head, and nearly knocked his cap off. That was the beginning.

"Look here, you nippers, clear off!" shouted Grundy wrathfully.

"Yah!"

"Go 'ome!"

"Who yer talking to?"

"Yah!"

Two or three stones whizzed round Grundy. The fact that he was well dressed was enough to excite the enmity of the little ragamuffins, and they wanted to know what he was doing there, too. Two or three river-men came out of the Black Bull, and joined the crowd of juveniles staring at Grundy. George Alfred felt more and more uneasy, and he inwardly resolved that when Levison arrived he would not waste much time in kind words. The alternative collaring process suited his present temper better.

"Yow!" stuttered Grundy suddenly, as a stone clinked on his ear. "You young scoundrel! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pelt 'im!"

"Pelt the blooming torf!"

Grundy, risking it with his bike, made a rush at his tormentors, and scattered them. He rushed back just in time to stop a young rascal who was dragging his bike away from the kerb. Grundy shoved him off, and the ragamuffin sat in the road and yelled.

"'Ands off that there nipper!" exclaimed one of the Black Bull habitues, pushing towards Grundy. "You let 'im alone!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Grundy.

The bargeman spat on his hands.

"Where will you have it?" he asked politely.

"Look here—— Oh, my hat!"

Grundy had let go his bike again to guard his nose. The bargeman pressed him harder, and Grundy was engaged in a fight before he quite knew what was happening. Fortunately, the bargeman had been imbibing at the Black Bull, not wisely but too well, and a drive on the chest sat him down on the pavement, and he remained there.

Just then there sounded the whir of a bike in the road, and Knox of the Sixth dashed up, and jumped off his machine. The rough crowd was pressing closer round Grundy, who was looking red and bewildered.

"Grundy!" shouted Knox.

"I say, Knox, stand by me!" exclaimed Grundy. "Lend a hand!"

"You young rascal, come away at once!" shouted Knox.

"Can't!"

"What?"

"You see, I'm waiting for somebody," explained Grundy.

"Come away at once!" commanded Knox. "You young idiot, you'll have a regular mob on you soon!"

He seized Grundy by the collar.

"Go it!" roared the delighted urchins. "Wallop 'im, mister!"

"Let go my collar, you silly ass!" shouted Grundy wrathfully.

He clenched his fists, and Knox released him suddenly. Grundy was excited and reckless, and the Sixth-Former did not want a scrap.

"I shall report this to the Head, Grundy," he exclaimed. "I order you to come back to the school with me at once!"

Grundy hesitated.

Even the great George Alfred had to obey a prefect's orders; and, besides, it dawned on him that he could not wait there for Levison any longer. He was in danger of being mobbed at any moment, and the bargeman was struggling to his feet to renew the combat.

"All right, I'm coming!" gasped Grundy.

Knox was getting on his machine already. He had had enough of that quarter. He rode away up the street, and Grundy, realising that discretion was the better part of valour, jumped on his bicycle and rode away with him. A yell from the crowd followed him, and stones whizzed after him.

Two or three of the stones smote Grundy's back, and he howled. He was glad when River Street was left behind.

He rode down the High Street with Knox, and they came out into the lane.

"Follow me to the school, Grundy!" ordered Knox, in his most dictatorial tone.

"Oh, rats!" answered Grundy. "I shall beat you to the school. You can't ride!"

And he passed Knox, and shot ahead.

Knox was in a bad temper. So was Grundy. He had failed to intercept Levison on his way to the Black Bull, owing to unforeseen circumstances, though anyone but George Alfred Grundy might have foreseen those circumstances. Cardew certainly had. But the River Street mob made his task an impossible one, and Grundy had to give it up.

He was disappointed and annoyed, and not disposed to stand any nonsense from Knox, prefect though he was.

It was near locking-up time when Grundy arrived at St. Jim's, and he put up his bicycle and went round to the School House. His study-mates, Wilkins and Gunn, met him as he came in.

"Hallo! Where the dickens have you been all this time?" asked Wilkins.

"Out!" replied Grundy.

"Been in the wars?" asked Gunn curiously.

"Yes, a bit! I suppose you haven't seen anything of Levison?"

"Levison of the Fourth? Yes. I saw him with Cardew and Clive a while ago," answered Wilkins.

"Then he's come in?"

"I didn't know he'd been out," yawned Wilkins. "If he had he's come in, certainly. What does it matter?"

"It matters a lot," said Grundy.

"Hallo! What do you want, Knox? You're always bothering a chap!"

Knox had followed him into the House.

"Come with me!" he snapped.

"Eh? What for—where?" asked Grundy irritably.

"To Mr. Railton!"

"What for? Nothing to see Railton about, is there?"

"I rather think so," answered Knox grimly. "You're going to be reported to the Housemaster for pub-haunting, my pippin."

"What?" roared Grundy.

"Follow me at once!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Wilkins; and Gunn looked dismayed. But George Alfred Grundy only looked wrathful.

"Pub-haunting!" he repeated. "Me! You silly ass, Knox——"

"Follow me!" shouted Knox.

"Go and eat coke! Pub-haunting! More in your line than mine, if what the fellows say is true!" snorted Grundy. "In fact, I've got reason to believe that you're mixed up in that kind of thing with the fellow I was looking for, Knox."

Knox's face was a study. Grundy's voice could be heard far and wide. It never was a gentle voice, and when Grundy was excited it was like unto the dulcet tones of a Bull of Bashan. A dozen fellows looked round in astonishment. Kildare of the Sixth came up quickly.

"Grundy!" he exclaimed.

"It's all right, Kildare," said Grundy. "Knox seems to be off his chump a bit."

"He's got to go to the Housemaster!" gasped Knox. "I caught him at the Black Bull in Wayland——"

"You mean I caught you there!" snorted Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Kildare. "Grundy, go to Mr. Railton's study at once, or I'll take you there by your collar!"

"I'll go if you like, Kildare, but really there's nothing—— Oh, all right, I'm going!"

And Grundy went, with the infuriated Knox at his heels. He left a crowd behind him, in a buzz of excitement.

CHAPTER 5.
Cardew Explains.

MR. RAILTON, in his study, had heard the loud voices, and he was frowning when Knox of the Sixth marched Grundy in.

"What is the matter, Knox?" he exclaimed.

"I have to report this junior to you, sir," said Knox. "He refused to come to you at my order."

"Grundy!"

"You see, sir, there was nothing to come for," explained Grundy. "I am really afraid, sir, that Knox is a bit wrong in the head. He's acting very strangely."

Knox almost choked.

"Silence, Grundy! What have you to report, Knox?"

"I was informed, sir, that Grundy had gone to a low public-house, the Black Bull in Wayland," said Knox. "I immediately put my work aside and went there. I felt that I was bound to do so."

"Quite right!"

"I found Grundy at the place, engaged in a shindy with a crowd of ruffians outside the public-house. I brought him back to the school."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, greatly shocked. "What have you to say to this, Grundy?"

"Only that Knox has got it all wrong, sir," answered George Alfred cheerily. "I was waiting for a chap outside the Black Bull."

"For whom were you waiting, Grundy?"

"A fellow I'd heard was going there, sir. I was going to stop him, and turn him back. I felt that that was my duty," said Grundy loftily.

"Do you mean a boy belonging to this school, Grundy?"

"Yes, sir."

"His name?"

"I'd rather not give his name, sir, as I don't want to get him into a row. My object was to interfere, and save him from playing the giddy ox."

"You will give me his name at once, Grundy, or else I can only conclude that you are speaking falsely!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Don't utter ridiculous ejaculations in my presence, Grundy!" thundered the Housemaster. "This is a serious matter. Your explanation is almost incredible; but if it is true I must know the name of the boy in question."

"I am sure it is simply an invention, sir," said Knox.

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed Grundy indignantly. "You jolly well know the name of the chap, Knox!"

"Is that the case, Knox?"

"Not at all, sir," said the prefect, looking at Grundy in wonder. "I don't believe a word Grundy says."

"My word's a good bit better than yours, Knox!" retorted Grundy. "Pub-haunting, indeed! You ought to know all about pub-haunting, certainly!"

"Grundy, how dare you speak to a prefect in that manner!"

"Well, he's accusing me of pub-haunting, sir," said Grundy. "I don't see why I shouldn't say what I know about him."

Knox's face became almost livid. He wondered whether Grundy had become aware of any of his shady secrets. The black sheep of the Sixth had a good many.

"You dare to accuse Knox, Grundy?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Well, I'm not a sneak," said Grundy. "I could say something if I liked. He's quite as bad as the other chap."

"What other?"

"The junior I was waiting for outside the Black Bull, sir."

Mr. Railton looked very hard at Grundy. Then he turned to Knox.

"Knox, you say you were informed that Grundy was at the Black Bull?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who informed you?"

"Cardew of the Fourth!"

"Cardew!" stuttered Grundy.

"Silence, Grundy! Call Cardew here, Knox!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Knox stepped to the door and opened it. The corridor outside was quite thickly populated. Fifty fellows, at least, had gathered to learn what was happening to Grundy.

"Blake!" snapped Knox.

"Hallo?" replied Jack Blake.

"Fetch Cardew here at once!"

"Right-ho!"

Knox turned back into the study, and in a few minutes Ralph Reckness Cardew came downstairs with Blake. There was a buzz in the crowded passage as the dandy of the Fourth was seen.

Cardew was quite cool.

"You've landed yourself into something, Cardew," said Manners. "Grundy's been caught at the Black Bull, you ass!"

"Knox spotted him there," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas. I sent Knox after him," said Cardew coolly.

"You did!" shouted a dozen voices.

"Yaas. Rather a joke on the pair of them, wasn't it?"

"Bai Jove! It may turn out a wathah sewious joke for you, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Yaas, I shouldn't wonder."

"You funny ass!" said Monty Lowther. "You've done it this time!"

"Yaas. I ought to leave the funny bizney to you, old bean. It's really your line," admitted Cardew.

"I say, leave the door open, Cardew," said Baggy Trimble. "Let's see the show!"

"Certainly, my fat nut!"

Cardew went into the Housemaster's study, kindly leaving the door a little ajar, so that the crowd outside could see and hear the show

Mr. Railton met him with a stern look of inquiry. Grundy stared at him. This new development quite astounded Grundy.

"Cardew, you informed Knox that Grundy had gone to the Black Bull in Wayland?" said the Housemaster.

"Quite so, sir!"

"Grundy declares that he went there to stop some junior whom he suspected of lawless conduct. Since you appear to have known Grundy's intention, doubtless you can also give information on this point."

"Certainly, sir!"

"Is Grundy's statement correct?"

"Quite!"

"Then you know the name of the junior he refers to?"

"I do."

"Give me the name!"

"Levison!"

"You rotten sneak!" murmured Grundy, in disgust.

"Silence, Grundy!"

"Cardew did not inform me that Grundy had gone to intercept Levison, sir," said Knox of the Sixth. "He simply told me that Grundy had gone to the Black Bull."

"Yes, that's so," agreed Cardew.

"I cannot believe, without the strongest proof, that Levison was present at such a place," said Mr. Railton. "Grundy, what grounds had you for supposing anything of the kind?"

"I had it from Cardew, sir."

"What? You told him, Cardew?"

"Not exactly, sir. I couldn't exactly tell him, as that would have been untrue," said Cardew calmly. "I led him to suppose so. That was quite easy, as Grundy is a silly ass, and never sees when his leg is being pulled."

"What? You deliberately gave Grundy a false impression of such a kind concerning Levison, Cardew?"

Grundy's face was a study.

"Yes, sir. I was pulling his leg," said Cardew.

"And why," said Mr. Railton, in a dangerous tone—"why did you play this foolish trick upon Grundy, Cardew?"

"I thought it would do him good, sir," said Cardew calmly. "Grundy's got a silly idea into his head that Levison's going in for paintin' the town red, an' playin' the giddy goat. There's nothin' in it—only Grundy's stupidity. He had the cheek to come and ask me silly questions on the subject, so I piled it on and pulled his leg. I thought he would very likely get mobbed if he hung about the Black Bull in Wayland for a long time, and that it would be a lesson to him. Levison had gone down to Rylcombe for his new bat," added Cardew.

"M-m-mum-my hat" stuttered Grundy. "You—you young villain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the passage.

"Close the door, please, Knox! Cardew, you have acted in quite an indefensible way!" said the Housemaster. "I understand that you were annoyed by Grundy's suspicions of your friend. But that is no excuse for leading Knox into following Grundy to Wayland, as you did."

"Well, sir, I thought that Knox, as a prefect, ought to know that Grundy was going to the Black Bull," said Cardew meekly. "It's a low place, sir—out of bounds."

"You were playing a trick on Knox, Cardew, and sending him to Wayland on a wild-goose chase!" exclaimed Mr. Railton sternly.

"Ahem!"

Knox gave the dandy of the Fourth a bitter look. His case against Grundy had collapsed now. It was clear enough that Grundy had only been the victim of a practical joke. Knox had also been its victim. That was equally clear. Mr. Railton took up his cane.

"Grundy!"

"Ye-es, sir?"

"You appear to have made yourself ridiculous and odious, by silly suspicions of Levison," said Mr. Railton. "I cannot blame Cardew for playing a trick to punish you; but for no reason whatever were you justified in going to a place strictly out of school bounds. I shall therefore cane you. Hold out your hand!"

Swish, swish!

"You may go, Grundy! Now, Cardew," continued Mr. Railton, as George Alfred Grundy left the study squeezing his hands, "I do not blame you for having played an absurd trick on Grundy. But you have been lacking in respect to a prefect. From what Grundy said, I have little doubt that you led him to entertain ridiculous suspicions regarding Knox as well as Levison."

"Ahem!"

"You have wasted a prefect's time and mine!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "If that is due to a peculiar sense of humour, Cardew, you must learn to keep your sense of humour under control. I shall cane you severely!"

And he did!

Knox looked quite satisfied when he left the study. Ralph Reckness Cardew had been through it, and Knox felt that his journey to Wayland was paid for. Cardew looked rather pale as he came down the passage rubbing his hands. But the smile still lingered on his lips.

"You silly ass!"

"You frabjous chump!"

Clive and Levison made those remarks as they joined their chum. Cardew looked at them reproachfully.

"Is that your blessed gratitude, Levison?" he demanded. "Why, if I hadn't nipped Grundy in the bud this yarn would have spread about you till half the school believed it. Now everybody will know it's only Grundy's piffle. Ow!"

Levison laughed.

"Something in that," he admitted. "All the same——"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

And Cardew squeezed his hands dismally as he made his way to Study No. 9 with his chums. The crowd of juniors dispersed, with many chuckles. Cardew's little joke on Grundy of the Shell was the cause of much merriment—to all excepting Cardew and Grundy. Just at present neither of them felt very merry.

Cadet Notes.

In the near future boys up to 17 or 18 years of age who do not belong to Cadet Corps may possibly find that steps are being taken to, more or less, compel them to take their share in the work of the Movement, and thus prepare themselves for possible eventualities in later life. Under the new Education Act, which has just passed through Parliament, certain powers are given to the Board of Education and the local education authorities to assist in the conduct and maintenance of Cadet Corps for the lads of school age, and this will give a great impetus to the Movement when it comes into operation in the course of a year or so. Besides this, there is a growing feeling amongst Members of Parliament and others that it should be made compulsory for lads between 15 and 18 years of age to attend drills, and several questions have been put in the House of Commons of late on this subject. Up to the present the Government has decided that the balance of advantages is against the enforcement of compulsion in this direction, but if the war continues this point of view may at any moment be changed, and steps may be taken to compel membership and attendance in the case of the younger lads, as is already done in the case of those over 18, who must join the Army.

We are quite sure that all our readers would prefer to join the Cadet Movement as volunteers rather than wait for any possible chance of compulsory methods being applied. There is good evidence of this in the very large numbers of those who have already responded to the invitation extended in these Notes from time to time to get into touch with their local Cadet Corps, and take part in the work being done. But there is still plenty of room for more recruits, and any lad reading these Notes, who is not already a member of a Cadet Corps, should write at once for information and particulars of the nearest unit to his address which he could join, to the Central Association Volunteer Regiments, Judges' Quadrangle, Royal Courts of Justice, W.C. 2, who will be pleased to give every information, and, when desired, a letter of introduction to the officer commanding the unit, so as to secure that every attention is given to the applicant when he attends to join up.

CHAPTER 6.

Study No. 6 is Wrathy.

"RAILTON, all over!" said Grundy bitterly.

Wilkins and Gunn tried to look sympathetic.

But it was hard.

In fact, it was all they could do to keep from smiling.

Grundy was really a little too much for the gravity of his study-mates. He often tried their seriousness very severely.

"Railton's got his good points," went on Grundy, rubbing his hands. "But he's an ass—I must say the man's an ass! Caning me, you know! Me! Just as if I'd done something wrong!"

"Well, the Black Bull's out of bounds, you know," remarked Wilkins.

"I didn't go there on my own, fathead! I went to stop Levison!"

"But Levison wasn't there!"

"Even if he wasn't, that makes no difference. That was my object. I've taken up this matter of Levison, you see, and I'm looking after him."

"Why?"

"That's just like you, Wilkins, to ask silly questions! It's up to me—a fellow in my position," said Grundy. "Haven't I often enough biffed Racke and Crooke for smoking? Haven't I licked Mellish for telling lies, and Trimble for scoffing other chaps' grub? Now, Levison's not so bad as that lot. He was a regular rotter once, but he reformed. I'm not going to see him slip back if I can save him. And I can do it. If necessary, I shall give him a jolly good hiding. For his own good, of course!"

"Oh!"

"Some fellows would call this meddling," said Grundy.

"They would!" agreed Gunn.

"But it isn't."

"Oh, it isn't?"

"Certainly not. It's my duty, owing to my position in the school," explained Grundy. "I have responsibilities towards the fags. Same with the Shell, for that matter. If I saw either of you two fellows kicking over the traces I should stop you!"

"Oh, would you?"

"Yes. If necessary, I should whop you!"

Wilkins and Gunn looked at Grundy. They really did not know quite what to say to him. Grundy ran on cheerfully:

"I'm certainly not going to let this



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matter drop. It's blacker than I thought, and I'm going to see that Levison doesn't disgrace the school."

"But there's nothing in it!" howled Gunn. "Cardew's confessed to Railton that he was only pulling your leg!"

Grundy smiled superior.

"You're not very bright, Gunny," he said.

"What?"

"That was only camouflage," explained Grundy. "I was staggered a bit at first. But, thinking it over, I can see that Cardew was telling whoppers to keep the facts away from the House-master. Levison was at the Black Bull right enough—or, at least, Cardew thought he was. I've no doubt he's going there on Saturday, and that's why he's cutting the cricket match."

"Look here, Grundy," said Wilkins quietly, "you may mean well, but what you're actually doing is slandering Levison—and Cardew, too."

"It might appear like that to an obtuse fellow, Wilkins," said Grundy calmly. "It's always been your drawback that you've got practically no brains. Don't think I'm ratty. I'm not.

"Oh!" gasped Wilkins.

Grundy rose from the tea-table.

"I'd better get along to No. 6," he remarked. "I must find that bottle of whisky before it lands D'Arcy into trouble."

"A-a-a bottle of whisky in Study No. 6?" said Wilkins faintly; while Gunn stared at Grundy open-mouthed.

"Yes. Cardew hid it there when he took it away from Levison."

"You frabjous ass!" shrieked Wilkins. "Cardew was only pulling your leg!"

"Not so jolly easy to pull my leg," I never expect any sense from you, which made his study-mates inclined to throw things at him. "Your leg, if you like, Wilkins; not mine! But 'nuff said!"

And Grundy quitted the study, leaving Wilkins and Gunn with hopeless expressions on their faces. It was futile to argue with George Alfred. He simply had to be given his head.

Grundy tapped at the door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth, and was greeted with a chortle as he entered that famous apartment. Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy seemed quite exhilarated by the sight of him. The mere sight of Grundy was enough to cheer anyone up just then.

"Gwunday, bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "Twot in, deah boy!"

"Found any more mares'-nests?" asked Blake.

Grundy did not heed.

"I've looked in on rather a serious matter," he said. "D'Arcy, where's your hatbox?"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus remembered what Cardew had said to him on the cricket-ground, and his noble eye began to glitter behind his eyeglass. "What do you want with my hatbox, Gwunday?"

"I've reason to suppose that there's a bottle of whisky hidden in it," explained Grundy.

"In my hatbox, you uttah ass?"

"Exactly. Where is it?"

Blake jumped up.

"So you're looking after this study as well as after No. 9?" he exclaimed. "And you think we keep whisky in the study? All together, kids!"

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"I mean—— Look here! I—— Hands off! Yarooh!" roared Grundy, as Study No. 6 rushed on him as one man.

Study No. 6 did not "hands off."

They laid their hands on, hard.

George Alfred Grundy was swept off his feet, rushed into the passage, and strown along the floor, with a heavy concussion.

That was Blake & Co.'s reply, and it was not to be misunderstood.

The chums of the Fourth returned into their study, leaving Grundy still strown, so to speak, and wondering dazedly whether it was an earthquake or an air-raid.

"Hallo! In the wars again, old nut?" asked Monty Lowther, as the Terrible Three came along.

"Yow-ow-wooop!"

"Looking for more trouble?" asked Tom Merry.

"Groooogh!"

Grundy struggled to his feet.

"The—the silly asses misunderstood me!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy hurled open the door of Study No. 6. The Terrible Three paused to look on, quite interested.

"Hallo, here he is again!" exclaimed Blake. "Collar him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let a fellow explain!" yelled Grundy, dodging round the study table as the four Fourth-Formers rushed at him. "I mean——"

"Collah him!"

"Chuck him out!"

Grundy dodged desperately. As it happened, Arthur Augustus' hatbox was standing in full view on a shelf, and Grundy sighted it. He grabbed at it and tore it open, and let the contents drop on the study table.

It was not a bottle of whisky that rolled out, however. It was Arthur Augustus' shining topper.

"You uttah wottah, be careful with that hat!" shrieked D'Arcy.

Grundy stared at the hat.

"What have you done with the whisky-bottle?" he demanded.

"Biff him!" roared Herries.

Grundy was collared the next instant—by three. Arthur Augustus was looking after his topper.

But Blake and Herries and Digby were enough for the great man of the Shell. They whirled Grundy to the door and whirled him out. Grundy went along the passage spinning like a top, and collapsed two or three yards from No. 6.

"Yoop!" he spluttered, as he went down.

"Poor old Grundy!" sighed Monty Lowther. "It would be an act of kindness to take him home out of mischief!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Manners.

And the Terrible Three performed that act of kindness. Monty Lowther secured Grundy's ankles, Manners his head, and Tom Merry his wrists. He was raised about a foot from the floor, and rushed along to his own study. He was not grateful for the act of kindness, however, judging by his wrathful yells.

Tom Merry kicked open Grundy's door, and George Alfred was whirled in. He was deposited with a great crash at the feet of Wilkins and Gunn.

"There's your lunatic!" said Lowther. "Why don't you get a strait jacket for him? Or put a chain on him?"

The Terrible Three quitted the study,

THE BUTTERFLY.

Perhaps you don't know Cheerful Charlie. If that is so, let us say that you ought not to lose any time in making the acquaintance of this sprightly young fellow. He is a fine soldier, a manly lad; but he is also a ventriloquist, and he bubbles over with fun from morning till night.

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Altogether, if you are in want of a paper which is packed with the best of features in fun and reading-matter, you should place an order with your newsagent to save for you a copy of the "Butterfly," published every Tuesday, price 1½d.

chuckling. They went along to Study No. 9 in the Fourth, to deliver their message to Levison from Jimmy Pink—whoever Jimmy Pink might be—leaving George Alfred Grundy struggling for his second wind.

CHAPTER 7.
No Luck for Trimble.

LEVISON & CO. had started their prep in Study No. 9 when the Terrible Three arrived. Levison was looking rather thoughtful, perhaps a little ratty. The proceedings of the egregious George Alfred Grundy had not pleased him; and perhaps he was not wholly pleased by Cardew's little joke on Grundy. His name had been used in a way that was not exactly pleasant. Cardew had acted without reflection, as he generally did. Levison was more sensitive than his study-mates guessed on the subject of his former unenviable reputation in the House.

"Interrupting you, I suppose?" said Tom Merry, as he looked in with his chums.

"Yaas, thanks!" yawned Cardew.

"Anything up?" asked Levison.

"Only a message for you."

"Go ahead."

"A man stopped us coming back from Rylcombe," said Tom. "He gave us a message for you from someone he called Jimmy Pink."

"My hat!"

Levison gave a start, and coloured.

"What a lovely name!" drawled Cardew. "Who's your friend, Levison?"

Levison did not answer that question, which revealed, by the way, the fact that Jimmy Pink was not known to Levison's study-mates. Sidney Clive was still working, but he glanced up curiously for a moment at Ernest Levison.

"What was the message?" asked Levison shortly.

"I'll give you his exact words," said Tom Merry, rather drily. "He said: 'Jimmy Pink says the horse is all right, and ten bob will do the trick.'"

"Oh, all right!"

"That's all," said Tom.

"Thanks for bringing me the message," said Levison.

"Not at all."

Tom Merry hesitated.

"Perhaps I'd better mention that Trimble of the Fourth was hanging round, and he heard what the man said," he added.

"Well, that doesn't matter," said Levison. "It's all right."

"All serene," said Tom.

The Terrible Three left No. 9 somewhat perplexed. The message from Jimmy Pink certainly sounded like a message on racing matters; but they did not want to misjudge Levison. Had Tom believed it to be a message from some racing man he certainly would not have been the bearer of it. But it was odd, at least, that Levison offered no explanation, though he must have known how curious that message must seem to the Shell fellows.

Indeed, the thought had entered their minds that Grundy, duffer as he was, might possibly be on the right track for once. Levison was really being rather mysterious, and unless he had something to hide there seemed no reason to make a mystery. But the chums of the Shell dismissed the matter from their minds. They would not suspect Levison unless he gave them weightier cause than that.

Both Cardew and Clive regarded Levison very curiously after the Shell fellows were gone. He bent his head over his work again.

Nothing was said in the study, and prep was resumed.

But it was destined to be interrupted again. The fat face of Baggy Trimble looked in a little later.

He closed one eye at Levison in a fat wink. The Fourth-Former looked at him impatiently.

"All serene, old scout?" said Baggy.

"What do you mean, you fat idiot?" growled Levison.

"You can rely on me," said Baggy, with another wink.

"Are you potty?"

"Look here, you know, you may as well be civil to a chap," said Trimble. "By the way, Levison, could you lend me five bob?"

"No."

"Think again," suggested Trimble.

"You silly lump of lard, what do you mean?" exclaimed Levison, exasperated.

"Had your message from Tom Merry?" grinned Trimble.

"Yes, hang you!"

"I was there."

"You generally are where you've no business!" snapped Levison. "What about it?"

"Well, I think I ought to say that I'm shocked at you, Levison," said Trimble. "In war-time, too! Racing is bad form at any time; but in war-time—really, you know, it's rather shocking! Don't you think so, Clive?"

"Oh, dry up!" growled the South African junior.

"What do you think, Cardew?"

"I think I could just catch you on the boko with this inkpot," said Cardew. "Stand quite still——"

"You silly ass!" roared Trimble, dodging. "Look here, you know, no larks! I came here as Levison's friend——"

"To borrow five bob!" grinned Cardew.

"Well, one good turn deserves another," argued Trimble. "I'm not bound to keep Levison's shady secrets, am I?"

"You silly ass, I haven't any shady secrets!" roared Levison.

Trimble winked once more.

"Rely on me," he said. "I'm not giving you away. I'm not going to mention it to Grundy."

"You can mention it to Grundy if you like, you owl!"

"Perhaps you'd like me to tell a prefect?" grinned Trimble.

"You can tell anybody you like, only get out of this study!"

"You can't bluff me, old man," said Trimble, with a sage shake of the head. "To put it plain, I never believed you'd reformed. Racke doesn't believe it, either. I heard him tell Grundy so. But I'm mum. Don't you be afraid, old fellow! But this is how the matter stands. I haven't had the remittance I was expecting from Trimble Hall. For once in a way, I'm short of tin. I'm sure you'll be able to lend me five bob, Levison. Think again!"

"What a sweet youth!" said Cardew, eyeing Trimble with great admiration. "This is what the legal johnnies call blackmail, I think. Who's going to bail you out when you're caught at it, Trimble?"

Levison rose to his feet.

"You've gassed enough here, Trimble," he said. "You're going out now—on your neck!"

"You keep off!" exclaimed Trimble in alarm. "Mind, I'll go straight to Grundy—— Yaroooop!"

Evidently Levison was prepared to risk Trimble's going straight to Grundy, for he grasped the fat junior by the neck and pitched him out of the study.

There was a bump in the passage, and a loud yell.

Levison closed the study door, and, with a heightened colour, returned to his work.

The door opened a moment or two later, and Trimble's fat and furious face looked in.

"Yah! I'm going to Grundy now!" he roared.



Levison and Jimmy Pink.
(See Chapter 9.)

A Latin dictionary whizzed across the study, and Baggy Trimble closed the door just in time.

In great wrath, he rolled away to the Shell passage; and a few minutes later Grundy of the Shell was the recipient of some extremely interesting information. Trimble spluttered his story into the ready ears of George Alfred, while Wilkins and Gunn sniffed with impatience.

"Look here, how's a chap to work with this blessed chin-wag going on?" Wilkins demanded.

Grundy waved an impatient hand at him.

"Dry up!" he said. "Go on, Trimble."

Trimble went on.

"You've done quite right to come and tell me this, Trimble," said Grundy, when the fat junior had finished. "Quite right. I shall take the matter in hand. Leave it to me!"

And Trimble rolled out, feeling that he had repaid his uncivil usage in Study No. 9.

Grundy knitted his brows thoughtfully.

"You fellows heard that?" he said.

"Couldn't help it," grunted Gunn. "I'd like to know how we're going to do any work in this study?"

"You see, it's proof positive," said Grundy, "I was right. You fellows may have noticed that I generally am right?"

"Blessed if I've noticed it!"

"That's only your crass stupidity, Gunn! I was pretty sure about Levison," said Grundy musingly. "Racke told me. Of course, Racke's a liar; but then, I saw the fellow myself near the Green Man. Might have been by chance, certainly; but then there's Cardew's story. Cardew was quite cut up over it, though he tried to make out before Railton that he'd been pulling the long bow. Now, this message from a bookmaker fairly settles it. You fellows see that?"

"How do you know it's a message from a bookmaker?" asked Wilkins gruffly.

"What does it sound like?" asked Grundy.

"Blessed if I know or care!"

"It's not our business," remarked Gunn.

"It's my business," said Grundy decidedly. "I've taken this matter in hand. I feel bound to look after Levison—same as I'd look after any St. Jim's chap who was in need of wise counsel and good advice. I don't see anything to snigger at, George Wilkins!"

"You never do," sighed Wilkins. "Are we going to do any prep? There'll be a scrap with Linton in the morning."

"Bother prep! I've got to deal with Levison on this matter. I'll have it right out plain," said Grundy. "Nothing underhanded about me. I'll let him have it straight, before all the fellows in the Common-room. That may shame him into acting decently. If that fails, I shall try more drastic measures."

"Can't you mind your own business?" asked Wilkins.

"I've said that this is my business, Wilkins."

"Oh, you're an ass!"

"If that means that you want me to punch your nose, Wilkins, I'm ready!" said Grundy, pushing back his cuffs.

Wilkins grunted, and devoted his attention to his prep. Grundy was past reasoning with, and his study-mates wisely did not attempt the impossible.

CHAPTER 8.
Black Ingratitude.

TOM MERRY & CO. smiled when Grundy of the Shell came into the Common-room that evening. In fact, there was a general smile. Ralph Reckness Cardew eyed the Shell fellow rather warily. Having pulled Grundy's leg and made the great George Alfred into a butt, Cardew was expecting wrath and vengeance.

Grundy glanced round, and came over towards Levison, Cardew, and Clive, who were together. Cardew prepared for war. But George Alfred hardly looked at him. His eyes were fixed on Levison, and most other eyes in the Common-room were fixed on Grundy himself. Evidently Grundy was on the war-path again, and the juniors were interested.

"Levison," said Grundy, "give me your attention a minute, will you?"

"No, ass!" answered Levison. "Cut off, and don't bother me!"

"I'm going to speak very seriously to you, Levison."

"Oh, shut up!"

"What?"

"Shut up!" snapped Levison.

This was plain English, as plain as Grundy could desire. Some of the juniors laughed. Grundy frowned.

"I don't want any cheek, Levison," he said. "I'm really acting as your friend—your best friend—in this matter."

"Idiot!"

Grundy breathed hard.

"Better mind what you say to me, Levison——"

"Dummy!"

"Look here——"

"Imbecile!"

"Do you want me to mop up the floor with you, Levison?" roared Grundy.

"I want you to shut up!"

"Well, I'm not going to shut up just yet," said Grundy. "I'm going to have this out, before all the fellows, too! I'm sorry to see, Levison, that you're taking up your old tricks again. I don't approve of it. I may as well say out plain that I'm not going to allow it."

"Idiot!"

"Yesterday," continued Grundy, unheeding Levison's complimentary remarks, "I saw you hanging about the Green Man."

"That's a dashed lie!"

"Wha-at?"

"A dashed lie!"

"Draw it mild, Levison!" murmured Wilkins.

"Rats!"

"You deny that I saw you hanging about the Green Man?" demanded Grundy.

"Oh, shut up!"

"For goodness' sake, dry up, Grundy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What business is it of yours, anyway? You're not a prefect, are you?"

"I make it my business," said Grundy. "Levison used to disgrace the school, and jolly nearly got sacked. He's not going to play that game again if I can stop it! I've got some regard for the good name of St. Jim's, Merry!"

"Oh, you hopeless idiot!" said Tom.

"Yaas, wathah! If you don't dwy up, Gwunday, we shall weally have to sling you out!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I'm doing what I consider my duty," said Grundy firmly. "Now then, Levison——"

Levison, with a red face, glanced round at the juniors.

"I hope you fellows know there's nothing in this?" he said. "That born idiot passed me yesterday near the Green Man. I was getting some honeysuckle from the hedge to stick in my study. That's all."

"No need to explain," said Tom Merry. "We all know that Grundy is potty."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm afraid that was only camouflage," said Grundy, with a shake of the head. "There's nothing to be ratty about, Levison. I'm really acting as a friend. You know very well that your own study-mate told me about your coming home squiffy, and his taking a bottle of whisky away from you, which he hid in D'Arcy's hatbox——"

Grundy was interrupted by a howl of laughter.

Even Levison grinned.

"I don't call that a laughing matter!" exclaimed Grundy indignantly. "It's simply shocking!"

"You frabjous ass! Cardew was pulling your silly leg!" yelled Blake.

"Don't be an idiot, Blake! Cardew also let out about your going over to the Black Bull at Wayland, Levison."

"You unspeakable idiot!" said Cardew, in measured tones. "I was stuffin' you up because you were a meddlin' ass. You heard me tell Railton so!"

"I heard you tell Railton so," agreed Grundy calmly. "That was your way of getting out of it. What you told me was fact, all the same."

"You shrieking duffer! I was stuffin' you, I tell you!"

"Nonsense!"

"Oh, gad!" said Cardew, quite helplessly. George Alfred Grundy was too much for him.

"Nonsense!" repeated Grundy. "Now, Levison, you see that I know the facts, and I'm going to put it plainly to you. This has got to stop!"

"Why don't Grundy's people send him to Bedlam?" asked Levison. "Surely they must know the state of his brain."

"It's got to stop," said Grundy calmly. "It's only too plain to me, Levison, that you're cutting the cricket on Saturday for a reason that won't bear the light—something to do with Jimmy Pink and his horse, I dare say."

Levison started.

"Ah! That hits you, does it?" grinned Grundy. "Now, look here, Levison. Be a sensible chap! This kind of thing isn't good enough. Give it up!"

"Take him away, Wilkins!" said Levison.

"Mind, I'm not going to allow it!" said Grundy. "I can't see this kind of thing going on without interfering. I sha'n't allow you to keep your shady appointment on Saturday, Levison. I'm looking after you, whether you like it or not!"

Levison rose to his feet.

"I don't know whether you're too big for me to lick, Grundy," he said, "but I'm going to try. Put up your hands!"

"You're not going to try, Levison," said Clive quietly. "Grundy's too big for you. This is where Study No. 9 chips in. Grundy, you've got to hold your silly tongue, and stop being a cheeky fool. Understand?"

"If you want a thick ear, Clive——"

"Otherwise, you'll be jolly well ragged!" exclaimed the South African junior. "You can take your choice!"

"I'm sorry to see that you're mixed up in this, Clive," said Grundy, more in sorrow than in anger. "I always thought you were a decent chap. I suppose Levison's led you into it."

"What?" ejaculated Clive.

"It's no good talkin' to him," said Cardew. "I suggest raggin' him. Lend a hand, you two, and we'll put him through it!"

"That's about the best thing," agreed Levison

Study No. 9 made an advance upon Grundy together. The burly Shell fellow put up his fists at once.

But three were too many for even Grundy. The rush of Study No. 9 carried him off his feet, and he went with a bump to the floor. Cardew knelt on his

chest, and pinned him down. Sidney Clive stood on his legs, and Levison put a boot on his head gently. Grundy struggled and roared, while the juniors, crowding round, yelled with laughter.

"Lend me a hand, Wilkins, you ass!" roared Grundy. "Come on, Gunny!"

Wilkins and Gunn, instead of coming on, strolled out of the Common-room. If ever a fellow had asked for it, Grundy had, and his chums did not see why he should not receive what he had asked for.

"Yarooh! Gerroff! I'll smash you, Clive!" gurgled Grundy. "I'll spiflicate you, Cardew! Levison, I'll—I'll—— Groogh!"

"Wag him!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Wag him, deah boys!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, are you goin' to stop playin' the giddy ox, Grundy?" asked Cardew.

"Gerrup!"

"Last time of askin'! Are you goin' to chuck it?"

"I'll smash you!"

"Give me the ink, somebody!"

"Heah you are, deah boy!" Arthur Augustus obligingly passed the inkpot from the table.

Cardew held it over Grundy's upturned face, Levison shifting his boot to Grundy's neck, to leave George Alfred's red and furious face exposed.

Grundy gazed upward at the threatening inkpot in horror.

"Don't you dare!" he gurgled.

"Are you goin' to chuck it, then?"

"I'll spiflicate you! Merry, drag him off, you rotter! Do you call this fair play?" hooted Grundy.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"You've asked for it, Grundy," he said. "If you talked to me as you've talked to Levison I'd scalp you. You can't help being born a fool, but you can help meddling. Well, why don't you chuck it?"

Cardew turned the inkpot, and the ink began to trickle down on Grundy's nose. It splashed over his face in black streaks.

Grundy struggled desperately, but he was well held. He moved his head frantically from side to side in wild efforts to dodge the ink.

"Gurrrrrrrg!" came from Grundy, as a splash of ink went into his mouth. "Yurrrggh! Groooooch!"

Still the ink trickled.

The juniors howled with laughter as they watched Grundy's face, which gradually became more and more like that of a Hottentot.

The inkpot was emptied at last.

"Had enough, old nut?" asked Cardew.

"Yurrrrgh!"

"Are you goin' to chuck up playin' the goat?"

"Grururrrrg!"

"Blessed if I understand German! Say 'Yes' or 'No'!"

"Groooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bed-time, you kids!" said Kildare of the Sixth, looking in at the door. "Hallo! My hat! What are you up to, there?"

Levison & Co. released Grundy, who staggered to his feet, streaming with ink. He gouged ink from his eyes and nose and mouth, and spluttered wildly.

"Only arguin' with Grundy," said Cardew coolly. "Grundy is a little too numerous, as usual."

"Gerroogh! I'll smash you! I'll——"

"It's all right, Kildare!" said Tom Merry hastily. "Grundy has been accusing Levison of pub-haunting, so he had to be shut up."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said Kildare. "This sort of thing isn't allowed in the Common-room; but it seems to be your own fault, Grundy."

"Groogh! I'll spiflicate them! I'll—I'll——"

"You'll go to your dormitory at once!" snapped Kildare. "Now, then, get a move on!"

"Do you think I'm going to stand this, Kildare?" roared Grundy.

"Yes. It may teach you to hold your silly tongue," said Kildare. "What right have you to make such accusations against Levison?"

"I wasn't! I was speaking as a friend!" hooted Grundy. "I simply told him I wouldn't allow it for his own sake, you know."

Kildare gave Levison a very curious look.

"I suppose there's nothing in this, Levison?" he said.

"Nothing at all," answered Levison, biting his lip.

"I believe you. Grundy, get off to your dormitory at once, or I'll take you by the collar!"

With a loud snort, expressive of great indignation, Grundy went. There were chortles in the Shell dormitory as he washed off the ink. Nobody in the Shell seemed to feel any sympathy for Grundy, not even Wilkins and Gunn. Grundy was quite tired by the time he had got the ink off and turned in.

"All very well for you fellows to cackle!" he snorted, with an angry glare at the grinning Shell fellows. "Cackle away!"

"Thanks, we will!" chuckled Lowther. "What a pity you don't know how funny you are, Grundy! You're missing a good thing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grundy, old man," said Talbot, in his quiet way, "why don't you leave Levison alone? Levison's as straight as any chap in the school, and you're making a silly mistake."

"That only shows what a crass duffer you are, Talbot!"

"Ahem!"

Talbot gave it up. Grundy went to sleep with his determination quite unshaken. He had set himself a rather thorny task in looking after Levison; but Grundy was a sticker.

CHAPTER 9.
Too Thin!

LEVISON of the Fourth was an object of considerable curiosity the next day, a fact that made him chafe.

Grundy's campaign had not been without results.

True, most of the fellows believed that George Alfred was making an ass of himself, as usual, and that he was meddling in matters with which he had no concern, also as usual.

But Levison's old reputation had not been forgotten; and some of the juniors had an impression that there was "something in it."

Racke & Co. openly expressed their belief that there was a good deal in it, and backed up Grundy. Their opinion went for nothing. Still, Levison had been a dog with a bad name, and the bad name clung to some extent. Moreover, there was the mysterious message from Jimmy Pink, which Baggy Trimble had chattered to everyone who would listen to him. And the fact that Levison was standing out of the Grammar School match without explanation looked odd.

The result was that Levison was eyed with much curiosity, and an impression was abroad that he was "breaking out again," as somebody expressed it.

It was bitterly exasperating to Levison, and his feelings towards the egregious Grundy were not amiable.

His minor, Frank of the Third Form, was full of wrath and indignation when the story reached the fags. Frank Levison paid a special visit to Grundy's study, to tell Grundy what he thought of him. Fortunately, he took D'Arcy minor and Reggie Manners and Joe Frayne with him, or the result might have been painful for Frank. As it was, there was a terrific shindy in the study, and the fags departed in rather a dusty state, leaving Grundy sorting himself out from his study furniture.

After lessons that day Levison looked for Grundy, with a gleam in his eyes, to speak to him. He met the Shell fellows coming out of their class-room, and tackled Grundy at once.

"Look here, Grundy," he said; "you've started a yarn about me, and you've got to stop it. If you don't, I shall go to the Housemaster about it, and he will stop you soon enough."

Grundy eyed him loftily.

"You can go to the Housemaster, or you can go to Jericho!" he answered. "I'm going to do my duty."

"You mean you're going on meddling, you crass idiot?"

"I'll come to Railton with you, if you like," said Grundy. "You can tell him what's your precious engagement for Saturday afternoon—if you dare!"

"You utter idiot!" said Levison, between his teeth.

"I'm going to keep an eye on you on Saturday," said Grundy calmly. "You're not going to be allowed to keep that engagement, Levison."

And Grundy stalked on, leaving the Fourth-Former speechless.

"My hat!" Levison ejaculated at last. "The cheeky idiot! By Jove, if the fool begins watching me to-morrow——"

"What is there for him to watch?" said Clive. "I suppose it can't matter?"

"It does matter!"

"I don't see it. Grundy's a meddling old fool; but I suppose you're doing nothing to-morrow that any fellow mayn't see?"

Levison shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"The fact is, Levison, you'd do better to be a bit more frank," said Clive quietly. "You've made a mystery of why you're standing out of the Grammarian match. It's not sensible. I'm not asking you any questions; but if it were known that you'd told Tom Merry, for instance, that would be enough. Why can't you tell him?"

Levison did not answer.

"Well, if you make a mystery of it, you've only got yourself to thank for Grundy's rot," said the South African junior.

"I'm not making a mystery of it," said Levison, colouring. "It's simply a private matter that only concerns myself; and I don't choose to shout it all over the school to please Grundy."

"That's right enough, of course. Then there's Trimble's yarn about some Jimmy Pink or other, and a blessed horse. It looks odd, to say the least."

"I don't see why I should be called on for explanations because of that meddling ass!" exclaimed Levison angrily. "Still, I've no objection to explaining, if fellows want to waste their time listening to what doesn't concern them. I say, Tom Merry!"

"Hallo?" answered Tom cheerily, stopping with Manners and Lowther.

"You brought me a message yesterday," said Levison, biting his lip. "There's been so much jaw about it that I think I'd better explain."

"No need to explain to me," said Tom at once.

"Well, I'd rather, if you'll waste a minute or two listening."

"Go ahead, then!"

"You know Jimmy Pink as well as I do," said Levison.

"Do I?" exclaimed Tom, in surprise. "Never heard the name, that I know of."

"I dare say; but you've seen him often enough. He goes around with a horse and cart selling logs in the summer," said Levison. "You must have seen him in the lanes."

"Oh, yes, I've seen that old chap, but I didn't know his name!" said the captain of the Shell. And Manners and Lowther nodded.

"Well, he's called up now, under the new Act," said Levison. "His wife's going to carry on the business when he's gone. He's jolly poor, as I dare say you know, and his horse has been ill—want of oats, I expect. I came on him the other day getting the poor brute home. I told him to have a vet to see it; but he was too hard up." Levison's colour deepened. "I offered to stand the expense. That's what the message meant. I told him to let me know how much it came to. It comes to ten bob. And that's all there is to it."

Tom Merry smiled.

"Simple as A B C," he said.

"I didn't want to jaw about it," said Levison savagely. "It looks like trying to get credit for lending a man a hand, like some dashed Good Little Georgie! But that's the whole story."

"He, he, he!"

Levison looked round as he heard Baggy's well-known cackle.

Trimble winked at him.

"Not bad, Levison," he said. "But you ought to do better than that. That's a bit too thin! He, he, he!"

Levison made a rush at Baggy, who promptly dodged into the quadrangle.

"Don't mind that fat duffer, Levison," said Tom Merry.

"I suppose you believe me?" growled Levison.

"Of course!"

Levison walked away with a knitted brow. He had felt driven to make that explanation: but, as the result proved, it had not done much good. Tom Merry & Co. certainly believed him; but Baggy Trimble told the story as a screaming joke in the Fourth, and belief certainly was not general.

When Grundy heard it, he came to see Levison about it, and did not find him in an accommodating humour.

"Now, about this yarn of yours, Levison," began Grundy loftily, unheeding Levison's savage stare. "It may be true. I don't say it isn't. Prove it, and I'll take it as gospel. Where does this man Pink live?"

"Find out!"

"Would he bear out what you say?" asked Grundy sceptically.

Levison's answer was not in words. He ran at Grundy, and began hitting out. It was really the reply that Grundy might have expected, but it made him very wrathful.

There was a scrap at once, and Clive and Cardew joined in, and led Grundy away down the passage by his ankles—an extremely uncomfortable method of travelling for George Alfred. He was landed in his own study, dusty and breathless—and firmly convinced that Levison had spoofed Tom Merry; but equally assured that Levison would have to get up early in the morning to spoof him—George Alfred Grundy!

CHAPTER 10.
Grundy's Great Discovery.

"SHOCKING!"

Grundy made that remark, on Saturday afternoon, to Wilkins and Gunn, in tones of the deepest and most utter disgust.

Tom Merry & Co. were thinking of cricket that afternoon; the Grammar School team were expected early. But Grundy wasn't bothering about cricket. His remark was made as Levison of the Fourth was seen going down to the gates with his minor. Frank was trotting along beside his elder brother, with a very cheery face.

"What's shocking?" yawned Wilkins.

"Look at that! Levison's taking his minor with him!"

"Jolly good-natured, to load himself up with a young brother for the afternoon!" said Wilkins. "'Tain't every chap that would."

"Considering what Levison's got on for the afternoon, I call it shocking!"

"Eh? He's got a straw hat on," said Wilkins. "So has Frank."

"I'm not speaking about his hat, you duffer!" snapped Grundy. "I mean, considering his business this afternoon."

"But you don't know what that is."

"I know well enough for me. And I'm not going to allow it," said Grundy firmly. "My mind's made up on that point!"

"Look here, old fellow," said Gunn. "You're mistaken about Levison. If he was after anything shady he wouldn't take that kid with him. That settles it!"

"The fact that he's leading that kid into his rascally bizney, Gunn, makes me all the more determined to put a stopper on it!"

"Time, Wilkins!" called out Tom Merry.

Wilkins was in the St. Jim's team that afternoon.

"Right you are!" called back Wilkins. "Coming to see the match, Grundy?"

"Can't. I'm looking after Levison."

"You could score for us," suggested Wilkins.

"Can't be done!"

Wilkins shrugged his shoulders, and followed Tom Merry & Co. His friendly attempt to save Grundy from making an ass of himself was in vain.

"You coming with me, Gunny?" asked Grundy.

"Where are you going?"

"After Levison."

"Look here, that's spying!" said Gunn. "Don't be an ass, Grundy!"

"I've time to give you a licking before I start, if I have any of your cheek, Gunn!" roared Grundy.

"Oh, rats!"

Gunn followed the cricketers. Gordon Gay & Co., of the Grammar School, had just arrived. Nobody had any attention to waste on Grundy. Clive was in the eleven, and Cardew was on the field to watch the match. Grundy did not even glance towards Little Side. Without himself in the St. Jim's team the match was hardly worth looking at, in Grundy's opinion.

There was keen interest in the crowd when Tom Merry opened the innings for St. Jim's, with Figgins of the New House. But Grundy was walking away towards the gates, unheeding.

Levison major and minor were in sight in the lane as he came out at the gates. Grundy was feeling very indignant and disgusted. The fact that Levison was taking his minor with him was the last straw, so to speak.

It was pretty well known that Levison's reform was largely due to his minor's coming to St. Jim's. Now it looked as if the black sheep, falling back into his old ways, had taken his minor into the path of recklessness with him—at least, it looked so to Grundy.

He was more resolved than ever to put a stopper on it.

Grundy was not the fellow to play the spy: but he felt that circumstances justified him in this case. Not that there was anything surreptitious about his proceedings.

Levison glanced back and saw him before he was a hundred yards from the school gates.

Levison's brow darkened as he spotted the Shell fellow on his track. His angry exclamation made Frank glance round, and Frank's eyes gleamed.

"Is that silly fool following us, Ernie?" he exclaimed.

"Looks like it."

"Let's stop for him, and give him a hiding!" exclaimed Frank.

Levison laughed.

"No. Come on!" he answered.

The brothers walked on, Frank chafing and angry. Grundy kept them in full view, turning from the lane when they turned, and keeping not more than ten yards behind. He was prepared to see the Levisons dodge, and to dodge after them. But they did not dodge.

Ernest Levison's brow was thoughtful as he walked on. As they followed the footpath through the wood, he spoke to his minor in a low tone, and the fag grinned.

"I'm on!" he said.

The two juniors suddenly left the footpath, and disappeared among the thick trees.

Grundy came on at a run, determined not to lose sight of them. He turned into the wood at the same spot.

As he plunged into the thickets two pairs of hands grasped him suddenly from behind, and he was dragged over on his back.

The next moment Levison was kneeling on his chest, and Grundy was glaring up at him. It dawned upon Grundy that he had walked into an ambush.

"Let me up!" he roared.

"Stand on him, Frank!"

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

Grundy struggled fiercely, but he was down on his back, tangled in the brambles, and he was held down. Levison took a whipcord from his pocket, and looped one end over Grundy's right wrist, and, in spite of his resistance, over the other, and fastened his hands together. Then he tied the end of the whipcord to the nearest branch.

"Come on, Frank!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Levison minor.

"You rotters!" shouted Grundy furiously. "You're not going to leave me here like this?"

"Looks like it to me," answered Levison coolly.

And the major and minor walked on, leaving Grundy struggling furiously with his bonds.

Grundy breathed wrath.

His hands were securely tied, and he could not get them loose. It was half an hour before he succeeded in breaking off the branch to which his hands were tied, and then he emerged into the footpath with the broken branch trailing from his bound hands.

Levison and Frank had long since vanished.

"Oh, the rotters!" breathed Grundy. "I'll jolly well run 'em down, all the same. Oh, the beasts!"

Grundy doggedly tramped on along the footpath, wriggling his hands as he went to get them loose. He succeeded at last, and by that time his wrists were sore and aching, and his temper was at boiling-point. He came out on the moor at the end of the woodland path, and stopped to look about him.

He was determined not to be beaten; but there was no sign of Levison or his minor. Grundy clambered into a tree, and scanned the open moor. With great astuteness, Grundy had put his field-glasses into his pocket, in case his quarry should succeed in dodging him; and now he put the glasses to his eyes, and

scanned the countryside through them. The field-glasses gave him a wide view of the moor, dotted here and there with cottages and bungalows. He uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

"The rotters! There they are!"

The two figures he had picked up with the glasses were little more than specks in the distance; but Grundy recognised them.

Levison and his minor were just entering the gate of a cottage on the moor, the garden of which was surrounded by a high privet hedge.

A few minutes later the hedge hid them from sight.

Grundy grinned as he slipped the glasses back into his pocket and descended from the tree.

"'Tain't so jolly easy to beat me," he reflected. "I've run them down now. My hat! They'll be surprised to see me when I drop in!"

Grundy tramped away across the moor.

His intention was to drop in and catch Levison in the very act, as it were. He had no doubt whatever that there was a sporting party at the cottage—a very suitable place from its loneliness. Cards or dice, Grundy thought, very probably whisky as well, after what Cardew had revealed to him. The young rascal would be utterly confounded at the sight of Grundy dropping in, catching him in his guilt. And Grundy was prepared to thrash him on the spot, if necessary, to make him quit his rascally associates. Somehow or other, Grundy had quite satisfied himself that this was his business.

In a grim mood Grundy tramped on, and arrived at the cottage hedge at last. There was a sound of voices on the other side of the hedge.

"By the way, how's the gee-gee, Pink?"

It was Levison major's voice.

Grundy started.

Here was proof positive, if he wanted it. This was undoubtedly the Jimmy Pink who had sent that shady message to Levison—the message Levison had explained in so very lame a manner.

"Right as a trivet, Master Levison," replied a man's voice. "The missus is out with the cart now, sir."

Grundy gave another start.

"Don't you overdo it, Master Frank," went on Mr. Pink's voice. "It's 'ot work in this 'ere sun."

"Oh, that's all right!" came the cheery reply of Levison minor. "We're going to do this whole patch this afternoon, Mr. Pink."

"Yes, rather!" said Levison.

"It's kind of you young gents," said Mr. Pink. Grundy was standing rooted to the ground as he listened in a bewildered state of mind. "The weeds are something cruel! I reckon I shall get all the hoein'-up done afore I join up next week. But don't you overdo it; you ain't used to 'ard work."

"Time we got used to it, then," said Frank, laughing. "It's a time for everybody to do his bit."

Grundy fairly gasped.

Even Grundy's mighty brain had to grasp the fact that matters were not as he expected to find them.

"M-m-my hat!" murmured Grundy.

He pushed at the thick privet hedge to look into the garden. Parting the hedge, he caught a limpse of the garden within.

Mr. Pink, in his shirt-sleves, was labouring with a hoe; and Levison major and minor, also in their shirt-sleeves, were working with a hoe and a spade, their faces red with exertion. It was a scene of busy industry. Grundy's expression was extraordinary as he stared through the hedge at them. Levison, whom he had tracked down, with the intention of dragging him forcibly away from his boozy associates, was spending his half-holiday helping a man who was called to the Colours! That was the beginning and the end of the mystery. Mr. Pink was naturally anxious to leave his vegetable-garden in a prosperous state for the sake of Mrs. Pink and the little Pinks while he was gone, and Levison and his minor had piled in to help. And that was all.

Grundy's asinine qualities had been recognised by everybody at St. Jim's with the exception of George Alfred Grundy himself. But now, for once, it was borne in upon George Alfred's mind what an ass he was!

He fairly blinked at the industrious scene in the garden.

There was a yell from Frank Levison as he caught sight of Grundy's face in the hedge.

"Grundy!"

Levison jumped.

"Grundy! Where?" he exclaimed.

Frank was rushing at the hedge with his hoe at the charge. Grundy struggled back from the hedge, but not quite in time. He caught the end of the hoe with his waistcoat, and roared.

Bump!

Grundy sat down.

"Come on, Ernie!" shouted Frank. "Cut round and collar him! We'll duck him in the pond!"

There was a rush of footsteps in the garden. The two juniors were making for the gate. But Grundy did not wait. He had had enough of the hoe, and he did not want any of the spade. He fled.

CHAPTER 11.
Grundy's Reward.

"WELL bowled, Talbot!"

That shout fell upon Grundy's ears as he arrived at St. Jim's. The Grammar School match had just finished.

Talbot of the Shell had taken the last wicket, and St. Jim's were winners by half a dozen runs.

"Hallo! You've got back, have you?" grunted Wilkins, as he came off the field and saw Grundy.

Grundy nodded. He was in a rather subdued mood.

"Been looking after Levison?" grinned Wilkins.

"I don't know that Levison needs looking after," said Grundy. "Jolly decent chap, if you ask me."

"Eh?"

"I don't want to hear you say anything against Levison!" said Grundy sternly.

Wilkins blinked at him.

"But—but I haven't," he stuttered. "You have!"

"He's a good sort," said Grundy. "If you were a bit more like Levison, George Wilkins, you'd do!"

And Grundy stalked away, leaving George Wilkins staring.

"I want a word with you, Cardew," said Grundy, joining the dandy of the Fourth in the crowd on the cricket-field.

"Two, if you like, old bean," answered Cardew affably. "Want some more information about Levison? What do you think of him taking a bottle of rum into the class-room, and taking nips from it under his desk?"

"Look here——"

"Awful, isn't it?" continued Cardew. "I've hidden the rum-bottle in Kildare's cricket-bag. So you know where to look for it."

"You silly ass!" roared Grundy.

"But there's worse than that to come," said Cardew seriously. "I find that Mr. Railton is mixed up in it. What do you think of Railton playing pitch-and-toss with Levison behind the woodshed? Shockin', isn't it? I think you ought to interfere, Grundy. It's your duty, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't play the goat!" said Grundy savagely. "I believe now that you were only pulling my leg with those yarns about Levison, Cardew."

"Go hon!"

"And I've a jolly good mind to mop up the ground with you!" roared Grundy.

"Lend me your bat, Clive, old nut. Go ahead with the moppin'-up, Grundy. I dare say your head is harder than this bat, so it may not hurt you."

Grundy snorted, and walked away.

Levison and his minor were just in time for calling-over, looking rather dusty and tired. After call-over Grundy came up to them, and was met with far from amiable looks, But he did not heed.

"Just a word, Levison——" he began.

"Oh, dry up!" said Levison.

"I was mistaken about you, and I'm sorry," said Grundy frankly. "You needn't mind the fellows knowing what you were up to this afternoon. No harm helping a soldier-man gardening, that I know of."

"Bai Jove! Is that what you were up to, Levison?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "And that uttah ass Gwunday supposed——"

"Well, I'm sorry," said Grundy. "I take it all back. The matter drops here."

"And so do you!" said Tom Merry.

And the Terrible Three collared Grundy on the spot and dropped him—hard.

Which was Grundy's reward—and the reward he deserved—for Looking After Levison.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"THE FINAL EVENT!"—by Martin Clifford.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"THE FINAL EVENT!"

By Martin Clifford.

This story tells of the result of the great sports competition between the Shell and the Fourth. Which will win?

The Marathon race is the final event, and practically every member of both Forms who is of the least use in a long-distance contest turns out for it. But, owing to circumstances, one of the best of the Shell and one of the best of the Fourth fall out early in the race.

Racke and Crooke play their parts in the story. So do Tom Merry and Talbot, and Grundy, and Skimpole, and Kerr, and Trimble. The parts that these eight play are very different, of course; but no intelligent reader will find it hard to separate the sheep from the goats in advance.

AN ADVENTURE SERIAL.

"The Twins from Tasmania," which has earned for itself great popularity among the majority of readers, as the letters I have had about it—hundreds of them—prove, will end in a couple of weeks or so, and within a week or two after that a new serial will begin. This is a first-class story of adventure in China by an old favourite, Mr. Alec G. Pearson.

The author of our new serial writes of places he has seen and things he has known. Mr. Pearson has knocked about all over the world as few men have, and the narrative of his own adventures would probably be quite an interesting one. In recent months, though well over even the present age limit, he has been serving in the Army, though he would have preferred the Navy, for the way of the deep waters is familiar to him of old.

I shall announce the title of the story in a week or two.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA.

FOR NEW READERS.

The twins are Philip Derwent, of Highcliffe, and his sister Philippa, of Cliff House. They have a cockatoo, named Cocky, which has been until recently with Flip (Philip) at Highcliffe, but is now at Cliff House. Flip has made an enemy of Gadsby, who is plotting against him with Vavasour. His best chums, Merton and Tunstall, are away from the school for a time, owing to a serious accident to one of Merton's eyes in a fight with Ponsonby. In their absence Flip gets too friendly with Pon and the rest of the nuts, and, without any real taste for it at the outset, takes to gambling. He goes with the nuts to a gambling den at Courtfield, quarrels with Pon, and is knocked senseless just as the warning "Police!" is heard. Flip comes to himself in a cellar, bound hand and foot. He is let out, however. He makes up his mind that the only thing for him to do is to run away, as returning to Highcliffe means certain expulsion. Then he meets Peter Hazeldene, who has run away from Greyfriars. Goggs of Franklingham comes to Highcliffe. Flip and Hazel go to London, and make for Wayland. They tramp for some time, and eventually lose their way. Suddenly Hazel disappears from view, and Flip pulls himself up in the nick of time on the edge of a steep downfall. By a trick Pon, Gadsby, and Vavasour are sent to the Head, and Vavasour confesses. Flip and Hazel are found in an exhausted state by St. Jim's fellows. Ponsonby stops Flap and Marjorie, and is insulting. Goggs fights and thrashes Pon before the girls and several Highcliffe and Greyfriars juniors. Flip is lying at death's door at St. Jim's.

Off to St. Jim's (continued).

"Where are the chaps who came from St. Jim's?" asked Merton huskily. "I should like to have a word with them."

"Oh, they went back early!" replied Benson. "They slept at Greyfriars, you know; and I've just heard from Bulstrode of Greyfriars that the Head there let Wharton and Tom Brown go with Mr. Quelch to see Hazeldene. I don't know whether they'll bring him back."

"Hazeldene's sister has gone, too," Yates said. "And Derwent's sister, I fancy."

"Tun," said Merton, "I haven't arrived here yet. I'm not comin' inside the gates!"

Tunstall stared at his chum, as well he might, lacking the clue as to what was in his mind.

"Gone off your onion, old top?" he asked politely.

"Not exactly. But I'm goin' off to St. Jim's by the next train, you bet!"

Now Tunstall saw.

"Oh, by Jupiter, you can't go without me!" he said.

"Then you'll have to take French leave an' come. For I'm goin'; that's a dead cert!"

"I've a better plan than that. Come in an' see the old bird. He'll be no end glad that you've come back, an' you've only to ask leave for both of us to get it like a shot! I'll come with you, but you will have to do the dashed gassin'."

"Right-ho!" replied Merton. "I don't mind talkin' to him for two minutes, though he's an awful bore for more than that, y'know. Come along, Tun!"

They hurried off. Smithson & Co. looked after them longingly.

"Wish we could go!" said Yates.

"No such luck!" answered Smithson sadly. "But they can take a message for us, anyway—just to say that everybody in the Fourth who isn't a rotten nut wants old Derwent back no end."

"We didn't see such a lot of him while he was here; but now he's gone, and we don't know whether he'll ever come back alive, I feel as if he was one of us," remarked Benson.

"Don't talk rot!" growled Smithson. "He'll come back all serene, and he will be one of us then. You see, Courtenay and the Caterpillar are no end keen on him."

Merton and Tunstall met with stoppages on their way to Highcliffe's Head. Fellows wanted to shake hands with Merton and congratulate him on his recovery; and, great though his haste was, he could not rush past them. The Caterpillar's eyes gleamed when he learned about the journey the two meant to make.

"Why don't you come with us?" asked Tunstall, whose feelings towards Rupert de Courcy were far warmer than they had been. He knew now that the Caterpillar had done all he could in Flip's cause.

"Can't be done!" replied De Courcy, with evident regret. "I should feel that I was buttin' in, y'know. Besides, the old bird would never give permission for more than three."

"But there's only two of us!" said Merton.

"Why should he?" asked Merton, who had not heard the full story of the part Goggs had played in the affair.

But Tunstall saw at once.

"By Jupiter!" he said. "I should have wanted to kick myself if I had forgotten Goggs, an' I was goin' to forget him. Thanks, Caterpillar! I'll look the old owl up at once."

"That's right, Tunstall, dear boy! Take Goggs to look after you, an' I'll stay here an' look after Franky."

"I don't know that I need it particularly, Rupert," said Courtenay.

"You never can tell," De Courcy answered, shaking a wise head.

"Goggs seems a popular character," remarked Merton.

But there was no suspicion of a sneer in his voice. There might have been in the old days, but a big change had been wrought in Merton. He had gone through the valley of tribulation, and had emerged the better for his experiences there.

"He is," replied the Caterpillar, and Courtenay nodded agreement. "Goggs is so singularly capable, so delightfully modest, and so beautifully polite that we all love him. Prepare yourself for a shock when we see him, old bean. He doesn't look quite all that, I must admit. But he is all that, by gad!"

"Ask him to take his glasses off, Merton," said Courtenay, smiling. "It makes simply all the difference. But I don't mind saying that I think a heap of him with glasses or without. He's Derwent's class at footer, and he's a terror at boxing, besides being polite and modest."

"Here he is!" said the Caterpillar, grinning at Merton's expected shock.

But if Merton was shocked—probably he was not, after the warning—he disguised the fact pretty well. A fellow who had done so much for Flip, a fellow who stood so high in the esteem of Tun and the Caterpillar and Courtenay, was good enough to be taken on trust for Algy Merton. Even if he had had any misgivings the manful grip of Goggs' hand would have dispelled them.

Goggs was keen to go, and the three went off at once to the Head.

"Ah, Merton, my dear boy!" said Dr. Voysey, rising from his seat to welcome the returned Highcliffian. "This is a pleasure not anticipated thus soon. I am very glad to see you back fit and well."

And there was no possible doubt that the Head meant it. If blindness had descended upon Merton for the weary remnant of his life, it would have been a bad thing for Highcliffe and for Highcliffe's Head. Little use to say that the affair was a pure accident—a fight in which one of the combatants had managed to get blinded would not recommend Highcliffe to anyone.

"I'm pretty much all right now, sir, thank you!" said Merton. "But I have been told that I must not study too hard for a time."

"That can be easily arranged," answered the Head. "I will myself mention the matter to Mr. Mobbs."

As he spoke he looked at Goggs and Tunstall inquiringly, evidently wondering why they were there.

Merton, finding himself so graciously received, lost no time in asking for what he wanted.

"These fellows an' I want to ask you for special leave, sir," he said.

"For leave, Merton? But you have only just returned here."

"We want to go to St. Jim's an' see Derwent—that's all, sir. No one has gone from here, I believe?"

The Head's face became overcast.

"That is so," he said gravely. "I had thought of asking Mr. Mobbs to make the journey. The state of my health puts it out of the question for me."

Tunstall and Merton suppressed grins. The state of the Head's health always seemed to stand between him and the doing of anything at all troublesome.

Goggs' face expressed only sympathy. No one could have guessed from it that he even suspected Dr. Voysey of being a confirmed slacker.

"I have not yet, however, made up my mind as to what is to be done in the matter of Derwent," went on the Head, knitting his brows, and doing all he knew how to look the strong, stern man he was not. "He levanted from here in such circumstances as would justify me in washing my hands of any further concern about him. Possibly to ignore him may suit his father's views better than his actual expulsion."

Captain Walter Leith had shaken Dr. Voysey. But Captain Leith had gone now, and there were other aspects of the question demanding consideration.

If Dr. Voysey meant to expel Flip Derwent, he should, in justice, have expelled Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Vavasour, who were at least as guilty as Flip in every way except the running away; and Gadsby might fairly be called upon to bear the greater part of the blame for Flip's flight.

But Highcliffe's Head did not want to give the order of the boot to these three young sprigs of the aristocracy. He had now made up his mind to forgive them, after punishment.

His fear was that the return of Derwent might mean such trouble between him and the three nuts as would lead to further complications and more worry for him.

But Dr. Voysey was a kindly man at heart—merciful, if not exactly just—and the faces of the three juniors before him when he spoke of Flip's possible expulsion touched him.

"You couldn't think of expelling him, sir!" cried Merton boldly.

"I have thought of it very seriously, Merton. But——"

"Why, it isn't even certain that he mayn't die, sir!" put in Tunstall.

"No one regrets more than I do the critical condition in which he appears to be. I feel it the more as it is undoubtedly largely due to his courageous and unselfish devotion to the Greyfriars boy who was so incomprehensibly the companion of his flight. But——"

"But after that it's surely impossible to sack him, sir!"

"It is not impossible, Merton," answered the head, more kindly. "But I must confess that I find myself loth to do it."

"Don't do it, sir, please!" Tunstall pleaded, flushing.

Then the Head suddenly made up his mind. Had Mr. Mobbs been present he would have groaned in anguish of spirit, for he detested Flip, and had worked upon the Head to expel him and forgive the other three.

And doubtless he would have had his way but for the earnestness of Flip's chums.

"I will not expel him," said Dr. Voysey. "I hate having to do that in the case of any boy; and, in spite of Derwent's offences, I am certain that there is much good in him. You may go to St. James'. And if you are allowed to see Derwent, you may tell him that I shall expect to see him back here when he is well enough to travel. You might add that I shall be glad to punish him and have done with a very disagreeable and disgraceful matter; but that my anxiety on that score is not my only reason for hoping that we may see him very soon."

It was quite a nice message, and the three would bear it gladly. Tunstall was opening

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his mouth to ask for more, but he shut it again when Merton nudged him.

"We are all very grateful to you, sir," said Merton.

Merton could be really nice mannered when he chose, though his standard of politeness fell below that of Goggs. But in this scene Goggs had preferred to play a thinking part.

The trio departed.

"I was goin' to ask the old bird whether we might stay on down there for a bit if Flippy isn't out of danger," said Tunstall.

"Fathead!" snapped Merton. "He didn't say anythin' about when we were to come back, did he? If you'd put your silly question he'd have asked all sorts of dashed sillier ones, an' we should have been tied up nicely, by Jupiter! Now we're free!"

Almost a Miracle.

"GOGGS! Here's old Goggs come back!" bellowed George Alfred Grundy, at the gates of St. Jim's.

"Dashed if I'm not in rather a fix to know what school you really do belong to, Goggs," remarked Merton. "You seem to be quite at home in several of 'em, by Jupiter! Is it Franklingham, or is it Highcliffe, or is it St. Jim's?"

"I am merely a visitor here, and little more than that at Highcliffe," replied Goggs gravely. "Next term I shall be at Franklingham again."

"You seem to be a jolly welcome visitor here!" Tunstall said.

And, indeed, it did seem so. The great Grundy had hurried forward to grip the hand of Goggs in a fist like a small shoulder of mutton. Grundy's chums, Wilkins and Gunn, were almost as enthusiastic in their greetings.

Word was passed from one fellow to another across the quad that Goggs had come; and Clifton Dane and Kangaroo dashed up to give him a welcome. Then came the Terrible Three—Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners—and Figgins & Co., and Talbot, and Redfern & Co., and Blake & Co., and half a score of others.

Goggs had forgotten no face there. Gravely and ceremoniously he introduced Merton and Tunstall to them all. But before that was done inquiries as to Flip's condition had been made and answered.

The news was not of the best. Everybody professed to feel sure that Derwent would pull through; but it was plain that they did not believe he would pull through easily.

"His sister's here," said Tom Merry. "Hazeldene's sister, too, and Wharton, and that New Zealand chap Brown, who, it seems, shares a study with Hazeldene, and has done what he could to keep the silly ass straight."

"How's Hazeldene?" asked Merton.

But it was evident that none of those felt any very special interest in the Greyfriars junior, though they were glad to hear that he was in no danger.

"He's desperately fagged out, and a good deal bruised by his fall, and one of his ankles is badly sprained," said Talbot. "But he isn't in any sort of danger. It's only a matter of a few days for him to be fit and well again, except that he won't be able to walk so soon, perhaps."

"Got off more luckily than he deserved, I consider," said Grundy.

"Yaas, wathah! Now, Derwent——"

"Derwent's a fine chap, every way!" Kangaroo said warmly. "We do breed the right sort in Australia, you know; but he's an extra fine chap, even for an Australian!"

"And so say all of us!" chimed in Monty Lowther. "Though there's really no need for any of the 'Advance, Australia!' bizney while Noble's about. If Australia advanced any farther than he puts her she'd be clean out of sight!"

Goggs and Tunstall and Merton all beamed at the St. Jim's fellows' praise of Flip. Highcliffe had learned from Tom Merry and Talbot of the story Hazel had told of his comrade's pluck and unselfishness; but to Flip's own special chums it meant more than to anyone else, of course, and perhaps it meant as much to Goggs as to them—for Flap's sake.

"It's easy choosin' between Derwent an' Hazeldene," drawled Ralph Reckless Cardew. "But I'm dashed if it's so easy to choose between Derwent's sister an' Hazeldene's sister! I admire them both no end—from quite a hopeless distance, of course, dear boys. They don't even know of my important existence; but that doesn't matter a dashed scrap to the eminently respectful devotion they have both kindled in my breast."

"They're here, then?" said Merton.

"Yaas, dear boy. They came in charge of a grim-lookin' cove answering to the name of Squelch, or somethin' of the sort, though I must say I shouldn't think he'd squelch much—dry as a bone, to judge by the look of him! But the charmers didn't appear to bar him a bit; an' Wharton and Brown seem actually to like him—a most unnatural thing, in my humble opinion, as he's said to be their Form-master. Imagine a chap likin' his dashed Form-master!"

At that moment Wharton and Tom Brown appeared with Ernest Levison.

"Quelchy's satisfied that Hazel won't peg out!" announced Levison, in his driest way. "He's going back by the next train, and these fellows with him. But the girls are staying on."

"Hurrah!" cried the irrepressible Cardew.

"You needn't cheer, ass!" snapped Levison. "It means that Derwent's in a very serious condition. They think it right that his sister should stay, and Miss Hazeldene stays with her."

Faces grew longer at that. It certainly did sound ominous.

"I don't like clearing out, I'll own," said Wharton. "Of course, I don't know Derwent as you fellows do." He looked at Merton and Tunstall as he spoke. "But—but—I hardly know how to put it—he got like this looking after a Greyfriars chap, and—and—— Well, you know, we've a kind of feeling that he matters a heap to Greyfriars as well as to Highcliffe."

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Brown.

Wharton's voice had been husky, and Tom Brown's was not quite under his control. They had just come from saying good-bye to Hazel in sanny, and they had seen Flip. The sight of the fellow whom they had known as a dashing forward and a first-class fighting-man, whom they knew now as something very like a hero, struggling for his very breath, almost at the end of his strength, had shaken them.

"Don't leave St. Jim's out!" said Tom Merry. "We may not really know Derwent at all here; but we feel as though we do, and there isn't really a fellow amongst us who wouldn't do anything to make sure that he should pull through."

Merton whispered in Tunstall's ear, and Tun shoved Goggs forward, with one word: "Speech!"

But Goggs was in no mood for polysyllables just then—or it may have been that he realised short words and few were best. Or it may even have been that he could only speak with difficulty—his voice was as husky as Wharton's.

"It's jolly good of you all," he spoke. "We know you don't want thanks for anything you've said. But we know you mean it, and we'd like you to understand that Highcliffe will appreciate it."

Then the group broke up. Some of the fellows were going with Wharton and Tom Brown to the station. Mr. Quelch was being driven over; but the two Removites preferred to walk.

"So you're Highcliffe now, old top?" asked Clifton Dane, collaring the arm of Goggs.

"Pro tem.," replied the Franklingham junior.

"How's that?" inquired Dane.

"Aren't you really goin' to stay on with us?" demanded Merton sharply.

"I'll go back to Franklingham next term, of course."

"Oh, I say! What rot!" snapped Merton, in evident disappointment.

It had not taken Merton long to make up his mind about Goggs.

"Can we see our man Derwent, do you think, Talbot?" Tunstable asked.

"Not just now, I'm afraid," answered the Shell fellow. "He's to be kept very quiet, I understand."

Merton and Tunstall exchanged glances.

"We can't go without a sight of old Flip," said Tunstall miserably.

"Of course you can't," Talbot said promptly. "That's all right. Just come along with me to Railton. He knows Goggs already, and likes him no end——"

"Everybody does," put in Merton.

"Pon doesn't, an' Gaddy doesn't," Tunstall corrected him.

Talbot smiled.

"I'm sure he'll agree to our putting the three of you up here," he said. "There won't be any trouble about that. Mrs. Holmes is taking charge of the two young ladies; but I guess you fellows would prefer to share our quarters."

"Oh, rather!" replied Merton.

"You bet!" said Tunstall.

Goggs said nothing. He would not have minded sharing the hospitality of the Head's house with Flap.

But he saw her within a few minutes. For half an hour those two paced the yard together, while Merton and Tunstall walked with Marjorie Hazeldene between them. Talbot and Clifton Dane cleared off.

There were marks of tears on Marjorie's pretty face; but Flap had not been crying. She bore her trouble like a soldier's daughter. For sheer courage there was little to choose between Flip and Flip's twin sister.

"He's very ill," she said. "It doesn't seem possible that Flip, who was always so strong and well, should lie there like that, with no strength in him at all. No, I'm not sure he'll get well. But if he—if he doesn't, I shall feel just as I should if father or one of the other boys died over there. Flip oughtn't to have bolted. But that's all anyone can blame him much for; and after he'd bolted he did as much as anyone could have done for Hazel, and he kept his promise to Marjorie! She says he saved Hazel's life. I don't know—I suppose so; but—but Flip's life is worth heaps more than Hazel's!"

She nearly broke down then; but those were the only words she ever spoke that reflected at all harshly upon wayward Peter Hazeldene. And Marjorie did not hear them. Not for a great deal would Flap have wounded Marjorie.

As for Hazel's sister, she could hardly find words eloquent enough to express her feelings about Flip. But her glowing face and her bright eyes told what her lips left unspoken. It was to Flip's best chums she spoke; and they were satisfied with the tribute she paid to Flip.

The early dusk of a winter's evening fell upon the quad, and shrouded the stately old buildings of St. Jim's; and the two girls reluctantly went in. The three Highcliffians were taken off to Study No. 10 in the Shell passage, and resources in the way of grub were pooled by ever so many members of the Shell and Fourth to do them honour.

They had little appetite; but they felt that they were among friends, and that counted for much.

During the evening they were allowed to see Flip; but he did not know them. He lay in something like a stupor, his face ghastly pale under the tan, his breath coming with difficulty.

Marie Rivers turned away from the sight of Tunstall's face and Merton's. They were fighting hard not to break down, these two. They were not familiar with sickness, and it may be that Flip seemed to them in worse case than he was. But he was really in very bad case; only his stamina stood between him and complete collapse—between him and death!

Hazeldene, from his bed, watched those three with eyes like the eyes of a dog that knows he has done wrongly.

Merton and Tunstall and Goggs were nothing to Hazeldene. He would have said that he did not care what they thought of him. Why should he care? But, in his strange, undisciplined way, he cared a good deal for Flip; and these fellows were Flip's friends. When Goggs, moved by an impulse of sympathy, turned to his bed, Hazel pulled the clothes over his head, feeling that he could not bear to be spoken to by any of them.

"If—if Flip—doesn't pull through I shall never forgive that chap Hazeldene as long as I live!" said Tunstall passionately, when they were outside.

They went to bed that night, but there was little sleep for any of them. And the next day was worse. All through that day Flip walked the Valley of the Shadow of Death. It was touch-and-go at the best; and at the worst the doctor saw little hope for him.

Study No. 10 was given up to the three, its inmates taking themselves elsewhere.

Now and then Tom Merry, or Talbot, or Dane would look in; but for the most part Flip's chums were left alone by the St. Jim's fellows. It was kindest so.

Thrice during the day the two girls came and stayed for a while; but for the most part they spent the time in the sanatorium, within call, and Flap was often by Flip's bedside. She could control herself, and Marie Rivers did not find her in the way or at all burdensome.

But utterly miserable as were all five of the visitors, perhaps none of them all felt quite such a load of misery as did Peter Hazeldene. If he could have learned the lesson he needed, he must have learned it then.

There was a hush upon St. Jim's. The wings of Azrael, angel of death, were spread above the old school; and even the fags trod softly and in awe. Piggott came near to being lynched by the Third for saying that he did not see what it all mattered to them; and Grundy banged the heads of Racke and Crooke

together because they talked too loudly and looked too cheerful.

Dusk was closing in again, and a period of twenty-four hours, which had seemed like as many days to the three, had just ended when Tom Merry came to them.

"Fellow named Mobbs has turned up," he said—"one of your masters, I believe. Says he's come to fetch you back. I don't like the look of him or the ways of him. And you've only to say the word, and I'll go to old Railton and get him to talk to the bounder."

"Oh, we'll talk to him!" said Tunstall grimly. "Send him up here, Merry, there's a good chap."

"I'll fetch him up if you're sure," replied Tom Merry.

No one negatived the suggestion at once, and Tom departed.

"I can't stand seein' Mobby," said Merton miserably.

"I can!" snorted Tunstall. "I feel like lettin' Mobby know just exactly what a worm he is!"

Goggs said nothing; but he did not appear to dread anything Mr. Mobbs could do or say.

Mr. Mobbs had rather misrepresented his mission—which was uncommonly like Mr. Mobbs. In sending him, Dr. Voysey had been moved far more by anxiety about Flip than by any worry about the three. But the Head of Highcliffe had not been very precise in his instructions. He had left a good deal to Mr. Mobbs' discretion.

The Highcliffe Fourth Form master was unmoved by Flip's danger. Even in the shadow of death his mean little soul did not rise to higher levels. He was still the petty tyrant of the Form-room.

He bustled into No. 10 with an angry face. Tom Merry closed the door behind him, and went away.

"I must insist on you boys returning with me to Highcliffe!" rapped out Mr. Mobbs.

Merton's face was buried in his hands. Goggs sat staring straight before him like one who neither sees nor hears. But Tunstall rose to his feet, and a red flush swept across the pallor of his face.

"We refuse!" he said, looking straight at Mr. Mobbs.

"Do you know what you are saying? This insubordination——"

"We're not going back till—till we know! That's our first word and our last, except that we don't care what comes of it, and that if you don't go at once I shall kick you out!"

Mr. Mobbs went. He returned to Highcliffe at once, breathing threats of terrible things.

What cared Tun, or Algy, or Johnny Goggs? What did anything in the world but Flip matter to them just then? But Flip did not matter at all to Mr. Mobbs.

The long evening wore on to night. The girls were still at the sanatorium. Just before midnight Mr. Railton came along and took the three over there. He said little, but they understood. Before dawn the crisis would be over. Flip would have passed beyond, or he would be on the way to recovery.

Mr. Railton left them together. They did not need the comfort of one who could only be an outsider to them at such a time. Victor Railton did not feel like an outsider; he was strongly moved. But he knew how they must feel.

One o'clock—two o'clock chimed from the tower. It was between two and three when Mr. Railton appeared again and beckoned to them.

Tunstall ceased his restless padding up and down the room. Merton braced his shoulders as he was slipping away, had made him face, and would face it with all the courage in him. Goggs laid one hand on Tun's shoulder, one on Merton's—the lightest of touches, yet full of sympathy. Then he fell behind them.

Flip was dying—they were sure of it! They had been called to say good-bye.

Dr. Holmes sat apart in the room where Flip and Hazel lay. Mr. Railton went to him, and Marjorie stood between Flip's bed and Hazel's. Poor Hazel lay with the tears running from his feverishly-burning eyes. Flap knelt by her brother, with one of his hands in hers. Behind her stood Marie Rivers and the doctor.

Flip's eyes were closed as the three drew near, and his face was as the face of death. Involuntarily Flap pressed his hand.

He opened his eyes.

"Algy!" came in a hoarse, wheezing murmur from his strained chest, and a glad light flickered across his face.

They knew—both Merton and Tunstall—what he meant. And Flap knew, and Marjorie.

Merton there, seeing as well as ever, not blind—not estranged from him! Even if Flip had to die, it would be easier thus!

And Merton fell on his knees by Flap's side, and broke down utterly, sobbing as if his heart would break.

The weak hand that Flap held struggled for release. She let it go. Flip lifted it to Merton's head, and it lay there caressingly.

Then it moved. He was stroking the hair of his chum, trying to comfort him.

The doctor shifted round to the other side of the bed. Ten minutes ago he had abandoned hope. Now—hope came back!

He whispered to Goggs and Tunstall, and they stole out of the room. And Marjorie, understanding somehow, spoke a word in Hazel's ear; and Flap looked up, and Marie Rivers impulsively bent and kissed her.

Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton moved to the door. The medical man stepped softly across to them and spoke. He sat up in bed.

It was Mr. Railton who said to the two out in the corridor:

"The doctor says that it is something like a miracle, my boys; but you can hope again. There is a chance—a good chance—yet. You may wait here for Merton if you like."

For twenty minutes they waited, silent, in the gloom. Then the door opened, and the face of Merton showed with a glad light upon it.

"Tun, Goggs, he's goin' to live! It's all right, thank Heaven!" gasped Merton.

Back at Highcliffe.

FLAP and Marjorie stayed on at St. Jim's for another day or two; but in the afternoon following the night of Flip's crisis Merton and Tunstall and Goggs returned to Highcliffe.

They were in the highest of spirits. Even the sedate Goggs showed the joy he felt. For there was no doubt now of their chum's recovery. He had made a really wonderful improvement during those twelve hours. The stamina was there, and somehow the sight of Merton had called him back just as he was slipping away, had made him struggle anew when all struggling had seemed at an end. It was a ghostly-looking Flip who smiled up at them when they said good-bye, but it was Flip sure enough, with life still strong in him.

What cared they for Mr. Mobbs in the first flush of their joyful relief? Let Mobby do what he chose!

But when the station next before Courtfield had been passed a sudden unpleasant thought struck Merton.

"By Jupiter, though, if we get sacked we shall lose old Flippy!" he said.

"You won't get sacked, an' Goggs needn't care a scrap if he does," replied Tunstall. "Come to that, neither of you had anythin' to do with it. I'm the dashed sinner!"

"You spoke for us all," said Goggs quietly. "And because you were the best man of the three—for the moment, anyway."

"Rats!" snapped Tunstall. "It was only because feelin' like that makes me madder than it does you two. I wanted to hit somebody, an' Hazeldene wasn't fit to be swiped. I should have loved to dot Mobby one on the boko, by Jupiter!"

"If you go, I go," Merton said resolutely. "I wouldn't stay without you, Tun. Neither would Flip. After all, there's Greyfriars, an' I don't think old Locke would refuse to take us in because we cheeked Mobby. He knows the worm."

"Why not all come to Franklingham?" Goggs asked. "It would be easily enough arranged."

"That's a dashed good notion!" answered Merton. "Hallo! Here's Courtfield, an' Courtenay an' the Caterpillar come to meet us! Jolly decent of them, I must say."

"De Courcy asked me to wire by what train we were returning," Goggs said.

Frank Courtenay and Rupert de Courcy were not the only fellows on the platform. Smithson & Co. appeared at that moment; and near the booking-office door hovered Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Vavasour.

Something like a cheer broke out when the three stepped from their compartment, and it was seen by their faces that they bore good news.

Pon & Co. did not share in that cheer. But they came forward, and Cecil Ponsonby held out his hand to Merton. They had not met during the hour or so Merton had been at Highcliffe two days before, for Pon was then under ward.

The three were free now. They had been punished, but they were not to be expelled.

Merton stopped dead. He looked down at Pon's slim, manicured hand as though it were some loathsome thing.

"Won't you shake, Merton?" asked Pon. "Dash it all, we can afford to let bygones be bygones, I suppose?"

"I don't think I shall ever want to touch your hand again, Ponsonby!" replied Merton.

"Bearin' malice for the damaged eye—what? Hardly the cheese when the thing was a pure accident, by gad! An' it's all right again now."

"No, that's not it. I could forget that, though I'm dashed if I'd ever care to be friendly with you again. It's because of the way you rotters served Derwent that I bar you once an' for all. An' if Gadsby offers to shake hands with me I'll kick him!"

"I wasn't goin' to, by gad!" muttered Reginald Gadsby sullenly.

"Still, there's really nothin' in the wide, wide world against kickin' Gadsby, even without that provocation," said the Caterpillar blandly. "A kickin' now an' then would be just the thing to do Gaddy good. If it wasn't such a dashed fag I'd look after it myself. Perhaps Derwent will attend to it when he gets back."

"He'd better not try it on!" snarled Gadsby, showing his teeth like a wolf.

It was not judicious of the Caterpillar. If Pon & Co. had been different from what they were, the letting bygones be bygones might have been for the best. But, after all, perhaps De Courcy was right. He knew Pon and Pon's satellites. They would only wait their chance to play some foul trick against Flip and his chums. Better to have them as enemies than as friends! For they would never be really friends to any decent fellow.

They cleared off together. There was more than the suspicion of a slink about Vavasour; but Pon was as haughty as ever, and Gadsby did not lose his air of defiance.

Adolphus Theodore Vavasour was badly under the weather. Pon and Gaddy had not forgiven him. They treated him as an outcast. Yet he hung at their heels, for he had nowhere else to go. Monson minor had been very plain with him, and Pelham and Drury and the rest of the nuts had made it clear that they looked upon him as a traitor.

He would win back his place among them in time—for what it was worth. But at present he felt like a toad under a harrow.

"What have you been doin' to the excellent Mobby, dear boys" asked the Caterpillar, as the small crowd left the station.

"Has he said anythin'?" inquired Merton.

"Not to me, old top! Somehow, Mobby doesn't confide in me as he might do if he knew my yearnin' sympathy for him."

"Don't be absurd, Rupert!" said Courtenay. "The story's got about that you fellows were violent to Mobbs. Of course it isn't true?"

"No. We weren't violent. He went. An' it was only me," Tunstall said.

"All of us," corrected Merton. "You spoke, that's all. Told Mobby he'd kick him out if he didn't go, Caterpillar! Mobby went."

"I'm surprised, by gad!" chuckled the Caterpillar. "Surprised an' no end shocked! Fancy Mobby threatened with a kickin' by a member of his Form! What is this queer world comin' to?"

"I'd have done it," said Tunstall quietly. "I don't believe he was sent with instructions to take us back by the ear. The old bird isn't that sort of cheap tyrant. Mobby didn't behave as a gentleman should."

"Never was much of an actor, the' dear Mobbs," remarked De Courcy. "An', of course, it would be merely actin' if he did behave that way. I don't think the old bird will be down on you too heavily. I almost suspect at times that he knows Mobby ain't quite the correct card."

De Courcy might be right as to that. Nevertheless, Dr. Voysey could hardly help taking a severe view of Tunstall's attitude—if it were reported to him. And there seemed little doubt that it would be reported.

Tunstall expected a summons before the Head that evening. He did not get it. Merton was sent for; but the Head said nothing to him about Mr. Mobbs. He merely asked a string of questions concerning Flip.

"The little worm swallowed his gall," said Merton, returning to No. 6. "Had to—what? Went beyond his dashed commission, an' daren't say anythin' to the old bird."

(To be continued.)