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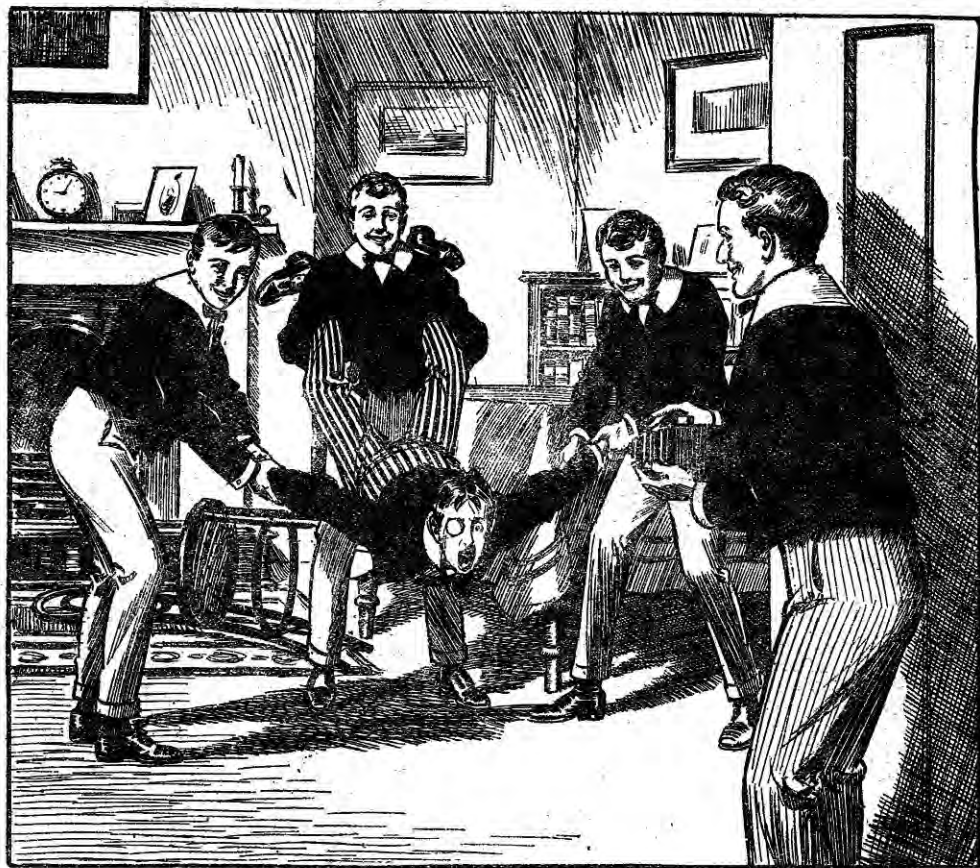


COMPLETE STORIES
FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

"WELL PLAYED, JULIAN!"

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

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



SNAP! "Hallo, what the thunder—!" The juniors stared towards the open doorway. Julian of the Fourth was standing there, with a camera in his hands. He was grinning over the camera, which had just snapped.
(See Chapter 3.)

CHAPTER 1.

Manners is Fed-up.

"**M**ANNERS, old chap!"
"Oh!" said Manners.
Manners was surprised. So were Tom Merry and Monty Lowther.
The Terrible Three were in their study. Tom Merry was conning over a footer list, Monty Lowther was doing lines, and Manners was cutting films. A goodly proportion of Manners' pocket-money went in films, and a great part of his spare time was spent in Mr. Lathom's dark-room.

Manners of the Shell was an enthusiastic amateur photographer. Indeed, it was only by dire threats of personal violence that Tom Merry and Lowther had prevented him from turning the study into a dark-room.

Manners had declared that, by painting the window red, and gumming paper round it to keep out every streak of light, and tacking rubber round the door, the study could be made into a ripping dark-room.

To which Tom Merry and Lowther had replied that, if they ever found the study window painted red, Manners would be found shortly afterwards with more bumps

Next Wednesday:

"THE CALL OF THE CINEMA!" AND "UNDER THE DRAGON!"

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than he could count, and a pair of thick ears, and a busted camera stuck down his back.

Manners, as we have said, was cutting films. He was busily engaged when Gore of the Shell looked in, and called him "old chap."

Naturally, Manners said "Oh!"

He was not on chummy terms with Gore, not in the least; indeed, they often had "words"—quite emphatic words. And Gore was not very agreeable, as a rule. Now he looked in with a most agreeable smile on his face, and addressed Manners in quite affectionate tones.

"Busy, old fellow?" said Gore.

"Yes," said Manners.

"Sorry to interrupt."

"Well, you can leave off interrupting," remarked Manners. "That's soon mended. Good-bye!"

"Ahem! I say, old son—"

Manners laid down his scissors and looked at Gore.

"Now, look here, Gore, what's the little game?" he demanded.

"Little game?" repeated Gore.

"Yes. Last time you saw me you called me a silly ass, and I called you a howling fathead. I still consider you a howling fathead, but you've turned me into an old chap, an old fellow, and an old son. What do you mean?"

Tom Merry and Lowther grinned, and looked curiously at Gore. They did not understand it any more than Manners did. Gore coloured a little.

"The—the fact is—" he stammered.

"Well?"

"Will you lend me your camera?"

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said Manners. "I'm a silly ass when you don't want to borrow my camera, and an old chap when you do?"

"Well, you—you see— You don't mind my asking you?"

"Not at all," said Manners; "and I hope you don't mind my saying 'No.'"

"I want it rather particularly," said Gore.

"So do I," said Manners.

"Look here, you rotter—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther.

Manners picked up his scissors again, and pointed to the door with them.

"I never lend my camera, excepting to fellows who know how to handle it, and can take care of it!" he explained. "It's a presentation camera, and I'm looking after it. You don't know how to use a camera!"

"I'm going to learn," said Gore.

"On my camera!" said Manners witheringly. "Thanks! Ask next door!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Gore. And he retired from the study, closing the door after him with a bang.

Manners snorted.

"Awful cheek!" he said. "Going to learn to use a camera on my ten-guinea presentation camera! My word!"

Tap!

"Come in!" said Tom Merry.

The door opened, and Mellish of the Fourth looked in. The Terrible Three looked at him rather grimly. They did not like the sneak of the Fourth. But Mellish was looking very friendly—almost wriggling with agreeableness, in fact.

"I say, Manners, old fellow!"

"Hallo!"

"Will you lend me your camera?"

"No!"

Mellish coughed. Manners' reply wasn't at all equivocal. There was no possibility of mistaking his meaning.

"I—I say, I want it rather particularly," he said.

"You see—"

"Shut the door after you!" said Manners politely.

"I'll buy my own films, of course," said Mellish.

"You can buy your own camera, too," said Manners.

"Look here, if you've lent it to Gore—"

"I haven't."

"Then why can't you lend it to me?" demanded Mellish. "I'm going to learn photography."

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"Not on my camera!" grinned Manners. "Shut the door after you, won't you?"

Slam!

Percy Mellish was gone, apparently in a bad temper. Manners grunted, and Monty Lowther chuckled. Tom Merry looked puzzled.

"There seems to be a rush on your camera," he remarked. "What the dickens are Gore and Mellish taking up that rot for?"

"Rot!" said Manners, with a glare. "If you had the brains to be a photographer—"

"Bow-wow!" said Tom. "I have enough of it, with films stuck all over the study! Only yesterday I sat on a lot of them in the armchair—"

"Yes, you silly ass, and mucked them up!" growled Manners wrathfully. "That lot cost me two-and-six! You— Hallo! Who is that?"

There was another tap at the door, and Levison of the Fourth looked in. He was another fellow with whom the Terrible Three were not on the best of terms. They seemed to be getting a lot of visits that afternoon from fellows they hardly spoke to. They stared inquiringly at Levison.

"Manners here?" said Levison. "Ah, here you are, Manners!"

"Yes; here I am," said Manners.

"I've just looked in to speak to you," said Levison, with an agreeable smile. "How are you getting on with your photography?"

"Same as usual," said Manners, with a stare. "You're not interested in it, Levison. What are you getting at?"

"The fact is, I'm taking it up," said Levison. "I've done a lot of it in my time, but I don't happen to have a camera now. I was wondering whether you'd let me help you sometimes in the dark-room, and give me some tips."

Manners thawed visibly. Tom Merry and Lowther grinned. Anybody who took an interest in photography, and asked Manners for information, was sure of getting on the right side of Manners. His chums suspected that Levison was leading up to a request for the loan of the camera, and piling on a little "soft sawder" to begin with. They knew that Levison was a skilled photographer—quite as good as Manners in that line. Indeed, there were few things the cad of the Fourth could not do when he chose to take the trouble, instead of slacking about in his usual way.

"I've seen some of your pictures, you know," went on Levison, encouraged by Manners' relaxing countenance.

"That photograph of yours of the St. Jim's First Eleven—it beats any professional work I've ever seen!"

"That was a specially good one," agreed Manners, relaxing still further. "You ought to get a camera, Levison. You're clever at it!"

"The fact is, I'm too hard-up," said Levison. "I'm rather sorry I sold my camera when I did. And—and if you wouldn't mind, Manners, I'd like you to lend me yours for a bit?"

Manners stiffened up again. He was an enthusiast on photography—some of the fellows said a crank—but he was no fool. As soon as Levison's request came for the camera, Manners understood that Levison's sweet words of praise were merely "soft sawder." If he hadn't understood, the chuckle that came from Tom Merry and Lowther would have enlightened him.

"Sorry. Can't be done!" he said shortly.

"I wouldn't hurt it, you know," said Levison. "You know I can take proper care of a camera, Manners, old chap."

"Not so much of your old chap!" said Manners sourly. "I don't keep a camera for general use. Besides, I want it myself. And I remember I lent it to you once, and you played a rotten trick with it!"

"Ahem! This time, you know—"

"Nothing doing," said Manners. "Good-bye!"

Levison scowled. He was standing in the doorway, scowling, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form came along. Levison tramped away, looking extremely annoyed, and D'Arcy took his place in the doorway. The swell of St. Jim's turned his eyeglass benevolently upon the chums of the Shell.

"Mannahs, deah boy—"

CHAPTER 2.

A Terrible Example!

"Hallo!"
 "Would you mind lendin' me your camewah?"
 "My only hat!"
 "Look here, what's the little game?" demanded Tom Merry, mystified. "Is every silly ass in the School House taking up photography all of a sudden, or is this a rag?"

"I wufuse to be called a sillay ass, Tom Mewwy!"
 "I suppose it's some scheme to pull my leg," said Manners, beginning to look wrathful. "Run away and play, Gussy! Go and buy a new silk hat!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"
 "Or a fancy waistcoat, or a new tie," snorted Manners. "I'll lend you a dress-tie to play with, if you like. That's more in your line than a camera."

"You uttah ass, Mannahs. At the pwesent moment I wequiah a camewah," said Arthur Augustus. "I have nevah twoubled about such wubbish befoah—"

"Such what?" snapped Manners.
 "Wubbish! But undah the circs I am goin' to take up photogwaphy, and if you will lend me your camewah to begin with—"

"Yes, I can see myself lending you my camera to begin with," grunted Manners. "I wonder what it would be like afterwards."

"I should be vewy sowwy if I damaged it—"
 "And that would make it all right again, of course," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"
 "Oh, run away and play!" said Manners. "I'm not lending my camera to any silly idiot at all."

"If you chawactewise me as a sillay idiot, Mannahs—"
 "Well, a howling ass, then!" said Manners. "And I don't believe you want the camera at all. I believe this is a silly jape. Buzz off!"

"Aftah that wemark, Mannahs, I wufuse to pursue the subject any furthah," said Arthur Augustus, with great dignity.

"Thank goodness!" said Manners unfeelingly.
 Bang! The door closed after Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Monty Lowther chuckled.

"It's your own fault, Manners, old scout," he said comfortingly. "They're ragging you because you're such a blessed crank about your camera, you know. I suppose it's a little game, and every blessed boulder in the House is coming here pretending he wants to borrow your camera."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 It was Tom Merry who laughed, not Manners. Manners frowned and picked up a cushion.

"I don't see any joke in it," he said. "The next silly ass who comes in talking about cameras will get this cushion, I know that."

Tap! Manners' eyes gleamed as the tap came at the door. He gripped the cushion ready. The door opened, and Digby of the Fourth looked in.

"I say, Manners—"
 "Well?" said Manners, in a deadly tone.
 "Will you lend me your cam—yaroooooooh!"

Whiz!
 The cushion flew with unerring aim. It caught Robert Arthur Digby under the chin, and completely bowled him over. Digby, with a roar of surprise and wrath, went spinning back into the passage, where he sat down.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Right on the wicket!"
 "How's that, umpire?" gasped Lowther.

"Groooh!" came from Digby. "Yoooop! Wha-a-at—what the thunder—ow! wow! Why, you silly ass—yooooop!"
 Manners fielded the cushion and slammed the door of the study. Digby did not look in again. Apparently he did not want any more. Manners sat down with a heavy frown. Scarcely had he sat down when the door opened. Herries of the Fourth smiled agreeably into the study.

"Hallo, you there, Manners—"
 "I'm here," said Manners sulphurously.
 "Will you lend me your camera? Why—what—keep off—oh, my hat—he's mad!" yelled Herries, as Manners rushed at him, brandishing the cushion.
 Biff, biff, biff! Whack!
 Herries dodged out of the study and fled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Tom Merry and Lowther yelled. They were almost doubled up with mirth. Manners was glowering with wrath. It was true that Manners was a little bit of a "crank" on the subject of his camera. But that was no reason why the juniors should spend a half-holiday in pulling his leg in this way.

"The silly asses!" growled Manners.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "There's nothing to cackle at, you fatheads. I don't see any joke in this—not the slightest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "And the next silly ass who comes here ragging will get it in the neck," roared Manners. "I'm fed up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Manners snorted angrily and sat down. Tom and Monty Lowther chuckled spasmodically. They had no doubt that it was a rag, designed to put Manners into a "wax." And if that was the object of the visitors to the study, they had certainly been very successful. Manners was in a towering wax.

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Manners, looking as if he were prepared to begin with the cushion on his study-mates.

"Shush!" said Lowther soothingly. "We haven't asked you to lend us your camera, old son. But you'll be getting some more requests soon, I expect. The whole House seems to be in it."

"If I had study-mates who had a tincture of brains, instead of a pair of cackling, silly asses, they'd help me stop 'em!" hooted Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Look here—"

"Peace, my child, peace!" said Tom Merry. "We'll stand by you. This may be very funny, but it's gone far enough. They must learn that they can't jape this study. The next joker who comes in looking for a camera is going to be made an example of. We'll let him trot in, and collar him, and give him the ink. That will keep the rest off the grass."

"Well, that's a good idea," said Manners. "Get between him and the door when he comes in, if there's another of the silly asses. I don't see any joke in this."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "And if you don't leave off cackling—" yelled Manners.

"Shush! Here he comes."
 Tap! The Terrible Three "shushed" as there came a knock at the door. Manners, with a deadly gleam in his eyes, took down a bottle of ink from the shelf. What was in the inkpot was not sufficient for the purpose; at least, Manners thought it wasn't. He meant to be liberal with the ink.

The door opened, and a bony forehead and a large pair of spectacles gleamed in. The visitor was Skimpole of the Shell, who shared the next study with Gore and Talbot. Skimpole blinked benevolently at the Terrible Three.

"My dear fellows," said Skimpole, "excuse my interrupting you—"

"Oh, certainly!" said Monty Lowther, pushing Skimpole a little further into the study and closing the door. Skimpole blinked at him.

"My dear Lowther—" he began, in his solemn way.
 "Not at all," said Lowther. "Go ahead!"
 "I hardly understand you, Lowther. I came in to see Manners."

"I thought so," assented Lowther. "Well, here's Manners, and he's quite ready for you—expecting you, in fact. You're ready, ain't you, Manners?"

"I'm ready!" snorted Manners.

Skimpole blinked round with a surprised look.
 "Pile in!" said Tom Merry encouragingly. "We know what you want, Skimmy. You're taking up photography, and you want to borrow Manners' camera—what?"

"My dear Merry, I hardly see how you guessed it," said Skimpole. "However, that is my object in calling

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in. Manners, would you have any objection to lending me your camera? Oh—ah—yawn!"

Skimpole hadn't time to finish. Manners was upon him with the spring of a tiger, and Skimpole was up-ended in the twinkling of an eye. He came down on the study carpet with a heavy bump and a loud roar. Then Manners turned the ink-bottle over him.

Swish! Splosh! Splash!

"Oh, dear! Yarooop!" roared Skimpole. "Oh, crumbs! My dear Manners—groooh—yow-ow—gug-gug-gug-guggggg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole floundered under the ink. His face and head were smothered with it. He could not see through his spectacles. He rolled on the carpet and dodged wildly, seeking to escape the stream. But there was no escaping it. Manners stuck to him like a leech.

Not till the last drop was gone from the bottle did Manners cease to pour. By that time the unfortunate Skimpole was in a parlous state.

"Now chuck him out!" hooted Manners.

"Gug-gug-gug!"

"No fear!" said Lowther. "He's rather too inky to touch. Let him crawl out." Monty Lowther opened the door. "There you are, Skimmy—or are you going to stay for some more? We've got a bottle of gum at your service."

"Grooh-hooh! Gug-gug-gug!" spluttered Skimpole. "My dear fellows, this—this outrage— Grooh! I—I am astounded— Yoooooh!"

"I'll give him the gum!" shouted Manners, jumping towards the shelf. "He hasn't had enough."

"Gug-gug-gug!"

Skimpole fled through the doorway. The ink was enough for him, and he did not want any gum. Leaving a stream of ink behind him, he fled.

"Tell the other idiots that there's the same for them, if they come here after a camera!" roared Manners.

"Gug-gug-gug-gug!"

Skimpole disappeared. Howls of laughter followed him. Manners closed the door with considerable satisfaction.

"I fancy that'll be the last," he remarked. "A joke's a joke, but one can have too much of a good thing. That'll be a warning to them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three sat down again—Manners to his films, Tom Merry to his footer list, and Lowther to his lines. The Shell fellows had no doubt that the awful example they had made of Skimpole would put an end to the rag. And, indeed, several minutes passed without any interruption.

Then there came a tap, and the door was opened, and the handsome, good-humoured face of Talbot of the Shell looked in. Manners made a spring for the gum-bottle.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Chuck it, Manners—I mean don't chuck it! You haven't come to borrow a camera, Talbot?"

"No," said Talbot.

"Oh!" said Manners, setting down the gum. "Good luck for you! You're the first silly idiot who hasn't come here to borrow a camera this afternoon."

"I looked in to ask you what on earth's the matter," said Talbot. "What have you been doing to poor old Skimmy?"

"Inking him!" grinned Lowther.

"Bob's worth of ink wasted," said Manners. "But he's welcome to it. I've got the gum ready for the next."

"But what's the game?" asked Talbot in astonishment. "What has Skimmy done?"

"Asked me to lend him my camera."

"My hat! Do you always ink a chap if he asks you to lend him your camera?" ejaculated Talbot.

"It's a rag," explained Tom Merry. "There's been a regular procession for an hour or so, all asking Manners to lend his camera—pulling his leg, you know. So we made an example of the last merry japer, to put a stop to it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Talbot.

He sat down on the nearest chair and roared. The Terrible Three had thought it funny; but Talbot seemed

to think it funnier still. He laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Oh, my hat! You blessed duffers! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh! What?"

"It wasn't a jape," gasped Talbot. "Skimmy thinks you've all gone mad. He's thinking of going to the Housemaster about it. He thinks you ought to be seen by a doctor."

"Wha-a-t?"

An inky face glimmered in at the doorway. It was Skimpole's. He blinked nervously at the Terrible Three through inky spectacles.

"Are they calmer, Talbot, my dear fellow? Do not—do not run any risks, Talbot. It would be much better to ask Mr. Railton to send for a doctor. I think it is probably suustroke."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—" began Tom Merry.

"It's all right," said Talbot, wiping away his tears. "Only a little mistake. They thought you were pulling their leg, Skimmy."

"I fail to see why they should have thought so, Talbot. I fear that their brains are uninking," said Skimpole doubtfully. "I merely asked Manners to lend me his camera, and he attacked me like a wild animal or a Prussian. I have been reduced to a deplorable condition."

"You had better go and get a wash, Skimmy," chuckled Talbot.

"But—but you are sure they are sane, Talbot? Perhaps you had better speak to them from the passage—it would be safer—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!" roared Tom Merry. "What are you getting at? If it isn't a jape, what did all those asses come asking Manners for his camera for, one after another?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Talbot. "It's a camera competition. Some of the fellows have just seen it in the 'Weekly Snap,' and they're going in for it—a prize for the best photograph, you know; only there's a shortage of cameras."

"Oh!" said the Terrible Three together.

"Five pounds for the best photograph by an amateur under sixteen," grinned Talbot. "A lot of the fellows are going in for it. You'll have to keep your camera chained up, Manners."

"Ahen! Sorry, Skimmy—"

"Awfully sorry, Skimmy, old man—"

"We—we take it all back," said Monty Lowther. "And—and we shan't charge you anything for the ink, Skimmy."

"You—you are sure they are quite sane, Talbot?" asked Skimpole, evidently still in doubt on that point.

"Ha, ha! Quite—or as much as usual, anyway."

"Why, you ass—" began Manners.

"Then I will proceed to a bath-room," said Skimpole, greatly relieved in his mind. "If I have been the victim of an unfortunate and deplorable misapprehension, I excuse you fellows; but I beg you to reflect before acting in so exceedingly hasty and reckless a manner upon another occasion."

And Skimpole drifted away, leaving a trail of ink behind him.

CHAPTER 3.

Snapped!

"FIVE quids!" said Jack Blake thoughtfully.

"Pounds, deah boy!"

"Five quids!" repeated Blake, unheeding.

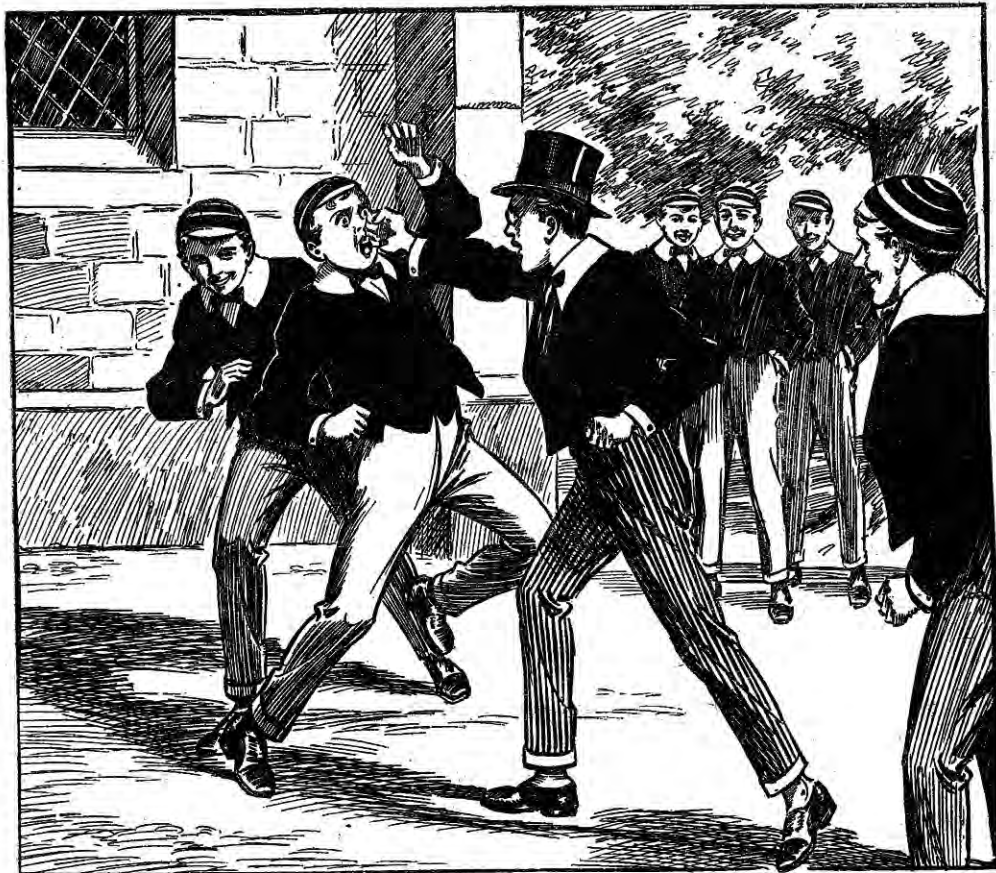
"It's really worth going in for. We shall have to get a camera from somewhere."

"I wufese to bowwow Mannahs' camewah."

"Most likely he would refuse to lend it, too, so you'd be in agreement about that," remarked Blake. "We'd better club up and get a camera among us. I don't see why this study shouldn't rope in that five quid."

"Hear, hear!" said Herries and Digby.

Study No. 6 was in consultation. Blake was sitting on the table, with an open copy of the "Weekly Snap" on his knees. There had been a rush on that copy that after-



"Here, look out!" roared Tom, as he received a drive meant for Julian. "Wharrer you at, you dangerous lunatic?" "Sowwy, deah boy—lemme get at him—," (See Chapter 5.)

noon. It was the only one in the school. Kerr of the New House, who dabbled in photography, had happened to bring it in, and remark that the snapshot competition was worth going in for.

A good many fellows thought the same. A dozen chaps with cameras decided at once to bag that five pounds when they heard of it. The copy of the "Weekly Snap" passed from hand to hand, till it was worn almost threadbare. And one result had been the rush for Manners' camera, which had had such a deplorable outcome for Skimpole of the Shell. The Terrible Three had been busy in their study, and had not seen or heard of the "Weekly Snap" competition.

"Study No. 6 were in somewhat low water with regard to funds. Arthur Augustus had written home twice for a fiver, but it had not arrived. Fivers seemed scarcer since the war; perhaps the noble Earl of Eastwood had found a better road for his spare cash. Arthur Augustus said sorrowfully that it was hard lines that he should have to pay for the Kaiser playing the giddy ox; and his study-mates agreed that it was.

Blake and Herries and Digby had run almost out of tin—a thing that sometimes happened in the best regulated studies. So they were inclined to jump at the prize of five pounds offered by the editor of the photographic journal.

Herries and Dig and D'Arcy had been along to see Manners about his camera, and returned to No. 6 in a state of intense indignation, one after another. Still,

Manners or no Manners, they were going to bag that five pounds if they could.

"Of course, Manners will go in for it, when he knows," Blake remarked. "He's a really good photographer, and he might pull it off, so far as mere finish goes. But they want something a bit out of the usual. Listen to this!" Blake read out: "The prize is offered for the most striking, original, and interesting photograph, these qualifications being as important as good execution."

"Yaas, wathah! We shall beat those Shell boundahs there," said Arthur Augustus. "Mannahs will have good execution, but his picture won't be stwikin' or intwestin'. His pictures are weally a feahful bore, you know."

"A certain amount of imagination will be required," said Blake. "An original turn of mind, you know. That's where we shall score."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Frinstance, suppose we photographed Gussy trying on two or three of his fancy waistcoats at a time—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"What about a photograph of my bulldog?" said Herries thoughtfully. "You know what a beautiful picture Towser makes."

Blake shook his head.

"Might break the camera, putting Towser's chivvy into it," he said.

"You silly chump!" roared Herries. "If you're going to be funny—"

"The first bizney is to get the camera," said Digby.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE CALL OF THE CINEMA!"

A magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"We can't all use Manners' old camera. Besidea, he'll want it himself when he gets on to this."

"Atah Mannahs' extweme wudeness, I should wefuse—"

"Bow-wow! Now, where are we going to get a camera?" said Blake. "We can't expect fellows to lend us theirs—they'll want 'em. Every chap who's got a camera will be going in for this five quids—"

"Pounds!"

"Quids!" roared Blake. "Cheese it! We shall have to buy a cheap camera. Manners' machine cost about ten guineas, but that was a presentation one. You can get a very good cheap camera. How much tin have you fellows got?"

There was a general turning out of pockets.

Arthur Augustus produced two shillings, Herries fourpence, Digby a halfpenny, and Blake twopence. Blake surveyed the collected wealth with a sniff.

"Two-and-sixpence-ha'penny," he said. "We can't get a camera for that—at least, I've never heard of one. When is your pater going to send you that fiver, Gussy?"

"I weally do not know, Blake. Instead of the fivah, he sent me a recommendation to keep within my allowance," said D'Arcy dolefully. "I wegardad that as addin' insult to injury."

"What about your pater, Dig?"

"My pater's in Egypt, fathead, looking after the Turks!"

"What about yours, Herries, old man? Didn't you have a tame uncle once who used to shell out?"

"I've written three letters," said Herries. "I haven't had any answers yet."

Blake groaned.

"It never rains but it pours," he said. "My people have just stood me a new footer rig-out, and I must let that blow over before I ask for any more. Still, we've got to have a camera. We'll sell something."

"Good egg!" said Herries. "Sell your bike, old chap, and let's have a really first-class camera."

Blake gave him a freezing glare.

"I was thinking of your bulldog," he replied.

"My—my bulldog?" gasped Herries. "Why, you silly duffer—"

"Well, your cornet, then?"

"Don't be a funny idiot!" growled Herries. "Is this a serious matter or isn't it?"

"A lot of the chaps would give something for Herries' cornet just to get it out of the passage," remarked Digby.

Herries snorted. He was almost as likely to part with Towser as with his cornet. Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass severely upon Herries.

"Hewries, deah boy, it's up to you. You are called upon to make a sacrifice for the good of the studay."

"Rats!"

"If my fivah had come, I should place it at the service of the whole studay, Hewries."

"But it hasn't come!" snorted Herries. "Still, I've got an idea. There's Dig's colour-box. It cost a pound, and some fellow would give five bob for it—"

"Let me catch you selling my colour-box!" said Digby warmly.

"Weally, Dig, it is up to you—"

"Well, if Blake won't sell his bike—"

"Catch me selling my bike!"

"What about your new footer, then?"

"Fathead!"

"I do not wegard that as an ansawah, Blake. If you sell your footah, you can get a new one out of the prize."

"Bow-wow!"

"I wegard you all as failin' in your dutay to the studay, and I must remark that I am surprised at you," said Arthur Augustus, with great severity. "What about patwiotism?"

"Oh, we're not at the end of our resources yet," said Blake, with a chuckle. "There's your gold watch, Gussy."

"M-m-my gold watch!"

"Yes—and your diamond pin."

"Weally, Blake—"

"And your bike, if it comes to selling a bike."

"But I want my bike, deah boy. I can't wide a camewah, I suppose!"

"Well, can I?" roared Blake.

"Weally, Blake, you should not waise your voice like that. It weally jabs on my nerves, you know."

"And then your hats," said Blake warmly. "You give thirty bob each for silk hats, and I dare say an old clothes' man would take 'em at a bob a time!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"And if we sold about twenty, that would raise a pound," said Blake argumentatively. "Well, you can get a good camera for a pound, or less."

"You uttah ass!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "You know vewy well that I do not have twentay silk hats!"

"And then your fancy waistcoats," pursued Blake. "You've spent a small fortune on them. Suppose we sold a couple of dozen at a bob each?"

"You are perfectly well awah that I have only nine waistcoats."

"Well, that's nine bob, at a bob a time."

"You—you Pwussian-headed duffah! I nevah give less than half-a-guinea for a waistcoat, and sometimes two guineas."

"Then it stands to reason they'd sell at a bob each."

"I wegard you as a sillay idiot, Blake. If you cannot make any sensible suggestion, you had better leave gettin' the camewah to me. I will contrive to waise the money somehow. I wemembah that young Hammond was offerin' to buy Dig's pocket-knife."

"Let me see you selling my pocket-knife!" said Digby. "Look here, I propose that we put it to the vote, and choose the giddy victim, same as they do in an open boat at sea when they want to eat somebody. Hands up for sellin' off Gussy's hats and waistcoats for what they'll fetch."

Three hands went up at once.

"Now hands up for not selling them," said Dig.

Arthur Augustus sniffed and put his elegant hand up. But his hand went aloft in solitary state.

"Passed unanimously," said Blake, slipping off the table. "Now, Gussy, the majority's against you. Trot out the toppers!"

"Wats!"

"Gussy must agree," said Blake. "We can't sell his property till he agrees. Buck up and agree, Gussy."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"Mind, we're going to tap your head against the floor till you do," said Blake. "It's up to you."

"Wubbish!"

"Lay hold!" rapped out Blake.

"You uttah asses!" shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as Blake and Herries and Digby collared him. "Welease me!"

"Over he goes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yawwooh!" roared Arthur Augustus, as he was suddenly up-ended in the grasp of his chums. "Gweat Scott! Yoop!"

The study swam round Arthur Augustus as he swung upside down in the grasp of three pairs of hands, with his carefully-parted hair rubbing on the study carpet.

"Now, then!" said Blake. "Do you agree, Gussy?"

"No!" roared Gussy.

"We don't want to damage the carpet. Better agree."

"Welease me! Yawwooh! Gwooooh! You wettahs! Yoocooop!"

Snap!

"Hallo! What the thunder—"

The juniors stared towards the open doorway. Julian of the Fourth was standing there with a camera in his hands. He was grinning over the camera, which had just snapped.

"Julian, you fathead—"

"Hold him!" exclaimed Julian eagerly. "I'll take another plate, in case the first won't wash. You're in a beautiful light from the window."

"Why, what—"

"An original and striking picture, you know," said Julian, squinting at the view-finder. "Hold on! Keep like that a minute—don't move!"

Bump! Arthur Augustus rolled on the study carpet with a roar, and Blake and Herries and Digby rushed

at Julian. Julian did not take that second photograph. He dodged away down the passage and fled. Arthur Augustus sat up gasping.

"Collah him!" he shrieked. "I wufuse to be photographed in that wiculous posish. Bweak the camewah! Bweak the sillay ass himself! Aftah him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Striking, original, and interesting!" howled Digby. "Julian will collar that prize."

Arthur Augustus scrambled to his feet. He was crimson with wrath.

"The uttah wottah!" he shrieked. "I will not allow it! I wufuse—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus rushed from the study in search of Julian of the Fourth. He left his chums howling with laughter. Certainly, if Julian's snapshot was a success, the result would be original, interesting, and striking. But the bare idea of being placed on permanent record in that ridiculous attitude made Arthur Augustus simply boil with wrath.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blake. "Julian will get the prize. They won't find anything to beat that!"

Bang! Bang! Bang! rang along the passage. Arthur Augustus had found Julian's door locked.

For the next ten minutes Arthur Augustus' voice was heard talking to Julian of the Fourth through the key-hole. Julian turned a deaf ear. He certainly did not mean to part with a striking, original, and interesting photograph merely on account of D'Arcy's objection to figuring in it.

Arthur Augustus gave it up at last, and came back into No. 6, and occupied the next ten minutes in telling his chums what he thought of them. And what exasperated him more than anything else was the fact that Blake & Co., instead of being properly repentant, persisted in cackling like hyenas.

CHAPTER 4.

Bad Manners!

"I'm on to this!" said Manners.

Manners was delighted to hear of the photographic prize. It was a chance for the enthusiastic amateur photographer to make his hobby pay for itself, and Manners did not mean to lose that chance. After ascertaining from Talbot the particulars of the competition, Manners took out his camera.

"Coming out for a walk?" he asked. "Strike the iron while it's hot, you know. I wish I'd known about this while Skimmy was here; he would have made a striking picture while we were putting the ink on him. You chaps could have done it while I snapped him. Let's go and look for a picture."

"I haven't done my lines," said Lowther.

"Blow your lines!"

"I haven't finished the footer list," remarked Tom Merry.

"Blow the footer list! Look here! We're short of funds, and that five quid would come in very handy just now. I'm the best photographer in the school—you know that. That five quid's as good as ours. Are you going to try with that bandy little camera of yours, Talbot?"

"Yes," said Talbot, laughing. "I've taken some nice little pictures with my bandy little camera."

"I'll lend you mine, if you like," said Manners. "Mine's half-plate. You could use it without mucking it up. I don't mind lending it to a chap who can handle it."

"Thanks!"

"Now let's get out," said Manners. "I've got twelve films in, and I'm anxious to get to work."

"Oh, all serene!" said Tom, putting his footer list into his pocket.

And the Terrible Three and Talbot left the study and sauntered out into the quadrangle. Manners looked about him with an eagle eye. He was very keen to get to work.

"Striking and original!" he remarked. "No good taking views for that. St. Jim's seen from the south

wouldn't be any good in this competition. A snap of a fight would be striking—two or three fellows going for one another hammer and tongs, you know. What do you think?"

"Topping!" said Talbot.

"Well, go ahead, then," said Manners, halting in the quad, and pulling out his camera, and adjusting the view-finder. "You three pitch into one another—"

"What!"

"Don't mind a few hard knocks—I want the scene to be realistic," said Manners. "A black eye or two would add to the effect."

"Why, you silly ass—"

"You frabjous idiot!"

"Look here! I suppose you want our study to bag that five quid?" said Manners irritably. "I should think my own pals might back me up. If you like, I could shove in the black eyes afterwards, doctoring the films. You needn't go as far as that. Just slog one another pretty hard. Where are you off to?" roared Manners.

His chums were walking away. For some reason or another they did not seem inclined to slog one another pretty hard to enable Manners to get a striking picture. Manners hurried after them.

"If you call this chummy, I don't," he said.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Talbot, as if struck by a bright idea. "What about a snap of a chap being bumped—ragged bald-headed, you know? We might manage that for you!"

"Oh, good!" said Manners eagerly.

"Chap looking a regular wreck, with all his buttons off, and his hair in a mop, and covered with dust, and being bumped like a steam-hammer?" suggested Talbot.

"Ripping!"

"Good! Hand me the camera, and I'll take it for you."

"Eh?"

"While Tom and Lowther are bumping you?" explained Talbot.

"Me?" gasped Manners.

"Certainly!"

"Why, you silly ass," roared Manners, "I thought you meant—"

"Never mind what you thought I meant! That's what I meant. You chaps don't mind giving Manners a good bumping?"

"Not at all!" said Tom Merry.

"Rely on me!" said Lowther heartily.

"You silly chumps!" growled Manners. "I—I don't think that would make much of a picture, anyway."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle! Let's go and look for something."

Manners walked on, frowning, and his chums followed him, chuckling. Mr. Selby, the master of the Third Form, was seated under the elms, reading a newspaper. Manners halted as he saw him.

"Got it!" he whispered.

"Selby?" said Tom Merry. "That's no good!"

"You remember the time Herries' bulldog got loose and chased old Selby? What a figure of fun he was!" whispered Manners excitedly.

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Well, wouldn't that make a striking picture?"

"I dare say it would; but it won't happen again."

"Ass! Go and bring Towser here behind the tree."

"Wha-a-at!"

"And set him on Selby," said Manners excitedly. "He doesn't like Selby, you know; the beast kicked him once. He would be sure to go for him. I could get a whole series of snaps before Selby gets to the house with Towser after him—might even get one of Towser hanging on his trousers! That would be ripping!"

"You—you frabjous lunatic!" gasped Tom Merry. "What you want is a strait-jacket! Catch me setting a bulldog on to a Form-master!"

"He wouldn't know how Towser got loose."

"Towser might bite him, you silly ass!"

"Well, he's a beast; he rags the fags no end."

"And they'd have Towser shot."

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NEXT WEDNESDAY: "THE CALL OF THE CINEMA!"

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

"Well, Towser's a beast, too; everybody's fed up with him except Herries."

"Look here! You're getting dangerous!" said Monty Lowther. "I think we'd better take that camera away and lock it up somewhere."

"Better take Manners and lock him up somewhere!" grinned Talbot. "Hallo—by Jove!" He broke off suddenly.

Mr. Selby was leaning back in his chair under the tree. His feet were resting upon one of the huge gnarled roots that cropped up out of the ground, and he had tilted back his chair at really a dangerous angle.

At a distance, taking cover very cautiously among the trees, was Wally of the Third—D'Arcy minor. The fag was visible to the Shell fellows, but not to Mr. Selby. He had a pea-shooter in his hands, and his intention was only too evident.

Mr. Selby was not popular in his Form. Wally of the Third was evidently "out" for vengeance for some caning or "lining" received that day.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "The young ass! If Selby sees him—"

Tom made frantic signs to Wally.

The fag had the pea-shooter in his mouth now, and was peering round cautiously from behind a tree towards his Form-master. He was in a line behind Mr. Selby, and naturally out of view as the Form-master had no eyes in the back of his head. Wally was an expert with the pea-shooter, and he was taking careful aim at one of Mr. Selby's ears.

He did not heed the Shell fellow's signal.

The juniors did not dare to call out to him for fear of attracting Mr. Selby's attention to the fag. They did not want to get Wally the licking of his life.

But they knew that if Mr. Selby was suddenly stung by a pea in the ear, he would probably go over backwards, and then—

"The young ass!" murmured Talbot. "I'll—"

But Talbot had no time to act. There was a faint whizz, and the pellet flew. The chums of the Shell watched in horror.

Mr. Selby gave a sudden jump, and clapped his hand to his ear. The pea had struck him fairly behind the ear.

"Goodness gracious! What—OH!"

Back went the tilted chair, and Mr. Selby made a wild effort to save himself. But he had no chance. The chair flew over backwards, and Mr. Selby flew over with it, and his shoulders bumped down on the turf, and his legs sprawled over the chair. A Form-master sprawling on his back, tangled in his gown, with his legs wildly thrashing the air, was an unprecedented sight in the quadrangle of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry and Lowther and Talbot started forward instantly to his assistance. Manners shrieked.

"Hold on! Gerroust of the way!"

SNAP!

"You fathead!" gasped Lowther.

Snap!

The three Shell fellows rushed to Mr. Selby and grasped him. They dragged him to his feet, shaken and confused and gasping.

"Hope you're not hurt, sir," said Talbot politely.

"Oh! Oh, dear! I—I—I was suddenly stung!" gasped Mr. Selby. "A wasp, I suppose—a wasp very late in the season! Oh, dear! I am severely hurt! Oh! Ah! Manners!"

Manners was retreating. He deemed it judicious to get off the scene with his snapshots. But Mr. Selby was not to be denied.

"Manners!" he roared.

Manners still turned a deaf ear.

"Manners," shrieked Mr. Selby, "come back at once! How dare you, Manners?"

Manners turned back reluctantly. He could not pretend not to hear the master of the Third, whose voice could have been heard as far as the School House.

"Yes, sir," said Manners. "Did you call, sir?"

"Come here!" shrieked Mr. Selby.

"Ahem! I—"

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"You have dared to photograph me," shouted the Third-Form master. "You have dared to photograph me, Manners, in an awkward and—and absurd position!"
"I—I—I—"

"You—you young rascal! Give me that camera at once!"

CHAPTER 5.

The Reward of Enterprise!

MANNERS blinked at the master of the Third in utter dismay. If Mr. Selby had asked him for one of his ears he could hardly have been more dismayed.

"M-mum-m-my camera, sir?" he stuttered.

"Yes!" thundered Mr. Selby.

"Wha-at for, sir?"

"I am going to destroy that photograph, Manners, and report you to your Form-master for insolent presumption!" roared Mr. Selby.

"I—I say, sir—"

"Do you hear me, Manners?"

"The—the fact is, sir—"

"Hand it over, you ass!" whispered Tom Merry, in alarm. Mr. Selby was looking as if he were on the very verge of apoplexy.

There was no help for it. Manners held out the camera, and then he drew it back again, just as the Form-master grabbed at it. Grabbing was not a dignified action for a Form-master, but undoubtedly Mr. Selby did grab. He was wildly anxious to get that ridiculous photograph destroyed.

But Manners simply couldn't do it. All the blood of an amateur photographer was boiling in his veins. He jerked the camera back.

"Manners!" roared Mr. Selby.

"If—if you please, sir, I—I want to develop it!" said Manners. "The fact is, sir, I've got twelve films in the camera—a whole new roll, sir. I've only taken two. If it's opened in the daylight the rest of the films will be wasted. They cost threepence each, sir."

"That is your own fault, Manners. You have been guilty of unpardonable insolence. For the last time, hand me the camera."

Mr. Selby's tremendous voice had drawn a crowd round the spot. Study No. 6 had arrived, and Figgins & Co. of the New House, and a dozen other fellows. They were all looking serious. Only one fellow was grinning—that was Wally of the Third. D'Arcy minor was very elated with his success in bowling over Mr. Selby, without Mr. Selby suspecting his agency in the matter. Mr. Selby was still under the impression that he had been stung by the last wasp of summer.

"Mannahs, you ass," murmured Arthur Augustus, "are you off your wockah?"

"Hand it over, you fathead!" hissed Blake.

Mr. Selby's face from crimson turned to purple. He made a motion towards Manners, as if he would take the camera by force.

"What is the trouble here, please?"

Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, came on the scene with his long etrides. The juniors made way for him. Mr. Selby, stuttering with wrath, turned to the Housemaster.

"Manners has taken a photograph of me, Mr. Railton, and he refuses to obey my order to hand me the camera. I shall request the Head to flog him for his insolence."

"Manners photographed you without asking permission?" asked Mr. Railton.

"I was falling over my chair, sir, and Manners photographed me in a ridiculous attitude!" shrieked the Third-Form master.

Mr. Railton's brow grew very stern.

"Manners, is it possible that you have been so wanting in the respect due to a Form-master—"

"I—I—I'm looking for an original and striking picture, sir, for a photo competition—"

"Give Mr. Selby your camera at once!"

"The—the rest of the films will be spoiled if it's opened, sir," said the unhappy Manners. "May I take it to the dark-room, sir, to open it—"

"You will hand it to Mr. Selby at once! Your loss is your own fault. Indeed, I am strongly inclined to take your camera away and confiscate it."

"M-m-my hat!"

That dreadful possibility almost overcame Manners. Without another word he handed the camera to Mr. Selby. An order from his Housemaster was not to be trifled with. As Mr. Selby was not Manners' Form-master, and had no authority over the Shell, Manners had felt himself justified in his previous hesitation, though, as a matter of fact, he wasn't justified. Mr. Selby, who was generally in the wrong, was in the right for once. But the enthusiastic photographer did not see eye to eye with his victim, naturally.

Mr. Selby took the camera, with gleaming eyes. He opened it and reeled out the long film, which, of course, was immediately rendered useless by exposure to the light. Manners' two snapshots were useless now, and so were the other ten films on the reel. Films were a very considerable item of expense to a junior who was keen on photography, and Manners looked on mournfully.

Mr. Selby flung the curling films on the ground and set his foot upon them.

"And now, Mr. Railton," he said, "I demand the severest punishment of that insolent boy."

"Manners shall certainly be punished," said Mr. Railton, a little drily. "You may leave the matter in my hands, sir."

He made a sign to Manners to follow him, and walked away to the School House. Manners took his empty camera and followed him dolefully. The waste of a dozen films, and the licking in prospect, discouraged Manners.

He was five minutes in Mr. Railton's study. When he came out, and rejoined his friends in the quadrangle, he was rubbing his hands hard together, and he looked rather flushed.

"Licked, you ass?" asked Tom Merry.

"Bow-wow!"

"I must say it serves you wight, Mannahs!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a judicial air. "Your conduct was vewy diswepctful."

"Oh, cheese it! Yow-ow! Two on each hand!" mumbled Manners. "I can't see that Selby had anything to complain of. Railton says that if it happens again he's going to take away my camera and confiscate my photographs. Yow! Of course it won't happen again. We shall never catch Selby rolling over the back of his chair again. No such luck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you are a giddy ass!" said Levison of the Fourth. "You couldn't expect Selby to stand it."

"Yow-ow! Fathead! Yecoooooh!"

"Tell you what," said Levison. "Lend me your camera, and I'll take a snap of your face as it looks now, Manners. That will make a striking picture—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners did not oblige. He snorted and stamped away, still rubbing his hands. He felt that he was not receiving proper encouragement. He left most of the juniors chuckling.

"Selby couldn't be expected to stand it," remarked Julian of the Fourth. "But the picture wouldn't have beaten mine. I've got a much more striking one, Gussy standing on his head—"

"Julian, you uttah wottah!" Arthur Augustus bore down on Julian. "Have you had the fwrightful cheek to develop that photogwaph?"

"What-ho!" said Julian.

"I insist upon your handin' me the negative at once!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "I wufuse to have such a thing on wecord."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Julian shook his head.

"Can't be did," he replied. "I'm after that prize. But I'll do the fair thing. If the picture gets the prize I'll go halves with you."

"I wufuse to have that picture wemain in existence. I uttably wufuse to be made to look widiculous."

"Well, I didn't do that, did I?" said Julian, in surprise. "Nature did that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus did not answer Julian's remark. He rushed at him, with his noble fists thrashing the air. Julian dodged behind Tom Merry, hotly pursued by Arthur Augustus.

"Here, look out!" roared Tom, as he received a drive meant for Julian. "Wharrer you at, you dangerous lunatic?"

"Sowwy, deah boy! Lemme gewwat him—"

"Keep off!" yelled Talbot, as Arthur Augustus tried to get round him at the grinning Julian.

"Gewwout of the way! Sowwy I hit your nose, Talbot—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Talbot seized the excited swell of St. Jim's and bumped him down in the quad. Julian chuckled and sauntered into the House.

Arthur Augustus sat up and gasped, and groped for his eyeglasses.

"You uttah wottahs—ow! Talbot, I wegard you as a wottah—yow! Tom Mewwy, you are a beashtay wuffian—gwooh!" Arthur Augustus scrambled up. "I've no time to tlwash you now—yow-ow! I'm going to scwag that villain Julian—gwooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A yell of laughter followed Arthur Augustus as he rushed away, dusty and rumped, in search of Julian of the Fourth. Fortunately, he did not find him.

CHAPTER 6.

A Bargain in Old Clo!

"HALLO!" ejaculated Blake. "The very chap I want to see!"

"That!" said Herries and Digby simultaneously.

"You bet!"

The chums of Study No. 6 were standing in the gateway discussing ways and means. How that camera, upon which the study had decided, was to be purchased, was a deep problem which exercised the brains of the three juniors to an almost painful extent. The mighty intellect of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not engaged upon the problem. He was still hunting for Julian of the Fourth in the hope of administering a fearful thrashing, and recapturing the negative.

A gentleman was coming along the road from Rylcombe—a gentleman in a shabby coat, very ancient boots and trousers, with a sack over his shoulder, and three top-hats on his head. He wore the three hats one above another as a symbol of his calling. The gentleman's calling was dealing in old clothes, varied with speculations in rags and bones, not to mention bottles and jars.

Mr. Woppes was a familiar figure; but what business Jack Blake could possibly have with him was a mystery to his chums. But Blake waved his hand to Mr. Woppes, and signed to him to halt. Mr. Woppes did so at once. He put his hand to his lowest hat—probably it was too much of an exertion to raise all three of them at once.

"Arternoon, genelman!" he said affably. "Hanythink in my line?"

"That's it," said Blake.

Mr. Woppes sometimes did a little private business with Taggles, the porter, who disposed of disused garments and boots to him. Certainly, he had never done any business directly with St. Jim's fellows before. He was a little surprised, in fact; but he was ready for business. Probably, he expected to make better bargains with the juniors than with the keen old porter.

"Hanythink to oblige a young gent!" said Mr. Woppes. "Wot is it? I give the best prices for old trousis."

"H'm! We can't do business here," said Blake, looking round.

"I should jolly well say you couldn't!" gasped Digby.

"Come to the side gate at the back, Mr. Woppes, will you?" said Blake. "I'll get it open for you."

"Suttlingly, sir!"

Mr. Woppes' three hats disappeared round the school wall. Blake hurried across the quadrangle, accompanied by his amazed chums.

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE CALL OF THE CINEMA!"

"Look here! What's the little game, you fathead?" demanded Herries.

"Raising the wind."

"But—what with?"

"Clobber."

"You're going to sell your clothes to old Wopps?" ejaculated Dig.

"Not my clothes—Gussy's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three juniors reached the gate at the back where the tradesmen's carts stopped. They found Mr. Wopps ready for them there. Blake opened the gate, and the gentleman with the three hats and the sack came in.

"We've got some ripping things to sell, Mr. Wopps!" said Blake cheerfully. "I suppose you buy new clothes as well as old ones?"

"Suttingly, sir!"

"Well, nearly new, you know—worn once or twice. And silk hats."

"Silk 'ats is a drug in the market, sir," said Mr. Wopps. "Gents as wears toppers generally buys 'em noo. Which my opinion is, a good second—and silk 'at is better than a cheap noo one; but it's the way they looks at it—they buys 'em noo. Still, I'm open to give the market price, and a little hovar."

"They're jolly good ones," said Blake. "The cheapest is twenty-five bob new."

"I'll see 'em, sir."

"Hum!" said Blake.

To bring the articles for sale there was scarcely feasible. But to introduce Mr. Wopps into the School House was a little difficult. Mr. Wopps was a very honest gentleman, but not exactly the kind of caller the juniors were expected to have.

"He's got to come into the study," said Blake.

"Oh, my hat!" said Dig.

"My only aunt!" murmured Herries.

"Toby will help us," said Blake. "I'll call Toby."

Toby, the School House page, was not far away. As a matter of fact, he had spotted Mr. Wopps and the juniors from the window of the boot-room, and he had come out to stare at them. Blake caught sight of him and called to him.

"Toby, my tulip, I want you to get Mr. Wopps in the back way and sneak him into the study," he said.

"Oh, Master Blake!" stuttered Toby.

"It's all right, Toby—only a little business," said Blake reassuringly. "We don't want all the House to know we're hard up, that's all. You sneak Wopps into the study, and we'll stand you a currant-bun."

Toby grinned.

"I'll do my best, Master Blake."

Mr. Wopps followed Toby in at the back door. Herries and Digby glared at the great chief of Study No. 6.

"We shall get into a row, you silly ass!" said Herries.

"I suppose we can't spread out Gussy's clobber over the kitchen garden for Wopps to see, can we?" demanded Blake.

"Well, no; but—"

"Oh, bother your butts! Let's get to the study."

Blake led the way, and they hurried into the School House and up to Study No. 6. As they entered the famous apartment, Herries and Digby grinned, and Blake frowned. For Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was there.

Arthur Augustus had declared, in round terms, that it was a fellow's duty to make sacrifices for the good of the study. He meant it, of course—probably thinking of Dig's pocket-knife, or Herries' cornet, or Blake's bicycle. His own elegant clobber was quite a different matter. It was quite certain the business could not be done with Mr. Wopps in Gussy's presence.

"Got that negative?" asked Blake.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Not yet, dear boy! I have always had a wathah high opinion of Julian. I was not awah that he was a beastly pwactical yokah. I shall have to weconsidah my opinion of that chap."

"Better get after that negative, though," said Blake, listening for the footsteps of Toby and Mr. Wopps.

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"You see, if it comes out in the 'Weekly Snap' as a prize picture, it will be—er—horrid—simply horrid!"

"Yaas, wathah!—though I did not expect you to wealise it, Blake!"

"I've been thinking about hardly anything else," said Blake seriously. "The worry of it is turning my hair grey!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You'd better get after Julian at once."

"The utter wottah is keepin' out of sight somewhah!"

"Have you looked in the old tower? Manners often goes there to get his films printed, you know; there's plenty of sun—"

"Bai Jove! The uttah wottah may be pwintin' a copy of that wotten photograph at this very minute!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

He simply bolted out of the study.

In a couple of seconds his footsteps died away down the passage towards the stairs. Gussy was gone!

"Is Julian in the tower?" asked Dig.

"Blessed if I know!" said Blake, with a yawn. "He may be. Anyway, a little run will do Gussy good. Hallo! Here's the Wopps-bird!"

Three hats loomed up along the passage. Toby, with a very cautious and mysterious manner, was piloting Mr. Wopps along the Fourth-Form passage from the direction of the back stairs. Juniors who met him stared at him and grinned, and Mr. Wopps grinned affably in response. He was a very affable gentleman.

"Ere you are!" said Toby.

"Thanks, Toby! Keep watch on the stairs, old scout, and if you see D'Arcy coming—"

"Yes, Master Blake—"

"Take him into a quiet corner and kill him. Come on, Mr. Wopps."

"Oh, Master Blake!" murmured Toby.

Mr. Wopps removed his three hats as he came into the study. He stood them in an imposing pile upon the table. Then he produced a fearsome-looking instrument of which the juniors did not know the use.

"I—I say! What's that?" asked Dig.

"Them's the steelyards," explained Mr. Wopps. "They're fur weighing the old clo'."

"Oh, my hat! We're not going to sell Gussy's clobber by weight," said Blake.

"P'raps you've got some old rags you'd like to dispose of?"

"Nunno!"

"Or bones?" said Mr. Wopps.

"Too late!" said Dig. "We had the bones of a haddock last night, but they're gone."

"Or bottles or jars?" asked Mr. Wopps.

"Nunno! Look at these!"

Blake jerked open a large box belonging to Arthur Augustus, and drew out an armful of waistcoats. It was a standing grievance in Study No. 6 that Gussy kept that big box there, for the study was none too large without big boxes taking up the space. Certainly, the box served as a seat when there was company.

By disposing of the waistcoats, the price of a really good camera could be raised, and the box got rid of; thus, two birds would be slain with a single stone! Gussy's very latest waistcoats were kept in another box in the dormitory. Even Blake would not have been unmerciful enough to "trade off" Gussy's latest creations. He did not want to break the noble heart of Arthur Augustus.

Mr. Wopps' face lighted up at the sight of the waistcoats. From his expression, it could be judged that fancy waistcoats were a good "line."

"Ain't they ripping, Mr. Wopps?" said Blake.

He had heard that it was a merchant's business to praise his own wares.

"Very 'andsome," said Mr. Wopps—"very 'andsome indeed! I could go to a shilling each for them weskits."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Some dealers would honly hoffer you sixpence," said Mr. Wopps. "But I ain't that sort. You'll find me an honest dealer, young gentlemen. I says a shilling, and I means a shilling."



Mr. Selby was leaning back in his chair under the tree, and at a distance, taking cover very cautiously among the trees, was D'Arcy minor. The fag was visible to the Shell fellows, but not to Mr. Selby. He had a pea-shooter in his hands, and his intention was only too evident. See Chapter 4.)

"B-b-but they cost no end of money," said Blake. "Gussy runs up bills with his tailor, and his pater pays, you know."

"Oh!" said Mr. Wopps. "They ain't your property, Master Blake?"

"Ahem! I'm seeing to this for Gussy. D'Arcy couldn't bear to part with them, personally. Besides, he's gone to see a chap very particularly. I suppose you really mean five shillings each, Mr. Wopps? Look at this one with pink spots and yellow flowers and purple stripes!"

"I'm afraid it would be rather a loss to me giving a shillin' each," said Mr. Wopps, "but I sticks to that."

"Well, that's six bob for the lot," said Herries. "That's not bad. Then there's the hats, you know."

"They're yours, Mr. Wopps," said Blake. "Put 'em in your sack. Trot out the toppers, you fellows. Gussy always keeps three in the study. Better leave the others. I don't suppose he'll miss three."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tanner each," said Mr. Wopps.

"But they cost thirty bob each!" said Blake, rather dismayed.

"That was noo," said Mr. Wopps.

"But this one—this is new. Gussy's only worn it about twice."

Mr. Wopps shook his head.

"There ain't no demand for silk 'ats, Master Blake. Still, jest to oblige you young gents, I could go to a tanner a time."

Blake shook his head in his turn.

"No," he said; "that's too bad! We—we'll keep 'em, and make Gussy a present of them."

"Hanythink else?" asked Mr. Wopps. "I'd like to do some business while I'm 'ere. If you're thinking of selling Eton jackets, frinstance—"

"Gussy's got some in the dorm," said Dig thoughtfully.

"No; we'll let him keep 'em," said Blake, with a shake of the head. "Fancy waistcoats are a luxury, and fellows are called upon to sacrifice luxuries in these hard times. What about neckties, Mr. Wopps?"

Blake spread out a tempting array of neckties on the study table. There were a dozen of them, of all hues and shades.

"Very 'andsome!" said Mr. Wopps. "Jest to oblige you young gents, I could give two shillin' for the lot."

"I suppose buying and selling's two different things," said Herries. "Gussy gave seven-and-six or half-a-guinea for some of them."

"Very different, sir," said Mr. Wopps calmly. "I may 'ave them neckties left on my 'ands till after the war. Heighntencepence is wot I ought to give."

"Two bob does it," said Blake.

The neckties were swept into Mr. Wopps' capacious bag, and the shillings clinked on the table. Six fancy waistcoats and twelve neckties had raised eight shillings. Blake could not help feeling that Mr. Wopps had got a bargain. But Study No. 6 had cash enough for the camera now, and that was the main point. Blake had

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generously resolved that the camera should belong to Gussy personally.

"Very glad to do business with you another time, gents," said Mr. Wopps, putting his sack on his shoulder and picking up his three hats. "Pr'aps there's some other young gents I could oblige while I'm 'ere?"

"Ahem! No. G-g-good-afternoon!" said Blake.

Mr. Wopps left the study. As he came into the passage there was an exclamation.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus had returned.

CHAPTER 7.

A Rise in Prices.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY turned his eye-glass in surprise upon Mr. Wopps. Mr. Wopps was about the very last visitor he would have expected to meet coming out of Study No. 6 in the School House.

"Arternoon, sir!" said Mr. Wopps genially, touching the rim of the lowest of his three hats. "Pr'aps you'd like to do a little business, sir?"

"Great Scott!"

"Best prices, sir, for rags and bones, bottles and jars—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Hany old clothes, sir?"

"I am not in the habit of disposin' of my old clothes in that mannah, thank you," said Arthur Augustus. "You are vewy good, but there is nothin' doin'."

"Good-bye, Mr. Wopps!" said Blake hurriedly. He was very anxious that Arthur Augustus should not discover what was in Mr. Wopps' bag. It would have led to something little short of an earthquake. "Hurry along!"

"Sittingly, sir!"

Mr. Wopps followed Toby. To get to the back stairs he had to pass through the Shell passage, and he paused to speak to the Terrible Three, who were chatting with Talbot in the study doorway. The Shell fellows looked blankly at Mr. Wopps.

"Hanything in my line, gents?" said Mr. Wopps.

"Great Scott!" said Gore, from within the study.

"Rags and bones—"

"Here's Skimmy," said Gore. "What will you give for him?"

"My dear Gore—" murmured Skimpole.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You kummerlonger me, Mr. Wopps," said Toby anxiously.

"I offer the best prices, gentleman," said Mr. Wopps. "But if you're not selling anything, perhaps you'd care to look at a line in fancy waistcoats and ties that I have to offer."

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom Merry.

Mr. Wopps opened his bag, and displayed a collection of waistcoats and ties that rivalled Joseph's celebrated coat.

"Nothing doing," said Monty Lowther. "You might call on the Head before you go, or the Housemaster."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop him!" came in a sudden yell along the passage. "Stop that wottah!"

Arthur Augustus had made a startling discovery. Perhaps the sight of Mr. Wopps, after Blake & Co.'s previous remarks concerning his wardrobe, had made him suspicious. At all events, he had looked into his box as soon as he entered the study. Then he glared at Blake and Herries and Digby.

"Where are my waistcoats?"

He did not wait for an answer to his question. It was only too clear where his waistcoats were. He rushed out of the study, and sped along the passage after the departing merchant.

"Stop him!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, as he spotted the merchant just leaving the Shell fellows. "Hold him!"

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Manners. "Looking for a bargain in second-hand waistcoats, Gussy?"

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"The awful wottah! He's got my clobber!"

"What!"

"My clobber!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, coming up, breathless. "Wopps, hand me my clobber at once! Do you heah?"

Mr. Wopps smiled genially.

"Hanythink I can show you in the way of waistcoats and ties, Master D'Arcy?" he asked. "I've got some 'ere that are just your size, I believe." Mr. Wopps opened his bag again. "Look at these 'ere—"

"They are mine!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"I just bought 'em from a young gent," said Mr. Wopps calmly.

"Blake, you uttah wottah—"

"Cheese it, Gussy!" gasped Blake, arriving on the scene, panting. "You silly ass! You can't touch Mr. Wopps' property, that he's bought and paid for!"

"You've been selling Gussy's waistcoats?" yelled Talbot.

"Certainly! We put it to the vote in the study, and it was decided to do it. We've got to get a camera. We can't take striking and original photographs with Gussy's fancy waistcoats, I suppose, or with his neckties."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The vote was three to one for raising money on Gussy's clobber," continued Blake. "Mr. Wopps came along at the right moment—the right man in the right place! What Gussy's grumbling at is beyond me."

"He's always grouching about something," remarked Herries, with a shake of the head.

"You—you—you feahful wottahs! M-m-my ties! Mum-m-my waistcoats! Mr. Wopps, I will return you the money you gave for those things. It was a—a—a misapprehension. How much was it, Blake?"

"Eight bob," said Blake.

The expression on D'Arcy's face made the juniors shriek. The idea of his valuable and extensive stock of waistcoats and ties going for eight shillings almost overcame the swell of St. Jim's. For some moments he could only gasp.

"You uttah ass!" he ejaculated at last. "I shall give you a feahful twashin' for this, Blake. Howevah, hand ovah the eight shillin' at once."

Blake shook his head.

"That's for the camera," he said.

"I wufuse—"

"Bow-wow! Do you think we've taken all this trouble for nothing?" exclaimed Blake indignantly. "We don't expect gratitude, but you might thank a fellow."

"Gwatitude! You—you bwigand! Weturn the money to Mr. Wopps at once, you uttah wottah, and let me take my pwoperty."

"Tain't your property—it's Mr. Wopps' property. Come on, you chaps, it's time we got down to the footer practice," said Blake. "Good-afternoon, Mr. Wopps! Toby will show you out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blake, you—you unspeakable wottah! Tom Mewwy, will you lend me eight shillings to weimburse Mr. Wopps?"

Tom Merry grinned, and went through his pockets. He produced a half-crown. Lowther added another, and Manners generously contributed three shillings.

"Thanks awf'ly, deah boys! I'll settle this on Saturday. Mr. Wopps, there is your money. Pway hand ovah my pwoperty."

"You want to purchase a fancy waistcoat, sir?" asked Mr. Wopps genially. "Certainly, sir! Which one do you prefer? This one with the pink spots and yellow flowers is very fashionable, sir, and the price is eight shillings."

"Wha-a-a-at!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Prices gone up!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Buying and selling seem to be two rather different matters."

"I can let you have this blue satin waistcoat for seven-and-six," said Mr. Wopps liberally. "My prices are always reasonable."

"Oh, cwumbs! That waistcoat cost my patah two pounds."

"Then you are getting it remarkably cheap for seven."

and six, Master D'Arcy," said Mr. Wopps. "But I am a reasonable man."

"But you only gave me a shilling for it!" ejaculated Blake.

"I have to make my little profit, sir," said Mr. Wopps cheerfully. "I dare say I shall have a dead loss on some of the articles. If you would care to see some ties in the latest fashionable shades, Master D'Arcy, I have a dozen here. Hany one of them you can 'ave for a 'arf-crown."

"You gave me two bob for the whole dozen!" shrieked Blake.

Mr. Wopps did not seem to hear him. It was only too clear that buying and selling were two different matters.

Arthur Augustus looked dumbfounded. In the innocence of his heart, he had supposed that if the money was handed back to Mr. Wopps the transaction could be undone. A half-crown extra to Mr. Wopps for his trouble would have seemed the right thing. But Mr. Wopps had made a bargain, and he was not disposed to part with it.

"Ere's a 'andsome white waistcoat," said Mr. Wopps. "The price of that weskit is five shillings, and a bargain at that, sir."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Ere's a blue silk tie, sir, for three shillin's."

"Gweat Scott!"

"And very reasonable, sir, considerin' the original price of the harticles," said Mr. Wopps emphatically.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Blake. "I—I say, Gussy, are you coming down to the footer? We've got to go and buy a camera, too."

"I'll tell you wot I'll do," said Mr. Wopps, in a burst of generosity. "I'll let the 'ole lot go for two-pun-ten."

"Two-pounds-ten!" murmured Tom Merry. "Who wouldn't be in the old clo' bunzy?"

"I don't do trade like this hevery day, sir," remarked Mr. Wopps.

"I suppose not," grinned Tom. "Gentlemen, it's up to us to make a whip-round for Gussy, but I'm blessed if I think we can manage two-pounds-ten!"

There was a general fumbling in pockets and shaking of heads. Funds were low; but at any time two pounds ten shillings was a considerable sum.

"I'll tell you wot I'll do," said Mr. Wopps. "As the young gent is so keen to buy my harticles, I'll keep 'em in a separate lot for a few days, wrapped up nice and clean and tidy, and when you send me the dibs, I'll send 'em along. Jest you 'and me a pound down to clinch the bargain, and it's a go."

Arthur Augustus did not speak. But the Terrible Three and Talbot and Gore made up the required pound among them, and handed it to Mr. Wopps. Then that gentleman went on his way, smiling, and Toby showed him out. Arthur Augustus' face was a study. Blake tapped him on the arm in a friendly way.

"Coming down to the footer?"

"I am not comin' down to the footab, Blake."

"You'd rather come at once and buy the camera?"

"I wufuse to come and buy a camewah."

Arthur Augustus walked away with his noble nose high in the air. Blake looked at the grinning Shell fellows.

"There's no pleasing some people," he remarked. "You'd hardly believe, from the way Gussy takes it, that we took all the trouble off his hands, and dealt with Mr. Wopps without worrying him at all—without even consulting him. It's a thankless world. Let's get down to the footer, you chaps, and try to forget Gussy's ingratitude."

On the footer field, Blake & Co. contrived to forget Gussy's ingratitude. But Gussy could not forget his waistcoats and his ties. When Blake and Herries and Digby came into tea, Arthur Augustus' face was like unto a graven image; and when, later, they came in with a new camera they had purchased in Wayland for the sum of ten shillings, Gussy's aristocratic face was still frozen.

"We've got it, Gussy," murmured Blake.

No reply.

"Don't you want to see your new camera, Gussy?"

Silence.

"We're going to get you a new waistcoat out of the prize, if we bag it," said Dig.

Sniff!

"And you haven't thanked us yet for the trouble we took," said Blake.

Snort!

"Gussy, old chap, we want to consult with you—"

"I wufuse to consult with you, Blake. I wegard you as a wank wottah."

"Well, I don't see how we're going to have a chance at the prize if you don't help us," said Blake resignedly. "You know what we're like when you desert us, Gussy—like lost sheep."

Arthur Augustus' noble face began to relax. It was said of old that a soft answer turneth away wrath.

"You see," added Dig, "we want a fellow of tact and judgment to run the affair, or—or we sha'n't score, you know."

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"If Gussy would come out with us to-morrow, with the camera, and give us directions!" murmured Herries.

"Weally, deah boys, of course I don't mean to leave you in the lurch," said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, you can wely on me."

And all was calm and bright.

CHAPTER 8.

Sauce for the Gander.

A MATEUR photography seemed to be the order of the day at St. Jim's now. The number of camera fiends that had been brought to light by the "Weekly Snap" competition was surprising. Every fellow who had a camera was busy using it, and refusing to lend it to fellows who hadn't one. At least a dozen new cameras were purchased among the juniors; and, out of lesson time, the snapping was incessant. Fellows ranged the countryside far and wide in search of striking and original subjects.

Manners of the Shell looked upon the efforts of the other fellows with a tolerant eye. Manners was assured that if the prize came to St. Jim's at all, it would come to his study. He had the best camera—that was admitted; and he was the best photographer—which wasn't admitted.

Striking and original subjects were not easy to find. Study No. 6 were very busy with their new camera, and Blake succeeded in snapping Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, in the act of chasing his hat in the quadrangle. Blake had high hopes from that negative; but his hopes were dashed to the ground when the negative was confiscated, and he received a hundred lines. Blake remarked bitterly that there was no encouragement for enterprise in the School House.

Then Kerr of the Fourth took a good snap of Mr. Ratcliff, his Housemaster, in the act of slipping down the steps of the New House. It would have made a very striking picture—there wasn't the slightest doubt of that—but Mr. Ratcliff unfortunately spotted Kerr in the act. The result was painful to Kerr. His hands smarted for the rest of the day, and his camera reposed in Mr. Ratcliff's study, to be handed back to him at the end of the term. The five pound prize was not to come to Figgins & Co.; and the remarks that were made in Figgins' study about Mr. Ratcliff would have made that gentleman's hair stand on end if he had heard them.

During the following few days, Arthur Augustus had three fights with Julian of the Fourth on the subject of the offending snap Julian had taken in Study No. 6. But the negative was not captured. Julian declared that he was willing to go halves with Gussy if it bagged the prize, and the fellows all agreed that he could not say fairer than that. Arthur Augustus' attitude on the subject was considered unreasonable. But the swell of the School House declined to listen to reason; and it seemed probable that he would have a fight with Julian every day till the competition was over.

Study No. 6 was still short of funds; and, with four juniors keeping very busy with the camera, plates went rather quickly. Blake's proposal to raise cash for plates by disposing of further articles from Gussy's wardrobe

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to the obliging Mr. Wopps was the cause of a long and heated argument in the study. Herries and Digby supported Blake's proposal heartily. Blake pointed out to his noble study-mate that the majority were against him, and added that he had been saved a lot of trouble in changing his waistcoats and ties since the visit of Mr. Wopps.

"I regard you as an uttah ass, Blake," was Arthur Augustus's reply, his very eyeglass gleaming with wrath.

"Well, I don't see what's to be done," said Blake. "We're hard up, and that five quid would see us through for a bit. We've used up all the plates, and most of them have been mucked up in the developing. It seems that a fellow has to learn how to develop before the things turn out satisfactory. Lucky Manners keeps his pyro and hypo and things in the dark-room, or we should have been put to a lot of expense for those. But about plates—"

"We got a camera with plates because plates are cheaper than films," remarked Digby. "If it had been films we should have had to sell off everything except what Gussy stands up in."

"You uttah ass, Dig—"

"Wopps offered us sixpence—each for your toppers, Gussy—"

"Sixpence?" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"And I dare say he'd let you have 'em back at five bob each when good times come," said Blake. "He'd keep 'em separate, wrapped up nice and clean, you know, like your ties and waistcoats. We can't go without plates for our camera when you're no end of toppers eating their heads off, you know."

"If you touch my toppers—"

"Well, it's up to you," said Blake. "We require ten bob for new plates. If you can think of a way of raising it, well and good. If you can't we shall have to go for your wardrobe again. You ought to be glad to have a reserve like that for the study to fall back on in hard times. It's up to you."

Arthur Augustus was about to make a wrathful response, but a sudden thought seemed to flash into his mind. He smiled instead.

"Give me till this evenin', and I'll see what I can do," he said.

"Done!" said Herries and Digby and Blake together, very heartily.

At tea-time the chums of Study No. 6 were due in Tom Merry's study. Blake and Herries and Digby turned up, but Arthur Augustus was a little late.

"Gussy's coming?" asked Tom.

"Oh, he's coming," said Blake. "I dare say he's busy raising the wind. He seems to object to his toppers going."

A few minutes later Arthur Augustus came in. There was a cheery smile upon his face.

"Sowwy I'm late, deah boys!"

"Oh, don't mench," said Tom Merry. "What luck?"

"All sewene. Blake, deah boy, here's a half-sovereign. That will see us ovah."

Blake stared at the half-sovereign as he took it.

"Well, my hat!" he ejaculated.

"You've done it, Gussy. I'm glad. I will say that! We'll keep your toppers back for next time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"But where did you get it?" asked Dig.

"Sellin' some things among the fellows," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully.

"Breaking up the happy home?" said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas."

"I hope you haven't parted with THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 402.

anything you really wanted, Gussy," said Blake, really concerned. "You know—"

"Not at all, deah boy. I sha'n't miss the things. Thank you; two lumps of sugah, Mannahs!"

Tea was very cheerful in the study. Manners was quite certain of bagging the photo prize, and if bagged it was going to be whacked out in the study. Blake was equally certain of bagging it, now that he could have a further supply of plates, so all parties were cheerfully anticipative.

Blake & Co. returned to Study No. 6 after tea in a very cheery mood. Arthur Augustus seemed cheeriest of all. He was smiling incessantly, as if his late sale of things he would not miss had bucked him up somehow.

"Hallo, where's my new footer?" exclaimed Blake, as he came into the study. Blake's handsome new footer was conspicuous by its absence.

"Blessed if I know," said Dig. "It was there when we went out."

"Seen it anybody? Some silly ass has taken it for a joke, I suppose!" grunted Blake. "I don't like duffers meddling with my new footer. What are you grinning at, Gussy, you fathead?"

"Was I gwinin', deah boy?"

"Yes, you were, you ass! There's nothing funny in playing silly jokes with a fellow's football," growled Blake. "I wonder—"

"It's all wight, Blake!"

"Eh? Do you know where the footer is?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, where is it, then?"

"Ovah in the New House, deah boy, in Clampe's study."

"Do you mean to say that that New House boulder has raided my footer?" roared Blake, in surprise and indignation.

"Not at all, Blake. I've sold it to him."

Blake nearly fell down.

"Sus-sus-sold it?" he stuttered.

"Yaas."

"You—you—you've sold my new footer to Clampe?" shrieked Blake.

Arthur Augustus nodded cheerfully.

"Yaas. He gave me five shillin' for it."

"Five shillings? It cost fifteen-and-six!"

"Yaas, I dare say; but buyin' and sellin' are two vewy different mattahs, you know," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I realised that the othah day in dealin' with Mr. Wopps, so I let Clampe have it for five bob. Of course, five bob wasn't enough for the plates we want, but Dig left his pocket-knife in the study, fortunately

"My pocket-knife?" yelled Dig.

"Yaas, deah boy. Mellish gave me half-a-crown for it."

"M-M-Mellish gave you half-a-crown for my pocket-knife?" gasped Digby.

"Yaas. That made seven-and-six," said Arthur Augustus, apparently unconscious of the ferocious expressions on the faces of Blake and Digby. "But I had to make up the ten bob. Luckily Kewwnish was willin' to buy a cornet for half-a-crown—"

Herries jumped.

"A cornet?" he roared.

"Yaas. I think Kewwnish got wathah a bargain with that cornet, as I've heard you say, Hewwies, that it cost pounds. But buyin' and sellin' are vewy different mattahs. I only hope Kewwnish won't start practicin' on that cornet, as he's in the next study. He might be willin' to let you have it back some time when you're in funds, Hewwies—pewwaps at a higher pwice. I suppose it's worth more than half-a-crown!" added Arthur Augustus innocently.

"You—you—you've sold my kik-kik-cornet?" stuttered Herries.

FOR NEXT WEEK :

THE CALL OF THE CINEMA!

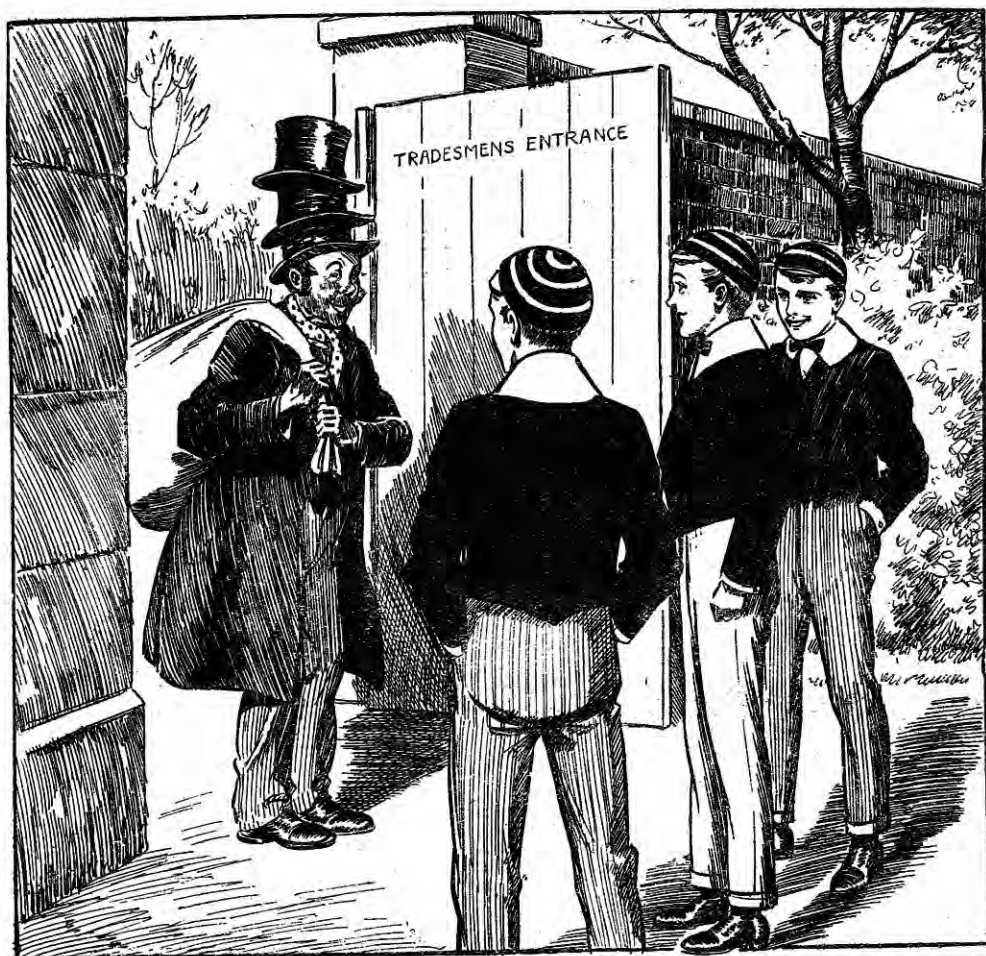
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PRICE ONE PENNY.



Blake opened the gate, and the gentleman with the three hats and the sack came in. "We've got some ripping things to sell, Mr. Woppes," said Blake cheerfully. "I suppose you buy new clothes as well as old ones?" "Sartinly, sir." (See Chapter 6.)

"Yaas. We'll go out aftah lessons to-morrow mornin', Blake, and lay out that ten shillin's in plates," said Arthur Augustus. "And don't wowwy about bein' short of tin on anothah occasion; you can always wely on me to waise the money."

"What?"

"Next time we are hard up, deah boys, you leave it to me. I am suah I could get a pound for Blake's bike."

"My b-b-bike?"

"Yaas; and a few shillin's for Hewwies' bulldog."

"Wha-a-a-at?" shrieked Herries.

"And Dig's white wabbits would fetch somethin'," said Arthur Augustus, opening the door of the study. "You leave it to me, deah boys, next time we're stonay. There will be no occasion to sell off my toppahs at six-pence each, I assuah you!"

And Arthur Augustus nodded and walked out, and closed the door behind him. The three juniors heard him chuckle as he sauntered down the passage.

"The—the villain!" gasped Herries. "After him! Scrag him! Wallop him! Bump him! Lynch him! My cornet! My hat! I'll—I'll—"

"My pocket-knife!" yelled Digby. "Why, that

pocket-knife cost a guinea. It was a birthday present! Why, I—I—I'll—"

"My new footer!" groaned Blake. "Oh, dear!"

"We're going to scrag him!" roared Herries, making for the door.

Blake burst into a chuckle, and pushed his excited chum back.

"Rats! Cheese it! He didn't scrag us for selling his waistcoats."

"But, my cornet!"

"My pocket-knife!"

"And my new footer!" said Blake. "Gussy's dished us. And—and it serves us right!"

"What?"

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the giddy gander," said Blake. "We've got to take it smiling. Upon the whole, I—I don't think we'll sell off any more of Gussy's wardrobe. Oh, my hat!"

When Arthur Augustus came into Study No. 6 to do his preparations he found three juniors with very peculiar expressions on their faces. Arthur Augustus had brought in a golf-club under his arm, perhaps with a view to an argument. But the golf-club was not needed.

"Wathah wippin' that we shall have those plates to-morrow, dear boys, isn't it?" said Arthur Augustus cheerily.

And Blake and Herries and Digby, manfully controlling their feelings, agreed that it was ripping. And Arthur Augustus smiled serenely and went on with his preparation. He was no longer in a state of apprehension on the subject of the remainder of his wardrobe. It was painfully clear that if Gussy's toppers went they would be followed by Blake's bike, Herries' bulldog, and Dig's white rabbits. Mr. Wopps had paid his last visit to Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 9.

Manners Comes Down Heavy!

"**W**HERE'S my camera?"

Manners asked that question, or rather, howled it. Manners was looking round the study with a ferocious eye. His camera was not in its place on the shelf, and it was a half-holiday. That afternoon the amateur photographer was going to be very busy, and during the morning he had declined to lend his camera to fifteen fellows, one after another.

It looked now as if someone had borrowed it without the preliminary of asking permission. After fifteen refusals, perhaps the sixteenth would-be photographer had decided that asking wasn't much use.

Manners glared at Tom Merry and Lowther suspiciously. He more than suspected that his study-mates were getting fed-up with photography, and Lowther was quite humorous enough to hide his camera.

"Where is it?" demanded Manners.

"Give it up," said Tom Merry. "Perhaps you've left it in the dark-room."

"I never leave it in the dark-room."

"Perhaps you've lent it to someone," suggested Lowther.

Manners snorted.

"I heard Skimpole asking you for it, and Gore, and Melish, and Blenkinsop, and Ray, and Kerruish, and Lumley-Lumley, and Reilly, and—"

"Don't go through the whole roll-call!" growled Manners. "Every blessed ass in the House wants my camera this afternoon. Have you hidden it, you duffer?"

"Never thought of it," said Lowther regretfully. "But that's a tip."

"Fathead! Somebody's borrowed it!" roared Manners. "Where's a cricket-stump? What do you want to shove the stumps out of sight for, just because it's footer now? A stump is handy when a fellow borrows your camera."

"You can't take photos with a cricket-stump, surely?" said Lowther, in astonishment.

"Ass! I can look for the boulder who's borrowed my camera with a cricket-stump."

A cricket-stump was disinterred from the cupboard, and Manners started to look for his camera. Tom Merry and Lowther accompanied him; they thought Manners might need holding when he found the borrower.

Manners headed for Levison's study. Levison was one of the would-be borrowers, and Manners intended to see them all in turn till he found his camera, and then there would be a case of assault and battery.

Manners kicked open the door of Levison's study in the Fourth Form passage in a very unceremonious way. Levison was there, and he was sitting at the table examining a camera. It was a large camera—half-plate—and Manners gave a whoop at the sight of it.

"So it was you!" he roared.

Levison stared.

"Eh! Don't they knock at a door in your slum, Manners?"

"You rotter!"

"Here, I say! What—what—Yah!" roared Levison, as Manners rushed at him, and began with the cricket-stump.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Manners was in deadly earnest, and the cricket-stump came across Levison's shoulders with terrific vim. The Fourth-Former yelled, and dodged wildly round the table.

"Keep him off!" he shrieked. "Is he mad? My hat! Keep off, or I'll brain you!" The Fourth-Former caught up a chair, and whirled it in the air. "Now, you rotter—"

Tom Merry and Lowther seized their chum and dragged him back. Manners was not finished yet.

"Lemme go!" yelled Manners. "I'll teach him to collar my camera! Playing some rotten trick on it, I expect. I'll—I'll—"

"You'd better hold him!" howled Levison. "If he comes near me I'll brain him, the silly idiot!"

"Peace, my infant!" said Lowther, dragging Manners back. "You can put that chair down, Levison. Why can't you leave other people's property alone?"

"I don't know what you're talking about, fathead!" said Levison. "Why, you rotter, leave my camera alone!" he yelled, as Manners picked up the camera.

"Your camera?" hooted Manners.

"Yes, idiot!"

Manners looked more closely at the camera, and then a very peculiar expression came over his face. He put it back on the table.

"Ahem!" he remarked.

"Isn't it yours?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Nunno."

"Why, you silly ass, do you mean to say you pitched into Levison when he hasn't taken your camera at all?"

"Well, it would be just like him to take it," said Manners. "He's always playing some rotten trick. That looks like mine, it's the same size; but it isn't mine, as it happens. I didn't know Levison had got a half-plate camera."

"You—you silly cuckoo!" said Levison furiously. "That's my camera—I've hired it. You blithering jabberwock—"

"Well, I'm sorry I lathered you," said Manners. "I thought it was mine. Somebody's taken mine."

"Sorry, are you?" hooted Levison. "Will that make my back all right, you burbling idiot, after you've nearly broken a stump on it, you babbling lunatic?"

"Well, you shouldn't be such a tricky beast," said Manners. "You've played tricks on my camera before."

"Hang your camera!"

"Somebody's taken it out of my study."

"I hope it's lost, or stolen, or smashed," said Levison; "and if you don't get out of this study, you'll get smashed!"

"Well, it's your own fault for being such a tricky rotter," said Manners. "Come on, you chaps, I've got to find the beast yet!"

The Terrible Three left the study, leaving Levison rubbing his shoulders and looking daggers. It was really a very unfortunate mistake, and Levison might be excused for feeling angry.

"Skimpole, perhaps," said Manners in the passage. "I'll go and see Skimpole next. Leggo that stump, fathead! Wharrer you at?"

Tom Merry jerked the stump away.

"You can look for your camera without that," he said. "You're not going to brain poor old Skimmy on suspicion. You might have apologised to Levison, too."

"Blow Levison! Didn't he play tricks on my camera last term?" said Manners. Manners had a long memory where his camera was concerned. "He's only got himself to thank. Br-r-r-r!"

Skimpole's door was kicked open next. Manners was not in a good temper. He had fears for the safety of his camera. It was a valuable camera, and it might have suffered in unskilled hands. And it had a roll of films in it ready for use, and if it were opened, the films would spoil.

"Hallo! Here it is!" growled Manners.

Skimpole was seated in the armchair, with a camera on his knees. He was blinking at it through his big spectacles, examining it. Skimpole was a brainy youth, and he knew all about Evolution, and Determinism, and Darwinism, but what he did not know about cameras would have filled all the volumes in a photographic library.

Tom and Lowther seized Manners at once. He glared at them wrathfully.

"Leggo, you asses!"

"Make sure first," grinned Tom Merry. "Is that Manners' camera, Skimpy?"

Skimpole turned his glasses upon them.

"Yes, my dear Merry. I have borrowed it."

"You cheeky ass!" howled Manners.

"I desire to take some photographs this afternoon," said Skimpole. "As you declined to lend me the camera, Manners, I borrowed it without permission. I suppose you are aware that under Socialism all cameras will be nationalised."

"You—you—you— Wharrer you doing with it?" shrieked Manners, struggling in the grasp of his grinning chums.

"Examining it, my dear Manners. I am unacquainted with the use of a camera," said Skimpole. "I have, of course, to acquaint myself with the use of the instrument before I proceed to take photographs. I do not see where the plates should go in this camera. Perhaps you will explain."

"You silly villain, it doesn't take plates!"

"Dear me!"

"And you've taken the film out!" yelled Manners.

"Is that a film—that curly thing?" asked Skimpole, with an air of interest. "Dear me! I can put it in again quite easy, my dear Manners. There is nothing whatever to get excited about."

"You—you—you—" Manners simply gasped. "You blithering ass, don't you know that a film is useless if it's exposed to the light."

"I was not previously aware of that, Manners. Of course, I have a good deal to learn about photography."

"That's four-and-six you've chucked away!" shrieked Manners. "My hat! I'll make you pay for it!"

"I'll pay for it with pleasure, Manners," said Skimpole, with dignity. "I have no desire to put you to loss. At the present moment, unfortunately, I have no money, but another time—"

"Lemme get at him!" yelled Manners.

The infuriated photographer wrenched himself away and simply leaped upon Skimpy. There was a wild yell from Skimpy as he went over on the rug, with Manners on him.

Bump! bump! bump!

"Yoooop! Help! Oh, dear!"

Skimpole's learned head was being banged on the floor. He wriggled and yelled for help. Tom and Lowther rushed to drag Manners off. But Manners refused to be dragged. With the two juniors dragging at him, he continued to bump Skimpole's head, and Skimpy's voice rang the length of the passage.

Snap!

Julian of the Fourth grinned into the study over his camera.

"Got it!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "Keep it up! A little more to the left, Lowther—you're in the light. More to the right, Merry—I want Skimpole in the centre!"

Snap!

Bump! bump! bump!

"Yooooooop!"

Snap!

Manners was dragged off at last, and Skimpole sat up and rubbed his head. Julian closed his camera with great satisfaction.

"That's three snaps," he said. "The last one will be perfect, I think. My idea is that I shall bag the prize with this or else the D'Arcy one. Thanks awfully!"

Julian walked away greatly satisfied. He had secured a striking and original picture again. Skimpole sat on the rug and rubbed his head. His powerful brain had received quite a shock.

"M-M-Manners," he gasped, "I regard your action as ruffianly! Grooch! I shall refuse to use your camera now—wow!—under any circumstances whatever."

"You'll get some more if you do!" snorted Manners, and he carried off his camera in triumph, and proceeded to look for some new films.

CHAPTER 10.

A Busy Afternoon!

THERE were many amateur photographers very busy that afternoon. It was the last half-holiday before the end of the "Weekly Snap" competition, and the camera-fiends were making hay while the sun shone, so to speak. The weather was fine and sunny, which was a stroke of good luck.

In all corners of the old schools, fellows were lurking with cameras; and in the fields and meadows, up the river, and in the woods, fellows could be seen with cameras. Many of them had been hired at the shop in Wayland, some had been bought, and one or two had been obtained on the instalment system.

Certainly it seemed very probable that the five pound prize would come to St. Jim's; among so many, it was very probable that the lucky one would be found.

Julian of the Fourth was sticking to "interiors" mostly. His pictures of Study No. 6 and of Skimpole's study had developed well, and they were undoubtedly striking and original. He had also secured a snap of Mary, the housemaid, slipping downstairs with a bucket of water, and another of Digby sliding down the banisters and landing upon Cutts of the Fifth. The expression upon Cutts' face, as it came out in the print, was decidedly striking.

Study No. 6 were also very busy. The large supply of plates obtained by Arthur Augustus' novel method of raising the wind, was being used up lavishly. The four juniors spent the afternoon out of doors with the camera, and came in somewhat dusty and tired, but very satisfied. They had an enormous number of plates taken, and among the lot, as Blake remarked, there was sure to be one that would take the biscuit.

Tom Merry and Lowther and Talbot were chatting on the School House steps when they came in. Manners was not visible.

"What luck?" asked Tom.

"Ripping!" said Blake. "We've got three dozen—"

"My hat!"

"Gussy took ten of them, so they won't be any good—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"But I think the prize one will be among the lot. How is Manners getting on?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Blessed if I know. We got fed-up, and went down to footer instead. Manners is still going it."

"Here he comes!" said Talbot.

Manners arrived grinning.

"Missed a jolly good chance," he remarked. "Old Selby took a tumble in the ditch. Some ass had moved the plank—rotten joke, I suppose—and Selby went right in. I could have snapped him a treat."

"And didn't you?" asked Blake.

Manners shook his head.

"No fear! Railton has promised to confiscate my camera if I snap Selby again. I couldn't keep it dark very well, especially if it came out as a prize picture—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But it was a pity to miss it," said Manners regretfully. "You should have seen him—he landed on his back in the water, with his legs in the air! You'll see him as he comes in—rather muddy, I think."

The juniors grinned gleefully. Mr. Selby was not popular. They watched for him to arrive. The Third Form-master came in a few minutes later, and the juniors tried to suppress their smiles as he came squelching up to the house. He was simply caked with mud, and water squelched out of his boots at every step. His face, wherever it was not disguised by mud, showed crimson with rage.

"Had an accident, sir?" asked Blake, with respectful sympathy.

Mr. Selby paused on the steps, and snorted.

"I have been the victim of an infamous trick!" he gasped. "Some unfeeling young rascal moved the plank bridge, and it fell as I crossed it. Someone must have seen me coming across the meadow, and done this intentionally."

"Not a St. Jim's fellow, surely, sir," said Tom Merry, with great meekness.

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ANSWERS

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "THE CALL OF THE CINEMA!"

"I am certain that it was. You were near the spot, Manners."

"I didn't touch the plank, sir," said Manners.

"There will be an inquiry," said Mr. Selby, in a grinding voice, and he squelched into the house.

Tom Merry whistled.

"Trouble for somebody," remarked Talbot. "One of the Third-Form fags, most likely; they don't like Selby."

"Quite suah it wasn't you, Mannahs, deal boy?"

"Quite sure," said Manners. "I wouldn't have risked it. Still, I can't say I'm sorry it happened. Selby made me give up a ripping photograph the other day, and got me into a row with Railton. He deserved it."

"He's got a suspicious cye on you," said Blake. "It's a bit unlucky you were there. Still, there must have been other fellows there, too."

"Oh, blow Selby!" said Manners. "Who says tea? I'm as hungry as a hunter."

"Tea!" said all the juniors together.

"There's a feed in No. 6," remarked Blake. "Gussy's fiver has come at last. He's going to get his clothes out of pawn—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake, you ass—"

"But there will be enough left for a feed."

"Yaas, wathah, and I shall be vewy glad to see all you fellahs there, aftah the feahful times we have had lately," said Arthur Augustus.

"Hear, hear!"

Manners took his camera to the study in the Shell passage, and then the Terrible Three adjourned to Study No. 6. There had been hard times of late in that celebrated apartment, but Blake & Co. were making up for it now. The festive-board was laden with excellent things, and eight juniors sat down to a lavish tea in great spirits.

They were beginning, when Julian of the Fourth looked in.

"Come in, Julian," said Jack Blake hospitably. "Just in time for tea."

Dick Julian shook his head.

"Thanks, I've had my tea. I'm going to take you. A study feed will make a striking picture—"

"You have not yet handed me that wotten picture you took last week—" began D'Arcy.

"Oh, that's ancient history, Gussy! Smile!"

"What?"

"Smile!" said Julian, sighting his camera. "Head a bit more to the right, Talbot! Close your mouth a little more. Herries!"

"What!" snorted Herries.

"Smile, Gussy—"

"You uttah ass!" Arthur Augustus was frowning. "I have already given you thwee thwashin's for not givin' up that wotten photogwaph—"

"Smile!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I uttally wefuse to smile, you sillay ass. I—"

"Well, I'm not going to take you with a face like that," said Julian. "I can't risk my camera on it."

"Why, you sillay chump—"

Julian sniffed and went down the passage. Arthur Augustus frowned severely at the grumbling tea-party.

"I can't see nothin' whatever to grin at, you duffahs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, Levison! What luck?" asked Talbot, as Levison of the Fourth passed the open door with his camera in his hand.

"Nothing to speak of," said Levison. "I say, have you seen Selby? What's happened to him?"

"Tumbled in a ditch," said Tom Merry. "Somebody moved the plank—"

"What a chance for a snap!" said Levison. "Did anybody get one?"

"Too jolly risky," said Manners. "Selby's too Hunnish. If any fellow snapped him, the best thing he can do is to chuck it away."

Levison nodded and passed on. There was a peculiar expression upon Levison's face, but the juniors did not see it. Levison turned into the Shell passage, and glanced up and down.

Then he quietly entered Tom Merry's study, where Manners' camera reposed on the shelf. If the Terrible Three had been aware of that action, they would have been surprised. But the merry tea-party in Study No. 6 were thinking of anything but Levison of the Fourth and his knavish tricks.

Manners, in the keen interest of photographing during the afternoon, had forgotten the incident of the cricket-stump. Levison had not forgotten. On that occasion, Manners had wielded the stump, and Levison had been stumped—it was the difference between the active and the passive—so perhaps it was natural that Levison should have a longer memory.

CHAPTER 11.

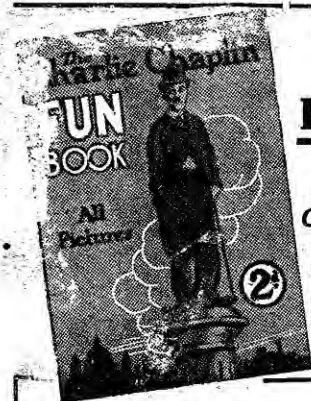
Levison's Little Game!

MR. SELBY pricked up his ears.

The Third-Form master was coming down the passage from the Housemaster's study, looking very cross. Mr. Railton had done his best to soothe him; the Housemaster did not think that a St. Jim's fellow had deliberately moved the plank bridge for the purpose of giving Mr. Selby a tumble. Mr. Selby, however, was convinced of it, and he required the matter to be inquired into. Indeed, his suspicions went further, and he surmised that the young rascal who had caused his tumble had done so with the intention of photographing him in a ridiculous position. Mr. Selby had not forgotten the incident of the previous week, and Manners' unlucky snapshot; and he had heard all about the "Weekly Snap" prize.

Mr. Railton, however, had declined to share his suspicions; and the Form-master came away from the study, very muddy and very cross, feeling that he was not receiving proper consideration and support.

And as he passed the window alcove in the passage



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He heard a whispered voice—the voice of Levison of the Fourth.

"They can't prove anything anyway. Nobody saw Manners take the snap."

Then Mr. Selby picked up his ears. He had a suspicious eye on Manners already. He paused in the passage, under the impression that the juniors in the window recess had not heard his footsteps, and did not know that he was there.

"How do you know Manners snapped him?" asked the voice of Mellish.

"I fancy it's in his camera," said Levison. "Of course, I don't know—I wasn't on the spot—but I've got my own ideas about it. I fancy that if Mr. Selby looked into Manners' camera, he would find a snap of himself in the ditch. Of course, I'm not going to say anything. Tain't my business to sneak."

"Levison!"

The two juniors swung round from the window.

"Yes, sir," said Levison.

"Are you aware of the identity of the boy who played a trick upon me this afternoon?"

"No, sir."

"You have just stated to Mellish your belief that it was Manners."

"I—I—I was only just talking, sir," stammered Levison. "Of—of course, I don't know anything about it. I wasn't there."

"You certainly appear to think that it was Manners," said Mr. Selby. "You probably have some reason for thinking so. If you know anything about the matter, Levison, it is your duty to tell me."

"I don't, sir," said Levison. "I only know that Manners has been taking photographs, but everybody knows that. I—I dare say he didn't do it, sir. If he snapped you, the film would still be in his camera, so he can easily prove that he didn't, if—"

"If he did not!" said Mr. Selby grimly. "Thank you, Levison!"

The master of the Third strode on. He was convinced now that Manners had played that trick upon him for the purpose of getting a striking snapshot. Yet it could not be said that Levison had sneaked. Certainly the contents of Manners' camera would prove the matter. If he had snapped Mr. Selby wriggling in the ditch, he had directly disobeyed his Housemaster's orders, and the presumption would be strong that he had arranged the mishap for the purpose. Mr. Selby was much obliged to Levison for the hint concerning Manners' camera.

Mellish looked very oddly at his companion when the Form-master was gone.

"What's the little game?" he asked.

"Game?" repeated Levison vaguely.

"Yes. You got me here, and began talking about Manners as soon as you heard old Selby coming along. You did it on purpose for him to hear you."

"What rot!" said Levison.

"I don't believe Manners did it," said Mellish. "He wouldn't be such an ass, after what Railton said to him!"

"Well, if he didn't, his films will prove it," said Levison carelessly. "If he did, he ought to be punished for—ahem!—disrespect to a master. Those rotters have sniffed at me often enough for breaking rules."

"I don't believe Selby will find a picture of himself in Manners' camera."

"Well, if he doesn't, Manners is all right, isn't he?" yawned Levison; and he sauntered away, whistling, leaving his chum looking very puzzled.

Meanwhile, Mr. Selby was looking for Manners. If such a photograph existed in Manners' camera, the Form-master did not mean to give him an opportunity of concealing it, if he could help it.

He inquired for Manners, and soon learned where he was. The merry tea-party in Study No. 6 were startled by a rap on the door; and Mr. Selby, with a frowning brow, stepped into the study. The juniors rose respectfully to their feet, and Manners made an involuntary grimace. He had little doubt that Mr. Selby was after him—on suspicion.

"Manners!" said the Third-Form master harshly.

"Yes, sir!"

"Did you photograph me this afternoon, when I had fallen into the ditch. I am aware that you were upon the spot."

"I did not, sir," said Manners quietly.

"Did you place the plank in a dangerous position, to cause my fall, after seeing me approaching across the meadow?"

"No, sir."

"Very well, Manners. Where is your camera?"

"In my study, sir."

"Have you removed the photographs from it that you have taken to-day?"

"Not yet, sir."

"Very good. That camera must be placed in my hands at once; or, rather, you shall take it to the Housemaster in my presence. The contents must be examined."

Manners flushed.

The implied doubt of his word was plain enough, and he did not like it. Tom Merry and Lowther looked very grim. But arguing with a Form-master was out of the question. Only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy ventured upon a remark. As Blake observed afterwards, Gussy was always ready to exemplify the old proverb, that fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

"It appears to me, Mr. Selby, that you are implyin' a doubt of Mannahs' word, sir," he began, turning his eyeglass upon the Form-master. "That is not what Mannahs has a wight to expect, sir."

"You will kindly hold your tongue, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove!"

"I think it very probable that you are all in a plot together," snapped Mr. Selby. "Manners, follow me at once!"

Manners hesitated a moment. Mr. Selby was not his Form-master. But he was a master, after all, and he had to be obeyed. Manners followed him from the study. Monty Lowther brandished a fist in the air when they had gone.

"What surprises me," he remarked, "is that nobody ever dots Selby in the eye! He keeps on asking for it and never gets it. If I knew who had ducked him this afternoon, I'd stand him a currant bun."

"Yaas, wathah! His mannahs leave vewy much to be desiahed."

Tom Merry looked very uneasy.

"It's all right, Tom," said Talbot reassuringly. "Manners has told us that he hasn't snapped Selby. There's nothing in his camera to do him any harm."

"No, I suppose not," agreed Tom. "Manners told us plain enough, that's true. I suppose it's all right."

Mr. Selby came back along the passage with Manners, the latter carrying the still unopened camera. They went downstairs, and directly to Mr. Railton's study. The Housemaster had a trace of impatience in his face as he regarded Mr. Selby inquiringly.

"I have reason to suspect that Manners snapshotted me in the ditch," said Mr. Selby. "I request that the photographs he has taken may be examined."

"You have no objection, Manners, I suppose?" said Mr. Railton.

"None at all, sir. Of course, they will have to be developed. I was going to do it after tea—"

"They will not be trusted in your hands, Manners, under the circumstances," said Mr. Selby. "I will ask Mr. Lathom to develop the films, as he understands such matters."

"If Mr. Lathom will take the trouble, sir, I shall be glad," said Manners. "He can do it better than I can."

"Request Mr. Lathom to step here, Manners," said the Housemaster.

Manners fetched in Mr. Lathom. The master of the Fourth, who was a keen amateur photographer, willingly undertook to develop the negatives. He took away the camera at once to the dark-room.

"We shall soon have proof as to whether Manners has stated the facts or not," said Mr. Selby, with a grim look at the Shell fellow.

Mr. Railton frowned.

"I accept Manners' word," he said. "I have asked Mr. Lathom to develop the films, in order to place the matter beyond all doubt, that is all. Manners, you may go; you will be sent for if wanted."

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"Thank you, sir!" said Manners.

He returned to Study No. 6.

"Well?" said half a dozen voices.

"It's all serene," said Manners. "Lathom's developing the films, and he won't find Selby in any of the pictures. Selby will have to sing small, the blessed hunks."

"I trust he will have the good grace to beg your pardon, Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus.

"Catch him!" growled Manners.

Tea in Study No. 6 was finished, and the juniors were chatting football and photography, when there was a tap at the door, and Toby looked in.

"Master Manners wanted in Mr. Railton's study," he said.

"Right-ho, Toby! You chaps can come along and see Selby climb down, if you like," said Manners, with a chuckle. "I'll leave the study door half-open for you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The tea-party followed Manners downstairs. He tapped at Mr. Railton's door and entered, leaving the door well ajar. In the passage his friends waited for him, prepared to see what passed, and to enjoy the climbing-down process on the part of the obnoxious Form-master.

But there was a surprise in store for Tom Merry & Co. As Manners entered the study Mr. Railton fixed a grim and frowning look upon him.

"Manners!"

"Ye-es, sir," stammered Manners, quite taken aback by Mr. Railton's look and tone.

"I am surprised and shocked, Manners, to discover that you have spoken falsely."

"Wha-at, sir?"

"I was quite assured of it from the beginning," said Mr. Selby acidly.

There was a murmur in the passage of amazement and wrath. Manners stared blankly at the Housemaster in utter dismay.

CHAPTER 12.

Found Guilty!

MR. RAILTON frowned grimly. It was evident that it was a shock to him to discover Manners in a falsehood, as he had said. Mr. Selby did not, however, seem at all surprised.

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, was in the study with a strip of negatives in his hand, and he looked very distressed.

"What have you to say, Manners?" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"I—I don't quite understand," stammered Manners.

"I—I told you the exact truth, sir."

"The impudence of that boy is astounding!" ejaculated Mr. Selby. "He dares to deny what he has done, with the proof under his very eyes."

"Manners," said Mr. Railton sternly, "you remember that I forbade you to repeat your former offence, of photographing the masters—ahem!—on undesirable occasions. I warned you that you would be severely punished, and your camera would be confiscated. You have, however, taken a photograph of Mr. Selby in the ditch, and the presumption is therefore very strong that you moved the plank to cause the accident, as you have denied your own action."

"B-b-but I haven't, sir," blurted out Manners. "I told Mr. Selby I hadn't, sir."

"Do you venture to repeat that statement now, Manners?"

"Certainly, sir."

"You deny that you took a photograph of Mr. Selby struggling in the ditch?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Manners, I fear that I have been greatly deceived in you," said Mr. Railton. "Look at that roll of films, boy, and repeat your denial, if you have the audacity."

Manners glanced at the strip of film in Mr. Lathom's hand.

"Is that the film from my camera, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, Manners," said the little Form-master, in a low voice.

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voice. "I opened your camera, Manners, removed the film, and developed it. This is it."

"Then it is all right," said Manners. "There certainly isn't a photograph of Mr. Selby there."

"My dear Manners, look!" said Mr. Lathom mildly.

He held out the strip. Manners looked, and almost fell on the floor of the study. There were three separate photographs of Mr. Selby struggling in a muddy and reedy ditch. In the negative, of course, the lights were dark, and the darks light, but the Third-Form master was quite recognisable.

Manners stared at the negatives dumbfounded.

He felt as if his brain were turning.

How had those photographs of Mr. Selby come there? On his roll of films in his camera? He was dumb.

"Well, Manners?" Mr. Railton's voice was as hard as iron now. "Have you anything to say?"

"I—I—I don't understand—"

"Here is the boy's own handiwork," said Mr. Selby. "He photographed me three times, as you see, Mr. Railton, and denied having done so. I take it as proved that he played the trick with the plank that caused the accident. In any case, he has deliberately disobeyed his Housemaster's orders."

"I—I haven't," stammered Manners. "I—I can't imagine how those negatives got there. I—I must have got the wrong focus or something when I was taking something else, and—and it came in by accident."

"Do you consider that possible, Mr. Lathom?" asked the Housemaster.

The master of the Fourth shook his head sadly.

"No, sir. These photographs have been carefully taken, and evidently with the deliberate intention of making Mr. Selby—in the ditch—the centre of the picture."

"Have you anything further to say, Manners?"

"I—I don't understand."

"Very well. You remember my commands to you, Manners, and the penalty. This camera will be confiscated. I am sorry, as I am aware that it was presented to you for an act of courage. You will be camed by the headmaster. I shall report the whole circumstances of the case to Dr. Holmes. Had you confessed your fault I should have punished you myself. But your conscienceless prevarication makes the matter very much more serious. I have no doubt that Dr. Holmes will punish you in the presence of the whole school. For the present you may go."

"But, sir, I—I—I—"

"You may go, Manners."

The Shell fellow staggered, rather than walked, from the Housemaster's study. He looked utterly dazed. With the evidence against him, Mr. Railton had no choice but to find him guilty, and he realised that. It seemed to Manners that his head was turning round.

His chums met him in the passage in a state of surprise and consternation. They were utterly dismayed by the turn the affair had taken. Tom Merry caught his chum by the arm.

"Manners, old chap—"

"I—I think I must be going potty," stammered Manners. "I didn't take any snaps of Selby, I'll swear I didn't. Yet there they were in my camera. I—I must have done it without knowing it. I—I think I must be cracked."

"Steady, old chap!" said Talbot. "That's a bit thick, you know. Pull yourself together! You look quite knocked over."

"I feel quite knocked over," said Manners. "I'd have sworn before a judge that I hadn't snapped Selby in the ditch. I felt inclined to, but I didn't do it. I swear I didn't."

"But the snaps are there," said Blake.

"Yes, I know they are. Unless I was cracked, and didn't know what I was doing, I can't make it out."

Mr. Lathom came down the passage, and he gave Manners a sad glance. He, like the Housemaster, was shocked and surprised. Julian of the Fourth came down the stairs, and stopped the master of the Fourth.

"Can I use the dark-room now, sir? I want to do some developing."

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"Certainly, my boy," said Mr. Lathom.

"Thank you, sir!"

The Fourth-Form master went to his study. Julian was looking extremely cheerful.

"I've got a ripping set of interiors, you fellows," he remarked, not noticing for the moment the glum looks of the juniors. "Even if I don't bag the prize I shall have a ripping set of pictures. I've got most of the study, and a view of the Shell passage from the window end. Hallo! What's the matter with you chaps?"

Julian looked concerned as Tom Merry explained.

"That's jolly odd," he said. "This is what comes of being an enthusiastic camera fiend, Manners. You simply snapped Selby by instinct, you see, without even noticing what you were doing."

"I suppose I must have," said Manners dazedly. "It makes me think I'm going cracked. Raitlon thinks I'm a liar. So does Selby. But I don't care what Selby thinks. Only—only it's rotten for old Raitlon to look on me as a lying cad, like—like Levison—" Manners' voice broke. That was the unkindest cut of all. The coming punishment from the Head, even the loss of his beloved camera, did not hit him so hard as the loss of Mr. Raitlon's good opinion.

"Buck up!" said Tom Merry. "We're going to set it right somehow."

Julian went away with his camera to Mr. Lathom's dark-room. Tom Merry & Co. stood in a miserable group, discussing the matter. Talbot of the Shell was looking grim and thoughtful. Manners leaned on the banisters, almost overcome. Unless he was, as he had put it, "cracked," there was no explanation of the strange affair.

Mr. Raitlon came out of his study, evidently on his way to see the Head to make his report of the matter. His glance dwelt for a moment sternly on Manners. The acute distress in the junior's face caused his expression to change a little, and he paused.

"This has been a great shock to me, Manners," he said. "I had a very different opinion of you."

"I can't help it, sir," groaned Manners. "If I photographed Mr. Selby I must have been off my head when I did it, for I'll swear I never meant to. I took twelve photographs with that roll of films, and Mr. Selby wasn't in any of them, so far as I knew."

Mr. Raitlon's brow darkened again.

"If you persist in this ridiculous denial, Manners—"

"It is the truth, sir," said Tom Merry. "We all know that Manners wouldn't tell a lie."

"May I make a suggestion, sir?" said Talbot quietly. "Isn't it possible that there has been some trick?"

"Certainly not, Talbot! The camera was opened, and the films developed by Mr. Lathom."

"No mistake about that," groaned Manners. "I can't understand it. The photographs were there, right enough."

"But before Mr. Lathom had the camera?" said Talbot. "Mr. Raitlon, I am sure there has been some trick in the matter."

Mr. Raitlon looked rather curiously at Talbot. The Toff of the Shell had an old head on young shoulders.

"If you can make any suggestion, Talbot, to clear Manners of this very serious charge, you are at liberty to do so," he said.

"Thank you, sir! Where did you leave your camera when you came in, Manners?"

"In the study."

"Then you came into No. 6 to tea?"

"Yes."

"Then anybody could have got at the camera if he wanted to?"

"I suppose so."

"If somebody else had a camera the same size, with a roll of those films in it, he could have taken out your roll and put in his own roll if he had liked—somebody else who had photographed Mr. Selby in the ditch, I mean?"

Manners started. Mr. Selby, who had come on the scene from the Housemaster's study, sniffed, but Mr. Raitlon looked very attentive.

"Who'd play such a dirty trick as that?" muttered Lowther.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy simply yelled. "Bai Jove! Gweat Scott! Levison!"

"Levison!"

"Yaas, wathah! He played a wotten twick like that once befoah."

"I remember now!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "So he did! Why, it was as easy as anything to do, and Levison's just the chap to do it."

"But Levison hasn't a camera," said Blake.

"Bai Jove! I—I nevah thought of that!"

"But he has a camera," shouted Lowther—"a half-plate, with films, same size as Manners. We've seen it. He's hired it somewhere. He had it in his study this afternoon when Manners went for him."

There was a buzz of excited voices at once. Mr. Raitlon's voice broke in:

"Fetch Levison here, please!"

Two or three fellows hurried away in search of Levison. A crowd had gathered in the passage, and there was a breathless hush while they waited for Levison.

CHAPTER 13.

The Answer in the Negative.

LEVISON of the Fourth came up in a few minutes. He was looking surprised, but otherwise quite unconcerned.

"You sent for me, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, Levison," Mr. Raitlon scanned the cool, steady face of the cad of the Fourth. "Levison, I understand that you have a camera the same size as Manners'?"

"I think so, sir—half-plate," said Levison, looking astonished.

"Some films have been found in Manners' camera representing Mr. Selby at the time he had fallen into the ditch. Manners declares that he did not photograph Mr. Selby. It is suggested that someone else may have taken advantage of Manners' absence from his study to take out his films and put in another roll."

"Yes, sir?" said Levison.

His tone was one of polite inquiry. Mr. Raitlon coughed.

"Did you photograph Mr. Selby this afternoon, Levison?"

"I, sir? No."

"Did you see him in the ditch?"

"No, sir. I heard about it when I came in. I remember I asked these fellows as I passed them in the study what had happened."

"Yaas; that's so," murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Did you go to Manners' study, Levison?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"You did not touch his camera?"

"His camera, sir? Why should I?"

"Never mind that! Answer my question."

"I did not, sir."

"You deny having been in Manners' study at all since you came in?"

"Certainly, sir!" A bitter look came over Levison's face, and he smiled sardonically. "I understand now, sir. Now Manners has been found out, he would like to put it on me."

"That is what it appears like to me," said Mr. Selby, in a grinding voice.

Manners crimsoned.

"I never said—" he began.

"It was I who made the suggestion, not Manners," said Talbot of the Shell quietly. "I didn't think of you, Levison. I suggested that it might have been done by someone who used the same kind of films. I am certain that the trick was played by somebody."

"And you played just such a trick once before!" exclaimed Tom Merry hotly.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"There is no evidence against Levison," said Mr. Raitlon. "He could have played this trick, but so could anyone else who had a similar camera. The fact that Levison played such a trick last term is not evidence against him now. Can you account for your time, Levison, since you came in?"

"I've been having tea in my study, sir, with Mellish and Lumley-Lumley."

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"I guess that's correct," remarked Lumley-Lumley, who had followed Levison on the scene. "Levison was in the study five minutes after he came into the House, sir. I saw him come in from the window."

"That was time enough for him to play the trick," said Monty Lowther.

"Pretty quick work!" sneered Levison. "I stopped for a few minutes to speak to the fellows in No. 6, and then went into my own study."

Mr. Railton glanced over the crowd of excited juniors.

"Does anyone remember having been in the Shell passage at the time?" he asked.

There was a general shaking of heads.

"Levison would pick a time when there was nobody about, of course," said Blake.

"All in five minutes!" sneered Levison.

Julian of the Fourth, with stains of chemicals on his fingers and a purple smudge on his nose, came up from the dark-room. He joined the crowd in the passage, curious to know what was "on."

"Hold on a minute, sir!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy excitedly. "Pewwaps Julian saw somethin' of Levison while he was hangin' about the passages. He had the feafuhl cheek to snap me the othah day, and pewwaps—"

"Very well; I will question Julian. Julian, it is a question whether anyone was seen to enter Manners' study while Manners was in No. 6. If you can give evidence—"

"Only Levison, sir," said Julian.

"Levison!"

"You saw Levison entering Manners' study?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Not entering, sir—coming out," said Julian, in surprise. "I was taking the Shell passage from the window, and Levison came out of Tom Merry's study and went away very quickly."

"When was that, Julian?" asked the Housemaster, his face growing very grim.

"About an hour ago, sir. Manners was in No. 6. It was a few minutes after I had called in there."

Tom Merry's face lighted up.

"That settles it!" he exclaimed. "That was the time!"

"What have you to say, Levison?" asked Mr. Railton sternly. "You have just denied entering Manners' study at all!"

Levison breathed hard for a moment.

"If you choose to believe him, sir, I've got nothing to say," said Levison bitterly. "They're all in it together to put this on me. I repeat that I haven't been in Manners' study at all since I came in."

Julian burst into a chuckle, which drew surprised glances upon him from all sides. Mr. Railton frowned.

"This is no laughing matter, Julian."

Julian coloured.

"Excuse me, sir, but I can prove what I've said."

"Indeed! In what way?"

"I mentioned that I took a view of the Shell passage, sir. Levison's in the photograph, coming out of Tom Merry's study."

There was a chirrup of delight from the whole Co. Levison's face was deadly pale, and his eyes had a hunted look. The toils were closing in on him.

"You are sure of what you say, Julian?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Oh, yes, sir! I've just developed the films, and they're drying now. Levison comes out quite clearly, sneaking out of the study."

"Huwray!"

"The films will be examined," said Mr. Railton. "Levison, do you now deny Julian's statement?"

Levison bit his lip hard. The thought was in his mind that Julian was "bluffing," that it was a trick to catch him.

"Yes, sir," he said desperately. "I deny it from beginning to end. I am quite certain there is nothing of the kind in the film!" Levison was playing the game out to the bitter end.

"Very well," said Mr. Railton. "I shall examine the film. Remain here till I return. Come with me, Julian, and show me the film."

The Housemaster strode away, followed by Julian. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 402.

The crowd of juniors waited breathlessly for his return. Levison stood with beads of perspiration on his brow. There was a slim chance yet, but he felt that the game was up.

In five minutes Mr. Railton returned.

His brow was like thunder.

The juniors hung on his words.

"Julian's film shows Merry's study, with a boy leaving it," he said. "In the negative the boy in question looks decidedly like Levison. If you persist in your denial, Levison, the matter will be left till the print can be taken."

"It's still light enough, sir," said Julian. "It can be done to-day."

Levison bit his lip hard.

"That will settle the matter beyond all possible doubt," said Mr. Railton. "Have you anything to say, Levison?"

All eyes were upon the cad of the Fourth. His face was reddening and paling by turns. The toils had closed round him at last.

"I—I"—Levison spoke thickly—"I—I— The fact is, sir, I—I—I did it for a joke, sir. I meant to own up!"

"You admit, Levison, that you placed a roll of films in Manners' camera?"

Levison licked his dry lips. After the proof that he had been in Tom Merry's study, and after his denial of having been there, he knew that a lie would not serve him.

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"You photographed Mr. Selby in the ditch, then, intending to play this trick on Manners? Doubtless you moved the plank to cause the accident, as you must have thought out this trick from the beginning," said Mr. Railton.

"I have no doubt of it," said Mr. Selby furiously. The Third-Form master had lost one victim, but he had found another, and his own injustice to Manners made him all the more furious with the real culprit. "The boy is an utter rascal, sir—little short of a criminal!"

"You will come with me to the Head, Levison!"

Without a word Levison of the Fourth followed the Housemaster to the Head's study.

He left a joyous crowd behind him. Manners was surrounded by a congratulating swarm of juniors, and Dick Julian came in for quite an ovation. And while Tom Merry & Co. were rejoicing, there were sounds of anguish proceeding from the Head's study, where Levison of the Fourth was receiving the flogging of his life.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had announced that he would graciously allow Julian to use that celebrated photograph of Study No. 6, in which Gussy was represented up-ended by his affectionate chums. That was a reward for Julian's services in clearing Manners, and bringing Levison's guilt home to him. But the swell of St. Jim's looked a little green when the result of the "Weekly Snap" competition was announced, and Julian's picture, having "bagged" the five pound prize, was printed in the photographic journal. It was agreed that Julian deserved the prize, but Arthur Augustus shook his head very seriously over the picture. There was a rush on the copies of the "Weekly Snap" that week; everybody seemed to want to keep that picture of the swell of St. Jim's, in an attitude which, as Arthur Augustus justly complained, could only be described as "weally widdleulous."

After their tremendous expenditure on plates Study No. 6 were somewhat surprised and disappointed at not bagging the prize. But they congratulated Julian very heartily, and so did Manners, who secured the second prize.

As for Levison, all he had secured was a flogging, but it was agreed, too, that he had secured exactly what he deserved.

THE END.

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The previous instalments told how:—

NORRIS BRENT, on returning to England with his Chinese servant YEN HOW, is greeted by his unworthy cousin, GUY MELVILLE.

Despite the fact that he had during a journey through a desert stolen the last drop of water, and left them to perish, Guy Melville pretends to be pleased at seeing them again. He informs his cousin that, owing to the death of an uncle, he is now owner of the estate Eagle's Cliff, and offers him a position thereon, which is accepted.

One day Yen How surprises his master by informing him that MING YUNG, a Chinese mandarin, and his ward, SILVER PEARL, whose acquaintance Brent had previously made in China, are staying at Eagle's Nest.

Brent discovers that Ming Yung has come to Eagle's Nest in order to experiment with an invention with which he hopes to secure world-wide power.

Guy Melville, for some sinister reason, desires the death of his cousin, and secures the assistance of a gipsy, KARL MARROK, to aid him in his foul purpose.

Brent finds a ruby of great value, which, after it has been stolen by Guy Melville, Ming Yung gains possession of.

Ming Yung, in a fit of temper, uses his marvellous invention to destroy a yacht belonging to one of Melville's guests, and is consequently forced to make a hurried return to China with his ward.

Brent and Yen How follow the fugitives, and their search leads them to an old Chinese temple. This they enter to rest for the night; but, being fired at in the darkness, are forced to flee therefrom, and seek refuge in a scrub.

In the morning Brent ventures out of the scrub, and is startled to see his cousin, Guy Melville, some distance ahead of him.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Mountain Torrent—The Cousins Meet—Lords of the Wild.

Overwhelmed by surprise, Norris Brent, utterly forgetful of the danger that he was exposing himself to, stood and stared at his cousin. The thought that the persistent enemy who had followed him throughout the night might be Guy Melville had never once occurred to his mind.

He had believed the other to be at Eagle's Nest, where he had left him upon his own departure from England. Amazement, perplexity, and angry indignation held possession of him. The whistle of a bullet close to his head warned him of the imminent peril that he was in.

"Come!" he said quickly to Yen How. "We must be off. They've spotted us!"

Leaving the shelter of the pile of rocks the comrades rushed down the slope into the valley. They had not gone far when several more shots were fired at them. Looking back they saw Guy Melville and another man, whom both recognised immediately as Karl Marrok, in hot pursuit.

"Keep up the pace!" said Brent. "We're out of range at present, and they're only wasting ammunition on us. Once we're across the river we shall have beaten them!"

Leaping over the rocks that were scattered promiscuously about the rough, broken ground, they came to the edge of the stream, which was a foaming, roaring torrent, between thirty and forty yards wide.

Together they plunged in, and were instantly swept away down-stream. The force of the current was greater than they had supposed it would be. By hard and sustained effort they managed to make slight progress in the direction of the far bank, but it was not long before they were once more under revolver-fire.

The danger came from Karl Marrok, who, running along the shore, subjected them to an incessant fusillade. He was alone, for his companion, driven on by eager hate and recklessness, had sprung into the river in pursuit of his cousin.

Quickly did Melville have cause to repent of his imprudence. He was a poor swimmer, and the swirling stream carried him whither it would, despite his desperate attempts to cross to the opposite bank. Soon he was in the direct line of Marrok's revolver-fire, a circumstance that intensified his fears and turned his rage upon his associate.

"Stop firing, you fool!" he spluttered. "And throw me a rope, or something—I'm almost done!"

It was true. His strength was failing him fast. Yielding to a panic of terror he screamed out and struggled furiously, the result being that he sank under the water, reappearing a moment or two later, only to sink again.

Drowning like a rat, Melville suddenly struck against a hard, unyielding substance. He clutched and held on to it with the strength of frenzied despair. His head bobbed up into the light, and he was able to breathe again.

Shaking the water from his eyes he looked round with a dazed, frightened stare. He was clinging to a shaft of rock set down almost in mid-stream. Lying across the top of this granite pillar, a few inches above the foaming surface of the water, was his cousin.

To this precarious point of refuge, Brent had been swept by the current, and, his head coming in contact with the rock, he was partially stunned by the shock. The next thing he became conscious of was that Guy Melville was close to him.

Every now and then, the other vanished from sight as a wave washed over him, and this repeated submersion weakened his hold on the rock, to which his cut and bleeding fingers clutched with desperate tenacity. Seeing his cousin watching him he opened his lips in a cowardly appeal.

"Save me!" he cried. "I can't hold on many seconds longer, Norris, and unless you do something for me I shall be drowned. You must help me! Remember that we are cousins!"

"I'm not likely to forget it," said Brent, a look of cold scorn and contempt in his face, "for I owe it to you that my life has been in danger for months past. Time after time you have attempted to kill me!"

"No, no!" lied Melville, his features twitching horribly. "It was Ming Yung who did that. He is your enemy. It was a cursed day that we first met him. You have no cause to distrust me!"

Impatiently Brent glanced away down-stream. He could

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see no sign of Yen How. A consuming anxiety as to what had happened to his comrade seized him.

"Look here," he said roughly to Melville, "if I pushed you back into the water and let you drown, I should only be acting in common justice. But, as you reminded me just now, you are my cousin, and therefore I'm going to leave you to the punishment that will most certainly fall upon you, sooner or later. You can take my place on the top of the rock here. There is plenty of room for one!"

As Brent dived off into the surging stream, Marrok fired at him from the bank. The bullet sped harmlessly by, and when he rose to the surface a few moments later, the lad was out of range. Carefully husbanding his strength he floated onward with the swift current.

At last the river widened out. Starting to swim again, Brent found that he was able to make easy progress, and it was not long before he was standing on the opposite bank. From behind a clump of rushes, Yen How came forward to meet him.

"You here no too soon," said the trusty Chinaman. "My begin to fear you had makee sink. What thing have kept you?"

When Yen How had listened to the explanation that his other gave to him he shook his head and wrinkled up his yellow face into a comically, forbidding frown.

"Velly silly thing you do!" he remarked. "More sense you show if you had pushed Mista Melville under the water. Then you get rid of him, and he trouble you no more. Now he do you more harm than ever before!"

Norris Brent uttered a reassuring laugh. "I'm not afraid of anything he may try to do to me," he said. "Besides, although I gave him a chance to save his life, he may not have had the luck to profit by it. The man I do fear is Karl Marrok, the gipsy!"

"What for they come this side?" Brent shook his head. "Only wish I could tell you," he replied. "I imagine, though, that it has something to do with Ming Yung. Most likely they hope to discover the secret of his mysterious invention and profit by it!"

Yen How chuckled, and rubbed his hands together. "In that case," he said, "we need not trouble ourselves very much about them. They will be attended to by Ming Yung himself. He will know how to treat them, my tell you!"

The comrades pushed on down the valley. The hot sun soon dried their wet clothes, and now that the danger which had threatened them was past, they made light of it. Still, Brent would have given a great deal to know the reason for Guy Melville and his gipsy associate being in China, especially as he believed that the object they had in view concerned himself in some way.

The valley ended at the foot of a mountain range, whose lower slopes were thickly-wooded with tree and bush, and the comrades, nothing daunted by the formidable climb in front of them, commenced the ascent.

It was fresh and cool in the shade, and, a good track being found, there was no delay occasioned by the necessity that would otherwise have arisen of forcing a path through the dense thickets that abounded on every side. Many sorts of wild birds were numerous, and Chinese deer raced away at the approach of the young travellers, who keenly regretted that they had no rifles with them.

Those which they had taken from the pirates, along with several other things, had been stolen from them soon after their landing on the China coast. Fortunately, Brent did not lose the English money that was secured in the pockets of the belt that he wore next to his skin, and this, changed into current coin of the realm, promised to last him for a long time to come.

So far he and Yen How had been in a position to provide themselves fairly well with the necessities of existence. Now, however, they were differently placed, for many days might elapse before they were in an inhabited region again.

With nothing but a compass and a map that Brent possessed to guide them, they had set out to reach Ming Yung's mountain home far to the south-west. That they were travelling in the right direction was all that they knew with any degree of certainty.

Now, more than ever before, did Brent value the companionship of his Chinese comrade. Without the other by his side he would have been lost. There was little that Yen How could not be trusted to do at any time, and now that he was back in his native land he was in his element.

On the way up the mountain-side he discovered a nest full of large eggs, which, being cooked over a wood fire, were found to be delicious eating. Thus refreshed, the comrades renewed their journey, and were soon at a high altitude.

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"We shall be out in the open in another minute," said Brent, as the sunlight grew stronger. "What a pity it is that we can't enjoy the forest shade until we're well over the mountains. As it is, we must put up with no end of a grilling."

"No mind that," Yen How answered. "My likee heat better than cold any day. Can stand any amount of it. Only—"

There was an alarming crash, and Yen How disappeared from sight. In stepping from the track to avoid a bush he had trodden on what was apparently solid earth, scattered over with leaves, that gave way immediately under his weight. It was a longish drop that he made, but, alighting on his feet, he preserved his balance by grasping the side of the hole into which he had fallen.

"Hello!" shouted Brent. "Are you hurt?"

"Not a bit of it," Yen How rejoined. "This is a tiger pit. Lucky for me there is no one at home. But I'll have hard work to climb out."

"Hold on a minute," said Brent encouragingly, "and you shall soon be with me again."

Running back to a thicket the track had passed through, he uprooted a bamboo about fifteen feet in length and returned with it to the brink of the pit.

"Here you are!" he cried, lowering the pole to his comrade. "Hang on to it, and I'll have you up in no time!"

At that moment a fearsome bellow sounded, and out from some bushes not a dozen yards off bounded a great buffalo. With its huge head lowered until it almost touched the ground, the savage brute charged straight at Brent, who, giving a warning shout to Yen How, slipped down the bamboo into the tiger-pit.

Fortunately for both, Yen How stepped aside and caught his comrade. Had he not done so he and Brent must have been thrown on to the pointed wooden stakes placed at the bottom of the pit, and so impaled as to ensure for them a lingering and painful death.

"Look out for a landslide!" shouted Brent. "It's coming!"

A quantity of stones and dirt rattled into the pit next moment, but the buffalo checked its fierce rush in time to save itself from a like fate to that which had befallen the comrades. Snorting and bellowing, the massive brute glared down at the prisoners, who feared that in its rage it might spring upon them.

Keeping close to the side of the pit they debated what they should do. To remain where they were until the buffalo departed seemed the wisest course to follow, and this they decided to do.

"The ugly beast isn't likely to stay there for any length of time," said Brent, "and if we keep quiet it will go away all the sooner. It's a rotten fix to be in, but no doubt this pit has saved our lives, for the brute would have had us both down on the track and trampled us to death."

"That is so," agreed Yen How, who accepted the situation with characteristic calm and resignation. "No animal more cunning than Chinese buffalo. He steal behind you so quiet and gentle that you no hear him coming. Then, *ba-ruff!* He charge like a steam-engine, and everything is up with you unless you have tiger-pit to fall into."

Brent gave a laugh.

"For choice," he said, "I'd sooner climb a tree. You would be able to see what was going on then, which is more than you can do now."

After a long time the buffalo drew back out of sight. It became quiet, and the comrades, hearing no sound of it, at last determined that it had gone back into the forest. Being convinced of this, they naturally concluded that there was no longer any necessity for them to remain where they were.

"Keep the pole fixed firmly," said Brent. "and I'll shin up it and have a look round. Here goes!"

Gripping hold of the bamboo he started to climb, and in a few moments was level with the edge of the pit. There, not many yards away, was the buffalo. It was lying down facing him, but as it did not move he realised that it was asleep.

"Come on, Yen How!" he called down to his companion. "The coast is clear for us at last!"

Nimble ascending the bamboo pole, Yen How reached his comrade's side. He started as he saw the buffalo, but Brent quickly reassured him, and together they hurried noiselessly away from the spot.

All at once Yen How caught sight of a moving patch of brownish yellow between the trees. He paused to look at it, and a ludicrous expression of mingled surprise and consternation overspread his face.

"My word!" he whispered. "You see that tiger?"

His companion had already seen it, for it was only a short distance off. Strange to say, however, the tiger took no



"Here you are!" Brent cried, lowering the pole to his comrade. "Hang on to it, and I'll have you up in no time!" At that moment a fearsome bellow sounded, and out from some bushes not a dozen yards off bounded a great buffalo. (See page 24.)

notice of the comrades. All its attention was given to the buffalo. Creeping sinuously over the uneven ground, it approached to within seven or eight feet of its intended prey; then, with swiftly lashing tail, it crouched low among the grass for a few moments.

Next it sprang forward with a long leap that brought it down lengthwise on the buffalo's broad back. There was a tremendous bellow as its victim woke to the knowledge of what was happening to it. In a moment the combatants were furiously struggling together; but the comrades, gladly seizing the opportunity to escape, did not pause to witness the outcome of the fight.

Darting out into the open they hastened on up the mountain, and did not halt until they had reached the summit. Then, worn out and gasping for breath, they flung themselves down on the hard rock.

"Wonder who had the best of it?" Yen How remarked. "Tiger, my think."

"Don't know, and don't much care," said Brent, with a little laugh, "but I'd like to hear that they both rolled down into the pit. Then they'd experience a similar sort of feeling to the one we did, and feel mighty sorry for themselves!"

After a short rest the comrades moved on down the far side of the mountain. For over a week they pursued their toilsome journey, suffering much from hunger and thirst, for food and water were hard to procure.

Then one morning Yen How pointed in the direction of a native village standing on the banks of a wide river.

"We pass that side once before," he said, "on our way down to Canton. Velly soon now we see Ming Yung again."

Paying no attention to the remark, Brent stopped and bent his head in a listening attitude.

"I can hear music of some kind," he said. "What can be going on?"

Yen How, also hearing the noise, understood the meaning of it.

"My savee," he remarked. "This day the Chinese makee chin-chin to the great dragon. Suppose they come this way, we shall see them. But more better they no see us."

Taking the hint, Brent led the way to a thick bamboo grove that overgrew a high point of the river-bank. It provided them with an excellent post of observation, and, what was as important for their purpose, it effectually screened them from sight.

The Dragon Festival—Seen from the Thicket—Ho Beng's Surprise.

Ten minutes later a procession of long boats, paddled by Chinese fantastically attired, and carrying native musicians blowing horns and trumpets, and beating drums, rounded a distant bend of the stream.

The largest boat was gay with gilding and paint. Its carved bow represented a winged dragon, from whose open jaws issued a cloud of coloured smoke. Astern there was a raised deck, covered by a silk awning, on which stood, side by side, a man and girl.

Long before he could catch a glimpse of their faces, Norris Brent knew instinctively that these two persons were Ming Yung and Silver Pearl. He guessed right. The yellow wizard and his ward were taking part in a river festival held in honour of the dragon, the legendary guardian of their land that the Chinese have paid homage to for thousands of years.

This superstitious veneration for a mythical creature Ming Yung shared with the rest of his fellow-countrymen. It was a curious thing that such a man as he, who knew all that there was to be known of modern science, should hold to a belief so utterly at variance with reason and common-sense.

It might have been that he so believed because he had never doubted. At any rate, the fact remained that in this direction he was almost as superstitious as the strangely-clothed and ignorant heathen around him.

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NEXT WEDNESDAY: "THE CALL OF THE CINEMA!"

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

The boats swopt on, and at last Brent was able to obtain a good view of Silver Pearl. She was paler than when he had last seen her, but beautiful as ever, and a wild impulse that he was barely able to restrain came to him to rush down the bank calling her name. So entirely were his thoughts centred on the girl that he took no notice of her companion, and was oblivious to all that was taking place until Yen How directed his notice to it.

"Look—see!" said his comrade, glancing towards a small sailing junk that, coming up the river, had been stopped and surrounded by the leading boats in the festive procession. "My think something going to happen. What for they stop that junk?"

From the river came an excited hum of voices that suddenly rose to a shout of angry execration. The cause of this agitation amongst the Chinese was speedily revealed in the shape of Karl Marrok, who, revolver in hand, prevented the yellow men from boarding the junk.

With insolent bravado the gipsy smoked a cigarette as he kept the Chinese at bay. That he did not fear them in the least was obvious to anyone who watched him. Base and evil though he was, he possessed the redeeming quality of unflinching courage.

"What a nerve the fellow has!" muttered Brent. "He's as cool and collected as if he wasn't in the slightest danger. Wonder where my cousin is?"

There was no sign of Guy Melville. Apparently Marrok was the only person on board the junk. Emboldened by the knowledge that they had only one man to deal with, the Chinese in the boats suddenly made a concerted movement against him.

"Springing" up on to the deck of the sailing-vessel, they rushed on Marrok from all sides. He fired twice, missing each time, and was then seized and hurled against the mast. In another moment he would have been done to death by the howling mob had not Ming Yung, in a ringing voice that made itself clearly heard above the din, commanded that no harm should be done to the white man.

Instantly the Chinese fell back from Marrok, who, a few moments later, found himself confronted by Ming Yung himself. The mutual recognition was an immediate one. For an instant the gipsy showed a faint sign of alarm at beholding his redoubtable foe. Then his lips parted in a smile.

"We are well met," he said. "Little did I expect to see you until I reached your home, and even there, I expect, it would have been difficult work to obtain an audience with you."

Grim as death looked the yellow vizard.

"Where is your master?" he inquired.

"If you mean Guy Melville," was the answer, "I don't know, and neither do I care. He was in England when I left that country nearly three months ago. Grew tired of him, and resumed my former life as a sailor. Worked my way out to Canton on a cargo steamer, and then started on this journey to see you."

"With what object?"

Karl Marrok smiled knowingly up into Ming Yung's sombre face.

"When I tell you," he said, "you will be surprised. You will also regard me as your friend. Although Guy Melville is in England his cousin is out here. He and a Chinaman, Yen How by name, followed you to this country. What their object is you know probably far better than myself."

Ming Yung uttered a harsh laugh.

"Lies will not serve you here," he said. "The white youth you refer to—Norris Brent—perished in the Indian Ocean, where he was drowned from the same vessel that I travelled by to China."

"What!" cried Marrok, scarcely believing what he heard. "But that is impossible! I know, as an absolute fact, that Brent is alive and in China."

Quickly he told the other of his meeting with Brent and THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 402.

Yen How, and of their escape, making no mention, however, of Guy Melville, or of circumstances that he deemed it best the man before him should know nothing about.

That Marrok spoke the truth Ming Yung was now convinced.

Hurled into the sea, Norris Brent had escaped the cruel death intended for him, and was now once more threatening his powerful enemy with some unknown danger. A vague, chilling sense of fear that was new to him assailed the yellow vizard.

In the past he had contemptuously swept his foes from his path, and they had troubled him no more. But he had failed to strike down the British lad, though, time after time, he had tried to. Was fate, as represented by Brent, going to cheat him out of all that he had set his heart on? Trembling, he passed his hand across his brow.

"You leave Brent to me," said Karl Marrok meaningly, his sharp eyes narrowly watching every movement of the other. "If he ever seeks to cross my will again so much the worse for him!"

"Do you hate the boy?"

"Hate him!" exclaimed the gipsy, with an evil smile. "I should never die happy unless I knew that through me he had come to a sudden end!"

In the short silence that ensued Ming Yung decided that Marrok might render him useful service for a time.

"You shall remain with me!" he declared. "Do my will, and give me implicit obedience in all things, and your reward shall be a handsome one. But fail me in a single thing, and you will have cause to regret that you ever lived to set eyes on me."

Indicating by a gesture of his hand that he did not wish the other to say anything more, he left the junk, leaving a Chinese guard on board, and returned to his own boat. Then the procession, in which the craft sailed by Marrok now figured, went on down the river.

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Norris Brent, who had watched the scene in growing wonder and amazement. "What'd you make of it?"

Yen How shook his head.

"You askee me another!"

he answered. "My thought that Ming Yung would have Marrok knocked on the head, and thrown into the water. Instead of that, the two are

more like friends than enemies."

"Marrok is a cunning dog," said Brent, "and he's no doubt succeeded in favourably impressing Ming Yung with a lying yarn of some sort. It's lucky for us we've seen what he have, for now we know a little of what we're up against."

Leaving the bamboo grove, the comrades proceeded on their journey, taking care to avoid passing close to any village, and keeping off the tracks that they had made use of before.

On the way, Brent thought constantly of his cousin, who, judging by the look of things, had met with his death. He did not pretend to a regret that he could not honestly feel, but he would have greatly liked to know what fate had really overtaken Guy Melville, and whether Marrok had taken a leading part in it.

"Marrok would play him false if it suited him to do so," he said. "I know that by my own experience of the fellow. Of course, Guy may have been hidden away on the junk somewhere. He wouldn't have had the ghost of a chance of deceiving Ming Yung."

Late in the afternoon, the travellers came in sight of Ming Yung's picturesque home. It looked just as it had done so many months before, when they had fled from it for their lives, and the memories of that time of dire peril came back with a rush to their minds. Had they escaped then only to return now and find death awaiting them? The question was a hard one to answer.

"Tell you what it is," said Brent. "We've a chance of entering the place and finding a good hiding-place before Ming Yung and his crowd of retainers return from their river

A QUARTERMASTER-SERGEANT'S APPEAL.

France, September 16th, 1915.

"Dear Editor,—The men of my company are so constantly asking me for reading matter, and as yours is the kind which seems to find very great favour with them, I have determined to ask you to appeal to your readers to send along the 'Gen.' Library and companion papers as they finish with them. If they will address them to me, I will see that they are distributed and redistributed. In fact, if I get sufficient I will form a kind of library, and thus ensure every man getting some reading whenever he wants it. My name and address is:

"COMPANY QUARTERMASTER-SERGEANT CAVE,

"C' Company 7th Leicester Regiment,

"British Expeditionary Force.

"The men are at present billeted in a town which has been almost deserted by its civil population, and have practically nothing to do when resting; and a few of your papers, such as the 'Gen.' and 'The Penny Popular,' would help to pass away the time.

"Wishing you every success, I am, yours faithfully,
"A. C. CAVE (Company Quartermaster-Sergeant)."

jaunt. Very few have been left at home, I imagine, and as we know our way about, we can easily dodge them."

"A velly good plan," Yen How assented. "But we must keep a sharp look-out for the dogs, or they'll bark and give the show away. Seems to me," he added, glancing at his companion, "that if we are going to stop this side for a while, that native dress you have on will prove our salvation. All you need now to make you look exactly like a real Chinaman, is a nice, long pigtail."

"And that you'll never get me to wear," laughed Brent. "It was only because my own old clothes were worn to rags that I had these, and jolly glad I shall be when the time comes for me to put them on one side."

Approaching the house from the riverside, the comrades ascended the steep, rugged slope of the hill, down which they had rushed when Ming Yung's native servants had pursued them. Screened by the trees and bushes, they ran no risk of being overlooked, and at last came under the high, massive wall, that surrounded the premises.

"The gateway is shut," said Brent, "and if we opened it someone might hear us. Give me a log up this tree, and I'll look over into the compound and see if there is anyone about."

Climbing the tree, which was densely foliated, Brent peered down into the large compound on the other side of the wall. There were dogs sleeping there, and an old Chinaman, whom he remembered to have seen before, sat smoking a long pipe just inside the closed gateway.

There was no other sign of life to be seen. Evidently the Chinaman by the gate and his dogs were keeping a perfunctory watch on the house, which was deserted for the time being. Descending from his perch, Brent acquainted his companion with the result of his observation.

"Velly good!" Yen How commented. "But the dogs would spot us the moment we set foot in the compound, and though the house is shut up, my fancy that there is sure to be someone inside. My savvy Chinese ways. To go in there now would be to walk into a trap."

But Brent was not to be dissuaded from making the venture that he had planned in his own mind during the previous few minutes. This was nothing less than to enter the house and search for some practical proof that Ming Lung was still engaged in experimenting with the diabolical violet ray, that was such a menace to the power of the white race.

"Anyhow, I'm going to risk it," he declared, in answer to his companion. "You must keep watch outside and give me a warning should it be necessary to do so."

Silently Yen How acquiesced in the proposal. It did not meet with his approval, but it was not for him to set himself in opposition to his comrade's wish, nor would it, as he knew perfectly well, have the slightest effect upon the other did he do so.

Scaling the wall, Brent let himself to the ground on the far side. The Chinese watchman did not stir, nor did the sleeping dogs awake. Swiftly and quietly the lad hurried across the compound to a long verandah at the side of the house.

Eureka! A swing door that he tried opened to his push upon it. The room within was sparsely furnished, and, after taking a quick glance round it, he passed into the one beyond.

There was nothing here to attract his notice, and he was about to leave when the rustle of a paper fell on his ear. The sound came from behind some gaily embroidered silk curtains hanging at an inner doorway. Cautiously he stole forward and peered round the edge of the curtain next to the wall.

At a table in the apartment beyond a Chinaman was writing on long, red slips of rice-paper, such as the Chinese often use for the purpose. A single glance showed Brent that the individual was Ho Beng, Ming Yung's sly and crafty secretary.

Scarcely had he made this discovery, when he heard a long, low whistle. It was the warning that Yen How had promised to give him in case of emergency. Almost immediately afterwards a furious barking came from the dogs in the compound.

Starting back, Brent turned to retrace his steps, but in his haste he was not so cautious as before, and a board creaked loudly under his tread.

"Who is there?" called Ho Beng sharply, rising from his seat, and pulling back the silk curtains at the doorway. "Ha! Name of a dog! How did you get in here?"

He imagined Brent to be a Chinese coolie, for the other had his back turned to him, and the fading light was deceptive. The challenge made the intruder realise that he was in a most awkward situation. What should he do? Discovery was certain.

Again Ho Beng called out, suspiciously this time, and came into the room. Then he recoiled with an expression of fear-stricken amazement, as the supposed Chinaman swung round and revealed to him the features of the lad whom, like his master, he had believed to be lying in an ocean grave.

"Silence!" said Brent sharply. "One cry from your lips will be your last. You are at my mercy, and you'll have to do exactly as I tell you to."

Catching sight of a pair of crossed daggers hanging from the wall, he took one down. It was a formidable weapon, not unlike a Malay kris, and sharp of blade as a razor.

"Now that I have this in my hand," he said to the enraged but terrified Ho Beng, "I care not if you try to trick me, for you will be the sufferer. You must know of a place quite near here, and under this roof, where it will be perfectly safe for me to remain until I can choose my own time for departure without anyone else knowing it."

A cunning look flashed in Ho Beng's eyes. What a fool, he told himself, was this feringhee to make such a request. He had but to comply with it to ensure the other's speedy doom.

"You have me in your power," he said, affecting a reluctance that he was far from feeling. "There is nothing else for me to do but to obey you. Come with me. I will lead you to a sure hiding-place."

Keeping a sharp eye on him, Brent followed his guide through two or three rooms, down a long passage, and up a winding stone staircase to a door in the wall. Opening it with a key, Ho Beng flung the door open, disclosing a dark and cheerless interior.

"You can remain here," he said, with a bland and innocent smile, "until I return. Have no fear. No one will come to look for you here!"

Brent gave Ho Beng a smart push.

"Go on in!" he said, with a cheery grin. "You must be my companion. I hate solitude. If you behave yourself, we shall get on very well together!"

Sick with fear, wild with humiliation at the thought of how neatly he had been tricked when he believed all the time that he was tricking another, Ho Beng did as he was ordered to.

"Now, hand me over the key," said Brent. "Thanks!"

Then, closing the door, he locked it.

'Another grand long instalment of this fine serial story next Wednesday. Order your copy early.'

"MAGNET" & "GEM" READERS



MISS DOROTHY DEAN JAY,
Colchester.



MISS WINIFRED DRURY,
Birmingham.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: **"THE CALL OF THE CINEMA!"**

A magnificent new, complete school tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



For Next Wednesday—

"THE CALL OF THE CINEMA!"

By Martin Clifford.

Next week's magnificent, long, complete story of the St. Jim's scholars brings to mind lively recollections of the days when Monty Lowther, the humorist of the Shell, was staggered, and threw in his lot with a touring company. History repeats itself on this occasion, save that the cinema, and not the boards, fascinates the foolish junior. Lowther leaves St. Jim's under dramatic circumstances and, through the influence of Mr. Curll, the broken-down actor, who is strongly addicted to the cup that cheers, he finds employment as a relief pianist at a picture-house. His experiences, during the fortnight that follows, are very painful ones; and the boy who so promptly answered

"THE CALL OF THE CINEMA"

needs very little persuasion to return to the old school and the more elevating society of his loyal chums.

I WANT YOUR OPINION NOW.

H. V. T., a Manchester reader of the "Gem" Library, comes to me this week with a very important and interesting suggestion. He declares that the "Penny Popular," our well-known Friday companion paper, would merit its title more than ever if the tales of Tom Merry & Co. were topical and up-to-date, and did not deal with the early schooldays of the characters in question. Moreover, it has occurred to me that the "Penny Pop" would be considerably enhanced if the school stories dealt with the rivalry between St. Jim's and Greyfriars.

I will do nothing in the matter, however, until I have consulted my numerous chums. Will those who care spare the time please drop me a note saying what they think of the idea? This is the suggested change in a nutshell:

To discard the stories dealing with the early schooldays of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's; and to introduce, in their stead, entirely new stories of these famous school-boys, and their healthy feud with Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.

In thanking my Manchester chum for his kind suggestion, I may repeat what I have said many times before, viz., that I am always only too pleased to give my readers a hearing on any matter in connection with the welfare of the "Gem" Library and its companion papers.

THE SPORTING SPIRIT.

Ever since a certain story appeared in the "Magnet" Library, describing how Bob Cherry of Greyfriars conquered Tom Merry of St. Jim's in fistic encounter, disconsolate letters have been drifting into this office, in which the writers bemoan that such a thing should have come to pass. Tom Merry beaten! How absurd! And by Bob Cherry, too! What ever are the companion papers coming to?

I can only denounce this sort of thing as being very peevish. Tom Merry is a human boy, not a phenomenon, and he cannot be expected to win all along the line in everything he undertakes. Personally, in reading the story—which, by the way, was entitled "Sportsmen All"—I could not but admire the game way in which Tom fought his fight up to the eighth round. And Bob Cherry, mark you, is a splendid boxer, hard

as nails, and full of pluck, skill, and energy. There was nothing preposterous in the way in which he knocked out Tom Merry. It was a good, well-balanced victory.

Those boys who have grumbled and grouched at Tom Merry's defeat are not good sportsmen. They must allow their heroes to take hard knocks as well as give them. Time was when Bob Cherry himself was beaten to the wide by Peter Todd, of the same school. But did Magnetites get up on their hind legs and cry "Shame!" Did they go straightway into hysterics? Not at all! They took the situation calmly and philosophically, and the one or two discontented Gemites should take a leaf out of their book, and be good sportsmen.

Just one more word. I have talked this matter over with the "Gem" and "Magnet" authors, and very shortly either Mr. Clifford or Mr. Richards will afford Tom Merry a chance of winning back his lost laurels.

OUR ROLL OF DISHONOUR.

A Choice Collection of Cads.

A good many "Gem" readers having implored me not to fill this Chat with comments on the letters of certain ill-bred, caddish youths. I have decided to bear their wishes in mind, and, instead of replying to offensive letters at full length, I shall in future place the names of the writers on our Roll of Dishonour. Those who seek to drag the fair name of the "Gem" Library through the slough of slander are contemptible little cads, and well merit being made a public example of. So here goes!

W. MALPAS (Oxford)
F. STEPHENS (London)
TOM HARPER (Sunderland)
S. HUNTLEY (Monmouth)
W. MORTON (Leith)
VICTOR MASKELL (Rochdale)
ALBERT WALSH (Rochdale)
JACK SHARPLES (Rochdale)
TOM GARRY (Rochdale)
J. McM. (Bootle).

Other names of malcontents will be published from time to time. I leave it to the loyal readers in the towns mentioned to ferret out the obnoxious individuals and bring them to a sense of their folly.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

T. B. (Montrose).—Thank you very much for persuading twenty-three of your chums to send me their approval in connection with the publication of "Tom Merry's Weekly." Your enthusiasm does you credit. I have no space in which to record the names of the boys in the St. Jim's and Greyfriars elevens. You will find them in the next threepenny book by Frank Richards. I am obliged to you for bringing two errors to my notice. The poor printer, whom it is usual to blame for such blunders, was not responsible on this occasion.

A. C. (London, E.C.).—The competition result you mention has already appeared.

"Two of Tom's Girl Admirers" (Bournemouth).—I was very pleased to hear from two such old friends again, and am glad you intend giving "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays" your loyal support. It will be only a matter of weeks now before this story appears. I will consider your suggestion concerning another portrait gallery. Best wishes.

(Continued on page III of cover.)