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CALLED TO ORDER!

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



CLIVE'S CHOPPER!

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16-11-18

"There he goes again!" said Trimble, who had his ear to the keyhole now. "Six, five, four, and four! He's potty!" "He must be, I should think, if he's burbling like that!" said Tom, in wonder.

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

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

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

"Cardew!"

"Hallo?"

"Have you gone off your rocker?"

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

"What are you burbling about, then?"

"Figures."

"What for?"

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

"Fathead!" replied Tom Merry.

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

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

CHAPTER 2.

A Peculiar Problem!

"HALLO!"

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

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

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

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

The chums of the Shell looked grim.

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

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

Cardew laughed.

"Sorry—old bad habits!" he said. "Simply absent-mindedness, I assure you. Like the johnnies who spout at the street corners, I used to be everything that was bad, and have only lately become very good and an example to youth. There it goes!"

He threw the half-smoked cigarette into the grate.

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

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

"Oh, rats!" growled Tom.

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

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Not at all! I haven't come here to



Cardew in Bad Company!

(See Chapter 5.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I'm afraid of shockin' Levison."

"What?"

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

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

"I was referrin' to your knowledge of

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

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

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

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

"Yes, of course. Get on!"

"Without flyin' out at me?"

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

"Well, this study has such a dashed high moral atmosphere," said Cardew pathetically. "Chap's afraid of puttin' his foot in it. Mind, I'm not askin' you to take a hand in the bizney I'm goin' to refer to—I wouldn't dream of it. I should expect you to punch my nose. Bear that in mind. I'm simply ~~goin' to~~ ask your opinion on a certain matter of figures, from the point of view of a chap with a mathematical brain."

"If it's a matter of figures, or anything in the way of a problem, I'm your man," said Manners. "I like that kind of thing. Is it a chess problem?"

"Ow! No."

"Something in Euclid?"

"Great pip! No. It's a problem, right enough—a problem that thousands of people have tackled and given up."

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Manners' eyes glistened.

"Go it!" he said.

"Look at that!" said Cardew.

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

3356965443231161891471135789.

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

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

"What-ho!"

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

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

"Yes, you ass!"

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

"A green table!" repeated Manners.

"Exactly!"

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

"You've hit it."

"Blessed if I catch on!" said Lowther.

"I can't see any game in taking down a list of silly numbers that don't mean anything."

"The question is, do they mean anything?—that's the problem. Have you chaps ever visited the country of our beloved Ally across the Channel?"

"Yes."

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

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

"Horrid, isn't it? Yes. That's how the numbers ran on a certain occasion," said Cardew. "It's really a modified form of the great game of roulette, which they play at Monte Carlo and such places. This game is played at all the French seaside places—or was, before the war. After the war it'll be goin' merrily again; and perhaps it's goin' on in some quiet spots even now—who knows?"

Cardew winked at the ceiling.

"It's possible, at least!"

Manners looked fixedly at the dandy of the Fourth.

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

"Last week, I believe."

"In this country, then?"

"Evidently, my dear fellow."

"That swindling game is illegal in England."

"I know—I know! Are we not the salt of the earth in this country, settin' an example to benighted foreigners, with the triflin' exceptions of horse-racin' and the Stock Exchange?" yawned Cardew. "It's sad to relate, but there's a naughty man not a hundred miles from here with a *petits-chevaux* machine complete, smuggled over from France early in the war, I believe. Those numbers were taken down by a chap I know—a reckless sort of rotter, who's certainly old enough to know better."

"Oh!" said Tom.

"I've been goin' over the numbers," continued Cardew negligently. Merely

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as a sort of mental exercise, of course, it's a problem, as I said."

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

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

"A—system!"

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

"I should think so."

"But lots of people think there is such a thing as a system," said Cardew.

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

In spite of Cardew's careless tone and manner, his eyes were gleaming now, and they were fixed eagerly on Manners' face. It was pretty clear that the dandy of the Fourth took more than an impersonal interest in the matter. It was not simply as a "sort of mental exercise" that he had been going over the numbers taken down at the *petits-chevaux* table.

"What utter rot!" said Manners abruptly.

"You think so?"

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

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

Manners threw the paper back to Cardew.

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

"Really?"

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

"Horrid!" said Cardew.

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

"Yaas, very likely!" Cardew rose to his feet. "I haven't gained much by consultin' your mathematical brain, that's clear. Thanks all the same!"

"But, seriously, Cardew," exclaimed Tom Merry, "you ought to keep clear of a chap who goes to a gaming-den. Even Racke and Crooke draw the line at that kind of dingy rot, I should say. If there's such a place in this neighbourhood, the police ought to be told."

"Old man, I'll remember your advice," said Cardew solemnly. "I can't very well break with the chap I've mentioned; but I'll keep my eye upon him very carefully."

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

"What!" exclaimed Tom.

"Isn't it plain enough?" said Lowther

impatiently. "It was Cardew who took those numbers down at the table."

"My hat! Is that so, Cardew?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The utter duffer!" said Tom Merry.

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

The Terrible Three had food enough for thought after Cardew had left them. But it was not clear that they could interfere in any way, especially as Cardew had not actually admitted, in so many words, that he was himself the reckless young rascal who had visited the *petits-chevaux* den. It was quite possible that he had been pulling their leg in leaving them with that impression; it would be like the whimsical fellow. In any case, Cardew was his own master, and had to go his own way. But Tom Merry & Co. felt very troubled and uneasy.

CHAPTER 3.

Trimble Knows Something!

LEVISON and Clive were in Study No. 9 when Cardew returned there; and Levison minor of the Third was present. Levison and his brother were going through *Cesar* together, Clive watching them with a rather amused smile. Cardew gave a deep yawn as he glanced at the book on the table, over which the brothers' heads were bent.

"Dear old Julius!" he murmured. "How you fellows must be enjoyin' yourselves! Is all Gaul still divided into three parts, young 'un?"

Frank Levison looked up with a smile. "How's cheery old Orgetorix gettin' on?" asked Cardew. "Still dead, I hope? What are you scowlin' at me for, Levison?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Eh?"

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

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

"Which isn't very far, old top!" said Cardew affably. "Can you spare me an

such or two of the table, kids? Prep's to be done! Yaw-aw-aw!"

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

"Don't! It's quite amusin' to watch you two diggin' into dear old Julius; reminds me of the time when I was a fag in the Third Form at Wodehouse. Pile in!"

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

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

"Cut!" said Levison.

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

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

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

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

"Listen to him!" said Cardew. "That weird sound, which resembles a saw that's being filed after needing it a long time, indicates that Baggy is in possession of a joke. Go it, my podgy tulip!"

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

"What do you mean, you cackin' ass?" asked Levison.

Baggy winked.

"I know what I know," he replied.

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

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

Cardew started.

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

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

"Numbers!" repeated Clive and Levison together.

"He, he, he!"

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

"The fact is," said Trimble, "I want to go. Mind, I'm keeping it dark—for why shouldn't a fellow have a flutter once in a way? What I mean you to understand is, I'm not going to be left out. See?"

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

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

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

"What place?" yelled Levison.

"He, he, he!"

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

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

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

Whack, whack!

Trimble wrenched himself away and

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

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

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

"Eh? What?"

"What Trimble was saying."

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

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

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

"Oh, rats!"

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

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

"Hook it!" he said briefly.

Instead of hooking it, Trimble closed the study door.

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

"But we do mind!" grunted Herries.

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

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

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

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

"Do you mean that Cardew's playing the goat again?" said Digby. "I thought he'd done with Racke and that crowd."

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

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

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

"A—a what?" shrieked Blake.

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

"Rubbish!"

"Gammon!"

"Wats!"

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

"Cheese it!" grunted Blake.

"He's making up a system," persisted Baggy. "That's what he was doing in the study when he was mumbling over numbers. I think it ought to be stopped,

myself. Would you fellows advise me to go to the Housemaster?"

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

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

"If!" snorted Blake.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Well, that's so," admitted Blake. "But it isn't your bizney, Gussy."

"Cardew is a distant wvelation of mine."

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

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

"Good old Grandfather Guss!" groaned Blake. "Mind Cardew doesn't chase you with a club, as well as Trimble."

"I should uttably wufuse to be chased with a club, Blake."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy left the study, and headed for No. 9, with a grave and solemn expression upon his face, which was, as Blake irreverently remarked, worth a guinea a box.

CHAPTER 4.

The Black Sheep!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY tapped at the door of No. 9, opened it, and looked in. Levison & Co. were working there, in a rather uncomfortable silence. The swell of St. Jim's stepped quietly into the study. Levison and Clive went on working, but Cardew gave him an affable nod. He was quite prepared to change work for a chat with the swell of the Fourth.

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

"I trust I am not intewwuptin' you?"

"You are!" came from Levison.

"I am sowwy, Levison."

"Never mind about being sorry. Leave off interrupting till we've finished prep, old fellow."

"I am sowwy that is impos. I have come heah to speak to Cardew vewy sewiously!"

"Seriously?" ejaculated Cardew.

"Yess, wathah."

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

"It is not a jokin' mattah, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I have heard a vewy remarkable statement frow Twimble."

Cardew yawned.

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

"Accordin' to Twimble," continued Arthur Augustus, "you have been

gambling at some wassally wesort where they play some kind of a game of chance, Cardew. You are making up a system."

"Go hon!"

"Is it twue?"

Cardew pointed to the door.

"What does that mean, Cardew?" asked Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"It means travel, old man!" answered Cardew affably.

"I wefuse to twavel, Cardew, until this mattah has been twashed out," said Arthur Augustus sternly. "You are a distant connection of my family—practically a wolation of mine—"

"Don't throw that up against a chap," pleaded Cardew. "That's my misfortune. You can't say it's my fault."

"I wish to know, Cardew, whethah there is any twuth in Twimble's statement?"

"Hahd'n't you better ask Trimble?"

"I am affraid I can't wholly wely on his word."

"And you can on mine?" smiled Cardew. "That's very flattering. You want me to confess my sins?"

"I want you to tell me whethah you have landed yourself in some wassally ewape, and I will do my best to help you out of it. Pway make a clean bwast of it, deah boy," added D'Arcy, encouragingly. "You cannot do bettah than wely on a fellow of tact and judgment."

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

"What?"

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

"Wha-a-at?"

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

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

"You are not speaking the twuth, Cardew. It would be quite impos for you to wun ovah to Monte Carlo in one day."

"Go hon!"

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

"You don't say so?"

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

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

Arthur Augustus breathed hard through his nose.

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

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

"What?"

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

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

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

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

"Certainly not!"

"Well, I'll try again," said Cardew patiently. "Feelin' the need of a little excitement—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I dropped in at the Stock Exchange in London this afternoon, and bought rubber shares—"

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"You uttah ass!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Don't you believe that?" demanded Cardew.

"Certainly I do not!"

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

"Weally, Cardew—"

"I hired a drag to the races—"

"Wats! You cannot hire a dwag to the waces now!"

"That's merely a detail, dear boy. I hired a drag to the races, and bet fifteen thousand pounds on Jolly Roger. He came in eleventh, and I came home stony. Hence these tears!"

"Ita, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass a little tighter into his eye, and fixed a look upon Ralph Reckness Cardew which ought to have withered him on the spot. But it didn't; Cardew only smiled blandly.



"You wefuse to tell me anythin', Cardew?"

"Haven't I told you enough?" asked Cardew, in surprise. "I couldn't have told you so much if I hadn't an imagination equal to that of a war correspondent. But I'll try once more. Feelin' the need of a little excitement—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to listen to any more of your uttah wubbish, Cardew!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "You are simply pweawicatin'."

"Go hon!"

"I take it for granted that Twimble's statement is twue, and that you are mixed up in gamblin' twansactions at some wassally wesort."

"What a mix-up!" sighed Cardew.

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

"Thanks!"

"Othahwise, you must expect to be wogarded with uttah contempt by every decent fellow!" said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"You horrify me!" gasped Cardew.

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And perhaps refuse to speak to me?"

"I should certainly wefuse to speak to you."

"Honest?"

"Yaas!"

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

"You uttah chump—"

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

Slam!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy departed, and closed the door after him forcibly. Ralph Cardew smiled at his study-mates. "Dear old Gussy," he said. "What an entertainin' chap he is! Hallo! What are you blinkin' at me like a pair of owls for?"

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

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

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

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

"Look here!" said Sidney Clive abruptly. "Is it true that there's a gambling-place in this neighbourhood, and that you go there, Cardew?"

"Suppose it is?"

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

Cardew nodded.

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

"Oh, dry up!" snapped Clive.

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

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

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

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

"No!" said Levison curtly.

"I won't tell your minor!" grinned Cardew.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Dear man, haven't we been good for ever so long?" urged Cardew. "Why not try a little flutter, by way of a change? We shall feel ever so much gooder afterwards. Nobody's so virtuous as a repentant sinner, you know. Go in with me, and let's paint the town red—what?"

"No."

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

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

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

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

"Quite so."

"What would your people say?"

"I wonder!" said Cardew calmly.

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

"Five—four—four—five—three!"

"What?"

"Six—four—four—two—one—one——"

Levison compressed his lips. Cardew was murmuring over the figures, as if no longer conscious of his presence. Levison looked at him for some moments, but Cardew did not lift his eyes from the paper, and at last Ernest Levison quitted the study without speaking again.

CHAPTER 5.

A Loyal Chum.

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

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

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

The three black sheep of St. Jim's plainly had something very entertaining on that afternoon; and Tom could guess that it was something to do with horse-racing or card-playing. The reputation of Racke & Co. was pretty well known among the juniors.

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

Cardew, in spite of his reckless ways, had much good in him, and he had lately shown good form as a footballer, with all his slacking. Tom reflected a moment or two, and then he stepped towards the quartette as they came down the steps.

"Cardew! Hold on a minute!"

"Certainly, old bean!" said Cardew.

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

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

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

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

"Look here——" began Crooke hotly.

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

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

"You can please yourself, Cardew!" snapped Tom Merry. "As a matter of fact, those fellows are going out food-hogging, or worse, and you're a fool to get mixed up with them. You can be decent when you like."

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

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

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

"Look here, you cheeky dummy——"

"Shush!" said Cardew reprovingly.

"The question is shall I go around with these bad eggs, or shall I accept the generous offer of Thomas?"

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

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

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

"Comin', dear boy."

The four sauntered down to the gates. They passed Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, in the quad, and as they passed him Racke was saying to Cardew:

"Got your Virgil, old man?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Good! I want to learn up the shipwreck bizney by heart," said Racke. "It's really splendid stuff, you know, and worth knowin', apart from lessons."

They passed on, and Mr. Linton, who had heard Aubrey Racke's remark, glanced after them with great approval.

Fellows who would spend a half-holiday in learning Virgil by heart were fellows of whom Mr. Linton approved highly.

It did not even occur to the Form-master that the remarks had been made for his especial benefit; or that Aubrey Racke had as much intention of learning Virgil by heart as of learning the Talmud.

Racke & Co. grinned as they came out of the gates.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was just coming in, and he stopped to speak.

"I am surprised to see you goin' out food-hoggin' with those fellows, Cardew!" he said severely.

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

"Weally, Cardew——"

"We're not going food-hogging, you fool!" muttered Racke. "Where do you think we could get the stuff from now it's all rationed?"

"I am quite awah, Wacke, that your man Scaife is still stayin' in the village, and I know the weason vewy well. And I warn you," went on D'Arcy indignantly, "that if this goes on you will be stopped, the same as you were befoah. Cardew helped to stop you, and I am surprised to see him joinin' in your wotten game!"

"Do I look like a food-hog, old boy?" asked Cardew. "Depend on it, it's nothin' of the kind."

"Come and join in the footah, then," said Arthur Augustus, encouragingly. "Old Talbot is captainin' the scwotch team, and he hasn't made up the eleven yet. I will put in a word for you."

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

"Oh, wats!"

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

"Look here——" began Crooke.

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

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

The swell of St. Jim's went in at the gates, and Racke & Co. walked down the lane towards Rylcombe.

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

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

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

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

"You fool!" exclaimed Racke, aghast.

"That gang, of all people!"

"Perhaps it was careless," smiled Cardew. "Not quite so careless as what we're doin' now, if you come to that. My dear man, Trimble knows nothin', and Tom Merry & Co. wouldn't give a chap away, whatever they might guess. Even if we're known to be goin' to Scaife's place to-day, it will be put down to food-hoggin', owing to your juicy reputation as a patriot. Safe as houses! By the way, don't call me names!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Oh, all right!"

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

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

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

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

"Yes. I'm coming with you."

Cardew started.

"Coming with me!" he ejaculated.

Levison nodded quietly.

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

"I know that."

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

"I know."

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

"No."

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

"You're doing it."

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

"After quarrelling with them a dozen times or more!"

"Yes; they're always willin' to make it up," grinned Cardew. "That's the advantage of havin' a giddy nobleman for a grandfather. Racke's the son of a baronet now, that's true; but the baronetcy smells a bit of war-profits. Dear old Racke senior was goin' to be a knight, but he seems to have decided to pay up handsomely an' make it a baronetcy. Wise man—what?"

"Don't get off the subject, Cardew. I'm coming with you, unless you come back with me and play footer."

"Can't be done!"

"Let's get on, then."

Cardew looked perplexed.

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

"I can guess that."

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

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

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

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

"You'd beter turn back."

Levison shook his head.

"Well, come on, then," said Cardew, resignedly. "Too much fag to argue. If you will, you will. Don't say I haven't warned you."

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

CHAPTER 6.

A Little Flutter.

"HERE we are!" said Cardew suddenly.

Levison nodded, without speaking, as Cardew opened a garden gate of a villa on the outskirts of Rylcombe.

Levison knew the place.

He was well aware that Racke's "man," Scaife, had his headquarters there, and it was hardly a secret that Racke & Co. went to the place to enjoy the surreptitious supplies of "grub" provided by Scaife.

Racke of the Shell had plentiful supplies of cash from his father, the eminent war profiteer, and he spent it in a manner worthy of his esteemed parent.

Scaife had "carte blanche" so far as money went, and by one means or another he found a way of providing handsome spreads in strict secrecy, to which Aubrey Racke came often, and his friends sometimes.

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

"Surely it's not food-hogging, Cardew," he said. "You're not that sort."

"You do me justice, dear boy. It's not food-hoggin'. I haven't fallen to that yet," answered Cardew urbanely.

"It's gambling?" said Levison abruptly.

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

"I've guessed it before," said Levison.

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

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

Levison frowned.

"Do you mean to say that Racke's man is keeping a gaming place here?" he breathed.

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

"Well, I'm coming!"

"Suit yourself!"

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

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

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

"Or babble at St. Jim's?"

"No."

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

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

Cardew laughed lightly.

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

"Let's get in!"

"Right-ho!"

Cadet Notes.

In the West Riding of Yorkshire very great activity is being shown in regard to the strengthening and increasing of the Cadet Movement. A meeting was recently held at Keighley for the purpose of forming a local committee to promote the Cadet Movement in that district, and Brigadier-General H. Mends, C.B., attended on behalf of the Territorial Force Association of that county, and in the course of his speech gave what is, perhaps, one of the best descriptions of the objects of the Cadet Movement that could be found. General Mends stated that the primary object of the Cadet Movement was to improve the boys physically, mentally, and morally, with a view to making them good citizens when they reach man's estate.

That is the proper reply to those who object to the Cadet Movement on the ground that it involves military training. The fact is that without some kind of drill and exercise it is scarcely possible to instil a sense of duty and discipline into boys, or, for the matter of that, into men either. In the Cadet Movement the aim is to keep the military side as subordinate as possible to the physical training and general improvement in the physique and character, and every boy who desires to play a useful and worthy part in after life should avail himself of the opportunities now presented to enrol in one or other of these corps, and reap the advantages which they undoubtedly afford. Any boy who would like further information and particulars about his local corps should apply to the Central Association Volunteer Regiments, Law Courts, Strand, W.C. 2, who will send an immediate answer and an instruction to the local corps wherever a suitable one exists.

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

It was rather surprising to Levison that even Aubrey Racke had fallen to such a depth as this. But the heir of the war-profitier was a rascal to the finger-tips, and doubtless he found great pleasure in this new form of excitement.

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

"All serene, Scaife!" said Cardew carelessly.

Scaife nodded, and unchained the door.

"Come in, sir!" he said respectfully.

The grandson of Lord Reckness was evidently a welcome person in the headquarters of "Racke's man."

Levison followed Cardew into the house, and the door was closed again and chained.

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

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

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

In the centre was a curious contrivance.

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

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

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

Each horse was numbered one to nine. Across the bowl was drawn a line, marking the winning post.

The horse that stopped nearest that line when the mechanism ran down was the winner, and the number he carried was the winning number.

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

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

There were other fellows present, too—Algernon Lacy, of Rylcombe Grammar School, and several whom Levison did not know. There was also Mr. Griggs, of the estate-agent's office in Wayland—a local "nut."

Presiding over the table was a hard-featured man, rather loudly dressed, with a diamond in his tie and rings on his fingers.

Levison recognised him; he had seen the man before.

"Tickey Tapp!" he muttered.

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

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

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

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

"You had a hand in that?"

Levison coloured.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ernest Levison gave him the curtest of nods in response.

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

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

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

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

The war, of course, had stopped "petits-chevaux" at Boulogne and Dieppe and Le Touquet and other Channel resorts, partly from the buildings being taken over for public purposes, partly because in war-time the crowds of holiday-makers could not come there to be fleeced.

Probably Tickey Tapp had picked up that table at a bargain. It had probably been packed off with much other property to escape the invading hosts of Huns in the early days of the war, and the owner had found it useless on the British side of the Channel.

However that might be, there it was, and Tickey Tapp was presiding over it; and his young friends were enjoying the unaccustomed pleasure of dabbling in a variety of gambling previously reserved for Continental trippers.

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

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

Levison stood and watched, with a gloomy brow.

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

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

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

Aubrey Racke was evidently enjoying himself.

The heir of Messrs. Racke & Hacke, profiteers, was, as usual, flush with money, and he was playing with pound notes, while the rest of the punters generally contented themselves with half-crowns.

Under the gas-light their faces did not look pleasant, most of them having a sharp and hawkish expression.

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

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

"Make your game, gents!"

Coins and small notes fluttered on the table.

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

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

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



Levison Looks Down, and Out!
(See Chapter 7.)

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

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

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

Levison was right.

It was number five that stopped at the line, and Racke muttered a curse under his breath. But on number five Cardew had thrown a half-crown, and he consequently received seven half-crowns from Tapp.

Cardew's eyes glittered.

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

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

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

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

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

And this was the game for which Cardew had been trying to make a "system"! A system! Levison felt a kind of compassion for his chum, angry as he was. A system—to beat a game which depended upon the will of the banker! But Cardew had no suspicion of that. He felt towards Cardew at that moment as if he were a child—a wilful child—and he could not be angry.

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

"Got any money?"

"What?"

"Lend me some money."

"Stony?" asked Levison.

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

"Yes. Lend me some tin."

Levison shook his head.

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

Cardew gave him a fierce look.

"You're not playing? You do the game your money. Do you think I won't pay you, you fool?" he said, in a shrill whisper.

"I know you would, but—"

"Lend it to me, then."

"Come away, old chap."

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

"No, I won't!"

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

It was too late for him to stake of

that round now, and he watched with his heart in his feverish eyes. Number seven won.

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

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

"What?"

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

"Oh, don't be a fool!"

"Look here, Cardew—"

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

"No."

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 7.

Trouble in No. 9.

"HAILLO, slacker!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Anything up?" asked Tom Merry good-naturedly. "You look as if you'd lost an English sapphire and found a German mark!"

Levison smiled faintly.

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

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

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

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Give him one of your sermons in your well-known seventhly style," urged THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 562.

Lowther. "We'll all come and hear you."

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

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

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

"Oh, rats!"

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

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

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

"And to me," said Manners.

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

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

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

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

Cardew, unusually enough for him, was looking tired and depressed. There were lines on his face.

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

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

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

"Do I?"

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

Cardew smiled faintly, and went his way. He was quite well aware that he would have done better to play footer; it was rather a better and more decent game than "petits-chevaux." But his evil genius was in the ascendant now, and he did not think of following Tom Merry's good advice.

Sidney Clive and Levison were at tea in No. 9 when Cardew came in, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a guest in the study. Supplies were short in No. 6, and Blake & Co. had "planted themselves out," as Blake called it, along the passage. Jack Blake had dropped in to see Julian; Herries bestowed his company upon Durrance and Lumley-Lumley; Digby honoured Contarini with his presence, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy accepted Clive's hearty invitation to No. 9. Possibly the great Gussy thought that his presence, and his uplifting conversation, might have a good effect upon the reckless Cardew; but tea in No. 9 was nearly over when the prodigal came in.

Cardew nodded and smiled as he entered, but it was with an effort that he could be seen plainly enough. The

dandy of the Fourth was not feeling himself, and he could not quite disguise the fact. Hours of unhealthy excitement in a close atmosphere had told upon him, fit as he was, and the feverish excitement of the green table had left its mark.

Levison pulled a chair to the table for him.

"Thanks, I won't have any tea," said Cardew, dropping into the armchair. "In fact, I've had a snack."

"Probably an unrationed snack with Racke & Co.," grunted Clive.

"My dear man, I haven't been food-hoggin'! D'Arcy, it's a pleasure to see you here."

"You are vevy flattewin', Cardew."

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

"Yaas."

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

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

"You'll give me some advice!"

"With pleasuah, deah boy!"

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

"Bai Jove!"

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

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

"Yaas, wathah! That's all wight.

But—"

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

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

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

"Yaas; but—"

"Shell out, then."

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

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

"Yaas."

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

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

There was a faint trace of shame in Cardew's face as he took the money. He avoided meeting Levison's eyes.

Sidney Clive's brow was like a thunder-cloud, but he did not speak.

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

"Cardew!" broke out Clive and Levison together.

"Hallo!"

"I asked D'Arcy here to tea, not for you to stick him for his money!" ex-

claimed Clive angrily. "I know what it's for, if D'Arcy doesn't."

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

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

"My bizney, I suppose, not yours."

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

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

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

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"This means that you're going again—"

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

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

Clive started.

"Levison, you haven't—"

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

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

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

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

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

Clive rose to his feet, his face set.

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

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

"Well, I'm not going to stand it," said Clive. "Racke's got you into this, I can see. I've heard how he tried to get D'Arcy into something of the same kind. He failed there, and he seems to have succeeded with you. Well, I'm not going to drop you—"

"Don't mind me, dear man!"

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

Cardew raised his eyebrows. "You're going to—what?" he asked.

"Stop you."

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

"Clive, old chap!" muttered Levison uneasily.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Clive gulped down his wrath.

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

"Rats!" yawned Cardew.

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

"What an awful fate!"

"Can't you see what it looks like to others?" asked Clive. "As I make it out, Racke's man has started some gambling-table game in that house at Rylcombe, where they used to carry on food-hogging!"

"Not Racke's man; another nice

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gentleman of the same kidney," smiled Cardew. "Birds of a feather, certainly!"

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

"Very likely."

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

"Likely enough."

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

"Quite so."

"It may happen to you with the rest."

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

"It isn't a joking matter, Cardew." "Your mistake. It is! You don't know how entertainin' you are when you mount the high horse."

Clive set his lips.

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

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

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

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

"You will see!" said Clive.

With that he left the study.

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

"No, I can't!"

"And won't?"

"And I won't!" assented Levison.

"Now, I wonder whom I could stick for a few pounds?" said Cardew, unmoved. "Talbot of the Shell would squeeze out a quid, I think; and young Julian's got lots of oof. The question arises, however, whether he would lend me any? My cousin, Durrance, will lend me all he's got, I know, if I don't tell him what I want it for. Figgins of the New House is a good-natured chap, too. Do you think Figg's got any money to lend, Levison?"

There was a tap at the door, and Levison's minor came in.

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

"Come in, kid!" said Levison.

"Yes, come in!" smiled Cardew.

"Glad to see you, Frank! Can you lend me any money?"

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

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

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

"My mistake!" said Cardew urbanely. "I forgot that Frank's youthful ears must not be polluted with such things."

You wouldn't like me to take him along with me to-morrow, Ernest?"

Levison clenched his hands.

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

CHAPTER 8.

Clive's Way!

"CHEERIO!"

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

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

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

Clive looked up, colouring a little.

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

"Eh?"

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

"Oh, no!"

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

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

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

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

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

"I can't give you the particulars," said Clive slowly. "It's a kind of confidence;

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I mean, I'm bound not to repeat what I happen to know about the matter. I'll put a case. Suppose a friend of yours was a reckless ass—a real good fellow at bottom, but liable to have fits of silly recklessness—

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

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

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

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

"Yes?"

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

"No."

"You'd chip in?"

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

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

Tom Merry glanced round.

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

Cardew passed Sidney Clive without even a look.

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

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

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

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

"I thought you'd agree with me!" said Clive, relieved. "What I'm thinking of is—a bit high-handed, and I'm glad to have your opinion. I don't see why I should stand on ceremony in dealing with a professional sharper who's getting schoolboys into blackguardly ways."

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

Clive shook his head.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Clive's eyes gleamed.

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

"I know."

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

"He will cut up rusty."

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

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

"Wait for me at the gates, while I cut round to the wood-shed."

"Right-ho!"

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

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

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

He recognised Levison, but blinked dubiously at Clive, and he did not remove the chain from the door.

"Let us in!" said Clive abruptly.

"I think I'd better speak to Master Racke first," said Scaife doubtfully.

"He hasn't said—"

"Let us in at once!"

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

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

"He needn't!"

Clive's hand came from under his coat; it held a heavy wood-chopper. Without any ceremony, he struck a powerful blow at the lock. Levison caught his breath.

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

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

Crash, crash!

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

"What are you up to?" he panted.

"Are you mad? Do you want me to telephone for the police?"

"Please yourself," answered Clive.

"You'll let me in, my man, or I'll hack through the door!"

"You can't come in, you fool! You—"

Crash, crash!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sidney Clive strode up to the table.

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

Clive raised the chopper, and brought it down with all his force upon the set of little wooden horses. There was a terrific crash, and a yell from Tickey Tapp. Those "petits chevaux" were not likely to run again.

Tapp sprang to his feet, black with fury.

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

"Smash him!" yelled Racke furiously.

"Clive, you mad idiot!" shouted Cardew.

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

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

Tickey Tapp halted.

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

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

"Wha-a-at?"

"You cheeky fool!" shouted Crooke.

"Kick him out!" raved Racke.

"Throw him out!"

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

The sharper seemed to be thunder-struck.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tickey Tapp, almost foaming with rage, came towards him once; but Scaife caught him by the arm and pulled him back. With a face of fury, the sharper grabbed up the money from the table and quitted the room, making no further attempt to interfere with Clive. Neither did Racke & Co. attempt to interfere, enraged as they were; Clive was rather too hefty for the slackers of St. Jim's to tackle. Scrope and Mellish and Chowle, indeed, were grinning. They had lost all their money, and they appeared to derive some solace from the South African junior's drastic action.

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

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

Crash, crash, crash!

The little wooden horses, the mechanical contrivance that worked them, the green cloth, the table itself, flew into fragments under Clive's doughty blows. Mr. Tapp's "petits-

chevaux" required more putting together after that than Humpty-Dumpty after his fall from the wall.

Clive stopped at last, a little breathless.

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

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

"Coming, Cardew?" he asked.

"Hang you! No!"

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

In the hall they found Scaife, pale and scared. Tickey Tapp had vanished. The sharper was not sure that Clive had not already given information to the authorities, and he had made himself scarce without loss of time. Scaife came towards the two juniors, but not in a hostile way.

"What do you want?" snapped Clive.

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

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

"Thank you, sir!" mumbled Scaife.

Clive turned his back on the rascal, and left the house with his chum. Levison drew a deep breath as they came out into the road.

"Well, we've done it!" he said. "Cardew will be as mad as a hatter over this, though."

"Let him!" said Clive.

And they walked home to St. Jim's together.

Tom Merry met Clive and Levison as they came in.

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

"All serene," he said.

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

"Quite—for good!"

"Good man!" said Tom Merry.

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

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

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

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

He met their astonished looks, and burst into a laugh.

"Clive, old man," he said, "you're A1. You're a gilt-edged jewel, old man. Tickey Tapp's face was worth a guinea a box when you started on the petits-chevaux, and dear old Scaife was all in a tremble. What a lark!"

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

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

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

"And now the game's gone sky-high, and I shall never try that merry old system!" said Cardew, with a sigh.

"What a life! It's rather a relief to a fellow's mind, though, come to think of it. Do you know, it was growing quite a worry? Do you want all those sardines, Levison? If not, pass a few this way."

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

Tom Merry eyed the chums of No. 9 when he saw them again, fully expecting to see the signs of trouble. But he was agreeably disappointed. The trio came into the Common-room that evening together, evidently on the best of terms; Ralph Reckness Cardew the cheeriest of the three—though he was the one who had been called to Order!

THE END.

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

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"TALBOT'S FOES!"

By Martin Clifford.

We are often asked for another Talbot story—and that always means, I fancy, a story in which the shadow of the past falls again upon Talbot, not one in which he plays an ordinary part, more or less heroic, such as any other fellow might play.

And the shadow of the past must necessarily lie blackly over Talbot at times. He cannot quite forget, though he is seldom reminded of it by anyone else. By the cads now and then, of course; but Talbot's chums soon shut them up if they hear anything.

John Rivers, Marie's father, the Professor of the old days, has made good over in France. Hookey Walker has also, through Talbot, broken with his past, or, at least, tried to break with it. But there remain others whom the Toff knew in the bad old days, and chief among them the scoundrel Tickey Tapp, who has lately turned up in the Rylcombe neighbourhood, and is hand in glove with Racke's rascal, Scaife.

Crooke, in spite of all Talbot's generosity to him, is still his cousin's bitter enemy, as you all know; and Crooke plays a villainous part in the fine yarn which appears next week.

I cannot tell you more now; I do not want to give away the story in advance.

GETTING YOUR FRIENDS IN!

This is just the kind of yarn which you would do well to show to such of your friends as are not already readers of the GEM. To appreciate the story there is no necessity to know all about what has happened to Talbot in the past. Quite enough for interest can be picked up from what is told in the story itself.

I am certain that no one who reads "Talbot's Foes" will fail to look forward eagerly to its sequel, which will appear in the following week. And after that I am sure that the new readers' interest will have been aroused in the Terrible Three; in Arthur Augustus, with his immense tact and judgment; in Figgins & Co.; and all the rest of the good fellows whom we have come to know so well, and whom most of us think of as though they were our own personal friends. And there are others who are interesting without being friends of ours—the unspeakable Baggy, Racke, Crooke, and the rest.

The best advertisement any paper can have is the testimony of its loyal and enthusiastic readers. And that is one way in which the editor of a boys' paper scores over his colleague who runs a paper for grown-up people, I consider. Boys—and girls, too—are more

loyal and more enthusiastic—more ready to talk about the paper to their chums.

I want you to do lots of this during this winter. When peace breaks out—as some humorist put it in the past—I hope that the circulation of the GEM and of the "Magnet" will be higher than ever before. We have weathered the worst of the war-time now. There never was any great fear that these two papers would go under; but changes had to be made that some of our less keen readers failed to understand the necessity for, and it would not have been surprising if we had suffered. We have not suffered. We stand in a stronger position than ever. But many scores of other papers have ceased to exist. When you think of what a gap it would have meant in your lives had the GEM and the "Magnet" been among these you will not feel much about doing what I ask of you, I am sure.

Your Editor

THE ST. JIM'S GALLERY.

No. 23.—The Head.

IT had been intended that this article should appear in last week's number; but, owing to the length of the story, there was not room for it. Of course, it would have come in appropriately enough then; but there was much in the story itself which told of the affection and respect with which St. Jim's generally regards Dr. Richard Holmes.

And, indeed, it would be difficult to imagine a finer headmaster for a great school. Dr. Locke, of Greyfriars, is a thoroughly good and kind man; but he lacks some of the qualities which Dr. Holmes possesses. Of the two the Head of St. Jim's is by far the stronger, and rather a better judge of character. And, essentially, he is no less kind, for his sternness is for the unrepentant wrongdoer. He can punish severely on occasion, but never without good reason—or what he believes so. For he is capable of making mistakes, like other men. But he does not make a great many of them, and he is ready to admit his mistake when convicted of it.

At Greyfriars Dr. Locke takes the Sixth Form in classes. At St. Jim's Mr. Railton is the Sixth Form master. Dr. Holmes does comparatively little tutorial work. In his family life, too, he has been happier than Dr. Locke; and, altogether, he has had rather less wear and tear to withstand than the Greyfriars Head. But that does not mean that he is or has ever been an idle man, or a man of much leisure. There is plenty for the Head of a school like St. Jim's to do besides class-work.

Dr. Holmes has naturally played a part in many of the stories; but to seek out many instances of this would be of small use, for the part has so often been the same one—that of sitting in judgment upon schoolboy wrongdoers. When one comes to think of it one sees that the Head of a great school must sometimes find it hard to keep his faith in human nature, for he is very apt to see his pupils at—or just after—their worst. And he often has to be judge and executioner in one. I am quite sure that Dr. Holmes dislikes caning anyone, and hates birching, with its ignominious associations. But he cannot hand over such tasks to another. When a fellow is taken before the Head it means that he has done something rather too black or too wild for his Housemaster to deal with the offence. Mr. Railton, at least, who thinks so much of the Head, certainly would not trouble him unnecessarily; while Mr. Ratcliff is too jealous of his own authority to do that often.

And it is not only the boys who give the Head cause for anxiety. Many a time he must have wished that Mr. Ratcliff would retire and hand over the governance of the New House to someone who did not attempt to involve Mr. Railton in constant bickerings. Those bickerings are not the fault of the School House master. At the bottom of them is always the bitter feeling Mr. Ratcliff has on account of the fact that one so much younger than himself, so very different from himself, should stand next in authority to the Head.

Mr. Selby and Herr Schneider have also given the Head trouble from time to time. The Third Form master is a born tyrant without the most elementary principles of justice; and, although the Herr has his good points, there is about him a good deal of the born Hun. Probably it was no easy decision Dr. Holmes had to make in the case of Herr Schneider at a time when so many schools had sent their German masters packing. The Herr was allowed to stay on; and that meant that Dr. Holmes counted him harmless. But he could hardly have made up his mind to that without some doubt and misgiving; and the doubt and misgiving must have been renewed lately, when Herr Schneider tried to deal with Durrance—or Paul Laurenz, as he was then called—in a way that was very distinctly off the rails.

There has seldom been acute trouble between the Head and the school. But that

did happen at least once, when the edict against the pets went forth, and the juniors struck. To a great extent Levison was at the bottom of that trouble. It was he who had teased Towser till the poor old chap broke his chain in his rage, and cleared the quad. Everyone but Herries shirked going near him; but Herries fetched him in. The Head got the wrong impression that Towser was really dangerous. Then there was an upset with Pongo, and after that Obadiah Walker, Reilly's monkey, annoyed Mr. Ratcliff extremely. After that the edict went forth. The Head was sorry for it when he found how hard it hit the owners of the various pets, and how aggrieved the whole Lower School felt about it; but, after the rebellion, he could not give way—until Levison had confessed. Then he did; and in giving way he showed himself the great-hearted and kindly gentleman he is. A man less generous and more obstinate would have expelled a few of the juniors, and punished heavily those left



behind. He would have stuck to his guns in the matter of the punishment of the dogs, the monkey, and the other animals concerned. Dr. Holmes could have taken that attitude. But he did better for himself and for St. Jim's by giving way on the point.

No headmaster likes expelling boys. It is usually bad for the boy, branding him as it does, though there are cases where it is the one thing that will pull him up in a career likely to end badly. It is bad for the school in a way, for the general notion among people who do not know how bad boys can be, or how much masters have to endure, is that expulsion is a confession of weakness. What are masters good for if they must give up a boy as hopeless? That is what they are inclined to ask.

But this is not fair. No one could be more long-suffering than Dr. Holmes; but the unpleasant task of expulsion has often fallen to his lot. There have been mistakes at times; it has already been remarked that the Head of St. Jim's is not infallible. Tom Merry, Talbot, Arthur Augustus—all these have had

to go for crimes not theirs. But they came back. Gore was allowed to come back, though in the days before he began to walk straight he did enough to justify expulsion a dozen times over. More than once a fellow has run away to avoid being expelled—Wally D'Arcy did that on one occasion, and Gussy on another. But besides all these there have been actual expulsions, almost invariably of thieves for whom no excuse could be found—Hake and Craik, the two New House Sixth-Formers, and Tresham, the rotter who tried to put the blame on Talbot, and was bowled by Levison, are instances that readily occur.

Levison himself, many a time in danger, was once under sentence; and he also ran away. Crooke and Hake have both been very near getting kicked out. They have been saved by the pleas of others; the Head is always ready to lend an ear to an appeal for mercy if his duty will allow of it.

Nothing shows up Dr. Holmes in a better light than his dealings with Jerrold Lumley-Lumley and Reginald Talbot. He was more than once mistaken about Talbot; but there was good reason for that. The shadow of a past such as that of the fellow who had been known as "the Toft" is not easily to be lifted. But it was to the Head that Talbot owed it in the long run that he had a chance to get out of that shadow.

The circumstances of the two cases were very different. Lumley-Lumley was the son of a millionaire; Talbot was a nameless young criminal. But those circumstances did not weigh with the Head. He was very patient, very kind, very forgiving with Lumley-Lumley. It is not necessary to tell the whole story here; Lumley-Lumley will be dealt with later.

But one story must be mentioned—that in which Lumley-Lumley and Tom Merry risked their lives in swimming through the floods to fetch the doctor from Kylecombe to the Head, who had been taken suddenly ill, and was in danger of death. There had been trouble just before that; the flood had meant a good deal of boredom for St. Jim's in general, and when boys are badly bored trouble often results. They even forgot the respect due to the Head. But they suffered for that when the kindly old man lay between life and death. Every decent fellow must have regretted it then.

It was rare generosity on the Head's part that allowed Talbot to take his place among the Shell fellows—still rarer generosity that allowed him to stay there when the story of his past was known. Many people would have thought Dr. Holmes merely soft and foolish; and he certainly risked much, for it would have been easy enough for an evilly-disposed person who knew the story to stir up objections among parents and guardians.

Some of you will remember how Crooke did this in the case of Colonel Lyndon, his uncle. The Head was seen at his best and strongest when the Board of Governors decided that Talbot must go. If Talbot were cast forth he himself would go, he said. And he meant it. Yet think of what it would have been for him! St. Jim's is the very centre of his life, the work of its best part, his home, his own old school.

He must have grown very fond of Talbot before he could have thought of making such a sacrifice for him, though his sense of justice came into play to reinforce his affection. He had come to know Talbot through and through, you see. The knowledge had come gradually; more than once he had believed himself mistaken in the boy, and had cut him off. But in every case it had turned out in the event that the seeming evidence against Talbot was the base work of an enemy. And thus the Head had come to feel that his faith was founded on a rock. He must have had some remorse, too, for the injustice dealt out, though unwittingly, to Talbot earlier.

For some time he had been paying Talbot's fees himself; but after that Colonel Lyndon took over their payment, as the boy's uncle.

But the Head's practical adoption of Talbot was not ended by that. Dr. Holmes is still very much in the place of a father to the handsome Shell fellow.

The Head is a man of strong affections. There can be no possible doubt about his feeling for Mr. Railton, D'Arcy's cousin, Ethel Cleveland, is a great favourite of his, too. And I think he has a very soft spot in his heart for Gussy himself, while there is no room for debate as to his liking for Tom Merry.

When Tom had to leave through his uncle's losses—or supposed losses—the Head made room for him at St. Jim's as a master. It was rather a daring experiment; but Dr. Holmes is never afraid of doing things out of the ordinary way, as his treatment of the strange case of Talbot shows. And Tom did not do badly, though it was not for long he bossed the Third.

Tom was the leader of the band of juniors who rescued the Head when he was captured and held to ransom by the scoundrel Pete Carson. Dr. Holmes showed up well in that affair. He was lured by a message from a brother who had gone abroad—or, rather, by a rasal impersonating that brother—to a lonely cottage. This brother—y younger than the doctor—had been reckless and foolish in his early days, and was now made out to be in peril of the law. But the Head soon disposed of the claims of the impostor to be James Holmes, in spite of the fact that there was a very strong likeness between the two men, and that he had not seen his brother for a very long time. A shrewd question or two made it certain that there was fraud afoot. Carson had planned well. A telegram to the school was to put everyone off the scent and prevent any search being made, and the Head could have his freedom when

he had signed a big cheque and it had been cashed.

But Dr. Holmes refused most positively to sign the cheque. They tried semi-starvation; but he would not give in. He was proof against threats of all kinds.

And then Tom Merry and his chums chipped in, got on the track, and in the event rescued the Head. But there will be more to say about this particular story in another article.

There is much more that might be told here; but I think there is no need for more. Enough has been said to show Dr. Holmes as he is—a strong man in the main, though not incapable of slight weakness on occasion, a most lovable man, and a most just and merciful man.

But all that he means to St. Jim's perhaps only a St. Jim's fellow could tell; and perhaps even the most eloquent of them could not tell it all!

Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

BAGGY THE SPOOK. By Monty Lowther.

WE had been exchanging ghost-yarns round the Common-room fire one wet, miserable evening, and had managed to work ourselves up into a most morbid state of superstition.

Thus it was that when Baggy Trimble, who had been snoozing, suddenly made the bold declaration that no ghost, spook, spirit, or spectre on the earth, over the earth, or under the earth could disturb his mental or nervous equilibrium, we welcomed it as something really funny.

But Baggy waxed exceedingly waxy, and proceeded to relate how, upon a raw and gusty Christmas night, before ever he had honoured the precincts of St. Jim's with his presence, he had "laid" the family ghost of the Trimbles at Trimble Hall. He explained that, according to a custom dating far back into the Middle Ages, the spirit of a deceased scion of the Trimble stock, by name Sir Odsobobs Trimble, walked each Christmas Eve at about midnight, though for what reason I really cannot tell, unless, like Baggy, he was after the grub.

Of course, we all laughed Baggy to scorn, and requested him to tell that yarn to the Marines, or, failing them, to his grandmother; but Baggy still persisted in his assertion that no ghost, spook, spirit, or spectre could frighten him.

Whereat I registered a solemn mental vow to prove, by some means or other, that Baggy Trimble was a most hardened prevaricator and a sad swanker.

A few days later, while I was still on the look-out for a wheeze whereby to make good my resolution, Bernard Glyn, the pet inventor of the Shell, informed me that he had just completed a sample tin of what he called "Glynto, the Super-luminous Paint." Upon my requesting further details, Glyn explained that, not only did his "Glynto" put all and every other brand and manufacture of luminous paint absolutely and completely in the shade for luminosity, but the additional beauty of it was, that it was perfectly harmless to the skin when applied, and quite non-poisonous.

This little piece of information set me thinking, and ere long the mighty brains of Glyn and I had concocted a rare plot.

We took Tom Merry and Manners into our confidence, and, as it was necessary to secure the collaboration of somebody in the Fourth, Blake & Co., of Study No. 6, were also included.

Two evenings later, if anybody had chanced to look in at the Fourth Form dormitory, Glyn and I might have been seen carefully secreting two long poles, a looking-glass, several pieces of string and rope, a pot of "Glynto" and a brush, underneath Blake's bed.

That evening the Fourth and Shell went to bed as usual, and Kildare, who saw lights out, bade us a cheery "Good-night!" without the least suspicion that there was anything extra special about that night.

One by one the fellows in our dormitory snoozed off, until Glyn, Tom Merry, Manners, and I were the only ones awake.

When the hour of midnight boomed forth from the old clock-tower, we five watchers of the night tumbled out of our little warm beds, and made our way carefully in the direction of the dormitory. On our way we had to pass Herr Schneider's door, from which some of the most tremendous snores reverberated along the passage, and, in passing, it struck me how lovely it would be to make that irate old Hun another victim of the little jape we had on hand. As will be seen later, however, Fate anticipated my designs, and took the little job out of my hands.

We were admitted into the Fourth Form stables by the one and only Arthur Augustus, who was attired in a gorgeous suit of pyjamas of a most striking pattern; indeed, I was so struck that I quite omitted to see that the door was fastened, which proved most unfortunate later on.

Baggy Trimble was industriously playing the "Broken Melody" on his nasal organ, with plenty of bass, when we got there. Blake, Herries, and Digby were up, and prepared to be doing, and, with such affable remarks as, "Hallo, ass!" and "Same to you, fat-head!" we got to work, and soon had the paraphernalia from under Blake's bed.

Then an unfortunate thing happened. Herries, who, as everybody knows, is afflicted with very big feet, must needs stumble over somebody's trousers which had fallen on the floor. Herries gave the offending nether garments a terrific kick, which lifted them clean across the dormitory, and we were horrified to hear a smothered gasp from Gussy, and a heavy thump as he sat down.

Then Gussy began to bleat. "Ow, ow, ow!" he wailed, leaping to his feet with remarkable alacrity, and dancing round the beds with his hands clasped to the rear of his pyjamas.

"Be quiet, Gussy!" growled Tom Merry. "Do you want to wake up the whole blessed dorm?"

Whether Gussy wanted to or not, the fact remains that he succeeded in waking up at least a dozen fellows—among them Levison, who arose in great wrath upon identifying his trousers as those which had been the cause of all the trouble.

"Gussy," muttered Blake, "shut up that row!"

"Ow!"

"What's the matter, fathead?" growled Glyn.

"Gwooooh!" gasped Gussy. "Some beastly wotah thwew a beasty pail of twounsahs at me, an'—an' I sat down on the beasty pwongs on the beasty bwaces! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

I glanced anxiously in Baggy Trimble's direction, but was relieved to find him still snoring peacefully away. It was difficult to restore peace and quiet again, as everybody who was awake wanted to know the why and wherefore of everything; and Levison, in particular, was most unreasonable in his wrath at having his trousers kicked about.

At last, however, we managed to appease

the burning curiosity of the others, and, making sure that Baggy was safe, Glyn and I proceeded with our work.

We fixed a pole at either side of the bed, opposite to each other, tying it to the iron frame of the bed with the rope. Then the large looking-glass was placed between the two poles and fixed by pivots at the top so that it swung in a vertical plane in the same way as the swing-mirrors in tailors' shops. At the top and bottom of the looking-glass were fixed the two ends of a long piece of string, so that anybody at the other side of the dormitory could make the glass swing up and down by just gently pulling the string.

It did not take long to do, and in ten minutes or so Glyn and I had quite a weird-looking contraption rigged up over Baggy's bed.

"What on earth are you up to, Glyn?" asked Levison, in wonder.

I chuckled mysteriously, and Glyn vouchsafed no other reply than a terse "Wait and see!"

"Hand me up the paint-pot, Lowther," said Glyn.

He sat on the edge of Baggy's bed, and grasped the sleeper by his fat shoulders. Carefully, very carefully, Glyn turned him round in the bed so that he lay on his back. It was a ticklish job, for Baggy always goes to sleep curled up like a cat, with his knees almost touching his chin. By adjusting his head on the pillow, Glyn at last got him into the position required. Still slumbering, Baggy lay on his back with his little fat face gazing unseeingly up into the looking-glass.

I handed Glyn the paint and the brush.

"What have you got in that tin, Glyn?" asked Cardew.

"Yes; can't you tell us what the little game is, you boulder?" said Clive.

"This," said Glyn impressively, holding up the pot of paint, "is the famous 'Glynto'—the latest thing in luminous paints!"

"What?"

"Getting deaf? 'Glynto'—the super-luminous paint—absolutely harmless and reliable—guaranteed five hundred horsepower, five thousand candle-power, five million gas-power! This is IT!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush!" said Glyn, tiptoeing over to the unconscious Baggy. "Don't wake the patient!"

And, taking the brush, he proceeded very gently and cautiously to give the upturned countenance of Baggy Trimble a coating of "Glynto."

Baggy's face cannot exactly be described as pretty at the best of times, but as Glyn's work of art progressed, so Baggy's face gradually assumed a ghastly aspect. When Glyn at last replaced the brush in the pot and surveyed his handiwork with a grunt of satisfaction, the face of Baggy Trimble was like unto that of a grinning fiend from the regions below, so well and discreetly had Glyn applied the paint—leaving little streaks untouched here and there and hollows round each of the eyes, so that as the rolls of fat on Baggy's face moved under the strain of

his breathing the effect was absolutely monstrous.

Truly, the face in the bed was a sight to see and wonder at!

We gazed at it and staggered away—almost unable to conceal our merriment.

Baggy still snored on, his face twitching, a truly frightful sight in the darkness.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry, grasping Cardew's bed for support. "What will Baggy do when he wakes up?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shurrup, you giggling duffers!" growled Glyn.

"Get on with it!" I sobbed.

Glyn lifted up the bedclothes at the bottom of Baggy's bed so that Baggy's podgy feet were exposed to view.

I knew what was coming, and pulled some feathers out of a bolster.

"Now to wake up the ghost!" chuckled Glyn.

He knelt down, and gently tickled the sole of Baggy's bare foot with a feather.

Nothing happened for a time. The terrific snores of the sleeper continued to resound. Glyn perseveringly tickled away with the feather.

Gradually the snores became gasps; the gasps became grunts; and at last Baggy heaved a heavy sigh and kicked angrily.

"Grooogh!" he murmured.

Glyn hissed a warning to keep quiet.

He gave a few more gentle touches with the feather, and Baggy's foot kicked spasmodically.

"Get the string ready to pull, Lowther!"

"What ho!" I murmured.

"Grunt!" said Baggy sleepily.

He heaved a heavy sigh and opened his eyes. He lay for a few moments as people newly roused sometimes will, gazing indolently before him—straight into the looking-glass.

The effect of the reflection therein upon Baggy was remarkable. The influence that

sight worked upon the very sluggish mind of Baggy could hardly have been surpassed by the most marvellous of natural phenomena.

Gradually his hands became tightly grasped upon the bedclothes, his eyes dilated with surprise, his mouth opened, his hair stood

erect upon his forehead, and when I pulled the string, thus making the weird apparition in the glass jump towards him, his eyes

nearily started out of his head in fright.

"Ooooh!" he gasped, kicking up his legs.

I pulled away at the string. All of Baggy's weird facial contortions, as I did so, were reflected with startling variations in the glass.

"Yarooogh!" roared Baggy, scared out of his wits. "Stop! Stop! Help! Keep it off! Ooooh!"

Glyn groaned in a deep, sepulchral manner. "Woogh!" screeched Baggy, giving the apparition in the glass one look of terror, and then diving beneath the bedclothes.

Glyn bent down and emitted another hollow groan at close quarters.

That did it!

With a wild leap and a yell of horror Baggy shot out of the bed, and pulled the looking-glass, poles, rope, and all on top of him.

We couldn't help ourselves—we howled with laughter.

Baggy howled, though not with laughter. He was hurt. He was frightened. He wanted to get away, but could not, being entangled in the rope.

Somehow—nobody knows how—he at last managed to free himself.

He caught a glimpse of himself in the glass and bolted.

"Ha, ha, ha!" we roared, almost weeping with laughter.

Baggy's howls had awakened everybody else in the dormitory, and there was a perfect pandemonium in a few minutes; especially when some of the fellows caught sight of the glowing face of Baggy in the darkness.

"Oooogh! Wha-a-at is it?" stuttered Mellish, only half awake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wowww!" howled Baggy, more scared than ever at the sound of so many voices.

"Murder! Fire! Yarooogh!"

And he dashed blindly round the dormitory, barging into everything and everybody in his precipitant hurry.

"What the—"

"He, ha, ha!"

"What is it?"

"Howly smoke—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Baggy joined in the chorus with a

fiendish yell, as he found the door which he

had been seeking so long—found it with his head!

He dragged the door open, precipitated himself through it, and dashed madly down the passage, bellowing like a bull.

How fervently I deplored that I had not locked the dormitory door, and how I could have kicked myself, and Gussy, too, for wearing such paralyzing pyjamas!

Fearful lest Baggy should wake the rest of the house with his howling, we dashed into the passage and followed him, in the hope that we might stop and reassure him before anything worse happened.

Baggy, however, heard us, and no doubt thinking that the ghost was chasing him, howled with renewed vehemence, and, putting on a desperate spurt, rushed blindly on and dragged open the first door he came to.

Oh, naking Fate! Oh, unlucky freak of Destiny! The door Baggy opened was the door of Herr Schneider's sleeping apartment.

"My hat!" gasped Blake. "That's done it!"

We fell back in dismay, and gazed helplessly at each other.

"The fat's in the fire now, with a vengeance!" groaned Tom Merry.

If Tommy was referring to Baggy as the "fat" and Herr Schneider's room as the "fire," he was correct, inasmuch as Baggy had dashed right into the room. Baggy was about to make a dive underneath Herr Schneider's bed, but the noise he made in entering the room had the effect of waking the Herr. He sat up in bed, and caught sight of a glowing apparition glaring at him in the darkness.

His little round eyes opened wide in terror. Uttering a yell worthy of a Red Indian on the war-path, he gave a wild leap out of the bedclothes, and commenced a species of Irish jig round the room.

"Ach, himmel!" he gasped. "He haf me—der gheist!"

At the mention of the word "gheist," which even he knew meant "ghost," all Baggy's terror came upon him again.

He leapt to his feet as if he had been shot, and made a blind rush for the door.

But Herr Schneider got in the way, and they clutched each other round the neck, and, dancing wildly about, fell down—Herr Schneider on top of Baggy.

The Herr leapt to his feet, and grasped the poker for protection.

Baggy got up, and then fell over the chair again in the darkness.

Gazing with horror-stricken eyes at Baggy's glowing countenance, Herr Schneider stood and shivered in the corner, poker in hand. He was shivering with cold as well as with fear.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Baggy. "They're kicking me!"

He made a rush in the darkness, and landed full-tilt upon Herr Schneider, who, in his turn, landed out with the poker.

"Yah! Murder!" howled Baggy, as he got the poker on his legs.

"Woogh!" bellowed Herr Schneider, slashing out with the poker. "Get away mit you—get away!"

Baggy got away in double-quick time, howling with pain and terror.

Frightened out of his wits by the sound of Baggy's howling and by the ghastly aspect of the face from which the sounds proceeded, Herr Schneider made a bee-line for the door. But he stumbled over the bedclothes strewn about the floor, and landed with a terrific bump upon his back.

Baggy made another frantic bolt for the door.

Herr Schneider, having arisen, also bolted for the door.

Both got there at the same time, and both grasped the handle.

Both pulled, but in slamming the door as he entered, Baggy had jammed it, and it would not budge an inch.

Then Herr Schneider looked the apparition full in the face.

Giving it one fleeting look that nearly made his eyes drop out, Herr Schneider darted across the room.

He did that quite involuntarily. He had no wish to look upon that terrifying face. His eyes nearly dropped out of his head as he got the full effect of it.

One wild yell he gave, and bolted for the window. He must have intended the mad act of chucking himself out—in which case our comedy would have ended in a horrible tragedy. For though Schneider is a good deal of a Hun, we should all have felt really sorry when it came to picking up broken pieces of him from the flagstones of the quad.

Luckily, he collapsed before he could throw up the sash. He lay on the floor, groaning feebly.

By this time the noise had awakened everyone in the House. Mr. Railton appeared upon the scene, closely followed by Messrs. Lathom and Linton, Kildare, and a dozen other seniors. The rest of our own Form also showed up.

Confusion prevailed, and I need hardly say that we were not feeling too happy. There seemed a general opinion that Glyn and I ought to own up. We knew that would have to come; but, after all, there were others in the bizney.

Kildare pushed at the door.

It would not move at first, but after a few good heavy shoves it yielded, and Kildare strode into the room, followed by Mr. Railton and Mr. Lathom.

Baggy was reclining in the coal-scuttle, getting his second wind. He emitted a hollow groan of anguish as they entered.

Kildare gave a jump, and stood still.

"Wha-a-at is it?" he stuttered.

"Woogh!" grunted the apparition in the coal-scuttle, making a noise like a pair of very old bellows.

Then Glyn and I, feeling pretty sick, went up to Mr. Railton to make a clean breast of the whole business.

"It's all right, sir," I stammered. "It—it's only Trimble!"

"What?" ejaculated Mr. Railton.

"It's only a joke," said Glyn.

"That's it, sir!" I said. "We didn't mean—"

"Glyn! Lowther!" gasped Mr. Railton.

"What is this I—"

"Oh, dear!" groaned Blake. "We're all in it, sir!"

"In what? Explain yourselves, boys!"

And we explained, with very crestfallen faces, that it was merely Baggy painted with "Glynto." We told all, before nearly the whole School House, and when we had finished a howl of laughter went up.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the crowd.

"Silence!" commanded Mr. Railton sternly.

The laughter quieted down somewhat, but broke out again here and there when someone couldn't contain himself.

"Blake, Lowther, Glyn, Merry," said Mr. Railton, "I will see you in my room to-morrow morning!"

"Yes, sir!" we groaned.

Manners and Herries, Dig and Gussy, hastened to make confession of their share in the plot.

Mr. Railton strode into the room, and gripped Baggy.

"Trimble!"

"Groogh! Leggo!" stuttered Baggy.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled the crowd.

"Trimble, you foolish boy, go up and wash your face!"

A groan answered him. Then the Herr got up, shivering in his thin pyjamas.

A roar of laughter greeted him as he emerged into the light. But we did not feel much like laughing.

"Back to bed, all of you!" snapped Mr. Railton.

We went. There was nothing else for it.

Next morning eight of us had an interview with the Head. I need hardly add that it was not a pleasant one. Six across each hand finished it for one and all of us.

But there was some satisfaction in having disposed of Baggy's absurd pretensions to heroism in the matter of ghosts—for me, at least. It soon wore thin, though, when I came to reflect how much value was ever attached to Baggy's swank about anything.

Glyn and I had gone rather a long way round to disprove what no one had ever believed true; and it was no great satisfaction to us to hear Baggy japed about it; we were tired of the whole affair as soon as Baggy was.

Herr Schneider got the worst of it. He was in sanny for a week after that night. Afraid I cannot honestly say I sorrowed over that. The Herr is no particular friend of mine. But, all the same, we were not out to present him with an extra-large size in chills—too dangerous.

Some chaps voted the joke the best of the term. But Glyn had his doubts about that, though the "Glynto" gained him quite a lot of kudos. As for the rest of us, our feeling about it may be summed up in the classical phrase, "I don't think!"

For it really would have been a bit nasty for us if the Herr had taken that mad leap out of the window, wouldn't it?

So this is a story with a moral; and the moral is: "Don't you ever try it out!"