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MANNERS MINOR!

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



"Who is it—Manners minor?" gasped Mr. Selby. "Manners minor, how dare you! How dare you, I say, descend in your night attire—and enter my study!" "I won't stay in the dormitory! They're ragging me! They're beating me! I believe they're after me now!" said Reggie. (See Chapter 14.)

CHAPTER 1.

A Pleasant Prospect!

THERE was deep silence in Tom Merry's study in the School House at St. Jim's. Manners was reading a letter. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther were watching him.

It was a letter from home. Tom Merry had brought it up to the study for Manners, and he had noticed that it was addressed in the hand of Manners' pater. Letters from home were often welcome. Sometimes, indeed, they contained good advice which, as Lowther had

remarked, was quite superfluous in the case of such really nice boys as themselves. But sometimes they contained remittances. Sometimes they contained both, and then the bad could be taken cheerfully with the good.

As it was tea-time, a certain amount of general interest centred in Manners' letter from home.

But, as Manners read it, it became clear, from the expression of his face, that it was not a case of a remittance.

Manners' face grew very grave.

Then it lengthened.

Then Manners frowned, and then he looked perplexed.

Next Wednesday:

"THE RIGHT STUFF!" AND "THE PRIDE OF THE FILM!"

Monty Lowther closed one eye at Tom Merry. It was really entertaining to watch the peculiar changes in Manners' face.

But the chum of the Shell did not speak. Manners was deep in that letter, and they would not interrupt him.

It was left to Manners to break the silence. He did so, at last, quite suddenly.

"Well! Well, I'm blowed!"

"Nothing wrong, old chap?" asked Tom.

"Well, that depends on how you look at it," said Manners, staring at the letter.

"I mean nothing wrong at home?"

"Well, no. Things are going to be a bit better at home, judging by this letter."

"Pater come into a fortune?" asked Monty Lowther. "If he has, drop him a line about little us. We want a new carpet in the study."

"Fathead!" said Manners.

"Well, we do," said Lowther. "And now those bouders in Study No. 6 have been furnishing themselves equal to new, it's time this study was done up a bit! Say, a new carpet and a new clock. That clock has never really kept good time since Tom caught it with his bat!"

"Tisn't anything of that sort," said Manners, still staring at the letter. "I expect things will be a bit better at home after Wednesday. They won't be so jolly comfy here—at least, for me."

"What on earth's happened?" asked Tom Merry.

"Nothing as yet. It's going to happen on Wednesday."

"The House match happens on Wednesday," said Tom.

"We're going to lick Figgins & Co."

"You'll have to leave me out of the team," said Manners.

"What rot!" said Tom warmly. "You can stand out of all the School matches you like to go mucking about with your dashed old camera, but you're not cutting the House matches!"

"Tain't that, fathead!"

"Well, what is it?" demanded Lowther. "Tell your Uncle Monty."

"I suppose I can't grumble!" said Manners thoughtfully.

"Depends on what you're babbling about, old chap!"

"It will be a worry, no mistake about that! But, after all, it's up to me. And if the young rascal wants looking after, I suppose his elder brother's the chap to do it, isn't he?"

"Is that a conundrum?" asked Lowther affably.

"No, ass!"

"Because, if it is, I've got an answer. Because one rode a horse, and the other rhododendron," said Lowther.

"Oh, don't be funny, there's a good chap!" said Manners. "This isn't very funny for me!"

"But what's up?" shouted Tom Merry.

There was a tap at the door, and an eyeglass gleamed into the study with the aristocratic countenance of D'Arcy of the Fourth behind it.

"Tea weady, deah boys?"

Tom Merry jumped up.

"In a jiffy, Gussy! Manners has taken to talking in giddy mysteries like an oracle, or it would be ready now."

"I twust I am not too earlav," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pway, allow me to lend a hand. Bai Jove! you are lookin' wowwied, Mannahs!"

"I'm feeling rather worried!" growled Manners.

"Pway, tell me what's the mattah! If you are in need of advice—"

"I'm not!"

"Weally, Mannahs, you could not do bettah than wely on a fellah of tact and judgment," said D'Arcy gently.

"I have no doubt that I could get you wight out of the difficulty. Pway, confide in me!"

Manners grinned at last.

"There's nothing the matter," he said. "It's all right!"

"You're making a jolly long face about nothing, then," remarked Lowther.

"Well, it's a bit of a worry. Do you remember seeing my young brother one vac—young Reggie, you know?"

"Yee—a cheeky young bouncer!"

"These minahs are all the same," said D'Arcy, with a THE GEN LIBRARY—No. 421.

wise shake of the head. "Look at my young bwothah Wally—he nevah weally tweats me with the pwopah respect due to an eldah bwothah!"

"He's coming here," said Manners.

"Visiting you?" asked Lowther.

"No; coming to St. Jim's."

"Well, that won't hurt you. He'll be in a fag Form, and you won't see him once in a blue moon!"

"No such luck!" said Manners. "I'm requested to keep a very special eye on him, and look after him, and all that. He'll go into the Third."

"No good mollycoddling him!" said Tom Merry. "It would set the other fags against him, too!"

"I know that. But—but that isn't all! You'd better read the letter, you chaps. You too, Gussy; you may be able to give me some splendid advice which will make the whole thing as clear as daylight."

Manners was speaking in a sarcastic strain; but his sarcasm was wholly lost upon the swell of St. Jim's. D'Arcy nodded genially.

"I will do my vewy best, Mannahs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellahs, I see nothin' to cackle at. Let us wead the lettah, as Mannahs wequeests."

The chums of the School House read the letter together. They all looked rather grave, as Mannahs had done, as they read it. It ran:

"Dear Henry.—I have decided to send your brother Reginald to St. Jim's. I have already been in communication with the Head on the matter, and it is arranged that Reggie shall go into the Third Form. I am sure that you will keep an eye on him, and assist him in every way in your power. You are aware that he has been somewhat petted at home, and is a little wilful and headstrong, but I know you will be very patient with him, my boy. There is another circumstance I do not like referring to, but which I must mention. I have discovered, with great pain, as you may guess, that Reggie has formed some very undesirable acquaintances, and acquired some very bad habits. I must tell you this so that you will know what to expect; but you must not judge Reggie too harshly; his boyish simplicity has been taken advantage of by unscrupulous lads older than himself. I have found that he smokes, and have found a pack of cards in his possession, and extorted from him a confession that he has played cards for money. His going to school will make a complete break between him and his worthless friends, and I trust that, especially with your example before him, he will show the real good that is in his character. Above all, my dear boy, I ask you to be very patient with him at first, and make the change for him from home to school as easy as possible. He will reach the school on Wednesday afternoon.—Your affectionate father."

"JOHN MANNERS."

"Oh!" said Tom Merry; and Monty Lowther whistled softly.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy screwed his brows over his eyeglass.

Manners looked at them glumly.

"He isn't really a bad little chap," he said. "He's good-natured, and has heaps of pluck. But—but my sisters have petted him a lot, and the mater makes rather a pet of him, and he's generally had his own way. I've got into rows in the vac for licking him—for his own good really."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Your pater seems afraid you may try the same method here," he remarked. "Better not begin with a licking, anyway."

"I dare say he'll turn out all right," said Monty Lowther. "Don't worry. No good meeting troubles half-way."

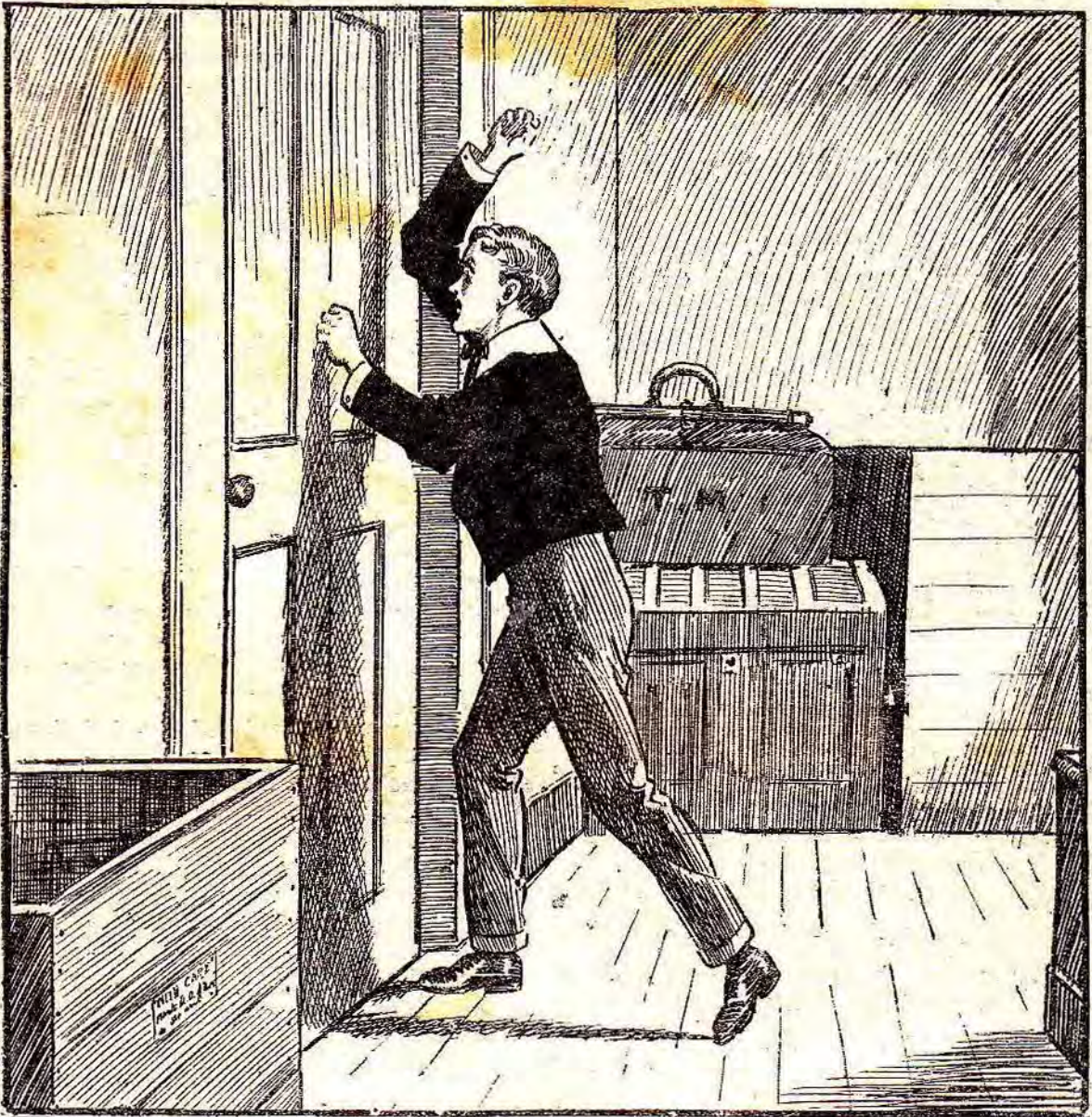
"It's all wight, Mannahs."

"Oh, it's all right, is it?" growled Manners.

"Yaas, wathah. I am goin' to make it all wight. As you we remarked, I'm just the chap to give you some weally good advice."

"Bow-wow!"

"Weally Mannahs, pway listen to me! Young Weegio is goin' into the Third. Well, my minah is in the Third."



Manners minor reeled against a box, and then spun round to the door, furiously. He could see now that he was in a box-room, and he knew that he was locked in. He hammered savagely on the door. "Let me out! You beast! Let me out!" (See Chapter 7.)

I will wequest young Wally to look aftah him a bit, and bwing him up in the way he should go."

"And suppose young Wally tells you to go and chop chips?" asked Manners.

"Wats! He will natuwallu do as I tell him, bein' my minah. I assuah you it will be all wight."

"I'm rather nervous for him in the Third," said Manners uneasily. "The fags will take him for a mammy's darling, and they'll make his life not worth living if he comes any of his rot—and he's sure to."

"All the more weason why Wally should look aftah him," said Arthur Augustus. "With Wally to look aftah him, he will get thwough all wight. My ideah is to—"

"To have tea?" asked Lowther. "It's past tea-time."

"Pway be sewious, Lowthah. My idea is to put it to young Wally, and intewest him in Weggie, and make them chummy at the start. When Weggie comes we will have him to tea in No. 6, and have Wally there, too, and let him bwing his pals in the Third—young Fwayne and Jameson and Gibson—and make them all fwiendly

with Weggie. Nothin' like a stunnin' good feed to make those young wascals feel fwiendly!"

The Terrible Three looked at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in great admiration. It was really a stunning idea.

"By Jove, there's something in that!" said Manners. "Much obliged to you, Gussy!"

"Not at all, deah boy. Don't mench," said Gussy gracefully. "You can always wely on a fellah of tact and judgment."

And the Terrible Three grinned, and assured the noble Gussy that they were quite, quite sure they always could!

CHAPTER 2.

Herrings for Tea!

TOM MERRY and Monty Lowther were very patient with their chum during the next few days. Manners was frequently in a thoughtful mood, and frequently he wore a worried look. It was the advent of his minor that worried him.

His chums could not understand why the forthcoming

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY: "THE RIGHT STUFF!"

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arrival of the youthful Reggie should bother old Manners so much. Neither of them had a minor, and so, perhaps, they didn't know what it was like. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy understood better. He had a minor, and a strong sense of duty towards him, which the cheerful Wally repaid with the blackest ingratitude. Indeed, when Gussy gave him good advice, D'Arcy minor would tell him not to "come the uncle" with him, and would request him to go and eat coke or to chop chips, or something equally frivolous and disrespectful.

But Tom Merry and Lowther, though they couldn't quite see wherein the trouble lay, sympathised with Manners, who evidently was troubled. Possibly Reggie Manners was a greater young scapegrace than they suspected.

At all events, all Manners' chums were prepared to back him up. His own friends in the Shell, and Blake & Co. of Study No. 6, were prepared to "take up" young Reggie and make the best of him. But it was clear that what would do the new fag most good was a friend of his own age in his own Form, and therefore Wally D'Arcy was invaluable, and was much to be conciliated.

Wally was a reckless young rascal, but he had a heart of gold; and, though he would punch a fellow's nose one moment, he would share a stick of toffee with him the next. And Wally was acknowledged cock of the walk in the Third, and looked up to with great admiration by Jameson and Frayne and Curly Gibson and Hobbs, and the rest. The way he kept his major in his place was really admirable, from the point of view of the fags. Especially little Joe Frayne admired Wally; for had not D'Arcy minor, though a lord's son, chummed up with him—little Joe, once a ragamuffin, a dweller in slums and alleys, whose struggles with the King's English were still difficult?

Wherever Wally led, the Third Form would follow; and if Wally's friendship could be secured for Manners minor—why, then, Manners minor would find things made very easy for him in the Third Form at St. Jim's!

During the two or three days that elapsed after the receipt by Manners of that letter from home, therefore, Wally of the Third was subjected to a series of surprises.

He had been accustomed to his major taking a fatherly interest in him—quite unappreciated on his part. D'Arcy's friends considered him a young rascal, and liked him none the less, perhaps. But they had never shown any special yearnings for his society.

Now they cultivated Wally in a way that was astounding to Wally.

The very day after that letter came Tom Merry met him outside the Third Form-room, and clapped him cheerily on the shoulder.

"Not had your tea yet, kid?" he asked.

Wally stared.

"We don't usually have tea during lessons," he replied.

"Ahem! No, of course not," said Tom hastily. "It's a long time since you've fed in my study, though, isn't it? You've been neglecting your old pals."

"What's the game?" asked Wally, with charming frankness.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Come along to tea," he said. "Half-past five."

Wally paused and considered. He ought really to have jumped at such a flattering invitation from the captain of the Shell, but he didn't.

"Well, Hobbs has been buying herrings," he said. "I've promised to cook them for him over the Form-room fire when old Selby's clear."

"Bring Hobbs," said Tom.

"Frayne and Jameson were going to whack out the herrings."

"Bring Frayne and Jameson."

"Anything special on?"

"Yes; three kinds of jam."

"Good! We'll come. And I'll tell you what," said Wally, in a burst of friendship. "We'll bring the herrings, and cook them in your study."

"Oh!"

"We'll stand them towards the feed," said Wally generously. "I can cook herrings a treat, you know. I suppose you've got a toasting-fork?"

"A—toasting-fork?"

"Yes. It's really better than sticking them on a pen."

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"Ye-es. All right. Half-past five, then," said Tom, concealing his dismay.

And Wally nodded, and walked away, with his hands in his pockets.

It happened that there was light enough for footer practice, and the Terrible Three did not come in till somewhat later than they had intended. But Wally & Co. were not late. As they approached their study, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther became aware of a terrific smell of fish and burning.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Lowther, in astonishment.

"That's in our study! Is it a New House jape?"

"My hat, what a niff!" said Manners. "Somebody's been putting herrings into the fire or something!"

"Hold on!" said Tom.

But Manners and Lowther were already dashing into the study.

The atmosphere was a little thick. Four Third-Formers were gathered round the fire, which was blazing high. Their faces were very ruddy, and they were cooking herrings. Doubtless Wally had been correct in asserting that a toasting-fork was an improvement upon a pen, but it had not been wholly successful. Wally's herring had slipped off into the blazing embers, and when rescued it was in a sadly charred state.

"You young sweeps!" roared Lowther indignantly. "What are you making that fearful muck in our study for?"

Wally spun round wrathfully.

"Hallo! What are you burbling about?" he demanded.

"You horrid little fishy beasts!"

"The awful nerve," exclaimed Manners, "to come and cook their filthy, waxy fishes in our study!"

"Kick 'em out!" said Lowther.

"And pitch their muck out after them!" said Manners. Wally glared. Before he could reply, however, Tom Merry was on the scene.

"Shut up, you chaps!" exclaimed Tom. "That's a nice way to speak to guests!"

"Guests!" ejaculated Manners and Lowther.

"I've asked these kids to tea."

"Oh!"

"Not so much of your 'kids'!" said Wally resentfully. "And we're jolly well not staying to tea after that! I don't like your manners! Come on, you fellows! Let's get out of this!"

"Hold on!" said Tom, in dismay.

"Yes, hold on," said Manners, remembering his minor, shortly due at St. Jim's. "Don't go. I—I—I'm sorry I spoke!"

"I trust," said Monty Lowther, in the best manner of D'Arcy of the Fourth—"I trust our young friends will not take notice of a hasty remark, made on the spur of the moment."

"Oh, come off!" growled Wally. "Not so much younger than you if you come to that!"

"It was—was awfully good of you to bring the herrings, Wally!" said Tom Merry. "I—I—I'm jolly glad you didn't forget them."

"We all know how Wally cooks herrings," added Lowther gracefully.

"Huh!" said Wally.

Hobbs twitched his sleeve and whispered:

"Don't be a mug, Wally—three kinds of jam, you know."

Wally's face cleared. He allowed himself to be mollified.

"You chaps get on with the cooking, while we get the tea," said Tom Merry. "It—it's made me feel awfully hungry, that—that appetising smell."

"Same here," said Lowther solemnly. "Are there any herrings done, Wally? I'd like to take a snack while I'm getting the table laid."

"They'll be done soon," said Wally, quite restored to good humour. "You fellows buck up and lay the table. Better leave them to me, Jameson—I'm a better cook than you are."

"Yes, I don't think. Look at your herring."

"Well, that fell in the fire—"

"If that's the way you cook, you'd better leave the rest to me."

"Look here, young Jameson—"

"Look here, young D'Arcy—"

It looked like war—peace was always somewhat uncertain in the Third Form. But Tom Merry's voice chimed in, pouring oil on the troubled waters, as it were.

"I say, we're waiting for those herrings. You promised us herrings for tea, Wally."

"Yes, buck up, Jamey, and don't jaw," said Wally.

"Well, don't you jaw," said Jameson.

And the cookery proceeded. The Terrible Three laid the table, producing three pots of jam, of different varieties, a large currant-cake, a tin of pineapple, and several other good things. There was also ham in large quantities to lay a solid foundation to begin with. The herrings were done at last—not to say overdone.

Then the goodly viands were set out.

Four extra chairs had been brought in, and the seven juniors found room somehow round the study table. The fags surveyed the festive board with considerable satisfaction. Six herrings lay on a dish, looking as if they had been rescued rather late from a serious conflagration.

"There won't be enough herrings to go round, owing to you burning that one," Jameson remarked.

"That's all right," said Tom Merry hastily. "You kids pile into the herrings—"

"No; we'll start on the ham," said D'Arcy minor. "You have the herrings. I hope you'll like the way they're cooked."

"Yes, pile in!" said Jameson. "We often have herrings ourselves—they're cheap, you know, and we're dabs at cooking 'em. Pass the ham!"

The Terrible Three looked at the charred and greasy herrings, and looked at one another. Then they helped themselves. They could not appear to turn up their noses at those dainty morsels. That would not be the way to propitiate D'Arcy minor & Co.

The hungry fags piled in at a great rate, and the ham soon disappeared, and the tongue along with it. The Shell fellows were making much slower progress with the herrings. A good deal of debris remained on their plates when they were through.

"Go it," said Wally. "There's three more."

"These herrings are awfully filling," said Lowther, in a casual sort of way. "I'll get on with the cake, I think."

And he did, and Tom Merry and Manners followed his example. Wally looked at them suspiciously.

"If you don't like those herrings—"

"Ripping!" said Lowther. "I—I was thinking we'd have them cold for supper, if you fellows don't care for them. Gussy will be here to supper, and I'm sure he would—ahem!—like one."

"Oh, all right!"

The three kinds of jam were duly disposed of, so completely that hardly a trace was left of any kind of jam. The cake disappeared, and the biscuits, and the pineapple. Then Wally & Co. rose to go.

"Thanks awfully," said Wally. "You fellows must come to a feed in the Form-room some time."

"Delighted."

"We'll have some more herrings—"

"Oh! I—I mean, do!"

"Those 'errings were 'orrid, Wally," said Joe Frayne, with a shake of the head. "You burnt them."

"Did you come out specially for a thick ear this evening, young Frayne?" asked Wally pleasantly.

"Well, they were burnt!" said Jameson. "Those you did were horrid, and there's no getting out of that, young D'Arcy."

"And what about those you did?" demanded Wally.

"You New House fathead—"

"You School House dummy—"

"You Shell fellows must excuse me for bringing a New House hooligan to tea," said Wally crushingly. "They're all pigs in the New House. Yarocoh!"

Jameson's reply to that remark was given with his knuckles. The next moment Wally was affectionately embracing his New House chum round the neck, and hammering him with his left. The two struggling fags bumped into the table, and set the crockery rocking, and then staggered into the passage, still pommelling. Frayne and Hobbs followed, cheering them on.

"Go it, Wally!"

"Go it, Jamey!"

Tom Merry gasped, and shut the door.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Lowther.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Manners.

"Never mind, it's all on account of Manners' minor," said Tom Merry, laughing.

The sounds of the conflict died away down the passage. Then the Terrible Three set to work clearing up the study. The whole room was fishy—the grate and fender rooked of fish—there were traces of herrings everywhere. Tom Merry opened the window and waved a newspaper; Monty Lowther seized the remaining herrings and hurled them forth from the window as far as he could, reckless of what happened to them afterwards.

"My hat!" murmured Lowther. "Your minor ought to be much obliged to us, Manners. This is going to be our self-denial week, and no mistake!"

CHAPTER 3.

Soft Sawder!

D'ARCY minor, when he came to think of it, was a little puzzled by that sudden burst of hospitality on the part of the Terrible Three. He was still more puzzled on Sunday morning, when the chums of the Shell bore down on him after morning service.

"Coming?" asked Tom Merry affably.

"Coming where?" asked Wally.

"Oh, a nice Sunday walk, you know."

Wally shook his head decidedly.

"I don't care for Sunday walks with a gang of old fogies, thanks!" he replied. "I'm going with Frayne and Jameson!"

"Ahem!"

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

"Game!" repeated Tom Merry vaguely.

"Yes. What are you so fond of me all of a sudden for?"

Tom Merry coughed.

"Well, you're such an entertaining chap," he said.

"Oh, come off!" said Wally.

And he walked off whistling.

"No go!" grinned Lowther. "N-blessed-G, dear boys. And Wally's beginning to smell a rat, and when we spring Manners' minor on him, he will put two and two together."

"Well, he's bound to be decent to young Manners after we've been so decent to him," said Tom Merry. "One good turn deserves another."

"I hope he'll get on with my minor," said Manners, wrinkling his brows. "As a matter of fact, Wally is just the chap who's most likely to be down on young Reggie."

"Well, we're disarming him beforehand," said Tom. "What about lending him your camera?"

"My camera?" ejaculated Manners.

"Yes—why not?"

"Well, there's about a thousand reasons why not," said Manners crossly. "But one will do—I'll see him blowed first, and young Reggie, too!"

But Manners thought it over, and the next day, after morning lessons, he asked Wally if he would care to come with him and take some snaps. Wally closed one eye, and looked at Manners very sharply with the other.

"Can I use the camera?" he asked.

Manners made a noble effort, and nodded.

"Right-ho! I'm on!"

And they wandered forth together with the camera. Wally was very active as a photographer, and he used up a whole roll of films. His skill did not equal his activity, however. Later in the day, being keen on developing his own films, he accompanied Manners to the dark-room. Manners gave him exact instructions, but the films turned out very remarkable. So did Wally for that matter, being greatly adorned with pyro when he came out of the dark-room; and his Form-master, Mr. Selby, spotting him in that state, promptly gave him a hundred lines.

The next morning the negatives were printed, and showed a beautiful series of blotches which bore no resemblance to anything in the earth, in the air, or in the waters under the earth. Wally snorted at the sight of them.

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"THE RIGHT STUFF!"

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY!

"That's a pretty rocky camera of yours, Manners," he said despairingly.

"Why, you young fathead," said Manners warmly, "that's my presentation camera!"

"Then they might have presented you with a decent one. Look at those photos!"

"That's the fatheaded way you took 'em and developed 'em. They were all over-exposed and over-developed."

"Well, a good camera ought not to over-expose things," said Wally.

"You young ass!"

"If you want me to come photographing with you again, Manners, you'll have to get a new camera, that's all. I'm not going to waste my time," said Wally severely. And he left Manners gasping.

But for the consideration that Manners minor was due on Wednesday afternoon, and would then be at the mercy of Wally, the cheerful fag would certainly not have escaped without a thick ear. But Manners exercised heroic self-restraint.

That evening Wally was invited into Study No. 6 to help dispose of baked chestnuts. Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy were all very cordial with the invitation, and they smiled as sweetly as possible when Wally brought Frayne and Jameson and Hobbs and Carly Gibson with him. The fags cleared off the chestnuts in record time, and Hobbs asked if there was a cake; and as there wasn't Wally & Co. departed.

Wally looked very perplexed as he departed with his chums.

"There's something or other on," he told them. "I can't catch on to it. What have those old fogies taken such a fancy to us for?"

"Because we're so nice," grinned Jameson.

"Well, that might apply to us," said Carly Gibson, "but it's Wally they've taken a fancy to. They only put up with us on Wally's account. What on earth have they taken a fancy to Wally for?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Further discussion of the point was interrupted by Carly Gibson's curly head being taken into chancery.

But the series of surprises was not over yet. On Tuesday Wally was discovered with a glum expression by the Terrible Three. Mr. Selby, his Form-master, a somewhat severe gentleman, had bestowed two hundred lines upon him, as Wally explained with suppressed fury. Wally, apparently, had done to deserve it—nothing but drop a book on Selby's favourite corn. Not being the owner of the corn, Wally regarded that as a trifling matter; and he averred that it was by accident, too—well, practically by accident.

To Wally's surprise the chums of the Shell offered unanimously to help him out with his lines.

"Equal whacks!" said Tom Merry. "That'll be fifty each."

Wally brightened up. He was due in the gym for a four-handed mill, and the lines had to be done at once.

"Look here! Honest Injun?" he asked.

"Honest Injun!" said the Terrible Three solemnly.

"Well, I must say that's decent of you," said Wally. "Mind you make your fists like mine, though. Selby's awfully sharp!"

"We'll put in plenty of blots and smudges," said Lowther, "then Selby can't suspect anything."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Wally crossly. "Squat down and help me with this rotten impot, if you're going to."

And the Shell fellows did, and the two hundred lines were knocked off in concert, and triumphantly taken in by Wally, Mr. Selby, fortunately, not spotting the variety of hands. Wally came away from his Form-master's study in great spirits.

"Thanks awfully, you chaps!" he said. "It's all serene!" old Selby swallowed it without a word. Much obliged!

"Oh, don't mench, dear boy!"

Wally cut off to the gym. Monty Lowther expressed his feelings in a chuckle.

"If Wally's got any gratitude at all in his composition he'll take your minor to his manly chest and weep over him," he said to Manners.

On Wednesday, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked for

his minor after morning lessons. Wally stared at him as he came up.

"Any more of it?" he asked.

"Any more of what, dear boy?" asked Arthur Augustus, in a stately way.

"Kindness to animals, Wally means," said Hobbs.

"Don't you talk out of your neck, Hobbs," said Wally. "I mean, any more of your soft sawder, Gussy?"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Is it baked chestnuts this time?" asked Wally, with a grin.

"Somethin' wathah bettah than that, dear boy. We want you to come to a little partay in Studay No. 6 at tea-time."

"These chaps as well?" asked Wally, loyal to his inky brigade.

"Yaas, wathah—any fwiend you care to bring."

"We'll come," said Hobbs at once.

"Wot to!" chuckled Joe Frayne.

"I'll come," said Wally, "and I'll bring my friends. Anybody else coming?"

"Yaas, Tom Mewwy and Mannahs and Lowthah, and a new chap."

"Not that chap Trimble of the Fourth?" asked Wally.

"I can't stand him!"

"Certainly not Twimble. A new kid, who is comin' to-day."

"Friend of yours, Gussy?" said Wally considerably. "If he is we'll be nice to him, considering that you are standing the feed."

"Yaas, in a way—Mannahs minor, you know."

Wally jumped!

"Manners minor? I didn't know Manners had a minor!"

"Yaas; a—a vewy nice boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"He is comin' to St. Jim's this afternoon, and he is goin' in the Third."

D'Arcy gave a prolonged, expressive whistle. He winked at his major.

"Oh!" he said comprehendingly.

"It will be a good opportunity of intwoducin' you chaps to the new kid, you know," remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Blessed if I care a button for a new kid!" said Jameson.

"No fear!" remarked Hobbs. "Is he anything like Manners? If he is, he will get his nose panned in the Third, I can tell you!"

Arthur Augustus coughed.

"I twust you youngstahs will be on wathah good terms with Mannahs minor," he said. "We are goin' to have a first-class spweed."

"Rely on us," said Wally. "Don't worry, old son, we'll come. As for Manners minor, we won't eat him!"

Wally grinned at his comrades as the great Arthur Augustus quitted them.

"The deadly secret's out now," he remarked. "That's what the bounders have been battering me up for! Manners has got a minor coming into the Third, and old Manners wants us to spare his life."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see why they should take all that trouble," said Jameson. "We don't massacre the new kids in the Third. We might lick him if he's cheeky, and toss him in a blanket, but we shouldn't hurt the kid. I don't see why they should bother."

Wally chuckled.

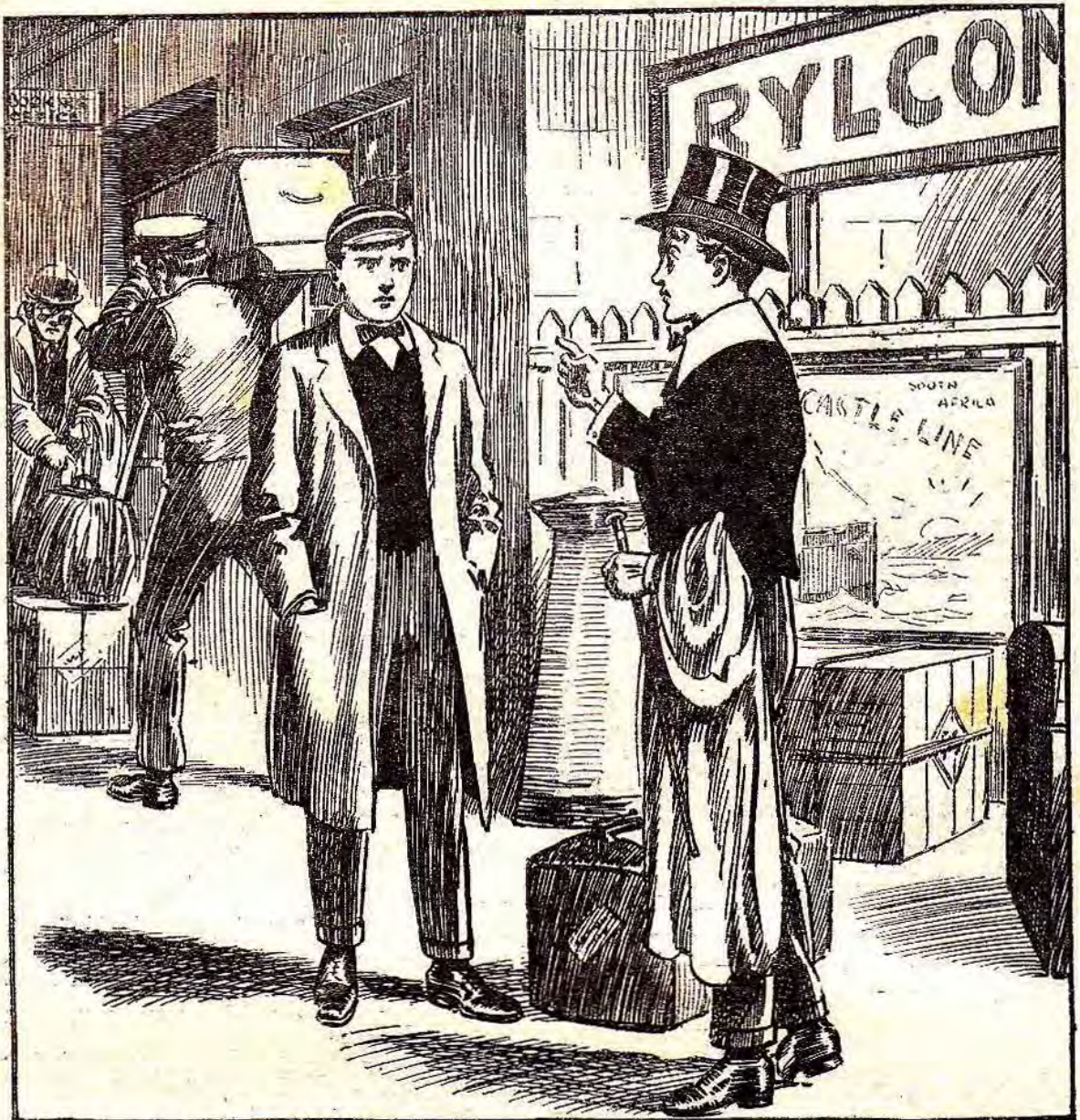
"I expect there's something fishy about the kid," he said; "perhaps some sort of a scug, you know. Pr'aps a cheeky little beast, and Manners major don't want him hammered for his cheek."

"He'll jolly well get hammered if there's any rot!" said Jameson warmly. "I believe in keeping new kids in their place."

"You ain't always so jolly successful with it," snorted Wally. "I remember you wanted to keep me in my place when I first came. I wasn't taking any."

"Look here, D'Arcy minor—"

"They're standing us a feed," said Wally, "don't forget that. After all, if he's some spoony little beast we can go easy with him. I dare say I shall have to



"I shall be glad of some tips, as you know the ropes, and I don't!" said Reggie. "That's all right. But none of your blessed sermons! I can't stand 'em, and I won't! That's flat!" Manners seemed to gulp something down. "I won't give you any sermons, Reggie!" he said. (See Chapter 4.)

lick him, of course. Most likely! But you fellows are not going to rag him."

"Look here, I'll rag him if I like!" roared Jameson. "You jolly well won't!" said Wally. "If he wants licking I'll lick him. Come down to the footer, and don't jaw, Jamey. You're always jawing!"

Jameson snorted. So far as Jameson was concerned Manners minor's prospects in the Third were not rosy. But—if all went well, at least—the great spread in Study No. 6 would smooth over all difficulties, and all would be calm and bright. If Manners minor was anything like decent Wally was prepared to take him under

his wing—in return for benefits received. It all depended upon Manners minor.

CHAPTER 4. Manners Minor.

TOM MERRY & CO. went down cheerfully to Little Side for the House-match. Manners went with the footballers, though not to play. He had to go to the station at Rylcombe to meet his brother soon after the match was started. Julian of the Fourth had taken his place in the team, very willingly. Manners stood with his hands in his overcoat pockets to watch the beginning of the match, with a thoughtful wrinkle on his brow.

Figgins kicked off for the New House, and the football match was soon going hot and strong. Manners hardly noted it. After a few minutes he turned away and walked down to the gates.

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ANSWERS

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE RIGHT STUFF!"

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The day of Reggie's arrival had come at last, and Manners was in an anxious mood. Manners was not a demonstrative fellow, but he was proud of his young brother—though there was sometimes civil war when they were at home together. Reggie was really lord of all he surveyed at home; a fond mother, an indulgent father, and kind elder sisters had petted him and spoiled him. He had never roughed it in any way; he had always been coaxed rather than commanded.

Manners had often thought that a term at St. Jim's would do Reggie no end of good, by knocking a great deal of nonsense out of him.

But such a process would have been very hard on the petted boy. Now that the time had come, Manners realised how very hard it would be, and he was anxious about the lad. The airs and graces Reggie sported at home, and which were conceded to there, would hardly serve him in a fag Form at St. Jim's. Anything like "putting on side" would put the backs of the fags up at once. Complaints over small hardships would earn him scorn and contempt. And the bad habits to which his father had referred—hardly surprising in a boy who had been so thoroughly spoiled—would be against him, too.

True, there were fellows in the Third—Piggott, for example—who aped the manners and customs of certain doggish "blades" in the upper Forms, and Reggie might find kindred spirits among them. But the mere idea of Reggie chumming with an utter young cad like Piggott was dismaying. A fellow like Wally D'Arcy was what he needed for a friend; but, unfortunately, Wally was likeliest of all to be irritated and disgusted by any nonsense on Reggie's part.

However, Manners had done his best, with the aid of his loyal chums, to propitiate Wally, and he could only hope for the best.

But his brow was very thoughtful as he walked down to Rylcombe.

He was in good time for the train, and he waited on the platform till it came in. A lad of about thirteen stepped out of the train, and looked about him. He was a slim, graceful lad, with a very handsome face—very like Manners' own, but very much more good-looking. He was extremely well-dressed, and, "kid" as he was, he wore his shining silk hat. But the handsome face was very petulant in expression, and the well-cut lips had a discontented droop. He looked impatiently up and down the platform, and Manners ran towards him.

"Hallo, Reggie!"

"Hallo!" said Reggie. "You're here, then."

"Yes, I came to meet you," said Manners. "Nothing wrong, is there?"

"No, not specially."

"You're looking rather down."

"I'm feeling rather down," snapped Reggie. "What the pater has sent me here for, I don't know. I didn't want to come. I was comfortable enough at home. I've had a rotten journey."

"Sorry," said Manners.

"I jolly nearly missed the train at Wayland. I don't see why you couldn't have met me at the junction," said Reggie sulkily.

"Well, it's a jolly long way," said Manners mildly. "And you had only to walk across the bridge from one platform to the other."

"I stopped to get some cigarettes from an automatic machine, and jolly nearly missed it."

"Cigarettes?" said Manners.

Reggie grunted discontentedly.

"Yes. The pater's been awfully down on my fags. He took jolly care I hadn't any with me when he saw me off."

"I should say he did," snapped Manners. "And you'd no right to buy any more, you know that!"

Reggie's eyes glistened.

"Now, look here, Harry, we'll have this out before we go any farther," he said. "You've preached at me in the holidays, and you've talked rot about the school doing me good if I came there. I shouldn't wonder if you put it into the pater's head. I've been told till I'm sick of the subject that you're going to look after me at St. Jim's, and I'm to take your advice, and do as you tell me, and that kind of rot. Now, I want you to

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understand at the start that I'm not going to stand any of your elder-brother bizny."

"Oh!" said Manners.

"I shall be glad of some tips, as you know the ropes and I don't," said Reggie. "That's all right. But none of your blessed sermons. I can't stand 'em, and I won't. That's flat!"

Manners seemed to gulp something down.

"I won't give you any sermons, Reggie," he said.

"Well, that's all right," said Reggie, more civilly, "Don't, that's all."

"I'll look after your box," said Manners.

After the Shell fellow had seen to the box, the brothers left the station together.

"Walking?" asked Reggie.

"Yes; it isn't much of a walk."

"What about my box?"

"That will be sent on. You've got your bag?"

"Yes, all right."

"I'll carry it, if you like."

Reggie handed over the bag at once, and they walked out of Rylcombe. Reggie was still looking sulky and discontented, and he showed signs of shortness of breath as they came to the rise in the road.

Manners understood very well that the foolish lad had been smoking in the train, but Reggie was evidently not in a mood for "sermons," so he was silent.

Reggie halted when they came to the stile.

"Rotten fagging walk!" he said. "Let's have a rest. I don't see why we couldn't have taken a cab."

"It isn't much of a walk, and it wasn't worth the tin."

"It seems miles to me. And I've got plenty of tin. I shouldn't have asked you to pay for the cab."

Reggie sat on the stile, and took a packet out of his pocket, and selected a cigarette. Manners stared at him. He had determined that his minor should have no sermons; at least, not to begin with. But this was a little too much.

"You're not going to smoke here, Reggie?" he said.

"Why shouldn't I?"

Manners felt his anger rise.

"There's a lot of reasons why you shouldn't!" he exclaimed hotly. "It's pretty mean to begin as soon as you get out of father's sight, when you know he objects to it."

"Rot!"

"You know it's bad for you, too, a growing kid."

"That's my business, I suppose."

"Well, it isn't," said Manners. "There's a strict rule against it at St. Jim's, and if you're caught it means caning."

"What a school for whitewashed cherubs," sneered Reggie. "Doesn't anybody smoke there?"

"Well, yes," Manners had to admit. "But it's done secretly, and only by rotten sort of chaps. It's considered bad form."

"I don't consider it's bad form."

"Do you think you're quite old enough to have positive opinions about that?" asked Manners.

"Quite!" said Reggie calmly, and he blew out a cloud of smoke that made his major cough. He grinned as Manners said "Gerroogh!"

"Look here, Reggie, it won't do," said Manners. "Anybody belonging to St. Jim's might see you. Then I should be supposed to be encouraging you."

"If you're afraid, you can trot along."

"I'm not afraid of the cane, if that's what you mean, but I'm afraid of being thought a blackguard!" said Manners savagely.

"Oh, rats!"

"Put that cigarette away, Reggie."

"I won't!"

A gentleman in black with a clerical collar and a fat face, turned out of a side lane, and stopped as he saw the two boys. It was Mr. Smiley, the vicar. Mr. Smiley's fat face assumed an expression of horror.

"Manners," he exclaimed, "what is this? I am surprised at you."

Manners turned crimson. He raised his cap awkwardly. Reggie stared coolly at the clerical gentleman.

"Who's the old sport, Harry?" he asked, loud enough for Mr. Smiley to hear.

Then Mr. Smiley became as crimson as Manners.

"This is, I suppose, a new boy for the school," said Mr. Smiley.

"It's my young brother, sir," said Manners.

"And you are encouraging him in bad habits? I shall mention this to Dr. Holmes when I see your headmaster again, Manners."

And, with a glance of angry contempt, Mr. Smiley passed on before the unfortunate Manners could reply.

CHAPTER 5.

Bad Blood!

MANNERS stood crimson, angry and ashamed. He could not correct the reverend gentleman's mistake, neither did Mr. Smiley give him time to do so. The vicar's broad back was turned, and he was puffing on towards Rylcombe. Reggie looked after him curiously.

"Cheeky old beggar!" he said. "That's not a master at the school, I suppose?"

"It's the vicar."

"No business of his what you do, is it?"

"No; but—"

"Then what the dickens was he chipping in for? Check, I call it!"

"Well, as a clergyman, he has a right to chip in," said Manners. "Anyway, he'll mention this to the Head, and it means a row for me."

"What rot! You can tell the Head you weren't smoking, and that you were preaching at me about it."

"Well, I can't!" said Manners angrily. "Besides, the Head would think I ought to stop you, if you won't stop for telling."

"What rot!"

"Are you coming along?" asked Manners impatiently.

"Oh, all right!"

Reggie slipped from the stile, and paused to light a second cigarette. Manners was glaring now.

"Look here, Reggie, you've got to chuck it!" he said resolutely. "Why, we might meet your Form-master, old Selby, on the road; he often trots along here on a half-holiday! Haven't you any sense?"

"I told you I wouldn't have any sermons! If you're afraid of being seen with a chap smoking, hook it!"

"What precious rascal taught you to smoke, you young idiot?"

"I learned it from Joey Pike. He was my best pal; but the pater made an awful row when he found I knew him!" growled Reggie. "Joey taught me to play billiards, too. His father doesn't mind him smoking; he's only seventeen. He taught me to play poker, too."

"And welshed you, I dare say!" growled Manners. "He wouldn't take the trouble to bother with a silly little fool for nothing!"

Reggie's eyes blazed.

"If you're going on in that strain, we'd better part here!" he said. "I've warned you I won't stand it, and I won't!"

"Oh, come on!" growled Manners. He was greatly inclined to take the wilful young rascal at his word; but his sense of duty was strong. He had not expected to find much pleasure in the hopeful Reggie's company.

Reggie walked on, smoking. That he found much pleasure in the cigarette was hardly probable, but he certainly found a great deal of pleasure in asserting his lofty independence, and irritating his elder brother. Manners felt that he was on pins and needles. He was keenly conscious of the absurdity of Reggie's nonsense, and the mannish airs of a boy of thirteen made him feel ashamed and uncomfortable. But, apart from that, they were getting near the school, and at any moment St. Jim's fellows might have come in sight.

Manners did not want it to be a joke up against him in the School House that he had a "doggish" young brother. Neither did he want a prefect's wrath to descend upon him and his minor. He knew that any prefect would blame him, and justly, for allowing Reggie to smoke, yet he naturally shrank from drastic measures.

He had been asked by his father to look after Reggie; but Mr. Manners had not exactly meant that he was to lick him on his first day at St. Jim's.

The sight of two St. Jim's caps on the road brought the matter to a head. Levison and Mellish of the Fourth came in sight. They were the last fellows in the world whom Manners wished to meet at that moment. They were young blackguards themselves, and Manners had never concealed his contempt for their doggish ways.

"Look here, Reggie—" he began fiercely.

"Oh, shut up!" said Reggie.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Levison of the Fourth. "Manners, I'm shocked at you! Teaching the young idea how to shoot in this way! Oh, Manners!"

"What would Tom Merry say?" said Mellish solemnly. "The good, the stainless Thomas, what would he say? Oh, Manners!"

Manners flushed with rage.

"Kid," said Levison, wagging his finger at the astonished Reggie, "I don't know who you are, but I must warn you against Manners! Manners is a bad boy!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Mellish.

"Sheer off, confound you!" exclaimed Manners. "I'd wipe up the road with both of you for two pins!"

And Manners looked so dangerous that the cads of the Fourth thought it better to sheer off, and they strode along the road chuckling.

"Who are they?" asked Reggie.

"Levison and Mellish, two rotten outsiders in the Fourth Form!" growled Manners. "This will be all over St. Jim's as soon as they find out that you're my minor. I shall never hear the end of it!"

"Who's the Thomas they were speaking about?"

"Eh? Oh, that's Tom Merry!"

"Some goody-goody prig, I suppose?" sneered Reggie.

"A fellow who's worth fifty times as much as you will ever be!" said Manners. "A chap whose boots you're not fit to clean!"

Manners was getting into a state of intense irritation, and he did not measure his words now. Reggie sneered.

"Well, I shan't have to clean his boots, so that's all right!" he said.

"Put that cigarette away, Reggie!"

"Oh, cheese it!"

Manners looks became resolute.

"We're close to the school now," he said. "If you won't do the sensible thing, I shall have to make you! Throw it away!"

"I won't!"

"Then I shall take it!"

Reggie backed away, a dangerous gleam in his eyes. "So you're beginning bullying already, are you?" he said. "I knew that was coming! Well, I'm not going to stand it!"

"I mean what I say!" said Manners. "I'm not going to have you hauled up before the beaks first day at St. Jim's! Throw that cigarette away, and give me the packet, or I'll take them by force!"

"You'd better keep your hands off me!"

"Will you do as I ask you?"

"No, I won't!"

Manners said no more; he grasped Reggie by the collar, and jerked his cigarette away, and threw it over the hedge. Reggie yelled and struggled. Manners gave a howl as a boot clamped on his shin.

"Let go!" yelled Reggie. "Confound you, let go! Let me alone!"

"You young cad!" panted Manners. "I've a jolly good mind to give you the licking of your life!"

"You rotten bully, let me go!"

Manners thrust his hand into Reggie's pocket, and snatched out the packet of cigarettes. Then he released him. He twisted the packet and the cigarettes it contained into pieces, and tossed them into the field. Reggie looked at him with burning eyes. He was not able to save his precious smokes, that was impossible, and his brother's action, which he regarded as high-handed and meddlesome, exasperated him beyond measure.

"Now come on!" said Manners, panting.

"I won't come with you!" said Reggie savagely. "I

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE RIGHT STUFF!"

won't speak to you! Touch me again and I'll kick you, you beast! Let me alone!"

"You've got to come to the school!"

"I won't come with you! Give me my bag!"

"Look here, Reggie—"

"Oh, shut up! Can't you leave me alone when I ask you? I tell you I won't walk a step with you!" said Reggie shrilly.

Manners stood undecided. He had dropped the bag, and, as he made a movement to pick it up, Reggie snatched it away. Manners regarded him doubtfully. It had turned out worse than he had expected in his blackest moments of anticipation. What was to be done now?

"Reggie, old man," he said, at last, "don't be a young ass! Come with me!"

"I won't go a step with you!"

"We—we've got a little party in D'Arcy's study to meet you," said Manners. "All my friends will be there."

"The good and stainless Thomas and the rest?" sneered Reggie. "Well, I don't want to meet your friends! They can go to the dickens!"

"Reggie, you don't know a soul at St. Jim's—"

"I can look after myself! I'm fed up with you anyway! I won't come a step with you, and I won't speak to you at the school, either! I don't move from this spot till you've gone!"

Reggie Manners sat down on his bag, with an expression of passionate and obstinate determination. Manners major regarded him silently for some moments. He had a choice of alternatives—to give his young brother the licking he badly needed, and march him along by the ear, or to leave him to his own devices. His inclination was strongly for the first alternative, but he adopted the second. Without another word, he turned away and walked on to the school—alone. Reggie watched him with savagely-lowering brows till he was out of sight.

CHAPTER 6.

The Spread in Study No. 6.

"GOAL!"

The House match was just finishing as Manners came on Little Side. Manners' face was grim and gloomy.

"Goal!"

"Well kicked, Tommy!"

"School House wins!"

Tom Merry came off the field looking very cheerful. The match had been a hard one, neither side breaking its duck till right at the finish, and then Tom Merry had beaten Fatty Wynn at last, and scored. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy patted the captain of the Shell on the back.

"Wippin, deah boy!" he said. "I couldn't have kicked that goal bettah myself!"

"Perhaps not even so well!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Hallo! Here's Manners! We've beaten the New House, Manners, right at the finish. Where's your minor?"

"I don't know," said Manners grimly.

"Didn't he come?"

"Oh, yes, he came!"

"Bai Jove! I twust you haven't lost him, Mannahs? Didn't you meet him at the station?"

"Yes, I met him," said Manners briefly.

Tom Merry looked at him curiously, but he asked no more questions. He could see that there had been trouble. Manners went indoors moodily enough, and the footballers proceeded to change, and then made their way to Study No. 6. The match had given them a keen appetite, and they were quite ready for the magnificent spread planned by the great Gussy.

Manners was in the study laying the table ready. But he did not look cheerful. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther could not help wondering. Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy, who were prepared to do the honours to a "gang" of fags for the sake of Manners' minor, naturally

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wanted to know where he was. There was nothing for it but to explain.

"The fags will be here soon," said Blake. "Buck up with the cooking, Dig, you're cook! Poach all the eggs."

"Right-ho!" said Dig.

"Your minor all right, Manners?"

"I hope he is," said Manners.

Blake stared.

"You hope he is!" he repeated. "Don't you know?"

"Well, I don't, as a matter of fact."

"Oh!" said Blake, scenting trouble.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass somewhat severely upon Manners.

"I twust, Mannahs, that you have not been havin' twouble with your minah already? I weally must wemark that that shows a lack of tact and judgment."

"What about the giddy reception?" said Herries. "Isn't it coming off? Are we going to be invaded by a gang of the Third for nix?"

Manners coloured.

"I'm sorry!" he said. "I suppose I'd better tell you fellows. My minor is a young rascal, and he insisted on smoking all the way to the school."

"Bai Jove!"

"I took his cigarettes away at last, not till old Smiley had seen him smoking, and threatened to report me to the Head—as if it was my fault!" growled Manners.

"I'd have given him a hiding, too," said Herries. "That's what he wanted—a hiding! Didn't you give him one?"

"No," said Manners, with a faint grin.

"That's where you made a mistake," said Herries sagely. "What he wanted was a thundering good hiding!"

"I dare say he did, but I didn't want to lick him his first day at school. Besides, he—he might write home and put it rottenly for me, and the pater wouldn't understand," said Manners, fushing. "And—and licking won't do Reggie much good—from me. He calls it bullying. He'll get lickings enough without me handing out any."

"But where is he now, old scout?" asked Lowther.

"He wouldn't come with me after I chucked his smokes away, and I had to leave him in the road," said Manners reluctantly.

"Well, he'll come on all right," said Tom Merry. "But what about the feed?"

"Oh, bother him!" said Manners peevishly. "You chaps have taken too much trouble already. Let him go and eat coke!"

"I am not surprised that you are watty, Mannahs. deah boy," said Arthur Augustus sympathetically. "I know what a wowwy these minahs are. But I weally think the young donkey ought to be given a chance. If he's watty with you, I will go and look for him, if you like. He must have awwived before this."

Manners nodded and D'Arcy quitted the study. Tom Merry & Co. went on with their preparations for the spread. They were feeling a little concerned for Manners and considerably irritated with his minor. In fact, every fellow in the study felt quite prepared to administer the thrashing Reggie Manners was evidently badly in need of.

There was a tramp of feet in the passage, and Wally & Co. came in. D'Arcy minor gave the juniors a cool nod, and marshalled his followers into the study. D'Arcy had told him to bring his friends, without making any specification of the number, and Wally was too hospitable to leave a friend out. Besides Frayne and Hobbs and Jameson and Curly Gibson, three other fags of the Third trotted in, all looking very anticipative. The addition of eight to the party put a somewhat severe strain upon the accommodation.

"Not crowding you out—what?" asked Wally affably.

"Hallo, Manners! Where's that new kid—your minor?"

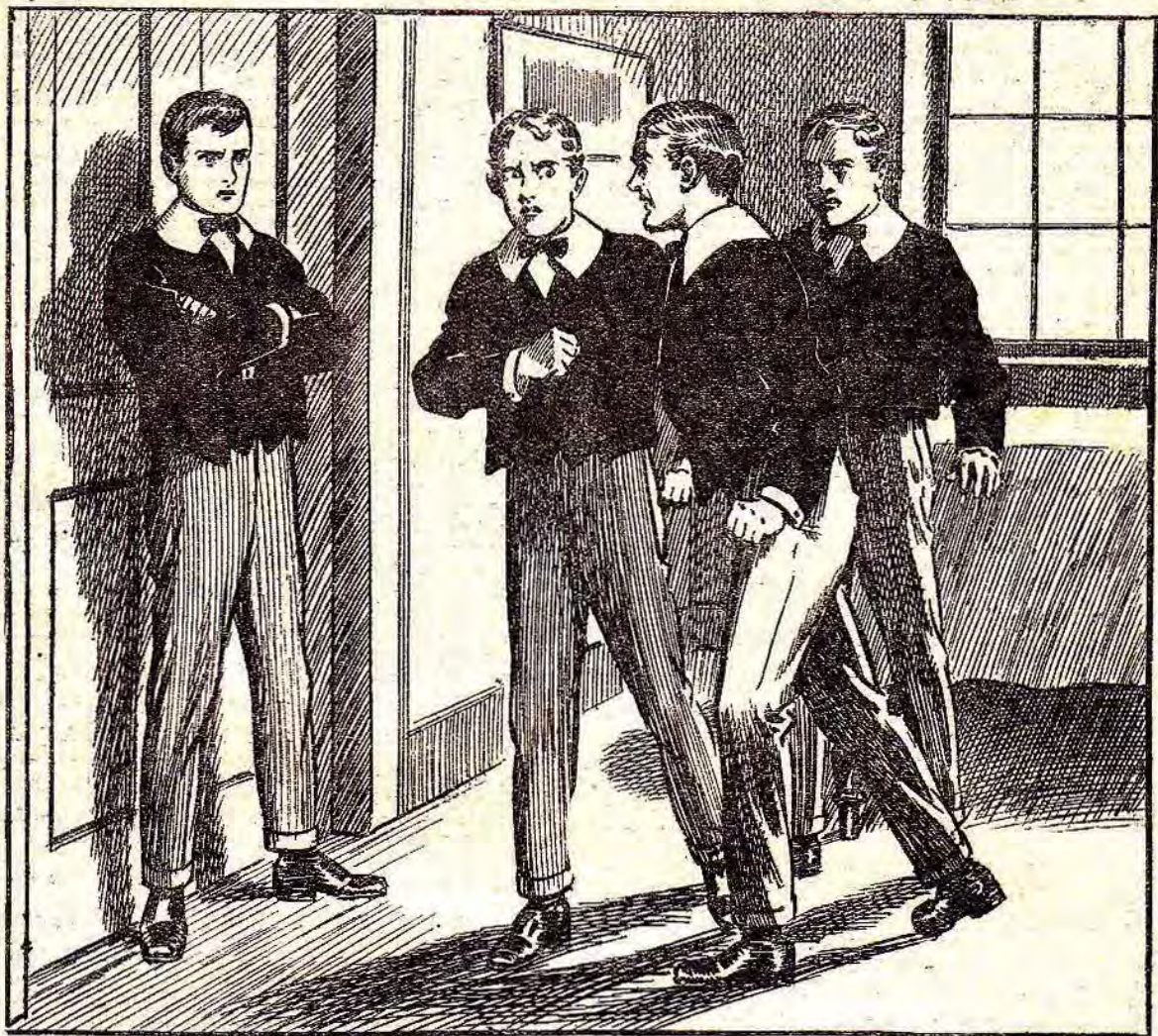
"He—he's coming," said Manners awkwardly.

"Not here yet—what? Well, never mind, 'tain't a bit important," said Wally candidly. "Like me to help you with the cooking, Dig?"

"Just done," said Digby hastily.

"Not waiting for Manners' minor, I suppose," said Jameson. "If you fellows don't mind my mentioning it, I'm rather sharp set."

HAVE YOU HAD A GORGEOUS TUCK HAMPER YET? SEE THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD," 1st.



"Sneak!" Manners minor started back. "Sneak!" howled the juniors. "Ca! Rotten! Tell-tale!"
(See Chapter 13.)

"Waiting for Manners minor!" said Wally. "Well, I like that! Likely to wait for a new kid!"

"Nunno," said Blake; "not at all. Sit down, gentlemen; you don't mind going two to a seat, do you? Space is limited."

"Don't mench!" said Wally gracefully. "Right as rain! Now then, young Jameson, don't shove a chap off the chair!"

"Well, give me half, young D'Arcy!"

"You've got half, and if you shove me again, you go under the table, napper first, so I warn you," said Wally, darkly. "I don't want any of your New House manners when I take you out to tea with my distinguished friends in the upper Forms!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, this is a jolly good spread," said Hobbs confidentially. "You can have a minor come every day, if you like, Manners."

"What a chump he must be to be late for a feed like this 'ere!" said Joe Frayne. "Pass the 'am, Master Wally."

"I'll pass it down your neck if you 'Master Wally' me! Here you are!"

"Tuck in, you Shell-fish!" said Wally. "Don't wait for Manners minor! Where's old Gus got to—gone to change his necktie? Good old Gus! Pile in, you won't have much chance later!"

Tom Merry & Co. sat down to tea. Manners joined

them, looking as cheerful as he could, though he was evidently troubled in mind about his minor. The spread in No. 6 was having its intended effect of putting Wally & Co. into high good-humour. But the project of introducing Manners minor under those favourable conditions and starting him on good terms with the chiefs of the Third seemed likely to fall through. The feed proceeded, but Arthur Augustus did not put in an appearance. Evidently the generous Gussy was searching for Manners minor, and Manners minor, apparently, was not to be found.

CHAPTER 7.

"On His Own!"

REGGIE MANNERS tramped on towards the school after his brother had disappeared, in an extremely bad temper. His handsome, somewhat weak face was puckered into peevish and discontented frowns. He bitterly resented his brother's interference with him, and though he had driven his major away, he unreasonably resented the desertion. So this was the way Harry was looking after him, on his first day at school—that was how Reggie put it to himself.

He reached the school gates at last. The school had been in sight when his brother parted with him. Taggles

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE RIGHT STUFF!"

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

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was standing in the doorway of his lodge, and Reggie called to him.

"Is this St. Jim's?"

"Yes," said Taggles.

"Where is the School House, please?"

Taggles pointed to the School House. Without troubling to thank him, Reggie tramped away across the quadrangle. There was a sound of cheering from the direction of the football ground, where the junior match had just ended. Manners minor did not look in that direction, however. He went in at the big, open doorway of the School House, and stared about him. A boy in buttons came along, and Reggie hailed him.

"Hallo, you!"

Toby, the page, stopped.

"Can you tell me where to find the House-dame? I've got to give this bag to her," said Reggie.

"Yes, sir; follow me, sir!" said Toby, in cheery expectation of a tip from the new boy. "Let me carry the bag, sir."

Reggie willingly handed him the bag, and followed him. Mrs. Mimms received the bag, and spoke a kind word or two to Reggie, and told him to go and report himself to his Form-master. The obliging Toby guided Reggie to Mr. Selby's study.

"Shall I tell Master Manners you're here?" asked Toby, who had caught the new boy's name in the House-dame's room.

"No!" said Reggie curtly.

"I thought Master Manners might be a relation, sir."

"He's my brother."

"Then I'll tell him," said the puzzled Toby.

"You needn't trouble."

Reggie knocked at Mr. Selby's door and went in. Toby blinked after him, and returned to the regions below, murmuring remarks to himself that were not at all complimentary to Master Reginald Manners.

The master of the Third was reading a newspaper, and he looked up crossly at Reggie as the latter came in. Mr. Selby generally looked cross.

"Well, what do you want?" he said, in an acid voice.

"Ah! I suppose you are the new boy, Manners minor?"

"Yes, sir," said Reggie. "The House-dame told me to report to you, sir."

"Quite right. As your Form is already arranged, however, I need not detain you. You had better find your brother, and he will tell you anything you need to know. You may go."

Manners minor left the study with a sinking heart.

The short and snappish manner of the Form-master was not gratifying—especially after what Reggie had been accustomed to at home. The moment he was outside the door Mr. Selby returned to his paper, and forgot the boy's existence. Reggie was quite aware of that. He was nobody—nothing—less than nothing here—and at home he had been the darling of all, indulged in every pettish caprice, his complaints listened to with gravity and attention, his very wishes anticipated. It was a sudden and chilling change.

He had anticipated an unpleasant change from home, but nothing quite like this. His utter unimportance, in all eyes but his own, struck him forcibly. Had his Form-master been kind and considerate like Mr. Railton or Mr. Lathom, however, Reggie would certainly have taken every kindness as a matter of course, and no more than his due.

He stood in the passage, looking about him, feeling lonely and miserable.

He was not in the least inclined to search for his brother, however. He felt a fierce resentment that his brother was not searching for him. What to do with himself he did not know. He was tired and hungry, but he did not know his way to the dining-room, or the times of the meals there. Everybody seemed to be out of doors, and the boy in buttons had disappeared.

A fag of about his own age, with a pasty complexion and very sharp eyes came along the passage and stopped to stare at him. It was Piggott of the Third, the most thorough young rascal the School House contained. Piggott stared at him, and grinned.

"New kid?" he asked.

"Yes," said Reggie, glad of someone to speak to, THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 421.

though Piggott's manner and looks were not prepossessing, "I'm Manners minor."

"Oh, you're that cad Manners' brother, are you?" jeered Piggott. "Well, if you weren't just outside old Selby's door, I'd give you a thick ear, you spoony-faced young nincompoop!"

Reggie stared at him helplessly. Was this how he was going to be talked to at St. Jim's? At the same time, he felt a curious satisfaction at hearing his brother ill-spoken of. It seemed a justification, somehow, of his own angry resentment and unreasonableness.

"What Form are you going into?" continued Piggott.

"Third," faltered Reggie.

"My Form!" Piggott chuckled. "I promise you we'll give you a high old time, then, spoony-face! You won't have nurse-nurse to put you to bed to-night!"

"I'm never put to bed by a nurse!" said Reggie indignantly. "And you're a cad!"

"Eh? What's that?"

"You're a cad, and jolly ill-bred!" said Reggie undauntedly.

Manners minor had plenty of faults, but he had quite a full allowance of pluck.

"If we weren't just outside old Selby's door—" said Piggott, breathing hard.

"I'll come down the passage with you, if you like!" sneered Reggie. "I'm not afraid of you!"

Piggott looked at him hard, and his manner changed. Reggie had clenched his hands, and his eyes were gleaming. Piggott had no liking for clenched hands.

"Oh, don't be ratty!" he said, with a grin. "Only fanning, you know! Look here! Would you like me to show you to your brother's study?"

"No, thanks!"

"Like to have a feed?" asked Piggott. "Tea's just ready."

"Yes, I'd be jolly glad!"

"This way, then!"

Piggott mounted the stairs, and Reggie followed. They went up another flight, and then another, to Reggie's astonishment.

"Do you have tea in the top of the house?" he exclaimed.

"There's a special tea-room for new boys," said Piggott calmly. "Here it is! Trot in!"

He threw open a door, and Reggie, as he hesitated on the threshold, wondering, received a rough push, and went staggering into the room. The door closed, and the lock clicked as the key was turned outside.

Manners minor reeled against a box, and then spun round to the door furiously. He could see now that he was in a box-room, and he knew that he was locked in. He hammered savagely on the door.

"Let me out, you beast! Let me out!"

He did not need telling that this was an ill-natured trick upon a new boy. There was a chuckle outside, and a sound of departing footsteps. Piggott of the Third was gone. Reggie, panting with rage, hammered on the door till his hands ached, breathing fury.

"Oh, the rotter!" he panted. "It's all Harry's fault, too, for leaving me alone! Oh, dear! Oh!"

The unfortunate fag was greatly inclined to "blub." But he held back his tears, and hammered on the door in the hope that his entrapper would return. But Piggott did not return. He was retailing the joke to some choice spirits in the Third Form-room amid shouts of laughter.

CHAPTER 8.

Arthur Augustus Does His Best.

"B AI Jove! It is weally vewy wemarkable!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was feeling perplexed.

He had looked round the quadrangle for Manners minor; he had asked fellows right and left; he had even gone over to the New House to inquire whether Manners minor had wandered in there by mistake.

But he could not find the new fag.

That he had arrived was certain, for he had learned from Toby that the page had taken him to Mr. Selby's

study and left him there. He was not likely to be there all this time, and Arthur Augustus had passed the door several times, and as there was no sound of voices, it was pretty certain that Reggie was not there. However, at length, the swell of St. Jim's had knocked at the door, and looked in to make sure Mr. Selby glanced at him irritably.

"Pway, excuse me, sir," said Arthur Augustus apologetically. "I am lookin' for Mannahs minor."

"Kindly close that door at once."

Arthur Augustus closed the door at once. Manners minor was not there, and that was all he wished to know.

He stood in the passage, puzzled and perplexed, wondering what had become of the new fag. It was really very remarkable.

"Pewwaps I had bettah look in the Form-woom," murmured Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps some of the fags have seen him and taken him there. I weally do not see where else he can be."

And Arthur Augustus made his way to the Third Form-room. Sounds of laughter greeted him as he approached. He looked in, wondering whether the fags were already ragging Manners minor.

Piggott of the Third was there with four or five fags. They were all laughing loudly, apparently over some good joke. But there was no sign of a new boy.

"Hallo!" said Piggott, as D'Arcy's eyeglass gleamed in. "Looking for somebody?"

"Yaas, I am lookin' for Manners minor."

"Who's that?" asked Piggott innocently; and his comrades chortled.

"Mannahs' young hwothah, you know!"

"Has Manners got a young brother?" said Piggott.

"My hat! So there are two of them."

"Yaas!"

"How rotten for their people!" said Piggott.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Piggott, you are a cheeky little ass! Have you seen Mannahs minor? I am searchin' for him ewewywhah!"

Piggott winked at his friends. It was quite in accordance with his peculiar sense of humour to send the noble Gussy on a wild-goose chase.

"Whv, it must be that new kid you're speaking about!" he exclaimed, as if suddenly remembering.

"Yaas. Have you seen him?"

"A spoonv-looking kid—looks just as if he's got away from his nurse!" said Piggott.

"Yaas, possibly! Where is he?"

"I saw him come out of old Selby's study," said Piggott.

"Thank goodness! He seems to have disapeahed. But pewwaps you know wheah he is, Piggott?"

"I can tell you where he's gone, if that's what you mean," said Piggott, closing his eye at his grinning comrades.

"Pway, buck up, deah boy!"

"I don't know whether I ought, though," said Piggott.

"If the kid wants to clear off home, it's his own business, I suppose."

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Cleah off home!" he ejaculated. "Bai Jove! You don't mean to say he's wun away, Piggott?"

"I think he wasn't satisfied with Selby," explained Piggott. "Anyway, he asked me what was the next train at Rylcombe, and I told him, and he cut off. He's catching the six-train."

"You ought to have stopp'd him, you young wascal!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"'Twasn't my business!" said Piggott sulkily. "Stop him yourself!"

D'Arcy looked quickly at his watch. It was turned half-past five.

"Bai Jove! I shall catch him if I hurwy!"

He rushed out of the Form-room.

"Oh, my aunt!" ejaculated Sturt of the Third. "Is he ass enough to go down to the station after him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The young rascals yelled with delight.

"Come and watch him!" gasped Piggott.

They crowded to the window. In a few minutes Arthur Augustus came in sight, hastily wheeling his bicycle down to the gates. It was evident that he was going

to the station without losing a second—to look for Manners minor. Piggott & Co. watched him from the window, almost in hysterics.

Arthur Augustus had no suspicions. As a matter of fact, Reggie's supposed action in bolting home after an interview with an unpleasant master was quite what might have been expected of him, according to Manners' description of his petted and wilful nature. D'Arcy was very anxious to save the foolish fag from the consequences of such an escapade.

He mounted in the road, and pedalled away at a record speed for Rylcombe.

With his topper on the back of his head, and his monocle flying at the end of its ribbon, Arthur Augustus fairly scorched. The ground flew under the whizzing wheels, and Rylcombe Station very soon came in sight. Arthur Augustus, panting, jumped off his machine, and ran into the station.

He caught old Trumble, the porter, by the shoulder. The old man was seated on a trolley, sucking a straw.

"Is there a St. Jim's chap here, Twumble?" asked D'Arcy hurriedly.

"Ain't seed him, Master D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy rushed to the booking-office, and discovered that no St. Jim's boy had taken a ticket there. He ran on the platform, but the platform and the waiting-room were tenanted only by an old lady and a couple of soldiers. There was no sign of anyone who could possibly have been Manners' minor.

"Bai Jove, it is vevy odd!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps the young wascal is keepin' out of sight till the twain goes."

And he waited for the train.

But when the six o'clock train buzzed in, and buzzed out again, it was not boarded by a boy of any sort. Certainly Manners minor did not take it.

Arthur Augustus stared after the train in deep perplexity.

A frown came over his face, and deepened, and his eye gleamed behind his eyeglass. It began to dawn upon him that the cheerful Piggott had been pulling his leg.

"The utter young wottah!" said Arthur Augustus, his face crimsoning. "I have come here for nothin'—the young wascal was telling whoppahs—oh, cwumbs!"

He left the station, and pedalled back to St. Jim's.

Half a dozen fags of the Third were waiting for him in the gateway, and they greeted him with a howl.

"Have you found him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus made a wrathful rush at the fags, and they scattered in various directions, howling with laughter.

With a very pink face, Arthur Augustus put up his bike, and went into the School House.

He had a hope that Manners minor might have turned up in his absence, and he made his way to Study No. 6. There was evidently nothing more to be done.

CHAPTER 9.

Wally to the Rescue.

"Gussy, where on earth have you been?"

The great spread in Study No. 6 was at its finish. Wally & Co. of the Third were looking very cheery and good-humoured. The table had been almost cleared of its imposing array of good things.

Arthur Augustus looked quite red and warm as he came in, breathing hard.

"Hasn't Mannahs minor turned up?" he asked.

"No," said Manners, looking at him quickly. "You haven't been searching for him all this time, have you surely?"

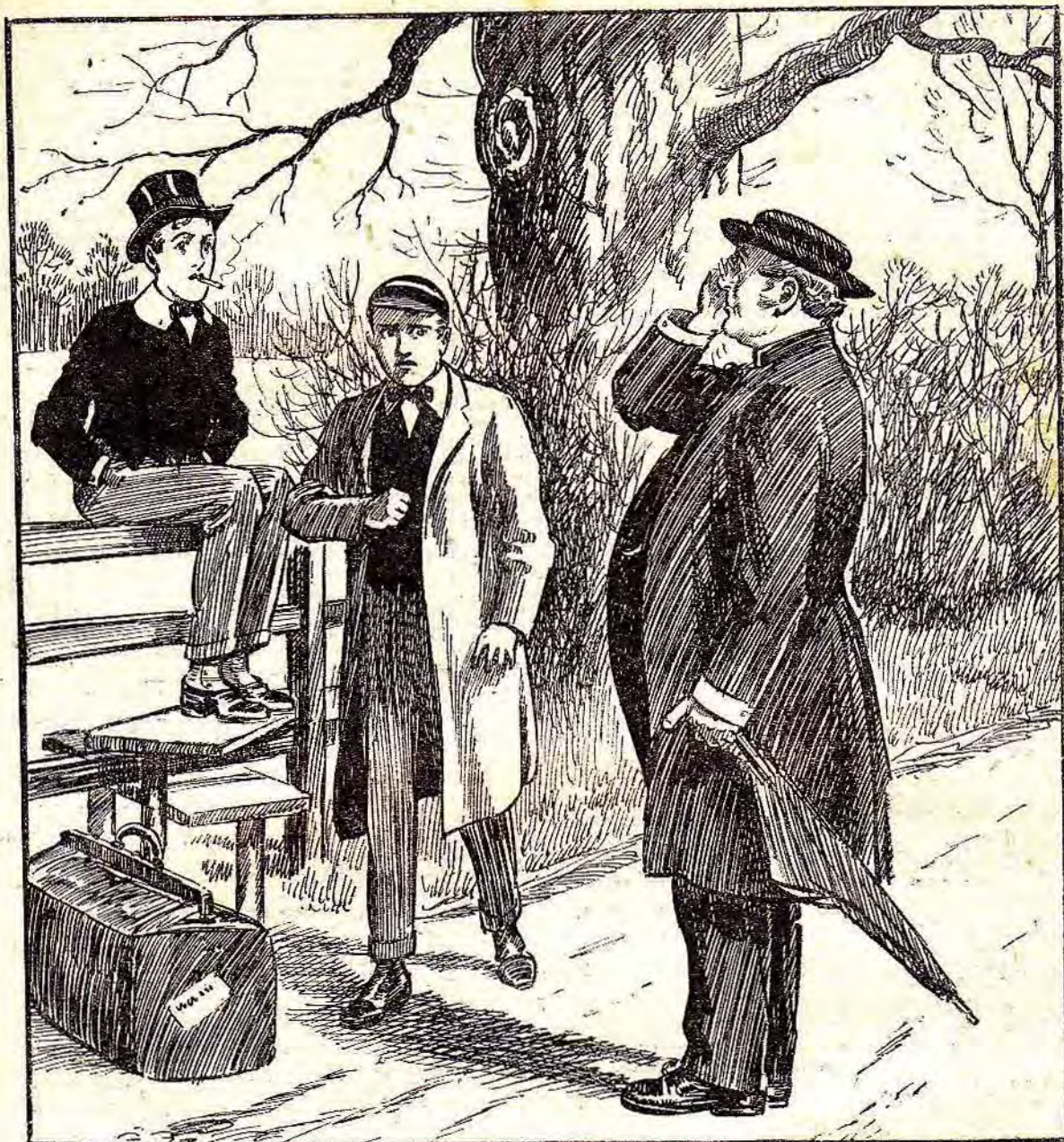
"Yaas, wathah!"

"Sorry; he wasn't worth the trouble."

"But why haven't you found him, then?" said Tom Merry, puzzled. "I suppose he's come, hasn't he?"

"Yaas, he has come all wright. Tobay took him to Mr. Selby attah he had seen the House-lame. But he has

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A gentleman in black, with a clerical collar and a fat face, turned out of a side lane, and stopped as he saw the two boys. It was Mr. Smiley, the vicar, and his fat face assumed an expression of horror. "Manners!" he exclaimed. "What is this? I am surprised at you!" (See Chapter 4.)

"Seen a new fag knocking about?" Wally asked, as he met Sturt of the Third in the passage.

Sturt chuckled.

"Piggott's locked him up in the top box-room," he explained. "Piggott says he's a cheeky, sneery young rotter!"

"Rotten trick on a new kid!" said Wally severely. "Jolly good mind to punch Piggott's head. Still, Manners minor can do that. Come on, you chaps; we'll get the poor beggar out."

"Must be a green ass, to be shut up in the box-room!" giggled Hobbs.

"Well, a new kid don't know the ropes," said Wally. "I dare say Piggott told him some lies to get him there, too; you know Piggott tells lies."

Wally started for the stairs, and Jameson and Joe Frayne went with him. Hobbs and Carly-Gibson did

not think a new fag worth the trouble of negotiating several flights of stairs. There was a sound of hammering above, as the three fags came up, and they grinned.

"Sounds as if he's getting rather impatient," remarked Wally. "Why, he must have been there nearly two hours."

"Ha, ha, ha! The duffer!"

Through the thick door of the box-room a voice could be heard faintly:

"Let me out! You hound! Let me out!"

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

The top box-room was too far removed from the inhabited quarters for the noise to be heard. Piggott might have left the unfortunate Reggie there till bedtime, if rescue had not arrived. The key was in the outside of the lock, and Wally turned it, and threw the door open.

There was a shout of rage in the dusky room, and a figure came rushing out. A clenched fist smote Wally full in the face, and he went down on the landing with a crash and a roar.

CHAPTER 10 Not Popular!

"YAROOH!" roared Wally. It had been a fierce blow, but it would not have knocked the tough and muscular fag over if he had not been taken by surprise.

As it was, however, Wally was floored.

Jameson and Frayne started back, putting up their hands defensively. Wally sat up on the floor, blinking. Night was falling, and it was very dusky on the landing.

"What the—the thunder—" howled Wally.

"You rotter! You lying rotter!" yelled Manners minor.

"I'll give you some more!"

"He's dotty!" exclaimed Jameson.

Wally jumped up.

"You silly ass!" he shouted. "What are you going for me for? Do you want me to mop up the floor with you?"

Manners minor peered at him in the dusk.

"Oh! You're not the fellow!" he exclaimed, taken aback. "I—I thought it was that beast coming back to let me out!"

"You silly little fool, you might have made sure first!" said Wally, rubbing his nose savagely.

It had been a mistake, but that would not have saved Manners minor from a licking but for other considerations. Certainly he had had no right to be so hasty. But Wally held his hand.

"I'm sorry I hit you!" said Reggie, not looking very sorry, however. It had been a relief to his pent-up feelings to hit someone. "A rotten beast told me lies about this being the tea-room, and brought me up here!"

Wally's face relaxed into a grin, and Frayne and Jameson chuckled.

"Well, you must have been green to swallow a yarn like that!" said Wally. "Never mind; no harm done. Just you be a bit more careful how you land out with your fists again, that's all! You might have hurt me!"

In point of fact, Wally was hurt, but he did not choose to admit it.

"I've said I'm sorry!" growled Reggie. "I thought it was that cad! Did you come up to let me out?"

"Yes."

"Then you jolly well knew I was here," said Reggie angrily.

Wally stared at him.

"We've just found out you were here," he said. "But do you think it's our special business to worry about silly new kids who are green enough to get locked up in a box-room?"

"I'll make that rotter sit up for it!" snarled Reggie.

"I'm going straight to the Head."

"You're whatting?"

Reggie Manners thrust past the fags to go down the stairs. Wally caught him by the shoulder and stopped him.

"Let me go! What do you want?"

"Where are you going?" asked Wally quietly.

"I'm going to the Head!"

"What for?"

"To tell him I've been locked up in a box-room for two hours!" said Reggie, his voice trembling with passion.

"Hold on!" said Wally. "There's a Housemaster in this House. Chaps have to go to the Housemaster with complaints. It's against the rules to sneak to the Head."

"You see," said Jameson contemptuously, "the Head hasn't the time to attend to sneaking cads!"

Reggie flushed crimson.

"Where is the Housemaster's room, then?" he asked angrily. "I don't care who I go to, so long as that beast is punished."

"I shan't tell you where it is!" said Wally quietly.

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"I'm not going to help you to sneak! Wait a minute, Manners minor! As you're new here, you are rather in want of some advice——"

"I don't want your advice!" said Manners minor, "And take your hand off my shoulder, or——"

"Or what?" asked Wally, with deadly quietness.

"Or I'll knock it off!" growled Reggie.

"My 'at!" murmured Frayne. Jameson giggled.

Both the fags expected Wally to take the new fag by the neck, and make an example of him.

Wally, to his credit be it said, did nothing of the kind. He had an inward struggle, and then he removed his hand from Reggie's shoulder.

"Cut!" he said briefly.

Reggie sneered—a sneer that very nearly made Wally change his mind—and went downstairs.

Jameson started after him, but Wally jerked him back.

"Don't stop me, you fathead!" growled Jameson. "He wants a thick ear, and I'm going to give him one!"

"Let him off this time, Jamey!"

Jameson snorted.

"What for?" he demanded.

"He's a 'orrid little beast!" said Frayne.

"I know he is. But those chaps stood us a stunning feed, and they've been very decent to us lately," said D'Arcy minor. "Of course you can see now what they were up to. Manners knew his minor was a cad and a rotter, and he wanted him to be let down easy. Well, let's let him down easy. We've had the feed."

"That's all right," said Jameson, after a pause. "But I suppose we're not going to let the cad go on like this!"

"No jolly fear!" said Wally promptly. "We're letting him off this once, and that makes us square—see?"

"Ear, ear!" said Frayne.

"But he's going to sneak about Piggott!" said Jameson.

"That's his look-out, and Piggott's," said Wally. "Piggy oughtn't to have played that trick on him; it's more than a joke to be shut up in a box-room for nearly two hours."

"I dare say he cheeked him, same as he did us!" growled Jameson.

"Shouldn't wonder!"

"If he sneaks to Railton——"

"If he does, he will have a high old time in the dormitory to-night!" said Wally grimly. "I'm sorry for Manners major! He's a decent sort, though he's rather an old frump. But if his minor's a sneak as well as a cheeky little reptile, his minor won't find life worth living in the Third!"

"And we came up 'ere to be friendly to 'im!" said Joe Frayne, in a tone more of sorrow than of anger.

Wally shrugged his shoulders. His friendly intentions towards Manners minor had come to a sudden end, which was not surprising.

The three fags went downstairs, and Manners of the Shell met them in the lower passage. They looked at him grimly.

"Have you seen my minor?" the Shell fellow asked.

"We've let him out. A kid locked him in the box-room for a lark."

"Oh! Where is he now?"

"Gone to look for a master to sneak to," said Jameson. Manners started, and frowned.

"Shut up, Jameson!" muttered Wally.

"Well, he has!" said Jameson.

Manners stood still as the fags went down the passage. His face was dark and troubled. Everything seemed to be going wrong. The looks of Wally & Co. showed what kind of an impression Reggie had made on them; all labour in that direction had evidently been wasted. Tom Merry came out of his study.

"What's wrong?" he asked. "Hasn't the kid turned up yet?"

Manners explained.

"The young ass!" said Tom anxiously. "He's making about the worst start he could make. Perhaps there's still time to stop him. I suppose he's gone to Railton. Let's see!"

Manners nodded, and they descended the stairs.

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They were in time to see Reggie tapping at the door of the Housemaster's study. Manners called to him hastily over the banisters.

"Reggie!"

Manners minor looked round.

"Come in!" came a deep voice from the study.

"Reggie, don't—"

Reggie Manners went into the study. Manners drew a deep breath and clenched his hands.

"I oughtn't to have left him alone!" he muttered.

"I ought to have made him come with me, if I had to take him by the neck! The sneaking young cad! Why, the fags will make his life a misery for this!"

"Can't be helped, old chap; you've done your best!"

Manners nodded gloomily, and went down the passage to wait for his minor to come out. Tom Merry waited with him.

CHAPTER 11.

Manners Minor Goes His Own Way.

MR. RAILTON, the Housemaster of the School House, greeted Manners minor with a kind smile. He guessed at once who the boy was.

"Ah! You are Manners' brother?" he asked.

Mr. Railton had a high opinion of Manners of the Shell.

"Yes, sir," said Reggie. "Are you the Housemaster? I was told by the page that this was the Housemaster's study."

"Yes, I am Mr. Railton."

"I've been shut up in a box-room," said Reggie.

Mr. Railton's genial expression changed a little, and he looked hard at the new boy. The petulant, passionate face told its own story, and Mr. Railton did not need further information as to Reggie's nature and his variety of home-training.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Railton. "I hope you have not come to me to make a complaint, Manners minor, your first day at the school."

"Yes, I have," said Reggie sullenly. "I've been shut up in a box-room for two hours, and I was hungry, and—and—the rotter—"

"The what?"

"The fellow told me lies about the box-room being a tea-room for new boys, and shoved me in, and locked the door, and—"

Mr. Railton smiled slightly.

"It was an unfeeling joke," he said. "I disapprove of such a thing very strongly. But you are out of the box-room now, Manners minor, and you must forget all about it. You had better go and see your brother."

Reggie stared at him. The unfortunate darling of the home circle was not accustomed to having his wrongs and grievances brushed aside in this manner. At home such a grievance would almost have caused a family council. Reggie, in his blissful ignorance of the world outside his home, had expected the Housemaster to show as much concern as his fond and indulgent father would have shown.

"But isn't he going to be punished?" he blurted out.

"The boy who shut you in the box-room?"

"Yes, of course."

Mr. Railton paused before he replied.

"If you make a complaint to a master, Manners minor, the matter will certainly be investigated, and the delinquent punished," he said. "I recommend you, however, to do nothing of the kind. Dismiss the matter from your mind, and take it good-humouredly. You will find that much better in the long run, my boy. A lad who bears malice is not liked."

Reggie did not understand that the Housemaster was wasting time upon him, and giving him good advice from sheer kindness of heart. He was too accustomed to having time wasted on him.

"I came here to complain, sir," he said obstinately. "I want him to be punished for telling me lies and shutting me up in the box-room."

"If you persist, Manners minor, your complaint must be listened to; but I again advise you to let the matter drop."

That would have been more than enough for anybody

but Reggie, but Reggie did not budge an inch. He stood still, looking sullen.

"Does that mean that you persist in your complaint, Manners minor?" asked the Housemaster tartly.

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Who was the boy who locked you in the box-room?"

"I don't know his name, sir."

"Does he belong to your Form?"

"I—I think so."

"You had better ascertain," said Mr. Railton drily. "If it is a boy of your own Form the matter is one for your Form-master to deal with, and you must go to Mr. Selby. I advise you to see your brother, and take his advice upon the matter first. You may go."

Reggie went sullenly. As he closed the door he found Tom Merry and Manners waiting for him. He knew his way to Mr. Selby's study, and he was brushing past them when Manners caught his arm.

"Let me go!" growled Reggie.

"Have you sneaked to Mr. Railton?" said Manners savagely.

Reggie flushed. He did not like the word "sneaked."

"I've complained to him," he said loftily.

"You young cad!"

"Easy does it," said Tom Merry. "Reggie don't know the ropes. What did Railton say to you, kid?"

"Advised me to let the matter drop," said Reggie savagely.

"Good old Railton!" said Tom. "That's all right, then. Let it drop, and there's an end to the trouble."

"I'm going to my Form-master," said Reggie sulkily.

"It seems that he's got to attend to it. I'm going to tell him."

Manners tightened his grip on his minor's arm.

"Look here, Reggie!" he said, in a low voice. "Can't you see that old Railton was giving you a chance? If you begin here by sneaking, you'll have every kid in the House against you. Your life won't be worth living in the Third. It was a rotten trick that was played on you, but you can punch the fellow's head when you see him again. I suppose you're not afraid of him?"

"No, I'm not!" growled Reggie.

"Then punch his head, and let the matter drop."

"I won't!"

Manners' eyes gleamed, but Tom Merry chimed in gently and kindly.

"Why won't you, kid?" he asked.

"Because I won't!" said Reggie. "I'm going to have the cad punished, and it will be a warning to the others, too. Those fellows who let me out, they were all cheeky and rotten. I'm jolly well going to show them that I'm not standing any rot!"

Tom Merry looked at him curiously. How to deal with so wilful and wayward a character was a little beyond his knowledge.

"They'll all be down on you if you sneak," he said at last.

"Hang them!" said Reggie.

"Reggie, won't you take my advice?" urged Manners.

"No, I won't! I've had enough of you, and I don't want to speak to you again while I'm at the school."

"You're not going to sneak!" said Manners resolutely.

"Come with me!"

"I won't!"

"Then I'll make you!" said Manners, and he drew the fag away by main force.

Reggie clung to the banisters, and shouted.

"Let me go! Let me go! I'll yell for help—"

"Chuck it, Manners; you'll have Railton out!" muttered Tom.

Manners realised that, and he released his minor. Reggie sneered, and went directly to his Form-master's study. Manners and Tom Merry went up the stairs. It was time to do their prep.

"Hallo! Kid turned up?" asked Monty Lowther cheerily, as they came into the study.

Manners grunted.

"Yes; never mind him. I'm done with him. He's gone to Selby to sneak about some tricks the fags played on him."

"Why didn't you stop him, ass?"

"I couldn't."

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"Poor little beggar!" said Lowther. "Don't be too hard on him, old scout. He doesn't know our charming manners and customs yet. I suppose he always runs to pater or mater when he's got a grievance—what?"

"Yes," growled Manners.

"He'll soon get it knocked out of him here," said Lowther.

Manners grunted, and sat down to his work. Manners was a conscientious fellow, and he fully meant to do his best to carry out his father's wishes and to look after the pet of the family. He wondered now whether he had done his best. At all events, he had put Reggie's back up at the start, and made the obstinate young rascal determined not to follow his advice upon a single point. Manners was very much inclined to dismiss the fag from his mind altogether, and let him go his own wilful way. But he knew that he could not.

CHAPTER 12.

Tea in Tom Merry's Study.

REGGIE MANNERS felt a little uneasy as he presented himself to Mr. Selby. The master of the Third was at work, and he was pressed for time, as it was getting near the hour when he had to take his form in evening preparation. The look he gave Reggie as he came in was snappish and impatient.

"What do you want? You should not interrupt me like this. What is it?"

Reggie faltered. This wasn't much like Mr. Railton. At the same time it struck him that the snappish gentleman was more likely to give heed to complaints than the genial Housemaster.

"Please, I've been locked up in a box-room—"

"What? What?"

"I've been shut up for two hours, sir, and I—I haven't had any tea," said Reggie, his lip quivering.

Mr. Selby stared at him.

"Do you mean to say that some boy has shut you up in a box-room?"

"Yes, sir."

"A Third-Form boy?"

"I think so, sir."

"If it is not a Third-Form boy I have nothing to do with the matter," snapped Mr. Selby. "Was it D'Arcy minor?"

Mr. Selby did not like D'Arcy minor, and he would not have been displeased to hear a complaint about him.

"I don't know his name, sir."

"You have come to me with a complaint about some boy whose name and Form you do not know? You are wasting my time."

"I—I—"

"You may point out the boy to me at evening preparation, if he is in my Form. Then I will inquire into the matter. You may go!"

"But, sir—"

"Leave my study at once!"

Reggie's eyes gleamed, but he obeyed. He drifted down the passage again, feeling lost and miserable. He had not had tea, and he was feeling hungry. And he did not know anything about evening preparation, or when or where it was to take place. How was he to find out?

His brother could and would have told him everything he wanted to know, but he did not think of seeking his brother. It would have been too humiliating, after all he had said and done. But what he was to do he had no idea.

A good many boys passed him, and some glanced at him, but he did not know anybody, and nobody seemed to bother about him. After a time he plucked up courage to speak to a big, handsome senior who came in from the quadrangle. It was Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, though Reggie was not aware of it. The big Sixth-Former looked down on him kindly enough.

"Hallo! New kid?" he asked. "Manners minor, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Reggie. "P-p-please can you tell me what—what—"

"Eh? Fire away!"

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"I—I don't know where to go," said Reggie, miserably. "I—I haven't had any tea, and I don't know what to do, and—"

"Dash it all! Manners might look after you a bit," said Kildare, frowning. "Here, come with me!"

There were a good many of the Sixth who would not have bothered their heads about the forlorn fag, but Kildare was good-natured to a fault. He was a little angry, too, at Manners of the Shell neglecting his minor in this way. Reggie followed him to the Shell passage, and Kildare looked into Tom Merry's study.

The Terrible Three, who were at work on their prep, rose to their feet at once.

"Hallo, Kildare!"

"Here's your minor, Manners," said the prefect. "Don't leave the kid wandering about the-house like a lost sheep. Look after him a bit!"

And Kildare walked away without waiting for Manners to reply.

Poor Manners turned crimson with vexation. Kildare knew nothing of his little troubles with his minor, of course, and evidently considered him as neglecting his brotherly duties. Kildare's good opinion was worth having—and keeping—and the Shell fellow did not like looking selfish in his eyes.

Reggie stood uncertainly in the study. Tom Merry and Lowther made the best of the situation.

"Had your tea, kid?" asked Lowther.

"No; I've been shut up in the box-room—"

"Lucky we've got something left, then," said Lowther, interrupting the tale of wrong and grievance. "We've been dining out—ahem!—and the larder is well stocked. Have some tea with us."

"Yes, do, kid!" said Tom Merry.

"Thank you!" faltered Reggie.

"Don't you chaps leave your prep," growled Manners. "I can look after it."

"Oh, rot!" said Tom.

The prep was put aside, and a cloth spread over a corner of the table, and Reggie sat down. He felt much better after a meal of ham and tongue and cake, with coffee specially made by Monty Lowther.

"Tuck in, kid!" said Tom Merry hospitably. "It's jolly near time for your prep, you know."

"Mr. Selby told me there was evening preparation," said Reggie. "I don't know when it is."

"Half-past seven. Time to finish your tea."

"In the Third-Form-room," said Manners. "I'll show you the way."

"You needn't!" retorted Reggie.

"Ahem!" said Tom Merry. "Another slice of cake, kid? Fill up that cup again, Monty, and make yourself useful."

Reggie was looking much more cheerful now.

"I say, what is evening preparation like?" he asked.

"Oh, you prepare your lessons for the next day, you know," said Tom. "We do it in our studies, but the Third do it in the Form-room, with a master. Any of the kids will give you tips about it, especially D'Arcy minor."

"I don't know anybody in the Third, excepting the rotter who shut me in the box-room," said Reggie. "I don't like the idea of working in the evening. Can't I leave it if I want to?"

"Well, no; that wouldn't be allowed," said Tom, as gravely as he could. "Still, as it's your first day here you won't be bothered much. You'll have to turn up, that's all; Selby won't expect much of you in the morning."

"I'd rather not do it at all."

Manners gave a snort. Lowther grinned, and Tom Merry smiled.

"But you must, you know," he said. "We're not our own masters here. We can't do just as we like."

"My father always lets me do as I like," said Reggie snikily.

Another snort from Manners.

"Well, you see," said Tom, rather perplexed, "school isn't exactly like home, you know. You'll find it all right in the long run."

"Better come along to the Form-room," said Manners. "It's close on half-past, and Selby will rag you if you're late."

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"I'm not coming with you!" said Reggie defiantly.
 "You silly little ass!" roared Manners. "If you're late you'll get lines."

"I don't care."

"May I have the honour of seeing our young friend to the Form-room?" asked Monty Lowther, in a honeyed tone. "Come on, Reggie, you stick to your Uncle Monty!"

"I'll go with you," said Reggie condescendingly.

"Thanks awfully, dear boy," said Lowther blandly. "This way!"

Reggie, with a glance of defiance at his brother, followed Monty Lowther from the study. Manners gave Tom Merry a hopeless look.

"What do you think of him?" he said.

"Well, he is rather a cough-drop," said Tom frankly. "but he'll pull round all right."

"Look here, I'm not asking you fellows to keep on wasting time and trouble on the little fool because he's my minor."

"My dear chap, we're going to stand by you. Don't we always back Monty up when his uncle comes?"

And Manners grinned, and sat down to his prep again. Monty Lowther guided Reggie solemnly down the stairs to the Form-room. Most of the Third were already in—with Mr. Selby it was always more judicious to be early.

"Here you are," said Lowther. "There's your room, kid. Hallo, young D'Arcy!"

Wally came bolting up the passage as the half-hour began to chime.

"This is Manners minor. Take him in."

Wally made a grimace.

"All right. Come on, Manners minor!"

Reggie entered the Form-room with Wally, and Lowther returned to his study. He clapped Manners on the shoulder as he came in, and Manners gave a yelp as five or six blots spurted from his pen.

"Fathead!"

"All serene," grinned Lowther. "How clumsy you are! His lordship has been duly guided to his lordship's quarters, and Wally's taken him under his wing. Now we can sleep in peace."

To which Manners replied with a snort.

CHAPTER 13.

Sneak!

MR. SELBY was not yet in his place, and the Form-room was in a buzz. Piggott grinned at Manners minor as he came in with Wally. "Here's the new fathead!" Piggott remarked. "So you got out?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I let him out," said Wally. "You shut up, Piggott!"

"Well, I was going to let him out in time for prep," said Piggott, "only Hobbs told me he was let out. I suppose I can pull a new kid's leg if I like, D'Arcy minor, especially a cheeky, scowling scug like that!"

"He said he was going to sneak about it," said Jameson.

"He ain't done it," said Frayne. "We'd have 'eard about it before now. Don't be 'ard on a new kid, Jimmy."

"Well, he looks as if he might," said Curly Gibson. "He'd better not, though!"

"Cave!" called out Hobbs.

The Third-Formers scuttled into their places, and were quiet as mice as Mr. Selby entered. Mr. Selby had apparently forgotten Manners minor and his complaint, for he went directly to his desk, without a glance at him. Reggie sat in suppressed indignation for some minutes. He was not accustomed to being forgotten. He rose, his face flushed and angry.

Then Mr. Selby's eyes turned on him, and he remembered.

"Oh," said Mr. Selby, "is that you, Manners minor? You had a complaint to make to me, I think?"

"Yes, sir," said Reggie.

Every eye in the room was turned on Manners minor. The fags looked angry, amazed, and incredulous. Sneaking was contrary to all their traditions, though the unfortunate Reggie wasn't aware of it. Reggie didn't really mean to sneak—he only wanted to see strict justice done on his tormentor. He had always complained at home when he had a grievance, and he did not see any reason for changing his habits at St. Jim's. That was one of the many things Reggie had to learn.

"Well, well, it appears that you were shut up in a box-room by some foolish practical joker," said Mr. Selby, his eye lingering on D'Arcy minor. "If the boy is here, you may point him out to me."

Mr. Selby's tone was a trifle contemptuous, which angered Reggie still more.

"That is the boy, sir," he said, pointing to Piggott.

Piggott gave him a deadly look.

"Stand out here, Piggott!"

Piggott reluctantly stepped out before the class. There was a murmur in the ranks of the Third. Mr. Selby stilled it with a glance.

"Piggott, did you lock Manners minor in a box-room?"

Piggott hesitated. He had few scruples about lying, but he felt that it would not do. Mr. Selby was not a man to be trifled with.

"Yes, sir!" muttered Piggott.

"Indeed! And why did you do it?"

"It—it was only a joke, sir!" stammered Piggott.

"Nobody would make a fuss about it, sir. I—I didn't mean any harm!"

"I couldn't have my tea!" said Reggie, in a tone of deep injury.

"You need not speak, Manners minor!" said Mr. Selby acidly. "Piggott, I disapprove of these tricks. Hold out your hand!"

Swish!

Piggott went back to his place, with his hand tucked under his arm. Reggie looked far from satisfied. He had expected to see Piggott soundly thrashed for such an unparalleled outrage. He sat looking sulky.

The rest of the Third looked furious.

Never had the fags found the evening preparation so long. They were anxious for it to be over, having many things to say to Manners minor.

But everything comes to an end at last, and so did prep. Mr. Selby glanced at the clock, and quitted the Form-room, leaving the Third to their own devices. The Third favoured the Form-room rather than the junior common-room, having it to themselves when prep. was over.

Piggott ran to the door, as soon as the Form-master was gone, and put his back to it. He feared that the victim would bolt. But Reggie was not thinking of bolting. He did not know yet that there was anything to bolt for.

He was first apprised of the fact that trouble was brewing by Jameson. Jameson put his head close to Reggie's, and bawled in his ear:

"Sneak!"

Manners minor started back.

"Sneak!" howled the Third.

"Cad! Rotter! Tell-tale!"

"He's got me licked!" yelled Piggott furiously. "Got me licked, through telling tales. Collar him!"

"Let me alone!" roared Reggie, as the excited fags closed round him.

"Yes, we'll let you alone—I don't think!" said Hobbs. "You worm, come out and be trodden on!"

"If you touch me, I'll complain!" yelled Reggie.

"Then you'll jolly well have something to complain about, you Prussian!" said Jameson, and he seized Reggie by the collar, and whirled him away from his desk.

Reggie spun out into the middle of the room, his brain whirling.

"Rag him!" shouted Piggott. "Rag the sneaking little beast!"

"Bump him!"

"Ink him!"

"Help!" shrieked Reggie, as the fags closed round him, angry and threatening, and he made a bolt for the door.

Hobbs put out his foot, and Reggie tripped over it.

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and crashed down. Then a dozen hands were laid on him.

Manners minor kicked and struggled furiously. Wally stood looking on with his hands in his pockets. He did not join in the ragging, but he was not in the least disposed to interfere. Wally's opinion was that the sneak deserved all that he was going to get.

"Let me alone!" screamed Reggie. "Rotten cowards!" "Nice boy!" grinned Jameson. "Here, stick him on his feet and let him fight Piggy!"

"He's going to be ragged for sneaking," said Piggott. "He ain't fit for a decent chap to touch."

"Don't be a funk!" said Jameson. "Give him a licking!"

"That's a good idea!" said Wally. "Rag the little cad if he won't fight. But give him a chance!"

"I'll fight anybody here!" howled Reggie.

"Well, here's your man!" said Jameson, dragging forward the reluctant Piggott.

"I'm not going to fight a beastly sneak!" snarled Piggott.

"Yes, you are—or you'll fight me!" said Wally. "Take your jacket off, young 'un. Can't help you—can't touch a filthy sneak!"

"I don't want your help," growled Reggie, "and I'll fight you if you like."

Wally grinned. "One at a time," he remarked. "Go it, Piggott! Don't be a funk!"

Piggott growled, but he had to come on. The fags made a ring round the two, and Piggott was urged on from all sides. Piggott was by no means popular in his Form; but he was an idol in comparison with the sneak. All the sympathy of the Third was with Piggott for once.

Reggie, in a state of fury, and glad of a chance of hammering somebody, did not wait to be attacked. He opened the ball by rushing at Piggott, hitting out furiously. Piggott hit out, too, and the fight was soon going strong. Piggott was the bigger of the two, but he did not like close quarters, and, to the disappointment of the fags, he was knocked right and left.

"Go it, Piggott!" yelled Jameson indignantly. "Stand up to him! Don't funk!"

Crash! Piggott went down on his back and stayed there, gasping.

"Get up!" rapped out Wally.

"I—I can't!" mumbled Piggott.

"Licked already!" said Jameson, in deep disgust. "The sneak wouldn't have licked a New House chap as easily as that!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" said Piggott dolorously. "Tackle him yourself! Yow-ow! He's a wild beast! Grook!"

"Well, he's licked Piggott," said Jameson. "Now he's going to have the frogs'-march for sneaking. Collar him!"

Reggie struggled in vain as the fags collared him. He shrieked and yelled, but he had to go round the Form-room, bumping at every other step. Piggott sat on a desk and watched in delight.

In the midst of the uproar the door opened, and Mr. Selby's angry face looked in.

"What does this disturbance mean?" he thundered.

"Cave!" gasped Hobbs.

Manners minor was dropped as if he had suddenly become red-hot. The fags stared at Mr. Selby, and Mr. Selby glowered at the fags. Reggie struggled to his feet, almost foaming.

"So it is you, Manners minor?" said Mr. Selby unpleasantly.

"I've been bumped and kicked!" howled Reggie. "I won't stand it! I'll write to my father to take me away from here."

"Silence! It appears that you have been ill-using this new boy," said Mr. Selby. "I think I understand the reason. Every boy here will take two hundred lines, and bring them to me before bed-time. If there is another sound from this room, the Form will be detained for three half-holidays!"

Mr. Selby rustled away. The fags looked at Reggie as if they would eat him. But they did not venture to touch him again. Mr. Selby's threat was too terrible.

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Reggie, putting his collar straight, walked out of the Form-room with a defiant look at his cowered Form-fellows. Jameson gave a gasp.

"There's our evening gone," he said. "Lines till bed-time! All through that sneak. Selby wouldn't have come if he hadn't yelled. Oh, my hat! I'll make him squirm to-morrow."

"I sha'n't wait till to-morrow," said Hobbs furiously. "Wait till the sneaking cad is in the dorm to-night, that's all."

And that thought was comforting to the Third. As they wearily ground out lines for Mr. Selby, they consoled themselves by the prospect of having Manners minor all to themselves in the Third-Form dormitory.

CHAPTER 14.

The Last Straw.

TOM MERRY & Co. met Wally as he came out of the Form-room shortly before bed-time.

Wally was looking grim.

"We've been looking for you, Wally," said Tom. "Been detained?"

"Yes," grunted Wally; "and I've got to get these lines to Selby."

"Hard lines, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "What have you been up to?"

"Nothing."

"It's that rotten sneak Manners minor," said Jameson, following Wally out. "He's got us all lines with his sneaking. The rat!"

The fags crowded away with their impositions, looking savage and angry. Manners gave his companions a hopeless look. This was worse than ever. Arthur Augustus detained his minor.

"Wally, deah boy, I twust you are goin' to look after Weggie a bit," he said mildly.

"Yes, I'm going to look after him," said Wally. "I'm going to make minciment of him."

"Look here—" began Manners.

"You might go easy with him, Wally," urged Tom Merry. "He's a new kid fresh from home, and you're an old hand, you know."

"Oh, none of your soft sawder!" said Wally sourly.

"I've gone easy with him. I've let him punch my nose, and haven't slaughtered him. I've advised him not to be a sneak, and he's told me to mind my own business. He stood out before the class and sneaked about Piggott. I can't stand by him after that. If he'd been decent, it would have been different. We are going to treat him well. But he's a rotten worm and an outsider, and I can't help it."

And Wally tramped away.

"Bai Jove! It's wotten!" said Arthur Augustus doubtfully. "Wally wouldn't be so watty ovah nothin', I'm afraid!"

"It's Reggie's own fault," said Manners. "I suppose he'll get it knocked out of him in time. It will be a rather rough process, that's all. I don't see how he's to be set right with the Third now. But—but I'll speak to him."

It went against the grain to seek Reggie out, in his present humour, but Manners was anxious. He could guess only too well that a ragging was likely to take place after lights out in the Third Form dormitory. It was impossible for him to look after his minor there.

He sought for Reggie, and found him in the common-room. There were a dozen juniors in the common-room, and they were all staring at Reggie. That was not surprising, as the remarkable new boy was smoking a cigarette by the fire. His box had arrived, and Reggie had a new supply of smokes hidden in it.

"Is that your minor, Manners?" asked Kangaroo of the Shell.

"Yes," grunted Manners.

"You'd better speak to him. I've spoken to him, but— If a prefect sees him, there'll be trouble."

Manners crossed over to his minor. Reggie stared at him, and blew out a cloud of smoke at him.

"You young fool!" said Manners, in a concentrated voice. "Put that cigarette into the fire."

"Sha'n't!"

"Do you know that these fellows here would have

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kicked you out of the room if you weren't my brother?" muttered Manners. "Throw it away! It's your bedtime, too."

"Oh, don't worry!"

Darrel of the Sixth looked into the room.

"Any of the Third here?" he asked. "There's one hasn't turned up in the dorm—a new kid— Why, what—what—" Darrel broke off in utter astonishment, as he saw the cigarette. "You dirty young rascal, what are you doing with that?"

"Smoking it," said Reggie.

"Put it in 'he fire!'"

"Sha'n't!"

Darrel gasped, and the juniors gasped, too. It was the first time they had ever heard a fag of the Third say "Sha'n't!" to a prefect of the Sixth.

Darrel did not speak again. He took Reggie quietly by the collar, took the cigarette away from him, and dropped it in the fire. Then he walked Reggie off to the dormitory. Reggie struggled at first, but the grip on his collar was like iron, and he found it more convenient to go quietly.

The School House Third were in their dormitory when Reggie was marched in by the collar. The fags grinned at the sight.

"Get into bed," said Darrel quietly.

Reggie gave him one furious look, but he obeyed. Darrel waited patiently a few minutes, till he was in bed, and then turned out the light and quitted the dormitory.

"So the cheeky rat's been checking Darrel," said Hobbs. "Lucky for him it wasn't Knox. Knox would have skinned him."

"We're going to skin him pretty soon," said Piggott. Manners minor quaked.

A match scratched, and a candle-end was lighted, and then another. In the dim and flickering light the Third-Formers gathered round the bed of Manners minor.

"Have him out!" said Wally tersely.

"Turn the rotter out!"

Reggie sat up in bed.

"If you touch me, I'll yell for help!" he panted.

"Put a pillow over his chivvy," said Hobbs. "He's cad enough! Have him out!"

A dozen hands grasped Reggie's bedclothes, and jerked them off. Then he was bundled out of bed.

"Run the gauntlet first!" commanded Wally. "Form up!"

"Good egg!"

The fags formed up in a double row along the beds. Each of them grasped a pillow, or a slipper, or a twisted sock. Reggie stared at them furiously. He was not in the least disposed to run the gauntlet.

"Start, you sneak!" said Hobbs.

"I won't!"

"Then we'll jolly soon start you."

Hobbs and Frayne grasped Reggie, and he was hurled bodily into the space between the lines of waiting fags. He rolled over, yelling. Blows descended upon him at once, and he picked himself up and ran. He had to run now; and he ran his hardest, and the vengeful Third almost fell over one another in their eagerness to get in a "swipe." By the time Reggie reached the end of the double line he was gasping, and feeling decidedly hurt.

But the double line ended at the wall, and there was no escape.

"Back you go!" chortled Gibson.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Paste him!"

Swipe! Swipe! Swipe!

Reggie, yelling with pain and rage, raced along again, and came out at the other end, dazed and staggering. But he did not stop there. He ran straight on to the door, tore it open, and rushed into the passage.

The fags stared after him in stupefaction.

That Reggie would attempt to bolt from the dormitory in his pyjamas had not even crossed their minds.

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally, in astonishment.

"He's gone to sneak!" hooted Piggott.

"Oh, the cad! The rotter! He'll bring Selby here."

"Turn in!" said Wally hastily. "Better be fast asleep."

"Yes, Selby'll believe we're fast asleep!" groaned Hobbs. "He'll bring a cane. Oh, dear! Oh, the awful young villain!"

The candle-ends were hastily blown out, and the fags bundled into bed in a state of great apprehension. Meanwhile, Reggie was racing downstairs in his pyjamas. In that light and airy attire, he burst headlong into Mr. Selby's study without stopping to knock.

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was there with the Third-Form master, having dropped in for a chat. The two masters sprang to their feet in amazement, as the fag bolted in.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Mr. Selby.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Linton.

"Who is it—Manners minor?" Mr. Selby grasped a cane. "Manners minor, how dare you—how dare you, I say, descend in your night attire and enter my study? Hold out your hand, sir!"

Reggie yelled.

"I won't stay in the dormitory! They're ragging me! They're beating me! I believe they're after me now. Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Ahem!" said Mr. Linton. "It appears to be a case of a ragging, Mr. Selby. The boy seems frightened."

"He has been in trouble with his Form already," said Mr. Selby, frowning. "He seems to be an unpopular boy; bad training at home, I think. Manners minor, come with me. Excuse me a few minutes, Mr. Linton. Come, boy!"

"I won't go back there!" howled Reggie.

"Do you hear me, sir?"

"I won't go—I won't! I want to go home! I—I— Yaroooh!" Reggie howled, as Mr. Selby grasped his ear with a grip that was like a vice. "Yow-ow! Leggo!"

Mr. Selby marched him out of the study by the ear. Reggie struggled in the doorway, and the Form-master—never a very patient man—lost all patience. The cane sang through the air. Pyjamas were a very poor protection against a cane. Reggie howled and writhed.

"Now will you come?" thundered Mr. Selby.

"Wow-wow! Yes! Ow!"

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Linton, in astonishment, as Reggie was marched away. "An extraordinary boy—very! Bless my soul!"

Mr. Selby escorted Manners minor to the dormitory and turned on the light. Every bed but one was occupied, and slumber seemed to reign.

"Boys," said Mr. Selby, in a deep voice, "you need not affect sleep; I am perfectly well aware that you are awake! Listen to me. There has been a disturbance here this evening. Every boy here is detained for Saturday afternoon, and will write out three hundred lines. If there is another sound from this dormitory to-night, I shall cane every boy in the Form, and stop holidays for the rest of the term! Get into bed, Manners minor!"

"I—I don't want to stay here—"

"Get into bed!" thundered Mr. Selby, and Manners minor bundled in.

The worried Form-master quitted the dormitory. Reggie lay palpitating in the darkness.

Wally sat up in bed.

"Gated for Saturday, and three hundred lines!" he said. "Oh, ripping! And no holidays for the rest of the term if we touch that sneaking rat again! Well, we can't afford to be gated for the rest of the term."

"He's not going to be let off!" said Hobbs sulphurously.

"More ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream," said Wally. "He's going to be sent to Coventry! They can't line us and gate us for that!"

"Hear, hear!"

And Wally put his head on the pillow again.

Manners minor settled down to sleep. He was feeling relieved; there was no more ragging to be feared; the penalty of that was too heavy. And he did not yet realise that being sent to Coventry might be more painful than a good many raggings.

But he was destined to learn that—and many other things—before he had been much longer at St. Jim's.

THE END.

Next week's grand, long complete story of the Chums of St. Jim's is entitled "THE RIGHT STUFF." by Martin Clifford.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 421.

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

Illustrated by A. G. H. and J. H. H.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "THE RIGHT STUFF!"

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

It was evident from his uniform that he was a messenger-boy, and he shuffled along the street with his eyes glued to a blood-curdling narrative.

As he reached the corner of the thoroughfare, he bumped into another of his kind, who promptly turned and ran off as fast as he could.

"Hi, Bill!" shouted the first messenger. "What are you running for? Ain't you working to-day?"—Sent in by R. H. James, Wallasey.

A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR'S APPEAL.

"Dear Lord Kitchener,—I'm not a good walker, which prevents me joining the infantry. As I have no experience of horses, the cavalry is also out of the question. The artillery I object to on account of the noise, and flying makes me giddy. The A.S.C. does not appeal to me, and the R.A.M.C. would entail some very unpleasant duties.

"So you had better not worry about me.

"Perhaps, when the fine weather comes, I may think about joining the Navy. I'm rather keen on boating, don't you know, and have spent many happy hours on the river.—Yours etc., A. Slacker."—Sent in by R. Armstrong, Hove.

THE MISSING WORD.

A retired cavalry officer hastily called a cab, and requested the driver to take him to the station in about two minutes.

"Can't do it, sir," said the driver regretfully. "The old horse will hardly budge to-day."

Then the retired officer noticed that the horse had also retired from the cavalry.

"Let me try," he said. And, jumping up beside the driver, he shouted:

"Trot!"

The horse obeyed the command.

"Canter!" shouted the retired officer, and it cantered.

"Gallop!" came the next command, and its pace quickened.

The station was reached in a very short time, and the officer, to bring the horse to a standstill, shouted:

"Halt!"

The horse, recognising the military order, immediately stood fast.

After the officer had departed, a tourist engaged the cabman to take him to a certain place.

"Can you do it in five minutes?" the tourist asked.

"Yes, sir!" returned the cabbie, remembering the way in which the officer had made the horse run. "Swiftest horse in creation, sir!"

When the fare had taken his seat, the cabbie gave the horse its orders in the same way as the officer had done.

At the word "Gallop!" the horse dashed off at a furious pace, missing the lamp-posts and kerbstones by inches.

The destination was reached and passed, but still the horse kept up a tremendous speed.

"Stop! Stop!" shouted the tourist frantically, leaning out of the window, and waving his arms.

"Can't, sir!" said the driver. "I've forgotten the blooming password!"—Sent in by Rifleman H. Stevens, Camberwell, S.E.

CONFUSING THE QUESTIONER.

Young Symple was at a grand dinner one evening, and he tried to make an impression on a well-known lawyer who sat next to him. But the man of law did not appreciate the attentions of his neighbour.

"I suppose you lawyers have some strange cases to deal with it times?" observed Symple.

"Yes," answered the lawyer.

"Some very puzzling cases," said the young man, trying again. "Cases that almost confuse you, and er—er—"

"Just so," interrupted the legal gentleman, a look of determination overspreading his countenance. "I knew a man who had a case to deal with of the kind you mention. He gave his full and undivided attention to that case during the whole of the night, and when he was finished, he did not know which side he was on, he was so confused."

"Really," exclaimed Symple, delighted at having drawn something out of the lawyer at last. "Most interesting! What kind of case was it?"

"It was a case of champagne," replied the lawyer.—Sent in by Ronald Taylor, Cardiff.

AN ODE TO YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER.

Tom Merry, oh, Tom Merry, how I like your cheerful face, And the way you try to influence the "knuts" who go the pace!

Your loyalty to your comrade, your kindly word for all, The helping hand you always give should any of them fall.

You have an honest, open look, straightforward, clean and true;

To even think of "dirty tricks" is more than you would do. A loyal Britisher you are, and we should count it luck

If all our youthful Britishers possessed such grit and pluck.—Sent in by Miss M. Creeke, Finsbury Park, N.

QUITE OUT-OF-DATE.

Geordie, the pitman, had been kept awfully short of pocket-money by his wife, and was determined to obtain more. Before he took home his next week's wages, therefore, he extracted nine shillings and sixpence from it for his own pocket.

When he reached home, he went whistling into the house and handed his wife the remainder of his wages.

But wife had her doubts, and, finding an old ready-reckoner brought it into use.

"Geordie!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, my dear?" said her husband meekly, scenting trouble.

"Didn't you tell me you were getting ten shillings and sixpence a shift?"

"Ay, so be I!" answered Geordie truthfully.

"Well, the reckoner says that for five nights you should have two pounds twelve-and-sixpence. You've only given me two pounds three shillings. Where's the other nine-and-six?"

Taking the reckoner from his wife, Geordie noticed that it was dated 1915.

"Gang on wi' ye, lass!" he replied contemptuously.

"That's last year's ready-reckoner you're been looking at."—Sent in by R. G. Allen,

Aslington, Northumberland.

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As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

THE BOYS' FRIEND, 1d.,

Published every Monday,

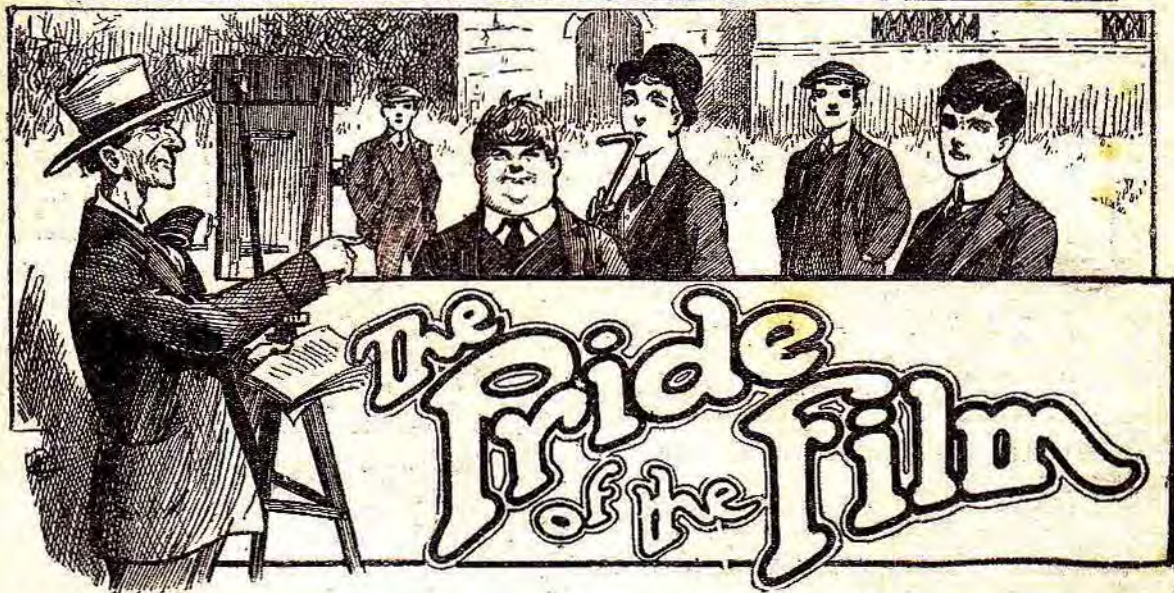
in order to give more of our readers a chance of winning one of our useful Money Prizes.

If you know a really funny joke, or a short, interesting paragraph, send it along (on a post-card) before you forget it, and address it to:

The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND and GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, E.C.

Look out for YOUR Prize Storyette in next week's GEM or BOYS' FRIEND.

HAVE YOU HAD A GORGEOUS TUCK HAMPER YET? SEE THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD," 10.

START OUR GRAND NEW SERIAL STORY TO-DAY!

The Opening Chapters of a Magnificent New Adventure Story.

By VICTOR CROMWELL.

The First Instalments.

REGGIE WHITE, an orphan, is befriended by MR. ANTHONY DELL, a millionaire film-producer, and given a position as actor in his company.

Among others in the company, Reggie makes the acquaintance of RICHARD TURNER, a boy whom he likes; HUBERT NIXON, a snobbish youth, whom he dislikes; and WILLIE BURR, a jovial, fat boy.

MRS. HORACE DELL, Mr. Dell's widowed sister-in-law, tells Reggie that before she married Mr. Dell's brother she was married to MR. NIXON, Hubert's father. Nixon later gave her to understand, however, that the marriage was illegal, as his first wife, Hubert's mother, was still living; and, under these circumstances, she had consented to marry again.

Mr. Nixon now denies the fact that he had a wife living at the time of his second marriage, and, under the threat of disclosing the knowledge that Mrs. Dell is a bigamist, he levies blackmail from her.

Reggie, therefore, determines to find out whether Hubert's mother is still living.

Becoming aware of Reggie's intentions, Hubert and his father concoct a scheme for ridding themselves of him.

He is enticed by Hubert to a certain picture-palace owned by Mr. Nixon, and, under some pretence, Hubert leads him to a cellar, containing a pile of old films, and afterwards slips away, locking the door behind him.

Reggie's suspicions are aroused by this, and, swinging round, he discovers the old films to be in flames.

(Now read on.)

The Escape.

At the moment Reggie saw the first glow of light, his hand was upon the covering of the tank, and almost simultaneously with the first flash and roar of the blazing films he had wrenched this from its place.

He was taking a desperate chance. In the dim light from the two long narrow windows he was unable to see what the tank contained, and to show what curious ideas came into one's head in such a moment of suspense, Reggie's first impression, or rather fear, was that the tank might contain boiling water.

Perhaps it was the association of the two very present facts of heat and water meeting in his mind in the flash of a second that produced the fear; but the moment came just a fraction of a minute too late for him to avoid taking the risk,

whatever it might mean, for into the tank he went, making a splash that made the ceiling wet.

Then the fire began in earnest.

The water was just ordinary cold water after all—deliciously cold—and Reggie was glad of it, too, for such a spluttering and flashing as now took place he had never witnessed before.

He was glad enough to draw himself down completely under the water, for the burning films had set up an intensity of heat that made the cellar seem almost like a furnace.

What was burning, and whether the fire was increasing, he could not tell, for the water in the tank quickly became covered with a covering of dense smoke. Even if he lifted his head a moment to get a mouthful of air, he felt this suffocating hot smoke almost scorch his face and mouth.

And the very air tasted smoky.

Perhaps this was the most alarming feature of all. It set him wondering how soon it would be before there would not be a breath of wholesome air above the surface of the tank.

"I fancy I have done it this time," he thought. "What chance have I for a bolt through to the door?"

He raised his head and took a quick glance around, and decided that there was none. The cellar was a blazing furnace.

Just at that moment something fell on the water with a hiss. It was a small piece of burning wood, but it gave Reggie a fairly clear indication of troubles to come later. Presently beams would be dropping, and the tank, made of slate, would be smashed, and all the water that covered him split.

Just then Reggie heard a slight cracking noise near by, and the water in the tank suddenly seemed to slide away from him.

He understood the cause of this in a moment. The heat had cracked a big piece out of one of the slates, and the water was not as high in the tank as it had been before by a full foot.

But there still remained plenty to cover him, while the ball-tap, released by the fall of water, began pouring in a delightfully cool stream.

It seemed a big tank. He could lie out at almost full length.

Then he became aware that breathing was not so difficult as it had been. It almost seemed to him as if a blast of pure, sweet air was pouring into the cellar right across his face. It must have been so, for the smoke above him seemed to be receding.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE RIGHT STUFF!"

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

And with this came sudden understanding of the cause.

The tank went right through the wall!

The moment Reggie grasped this fact, he was pushing at the covering of the tank on the other side of the wall. He found the task quite an easy one, for it was a mere wooden shield that slipped away from him almost as soon as he touched it.

He found himself in a good-sized room of a kind that puzzled him. Spread around were a number of marble slabs and a queer-looking stove, all more or less dusty as if the place had not been used for some weeks.

This place that puzzled the boy was the boiling-shop of a small sweet-maker, who had recently abandoned this branch of his business.

From this room it was quite easy to escape upwards, and the boy found himself in a well-stocked sweet and chocolate shop. At present this was unoccupied, owing to the interest that the proprietor appeared to be taking in something that was occurring in the street outside.

Of course, it was the fire that was taking his attention. The electric theatre was well alight by this time, and fire-engines were approaching.

The next moment a big man of middle age, with his coat off, and a busy, flushed look on his face, came back into the shop.

"What the dickens—" he asked, when he saw Reggie's soaking garments.

Reggie explained.

"My word!" said the man. "You'll catch your death of cold! My boy has an old suit here that will fit you. Come in and change quickly!"

The confectioner seemed to be a kind, fatherly sort of man, though rather bustling.

"You'd better be quick, sonny!" he said. "I'm afraid that fire next door is going to swallow up my little lot as well."

Reggie thought the man was wonderfully calm, considering the danger.

"You don't seem in a hurry to move your things," he remarked.

"What's the good?" asked the man. "They would only get in the way of the firemen. It's all insured, and I don't fancy that I could save five pounds' worth, even if I worked hard at it. You see, the stock is safe, anyway, if I keep it here. But if I move it out I shall lose it among the sort of neighbours we have in this part, and I doubt if the insurance company would pay me back unless my shop really did catch on fire."

He suddenly became thoughtful.

"You needn't talk too much about your escape, sonny," he said. "I don't want to be dragged into this business."

Reggie soon learned that the fire had not been a very big affair after all. It had burnt out the cellar and the floor of the picture palace, but the shell of the building was unharmed. The firemen had come promptly on the scene, and fortune had favoured their efforts.

A Counter-Plot.

When Reggie got back to Mitham, he went straight to Mr. Dell's sanctum. It was rather late, and he was somewhat surprised to find the picture millionaire still at work.

At once he told the whole story of what had happened.

"Good glory!" gasped Tony Dell. "What a wicked plot!"

"What did they do it for?" asked Reggie. "Do you think they were afraid of my finding out something?"

"What about?"

Reggie suddenly remembered that Mrs. Dell might not wish her brother-in-law to know of the work she had commissioned him to do.

"Well, about the forgery, say?" said Reggie.

"No! No!" retorted Dell. "Why should Nixon fear you there more than he fears me or the police? Oh, no! I can see what the game was! You don't understand these things. Shall I explain?"

"I wish you would, sir," replied Reggie.

"Well, that building has a name in the trade. It is called 'Nixon's Folly.' Everyone knows that he is losing money on it."

"So he planned to burn it down, and get the insurance-money?" suggested Reggie.

Dell nodded.

"It isn't only that," he went on. "A man would want a terribly high reputation to get a claim paid on a fire in such circumstances. A new building that doesn't pay is more profitable burnt down than standing. Everyone would want to know how the thing happened. Now, if it were explained that a couple of boys went into the picture-palace when it

was empty, and got larking around in a cellar full of films, the thing explains itself, especially if one of the youngsters gets burnt to death, and the other tells a harrowing tale of a narrow escape!"

"What a wicked plot!" said Reggie.

Mr. Dell was looking thoughtful.

"But hang it all!" he said suddenly. "What a jolly good story this is for a film!"

It was a new idea to Reggie.

"By jingo!" went on the millionaire. "We'll do it! We'll act the whole story, and make a first-class picture out of old Nixon's plot. I'll get one of my tame poets on the subject at once, or I'll try to knock out a bit of a synopsis myself. I'd give something to see Nixon's face if he could gaze at the finished film without being prepared for what was coming!"

The idea rapidly grew in Tony Dell's mind, for he suddenly swung around and gripped Reggie's arm.

"Tell me," he said, speaking with quite noticeable excitement, "how many people have you seen since you escaped from the burning picture palace? I mean people who know you—people here, for instance."

It so happened that Reggie had entered the film factory without being seen by anyone.

Mr. Dell became even more excited than he had been before when he heard this.

"So there is no one knows but that sugar-boiler," he said. "Well, I must square him somehow. Here, give me the address. Ah, you needn't! I know the picture-palace, so I can easily find him if he lives next door. Now, you are not going out of this place to-night till the coast is clear. Understand? And even then you'll have to hide a bit."

"Why?"

Reggie asked the question in bewilderment, though it must be admitted he was beginning to get a slight inkling of Dell's meaning.

"We're going to make a film out of this, my boy," he said eagerly. "Just fancy! The 'Crime of the Cinema! There's a title for you!"

Tony Dell was an enthusiast in his profession, and when he "saw a picture in it" he could scarcely rest night or day till he had got that picture in process of making.

"It means delaying the 'Haunted House' picture," he went on. "You can't be expected to be alive in one show and dead in another both at the same time. But the delay won't be very great, as it only needs a few actors, and we have most of the props handy. I should think a week would see me out of it."

Mr. Dell went on to make it quite clear to Reggie that the Nixons, father and son, must be allowed to suppose that their plot had succeeded in every detail.

"Did you ever read 'Hamlet'?" he asked Reggie.

"I've seen the play acted," said Reggie.

"Ah!" exclaimed Dell. "Then you ought to see what I am after."

"I think I begin to understand," Reggie replied.

Dell slipped his hand into his pocket.

"You get out of this for a week," he went on. "Can you do a week on a fiver? There, take ten sovereigns, and fix up with me later."

He counted out ten one-pound notes. In vain Reggie explained that he could do on a fifth of the sum.

"You'll have to send back those clothes, and get something different from your usual wear," explained Dell. "Where'll you go? Bristol?"

"If you like."

"Say Bristol," said Dell; "and call every day at the post-office for wires from— Let me see! Smith, Jones, Robinson—he repeated over a number of names reflectively—"Noakes, Stokes, Styles— Ah, Styles! John Styles, junior. That will do it! Better write it down."

Reggie wrote it.

"I'll wire you under the name of John Styles, junior, when I am ready for you," went on the millionaire. "I'm going to make a picture out of this. Do you know where I can find a few bones?"

"What ever for?" gasped Reggie.

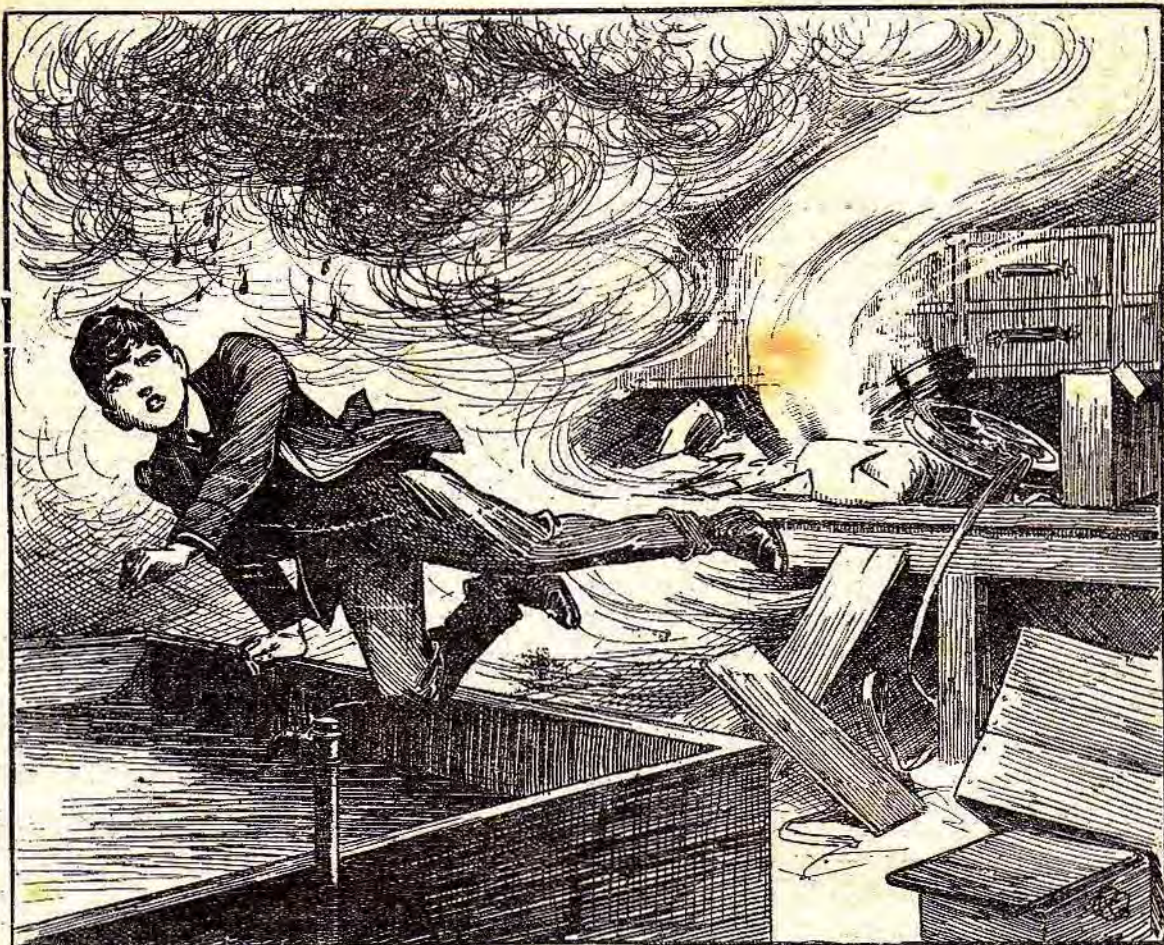
"They're going to find some charred bones in that picture-palace, and a part of your coat," explained Dell cheerfully. "I think you said the sugar-boiler had your wet garments?"

And then Reggie actually laughed.

Mr. Dell Scores.

Reggie got a wire when he had been in Bristol only six days. It was a telegram calling him to Brighton.

He found that the address given him in that town was that of a high-class boarding-house on the front. Here Mr. Dell was awaiting him.



Into the tank went Reggie, making a splash that made the ceiling wet. Then the fire began in earnest.
(see page 24.)

"We've done it!" he said. "We've got the whole picture made, excepting one or two scenes. We did it all here, instead of at Mitcham, as I didn't want to arouse anyone's suspicions. I have a friend in the same line of business in this town, and he had recently done a big picture with a fire scene in it, so he had all the appliances. By the way, that picture of his was released this week. It is worth seeing, and is called 'Carl Strafe, the Incendiary.'"

"I saw it in Bristol," said Reggie.

"Ah! Good! Well, we've got some of the same actors as he used in his picture, and all the effects. Some of our men are in it as well, such as Ben Wheeler and young Burr. Our picture isn't as long as the Incendiary, but it is a good one, and I never saw a smarter piece of work in making a picture in my life."

"It is finished, then?"

"All but one or two effects, that I want you in," answered Mr. Dell. "The whole thing is cut and dried for them, and I dare say an hour or so in the morning will see the film finished."

From Mr. Dell Reggie learned that he was still to keep out of the way.

"Most people think that you were burned to cinders in the fire," explained the millionaire.

"Yes, I have seen the papers," replied Reggie.

"I understand that Mr. Nixon and his son supplied most of what the papers contain," explained Dell. "Mr. Nixon is beginning to make his claim on the insurance company."

It was three days after this conversation that the completed picture was shown in the small trial theatre at Mitcham. Reggie arrived in a very wrapped-up and disguised condition, as he had arranged with Mr. Dell.

"Both the Nixons are here," said the millionaire, "and I've got them sitting where you will be able to see them without being seen yourself. Also I've got a private detective

or two handy to hear Mr. Nixon's remarks; and, in addition, a friend of mine who happens to be a director of the insurance company that Nixon is claiming from."

It was apparent to Reggie that Mr. Dell was very keen upon his new version of the "Hamlet" drama, and this impression grew rapidly as soon as he saw the elaborate manner in which the private trial theatre had been prepared.

The Nixons and some other people sat in a prominent place, where, in spite of the natural darkness of a picture-theatre, sufficient light fell upon them to make them quite visible as soon as one's eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness.

Reggie was in a curtained corner, with a convenient spy-hole cut in the curtain, where he could see without being seen.

Altogether, the arrangements had been made with an eye to dramatic effect, for Mr. Dell was nothing if not spectacular.

"You seem to be rather keen about this new film of yours, Dell," said Mr. Nixon just before the show commenced. "You generally let your productions slide into the market in a much simpler way. What is the idea of getting us all here?"

"We all have our fancies," replied Dell. "Do you know that I quite flatter myself about the original character of this film. Some of my friends don't share my view, and call the plot very trite and ordinary. But I am sure they are quite wrong."

"By the way," he added, "this marks a new departure with me. I am the author of the story, as well as the producer of the film."

Tony Dell said this with well-acted dignity, as if he were proud of the fact that he had taken a hand at a new branch of his business.

"I thought all you picture producers were something of authors," responded Nixon.

Dell nodded.

"Quite right, when we deal with mere scenic effects; trick

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"MANNERS MINOR!"

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

pictures, news films, and educational matters," he said: "but stories with plots generally mean putting a tame poet on to the job. Ah! We'll start. Drive ahead, Silas!"

The next moment the picture began.

In many private shows of pictures when films are being displayed to the trade the scenes are raced through at a rate that would confuse the general public, the reason being, of course, that the agents who gaze on new pictures for many hours a week with the object of buying or hiring are trained to form judgments on very quick impressions. If they can see a reel in five minutes, they don't want it dawdled over fifteen.

But on this occasion Silas Shock took his time. In fact, the scenes went through at a pace the slowness of which was like slow torture to at least two people in that little company.

Reggie, watching the picture from behind his curtain, was amazed at the successful manner in which Mr. Dell had retold the whole story of the wicked deed that the Nixons had tried to perpetrate. He had himself acted in one or two scenes to complete the picture, and now he saw the places into which these parts had been fitted.

But keen as he was in watching the screen, he was much more interested in watching the two guilty spectators.

Mr. John Nixon was at first puzzled, then angry, and then terror-stricken: for upon the screen he saw the whole story of his crime told with vivid and terrible frankness.

White and trembling, with his eyes almost protruding from their sockets, he clutched his chair with both hands, as if wanting its assistance to keep himself from falling.

Hubert Nixon was affected in a different way. He simply appeared to be cowed and frightened, and every now and again he would force up a look of bravado.

The treachery of Hubert Nixon was brought out with singular directness.

But at the end the whole nature of the story was quite changed. There was no way of escape—no tank scene.

Instead, there was a touch of the supernatural, for the spirit of the youth who was supposed to be burnt to death was made to return to haunt the murderer.

And here Dell had got his master-stroke.

All through the picture a young Brighton actor had taken the part that Reggie had taken in real life. But when the haunting scene took place, and the ghost of the victim appeared to the murderer, that ghost quite suddenly became Reggie White.

It was to act in this special part that Reggie had been wired for to go to Brighton, and his appearance as a ghost was the grand finale of the whole story.

The Nixons had watched and trembled and muttered all through the show, but at this sudden, abrupt incident—an incident that absolutely confused the other onlookers—a dramatic occurrence took place.

John Nixon screamed out.

"Take him away! Take him away! He shan't haunt me!"

Then the light went up.

Brazening It Out.

Everyone stared at John Nixon. Even those who were altogether mystified by the strange conclusion of the film were more mystified than ever by the man's dramatic outburst.

Tony Dell had not finished yet. He made a sign to Reggie, a signal that had been patiently waited for, and Reggie stepped forward.

It had been intended that this last action would shock the

conscience-stricken Nixon into something like a confession. But it did not have quite this effect. Rather it explained to father and son the way in which their secret had got out.

John Nixon looked terrified enough when Reggie appeared. It was his son who showed sudden presence of mind.

"What do you mean by these gymnastics, you young cad?" he said, with well-acted anger. "It was bad enough to burn our theatre down. But why did you keep out of the way, and make us all think you were dead?"

Two or three strangers near to Nixon appeared to be interested in this view of the case. These were probably the detectives and insurance people of whom Tony Dell had spoken. They had been prepared, by what they had heard, for some startling further developments, and the scene had quite justified their expectations.

But Mr. Dell had forgotten one important fact of human nature. The average specialist in criminal investigation is usually more suspicious of the person who consults him than he is of the person about whom he is consulted.

The chief detective in this instance—the other two men were merely brought as witnesses in case they should be needed—had come at Tony Dell's invitation, and his attitude of mind had been: "Why has Mr. Dell got his knife into Mr. Nixon?"

As the story had developed, he had become more puzzled than ever. He saw that the affair must be taken as a sinister practical joke, a serious charge against Nixon, or a wild guess at the meaning of the fire that was only a guess pure and simple.

On the whole, he took Nixon's side rather than Dell's, and though Reggie's sudden appearance confused him, Hubert Nixon's question put the whole problem in what he felt to be a right light; and that problem could be stated in a few words:

"If Reggie White had been alive all the time, why had he kept out of the way?"

At bottom the detective was a just man, and rather a stickler for etiquette even in the investigation of crime. He did not like any method of terrorising a weak-minded person into a statement that could be claimed as a confession.

"Mr. Dell," he said, in an undertone, "I want a few minutes' chat with you."

"Alone?" asked Dell.

"No. I want those two Nixons, and that youngster who acted the ghost scene. I want to know where I am."

On the whole, the request seemed a reasonable suggestion. In a few minutes the whole five of them had left the small experiment theatre, Silas Shock deftly putting on another picture to cover their departure.

Nixon demured a little at this informal tribunal, but his son had more courage than he had, and made him come.

It was a queer kind of consultation. The two Nixons by this time were both prepared to face anything. Reggie was frankly puzzled, and Mr. Dell had an uneasy feeling that things were not shaping as well as he had expected.

Inspector Kleep, the detective, was the real master of the situation. He belonged to Scotland Yard, but he had come in a quite unofficial capacity, and perhaps this made him more than ordinarily judicious in his manner.

He addressed himself to the elder Nixon.

"You must be aware, Mr. Nixon, that this film is a rather serious one for you in its present form. I am only an outsider in these things, but it strikes me that the pictures were intended to be unpleasant."

"It's a plot," replied Nixon—"a conspiracy."

"Then I presume you will run an action against Mr. Dell. Eh?"

Nixon had almost recovered his presence of mind, so he answered guardedly.

"I shall consult my solicitor," he said.

Here his son came to his rescue.

"It's that young fool did it all," he declared, pointing to Reggie. "He set the theatre on fire, and now he is trying to blame me. He would lark about with matches, though I told him that the place was like a powder magazine, with all those old films about."

"That is the serious part of it all," said Kleep. "Everyone thought that he had been burnt to death. Why did you keep out of the way, my boy?"

Before Reggie could answer Tony Dell got in a word.

"I can answer that question for him, Mr. Kleep. He kept out of the way at my wish, after I had heard his story. Don't you think we had better wait now to see what is the outcome of Mr. Nixon's talk with his solicitor?"

The detective nodded.

"That might be the best way," he said, "but I have to consider my own position. As I read it, the picture I have seen is frankly a charge against Mr. Nixon and his son, in which they are accused of setting the place on fire to get the insurance money. Are you prepared to make that definite charge, in black and white?"

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THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 421.

HAVE YOU HAD A GORGEOUS TUCK HAMPER YET? SEE THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD," 19.

"I am!" put in Reggie. "If the lock of the door could be found—"

"The door was burnt," said Kleep; "but I sha'n't proceed on what you say, young man. You are a boy, and I am not going to notice you in the matter. The question is, what will Mr. Dell do?"

"I'll tell you, then," said Mr. Dell. "I shall wait a week for Mr. Nixon's writ, and if I don't get it I shall put the picture on the market."

"Very well," said Nixon.

And he left the room, followed by his son.

The Theft.

Nixon did not issue any writ against Mr. Dell, which was precisely what the millionaire film-producer expected.

But three days after the dramatic incident took place in the trial theatre, Mr. Dell received a call from his friend the director of the insurance company.

"We're going to compromise that case," he said. "We're paying Nixon half his claim."

"More fool you!" retorted Dell.

The director shook his head.

"I haven't the remotest doubt about the truth myself," he said; "but it is a big thing to prove. And the chief witness having left the country makes the case harder."

"What chief witness?" asked Dell.

"Nixon's son. He has gone to America, I hear."

"Indeed!"

"And those detectives don't help us," went on the director, "that Mr. Martin Kleep is loaded up with prejudice against you. He thinks nothing of Nixon saying queer things when he saw the film as any innocent man might do the same. In fact, he thinks a Privy Councillor would show astonishment if he saw himself subjected to such an attack."

"So you compromised?"

"We thought it the best course," went on the director.

"Nixon hummed and hawed a bit, but he took our offer. I fancy, though, if we had cut it any longer he would have fought the thing in the courts. He is not without nerve."

The director of the insurance company had hardly left Mr. Dell's office, when Silas Shock came in.

"I'm very sorry to have to give you some awkward news, Mr. Dell," he began.

"Going to get married, Silas?"

"No, sir. Why?"

"You seem so depressed. Out with it! What is the trouble?"

Silas Shock brought out his information.

"That Brighton film, sir."

"The one about Nixon's fire. Well?"

"It's gone."

"Gone?"

"Stolen, sir, with the negative, and all the trial parts we left out."

Tony Dell frowned.

"I don't like to hear that," he remarked. "It shows careless work somewhere. However, we'll let it go at that. Don't bother any more about the confounded thing. I've lost interest in it."

But though Mr. Dell had lost interest in the stolen film, Reggie White had not. Half an hour later he happened to hear from Mr. Dell the story of the insurance company's settlement with Mr. Nixon.

"That was a master stroke, getting young Nixon out of the country," said Mr. Dell.

"But are you sure he has gone, sir?" inquired Reggie.

"Eh? Don't you think so?"

"I don't," said Reggie. "I saw him near here only yesterday, and I believe that he managed to get inside the place, and that he had a hand in stealing that film."

Tony Dell seemed surprised.

"He's a dangerous young rogue," he said slowly. "I was hoping that he really had gone abroad. If you take my advice, you will give both those Nixon's a pretty wide berth. They're dangerous."

But Reggie heard this advice with certain reservations of mind. He did not intend to give either of them a wide berth if he could help it. The reason for his decision was that he had had a letter that day from Mrs. Horace Dell—a letter so full of kindness that Reggie was more than ever resolved to free her from the persecution of John Nixon.

It ought to be explained here that Reggie was an orphan boy. He had never been lonely, because he had just the very nature to attract friends everywhere. But one kind of friendship he had never known, and this was what an orphan boy would naturally most long for.

Mrs. Horace Dell was motherly by nature and instinct,

although she was brusque, and almost rude in manner. She had no children of her own, and perhaps this made her feel all the more interested in those who gave her a chance of showing her real nature.

Dolly she loved passionately, and Reggie had come to her as Dolly's champion, who had saved the girl at Storm Park, so what more natural than that she should include Reggie in her kindness of heart, and that the boy should value her feelings intensely?

"I am going to get at Mr. Nixon's secret," Reggie resolved.

And that very day he got a clue to help him.

Silas Shock told him all about the robbery of the film, and took him to the store-room where incomplete films were kept.

He pointed out into a yard in which reposed a big waggon and some of the larger properties. As the store-room was on the ground floor, and the window was low, it was easy to see how the theft had been committed.

Reggie examined the window, and suddenly lifted it. He had no special idea of turning detective, or had he any thought that the theft might have left a clue behind. But it so happened that he saw a piece of crumpled paper lying on the ground beneath the window-sill.

Examined, this turned out to be a torn portion of a letter, and the word that caught his eye was "Nixon." After seeing this word, he had no hesitation in reading the document. It seemed to be the end of a letter, and was fairly complete. It ran:

"Don't ever let out your real name again, as that is what Mrs. Dell wants to know. Remember you are 'Nixon,' as I have chosen that name for us both. If our real name is discovered, searches can be made at Somerset House and dates ascertained. It isn't the little I'm getting I worry about. I know that horrid beldame will pay up to a handsomer tune out of her millions before I have finished with her. I really regard her as so much in the bank."

"No; don't come to the house. Mrs. C. is not entirely reliable, and may gossip. I'll come to Upton Cleaser Street, and we can talk about plans."

When Reggie read this letter he felt that he could fill in the blanks and understand its meaning.

In ten minutes, with the aid of a directory, Reggie had discovered that the only Upton Cleaser Street in London was in the South-Eastern district just beyond Peckham.

"I'm going there," he said.

It took him an hour or more to reach his destination.

He found Upton Cleaser Street was a long and fairly busy thoroughfare. There was no number given in the torn fragment of the letter, but he did not despair of finding the house referred to.

Reggie walked up and down the long thoroughfare, wondering in what way he could locate the place to which the elder Nixon would come.

All of a sudden his eye caught sight of a board in front of a couple of apparently vacant houses. Upon the board was painted:

"THIS SITE HAS BEEN
SELECTED BY THE MAJESTIC CO., LTD.,
FOR A
NEW FILM THEATRE."

In this he saw the explanation of the whole mystery. These houses, not yet demolished, were in Mr. Nixon's control, as the site had been obtained for a picture-palace. As Hubert wanted a convenient hiding-place for the time, what could be more natural than that he should find it in one of these houses?

"That is where they are," said Reggie—"or, that is where the young bounder is. I'll wait here."

He said this to himself as he stood before the notice-board, and just at that moment a door by the side of the board opened.

And Hubert Nixon stood before him.

Their eyes met. In a second they both saw that there had been mutual recognition. Hubert for a moment looked as if he were hesitating about closing the door in his face, but he seemed to think better of it.

"How did you like America?" asked Reggie.

"How did you get here?" demanded Hubert.

"Train from Tooting Junction," said Reggie. "I've called for those films you stole."

At the very moment he said this, he felt himself caught by the neck and hurled into the passage.

"How comes this young fool here?" asked a voice.

It was that of John Nixon, who had come up behind him from the street, and, recognising him, had flung him into the passage.

Another long instalment of this splendid new serial story next Wednesday. Order your copy early!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 421.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "THE RIGHT STUFF!"

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



THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to — — — — —
EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON ST. LONDON, E.C.
OUR THREE COMPANION PAPERS!
"THE MAGNET" THE "PENNY" CHUCKLES.
— LIBRARY — POPULAR — 1/2 —
EVERY MONDAY EVERY FRIDAY EVERY SATURDAY.

For Next Wednesday:

"THE RIGHT STUFF!"

By Martin Clifford.

Next week's great story continues the chronicle of the early days of Manners minor at St. Jim's, and is written in Mr. Clifford's best and most dramatic style. Manners minor is a tremendous handful and his elder brother almost despairs of him. For Harry Manners' sake, Tom Merry tries to take Reggie in hand, but does not meet with great success. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with his invincible faith in human nature, is rather more successful; but he cannot prevent Reggie from falling foul of his Form-master, the stern Mr. Selby, with results that threaten to cut short summarily the career of Harry Manners at St. Jim's. How it came about that our old friend got into peril of expulsion for the sake of his brother and the folks at home, and how at the eleventh hour the spoiled and pampered Reggie proved himself

"THE RIGHT STUFF!"

the story will tell.

A THIRD-FORM FAVOURITE.

Many readers have asked for more about that sterling little Cockney, Joe Frayne, of whom Mr. Clifford has told us little lately. These will be pleased to know that Joe plays quite a prominent part in the fine story to be published next week.

A GREAT ANNOUNCEMENT.

I can only imagine one thing that would please my staunch "Gem" readers better than the announcement I am now about to make. That one thing would be another "Boys' Friend" Threepenny Library story by Mr. Martin Clifford. That pleasure is still in store. Before long — But "we must not anticipate," as Dicky Nugent says in the "Greyfriars Herald."

The next best thing for "Gem" readers to a long Martin Clifford story is a long Frank Richards' yarn. Though they put the blue-covered paper first in their affections, as I know they do, nearly all of them give its companion, the "Magnet," second place. There is a little jealousy, I know; but it is a sporting kind of jealousy, after all.

Of one thing I feel sure—that not a single Gemite can afford to miss

"RIVALS AND CHUMS!"

which is No. 328 of that world-renowned series of tip-top yarns, the "Boys' Friend" Threepenny Library.

Mr. Frank Richards has gone all out to beat even his previous best—and that takes some doing, as you all know. Remember such splendid yarns as "The Boy Without a Name" and "School and Sport."

The subject of the new book is just what the great majority of "Magnet" readers would choose—that of the old rivalry between Greyfriars and Highcliffe. "Rivals and Chums!" What better description in brief could one have of the feeling between the Famous Five and their circle and those two fine Highcliffe fellows, Frank Courtenay, the one-time boy without a name, and Rupert De Courcy, alias the Caterpillar? Ponsoby & Co. may not come into the title, but you may take it from me that they come into the story! So does Bunter; and so do all the characters that have pleased so many hundreds of thousands of readers in the "Magnet."

A BIT OF ADVICE.

I suppose most of you read the daily papers more or less, and you must have seen of late references to Government

action in the direction of cutting down imports of several articles—among them paper-pulp.

Probably you did not regard this as at all affecting you, except that you might have to pay more for notepaper and envelopes.

But it is bound to affect us a good deal, and through us our readers. And I am going to ask you to do me a good turn, feeling quite sure that there is nothing many of you would like better.

The companion papers are now on sale in most newsagents' shops in towns. You do not need to order a copy. You walk in and take one off a pile, and plank down your penny or halfpenny.

Well, in a very little while you may not be able to do that. There will not be any piles.

Why? Simply because economy of paper will be so absolutely necessary that it will be impossible to let the retailers have big supplies on sale or return, and that will mean just this—if you don't order your papers in advance, you may not get them at all!

The disappointment will be great to you. But perhaps you don't see how it will affect me.

In this way. I don't want to lose a single regular reader! When I cut down my printing orders for the companion papers—as I shall have to do because of the shortage of paper—I shall lose quite a lot of casual readers, people who buy the journal one week and miss it another. That cannot be helped. But I repeat that I do not want to lose a single regular reader; and your giving your orders in advance will benefit not only yourself, but me, because it will help me to know just how many copies I need to have printed.

THAT RIDDLE!

What is the answer to the mysterious riddle published in No. 415? I don't know, and it really does not look as if any of my readers has hit upon it yet. One suggests "the steam in a tea-urn." This won't fit. Steam is not a voice in an orchestra, or a bird of bright plumage. In fact, I cannot see that steam fits anything in the riddle. Another said "noise." But this also seems rather a wild guess. A third suggests "a soap bubble." Try again! A girl reader of fourteen makes out quite an ingenious case for "love." She says: "The first two lines might mean that love is a sweet voice, but is never heard in an orchestra. The next two, it makes you bright and happy, and is often called a bird, but you can't see it. The next line might mean—when the man asked his sweetheart to marry him, he found she did not love him enough. 'In water I die' might mean that when a man is poor or in trouble—in hot water, as some say—the woman's love dies. 'Distress destroys me' may refer to keeping secrets, and so killing love. 'Light is my death'—that telling everything does not pay. 'You can't keep me alive save by stopping my breath'—that you must not say anything about it till the lady shows signs of returning your affection. And the last two lines, that men cannot understand women, but women can understand each other."

Miss G. E. adds: "Probably the person who wrote the riddle had been disappointed in love." The finishing touch to her letter is quite worth quoting: "I am not a romantic merchant generally. Please don't think I'm in love, or know anything about it, because I am only a kid; but I thought I would like to try it." The solution, she means, not being in love. Well, she has made the best shot yet, but I do not think it is a bullseye!

For the benefit of new readers I repeat the riddle, which is said to have been the work of an old bishop, who died

(Continued on page 31 of cover.)

THAT RIDDLE—continued.

before he gave the answer. I think the same thing may happen to some of those who try to solve it—anyway, I don't expect to live long enough.

"I'm the sweetest of voices in orchestra heard,
And yet in an orchestra never have been.
I'm a bird of bright plumage, and less like a bird
Nothing in Nature has ever been seen.
Touching earth I expire; in water I die;
In air I lose life, yet I swim and I fly.
Darkness destroys me, and light is my death.
You can't keep me alive save by stopping my breath.
If my name can't be guessed by a boy or a man,
By a girl or a woman it certainly can."

But the shrewd lady who can guess it has not come our way yet!

NOTICES.

Gunner E. Runnals, 592, Glam R.G.A., "A A" Battery, Pitsea, Essex, would be very glad to have back numbers of the "Gem" and "Magnet" from any reader who can spare them.

Private A. Wells, 14392, "C" Company, No. 6 Hut, 4th Batt. Royal Warwickshire Regt., Sandown Barracks, Sandown, Isle of Wight, asks the same favour.

Driver C. J. Oliver, 21030, "A" Battery, 79th Brigade, R.F.A., 17th Division, B.E.F., France, would be glad to have letters from any "Gem" readers who care to write to him.

Roland Walker, 92, Oakleigh Road, New Southgate, N., wants to form a "Gem" League in that district, and will be glad to hear from readers who would like to join.

Basil Stephenson, 33, Plessey Road, Blyth, desires to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League in that town. One of the objects of the league will be to send back numbers of the companion papers to men at the Front. An amateur magazine is also in contemplation. Will any readers in Blyth who care to join write to him?

Sidney Walsh, 15, Avondale Road, Wigan, would like to hear from Theo. Hook, of Herbert Shelley's Touring Company, in connection with his notion of getting Tom Merry yarns filmed for the cinema. Our friend Walsh thinks that there are fewer difficulties in the way of getting this done than the Editor imagines. Wait and see!

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

W. S. (Birkenhead).—There is no certain remedy for lack of inches. Exercises can be tried, but they do not usually result in a very marked increase—an inch or two perhaps.

"A Loyal Paddington Reader."—Our papers certainly won't hurt you in the way you mention. George Raby and Edward Newcome are the names you want.

S. B. (Wollengong, N.S.W.).—By this time you will probably have seen the "Greyfriars Herald," and I hope you will like it.

C. J. M. (Highbury).—You are one of the few readers who recognise that even Mr. Clifford's power for work has limits. Thanks for your letter.

"Glasgow Cadet."—Many thanks!

Victor H. (East Warwick, Queensland).—Glad to hear from you, and to know that the companion papers are appreciated so far away.

"An Australian Soldier" writes that the "Gem" and "Magnet" are lovely, and very popular among his comrades.

"H. Martin" (Sydney) wants Masters Malpas and Stephens to know that they have in him a Colonial supporter. They are very welcome to him, I'm sure!

W. H. McD. (Long Eaton).—Messrs. W. and G. Foyle, Charing Cross Road, London, W.C., would supply you with the two books mentioned. New copies at discount prices, or possibly second-hand copies a good deal cheaper. Both were published originally at six shillings, I believe.

E. W. (Skegness).—Verses very moderate. Pleased to hear you were able to do the soldier you met in the train a good turn.

"A Pauline."—I don't think you are far wrong in ranking your school as the best in London, and I don't think your friend's far wrong in ranking his so. St. Paul's and City of London are both fine foundations. But what about Westminster?

"The Daisy Patrol."—But Cousin Ethel does play cricket. I distinctly remember a holiday stay in which she played for Gussy's eleven, and made a catch that won the game. The opinion of yourself and your chums seems to be that our girl characters are not boyish enough. There may be something in it, but I cannot say that I agree personally.

(Continued on the next page.)

HELP TO SMASH GERMANY

AN IMPORTANT APPEAL NOTICE TO READERS OF THE "GEM."

We want more and more ships to carry troops and munitions. Hence the Government has cut down the imports of pulp for paper. This means we must reduce the waste in unsold periodicals to the lowest possible amount. Now, your newsagent has to order next week's issue of the "Gem" Library this week, but he can only guess at the number of copies he will require unless you help him by definitely ordering your copy in advance. Will you please do so? This assists the nation to meet the difficulty of paper shortage by limiting the number of copies of periodicals printed to the number actually sold over the retailer's counter. All economy of this kind helps to give Germany a heavier blow. Please lend your weight to that blow by giving your newsagent a **STANDING ORDER FOR THE "GEM" LIBRARY.**

ORDER FORM.

Date.....1916.

To Mr.

Please order for me one copy of the "Gem" Library each week until further notice.

Name

Address.....

REPLIES IN BRIEF—continued.

"A True Gemite."—Place imaginary, likewise stories, of course.

Georgina (Adelaide, South Australia).—Very pleased to hear that all of you, even your father, like my papers.

Victoria and Roy (North Melbourne).—A very good letter indeed for a ten-year-old girl, and I am not at all sure your brother, though he is two years older, would have made a better job of it. It certainly was not true that we missed a week in the publication of the "Magnet." What a howl there would have been if we had! Yes, I agree that your elder brother is far better off as prisoner to the Turks than he would be in Hunland.

E. M. (Back numbers of the "Gem" are only kept in stock for about three months. I could let you have an earlier number, I dare say, but it would be one chosen by chance, not any special number. No time to look those out.

"A Loyal Jewish Reader."—I don't know Trimble's weight. Cousin Ethel's School-days is quite satisfactory to the great majority of readers. Figgins may be a shade better boxer than Redfern. Not much, is it? Brooke is still at St. Jim's.

C. B. (Whitechurch, Oxon).—Places and characters imaginary.

Edyth (Lower Peover).—Yes. Send along your application, and I will see that it is all right.

A. R. L. (Bradford).—There are the "Greyfriars Herald," full of school stories, and "Chuckles," which has a very good one each week. Each one halfpenny.

N. M. M. (Dunedin, New Zealand).—I don't think a ghost trick would be at all likely to work a lasting reformation in Levison. Tom Merry is the best junior cricketer at St. Jim's, Kildare among the seniors. Talbot's uncle now supplies him with pocket-money.

"Footer Lover."—(1) Not much to choose between Blake and Figgins, if anything; (2) Wharton; (3) Why should he? No one pretends that all Indians talk like Inky, any more than all English boys talk like Gussy.

"Londoner."—You like the "Gem" best. I don't quarrel with your taste. But a great many put the "Magnet" first, you know.

N. S. (Auckland, New Zealand).—Wants a 3d. book about Gordon Guy & Co., somewhat on the lines of "The School Under Canvas." Not at all a bad idea. We will see what can be done.

P. W. C. (Dover).—Tom Merry is the best all-rounder among the juniors.

D. A. (Birmingham).—Sorry you are enraged. I think the omission to which you refer is due to the fact that the scroll is an old block which has not yet been brought up to date. We have lots of things to think about up here, you know.

D. C. (Hastings, New Zealand).—It is a pity you sometimes miss a number, but I am powerless to prevent the lapse. Thanks for efforts to get new readers!

W. E. C. (Nenagh).—Cannot give heights. Ages will be found in the Christmas Supplement. Thanks for "recruiting" work.

F. W. and R. P. (Stroud Green).—Prizes arrive at, or about, same time as results are published. They may be a day or two after.

J. S. S. (Clapham).—"Officer and Trooper" can be obtained in 3d. form.

"Perplexed" (Manchester).—Sorry, but nobody here seems to know Spanish.

"A Loyal Little Reader."—Good masters don't have favourites; but I think you may take it that all those mentioned regard D'Arcy as a good sort of fellow, straight and plucky, if not too wise. He is certainly a favourite with the other boys, though they do rag him. Wally is about 13.

"Rory" (Hammersmith).—Have you done any acting as an amateur? That might help a little. But the only road to stage success is a long one. Get an engagement in some small part, and work your way up.

C. McF. (Bothwell).—Levison could certainly lick Mellish. Yes, I think Trimble would eat more than Wynn—not sure about Bunter. A 3d. book about St. Jim's will appear some time before long. Cannot yet give a date for the publication of "Tom Merry's Weekly."

"An Ardent Irish Reader."—Back numbers unobtainable, and a reprint at present unlikely. Do you read the "Penny Popular"? There are early Tom Merry yarns in that, you know.

"Success."—What is my reason for saying that Dick Brooke is the cleverest boy in the Lower School? A very simple one. It happens to be so, that's all.

C. M. and A. W. (Ratherglen).—Tom Merry is the best all-round sportsman among the St. Jim's juniors. I think Wynn is a trifle better in goal than Balstrode. Cannot give you the St. Jim's 2nd XI.—don't know it.

"Britainion" (whatever that may be!).—(1) Kildare does not come under the group system, because that system starts at 18, not 17; (2) Talbot's reformation is certainly a real and lasting one; (3) Grundy cannot spell better because he spells so badly, I suppose; (4) I do not know how many gallant

rescues Tom Merry has made, but I don't suppose he has made his last, by any means. May I ask you one question in return? Were you feeling at all like a camel when you wrote?

"A Kangaroo Reader."—The prices of our papers in the Colonies are fixed by the agents, not by us.

A. H. and G. H. The reason for the rule as to sending in storyettes on postcards is that it saves much time in this office to have them in that form. A boxing contest between Hurree Singh and Kouni Rao would provide a very close finish, I should think.

Phyllis B. (Lichfield).—Marie Rivers is about seventeen. Mayne is now in the Fifth, and working too hard to have much time for anything else.

"A Regular Reader" (Walsall).—1 and 2. Jangton and Ray may be still at St. Jim's, but I have heard nothing about either lately. 3. Blake is a somewhat better boxer than either Dane or Noble; but both these are pretty good. 4. Mr. Ratcliff is now back.

W. Clark (Carlton, Melbourne).—A loyal and vigorous supporter, this reader! He inflicted personal chastisement on a workmate who slandered the "Gem." There are few of that sort in Australia, I believe, which may be just as well for my friend Clark, as if he happened to be run in for assault I should be too far away to bail him out! Thanks to your cousin at Woolloomooloo—is that right?—for his kindly message.

M. R. (London, E.).—I should say that Kildare is about the best senior swimmer at St. Jim's. Engineering is certainly a calling which offers better chances than clerkship. There are exercises which might help to increase your height an inch or two, and I will give you details of them if you like; but if anyone is short by nature not very much can be done in this way. "Through Thick and Thin" is out of print.

"Gumsucker" (Australia) makes the confession that there was a time when the sight of the "Gem" on a counter made him say to himself: "Rotten stuff! Anybody who reads it ought to be septenpartite and pyrophanous!" Which shows what a highly-scientific chap Gumsucker is, of course. But now, he says, he has a bit more sense, and he considers that it was he who ought to have been put through the aforesaid operations for insulting the "Gem." Well, I don't believe they are operations; but I forgive "Gumsucker" all past offences, in consideration of the fact that he is now a loyal supporter. He particularly desires a story in which Tom Merry and Harry Noble shall play the chief parts. But he does not want Talbot squeezed out, and in his frank, engaging Australian way, characterises the anti-Talbotites as coots who don't know enough to appreciate a top-notch story. He also asks for an Australian serial. I will see what can be done.

S. E. D. (Kensal Rise).—Patoff has gone, I believe. Mayne is still at the school. See reply to Phyllis B. above.

"The Troublesome Trio" (Stockton-on-Tees).—The usual pronunciation is Rillcombe, I believe.

K. M. (Belfast).—Glad you liked "Cousin Ethel's School-days" so much.

S. H. D. (Dingle).—Thanks for an interesting and thoughtful letter. To publish the "Boys' Friend" on Tuesday would not suit other arrangements.

"A Loyal Boxford Reader."—As "Tom Merry's Weekly" is not yet out, it is a bit early to be worrying about your inability to buy it regularly. But I understand what you mean, and you may rely upon it that I shall not suspect you of disloyalty because you don't happen to have so much pocket-money as some of my readers.

A. A. (Manchester).—Do you happen to know thoroughly well any fairly long piece of poetry? I know a man who says he has got himself to sleep hundreds of times just by letting Macaulay's "Horatius" run through his mind, so to speak. But you need to know it really well, so that there is no strain on the memory. The secret of it seems to be that it takes your mind quite off other things.

"Highland Mary."—It's all right. One can forgive a momentary irritation in a keen reader who feels disappointed. Perhaps we may have Cousin Ethel again some day. Will try to arrange for a story with Wally D'Arcy figuring prominently.

J. H. (Burslem).—Thanks! Quite willing to examine the verses, but cannot publish them.

"Incognito."—I don't think our readers would be interested in facsimiles of one another's signatures, though each might like to see his (or her) own reproduced. Try again!

Your Editor