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from This Week's
Grand St. Jim's
Yarn, "OUT OF
BOUNDS!"





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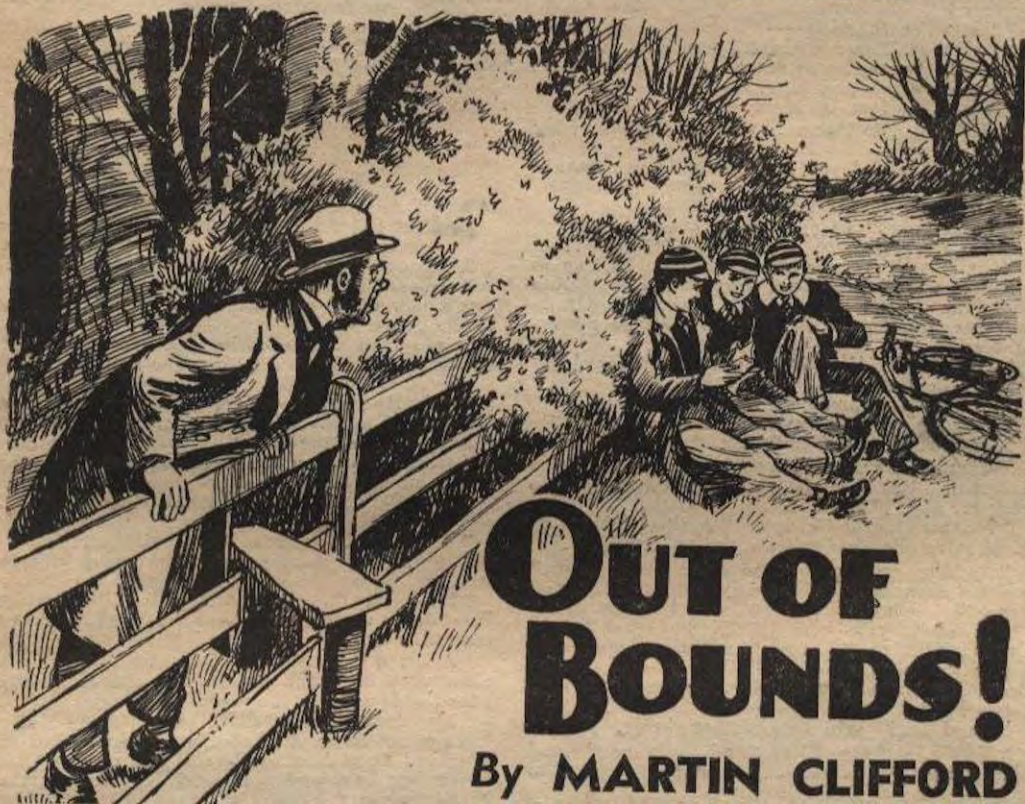
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(Continued on page 22.)

PEN PALS COUPON

3-12-33

Why Are School Bounds Suddenly Limited By The Head Of St. Jim's? Cardew & Co. Choose To Defy The Order—Thus Endangering Themselves And All The School!



OUT OF BOUNDS!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

"Got the chocolate, Owen?" Mr. Ratcliff jumped as he heard Kerr's voice and leaned farther over the stile. The three juniors he had been trailing were sitting under the hedge. They had not gone out of school bounds!

CHAPTER 1.

Players Wanted!

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW of the Fourth Form came along the Shell passage to Tom Merry's study.

In that apartment the Terrible Three of the Shell were all at home, and Cardew could hear their voices as he stopped at the door. They were discussing the Grammar School match coming off on Saturday.

"Clive or Lowther at half-back?" Tom Merry was saying in a thoughtful tone.

"Lowther!" said the owner of that name, with great promptness.

"What about Manners?" asked that youth.

"Can't be did, old son!" said Tom Merry. "When you play footer as well as you take photographs, you go in right away. Until then, I keep you for House matches and Form matches, old son!"

"Bow-wow!" said Manners.

When Ralph Reckness Cardew makes up his mind to keep a football engagement, not even the Head's unexpected order restricting school bounds will turn him from his purpose!

Cardew grinned and tapped at the door.

"Come in!" called out Tom Merry. "Here's another ass wants to play against the Grammarians, I suppose! I've had fifteen offers already."

Cardew entered the study.

"Busy?" he asked.

"Awfully!" said Tom Merry. "Good-bye!"

"Shut the door after you," suggested Monty Lowther.

Cardew did not take the hint. He remained where he was, with his hands in his trousers pockets, regarding the Terrible Three coolly.

"I've dropped in to speak about the match on Saturday," he remarked.

"I thought you had," agreed Tom Merry. "That's why we're busy. Ta-ta!"

"This is the last match before Christmas."

"Yes."

"I suppose you want the best men?"

"I've got them," said

Tom Merry, laughing. "The team's made up—when I decide on Lowther or Clive at half."

"That's decided already!" said Lowther warmly.

"Well, I'm thinking—"

"Chuck it, then; it doesn't suit you, anyway. Tommy! Put my name down, and let's have tea! Hallo! Are you still here, Cardew?"

"Yes. The fact is, Merry—"

"Declined with thanks!" said the captain of the Shell.

"I'm not askin' you for a place in the team!" shouted Cardew.

Tom Merry looked surprised.

"You're not!" he ejaculated.

"No, I'm not!"

"Oh, good! Take a chair, old chap! Stay to tea, will you?" said Tom, very cordially. "Any chap who doesn't want to help wallop the Grammarians on Saturday is as welcome as the flowers in May!"

"The fact is, I'm playin' away on Saturday," said Cardew loftily.

The Terrible Three looked at him curiously.

"Playing away!" repeated Manners.

"Yes; at King's Woodley."

"Running a footer team on your own?" grinned Lowther. "Or have the Corinthians asked you to play for them?"

"Neither!" said Cardew. "A chap I know at King's Woodley has asked me, and I'm goin'."

"Awfully good of you to come and tell us," yawned Lowther. "I hope you'll have a good game!"

"I didn't come here to tell you that," said Cardew calmly. "I came to tell Tom Merry that I want to take Levison and Clive with me, if he doesn't particularly want them for the match with Gay's lot."

"Oh, I see!" said Tom, rather slowly.

"You can have Clive, and welcome!" said Monty Lowther at once. "It happens that I'm playing left half-back this time!"

"Well, that's a go!" said Tom Merry. "I don't know about Levison. I was going to put him in the front line."

"Row with Gussy if you do!" said Manners.

"Well, if you want him, I suppose it can't be helped," said Cardew, though he frowned. "I've been asked to bring two players. Some of the Woodley team are laid up with somethin' or other, and they're short of men. Clive and Levison are in my study, and I wanted to take them."

"I don't know that it matters," said Tom, after some thought. "I was going to put in Levison, as he's in such ripping form, but Gussy is quite all right. I was really thinking of giving Levison his turn, as much as anything else. If he'd rather go with you, you can tell him it's all serene."

"Right-ho!" said Cardew.

And he quitted the study.

"There's a chance you've lost, Tommy," said Monty Lowther. "Might have had Cardew for the eleven. People five miles away are yearning for him, you see. Not to mention that his grandfather is a lord."

"Never noticed that he was much of a footballer," said Manners.

"Well, I've noticed him at practice," said Tom. "He's pretty good, but not up to our match form. I should have given him a chance in a House match sooner or later. I imagine that King's Woodley, whoever they are, are not quite at the top in the football line, if they're keen on having

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Cardew—though I'm too nice and polite to tell him that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, never mind Cardew," said Manners. "Let's have some tea."

And the subject of Cardew's playing at King's Woodley was dismissed—though the Terrible Three were to be reminded of it again later.

CHAPTER 2.

By Order of the Head!

"MY hat!"

"Bai Jove! Somethin' must be up, you know!"

A group of juniors had gathered before the notice-board in the School House. On the board was a new notice in the handwriting of the Head of St. Jim's.

It was read with surprise and some resentment by the School House fellows. The notice ran:

"Until further notice school bounds are restricted to this side of Wayland Road. No one belonging to the school is permitted to pass these bounds, and the order applies to seniors and juniors alike."

"H. HOLMES, Headmaster."

"We mustn't go into Wayland," said Monty Lowther. "No more visits to the merry cinema. Alas!"

"Hold on, though!" said Julian. "Part of Wayland is on this side of the Wayland Road. We can still go to the post office."

"And the bank!" grinned Lowther. "And the old church, too; but not the new church. I suppose the Head's got a reason."

"No doubt about that," said Tom Merry. "We're not to go south, for some reason, and the Wayland Road runs nearly east and west, so it's a convenient line, and a chap can't make out that he mistook it."

"But why?"

"Goodness knows! Ask the Head!"

"Rotten, I call it!" growled Crooke of the Shell. "Why can't a chap go where he likes?"

"Better ask the Head."

"Probably the Head has some reason," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth sagely. "Aftah all, we don't usually want to go farthah than the Wayland Woad, only when we're playin' away matches, or goin' on bike spins or papah-chases. As a wule, our little walks are on this side."

"And we can go as far north as we like," grinned Lowther. "Nothing against a chap strolling up as far as Manchester, if he chooses."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think it's rot!" growled Crooke. "If there's any reason, why can't the Head give it?"

"Weally, Cwooke, it is wathah bad form to chawactewise your headmastah's ordah as wot!"

"Oh, bow-wow!"

"I wogad it as bein' up to us to wespect the wishes of the Head," said Arthur Augustus, with a frown at Crooke.

"Especially if it will mean a licking if we don't," said Kerruish.

"I don't see that it will hurt us much," said Tom Merry. "It isn't as if we have a match to play away. The match on Saturday is on our own ground. As for biking, a chap has north, east, and west to choose from. It's up to us to toe the line."

"Hallo! What's the news?" asked Cardew, joining the group. "My hat! That can't be right about bounds?"

"It's right enough," said Tom Merry. "What does it matter?"

"It matters a lot," said Cardew, knitting his brows. "King's Woodley is three miles the other side of Wayland."

"Oh!" said Tom. "You'll have to chuck it, then!"

Cardew bit his lip.

"I can't chuck it. Saturday's to-morrow, and I can't let Gilbert know in time."

"Letter posted to-night will get to King's Woodley to-morrow, some time before the afternoon."

"That's not good enough."

"Well, you'd better think twice before you break bounds, that's all!" said Tom, rather sharply. "The prefects will be looking out."

Cardew shrugged his shoulders and walked away with a clouded brow. The new junior of the Fourth had very little sense of discipline. In fact, he was very considerably given to disregarding authority. The mere fact that King's Woodley was placed out of bounds was sufficient to make Cardew keener on going there, even if he had no other reason. The risk of the escapade rather appealed to him than otherwise.

He went up to Study No. 9, which he shared with Levison and Clive.

Sidney Clive was working at his prep, but Levison was going through Eutropius with Frank Levison, his minor in the Third Form. The three of them glanced curiously at Cardew's clouded face.

"Anything up?" asked Levison.

"Yes," growled Cardew. "You two fellows have fixed it to come with me to Woodley to-morrow, to play for the Rangers?"

"That's all right," said Levison. "We're coming."

"Glad to come, as far as I'm concerned, as I haven't a place in the junior team," said Clive.

"It's been put out of bounds."

"My hat! What for?"

"No reason given," said Cardew savagely. "Just put out of bounds, that's all, by the Head. Treating us like a dashed set of infants! I'm not going to take any notice of it, for one!"

Levison looked grave. The former recklessness of Levison of the Fourth was not so conspicuous a trait in his character now.

"The Head must have a reason," he said slowly.

"Why can't he give it, then?"

"Well, perhaps he knows best," remarked Clive.

"Oh, rot! Look here, Gilbert asked me to come over on Saturday and bring two players, and I've promised to. You fellows have agreed to come. We can't leave them in the lurch. We shall have to chance the prefects, and go."

"I suppose we could," said Levison.

Clive shook his head.

"Can't be did," he said. "There must be a serious reason, or the Head wouldn't give such an order. You can wire to Gilbert."

"And leave him in the lurch!" exclaimed Cardew. "He's dependin' on us. He's got to play a team at Woodley, and he's short of men, or he wouldn't have asked us. Something's happened to some of his team. He didn't tell me what. We simply can't leave him in a hole like this!"

"But the Head—"

"Oh, blow the Head!"

"You can't blow the Head!" said Clive, with a

grin. "I know it's a bit hard on your pal at Woodley, but it can't be helped."

"Does that mean you're afraid to come?"

The South African junior's eyes gleamed.

"You know it doesn't," he said quietly.

"Well, I do know that," agreed Cardew. "I take that back, Clive. But—but Gilbert's dependin' on me, and I've promised him. You can't make me break my word to him because the Head's put Woodley out of bounds for some reason—perhaps no reason at all!"

Clive was silent.

"Anyway, I can depend on you, Levison?"

"Yes," said Levison. "I think we ought to keep our word to Gilbert, and if there's a row we can stand it."

Levison minor looked anxiously at his brother.

"Doesn't the Head know best, Ernie?" he said, in a low voice.

"Oh rats! We've broken bounds before!" said Levison.

"Yes, but this seems to be something special."

"We don't want sermons from a fag, Levison"



"A tight squeeze, comfortable, but I just did it!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Podmore, "Old Parsonage," Whitmore Village, near Newcastle, Staffs.

minor," said Cardew. "When we want instruction from the Third we'll ask for it."

Frank turned crimson.

"Well, you ought not to go!" he exclaimed.

"And you know it, too!"

"Oh, cheese it, Franky!" said Levison uneasily.

"It isn't such a terrible thing, breaking bounds once in a way. Let's get on with Eutropius."

And the subject dropped in Study No. 9.

CHAPTER 3.

Wally & Co. Take a Hand!

"PENNY for 'em, Tommy!" said Monty Lowther.

The Terrible Three had come out after lessons on Saturday morning, and there was a thoughtful expression on Tom Merry's face. Hence Monty Lowther's offer of a penny for his thoughts.

"Thinking that you'd do better to put me in the eleven?" asked Manners.

"No!" said Tom, laughing. "I was thinking about Cardew."

"Oh, bother Cardew!"

"I know he's thinking of breaking bounds this afternoon," said Tom. "Well, Railton spoke to me this morning and asked me to see, as far as I could, that none of the juniors of our House went out of bounds. It seems to be something awfully important, somehow, though we don't know the

reason. It puts me in rather an awkward position, knowing that Cardew means to clear, after what Railton said."

"It do—it does!" agreed Lowther. "But you're not responsible for every silly ass who kicks over the traces. We shall be playing footer, and you can't bother about Cardew. If he gets caught, and licked—serve him right!"

"He oughtn't to go!" said Tom, frowning.

"All the more reason why he will go, from what I've seen of him," said Manners dryly.

"I think I ought to speak to him about it," said Tom. "Here they come!"

The trio from Study No. 9 came out of the School House together, the Fourth Form having been dismissed. The Terrible Three bore down upon them.

Cardew eyed them somewhat grimly as they came up. Perhaps he could guess what was coming.

"Look here, Cardew," said Tom, plunging into the matter at once. "Railton has asked me to see as far as I can that no juniors break the new bounds. From what I can see, there seems to be some important reason for it, though I don't know what it is."

"Piffle, most likely!" said Cardew.

"You ought to keep to the bounds, as the Head makes such a special point of it," said Tom.

"Never broken bounds yourself?" asked Cardew.

"Yes, more than once; but this seems to be a special occasion, and it's pretty certain the Head has a good reason. It's not an ordinary case. Look here, suppose you go to the Head and ask his permission to go over to Woodley, and explain that you're bound to go!"

"N.G. If he refused I couldn't go. They'd have an eye on me."

"Well, you ought not to go. It's not the right thing."

"Any charge for sermons?"

"I'm not giving you sermons!" said Tom angrily. "I'm telling you what a decent fellow would think about it."

"Thanks!"

"Anyway, I hope you fellows won't go," said Tom, looking at Levison and Clive. "It's not the right thing, and you know it."

"I don't see that," said Levison, with a touch of his old obstinacy. "I've promised Cardew, anyway."

"And you, Clive?"

"I'm not going," said Clive quietly. "I wouldn't mind asking the Head for permission, though; I hadn't thought of that."

"No harm in that," said Tom, with a nod. "You may possibly get it."

"Good idea!" said Cardew. "If he gives you permission, then I'll ask him. If he doesn't, I go, anyway."

Sidney Clive went into the House, and the juniors waited for his return. He came back in about ten minutes.

"Well?" asked Cardew.

"No go!" said the South African junior, with a shake of the head. "The Head refused at once. He said it's very important."

"And he didn't give you the reason?"

"No."

"Well, I call it tyranny," said Cardew, "and I'm goin', and Levison's goin' with me. You can stay in and see Tom Merry kick goals, if you prefer it."

Clive nodded and walked away. His mind was made up. Breaking bounds on an ordinary occasion was only a matter of risk, and he did not fear the risk; but he felt that this was not an ordinary occasion. But the headstrong new junior meant to have his way, and he was carrying Levison with him.

"Look here," said Cardew abruptly, "we've got to have a third. Your minor can play footer, Levison. I've noticed him. He's jolly good for a tag. Bring him along this afternoon."

Levison shook his head at once.

"No fear! You can leave Frank out of it!" he said curtly. "I'm not going to land him in trouble."

"There won't be any trouble!" snapped Cardew. "I suppose we're not silly goats? We can work it without being spotted. Frank would like it."

"I know he would. But—"

"Here, Franky!" called out Cardew. And Levison minor came up. "How would you like to come along this afternoon? We want another man."

Frank looked anxiously at his major.

"Are you going, Ernie?"

"Yes."

"I wish you wouldn't!" said Frank. "Look here—"

"Oh, rot! Levison's comin' with me, anyway!" said Cardew, interrupting the tag. "The question is—will you come with him?"

"I'll go if Ernie does, certainly!" said Frank at once.

"You'd better not!" muttered Levison uneasily. Breaking bounds was not, from a junior's point of view, a serious matter; but Levison felt a vague uneasiness at the idea of his minor joining in the escapade. "Look here, Frank, you had better not come."

"Why shouldn't he?" demanded Cardew. "Dash it all, it's only breaking bounds! Let him come!"

"I'll come!" said Frank.

"Then it's settled," said Cardew. "We'll get out our bikes sharp after dinner and start off towards Northwood; that will look all right for the prefects. Then we can take the Abbotsford Road, and get away a mile from here. It means losin' some time, but it's safe."

"Done!" said Levison minor; and he walked away cheerily.

His doubts as to the wisdom of the expedition were not dispelled, but they were outweighed by the prospect of playing in the footer match with his major.

After dinner, while Tom Merry & Co. were preparing for the match with the Grammar School team, Cardew and Levison were preparing for the afternoon's adventure.

They went down to the bicycle-shed, wheeled out their machines, and waited for Levison minor.

The tag had arranged to be there at the same time, but he had not put in an appearance.

Cardew uttered an exclamation of angry impatience when five minutes had passed.

"Where on earth's your minor, Levison?"

"Blessed if I know! Selby may have detained him."

"Hallo! Waiting for somebody?" asked a cheery voice.

D'Arcy minor—Wally of the Third—came sauntering up with curly Gibson and Joe Frayne. The three heroes of the Third Form were grinning, as though over a joke among themselves.

"Yes. Where's my minor?" asked Levison.

"In the box-room," said Wally coolly.

Levison stared at him.

"What's he doing in the box-room?"

"He's locked in."

"What?"

"And I've got the key in my pocket!" said Wally coolly. "You see, we know he was going to break bounds this afternoon, and we're taking care of him. But we don't mind—do we, you chaps?"

"Not a bit!" grinned Joe Frayne.

"And we're not going to let him out till you've gone!" added Wally. "So the sooner you clear off the better it will be for Levison minor!"

"You cheeky young sweep!" roared Cardew.

"Give me that key, or—"

"Or what?" asked Wally coolly.

"Or I'll lick you, confound you!"

"Right-ho!" said Wally cheerfully. "Come and get on with the licking!"

"That'll teach you!" exclaimed Wally.

Then the three Third Formers scuttled off, yelling with laughter, and Cardew sat up dazedly. Levison was grinning.

"You rotter!" yelled Cardew. "Why didn't you help me?"

"Let's get off!" said Levison.

"I tell you—"

"Frank can't come," said Levison.

"You're glad he's kept behind!" growled Cardew savagely, as he rose painfully to his feet.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

The two juniors wheeled out their bicycles. It was evidently hopeless to think of running down the elusive Wally and capturing the key of the box-room. Cardew's face was dark with anger, but Levison did not look displeased. As a matter



A group of surprised juniors gathered before the notice-board, on which there was a new notice in the Head's handwriting, restricting school bounds. "Baf Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Something must be up."

Cardew gritted his teeth and strode towards the fag.

Levison caught him by the arm.

"Chuck it, Cardew! Let's get off without Frank."

"Let go!"

Cardew's eyes were gleaming with rage. He shook off Levison's detaining hand, and fairly hurled himself on D'Arcy minor.

"Back up!" yelled Wally.

D'Arcy minor alone would not have stood much chance against Cardew. But Gibson and Joe Frayne rushed in at once.

Levison stood hesitating, while Cardew struggled furiously in the grasp of the three fags. Three of them were too much for him.

There was a heavy bump as Cardew was brought down, and he yelled as Wally gave his head a bang on the ground.

of fact, he was not sorry that his minor had been prevented from joining in the reckless expedition.

Tom Merry & Co. were coming out as the two juniors passed the School House.

Tom gave them a glance, and his brows knitted, but he did not speak to them. They wheeled their machines on, and the footballers went down to Little Side.

CHAPTER 4.

A Nice Walk for Ratty!

KERR of the Fourth came out of Mr. Ratcliff's study, in the New House, with knitted brows.

The Scottish junior had been in to see the New House master, and he did not seem pleased with the result of his interview.

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Figgins and Fatty Wynn, in football rig, with their coats on, were in the doorway of the New House, and their chum joined them there.

Figgins and Wynn were playing in the afternoon's match, but the kick-off was not due yet.

"Well, what did Ratty want?" asked Figgins, looking curiously at Kerr's clouded face.

"The rotter!" growled Kerr.

"What's happened?" asked Figgins.

"Bike ride's off!" growled Kerr. "Ratty seems to have known that I was going out for a spin with Owen and Julian, as we're not playing this afternoon. Blessed if I know how Ratty knows everything!"

"Nosey old specimen!" agreed Figgins. "But you were not going out of bounds. You arranged not to go past the new bounds after the new notice was put up."

"Yes, we did, but Ratty doesn't trust us, so, in case of accidents, bike rides are off."

"Beastly tyrant!" grunted Fatty Wynn.

"That applies to Owen and me. Julian can do as he likes, as he's a School House chap," said Kerr. "Jolly good mind to wheel out my bike all the same!"

"Better not," said Figgins sagely. "Ratty will have an eye open from his window. No good looking for trouble!"

"Walk out and hire a bike somewhere," suggested Fatty Wynn.

"Might do that," agreed Kerr.

"Hallo, we're wanted!" said Figgins, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came up.

"Come on, deah boys!" said D'Arcy. "The Gwammurians will be here in a few minutes."

Figgins and Fatty Wynn followed Arthur Augustus to the football ground.

BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS!

*A Top-Hole School Yarn
by Frank Richards*



Nobody wants Billy Bunter—not even at Christmas! But the artful dodger of the Greyfriars Remove is determined to sting someone for his Christmas dinner. Who's going to be the unfortunate host? The answer's supplied in this grand book-length yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. Look out for it!

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Kerr made his way to the bike-shed, where he found Owen and Julian. They were getting the machines out.

"You can shove that back, Owen!" said Kerr. "No bikes out this afternoon—Housemaster's orders!"

"Beast!" said Owen savagely.

"Rotten!" said Julian, with a grimace. "That knocks our spin on the head!"

"It doesn't apply to you, of course, Julian. Ratty can't give you orders, as you're in the School House."

"Well, I don't want to go alone, of course," said Julian. "I suppose you couldn't chance it?"

Kerr shook his head.

"Ratty can watch the gates from his study window, and you can bet he will. He would be jolly glad to catch us on the hop."

"Beastly!" growled Owen. "Look here, the bike-shop in Wayland is this side of bounds. Let's trot there and hire machines, and Ratty won't know."

"I was thinking of that. Like to walk your jigger as far as Wayland, Julian?"

"Certainly!" said Julian at once.

"Come on, then."

Two bikes were replaced on the stands, and the three juniors walked down to the gates, Julian wheeling his machine.

They had to pass within view of Mr. Ratcliff's study window, and Kerr caught a glimpse of the Housemaster's thin, acid face there.

"Ratty's got an eye on us," he murmured. "Well, even Ratty can't complain at our going out for a walk."

And they turned out of the gates.

The bright winter afternoon cheered up the trio, however, and they were quite cheerful as they walked down the sunny lane.

But as they reached the stile, Owen glanced carelessly back, and gave a start.

"Ratty!" he murmured.

"My hat!" said Kerr.

In the distance, towards the school, the thin form of the Housemaster could be seen. He was following them.

The three juniors exchanged glances of utter disgust.

"Spying, by gum!" said Owen.

Julian whistled.

"He's smelled out the little game," he remarked. "Ratty's going to waste his afternoon keeping an eye on you fellows. You won't be able to hire any bikes, my infants!"

A sudden glimmer came into Kerr's eyes.

"My hat! Look here, instead of a spin, let's have a walk, and pull Ratty's leg. We'll give him a waltz round the country till he's tired of following us. Make straight for the Wayland Road, and don't let the old horror know we've spotted him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr's brilliant idea was adopted at once. Pulling Mr. Ratcliff's leg was better fun than a bike spin. The juniors lifted Julian's bike over the stile, and started along the footpath across the fields for the Wayland Road.

Mr. Ratcliff arrived at the stile, and paused there to look after them.

The New House master was a very suspicious gentleman. If the juniors had headed for Wayland Town, he would have suspected that Kerr and Owen meant to hire bicycles, in order to dodge his unreasonable order. But as they headed for the open road at some distance from the town, near the old castle, he jumped to the

conclusion that they were going straight out of bounds on foot. Certainly he could not guess that they meant to walk two miles to the open road, and then turn back again. He was not in the least aware that they had spotted him, and guessed that he was spying—or, as he would have called it, investigating, from a strict sense of duty.

Kerr & Co. were careful not to look back. Their game was to lead the Housemaster to suppose that they had not seen or suspected him. Only, every now and then, then contrived, in stooping to attend to a shoelace, to take a surreptitious glance to the rear, and ascertain that the Housemaster was still on the trail.

Mr. Ratcliff crossed the stile, and marched along the footpath.

The New House master was not an athlete, and he was never in good condition, and the exercise was not enjoyable to him. It is much to be feared that Mr. Ratcliff really hoped that he would catch the three juniors breaking bounds, otherwise he would have his long walk for nothing.

His eyes glittered as the party drew near the Wayland Road. They lifted the bike over the stile at last, and then the high hedge hid them from his view.

Beyond the hedge was the last field, with a short path leading to a gate on the high road. If the juniors went through the gate they were out of bounds. And Mr. Ratcliff had not the slightest doubt that they were about to do so. He hastened his steps, and came up to the stile quite breathless. Then he paused to pump in breath and look about him.

The three juniors were not in sight.

Mr. Ratcliff set his thin lips.

"Ah, the young rascals!" he murmured. "It is well I came. They have undoubtedly gone into the road, probably beyond it. I shall—" "Got the chocolate, Owen?"

Mr. Ratcliff jumped as he heard the voice. He could not see the speaker. But he knew Kerr's voice. He leaned farther over the stile, stretching his long, thin neck to see along the hedge.

Three juniors were sitting under the hedge with the bike at their feet. Owen was unrolling a packet of chocolate. They did not look up, and did not seem to know that Mr. Ratcliff was there.

The expression that came upon the Housemaster's face was quite frightening. Kerr & Co. were not out of bounds. They were twenty yards within bounds. And apparently they had settled down for a rest after their walk, and did not intend to go out of bounds at all.

Mr. Ratcliff could see that they were grinning as they started on the chocolate, and it slowly dawned upon his mind that the merry trio had seen him and guessed his intention, and had deliberately led him upon that fatiguing walk.

Mr. Ratcliff remained silent for some minutes, breathing hard.

The three juniors ate the chocolate and chatted cheerily, without a glance towards the stile, though Mr. Ratcliff was pretty certain that they knew he was there. He called out to them at last:

"Kerr! Owen! Julian!"

The three juniors jumped up, lifting their caps very respectfully to the New House master.

"Yes, sir," said Kerr.

"What are you doing here?" said the Housemaster harshly.

"Eating chocolate, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes gleamed.

"Why did you come to this spot?"

"We've had a walk, sir," said Kerr calmly. "You told us we mustn't take out our bikes to-day, sir. That's Julian's bike."

"You are very near to the limit of school bounds, Kerr."

"Yes, sir."

"I cannot help suspecting, Kerr, that if I had not chanced—ahem!—to see you here, you intended to go beyond bounds."

"Oh, no, sir!" said Kerr. "Not at all."

"Certainly not, sir," said Owen.

"Shouldn't think of it, sir," said Dick Julian.

Mr. Ratcliff set his teeth hard.

"You will return to the school at once!" he snapped.

"But it won't be calling-over for a long time yet, sir!" said Kerr, in astonishment.

"Obey me!"

"Oh, very well, sir!"

It was the sheerest tyranny on the part of the disappointed Housemaster, but the juniors had



An unfortunate lapse on the part of the topiary who turned barber.

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Wilkinson, Hill-side, Fenay Bridge, near Huddersfield.

no choice but to obey. Julian, as a School House fellow, was not under Mr. Ratcliff's orders, but he did not want to leave his friends. So the bike was lifted over the stile again, and the trio started for St. Jim's.

"Awful rotter!" murmured Owen, when they were out of hearing. "Never mind. We've given him a jolly long walk. He looked quite pumped."

"We'll see the finish of the footer match, anyway," remarked Julian.

And the three walked on in quite good spirits, finishing their chocolate as they went.

Mr. Ratcliff was not in quite such good spirits, however. He had sent the juniors home. But even he could find no excuse for further punishing them, and he was fagged out with the walk across the field. He sat on the stile, and pumped in breath and scowled.

CHAPTER 5.

A Narrow Escape!

"MY hat! It's your minor!" Cardew uttered that exclamation.

Levison and Cardew were cycling along the Abbotsford road at a good rate, when the latter glanced back at the loud ringing of a bicycle bell.

A youthful cyclist was coming along at top speed, red and dusty.

"My minor!" ejaculated Levison.

Cardew chuckled.

"He got away, after all. Good egg!"

The two Fourth Formers slackened speed. And Frank came up with them.

Cardew gave him a nod and a smile.

Levison major did not look so pleased.

"So you got away?" grinned Cardew.

"Yes," panted Frank. "I've had to scorch to catch you up, too."

"Good for you! Did they let you out of the box-room?"

"No."

"How did you get out, then?" exclaimed Levison eagerly.

"From the window."

"You reckless young idiot!" said Levison.

"I—I couldn't get out any other way, Ernie."

"You might have broken your neck," said Levison.

Cardew laughed.

"The kid's got pluck," he said. "I'm jolly glad you came, Frank. You don't want to get pumped, or you won't be much use for a footer match."

"Right-ho!" said Frank.

The three juniors rode on, Levison major with a clouded brow. He had joined readily enough in Cardew's reckless scheme, but it troubled him to see his minor playing the same game. But Cardew was in high spirits now. The trio turned into the Wayland Road at last.

They were riding at a moderate pace now, to give the lag a chance to recover from his scorch.

Cardew chatted cheerfully all the time, apparently not noticing Levison's silence.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Cardew suddenly.

Levison looked round.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Ratty, by gum!"

"Phew!"

The cyclists had to cover a quarter of a mile more to reach the turning that led to King's Woodley. They were riding now on the Wayland Road, which was the limit of school bounds.

There were open fields to their right, intersected by fences and hedges. And on a stile, twenty yards or so back from the road, an angular figure was seated. At that distance from the school they had not expected to see a St. Jim's master—least of all Mr. Ratcliff, who was no walker. But there he was, seated on the stile, with his face towards the road.

A field lay between him and the road, but he would see the three cyclists as soon as they passed the gap in the hedge by the roadside.

And he was looking towards the road, and even as Cardew spotted him, he gave a start.

"He's seen us!" muttered Frank.

Cardew set his teeth.

"Bend low and ride hard!" he muttered. "He can't have recognised us at that distance. He's as blind as a bat, you know."

There was nothing else for it. The three riders bent low, keeping their faces away from Mr. Ratcliff as well as they could, and scorching on at top speed.

The Housemaster had only caught a glimpse of them, so far—enough, perhaps, to tell him that they were St. Jim's juniors, but it was very improbable that he would have recognised them individually.

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As they rode on, with heads down, the high hedge hid them from sight.

But they heard hurried footsteps as they scorching on.

Mr. Ratcliff had jumped from the stile and was running towards the gate on the road. Before he could reach it, however, the three riders swept by.

The Housemaster reached the gate, to see the three disappearing down the high road. Mr. Ratcliff dragged the gate open, and ran into the road, waving his umbrella wildly.

"Stop! Come back!"

But the cyclists had already swept round a bend and were gone from his sight.

The Housemaster ran a few paces down the road after them, and then halted. He realised that it was not much use to pursue three cyclists who did not intend to be caught.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Ratcliff.

"Bless my soul! Kerr, and Owen, and Julian, of course! I could not recognise them, but I have little doubt that it was those three young rascals! They did not go back to the school as I commanded them!"

The Housemaster leaned on the gate, gasping for breath. His short run had winded him.

There was little doubt in his mind that the three cyclists he had seen were Kerr and his friends. That they were St. Jim's fellows he was absolutely certain—in fact, their sudden flight could mean nothing else. Doubtless they had made a detour after getting out of his sight, and had hired machines in Wayland, as from the first he had suspected to be their intention.

When he had recovered his breath, Mr. Ratcliff walked down the road to Wayland. He knew that Hanney's, in the High Street, was the place where bikes were hired by St. Jim's fellows who did not possess machines. An inquiry there would establish the identity of the three delinquents beyond doubt.

But the Housemaster met with a disappointment at Mr. Hanney's.

No fellow belonging to the school had been there that afternoon to hire a "jigger," so Mr. Hanney assured him.

Mr. Ratcliff was not satisfied. He considered it quite possible that Mr. Hanney was departing from the facts, in order to shield his customers. He questioned Mr. Hanney so closely that that gentleman lost patience, and told Mr. Ratcliff that he had business to attend to, and went forthwith back to his office, leaving the St. Jim's master fairly fuming.

There was evidently nothing more to be done, and the New House master left the shop and walked to the station, to take the next train home to Rylcombe.

CHAPTER 6.

The Rangers Match!

"JOLLY glad to see you!"

Dick Gilbert, the skipper of the Woodley Rangers, greeted Cardew and his companions very warmly.

Cardew presented his comrades, and the Rangers skipper glanced rather curiously at Levison minor.

Gilbert was about sixteen, and the Third Form lag of St. Jim's looked rather diminutive beside him.

"Other chap couldn't come," Cardew explained. "If Levison minor isn't up to what you want, and you've got another man, you can leave him out and he can look on."

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

Wally D'Arcy has just submitted a serial story. "He swept up the hill into his garage," it begins. Let's hope he replaced it again!

An English matador says it is nervous work fighting bulls, but one soon gets in the way of it. That's just what I should be afraid of!

"What time do you have to get up in the Navy," inquired the cadet of the able seaman—"six bells?" "Six bells!" exclaimed the able seaman. "You'll have to learn to show a leg before the bells have started ringing at all!"

Hot News: I hear burglars find it easier to enter glass houses than the other kind. Which only goes to show that people who live in glass houses shouldn't.

"**Racing Motorist's 200 m.p.h. Escape,**" runs a placard. Well, that's certainly one way of getting away from the police.

I see a compose is being sought for a National Anthem for South Africa. It should supply a long-veldt want!

During the vac: "Have you any objection

to my taking up drawing as a profession, pater?" Digby asked his parent. "No," said Mr. Digby, "so long as you don't draw on me!"

Knox of the Sixth says an older cousin of his, a barrister, has got a case to defend at last. His tailor is suing him!

Flash: A scientist visiting a brickworks was intrigued to notice that one of the workmen always pulled his wheelbarrow behind him instead of pushing it, like the others. "Why do you do it that way?" asked the scientist. "Well, if you must know," replied the workman, "it's because I ate the sight of the bloomin' thing!"

Another Flash: "Take away the empty glasses," said Figgins, after a toast had been drunk in flowing ginger-pop at a football tea: "they're like the British Army." "Why, what's wrong with the British Army?" inquired Blake. "Nothing," smiled Figgins. "I meant that the glasses have done their duty, and they're ready to do it again!"

News: I hear a chair-making factory is to be turned into a school. They are keeping the same slogan: "We Cane Seats!"

Remember, a real man is always ready to find excuses for others, but he never excuses himself.

If you can stand it, I'd like to add: Be content; remember, happiness is the one thing you don't have to buy.

Chap was moving in Rylcombe in the pouring rain when a friend passed: "What, moving?" exclaimed the friend. "No," grunted the householder; "just taking the furniture for a ride round!"

See you in the Christmas Number next week, chaps!

"I don't mind," said Frank at once.

Gilbert looked at him rather doubtfully.

"The fact is, I depended on your bringing two, Cardew," he said. "I wish I'd said three, as a matter of fact. Another of my men is knocked out."

"Three short, then?"

"Yes, worse luck!"

"Rather queer, isn't it?" said Levison curiously. "What's knocked your men out one after another—your reserves, too, I suppose?"

"Yes; there's six down altogether."

"Not a dashed epidemic?" asked Cardew, startled.

"Oh, you're safe enough!" said Gilbert reassuringly. "I shouldn't have asked you over here if there had been any danger, of course. The fact is, I didn't know what was the matter myself, when I asked you. It's come out since."

"Well, what is it?"

"Scarlet fever."

"Great Scott!"

"I suppose you're not alarmed?" said Gilbert, laughing. "The cases were isolated the instant they were detected. Those chaps happened to live in the part of the town where it's broken

out, that's all. The doctor's run the rule over all of us, in case there might have been any possibility of infection. You surely don't think I'd have asked you if—"

"No; that's all serene," said Cardew slowly. "I know you wouldn't. But—" He paused.

"That's why the Head put King's Woodley out of bounds," said Levison very quietly. Gilbert started.

"Is this place out of bounds for you, then?"

"Yes; it's just been made so."

"Then how are you here?" asked the Rangers captain, puzzled.

"French leave," said Cardew.

"I shouldn't have asked you to come and run the risk," said Dick Gilbert, with a rather clouded brow. "Of course, I never knew anything about that. You'll get into a row if your headmaster finds it out."

"He won't," said Cardew. "And we could face the music, anyway. Let's get changed!"

"Here's your dressing-room."

The three St. Jim's juniors had arrived a little late, owing to the roundabout route they had been compelled to follow. The rest of the foot-

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ballers were already on the ground, the opposing team being Abbotsford School.

Levison nodded to Yorke, the Abbotsford skipper, whom he knew. St. Jim's played Yorke's team regularly.

The three juniors had the dressing-room to themselves to change.

"The murder's out now," said Cardew, with a grin. "We shall be able to tell the fellows why bounds have been changed when we get back."

"Better not," said Levison dryly. "It will get out that we've been over here."

"Right! We'd better not," agreed Cardew. "I suppose your minor won't go chattering among the fags?"

Frank coloured.

"I shan't chatter," he said. "But don't forget that Ratty saw us on the Wayland Road."

"He didn't recognise us, though. If he knew we were St. Jim's chaps, that's the most he could have known."

"But if he knows that much, he won't let it rest."

"Oh, bother about Ratty!" broke in Cardew. "The teams are waiting for us! Get ready."

The juniors finished changing, and joined the footballers in the field. They lined up with the Rangers, and the whistle went.

Levison was put in as outside-left, Cardew as centre-half, and Levison minor as right half-back. The fag of St. Jim's looked very diminutive among the Rangers, whose average age was sixteen, but Dick Gilbert had no choice but to play him.

One of the forwards was not much bigger than Levison minor, and was evidently a mere emergency man.

The fag, however, soon showed that he could play a good game of footer. He was very quick on his feet, and his passing was first-rate.

Cardew showed up very well at centre-half, too, and the first goal to the Rangers came to Levison, who received the ball from Cardew.

"Good egg!" said Gilbert, as they lined up after the goal. "That's a good man you've brought with you, Ralph!"

"One of the best," agreed Cardew. "In fact, he would have been playin' this afternoon, only I made him come."

"Much obliged!" said the Rangers skipper, laughing.

Yorke scored for Abbotsford in the second half, and the score was level, and remained so till close on the finish.

Just on the stroke of time, however, a clever pass from Levison enabled Gilbert to put the ball in. Then the whistle went, and the game ended with the Rangers victors by two goals to one.

In the dressing-room after the match the Rangers were very cordial to the recruits from St. Jim's.

"You pulled us through," said Gilbert gratefully. "I'm jolly glad you brought Levison with you, Cardew! I only hope you won't get into a row when you get back."

"Oh, that's all serene!" said Cardew, with a smile. "The beaks won't have the least idea of where we've been. We can get in by dark if we scorch a bit."

And, after changing, and fastening their bundles on their machines, the three St. Jim's juniors took leave of the Rangers, and started on the homeward journey.

"Jolly glad we went!" said Cardew. "What do you fellows say?"

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"Well, I'm glad we helped the Rangers," said Levison. "Gilbert seems to be a very decent chap. I wish we hadn't come, all the same."

"Getting uneasy, now we've got to face the music?"

"Oh rats!"

"Buck up!" said Cardew. "We've got to go round a bit home. Mustn't come in from the direction of Wayland. If we're late for locking-up, it will bring a lot of attention on us, and we don't want that. Get a move on, Levison minor!"

"I'm doing my best!" panted Frank. "I can't keep up with you two if you ride so hard!"

"Oh rats! Put your beef into it!"

Levison major deliberately slackened down, and Cardew shot ahead of the two brothers.

"Go easy, Franky!" said Levison. "Don't fag yourself out."

"Come on!" shouted Cardew.

"Go and eat coke!"

Cardew waited savagely for the two to come up. He gave them a lowering look as they came level again.

"Look here, at this rate we shall miss calling-over!" he exclaimed.

"Can't be helped. Frank's not up to scorching after a footer match, and he's not going to try," said Levison coolly.

"I—I could go a bit faster, I think," faltered Frank.

"You can't, and you won't!"

"Let him try!" fumed Cardew.

"I won't let him try! Keep level, Frank!"

"Yes, Ernie."

"If we're late for calling-over, it very likely means being howled out!" said Cardew.

"Let it!"

"Oh, you're a silly ass!"

"You can go ahead, if you like," said Levison.

"There's nothing stopping you. I know I'm not going to let Frank pump himself out."

"I've a jolly good mind to!"

"Do!"

"Oh rats!" said Cardew.

He did not go ahead, but kept pace with Levison major, who carefully regulated the speed so that Frank should not be overworked.

Frank was a tough little fellow, but a hard footer match, and the ride both ways, told on him. He stuck to it gamely, but the pace slackened.

"I—I say," gasped Frank, at last, "you two clear off, and I'll chance it."

"You won't!" said his brother coolly.

"I don't want to get you into a row, Ernie."

"Bow-wow!"

Levison dropped his hand on his minor's shoulder, and helped him. By free-wheeling every now and then, Frank rested his weary legs. The three juniors came down the Rylcombe Road at last, as the dusk was falling.

Old Taggles had not closed the gates, however, when they arrived. They could see him moving in the doorway of his lodge as they wheeled their machines in.

The bicycles were put up, and the three juniors strolled towards the School House in the dusk.

"Mind, mum's the word!" said Cardew.

And they went in.

CHAPTER 7.

Mum's the Word!

"B A I Jove! Here you are!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was lounging elegantly in the doorway of Study No. 6 when Levison and Cardew came up.

Frank had scuttled off to the Third Form Room.

"Yes, we're here," said Cardew cheerfully. "How did the match go? Did the Grammarians beat you?"

"Wats! It was a dwaw!"

"One all!" said Jack Blake, looking out of the study. "We missed you on the wing, Levison."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Though, of course, Gussy was a host in himself," said Blake solemnly. "But the Grammarians were in great form. Where have you fellows been?"

"Oh, up and down and round about!" said Cardew carelessly. "We went out on our bikes, you know."

"I twust you have not been out of bounds?" said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon Cardew.

"I trust not," agreed Cardew. And he walked on with Levison to Study No. 9.

Clive was there.

"I waited tea for you half an hour," he said. "Then I piled in. Yours is ready."

"Thank goodness!" yawned Cardew. "I'm famished!"

"Same here," said Levison, "and jolly tired, too!"

Clive produced the tea, and placed it on the table. The two Fourth Formers were hungry, and they did the meal full justice.

"You've been to King's Woodley?" asked Clive.

"Of course!"

"How did the match go?"

"We helped the Rangers beat Abbotsford."

"Oh!" said Clive. "Abbotsford were there?"

"Yes, Yorke and his lot," said Levison. "It was a good game, and I'm sorry you missed it, Clive."

"The place doesn't seem to be out of bounds for Abbotsford, then," Clive remarked.

"No. I suppose they haven't had the news there."

"Eh? What news?"

"Oh, nothing!"

The South African junior looked sharply at Levison.

"Do you mean that you've found out at King's Woodley what the bounds have been changed for?" he asked.

"Well, we heard something," said Levison. "Least said soonest mended. For goodness' sake, don't let out that we went, or there'll be a thundering row! Might mean a flogging!"

"Breaking bounds doesn't mean a flogging as a rule," said Clive.

"It might, in this case."

"You mean that there's something serious on?"

"Well, yes."

"I thought there must be, from the Head's order," said Clive quietly. "The Head wouldn't give such an order for nothing. You needn't tell me what it is. I'm not curious. As for keeping it dark, of course, I've not said a word about your going, and don't intend to. But other fellows know."



The three fags were too much for Cardew. He was brought down with a bump, and he yelled as Wally gave his head a bang on the ground. "That'll teach you!" exclaimed Wally.

"Merry, Manners, and Lowther," said Cardew, with a nod. "By Jove, and those dashed fags, too!"

Levison whistled.

"D'Arcy minor, Frayne, Gibson, if not the rest of the gang," he said uneasily. "Still, they didn't exactly know; they could only have guessed."

"It's pretty certain to be jawed about the school if a crowd of fags know it," said Clive.

"I don't think they'll give Levison minor away," said Cardew. "They only nosed it out, and chipped in out of fag friendship. Can't be helped, anyway. I'll speak to Merry, and warn him to keep his head shut."

Cardew strolled out of the study, having finished his tea, and dropped in at Study No. 10 in the Shell passage.

He found the Terrible Three there, engaged upon "Tom Merry's Weekly."

"Look here, you fellows," said Cardew, as he entered, "I want you to be very careful not to mention my going out of bounds to-day. It will be awfully serious if it comes out!"

"Bless your going out of bounds!" said Tom Merry. "You were a rotter to do it, if you want my opinion; but we're not going to give you away."

"What is there awfully serious about it?" asked Lowther. "Have you found out the merry, mysterious reason?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"I dare say you'll find out soon enough. But, remember, mum's the word!"

"Oh, get off!" said Manners. "You needn't be afraid."

"I'm not afraid, you silly chump! But—"

"Hallo, deah boys! Julian here!" said Arthur Augustus, looking in.

"No, fathead! Anything wrong?" asked Tom, as he caught the expression on Arthur Augustus' face.

"Yaas, wathah! Watty's just come ovah—"

"Ratty!" exclaimed Cardew, with a start.

"Yaas; and he's brougth Kerr and Owen ovah with him. And he's with Mr. Wailton, and they've sent for Julian," said Arthur Augustus. "Somebody's been bweakin' bounds."

"Oh!" said the Terrible Three together.

"Not really?" said Cardew calmly.

"Yaas, wathah! It appeahs that Kerr and Owen and Julian have bwoken bounds, the weekless young asses!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "Kildare told me to look for Julian. Weilly says he's gone to tea with a Shell chap—"

"Kangaroo's study, I think," said Manners.

"Thanks, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus went along the passage to Harry Noble's study in search of the junior who was wanted.

The Terrible Three looked grimly at Cardew.

"Looks like a fair catch already," said Tom Merry.

"Oh rats! Ratty's on the wrong tack," said Cardew.

"You'll have to own up if they fix it on the wrong parties."

"I should do that, of course. But if Julian and the rest have been out of bounds, that's their look-out. They should be careful not to be caught."

"I don't believe they have," said Tom Merry. "In fact, I'm sure they haven't. It's a mistake of Ratty's. Did you see anything of Ratty this afternoon?"

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"Well, yes."

"Oh, that accounts for it!"

"I know he didn't recognise us," said Cardew. "I suppose he's jumped on those chaps on suspicion. Just like Ratty! I shall see whether they get clear before I open my mouth."

"Well, that's right enough."

"And mum's the word!" said Cardew; and he quitted the study.

He met Julian on his way downstairs.

"Were you out of bounds?" he asked.

"No fear!" said Julian, with a grin. "Ratty is offside this time."

"I hope he is!" said Cardew grimly; and he went back to Study No. 9.

CHAPTER 8.

A Disappointment for Ratty!

DICK JULIAN looked quite cheerful as he entered Mr. Railton's study.

He had, so far as he could remember, no special sins upon his youthful conscience just then. He found Mr. Railton there with the New House master and Kerr and Owen.

The two juniors were standing silent, with suppressed resentment in their looks. In Mr. Railton's handsome face there was a slight trace of impatience.

"Here is the boy, Mr. Railton!" said the New House master acidly, as Julian presented himself.

"Come here, Julian! Mr. Ratcliff informs me that you were out of bounds to-day, in company with two boys of his House. As boys of both Houses are concerned, Mr. Ratcliff and I are inquiring into the matter together."

Kerr seemed about to speak, but Mr. Ratcliff made him an angry gesture to be silent.

"Julian, you will kindly tell your story without hints from your companions!" he said. "We shall see whether it agrees with the story already told by Kerr and Owen!"

"It's certain to, sir," said Julian calmly. "I'm quite sure that Kerr and Owen have told the truth!"

Mr. Railton coughed, and the New House master bit his lip.

"Do you prefer to question Julian, Mr. Ratcliff?" he asked.

"I should prefer it, certainly!"

"Very well, Julian, you will answer Mr. Ratcliff's questions frankly."

"Certainly, sir!"

The New House master fixed his sharp, suspicious eyes upon Julian's dark, handsome face. Perhaps he hoped to read signs of a guilty conscience there. But, if so, he was disappointed.

"I saw you this afternoon within twenty yards of the Wayland Road, the present limit of school bounds, Julian."

"Yessir, with Kerr and Owen."

"I ordered you back to the school, and you did not go."

"Excuse me, sir," said Julian quietly. "You had no right to order me back to the school, as you are not my Housemaster!"

"What?" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

"But I felt that I had better obey the order, as Mr. Railton would most likely have preferred me to do so," said Julian, unmoved. "I came back to St. Jim's with Kerr and Owen."

Mr. Railton looked relieved.

"I was sure of it," he said. "There has been some mistake, Mr. Ratcliff."

"I do not think so for one moment. Let me



Detective Kerr Investigates

No. 20.

The Cinema Alibi!

CLAMPE of the New House having been in trouble with the masters, found himself under observation. One half-holiday Mr. Railton reported that he had seen Clampe talking to Banks, a rascally bookmaker staying at the Green Man, outside the public-house. Clampe, so Mr. Railton said, made off rapidly at his approach. To clear himself, Clampe accused Digby of the School House, for whom, at a distance, it was just possible that he might have been mistaken. There was no resemblance at close quarters, only in general outline and colouring. Unfortunately, Digby could not prove an alibi; so "Detective" Kerr decided to investigate.

KERR: If you can explain just where you were yesterday afternoon, Digby, it should be easy enough to clear yourself.

DIGBY: It should be, but it isn't. You see, Blake was playing for the junior eleven against the Grammarians, and so was Gussy. Herries was busy with his dog Towser, which has a chill. I usually watch the footer, but this time I went for a stroll. I must have walked two or three miles through country paths and woods, and once I sat on a stile to rest. But I don't remember seeing a soul.

KERR: So there is nobody actually whom you could ask to come forward and prove an alibi for you?

DIGBY: Afraid not.

finish questioning this boy. Instead of returning to the school, Julian, did you go with your companions to some place where bicycles could be hired, and then go for a ride?"

"No, sir."

"Did you cycle along the Wayland Road afterwards in the direction of Woodley Lane?"

"No, sir."

"H'm! What did you do when you came back to the school?"

"We were in time to see the finish of the football match, sir."

"Then you were on the football ground?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff paused, his eyes gleaming green. The School House master broke in:

"Julian's explanation agrees precisely with that made by Kerr and Owen, Mr. Ratcliff. They have made exactly the same statement."

"I acknowledge it, Mr. Railton. I have not the slightest doubt that they have concocted the story in advance! I am absolutely assured that three boys—juniors—passed me on the Wayland

KERR: Well, that's rather rotten, Digby. But I'll see what I can find out.

KERR: Hallo, Grundy! You didn't happen to go out of gates yesterday, did you?

GRUNDY: I should say I did, Kerr! Wilky and Gunny and I went to the pictures in Wayland.

KERR: Jolly good show, they tell me. I suppose you three were in funds?

WILKINS: Grundy was. He stood us the best seats in the house.

GRUNDY: Oh, all the seats are half-price in the afternoon! You can get the most expensive seat for a shilling then, you know.

GUNN: It was a jolly good programme, too. You ought to go, Kerr. You'll enjoy "Riders of the Desert"—and the Silly Symphony is a scream.

KERR: I will. You saw nothing of Digby or Clampe, I suppose?

GRUNDY: No. I can't say we did.

KERR: Well, thanks, Grundy.

KERR: I hear you've practically cleared yourself with Mr. Railton, Clampe?

CLAMPE: Yes—and without your help, Kerr!

KERR: So you weren't the fellow Mr. Railton saw in Rylcombe Lane?

CLAMPE: How could I have been, when I was at Wayland Empire?

KERR: So you went to the pictures, too? See anything of Grundy & Co.?

CLAMPE: No. But they probably went into the best seats—if I know anything of Grundy. I could only afford to pay a bob for mine.

KERR: By the way, what was on?

CLAMPE: A Wild West film—"Riders of the Desert"—and a Walt Disney Silly Symphony.

KERR: Remember the name of the Silly Symphony?

CLAMPE: No. I don't. Except that Donald Duck was in it. Dash it all! Do you expect me to remember everything I see on the screen in an afternoon?

KERR: No, Clampe; I merely expect you to tell me the truth.

(How has Clampe given himself away? Did you spot the slip? Turn to Kerr's solution on page 33.)

Road, though too quickly for me to recognise them. I am convinced that these are the three, and I have not the slightest doubt that the matter can be proved."

"Very well. You are at liberty, of course, to take any steps to prove it," said Mr. Railton. "I am satisfied with the assurance the juniors have given."

"You state that you witnessed the close of the junior football match?" said Mr. Ratcliff, eyeing Julian.

"Yes, sir."

"Was there a crowd there to witness the game?"

"Yes; dozens of fellows."

"Did you speak to any of them?"

"Yes, several."

"Very good! Then some of the boys will be called as witnesses; and if they corroborate your statement, I shall accept it that you are cleared!" said the New House master, with a bitter smile.

Mr. Ratcliff expected to see uneasiness and

alarm in the faces of the three culprits. They did not turn a hair, however.

The New House master bit his lip, and stepped to the door and opened it.

Darrell of the Sixth was passing down the corridor, and the master called to him.

"Kindly step into Mr. Railton's study, Darrell!"

The prefect, looking somewhat surprised, came in. Mr. Railton controlled his patience with an effort.

"Darrell, will you find half a dozen boys who witnessed the junior match this afternoon, and bring them here? I am sorry to trouble you."

"No trouble, sir!" said Darrell. "I'll be back in a few minutes."

He left the study, and there was a grim silence while the two masters and the juniors waited for his return. Darrell was not long gone. He returned in five minutes, followed by Kerruish, Reilly, Hammond, and Boulton of the School House, and Pratt and Kourni Rao of the New House.

The six juniors were looking surprised and uneasy as the prefect marched them in.

Mr. Railton made a gesture to the New House master to take up the questioning again.

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"You juniors witnessed the match on Little Side this afternoon?" asked Mr. Ratcliff.

"Sure we did, sir!" said Reilly. "Darrell just asked us—"

"Did you see these three boys on the football ground?"

"Faith, I don't remember—"

"Yes, I did!" said Hammond.

"And I!" said Boulton. "They came in just before the finish!"

And three more voices added the same information.

Mr. Railton smiled slightly. Even the suspicious New House master could hardly suspect that six juniors chosen at random could have been primed with a concocted story in advance. Mr. Ratcliff bit his lip.

"At what time did the football match finish?" he asked.

"About four, sir," said Boulton.

The New House master compressed his lips.

"Can you tell me whether these boys left the school again afterwards?"

"Sure, Julian didn't!" said Reilly. "He went to tea with Noble."

"Owen didn't," said Pratt. "He was in the gym with me."

"How long before the close of the match did you see them?"

"About twenty minutes, sir."

"That will do!" said Mr. Ratcliff sourly. "You may go!"

The surprised six filed out of the study.

Julian, Owen, and Kerr waited, but an angry gesture from Mr. Ratcliff dismissed them also.

"You are satisfied?" asked Mr. Railton.

"So far as these juniors are concerned, I must admit it!" said the New House master reluctantly. "The three boys I saw in the Wayland Road could not have been in the school at a quarter to four, certainly. But it is an undoubted fact, Mr. Railton, that three juniors were out of bounds this afternoon! I shall question, personally, every boy in my House, and I recommend you to do the same!"

Mr. Railton shook his head.

"That does not seem to me a good method," he said. "It is tempting a boy to tell a falsehood. If there were the slightest evidence, it would be a different matter. I shall, however, ask the prefects to inquire into the matter informally!"

"You will doubtless follow your own methods, and I shall follow mine," said the New House master sourly; and he quitted the study, much to Mr. Railton's relief.

Ten minutes later there was a regular orgy of questioning going on in the New House at St. Jim's. If Mr. Ratcliff had been an old-time official of the Holy Inquisition, he could not have played the part of an inquisitor more thoroughly.

But the result was nil. Every fellow in the New House denied emphatically having been out of bounds. With his keenest questioning, Ratty could not catch any of them tripping. So he could only conclude that the three juniors he had seen belonged to the School House.

If that House had been under his authority, Mr. Ratcliff flattered himself that he would have unearthed the culprits quickly enough. But it was not, which was probably fortunate for the breakers of bounds.

CHAPTER 9.

Tom Merry Called In!

TOM MERRY & CO. were still busy on the "Weekly" when the captain of St. Jim's put his head into the study.

"Terrifically busy?" asked Kildare.

"Oh, yes!" said Tom Merry. "Still, we can give you a minute if you like!"

"A minute will do!" said Kildare gravely.

"Two, if you like!" said Manners generously. "Looking for really good recruits for the football?"

"Quite at your service, if you like!" added Lowther.

"No, not exactly. The fact is, it's a serious matter!" said Kildare.

The Terrible Three groaned in chorus.

"What have we done now?"

"Nothing, you young asses—at least, if you have, I'm not aware of it."

"Thank goodness for that!" said Monty Lowther. "Always try to preserve your sweet and child-like innocence and unsuspectingness, Kildare. It's your most fascinating quality."

Tom Merry and Manners chuckled. The captain of St. Jim's gave the humorous Monty a warning glance, and went on:

"I've come to you as you're junior captain of the House, Merry. I've just been to Mr. Railton."

"Yes," said Tom.

"Mr. Ratcliff thinks he spotted three juniors out of bounds this afternoon," said Kildare. "As he didn't recognise them, it's possible that a mistake was made. He appears to have satisfied himself somehow that they were not New House juniors—so he tells Mr. Railton. I hope he was mistaken, and that no chap belonging to this House broke bounds after the Head's special request. Mr. Railton has asked me to look into the matter."

The Terrible Three looked grim. All three of them heartily condemned Cardew's reckless escapade, but they had not the slightest intention of giving Cardew away.

Wild horses would not have dragged his name from them. But Kildare knew that. He was not the kind of fellow to ask one boy to sneak about another.

"It's no easy matter for me to deal with," said Kildare, apparently not noticing the Shell fellows' peculiar looks. "As the fellows weren't recognised, a lie in answer to a question would be enough to see them clear, and I don't want to make a fellow into a liar by putting him into an awkward position. So I've come to you."

"Oh!" said Tom, not quite understanding.

"I've seen the Head," continued Kildare, "and in the circumstances he has decided to let it be known why bounds were restricted. It's a beastly unpleasant thing, and he did not intend to let the school know. But for the sake of avoiding any possible danger from foolish fellows breaking bounds, he has altered his intention."

"Danger!" repeated the three juniors in a breath.

"Yes. There's been an outbreak of scarlet fever at King's Woodley and in the surrounding district."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Of course, there mightn't be any danger, but there might, and for that reason bounds are drawn to this side of the Wayland Road till the affair is well over and done with. It would not be exactly



PROFESSOR SKIMPOLE'S HOROSCOPE

This Week:

GEORGE KERR.

"COMING for a stroll, Skimpole?" queried Kerr of the New House, as I encountered him just going out of the gates. "I had not intended taking a walk, Kerr," I replied, "but as I wish to ask you a few personal questions, perhaps it will be as well if I accompany you." "If I tell you my birthday to begin with, it will save a lot of beating about the bush, won't it?" grinned Kerr, as I endeavoured to keep up with his rather long strides. "However did you know I wanted to cast your horoscope, Kerr?" I asked in surprise. "Didn't you know that nothing is hidden from Detective Kerr?" rejoined the amateur sleuth.

I could perceive that I was dealing with a native of Virgo, the Virgin (all birthdays from August 24th to September 22nd), and a swift calculation showed that Kerr's guiding influence was the Moon. Far from being a "mooner," however, Kerr is of a type which is constantly on the alert, restless, ever seeking a solution to the problems which life has to offer. His is a keen, analytical mind, but he is no pedant, and he is by nature a bright and cheerful companion. Sagacity and level-headedness are two of his strongest suits. "Are you out merely for the exercise, Kerr?" I inquired. "No. I have a reason for going as far as the village," replied Kerr. "As a matter of fact, I'm just going to get my copy of the GEM, to read the report of the last mystery I was lucky enough to solve!"

a joke to have an outbreak in a big, crowded school."

"I should think not!" gasped Tom.

"You can inform the others of what I've told you. There's no need for any silly kids to be alarmed, of course. But you can see for yourselves now that it's important for everybody to keep this side of bounds."

"Yes, rather!"

"The Head did not state the reason at first, so as not to cause needless alarm. He took it for granted that every fellow would have sense enough to abide by an order issued so specially. But since Mr. Ratcliff's report, he has decided to let it be known. I think it's best myself. Now, if any juniors have been out of bounds they ought to be jolly well licked, and I shouldn't wonder if you three fellows can guess who they are."

"I'm not going to ask you," added Kildare. "I know that in a matter of this kind I can trust you, Merry. You can inquire into the matter unofficially. It will not be sneaking for any fellow to give you information, and nothing need come to the master's ears. The three young rascals concerned want a lesson—and want it badly. Can I trust you to see that they get it?"

"You can, Kildare!" said Tom Merry quietly.

"I think I can," said the prefect, with a nod. "I leave it in your hands, then. You will not report anybody to me, of course; but you can let me know that the matter has been settled."

"Right-ho!"

Kildare quitted the study, and the Terrible Three looked at one another.

"So that was it!" said Lowther, with a deep breath.

Tom Merry knitted his brows.

"Those three silly fools might have brought an epidemic into the school!" he said. "I suppose

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there was no danger, actually, as they only went to a footer field, but—"

"But there might have been—lots!"

"The fools!" said Tom. "The silly idiots! Just think what might have happened from their playing the giddy goat like that!"

"Kildare's a sensible chap!" said Manners. "We can look into it better than a prefect, especially as we know the chaps—two of them, at any rate."

"What's the programme?" asked Lowther. "House meeting?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No. No need to tell the whole school that fellows have been to that place. Some duffers might get alarmed, especially the kids in the Second!"

"But we can't deal with the merry culprits on our own," said Lowther. "We are awfully important chaps, of course—ahem!—but—"

"Twelve is enough for a jury," said Tom. "We'll pick out twelve of the leading fellows—nine besides ourselves. We'll call the silly rotters over the coals in their own study, with the door locked."

"Good wheeze!"

"You can cut off to Study No. 6, and call Blake and Herries, and Dig and Gussy. That's four. Call at Study No. 5 for Julian and Reilly. That's six! I'll call Talbot and Kangaroo and Wilkins."

"Right-ho!"

And the Terrible Three proceeded to call the jury together.

Kildare had left the matter in the hands of the junior captain, confident that it would be well dealt with; and there was no doubt that Tom Merry & Co. would deal with it efficaciously.

CHAPTER 10.

Called to Account!

SUPPER was going on in Study No. 9 in the Fourth.

Cardew, Levison, and Clive were at the table together.

Cardew and Levison were feeling relieved in their minds, and satisfied that their escapade had blown over.

They had seen Julian, and learned that the three juniors accused by Mr. Ratcliff had cleared themselves. To do Cardew justice, he would have owned up at once if his offence had been visited upon an innocent party. But the discharge of the three accused "without a stain on their merry characters," as Julian put it, saved the real culprits from that disagreeable necessity.

So far as he could see, the matter was over and done with.

Indeed, Cardew had proposed a visit to Dick Gilbert on the following Wednesday afternoon. Gilbert, as he explained, had a ripping place at King's Woodley, and a half-holiday there would be topping.

Levison declined the suggestion at once. Cardew, whose recklessness seemed to grow with impunity, declared that he intended to go, in any case. Levison and Clive could come, if they liked. At that, Clive broke out angrily.

"I shan't go—and you won't go!" he exclaimed. "Don't be such a silly ass, Cardew! You've said yourself there was a serious reason for the Head drawing in bounds—"

"Oh, rats! Why shouldn't we go?"

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"Cardew, you are guilty of dishonourable conduct to a week in Coventry, and to be whacked with a cane."

"We're not going."

"Well, I'm goin'!" said Cardew sulkily. "I'm the best judge whether it's safe or not, and the Head can go and eat coke! We'll take your minor, Levison."

Levison grinned.

"Frank's fed up with breaking bounds, I think. His pals in the Third have been ragging him. They made him run the gauntlet in the Third Form Room."

"Cheeky young sweeps! Hallo! Come in!" rapped out Cardew as their came a knock at the door.

The door of Study No. 9 opened, and the Terrible Three of the Shell presented themselves. They walked quietly into the study, and Blake, Herries, Digby and D'Arcy followed them.

After them came Julian and O'Reilly, followed by Kangaroo and Talbot and Wilkins.

Twelve juniors, in all, came into the study, pretty well filling it.

Levison & Co. stared at the numerous visitors in blank astonishment. It was evidently not a friendly visit. The dozen juniors all looked grim, Arthur Augustus, especially, having a very severe expression on his aristocratic countenance.

"Hallo!" said Cardew coolly. "I don't remember asking you fellows to supper."

"We have not come to suppah, you wottah!"

"That's lucky! There's only a crust of bread left," said Cardew coolly. "Still, you're welcome to it. Will you carve, D'Arcy."

"Wats!"

"Anything on?" asked Clive.

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "This study is on its trial, and we are the jury."

"Oh!" said Levison.



obstinacy!" said the foreman of the jury. "Sentenced up till you give your solemn word of honour not to break in!"

Cardew's lip curled.

"If you're takin' it upon yourselves to criticise this study, you can do it in my absence," he remarked, and he made a movement towards the door.

"Stay where you are, Cardew!" said Tom Merry quietly.

"Are you givin' me orders?" sneered Cardew.

"Yes."

"Why, you cheeky rotter—"

"Shut up, Cardew!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Dwy up!" said D'Arcy. "Your feahful cheek is not wanted now, deah boy."

"What's this confounded rot about?" demanded Cardew angrily.

"You'll see directly," said Tom Merry. "Ratty has reported to Railton that three fellows were out of bounds this afternoon. Railton called in Kildare, and Kildare's left it to us."

"Are you settin' up as a prefect?"

"In a way, yes," said Tom, unmoved. "We're going to see into the matter, and hand out punishment."

"Punishment!" exclaimed Cardew fiercely.

"Precisely."

"Yaas, pweicisely," said Arthur Augustus. "But we want the third wottah. It wasn't Clive, Tom Mewwy. I saw Clive watchin' the footah match."

"I was pretty sure it wasn't Clive," said the captain of the Shell. "Levison, you and Cardew went over to King's Woodley this afternoon?"

Levison nodded.

"You had another chap with you. Who was it?"

Levison was silent.

"I'm goin' out of this!" exclaimed Cardew, and he strode savagely to the door.

"Keep that ass quiet!" said Tom.

Cardew was pinioned at once by Kangaroo and Talbot. He struggled fiercely in their grasp.

"Let me go!" he shouted.

"When we've done with you," smiled Kangaroo. "Better keep order, or I shall twist your arms—something like that."

"Yah! Oh!" yelled Cardew.

"Sorry; but you asked for it," said Kangaroo politely. "If you ask for it again, you'll get it again."

Cardew did not ask for it again.

"You can let go!" he growled. "I'll stay."

"Right you are, dear boy!"

Cardew thrust his hands into his pockets and stood waiting, with a sardonic expression on his face.

Levison was looking troubled. Sidney Clive did not speak.

"You were not the third in the party, Clive?" Tom Merry asked.

Clive shook his head.

"Who was it, Levison?"

"You can leave him out," said Levison, in a low voice. "He didn't want to come. He tried to keep me from going, too. And he's been ragged already by the chaps in his Form for going."

"Oh!" said Tom. He understood. "I think I see. Well, the other party can stand out, then. But I'm surprised at your leading him into a silly game like that, Levison."

Levison's face was crimson. He did not reply. "I suppose you are alludin' to Levison minah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It was weally wotten of you to take your minah, Levison."

"Pile it on!" said Levison.

"The young rotter ought to be licked for it!" grunted Wilkins.

"He's been licked by the fags, and, after all, he didn't want to come," said Levison.

"Yes; I think that's so," assented Tom Merry. "You are to blame for the two, Levison?"

"Admitted."

"So we're on our defence!" sneered Cardew.

"Yes," said Tom.

"And what right have you to interfere in the matter at all?"

"Kildare's left it to me."

"Rot!" said Cardew.

"Rot or not, we're dealing with the matter," said Tom Merry coolly. "As you mayn't understand how serious it is, I will tell you that there's an epidemic of scarlet fever at King's Woodley, and it means danger for the whole school for a fellow to go there."

Clive uttered an exclamation.

"So that's it?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, that's it."

"You needn't be nervous, Clive," grinned Cardew. "We didn't go visitin' the patients. We went straight to the footer ground of the Rangers Club, and straight back."

"I'm not nervous," said Clive. "I don't think there's any danger; but you might have brought infection back, all the same. There was a chance."

"How much of a chance?" snapped Cardew. "Enough to make the Head change bounds, anyway."

CHAPTER 11.

Justice!

"Oh, rot!"
 "Did you know about the epidemic, Cardew?" asked Tom Merry ominously.
 "Not till we got there. My friend Gilbert told us there," replied Cardew. "I don't see anythin' in it myself."

"Bai Jove! Weally, Cardew——"

"Well, have you finished?" sneered Cardew.

"We haven't begun yet," said Tom Merry. "We're not going to spread it over the school that you fellows have been to Woodley. It might make some of the fags nervous. You're going to be put through it, fair and square. If you've got any complaint to make of the House jury, here present, you can make it."

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"You can join the jury, Clive."

"Leave me out," said Clive. "I'd rather not take a hand against these fellows, if you don't mind."

"Well, that's so; as you choose," said the captain of the Shell. "You can be the public in court, if you like."

Clive grinned and nodded.

"Take your seats, gentlemen," said Arthur



"I tell you I know what I'm talking about. Don't I go to school, stupid?"

"Yes, and you come back stupid!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to B. Worsell, 91, Horley Road, Earlswood, Surrey.

Augustus. "As foreman of the jury, I will proceed——"

"Who made you foreman?" inquired Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Sit on him, somebody!" suggested Monty Lowther.

"I wefuse to be sat upon, Lowthah! And I regard the suggestion as widiculous," said the swell of St. Jim's. "As a fellow of tact and judgment, I should natuwallly be selected as foreman of the jury——"

"Ring off!"

"I wefuse to wing off, Mannahs!"

"Dry up!" said Julian. "Tom Merry's foreman of the jury. Go ahead, Tommy!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"In the cires, Tom Mewwy, I am willin' to go by the majowity, and leave it to you," said Arthur Augustus gracefully.

"Are you willing to leave off burbling?" Herries inquired.

"Weally, Herries——"

"Order!"

"I wefuse to ordah—I mean——"

"Shut up!" roared the whole jury, in one voice.

And Arthur Augustus shut up at last; and the proceedings proceeded, as Blake expressed it.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,607.

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW stood with his hands in his pockets, and a sardonic smile on his face.

He evidently wished to make it clear that the whole proceedings of the House jury excited only disdain in him. The grandson of Lord Reckness had never looked so supercilious as at that moment.

Levison's expression was quite different, for Ernest Levison was not the Levison of old.

There had been a time when he would have taken the matter in Cardew's own spirit, and it was not very long ago. The sense of wrongdoing came home to the one-time black sheep of St. Jim's with unaccustomed keenness. He was anxious to set himself right in the eyes of the other fellows, but he knew that the task would be difficult.

Levison's look showed what he was feeling, and Tom Merry's stern expression relaxed as he noted it. He did not want to be hard upon the fellow who had made an uphill fight from the slough of reckless blackguardism; but he had his duty to do.

"Now, if you've got anything to say, go ahead!" said Tom Merry. "You're going to get fair play!"

"Yaaas, wathah!"

Cardew laughed recklessly.

"I've nothin' to say. I suppose you've come here to rag us. Well, you can go ahead. I shall hit out, I warn you!"

Tom's brow darkened.

"Is that all you have to say, Curdew?"

"That's all!"

"You don't want to make any defence?"

"None."

"Very well; you can stand aside. What about you, Levison?"

"I've something to say," said Levison quietly.

"I'll say this—that as soon as I knew the reason why bounds had been changed, I wished I hadn't gone. But I did not know when we started. I think we were justified in going."

"Oh!" said Tom. "Well, if you can make that out, the jury will be satisfied. You know that nobody here's got anything against you."

"I know that, of course. I'm willing to leave it in the hands of the fellows present," said Levison. "If you say I haven't played the game——"

"That's the question," said Tom. "Of course, I dare say there isn't a fellow here who hasn't broken bounds at one time or another. We're not a committee of Good Little Georgies!"

"Wathah not!"

"Dry up, Gussy!"

"But this isn't an ordinary case," said Tom. "The Head changed school bounds, and we know he wouldn't do it without a good reason. It was putting the school on its honour. Fellows couldn't be watched all through a half-holiday. There isn't a master at St. Jim's who'd spy on a chap, excepting Ratty——"

"And Ratty did!" said Julian.

"Yes; and you know what we all think of Ratty for it," said Tom Merry. "Our House-master doesn't play that kind of game. Railton wouldn't. He trusted us to see that the Head's order was regarded. He would rather trust a fellow than watch him like a sneaking detective!"

"Hear, hear!" said the jury.

"But if fellows can't be trusted to toe the line when a special order's given, that rather justifies Ratty in his mean tricks," said Tom. "The point is that we were really put on our honour!"

"Yaas, wathah! Have you anythin' to weply to that, Levison?"

"Go it, old chap! We'll give you a fair hearing," said Talbot.

Levison nodded.

"I think I can make out a case," he said. "Cardew had promised to take two fellows over to Woodley. Of course, Gilbert would have taken it all right if we'd wired we couldn't come. But the point is that the Rangers were depending on us for the match!"

There was a general nodding among the jury. They were quite ready to admit the importance of keeping a football engagement.

"As it happened," resumed Levison, with more confidence, "we practically won the match for the Rangers!"

"You did, you mean," said Cardew. "I'm not takin' credit for that!"

"Well, I bagged a goal," said Levison. "Anyway, the match was won, and the Rangers would have been badly beaten if we hadn't been there. They had lost four men, and their reserves could only fill one place badly. The Rangers would have had to play three men short, or stick in anybody they could pick up at the last minute—which meant a licking in one of their most important matches of the season—and they've been having a lot of bad luck. If we hadn't

gone, we should have left them badly in the lurch!"

"Bai Jove! That's wathah a good case, deah boys," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a sage nod of the head.

"I don't deny that we were on our honour, in a sense," said Levison. "But we were on our honour, too, not to fail a chap who'd been led to rely on us. That's my case, and I leave it to the jury!"

"That's my case, too, and you can go and eat coke!" said Cardew flippantly.

Cardew's remark passed unheeded.

"That all, Levison?" asked the foreman of the jury.

"That's all."

"Then the jury can consult," said Tom Merry. The jury consulted.

Levison's defence had made quite a good impression upon them, and it was admitted that he had made out a good case, so far as it went. But the opinion of the juniors was not changed. There was a buzz of voices in the study for some minutes.

"In the cirs, I will put a question to the pwisonah at the bar," observed Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

"Oh, cheese it, Gussy!"

"I wufese to cheese it, Weilly! Pwisonah at the bar—"

"Go ahead!" grinned Levison.

"Are you still of opinion that you ought to

(Continued on next page.)

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have gone to Woodley, in spite of the respected ordah of the Head, or have you changed your mind?"

Levison hesitated.

"Yes, that question's in order," said Tom Merry.

"Well, I don't want you to think I'm begging off," said Levison, flushing. "As a matter of fact, if it happened over again I shouldn't go!"

"Good enough!" said Tom Merry. "If you see it like that, the jury can let you down lightly!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Sentence?" asked Blake.

The foreman of the jury delivered the sentence: "Guilty of playing the giddy ox, and putting a stain on the honour of the House. But taking into consideration the accused's recent good character, and his having reconsidered his action, he is sentenced to one day in Coventry!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Thanks!" said Levison quietly.

"And the othah pwisonah, deah boy?"

"Have you anything more to say, Cardew?"

"Nothin', exceptin' that it's like your cheek to be askin' me questions, and if it happened again I should go all the same!" said Cardew, in his most arrogant style.

The jury consulted again, and the foreman delivered sentence:

"Guilty of dishonourable conduct and mulish obstinacy! Sentenced to a week in Coventry, and to be whacked with a cricket-stump till he gives his solemn word of honour not to break bounds again till the Head's order is withdrawn!"

"Hear, hear!"

Cardew's eyes gleamed.

"I shan't do that!" he said.

"Execute the sentence," said the foreman of the jury coldly.

Cardew made a rush to the door.

He was promptly collared, and stretched face downwards on the table, struggling and panting.

Reilly picked a cricket-stump out of the cupboard.

"Lay it on!" said Tom.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Cardew struggled furiously.

Levison and Clive looked on grimly.

Cardew had asked for it, and he was getting it now; there was no mistake about that.

Reilly seemed to think he was beating carpet.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Oh! Ah! Yah! Oh! Leave off!" yelled Cardew.

"Word of honour wanted," said Tom Merry.

"Go and eat coke!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow! Leave off! I—I—I'll promise if you like!"

"Good enough! Honour bright?"

"Yes!" panted Cardew.

He slid from the table, flushed and furious.

The jury filed out of the study.

Justice was satisfied.

Tom Merry looked into Kildare's study later. The captain of St. Jim's gave him an inquiring look.

"All serene!" said Tom.

Kildare smiled.

"I won't ask you any questions," he said; "but—"

"There won't be any more of it. You can take that as a cert!"

"Right!" said Kildare.

And the matter ended there—quite satisfactorily, though the Housemaster and the prefect never knew who had been out of bounds.

Next week: Gussy's Christmas Party!"

PEN PALS

(Continued from page 2.)

Lim Ewe Hoe, 146, North Beach, Penang, Straits Settlements; pen pals; exchanging views, stamps; anywhere.

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Turned out of Cedar Creek for a mean trick, Kern Gunten, the rogue of the school, yet resorts to trickery to worm his way back again! Will he get away with it?

THE LUCKY ROGUE!

by Martin Clifford.

Mysterious!

"**H**OLD on a minute, you fellows!" Frank Richards and Bob Lawless had jumped down from their ponies at the fork in the trail where they met Vere Beauclerc on the way to Cedar Creek School.

Beauclerc was waiting for them on the edge of the timber, and instead of joining them in the trail, he called to them in a subdued voice.

"Anything up?" asked Bob.

"Yes; something rather queer."

Beauclerc's face was perplexed in expression.

Frank and Bob hitched their ponies to a tree and joined him.

"What is it?" asked Frank.

"I don't know that it's our business," said Beauclerc, "but it's jolly queer. Come and see, and keep quiet."

He led the way into the timber, and his chums followed him, in considerable astonishment.

After covering a distance of a hundred yards or so, Beauclerc halted on the edge of an open glade, making his chums a sign to be silent and to look.

Frank and Bob looked, with surprise dawning in their faces. There were three individuals in the clearing, at some distance from the schoolboys, but in plain sight.

Two were men, both recognisable as tough characters who loafed about the saloons in Thompson Town, and the third was Kern Gunten, the Swiss schoolboy of Cedar Creek.

The chums had not seen Gunten for some days. The Swiss had been turned out of the school for his rascally conduct; and, in spite of the wrath of his father, the rich storekeeper of Thompson, Miss Meadows had held firmly to her decision.

All Frank Richards & Co. knew of Gunten since that time was that the Swiss was staying away from home, having had enough—or too much—of the parental cowhide.

But it was not the sight of Gunten in the timber that astonished the chums of Cedar Creek. It was the occupation of his two companions, Black Rube and Dave Dunn.

The two roughs were engaged in painting their

faces with Kootenay warpaint, evidently with the intention of making themselves up as Indians. They wore Indian leggings and moccasins, and other articles of Redskin garb hung on the thicket near them, ready to put on.

Gunten was looking on at the peculiar transformation of his two associates and grinning.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Frank Richards.

"This beats it!" said Bob. "What is Gunten doing with those two horse-thieves, anyway? And what in thunder—"

"I spotted them as I came along through the timber," said Beauclerc. "They've been at this some time. They've got their horses in the wood, too. What on earth does it mean, you fellows?"

Frank Richards shook his head.

"There's some gun-game on," said Bob Lawless sagely. "They're a precious pair, those two. I guess they're going to rob somebody."

"Gunten wouldn't have a hand in that," muttered Frank. "He's an awful rotter, but not quite rotten enough for that."

"Oh, that foreign cad is rotten enough for anything!" said Bob Lawless, with a sniff. "Look here, let's speak to them, as we're here. If it's a gun-game, we may as well let them know they're spotted."

And the rancher's son strode out into the glade, followed by his comrades. There was a sudden exclamation from Gunten as he saw them, and Dave Dunn and Black Rube ceased their peculiar occupation all of a sudden.

The Swiss scowled angrily at the three chums.

"What are you doing here?" he exclaimed.

"I guess we want to know what you are doing!" retorted Bob Lawless.

"Mind your own business!"

"If it's a horse raid, to be put down to the Kootenays, you may as well know that the game's up before it's begun!" said Bob disdainfully.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1607.

"We can't keep this dark, you can bet your boots on that!"

"It's nothing of the kind!" snapped Gunten angrily. "Do you think I'm a horse-thief, you silly idiot?"

"Well, I know your friends are," said Bob. "And you're none too good for it, either, Gunten!"

"It's a lark!" said Gunten sullenly.

"Just a leetle joke, sonny!" grinned Dave Dunn. "Don't you be skeered—it's a leetle joke!"

"Yes, you look like taking all that trouble for a joke!" said Bob. "Look here, what are you up to?"

"Just as Dave says," replied Black Rube. "A leetle joke to please Gunten."

"Oh, rot!"

"That's all it is," said Gunten. "You can mind your own business, Bob Lawless. And—look here, don't jaw about this."

"Why not, if it's only a little joke on somebody?" asked Bob sarcastically.

Gunten bit his lip.

"You'll spoil the joke," he said.

"If it's only a joke we don't want to spoil it," said Frank Richards. "But it looks to me more like some piece of rascality, and that's flat!"

"I give you my word—"

"What's that worth?"

Kern Gunten gritted his teeth.

"You silly duffers! If you hear of anything being done by a couple of Kootenays, you can jaw then. I tell you, it's only a joke."

"Done!" said Bob at once. "Mind, if there's any yarn in the section of Kootenays running off horses or sleighs, we shall know what kind of Indians they were, and we shall go to Sheriff Henderson at once about it."

"Done!" said Gunten in his turn.

"Well, that's all right," admitted Frank.

And the three chums left the spot, leaving the two rustlers still engaged in getting themselves up as Indians.

Waylaid on the Trail!

MISS MEADOWS was very grave that morning. The schoolmistress of Cedar Creek had been considerably troubled about the Gunten affair.

Gunten had played a disrespectful trick that could not be forgiven, and he had been dismissed from the school, and Miss Meadows did not regret it. But the news that the boy was staying away from his father's home in Thompson troubled her somewhat.

The storekeeper's attempt to bully her into taking back his son into the school had failed. For the arrogant wrath of Gompers Gunten she cared nothing. But she was somewhat concerned for the boy himself.

The angry storekeeper had "cowhided" him with great severity, and there was more cowhiding for Kern Gunten when he came home—if he ever did.

The schoolmistress was turning it over in her mind whether, after all, it would be possible to allow the Swiss to return to the school. If he had shown a sign of real repentance for his wrongdoing, she would not have hesitated.

Morning school ended at last, and when the school was dismissed, Black Sam brought round Miss Meadows' horse from the stable.

Miss Meadows had business in Thompson

that day and Mr. Slimmey, the assistant master, was to preside at the dining-table, where the pupils whose homes were at a distance took their midday meal.

Frank Richards & Co. were talking in the gateway when Miss Meadows rode out on the trail, and they lifted their hats respectfully to the schoolmistress as she passed.

Miss Meadows gave them a smile. She rode on down the trail through the timber, a lonely trail that ran for miles, without a habitation in sight, to the town on the Thompson River.

Cedar Creek School vanished behind, as the Canadian girl rode at a leisurely pace along the trail, upon which lay patches of snow.

Suddenly from the frost-blackened larches some distance ahead two horsemen pushed out into sight.

Miss Meadows glanced at them carelessly as she rode on towards them. They were Redskins, in leggings, moccasins, and blankets, and their copper-coloured faces were adorned with daubs of paint.

The schoolmistress started a little as she noted it. Kootenay Indians were plentiful enough in the district, but the days of warpaint were long over.

The Canadian girl was surprised, but she felt no sense of alarm as she rode nearer to the two Indians. But alarm mingled with surprise as the two horsemen suddenly closed in upon her, and a coppery hand caught at her rein.

Her horse was dragged to a halt and she sat the steed between the two painted braves. Her eyes flashed.

"Release my horse at once!" she exclaimed sharply. "How dare you!"

The Redskins grinned.

"You come wit' Injun!"

"What?"

"Injun on warpath!" continued the brave.

"Look for squaw—pretty white squaw! Wah! I have spoken!"

The Canadian girl's face flushed with anger.

"Let my horse go at once!" she commanded.

"You come!" said the other brave gutturally.

"You come wit' Kootenay. Black Bear—great warrior!"

Miss Meadows drew a sharp breath. She was miles from help, and completely at the mercy of the Redskins, though their audacity was simply amazing. But the Canadian girl was accustomed to taking care of herself. With a sudden movement she raised her riding-whip and struck Black Bear full across the face.

Lash again, and the whip smote the other Redskin, and both of them started back, losing hold of the rein.

In an instant the Canadian girl was urging her horse to a gallop.

Thud, thud, thud!

It was the instant beat of hoofs in pursuit. The Redskins, their faces furious now, were riding in hot chase.

Miss Meadows urged on her horse desperately. But the rugged, tangled trail was not fitted for rapid riding. Her horse stumbled on a broken branch and slipped in a deep gully, and before the animal could recover the Redskins had overtaken the schoolmistress. A powerful hand gripped her shoulder and she was caught.

Lash, lash!

The whip struck again and again, but it was grasped and torn away and tossed into the thickets.

Strong and savage hands grasped Miss Meadows and she was held a helpless prisoner.

"Now you come—you my squaw!" snarled Black Bear.

"Help!" shrieked Miss Meadows in the faint hope that some white man might be abroad in the timber.

"No cry—you come!" hissed Black Bear.

A length of buffalo-hide was whipped round the girl, fastening her to the saddle. Then her horse was led from the trail into the timber.

"Help!"

Her cry rang out again, piercing the sombre shadows of the forest, and echoing among the trees.

There was a sudden shout from the timber in response, and a figure leaped into view, directly in the path of the kidnappers.

"Halt!"

A rifle was raised, bearing upon the braves, and behind the levelled barrel gleamed the eyes of Kern Gunten, the outcast of Cedar Creek.

Gunten the Hero!

MISS MEADOWS panted for breath. Her captors had dragged in their horses at once at the sharp voice of the Swiss.

Black Bear was gripping a knife, but he did not draw it. The rifle, in the hands of Kern Gunten, bore full upon the two riders, and his finger was on the trigger.

"Gunten!" panted Miss Meadows.

"All O.K., ma'am!" said Gunten coolly. "I've got them covered. You scoundrels, let that lady go at once!"

"No go!" grunted Black Bear. "Kootenay want squaw!"

"Let her go, or I'll drill you with lead! Now, sharp!"

The trigger was already moving. Miss Meadows gazed at the Swiss in astonishment.

Kern Gunten at the lumber school had never given her an impression of being a fellow of great courage. Yet he was facing the two Kootenays without a tremor. It surprised her in the Swiss. But she was glad to see Gunten there.

The two Redskins hesitated, growling in an undertone. But they yielded, and Miss Meadows' horse was released.

"Now vamoose!" said Gunten, watching them across the rifle. "I give you one minute to get out of sight!"

With guttural mutterings, the braves wheeled their horses and rode away, crashing among the larches.

Not till the sound of their horses had died away did Kern Gunten lower his rifle. Then he came towards Miss Meadows. He whipped out a knife and cut through the buffalo strip that bound her to the saddle.

"All right now, ma'am," he said. "Better get off, though; they might come back."

"I owe my safety to you, Gunten," said Miss Meadows, in a deeply-moved voice.

"I guess I'm glad I heard you, Miss Meadows. I was looking for game in the wood, so I happened to have my rifle with me. It was lucky, I reckon!"

"It was very brave of you to face them as you did. But we must leave this spot; there may still be danger. I shall not go to Thompson to-day."

"I'd better see you back to Cedar Creek, ma'am," said Gunten. "There may be some more of the rascals hanging about!"

"Come with me," said Miss Meadows.

In a few minutes they were on the trail again, and Miss Meadows rode back towards Cedar Creek, Gunten running by her side.

The Canadian girl was glad when the school came in sight at last. She halted at the gate.

"You will come in with me, Gunten," she said.

"I—I don't belong to Cedar Creek now, ma'am!" muttered Gunten, with a sidelong look at the schoolmistress.

"After what you've done, Gunten, I should be very ungrateful if I did not pardon you," said Miss Meadows. "If you choose, you may return to the school."

Gunten's eyes gleamed.

"Thank you, Miss Meadows!"

"You have been away from home some days, Gunten, I think?"

"I—I dared not go home, ma'am. Popper was too hefty with the cowhide."

"You will go home now that I have received you back into the school?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am! I guess it's not pleasant camping out in this weather."

"You will come in to dinner now."

"Certainly, ma'am!"

Gunten followed the schoolmistress into the dining-room, where most of Cedar Creek had sat down to dinner.

Mr. Slimmey rose with a look of surprise. The Cedar Creek fellows looked at Gunten in astonishment.

"By gum! Here's Guntie again!" muttered Chunky Todgers.

"Come back, by thunder!" murmured Eben Hacke. "What does it mean?"

Frank Richards & Co. simply stared. Gunten gave them a haunting look.

"You have not been to Thompson, Miss Meadows?" asked Mr. Slimmey.

"No; the trail is not safe now," said Miss Meadows. "Word must be sent to the sheriff at once. Some of the Kootenays are on the warpath."

"What!" exclaimed the assistant master.

"It is true, Mr. Slimmey. I was seized in the wood by two Kootenays, and forced away with them; but fortunately Gunten came up, and frightened them off with his rifle. He faced them very bravely," said Miss Meadows. "I desire all the school to know that I owe my safety to Kern Gunten. He is to return to Cedar Creek."

"My hat!" ejaculated Frank Richards.

A look of comprehension dawned on Vere Beauclerc's face.

"Miss Meadows, you were attacked by two Kootenays?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"And—and Gunten came up?"

"Yes; very bravely. I have forgiven him, and I hope all the school will receive him kindly," said Miss Meadows.

The schoolmistress left the dining-room, and Kern Gunten coolly took a seat at the table.

Frank Richards & Co. looked at the Swiss expressively. They did not feel that they could reveal their suspicion—or rather, certainty. At any time they would have been slow to believe that the Swiss could have performed an act of courage and devotion.

But in this case the facts were clear enough

to their minds. They had not forgotten the masquerade of Black Rube and Dave Dunn in the timber that morning. They knew that the whole affair was a cunning trick of Gunten's to regain his place at Cedar Creek.

Gunten caught their eyes fixed upon him, and grinned. He knew that Frank Richards & Co. guessed the truth, but he did not fear that they would betray him.

"So that was the game," murmured Bob Lawless. "Who'd have thought it?"

"Gunten, you spoofing rotter!" muttered Frank.

Gunten shrugged his shoulders.

"Glad to see me back, Richards?" he asked coolly.

"No fear!"

"Well, I can do without it. I'm back, anyway."

There was no doubt about that, at all events. And when the boys and girls trooped out of the dining-room after dinner, Kern Gunten was surrounded by a curious crowd, all demanding the details of his gallant rescue of Miss Meadows.

Not Out of Danger!

"**G**UNTEN, you swindler!" exclaimed Bob Lawless wrathfully, as he joined the group in the school ground with his chums.

"You spoofed!" exclaimed Frank Richards. Vere Beauchere did not speak, but his lip curled. The other fellows looked at Frank and Bob in surprise.

"Hallo! What's biting you?" demanded Eben Hacke. "Gunten's done a jolly plucky thing, I guess, from what Miss Meadows says."

"More than Richards would have done," sneered Keller.

"A good deal more than I would have done, certainly!" exclaimed Frank hotly.

"Oh, you must admit that?" jeered Gunten.

"Yes, you swindler! You've spoofed Miss Meadows!"

"What's that?" exclaimed Dawson.

"Are you going to tell tales?" sneered Gunten.

"You made me a promise this morning in the timber, Bob Lawless."

"I guess it wasn't a promise," said Bob. "I knew you were up to some gun-game. Is this trick what you call a joke?"

"Yes," said Gunten coolly. "And you're bound not to chew the rag on the subject."

"We're not thinking of telling Miss Meadows," said Frank contemptuously. "But it's a bit too thick for you to be swanking as a heroic rescuer, when we know—"

He broke off.

"What do you know?" exclaimed Chunky Todgers. "Out with it, Richards!"

But Frank was silent. He felt that he had no right to give the Swiss away, though Gunten's duplicity disgusted him.

"All serene!" said Bob. "Gunten can tell you, if he likes. We're not saying anything."

And the three chums cleared off, leaving the Cedar Creek fellows puzzled and mystified.

They plied Kern Gunten with questions, but the Swiss only answered that he had no idea what Frank Richards had been driving at. In his opinion, the English schoolboy was jealous—that was all he could say.

"Jealous of you," grinned Chunky Todgers.

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"Draw it mild, Swissy! I say, did you help Miss Meadows at all? And were there any Indians?"

"You heard what Miss Meadows said," answered Gunten, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Must be somethin' in it," said Hopkins.

"Miss Meadows 'as let the rotten worm crawl back into the school."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gunten walked away, leaving the fellows very curious and unsatisfied. Keller followed his fellow-countryman, grinning.

"All O.K.?" he remarked.

"Well, I'm back again," said Gunten.

"Popper will come round when I tell him. It's all serene."

"Where did you dig up those Redskins?"

"Oh, they happened along! Some of the Kootenays kick over the traces at times, you know," remarked Gunten carelessly.

Keller chuckled.

"Come off, old scout!" he said. "Don't give that to me. You fixed it up with them, of course, and Frank Richards knows it, though he won't say."

"And you won't say, either, Keller, unless you want a quarrel with me," growled Gunten. "I'm giving you the straight goods. They were real Redskins, and I chipped in with a rifle."

"Ha, ha!"

"Look here, Keller, if you want your nose punched—"

"Easy does it," grinned Keller. "I've come to give you a tip, I guess. There's two galoots outside."

Gunten started.

"Eh? What—who—?"

"Two bulldozers from Thompson," said Keller coolly. "They want to see you. They asked me—"

Gunten did not wait for him to finish. With startled face, and his eyes gleaming under knitted brows, he hurried away to the gates.

Outside the school fence Dave Dunn and Black Rube were standing, evidently waiting. Gunten hurried up to them.

"You fools, get out of sight!" he muttered savagely. "Haven't you sense enough to keep away from here after—"

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, young Gunten!" said Rube surlily. "We've come hyer to see you."

"If we're seen together, it may give away the whole stunt!" hissed Gunten. "Haven't you any sense?"

"I guess we're bound to see you," said Dunn coolly. "Come into the timber, if you don't want to be seen."

"I've nothing to say to you. I've paid you—"

"Then we'll talk here."

"Hold on! I'll come!" Gunten panted, as Frank Richards & Co. came out of the gateway. "Come—quick!"

He hurried the two ruffians into the shelter of the timber.

Blackmail!

KERN GUNTEN'S hard face was pale as he followed the two rustlers into the timber.

He breathed a little more freely when they were out of sight of the school.

Dunn and Black Rube were grinning. The unconcealed fear and uneasiness of the Swiss amused them.

Gunten fixed his eyes upon them fiercely.

"Now, what do you want here?" he said, between his teeth.

"I guess that's soon said," drawled Rube. "We want paying for our trouble. I tell you, I was a good hour washin' that muck off in the creek."

"I've paid you!" said Gunten shrilly. "Ten dollars each for the stunt, and I ponied up in advance!"

The two ruffians chuckled hoarsely.

"Ten dollars!" grinned Dunn. "What's that? An' you the son of the richest man in Thompson. A hundred dollars would be nearer the mark!"

"Or two hundred!" grinned the other ruffian.

And they chuckled again, Gunten watching them in growing terror. With all his cunning he had not counted upon this.

"I've paid you!" he faltered.

"Oh, that was only your little joke!" chortled Dunn.

"You—you agreed——"

"Course we did!" said Rube. "We're agreeable galoots, we are! You paid us ten dollars on account. You're goin' to pay us ten more now!"

"That'll do for the present," remarked Dunn, with a nod.

"Ten more on Monday," said Rube.

"And ten more the next week," chuckled Dunn.

"I can't—I won't—I——"

"I guess you will," said Dave Dunn coolly. "You've fooled your schoolmistress into taking you back into the school you was turned out of. It was a good game; and we helped you. That's worth something. Waal, you can't get all that for ten dollars."

"Not much!" chimed in his companion.

"S'pose we was to call on Miss Meadows, and tell her that them two Kootenay Injuns was us?" chuckled Dunn. "S'pose we let on that it was got up from the start to make her take you back in the school? You've took her in, Mister Swiss, but how long would it last if we blowed the gaff?"

"Oh, you villain!" almost groaned Gunten.

"Are you shelling out, Mister Swiss," asked Dave Dunn, "or are we goin' to call on the schoolmarm?"

"You bound!" muttered Gunten thickly.

"That's enough! Come on, Rube. We're goin' to see the schoolmarm."

"Stop!" shouted Gunten desperately, as the two ruffians made a movement towards the school. "You—you dare not——"

"I guess we'll soon see about that!"

"Stop, I tell you!" panted Gunten.

"Well, are you paying up, or ain't you?" demanded Dunn roughly. "We ain't got no time to waste hyer chewing the rag."

"I—I can't!" muttered Gunten. "Where am I to get the money from?"

"I guess your old popper's got plenty," said Dunn. "He's the hardest case in the Thompson Valley, and there ain't a galoot 'tween hyer and Kamloops that he ain't done brown, one time or another. You've got the spondulicks! I've seen you swanking with ten-dollar bills, and your popper's got more. And we're going to have a finger in that pie, I reckon."

"You thief! You——"

"Come on, Rube!"



As the two braves led Miss Meadows along the trail an armed figure leaped into view, directly in the path of the kidnappers. "Halt!" It was Kern Gunten, the outcast of Cedar Creek.

"Stop!" panted Gunten. "I—I can stand ten dollars, perhaps—"

"I reckoned you could!" grinned Dunn. "Hand over the durocks, and not so much chinwag with it!"

The Swiss fumbled in his pockets. His hands trembled with rage as he handed out two ten-dollar bills, one to each of the grinning black-mailers.

"I guess that lets us out," said Dave Dunn. "We'll drop in an' see you agin on Monday, Gunten."

And the two rascals went tramping away towards Thompson, where their illgotten gains were to be spent in "painting the town red."

With faltering steps Gunten stumbled away towards the creek. He wanted to be quiet, to think it out. But as he came out of the timber on the bank of the creek, he almost ran into Frank Richards and his chums.

"Hallo, Gunten! Are the cheery Kootenays gone?" chortled Bob Lawless. "You don't look as if you'd enjoyed a visit from your Indians!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gunten gave him a look of hatred. But he stopped.

The chums knew the truth, and in his desperation, he was willing to turn to them for help.

"I say, I'm in a horrible scrape," he muttered.

"I thought so," said Frank Richards dryly.

"Those rotters have turned on me!" muttered Gunten huskily. "They're bleeding me for money—and—and—"

"What did you expect?" said Beaulere. "They're the kind of men to do it."

"I—I never guessed. I say, what am I to do? I can't let them go to Miss Meadows!"

"My word! You'd be fired out fast enough if she knew!"

"Can't you advise a chap?" muttered Gunten.

"I—I've got back to school now. My popper will come round when I tell him that. Only—only those scoundrels are going to spoil it all. Can't you advise me, Richards?"

Frank gave him a look, in which compassion was mingled with contempt. His scorn for the wretched schemer was deep enough, but he could not help feeling sorry for a fellow who was utterly down.

"I could advise you," he said. "But I don't suppose you'd take my advice."

"Give it me, anyway."

"Well, go to Miss Meadows and make a clean breast of it."

Gunten started.

"Why, you fool, then she'd know—same as if those bulldozers told her! You want me to give myself away."

"I don't want you to do anything. You asked my advice, and there it is. Miss Meadows is bound to know, sooner or later, as it turns out, and your best chance is to confess it yourself, before you're given away."

Gunten paused.

Suspicious as he was, he could see that Frank Richards was giving him the best advice in the circumstances. And already his cunning brain was at work.

Frank was advising him to make a clean breast of the whole business. But it came into Gunten's mind at once that he could improve on that—with his usual cunning.

"I guess you're right!" he said.

And he hurried back to the lumber school, his mind made up.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,507.

Gunten Pulls Through!

MISS MEADOWS was in her study, writing a letter to the sheriff of Thompson, when Gunten tapped at her door. The Swiss came in with hanging head, and Miss Meadows gave him a kind smile.

"Well, Gunten, what is it?" she asked kindly.

"I've got a confession to make, ma'am," stammered Gunten.

Miss Meadows' brows contracted a little.

"I hope you haven't been doing anything wrong again, Gunten?"

"I—I'm sorry, ma'am. I—I can't let it go on like this," murmured Gunten. "I hope you'll forgive me, ma'am. The—the fellows are all talking about how brave it was of me to face those Redskins, and—and I can't let it go on."

Miss Meadows looked at him in wonder.

"I don't understand you, Gunten. It was brave of you. Your schoolfellows are quite right."

"It—it wasn't, ma'am. I've come here to confess," said Gunten, his eyes on the floor. "I—I fixed it up with two fellows to do it. They weren't real Redskins, ma'am—"

Miss Meadows caught her breath.

"Gunten!"

"They were got up as Kootenays, ma'am," said Gunten. "I—I reckoned you'd let me come back to school if you thought I'd rescued you, so—so I did it, ma'am."



"Pass me the cheese, Micky. You won't need it in your woe-ful position!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Tadeusz Levkovich, 3, Ain-Vered Street, Tel-Aviv, Palestine.

There was a deep silence for a minute or more. The Swiss hardly dared look at Miss Meadows.

Her face had become stern and set. The schoolmistress spoke at last.

"Then what happened to-day was a trick, Gunten?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You planned to deceive me in order to be admitted to the school again?" Miss Meadows exclaimed.

"I'm sorry, ma'am."

"And why, Gunten, when your contemptible scheme had succeeded perfectly, have you come to confess to me?"

"I—I couldn't let it go on, ma'am," murmured Gunten. "The—the fellows are all calling me a hero and—and praising me, and—and it made me feel a hypocrite. I couldn't stand it. I—I never thought there was any harm in it at first, but now—now I can see it, and—and I—I came to own up, ma'am."

Miss Meadows' stern face softened. The Swiss was playing his part well, and so far as Miss Meadows could see, there was no other reason why he should have confessed.

"That shows, at least, that there is an honest strain in your nature, Gunten," said Miss Meadows, after a pause. "At least, you did not wish to obtain credit under false pretences."

"I felt rotten, ma'am," said Gunten glibly. "I

—I simply had to own up. I—I hope you won't send me away now, Miss Meadows. I—I could have kept it secret if I liked, only—"

"I shall not send you away, Gunten. You have acted very badly, very wickedly, but at least you have shown that you are not all bad. After your confession of your own free will, I cannot punish you. You may go."

"And—and I'm going to stay at Cedar Creek, ma'am?" asked Gunten eagerly.

"Yes—at least, so long as you are careful in your conduct."

Gunten left the study, still looking very humble and meek. But outside, when the door was closed, he grinned. Once more his cunning had saved him.

Frank Richards & Co. met Gunten as he came out of the lumber school.

"All serene?" asked Bob Lawless

Gunten laughed.

"All O.K.," he replied.

"Well, you're in luck, I guess!"

"Thanks for your advice, Richards," grinned Gunten. "I'd never have thought of it. You've done me a good turn."

"Well, I'm glad of it," said Frank. "If you want some more advice, I advise you to go straight now you've got another chance. And those two bulldozers won't be able to trouble you again, now Miss Meadows knows."

"She doesn't know about them," chuckled Gunten.

"Then what reason did you give for confessing?" asked Beauchere curiously.

"Because I didn't like getting credit where it wasn't due. It made me feel a hypocrite to have all the fellows praising me, you know." And Gunten burst into a roar. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!" gasped Frank. "You lying rotter! You—you told Miss Meadows that?"

"Best thing I could tell her," said Gunten coolly. "Otherwise I guess she'd have fired me out fast enough. All O.K. now."

And he sauntered away, whistling.

"Well," said Frank, with a deep breath, "of all the rascally cads—"

"Gunten takes the cake, and no mistake" said Bob Lawless. "I've got a strong suspicion that that galoot will end his career, some day, behind prison walls."

It was the next day that Miss Meadows knew the real reason for Gunten's precious confession. Dave Dunn and Black Rube, having painted the town red overnight, dropped in at the lumber school to see Gunten, who snapped his fingers in their faces and turned his back on them. Much enraged, the two rascals proceeded at once to Miss Meadows with their angry tale.

The precious pair were pretty hard cases, but Miss Meadows' words, when she had heard their story, penetrated even their thick skins, and they were looking decidedly shamefaced as they slunk away.

To Gunten Miss Meadows said nothing. She understood how the Swiss had tricked her; but her word was given now, and she did not retract it.

Kern Gunten remained at the lumber school, and he was lucky to do so; but from that day there was a very sharp eye upon him, and the rogue of the school had to tread very warily.

Next Week:

"THE CHINEE OF CEDAR CREEK!"



THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Let the Editor be your pal. Drop him a line to-day, addressing your letter: The Editor, The GEM, The Fleetway House, Farrington Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, CHUMS! I have at last succeeded in finding a small corner in which to say a few words! I have been packing the paper with so many features of late, that I have been fairly crowded out myself!

However, here we are again. I'm glad that I have the chance to talk to readers this week, for I want to tell you about the next GEM, which will be our grand Christmas number. As a matter of interest, it will be the thirty-second Christmas issue of the old paper—a proud record of which few—if any—boys' papers can boast.

Having blown the GEM's trumpet, let's take a look at next Wednesday's programme. First, there is

"GUSSY'S CHRISTMAS PARTY!"

—a great yarn introducing all your favourites of St. Jim's, including Talbot and Marie Rivers. The latter are suddenly menaced during the holidays by an enemy from the past, when they were both members of a criminal gang in the underworld, and the outcome is that Marie is kidnapped!

Join up with Gussy's Christmas party and enjoy their fun and thrills at Eastwood House.

Next, we have another exciting story of Frank Richards' schooldays in the backwoods of Canada. It's called:

"THE CHINEE OF CEDAR CREEK!"

and the tale tells how Yen Chin, the Asiatic new boy of the school, finds a bitter enemy in bullying Eben Hacke, and how the Chinese, by his great courage in the hour of peril, turns his enemy into a friend.

Finally, the boys of the Benbow will be on deck again in "DAUBENY'S DARK SECRET!" In this powerful yarn the junior captain furthers his cunning scheme for ruining Drake's chances in the Founders' Scholarship—the schol Jack must win to remain at St. Winny's!

Lowther, the laughs-merchant, Kerr, the tec, and Skimpole, the star-gazer, are all in tip-top form again, while prize jokes and Pen Pals will round off this ripping Christmas number. Order it early.

Just a last word before I sign off. That hardy old favourite the "Holiday Annual" is as usual fast selling out. If you don't want to be disappointed, take my tip and see that your volume is reserved for you. It's packed with grand school yarns of St. Jim's, Greyfriars, and Rookwood, and it's the best five bobs' worth on the market—bar none!

So-long, chums!

THE EDITOR.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,607.

Unless Jack Drake Can Win The Founder's Scholarship His Days At St. Winny's Are Numbered. And With This In Mind, His Enemy Sets Out To Spoil His Chances!



With a furious face, Seeley made a rush at Jack Drake, who sat calmly in the armchair. But Rodney interposed, and grasped the Shell fellow by the collar and swung him round.

Daub's Surprise for Drake!

"YOU'LL do, old fellow!" Dick Rodney spoke in a tone of conviction.

Drake of the Fourth passed his hand over his brow with a tired gesture. His handsome face was a little pale, and showed evident traces of fatigue. He was seated at the table in Study No. 8, in the Fourth Form quarters on board the Benbow. Dick Rodney was sitting on a corner of the table, with an open book in his hand.

The chums of the Fourth had been hard at it. The day was drawing near now for the examination which was to decide whether Jack Drake remained at St. Winifred's. Rodney, who was a good distance ahead of his chum in classics, had been taking Drake through an informal examination, founded on last year's paper. And his opinion at the finish was that Drake would do.

There was a soft footfall outside the study, and Daubeny of the Shell glanced in through the half-open doorway. Neither of the chums of the Fourth observed him, and the dandy of the Shell remained where he was, looking in with a sneer on his face.

"You'll do," repeated Rodney. "You've picked up wonderfully this term, Drake!"

Jack Drake smiled, a rather weary smile.

"It's all due to you, though, I believe," he said. "You made me do it!"

"Well, I've done what I could."

"I came back to St. Winny's to work," said Drake. "I meant to; but so long as I was thick with Daubeny and his crowd it never came off. I suppose it was lucky for me, really, that they

CAPTAIN'S CUNNING!

By Owen Conquest.

found out my pater had lost his money, and that I wasn't worth keeping up. I've been able to work since Daub & Co. gave me the cold shoulder."

"Very lucky, I think, if you want to bag the scholarship."

"I've got to bag it!" exclaimed Drake. "I promised the mater I'd slog at it, and bag it somehow. I must do it. It will hit her hard if I have to leave St. Winny's."

"And it comes to that?"

Drake nodded gloomily.

"The pater couldn't pay my fees here for another term," he answered. "He told me so plainly before I came up this term. It depends on myself whether I stay at St. Winny's or not. I had fair warning, and, like an ass, I wasted time. But I've stuck to it since I chummed with you, old chap. Of course, I can't count on the schol as a cert. But I want to be able to tell

Jack Drake is inclined to think better of Daubeny when, to his surprise, the junior captain invites him to play in a football match. But there is more in it than meets Jack's eye!

the mater that I did my best. That's something!"

"And if you get it—"

"I'm safe for three years at St. Winny's, anyhow, if it goes all right. If not, I leave at the end of the term—and don't come back."

"But you're going to stay," said Rodney. "There's not a fellow you need fear, excepting Estcourt, and I think you can beat Estcourt."

"I—I'm sorry about Estcourt; he wants the schol as much as I do," said Drake. "He's a hard worker, and his people are poor. But—but I suppose a chap must think of himself first—of his people, anyway. If I could afford it, I'd stand out like a shot, and let Estcourt get through. But—"

"But it can't be done, old fellow. It's a fair fight between you for the schol, anyhow, and the best man will win."

"That's so," Drake nodded. "And—and you think I shall pull through?"

"Yes, if you keep on working as you have been doing!"

"I shall do that, never fear!"

"Only, don't overdo it," added Rodney, rather anxiously. "That's the fault of you impulsive chaps; you're liable to go at a thing too hot and strong. You want to keep fit. A little more time given to football wouldn't hurt your chances for the exam."

"I can't think of anything else till it's over," said Drake, with a shake of the head. "I've simply got to bag it—there's no two ways about it. I can't endure to think of leaving St. Winny's, and—Hullo!"

He had leaned back in his chair, and in doing so caught sight of the elegant figure of Daubeny outside the study.

"What the thump do you want?" demanded Drake unceremoniously.

Daubeny stepped into the study.

"I just came along to speak to you, Drake."

"You needn't have taken the trouble!"

"H'm! Is that what you call a polite reception?" asked Daubeny, with a smile.

"I've no politeness to waste on you!" answered Drake grimly. "The sooner I see your back, the better I shall like it!"

The colour crept into Vernon Daubeny's sallow cheeks; but he did not leave the study.

"We used to be pals, you know," he remarked.

"And you turned me down like a cad when you found out that I was hard-up!" said Drake scornfully.

"You've just been saying that it was lucky for you I did!"

"That doesn't alter the fact that it was cad-dish. And so you've added listening at doors to your other knotty graces, have you?" asked Drake contemptuously.

"I heard you by chance as I came up. You need not bear malice over what happened at that time. A fellow who's hard-up couldn't keep his end up in an expensive set—"

"I don't bear malice. You're not worth it, and I'm glad to have done with you!"

"Then there's nothin' to rag about," remarked Daubeny smoothly. "You may not guess it, Drake, but I'm really keen on seeing you bag the Founder's Scholarship."

"Rats! You'd be jolly glad to see the last of me at St. Winny's!" retorted Drake. "You won't, though, if I can help it. Do you think I don't know who ragged my study a few weeks ago, and chucked my books into the river? And why he did it, too!"

"If you've got any proof—"

"Oh, rot! I know it was you, and that's enough. If I had any proof, I'd rag your study in return. But I know it well enough!"

"I assure you—"

"But you haven't succeeded in what you wanted. I'm in good form for the exam, and Rodney thinks I'm going to win."

"The door's still there, Daubeny," remarked Dick Rodney.

"If you'll let me speak—" began Daubeny.

"I don't want to hear you!"

"I think you ought to hear me, Drake," said the Shell junior. "You and your friends cut up rusty over the way the Highcliffe match turned out. You accused me of playing my own friends in the junior eleven, and leaving out men who could play, and, in fact, chucking the match away!"

"All true," answered Drake laconically. "I suppose you haven't come here to talk football with me?"

"As a matter of fact, I have!"

"Oh!" said Drake, with new interest, and the look of hostility faded from his face. "What is it now?"

"I want you to play on Saturday."

"Wha-a-at?"

"You seem surprised," smiled Daubeny.

"I am surprised—jolly surprised! You've left me out of the team ever since we fell out—"

"I was to blame," said Daubeny, with an appearance of great frankness. "I admit it; I was ratty and I played the goat. You're wanted in the junior eleven, Drake, and as junior skipper I offer you a place for the Redcliffe match on Saturday."

"My hat!"

Jack Drake stared at Daubeny in blank astonishment.

He had wondered why the dandy of the Shell had come to his study, but he would certainly never have guessed what it was for.

Rodney was equally surprised. But there was suspicion as well as astonishment in Dick Rodney's glance, as it dwelt searchingly on Daubeny's face.

"You want Drake on Saturday, Daubeny?" he asked.

"Yes."

"This is rather a new departure, isn't it?"

"Isn't Drake a good man for the eleven?"

"None better. But—"

"Well, you've told me often enough that I play a weak team against other clubs—"

"You play a rotten fumbling team!"

Daubeny laughed.

"All the more reason why Drake should strengthen it, then. Not to beat about the bush, Drake is the best winger in the Lower School at St. Winny's. He's wanted to play for the school. I suppose you're not going to refuse, Drake?"

"No fear—if you mean business."

"Honest Injun!"

"I—I suppose you're pulling my leg?" said Drake, eyeing the captain of the Shell rather doubtfully.

"If you agree to play, your name comes up in the list this evening," answered Daubeny. "Is it a go?"

"What-ho!"

"Done, then!" said Daubeny.

And with a cheery nod the buck of the Shell walked elegantly out of the study, humming a tune as he went.

Drake and Rodney looked at one another.

"Now what the thump does that mean?" said Rodney ruminatingly.

"I suppose Daub's found out that he can't carry on with that feeble gang of fumlbers he played against Highcliffe," remarked Drake.

"We gave him a high old time over that affair. He's in danger of getting the push out of the junior captaincy, and I suppose he knows it. It's about time he put some new blood into the eleven."

"Is that his reason, do you think?"

Drake raised his eyebrows.

"What other reason could he have?"

"I—I don't know."

"Not friendship for me," said Drake, laughing. "The fact is, this is a bitter pill for Daub. He feels he had to do it, and he's done it. That's how I look at it."

Rodney was silent, his brows a little wrinkled.

"Why, what do you think his motive is, then?" asked Drake.

"I don't know. But—timeo Danaos et dona
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ferentes," as cheery old Virgil remarks. 'I fear the Greeks, even when bringing gifts.' And Daub—"

"My dear chap, I think you're a bit hard, even on Daub!" said Drake. His face was very bright now, and he was evidently in great spirits. "I say, this is ripping, you know. You were saying I ought to get a bit more time for footer. I really think you're right, Rodney. And I'm bound to play for the school if I'm asked—what?"

"Yes, but—"

"My dear old bean, there are no 'buts' in this case!" interrupted Drake buoyantly. "I'm jolly glad Daub's seen sense at last. I shall have to put in some time at practice. I want to be fit on Saturday." He glanced from the window. "It's still light enough to punt a ball about a bit. Come along, old top!"

He fairly dragged Rodney from the study. That evening there was no more discussion in Study No. 8 on the subject of the scholarship examination. One subject filled Drake's mind at present, to the exclusion of all others, and that subject was not exams—it was football.

The St. Winny's Eleven!

"**D**RAKE'S down to play!"

"My hat!"

"Drake! By gad!"

A crowd of juniors had gathered round the notice-board on the mainmast of the Benbow. The football list had been pinned up there by Vernon Daubeny, but at first sight it had attracted little attention.

Neither of the rival parties in the Lower School of St. Winifred's expected to find anything new in it. Daubeny was the kind of skipper who placed friendship before football, and it was well known in advance that his eleven would consist of his personal friends, the bucks of St. Winifred's.

At all events, that had generally been the case, till now. So far had Daub carried his wonderful system of selecting players according to the degree in which they stood in his personal favour, that his position as junior captain was somewhat in jeopardy.

He commanded a good majority in the junior club. Fellows who did not care much for footer cared a good deal for the wealth of the great Daub and for invitations to his luxurious home. And his own personal backers were numerous. But there was no doubt that St. Winifred's fellows were getting "fed up" with the defeats their skipper was gathering up one after another. It was possible that a turn would come in the tide.

Indeed, had not Drake been so keen and busy on "sapping" at present, some fellows considered that he would have had a good chance of turning Daub out of the junior captaincy.

But few, if any, expected Daub to show a sign of reform on his own account. And so the football list remained unregarded, as Daubeny strolled gracefully away after pinning it up.

It was Tuckey Toodles of the Fourth who glanced at it first, and then his surprised exclamation drew a crowd at once.

A score of fellows crowded round to ascertain whether Jack Drake's name really was on the list.

There it was. Otherwise the list was much the same as of old. It ran:

"T. Chilcot; H. Truro; F. Upham; C. Chetwyn. R. Vane; C. Dudley; A. Torrence; D. Egan; V. Daubeny; L. Fenwick; J. Drake."

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"J. Drake!" said Rawlings of the Fourth. "No mistake about it—Daub's playing Drake on Saturday."

"Couldn't do better!" remarked Estcourt.

"No fear!" agreed Sawyer major. "But he might do worse, and he generally does worse. What's come over Daub?"

"Tired of collecting lickings, perhaps," suggested Tuckey Toodles. "Of course, any skipper with sense would come to our study for a player. I'd be willing to play myself—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle," said Toodles disdainfully. "But I'd play the heads off some of those bouncers. Can Chilcot keep goal?"

"He jolly well can't!" agreed half a dozen Fourth Formers. "No better than you could, Tuckey."

"St. Winny's will be licked as usual," remarked Rawlings. "Drake can't play Redclyffe all on his own, and that's what it comes to."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still, it won't be the usual walk-over," said Sawyer major. "I'm jolly glad to see that Daub is getting a little hoss-sense at last. When he gets a little more he may play me."

"And me!" growled Rawlings.

"And me—what about me?" exclaimed Tuckey Toodles.

"Well, even Toodles couldn't do much worse than that crowd!" said Sawyer major. "Seeley's left out to make room for Drake. I wonder what he'll say? He won't like it."

"Perhaps he'll refuse to play banker with Daub in his study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

More and more fellows gathered round the notice-board, and there were endless comments on that surprising selection.

It was Jack Drake who had taken the lead in ragging Daub & Co. for their lamentable show against Highcliffe School, and the ragging had been followed by a fight, in which Daub had been licked. After that, nobody had expected to see Drake's name in the list again, so long as Daubeny was junior captain of St. Winifred's. But there it was.

Daubeny was displaying an unexpected strain of forgiveness in his nature. It surprised the fellows, but there was general satisfaction. It was a beginning, and it might mean that Daub was going to "play the game" a little more like a sportsman in the future.

But there was one discontented face, and that was when Seeley of the Shell joined the crowd before the notice-board.

A kind friend had promptly informed Seeley that his name was not down, and Seeley, who had expected a place in the team, as a matter of course, came along angrily to make sure.

The juniors grinned as the Shell fellow scowled at the footer list.

"It isn't there, old bird," chuckled Tuckey Toodles. "And you can't make it come there by scowling. He, he, he!"

Smack!

Tuckey Toodles gave a loud yell as the angry Shell fellow's open hand smote him, and he sat down on the deck.

Seeley strode away, with contracted brows, in the direction of the Shell studies. Evidently there was going to be an argument with Daub.

"Ow! Wow-ow! Wow!" roared Tuckey Toodles. "Why, you rotter! Ow-wow! Help me up, Sawyer, you grinning beast! Ow!"

Sawyer major helped Toodles up by one fat

ear, and there was another terrible howl from Tuckey:

"Yaroooh!"

"Hallo! What's the matter now?" asked Sawyer.

"Leggo my ear, you rotter!"

"Oh, all right! Only helping you——"

"Yow-ow-ow! Where's that rotter Seeley?"

"Gone!" grinned Sawyer.

"I know—I mean, I'm going to smash him! Ran away before I could get up!" snorted Tuckey Toodles scornfully. "Rotten funk! He didn't dare to wait for me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here he comes, Tuckey!" shouted Sawyer major, who was rather a humorist.

Tuckey Toodles' ferocity disappeared as if by magic. He made a jump for the lower ladder. "Where are you going?" howled Sawyer.

"I—I've got to get the tea ready for old Drake——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tuckey Toodles vanished from sight; but his alarm was groundless. Seeley was not coming back. He was heading for Vernon Daubeny's study, with a scowling brow.

He threw open Daubeny's door without troubling to knock, and came in on a cheery tea-party. Daubeny, Torrence, and Egan were at tea, and Chilcot of the Shell was a guest in the study. The four juniors glanced at Seeley's scowling brow, and smiled at one another. The bucks of St. Winifred's prided themselves upon a good many things, but loyalty to one another was not one of their virtues. A cynical philosopher has assured us that there is always something pleasing in the misfortunes of our friends. Daub & Co. found something entertaining, at least.

Seeley scowled at the smiling tea-party.

"Hallo! Just in time for the second brew!" said Daubeny genially. "Sit down, old bean!"

"I haven't come here to tea!" growled Seeley. "I've just been looking at the footer list."

"Not a bad one—what?"

"You've got Drake down."

"That's so."

"You have given him my place."

"He had to have somebody's place, if he was goin' in at all," remarked Daubeny.

"No need for him to go in, that I can see."

"He's a good man."

"Oh, don't give me any of that!" said Seeley roughly. "As if you care twopence whether a man is good or not! What have you put him in for? Has his father come into his money again?"

"Look here, Seeley——"

"Anyhow, I'm not satisfied with being left out."

"It had to be, old bean," answered Daubeny, shaking his head. "I had to make room, and, to be quite frank, you have been off form lately. I thought I'd better give you a rest for a bit."

"Drake's got my place."

"Well, I was under the impression that I was skipper."

"You're sticking to that list as it stands?"

"Oh, yes!"

"There'll be trouble, then, Daub. You can't drop a fellow like this at a moment's notice," said Seeley, gritting his teeth. "Perhaps you think you'll win at last, with Drake in the team. But perhaps Drake won't feel like putting up a good game on Saturday, after all."

"What are you goin' to do, Seeley?"

"Find out!"

And Seeley tramped out of the study, closing the door behind him with a slam.

Daub's Cunning!

VERNON DAUBENY pushed back his chair from the table and lighted a cigarette. He smiled contentedly through the little curls of smoke.

Egan, Torrence, and Chilcot eyed him. They were the faithful followers of the great Daub, but his latest departure puzzled them a good deal, and worried them a little.

If Daub was going to begin playing footballers in his eleven, and giving good men places instead of bad ones, there was no telling where it might end. Daub's chums felt that their own places would be invested with an unwelcome certainty.

"Seeley seems rather wild," Egan remarked, after a pause. "It was really a bit thick drop-pin' him out like that, Daub."

"He's going to pick a row with Drake, too," said Torrence. "I could tell that by his looks."

Daubeny nodded.

"Let him," he replied.

"But what the thunder are you playin' Drake for, if you come to that?" exclaimed Chilcot. "You can't expect our set to like it, Daub."

"He's a good man——"

"Oh, bow-wow!"

"The fact is, we came a bit too much of a mucker over the Highcliffe match," said Daubeny. "A fellow has to do somethin'. I'm playin' Drake, and I think it's a good move."

"Simply on his form?" asked Chilcot, staring.

"Exactly."

"Well, it beats me, then. I'd never have expected it of you. Drake's up against our crowd, tooth and nail, since he's chummed with that outsider Rodney."

"No reason why he shouldn't help us to beat Redelyffe."

"Oh, hang beating Redelyffe!"

And, with that sportsmanlike remark, Chilcot left the study.

Daubeny laughed and blew out a little cloud of smoke. Torrence and Egan watched him uneasily.

"Now Chilcot's gone, I suppose you can explain," remarked Torrence. "We're to be in the know, I suppose?"

"Of course, I'm not keepin' any secrets from you two," said Daubeny quietly. "You know how to keep mum, and you don't like Drake any more than I do. He's goin' to leave St. Winny's at the end of the term, if he doesn't bag the Founder's Schol!"

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"What's that got to do with football?"

"Lots!" answered Vernon Daubeny, smiling cheerily. "Have you fellows ever heard of Æsop?"

"Eh? An old Greek johnny who wrote fables?"

"That's the merchant. He spun a yarn of the wind and the sun havin' a contest to get a traveller's cloak off him. The wind blew as hard as it could, and the merry traveller only hugged his cloak tighter. Then the sun came out smilin', and the traveller threw his cloak off—"

"What the thunder are you telling us fairy-tales for?"

"By way of example. We've settled that Drake's not goin' to bag that schol; he's goin' to be pushed out of St. Winny's, if we can work it. We've tried the rough game; we've ragged his study, and chucked away his books, and mucked up his exercises, and so forth. And the sappin' cad only sticks to it all the harder. Rodney thinks he's goin' to bag the schol, and Rodney knows somethin' about it. I've thought of a new stunt. I'm tryin' the smilin' sun dodge."

"But how?"

"Drake's as soft as butter. Bully him, and he bucks up. Treat him well, and he will feed out of your hand," said Daubeny contemptuously. "I'm giving him a place in the junior eleven, and he's jumped at it. Can't you see the game? He's as keen as mustard on footer. He's goin' to play for St. Winny's; he's goin' to distinguish himself. He's goin' to be so much in demand that he can't miss a single match. He's goin' to be kept pretty hard at practice."

"Well?"

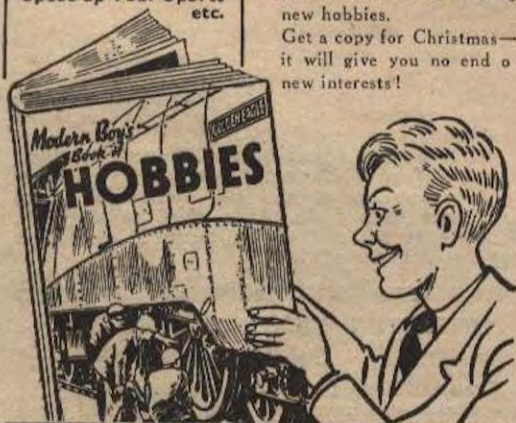
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"And what becomes of swottin' for the scholarship exam then?" asked Daubeny coolly.

"Oh!"

"That's the game," said Daubeny, with quiet bitterness. "Soft sawder doesn't cost anythin'. I know Drake, I tell you. Give him his head and he'll simply live, breathe, and dream footer for the rest of the term. Swottin' will go by the board. He's goin' down for the matches. If he thinks of cuttin' any, he'll be put on his honour to play, for the sake of the side. After the fuss he's kicked up about losin' matches, he won't be able to refuse, even if he wants to. And the schol goes hang!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Egan in great admiration. "You are an artful bounder and no mistake, Daub!"

"I fancy it will work," said Daubeny. "When the exam comes off, Drake will wake up suddenly and find he's out of it. Estcourt would run him close anyhow. Estcourt will bag it. He's a poverty-stricken rotter, and needs it, so this will be rather a good deed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The study door opened slowly, and Chilcot put his head in.

"Fight on!"

"Hallo! Who's goin' it?"

"Seeley's after Drake's scalp, in the Common-room!"

"Oh, my hat! Come on, dear boys—we mustn't miss this!"

And Daubeny & Co. sauntered away to the Common-room to see the fight.

By Proxy!

JACK DRAKE came into the Common-room after tea, with a very bright face. He had felt his exclusion from junior football keenly, and he rejoiced to have his old place again in the eleven. In his keen satisfaction, he was inclined to think better of Daubeny. He felt that he had not quite done old Daub justice.

Dick Rodney did not agree with him there; but he was glad to see his chum merry and bright. The two chums were chatting in a cheerful mood when Seeley came in.

"Drake!"

Jack Drake glanced up calmly as the Shell fellow rapped out his name. He read trouble in Seeley's looks, though he did not guess the cause.

"Hallo!" he answered coolly.

"You've got my place in the eleven."

"Is that so?"

Seeley compressed his lips.

"I don't know how you got round Daubeny," he said, "but you've done it. Don't tell me he's playing you on your form—"

"I suppose he is."

"You know he isn't. Does Daub ever play a man on his form?" sneered Seeley.

"Well, as he's your pal you ought to know best!" retorted Drake. "But I haven't got round Daub, as you call it. It was a surprise to me when he told me I was to play to-morrow."

"That's not true."

Drake sprang to his feet, his eyes blazing.

Seeley did not retreat a step. He pushed back his cuffs and stood facing the Fourth Former grimly.

"I'm ready for you!" he said, between his teeth. "You got my place by some trickery, and you won't be in a condition to put up much of a show to-morrow if I can help it."

"Shame!" exclaimed two or three voices.

"Come on, you rotter!"
 "I'll come on fast enough!" exclaimed Drake disdainfully. "I suppose a cad like you, Seeley, would suspect some sort of trickery. Put up your hands."

Dick Rodney caught his chum by the arm and jerked him back into his chair. Drake sat down involuntarily.

"What the dickens—" he exclaimed.
 "Sit there!" said Rodney coolly. "Seeley wants to knock you about before the footer match. You can't play with a black eye and a swollen nose, Drake. Leave Seeley to me."

"But—look here—"
 "Seeley's spoiling for a fight, and Study No. 8 can give him all the fighting he wants!" said Rodney. "You sit where you are. You've got to be in good form to-morrow for the Redcliffe match."

Drake burst into a laugh.
 "Much obliged," he answered. "I'll leave him to you, Rodney; but I warn you he's rather hefty in his way."

"I don't mind. Are you ready, Seeley?"
 Seeley gritted his teeth.
 "I haven't come here to fight you, Rodney; I've come here to fight Drake."

"Not this evening!" smiled Rodney.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 The juniors gathered round, chuckling. Daubeny & Co. had come in, and they looked on with interest.

"Go for him, Rodney, old fellow!" yelled Tuckey Toodles. "The cad smacked my head, you know, and bolted before I could smash him. I was going to make shavings of him, but I'll leave him to you, dear old boy. Give him socks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Seeley, with a furious face, made a rush at Jack Drake, who sat calmly in his chair. Rodney interposed, and grasped the Shell fellow by the collar and swung him round.

"Let go!" yelled Seeley.

"Rats!"

"Then take that!"

The next moment a furious fight was in progress.

"Go it, Seeley!" sang out Daubeny of the Shell encouragingly.

"Give him socks, Rodney!" roared the Fourth Formers.

There were no rounds in the fight; it was hammer-and-tongs from start to finish. There was plenty of punishment on both sides, but the finish came suddenly. Seeley rolled on the floor of the Common-room, and when Daubeny picked him up he limped out of the room leaning on Daub's arm, without offering to renew the fight.

Dick Rodney stood panting for breath. He blinked rather painfully at Drake.

Jack Drake squeezed his arm.

"Thanks, old chap!" he murmured.

"Hurrah!" roared Tuckey Toodles. "Good old Rodney! That was what I was going to give him, if—if I'd had time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better come and bathe your eye, old chap," said Drake. "I'm afraid you're going to have a blossom."

Rodney smiled faintly.

"Better me than you, in the circles," he said.

"You're a good chum, Dick."

And Jack Drake led his chum from the Common-room, the cheers of the Fourth Formers following Rodney as he went.

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