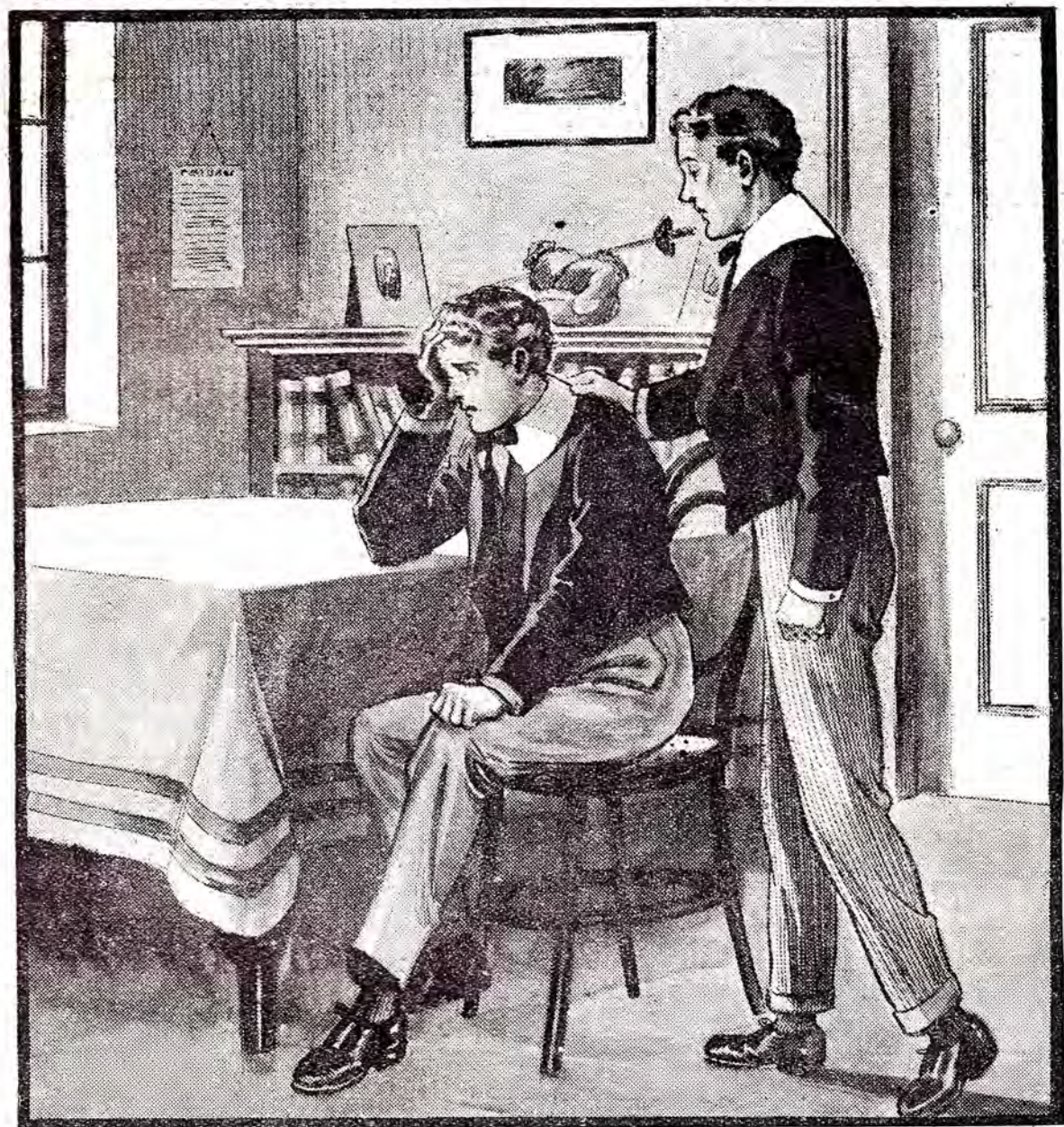


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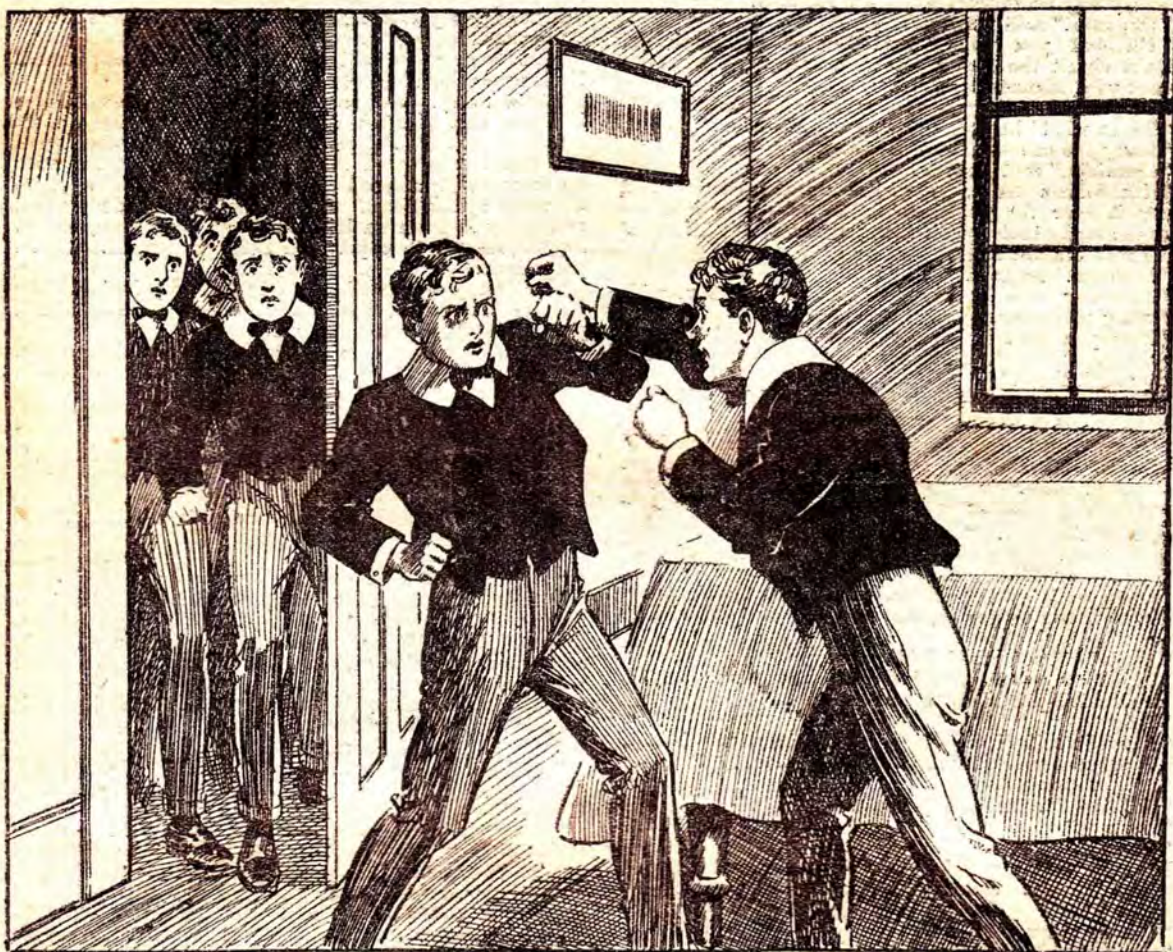


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"THE RIGHT STUFF!"

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

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



The combat was at its height, when there was a tramp of feet outside, and three juniors looked in at the open door. The Terrible Three had arrived. "My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Joe—and your minor, Manners!" (See Chapter 2.)

CHAPTER 1.

Manners is Misanthropic!

"COMING down to the footer, Manners?"

"No."

"Going out with your camera?"

"No."

"Doing anything?"

"No."

Tom Merry ran his fingers through his curly hair, and looked at his chum in perplexity.

Even Monty Lowther was looking serious, though that

was quite an unusual difficulty for the merry humorist of the Shell.

Manners was standing with his hands in his pockets, staring out of the study window into the quadrangle. There was a glimmer of early green on the old trees in the quad, and the sunshine was very bright and cheery. But the countenance of Henry Manners was overcast, his brow wrinkled, his aspect gloomy and glum.

It was a very unusual state for Manners. Though seldom boisterously merry, like Monty Lowther, he was generally cheery and equable, and a half-holiday with

Next Wednesday:

"BY LUCK AND PLUCK!" AND "THE PRIDE OF THE FILM!"

his beloved camera made him feel, as a rule, that life was quite worth living. Now there was a half-holiday, and the camera lay on the table, and the light was excellent for photographing. And there was Manners, staring gloomily out of the window, perfectly glum.

"Better come down to the footer!" said Lowther, at last.

"Blow the footer!"
"Certainly," said Lowther obligingly. "Blow it! Blow it twice! But it will do you good to punt a ball about a bit!"
"Rot!"

Monty Lowther coughed.

"What I like about old Manners," he remarked, addressing space, "is his beautiful manners, the cheery, chummy way he answers a fellow's remarks."

"Oh, rats!" said Manners.

"I'll tell you what," said Tom Merry heroically. "We'll chuck the footer this afternoon, and we'll all go out with Manners' camera."

Monty Lowther suppressed a groan, and nodded.

"So we will!" he said. "Come on, Manners!"

"Hang the camera!" said Manners.

"Certainly," said Lowther.

With solemn looks, he picked up the camera and slung it over the gas-bracket. It swung to and fro over the study table. Tom Merry grinned, but Manners' glum face did not relax.

"Fathead!" he said.

"Anything else I can do?" asked Lowther, with unflinching politeness.

"Yes; you can stop being a funny ass!" said Manners peevishly. "Keep it for the 'Weekly,' old chap. It's bad enough there."

"Why, you ass—" began Lowther, his politeness showing signs of wear and tear at last.

"Shush!" said Tom Merry. "Poor old Manners is in the blues. Manners has got 'em, and we've got to get him out of them."

"There's a copy of the 'Greyfriars Herald' here," suggested Lowther. "Awfully funny story about Herlock Sholmes. I'll read it to you, if you like, Manners."

"Blow the 'Greyfriars Herald'!"

"Dear me!" said Lowther. "It's no good, Tom. Manners wants to grouse, and we'd better leave him to grouse."

"Much better!" growled Manners.

"Of all the grumpy, fatheaded, grouchy, unreasonable Huns, I think you take the cake, Manners!"

"Rats!"

"Shush!" said Tom Merry. "Manners, my infant, get it off your chest! What's the merry trouble?"

Manners grunted.

"Not lines?" asked Monty Lowther.

"No, ass!"

"Ahem!"

Manners swung round from the window, and stared moodily at his chums, his hands deep into his pockets.

"It's my minor!" he snapped.

"Oh, young Reggie!" said Lowther.

"Yes; young Reggie!"

"I thought perhaps it was," said Tom Merry quietly. "He doesn't seem to be getting on in the Third. But really, Manners, there's no need for you to take it to heart like this. You've done your best for him. We've all done our best, I'm sure. If he will play the giddy ox, it's not your look-out!"

Grunt!

"Didn't we give the young rascal a ripping welcome to St. Jim's?" went on Tom, rather warmly. "Didn't D'Arcy of the Fourth take no end of trouble to make his minor in the Third look after young Reggie? And didn't young Reggie start first thing by rowing with D'Arcy minor? Haven't we all looked after him like Dutch uncles, and got more kicks than halfpence for our pains?"

"We have!" murmured Lowther. "We have!"

"I know!" growled Manners. "You've taken more trouble than the little rotter was worth! It was a waste of time!"

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"Well, then—"

"Well, then," said Manners, "Reggie's got into hot water with all the Third, and not a fag of them will speak to him! They've left off ragging him, because he tells the Form-master—little beast! They've sent him to Coventry instead, and it serves him right!"

"Well, if it serves him right, what is there to grouse about?" asked Lowther.

"Nothing!" said Manners. "I'm not grouching!"

"Oh!"

"Only the pater asked me specially to look after Reggie here, and Reggie's the apple of his eye. More than I am, or ever was!" added Manners, with a trace of bitterness in his voice he could not repress. "Reggie is a little tin god at home. If the pater found out how he was getting on here, it would cut him up no end. And Reggie's just the kid to write home letters full of complaints!"

"And your pater will lay the blame on you?" asked Tom, comprehending.

"Most likely. I—I wouldn't mind that, though, if—I if I was sure I didn't deserve the blame. Only, what can a chap do? Reggie won't listen to a word from me, and it's no good licking him. He's got his back up because I stopped him smoking. He's sent to Coventry by his Form. He's cheeky to his Form-master, and Selby is down on him—not very surprising, either. Reggie seemed to expect old Selby to pet him as the pater does!"

Tom Merry and Lowther could not help grinning. The idea of Mr. Selby, the crusty master of the Third, petting a fag, was distinctly humorous.

"I can't let things go on as they are," said Manners, "and—and I can't do anything to make them better, either, so I'm in a fix!"

"Well, that sounds rather like a fix," agreed Lowther.

"No need for you fellows to bother about it, though," said Manners brusquely. "You get down to the footer."

"Won't you come?"

"No."

"You can't do any good by moping in the study."

"I don't expect to."

"Well, then—"

"Oh, rats! You fellows buzz off!"

Manners was evidently in the last stage of misanthropy. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther exchanged a glance. They did not intend to leave their chum in such gloomy spirits. Monty Lowther sat on the table, with a determined air.

"Let's all be miserable together," he said, as if struck by a brilliant idea. "It's only pally!"

Manners grinned at last.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Monty!" he said. "I tell you I don't want to worry you fellows with my family troubles!"

"It's your face that's worrying me!" said Lowther plaintively. "You look like a funeral! Now, let's put our heads together! The unfortunate Reginald is sent to Coventry by his Form, and it serves him right. I suppose he's left on his own this afternoon, and considers himself a very injured party. Let's descend on him, like Greek gods from Olympus, and carry him off. We'll take him out for the afternoon, make much of him, stroke his fur the right way, and put him into a good little temper, and talk to him kindly. We'll show him what really nice boys we are when we try."

"Fathead!"

"I say, that's a good idea," said Tom Merry. "Reggie has had a few days of Coventry now, and he must be getting fed-up on it. Perhaps he's ready to listen to reason, and we can do some good with him. Let's try, anyway."

Manners hesitated.

"But you fellows want to go to the footer?" he said.

"Oh, the footer can go! It isn't a match."

Manners' gloomy face brightened a little.

"We'll try, if you don't mind," he said.

"Pleasure, dear boy," said Lowther, slipping off the table. "Come on! Let's track the beast to his lair."

And the Terrible Three—glad to be doing something, at any rate—started for the Third Form-room, where they expected to find Manners minor.



Right into Manners dashed a fleeing form, and he threw out his arms and grasped it. There was a violent struggle. "Reggie!" panted Manners. The dim figure ceased to struggle. "Oh, it's you, Harry!" (See Chapter 10.)

CHAPTER 2. A Friendly Visit.

"I SAY, young 'un!"

Manners minor started.

The new boy in the Third was seated at his desk in the Third Form-room. He had been detained there for an hour as a punishment for impertinence to his Form-master, Mr. Selby. The hour had elapsed, but Manners minor had not gone out.

Time hung heavily on his hands that bright and sunny afternoon.

Not a fellow in his Form would speak to him, and it was not to be wondered at. There were many excuses to be made for the foolish fag, who had come direct from a home where he had been spoiled to the rough-and-tumble of a big school. Poor Reggie had vaguely expected to be as important at St. Jim's as he had been at home. He had found out his mistake tragically. He had gone to his Form-master with complaints of his treatment, just as he had been habituated to going to a fond father with complaints when he was dissatisfied. But the fags were not given to much thinking, and they were not disposed to make allowances for Reggie Manners. They regarded him as a sneak and a

"spoony," and despised him accordingly, and declined to have anything to do with him.

Manners minor wasn't feeling cheerful. Outside the sun was bright, and the fresh breeze was blowing, but he did not want to go out by himself. And he had no friends in the school—no acquaintances, really, since he had estranged his elder brother and his brother's friends. Tom Merry & Co. had been prepared to be particularly gracious to Manners minor, but they could hardly be expected to caress and coax and flatter, and without that Reggie was not to be got on with.

Reggie was thinking it over glumly enough, and feeling that he was a very injured party, and that he was misunderstood at school as he had never been at home, when Joe Frayne came in and spoke to him.

Reggie had noticed Frayne of the Third more than once, wondering at his speech, which was quite unlike that of any other St. Jim's fellow.

Little Joe, rescued from a slum by Tom Merry, sent to St. Jim's by Tom's uncle, had made great progress in many ways. But, in spite of himself, in spite of his surroundings, his speech still remained more or less that of the Cockney street arab he had once been. A better-hearted fellow there was not in the school, and Joe was quite a favourite in the Third Form. Wally, acknow-

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"BY LUCK AND PLUCK!"

ledged cock of the walk in that important Form, chummed with him, and was ready with one of his celebrated "left-handers" for any fag who had a word to say against him. But Joe was liked on his own account, too, and the Third had generously agreed to let him drop as many h's as he liked.

Reggie Manners stared at Joe. Joe Frayne was looking sympathetic. He had not forgotten his first days at St. Jim's, when he had had an uphill fight. He had known what it was like to be an outcast, and his kind little heart was touched by the loneliness of the perverse boy. But he had another motive in coming to speak to him. It was that Reggie was the brother of one of Tom Merry's best chums, and he knew that Tom was concerned about him. Joe Frayne would have done anything for Tom Merry.

Hence his visit to the Form-room, where Reggie Manners sat in solitary state.

Manners minor was surprised, but he was glad to be spoken to, after several days of chilling aversion in the Third. He condescended to nod to Joe.

"Feeling a bit down?" asked Frayne.

"Oh, no!" said Reggie. "Not at all."

"Rather lonely—what?"

"Not a bit."

"Oh!" said Joe, somewhat at a loss. "I thought as perhaps you might be. Thought I'd come and speak to you, you know, young Manners. You're not really 'aving a 'igh old time 'ere, are you?"

Reggie's lip curled at the dropped h's.

"I'm all right," he said shortly. "I want to leave St. Jim's, that's all I want. I hope my father will take me away."

"P'raps it'd be better for you, young 'un," agreed Joe. "But it ain't so bad 'ere, you know, if you take it in the right sperrit."

"The right what?"

"Sperrit," said Joe.

"Do you mean spirit?" asked Reggie disdainfully.

"Yes, sperrit," said Joe, to whom apparently the pronunciation was the same. "Jest keep smiling, and don't get the coves backs up, and you'll be all right."

"What are coves?" asked Reggie, with studied insolence.

It was curious—and very characteristic of Reggie—that although he had been feeling solitary and lonely the minute before, he should be insolent to a fellow who had taken the trouble to seek him out from sheer kindness of heart.

"Coves! I mean the fellers."

"Oh, the fellows? Well, I don't care twopence whether they have their backs up or not."

"That ain't the right sperrit," said Frayne. "They're ripping blokes, most of them—cept a few like Piggott."

"What are blokes?"

"My 'at!" said Frayne. "Don't you know wot a bloke is? A chap, you know."

"Did you learn your English at St. Jim's?" asked Reggie.

"I ain't been at St. Jim's werry long, and I come from a werry different kind of place," said Joe.

"I should think so."

"I 'ad bad luck when I was a nipper, you see."

"What is a nipper?"

Reggie knew perfectly well what a nipper was, but it pleased his high mightiness to worry poor Joe in this way.

"A kid, you know. Master Merry found me in a rotten 'ole in London, and his uncle pays my fees 'ere, you see. Werry kind old gent."

"And do you mean to say you were allowed to come—the Head allowed it?" said Reggie, in surprise and disgust. "Did the Head know what you were?"

"Course he did," said Frayne, somewhat nettled. "The 'Ead's a ripping old bloke. Come to that, what 'appened to me might 'appen to anybody, I s'pose. S'pose you was without any parents, and 'ad no money, wot would become of you?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Reggie contemptuously. "I'm not likely to fall into a state like that."

"Lots of coves do," said Joe. "Thousands and

thousands of 'em in London, and I s'pose in Manchester and every other big town. Freezin' and starvin', poor covies, 'cause why, the Government don't think 'em worth the trouble of lookin' arter. That's wot I was afore Master Merry took me up."

"I should think you'd keep it dark," said Reggie.

"Couldn't be did!" said Frayne. "Everybody 'ere knows it, and I ain't ashamed of it, neither. 'Sides, I don't speak jest the same as 'he other coves. There ain't much difference, but a bloke can notice it."

Reggie sniffed.

"Seems to me a lot of difference," he said.

Joe's face fell.

"You've noticed it?" he asked.

Another sniff from Reggie.

"You speak like a costermonger," he said.

"Costermongers ain't a bad sort," said Joe defensively. "There's a lot of 'em at the Front now, playin' the game all right. I 'ad a good pal once who was a costermonger. He walloped old Bill Frayne once for a-belting of me!"

Reggie snorted. He made a mental note that he would mention Joe in his next letter home, as an additional reason why he should be taken away from St. Jim's.

"I s'pose you 'ave a splendid 'ome, young Manners," said Joe, by way of changing the subject.

"Certainly," said Reggie. "I have everything I want at home, and I'm allowed to do as I like. It's not like school."

"Tain't always a good thing to do everything you like," said Joe sagely. "'Cause why? You can't stay at 'ome always, and when you goes out into the world you're liable to find it rough and 'ard."

"Oh, rot!" said Reggie politely.

Joe tried another tack. He really wished to befriend the obstinate, peevish boy, and he had a great deal of patience.

"Wot about a walk?" he asked. "Look 'ere, you come a trot with me. It's much better out o' doors."

Reggie did not move. Joe had offended his aristocratic instincts, and he was far from giving the waif of the Third credit for his good intentions. His impression was that the little outcast wanted to take advantage of his isolation to fasten on him.

"Won't you come?" asked Frayne.

"No!"

"Oh!" said Joe. He sat on Reggie's desk and swung his legs. Manners minor seemed a little difficult to get on with. "Look 'ere, kid, would you like a tip from me?"

"Not specially."

"Well, look 'ere, you're a new kid, and I'm an old 'and, in a way of speakin'. You're on the wrong side of all the blokes. It was sneaking to old Selby did it. The Third don't like that."

"I don't care what they like."

"Nunno. But—but you ain't 'aving a 'igh old time, grousing by yourself, you know. I dessay you ain't a bad sort, and you sneaked without stoppin' to think."

"Don't call me a sneak!" said Reggie savagely. "I told Mr. Selby because the rotters ought to be punished. He didn't punish them enough."

"But telling a master anything about the fellers is called sneakin' 'ere."

"I don't care what it's called. I shall do as I like."

"Ye-es. But if you think a bit about it, you'll see that it's rather a rotten thing to sneak—"

"If you call me a sneak again, you low blackguard, I'll punch your head!" shouted Reggie.

"Wot!"

"Clear off, and let me alone. I don't want to talk to a street arab!"

Joe slid off the desk, and stood looking at Manners minor for some moments.

"Well, my 'at!" he said. "You sneakin', rotten little beast, I'm sorry I took the trouble to speak to you. You deserve all you're gettin' and more. If you wasn't Manners' brother, I'd mop up the floor with you."

"Would you?" said Reggie. "Well, hang my brother! You needn't stop for him, you cheeky guttersnipe! Get out of this room, if you don't want me to pitch you out!"

"You wouldn't find that so jolly easy!" said Frayne, saggy at last. "I'd mop you up with one 'and'!"

Manners minor jumped up.

"I'll give you a chance!" he exclaimed, and he whipped round the desk and ran at Joe.

"Ands off!" said Joe, backing away. "I don't want to 'urt you, you young fool! I come 'ere quite friendly—well, if you will 'ave it—"

Joe put up his hands. Reggie was attacking him savagely, all the anger and irritation of the past few days wreaking itself in the attack upon the inoffensive waif of the Third. Joe's blood was up, too, when he received a drive in the nose, and he hit out fiercely enough in return.

His friendly call had not prospered.

But he was not thinking of friendliness now. Reggie had pluck enough, and he was passionately angry, and his attack was hot.

In a few moments they were "going it" hammer and tongs, tramping to and fro before the desks, hitting hard.

Joe Frayne's nose was streaming red, and one of Reggie's eyes was closed, but they did not pause.

The combat was at its height, when there was a tramp of feet outside, and three juniors looked in at the open door.

The Terrible Three had arrived.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Joe—and your minor, Manners!"

Manners gave a grunt.

"Separate them," said Lowther.

And Tom Merry and Lowther rushed in, and dragged the fiery combatants apart by main force.

CHAPTER 3.

A Licking at Last.

JOE FRAYNE gasped as he was swung back in the grasp of Monty Lowther. But he cooled down at once, and grinned at the Shell fellow.

"All serene!" he said. "Don't stick your knuckles into my neck, or I'll kick your shins. I don't want to 'urt the little beast!"

Reggie was struggling with Tom Merry.

His struggles did not avail him much, however, in the muscular grip of the captain of the Shell.

"Cheese it, you young ass!" said Tom Merry, jerking him back by the collar. "What are you fighting about?"

"Mind your own business!" hooted Reggie.

"Well, it is my business, when you're fighting a pal of mine!" said Tom good-humouredly.

"A pal of yours!" sneered Reggie savagely. "That guttersnipe! I suppose he's one of your pals, too, Harry!" He glared at his major. "A street-arab who can't speak English! Pah!"

"You filthy little snob!" said Manners, in tones of concentrated disgust. "Hold your rotten tongue! You make me ashamed of letting the fellows know you're my brother!"

"Let me go!" yelled Reggie. "Let me go, Tom Merry, or I'll kick you!"

"Now, look here, kid—Yaroooh!" yelled Tom, as Reggie back-heeled him on the shin.

The shin is a tender place for a sharp back-heel! Tom Merry simply staggered, and he let go Reggie, and leaned on the desk, almost overcome with pain for the moment.

Manners uttered a cry of rage, and strode forward. Reggie was bolting at Joe Frayne again, when his brother's grasp fell on him.

Manners caught his minor by the collar, and with a single swing of the arm, pitched him face downwards over a desk. Then his right hand rose and fell with terrific vim.

Spank, spank, spank!

Reggie kicked and struggled spasmodically. He accompanied every spank with a yell of rage and pain.

Spank, spank, spank, spank!

Tom Merry straightened up. His handsome face was pale with pain. But he called out at once to Manners.

"Chuck it, old chap! Don't go for him! It's all right!"

"All right, is it?" roared Manners. "I'll pulverise the little cad! This is what he's wanted for a long time!"

Spank, spank, spank, spank!

Reggie roared like a bull. He was really getting it at last; not so much as he deserved, but pretty severely. Manners was enraged. The sight of Tom Merry with his face twisted with pain was too much for him. He pitched into Reggie with a vigour that was really surprising—and very painful for Reggie. The fag squirmed and wriggled and kicked and howled.

Tom Merry limped forward, and caught Manners by the shoulder, and fairly dragged him off.

"Chuck it!" he gasped.

"Rot! Let me give him a good one while I'm about it!" howled Manners. "Hasn't he been asking for it?"

"Never mind—chuck it!"

Manners had to "chuck it." Reggie curled off the desk, and leaned against it, panting, his face white and furious.

"My 'at!" said Joe Frayne. "Wot a little spitfire! My 'at!"

"What were you quarrelling with him for, Joe?" said Tom, a little sternly, and wincing with pain as he spoke. "You might let him alone, as he's Manners' minor."

Joe coloured.

"I didn't go for to go for him, Master Tom," he said earnestly. "I come 'ere quite friendly, jest because his major is your pal, Master Tom. On my davy, Master Tom, that was it!"

Tom Merry nodded; he could quite believe it. It was just like Joe to do a good-natured thing of that sort, at the risk of being ragged by Wally & Co. for doing it; and just like Reggie to repay it with perverse ingratitude.

"Better get out of here!" said Manners. "Come on! I'm sick of the sight of that young rotter. I'll write to my pater and ask him if he can't take him away. I'm ashamed to show my face in public with him here!"

Manners started for the door.

Monty Lowther looked questioningly at Tom Merry, who hesitated. The Terrible Three had come to take Reggie out for the afternoon; but they had arrived at an unfortunate moment. But Tom was loth to give up Reggie, perverse little rascal as he was. For Manners' sake, he would have been glad to make conditions a little better for Reggie at St. Jim's.

"Coming out for a trot, Reggie?" he asked, with an effort. His shin was throbbing as if a red-hot iron were being applied to it. It was likely to be a long time before Tom Merry recovered from the effects of that savage kick. He knew that he would be limping for hours. But his sunny good-nature, and his regard for his chum, triumphed.

Manners minor stared at him.

"Coming out?" he repeated.

"Yes. You'd like to look round the country, a bit, what!—and we'll have tea at a farmhouse. It's ripping weather."

Reggie simply blinked. He could see that Tom was still quivering with pain from that back-heel on the shin, yet he spoke with good-humoured friendliness. Reggie could not understand it.

"No, I won't come," he said at last.

"You'd like it, kid," said Tom. "We'll take you for a run on the moor, and come back through the woods."

It was a tempting offer; the fresh woods seemed ever so much better than the dusky Form-room. But Reggie could not understand, and he was obstinate.

"Is he coming?" he said, with a gesture towards his major in the doorway.

"Manners? Oh, yes!"

"Then I won't come!"

"For goodness' sake come out, and leave the sulky little beast alone!" called out Manners impatiently.

"Look here, Reggie—" urged Tom Merry.

"Oh, shut up!" said Reggie.

That reply would have earned Reggie a further spanking if he had not been Manners' minor. Tom Merry,

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however, turned to the door without another word, and Monty Lowther followed him.

Joe Frayne paused to glance curiously at Reggie, and then followed the Shell fellows into the passage.

"I say, Master Manners," blurted out Joe, "I'm sorry as I 'ammered 'im! I didn't go for to do it, honour bright!"

"You can hammer him every other minute, for all I care!" said Manners. "He won't get as much as he asks for, anyway."

"Dry up, old chap!" said Tom. "Look here, Joe! I know you weren't to blame, and Reggie is a little beast—excuse me, Manners. But I believe the kid's got some good in him, only he's spoiled, and rather a duffer. You might try to help him a bit in the Third, Joe. I know it's asking a lot, considering—"

"I'd do anything for you, Master Tom," said Joe sincerely. "I'll let 'im 'ammer me, if you like."

"No, I don't mean that," said Tom, laughing. "But you might make things easy for him as much as you can, and give him a tip every now and then. Manners is worried about the young ass."

"Course, I understand that," said Joe, with a nod. "Old Bill Frayne used to give me too much of the belt, but I desay there's such a thing as 'aving too little of it, too."

"I dare say there is," agreed Tom. "Manners minor never had enough lickings at home. He'll get enough here without you adding any more, Joe. If you want to oblige your old pals, look after him as much as you can."

"I'm on, sir!" said Joe. "You rely on me!"

"Thanks, kid!"

And the Terrible Three went out, Tom Merry limping a little, and Manners as black as thunder.

CHAPTER 4.

D'Arcy Takes a Hand.

"IT'S up to me, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form had been polishing his eyeglass in a thoughtful way for some time. Blake and Herries and Digby were watching a footer match on Big Side, and Gussy was supposed to be watching it, too. But Gussy had been thinking.

The game was worth watching. School House seniors were pitted against New House seniors in a House match, and there was some good play. Kildare of the School House was, at his best; and Monteith, the New House captain, was playing up splendidly. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was thinking.

Jack Blake had just remarked that Sefton of the New House was a rotten half-back, and that Monteith, if he had the sense of a bunny rabbit, would kick him out and put in a new man. Then Arthur Augustus spoke, and Blake stared at him, taking Gussy's remark as a reply to his own.

"Up to you?" he repeated.

Arthur Augustus nodded emphatically.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You fathead!" said Herries. "How could you play for the New House when you're a School House chap? And how could you play in a senior team, when you're in the Fourth?"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Herries in astonishment.

"I weally fail to follow the twend of your wemarks, Hewwies!" he said. "What are you alludin' to, Hewwies?"

"I'm alluding to what you said, fathead!"

"I object to bein' called a fathead, Hewwies! I wemarked that it was up to me, and so it is."

"To play half-back in a New House senior team?" yelled Blake.

"Certainly not. I was not speakin' of the New House team."

"Well, I was, ass!"

"Did you make a wemark, Blake? I am sowwy I did not heah it. I was thinkin'. The fact is, it's up to me, and I'm going to take it in hand, and you fellahs are goin' to back me up."

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"Bow-wow!" said Blake. "Just watch Kildare! Bet you the ball goes in this time!"

"Pway pay me a little attention, Blake—"

"Go it, Kildare! Bravo! On the ball! Goal!"

"Goal!" yelled Herries and Digby.

"Bai Jove! It's a goal! Huwway! As I was sayin', deah boy—"

"Sefton's simply no good!" said Digby. "They wouldn't have got through that time if Sefton had been any good."

"Bothah Sefton, deah boys! Come on!"

"Eh! Come on where?" said Blake. "This is only the first half."

"We have no time for watchin' the match this aftahnoon, Blake."

"Why, we've come here specially to watch it. What bee have you got in your bonnet now?"

"I wegard that as a wiculous question, Blake. I am thinkin' of Mannahs minah."

"Bless Manners minor!"

"He has been detained, I think," said D'Arcy. "Anyway, he has just come out into the quad, and he is standin' ovah there lookin' like a lost sleep."

"Well, let him stand!"

"Mannahs is a wathah decent chap, Blake, and he is wowwied about his minah, I know that. The Third won't speak to him."

"Show's their sense."

"I have talked vewy severely to young Wally about it, and he wplies that he can't stand Mannahs minor at any pwice, and even told me to go and eat coke, the dis-wespectful young wapscaillon."

"Well, do as you're told, and don't bother."

"Don't be fwivolous, Blake. I am goin' to look aftah that kid a bit. His majah has gone out; I suppose he is fed-up with him."

"I know I should be if I were his major."

"Howevah, it is quite possible that a fellah of tact and judgment may be able to hwing that young person up in the way he should go. I am goin' to try my hand. You fellahs are goin' to back me up. We'll cut the footah, and take young Mannahs out for the aftahnoon."

Blake and Herries and Digby stared fixedly at their noble chum. Out of consideration for Gussy's real kindness of heart they refrained from bumping him on the spot. But they came very near it.

"Cut the footer to take that sulky little cad out?" said Blake, in measured tones. "Are you off your rocker?"

"No," said D'Arcy, with dignity; "I am not off my wockah, and I wegard the question as impertinent."

"You can take him out, if you like," said Herries. "If he comes near me, he'll get a clump."

"And another from me," said Digby. "Sneaking little beast!"

"If you wefuse to back me up, I shall go alone," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard it as a duty."

"Well, England expects every man to do his duty, and I suppose the same applies to donkeys," said Blake, with a yawn. "Go and do your duty, Gussy, and give us a rest."

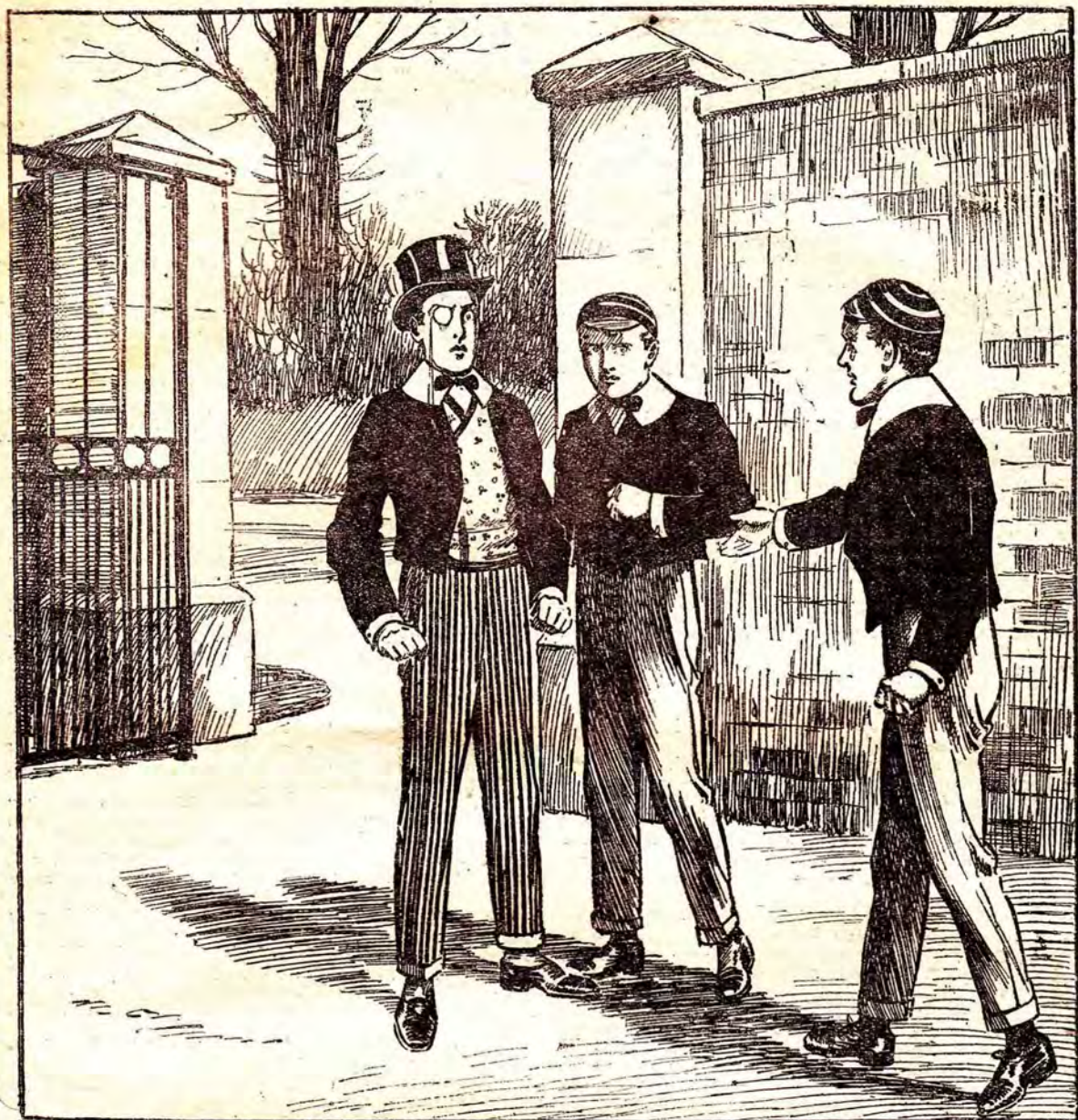
"Wats!"

With that rejoinder Arthur Augustus turned his back on the footer, and walked off the field. Blake and Herries and Dig sniffed, and gave their attention to the game. They were fed-up with Manners minor, and they expected that the noble Gussy would not be long in getting into the same state.

Reggie Manners was "moothering" about the quad-range, looking very blue. He was sick of the school, dissatisfied with everything about him, and dissatisfied with himself. But his father had not answered the passionate letters demanding to be fetched away instantly from St. Jim's. It was a new experience for Reggie to have his demands treated with indifference by his fond father, and a dreadful conviction was growing in his breast that his demand would be disregarded, and that he would have to remain at the school, willy-nilly.

Even that conviction did not induce him to make the best of it. It only added to his sulky discontent.

He was lonely and dispirited, and resentful at being left alone—regretful that he had not accepted Tom Merry's kind offer, and resented that the Shell fellows had gone out without him. He glanced towards the



"What are you doing with that sulky rat?" asked D'Arcy minor, pointing to Reggie. "Pway mind your own bisney, Wally, and do not speak diswespectfully of my fwient Weggie." (See Chapter 4.)

football field, and was inclined to go and watch the game; but Wally and a crowd of the Third were there, looking on, and Reggie did not want to come into contact with them. He was in a gloomy and undecided frame of mind when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bore down on him and tapped him on the shoulder.

"How are you gettin' on, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy affably.

"Rotten!" said Reggie.

"I am sowwy to heah that," Arthur Augustus was politeness itself, apparently forgetful of the fact that Reggie had alluded to him the previous day as a stuffed tailor's dummy. Arthur Augustus could be very forbearing. "Most of the fellahs wegard St. Jim's as a wathah wippin' place, you know."

"Blessed if I can see it! I think it's rotten!"

"Bai Jove! Pewwaps you will get to like it bettah in time," said D'Arcy, suppressing his indignation. "New chaps get wagged a little, you know. I was wagged when

I first came, because I dwess wathah well, you know. Are you comin' out this aftahnoon, deah boy?"

Reggie considered. He did not realise what a tremendous honour it was for a fag of the Third to be asked to walk out with the swell of the Fourth. Reggie was accustomed to regarding himself as a personage of the very first importance.

"Where can we go?" he asked.

"Have you seen the bunshop in Wylcombe?"

"No."

"Let's go there. They have a wathah nice lot of things, and it is wathah select, and there's a wippin' young lady looks aftah the customahs."

"All right," said Reggie. "I'm tired to death of this place. It will be a change, anyway."

"Yaas, won't it?" said D'Arcy sweetly. "Come along!"

"Your friends coming?"

"Ahem! They're watchin' the footah."

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"BY LUCK AND PLUCK!"

"All the better," said Reggie. "I don't like them."

"Oh!"

"I don't like anybody here. I hate all the Third!"

"It is vewy wong to hate anybody, Weggie," said Arthur Augustus seriously. "You are talkin' like a Pwussian, deah boy."

"Oh, rot!" said Reggie. But Arthur Augustus' remark seemed to have struck him a little, and he did not air his hatreds any more.

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally of the Third, as he caught sight of his major and Reggie walking down to the gates. "Gussy—I say, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus looked round.

"Yaas, Wally?"

"What are you doing with that sulky rat?"

"Pway mind your own bizney, Wally, and do not speak diswepfully of my friend Weggie."

"Your friend, eh?" said Arthur Augustus' cheerful minor. "Well, you've got a queer taste in friends. I'd rather pal with Herries' bulldog myself."

"Wats!"

Reggie's face was crimson as he walked on with D'Arcy. He was inclined to "go for" Wally; but he had tried that already, with direful results. He walked out of the gates with the stately Arthur Augustus.

"That young rotter's your brother, isn't he?" he asked.

"Wally is my bwothah," said Arthur Augustus quietly. "It is not vewy polite, Weggie, to call my bwothah a wottah in my pwesence."

"Oh!" said Reggie.

For the first time, it seemed to occur to Manners minor that politeness was expected of him. He walked on in silence for some minutes, and then spoke, with an effort.

"Sorry!"

Arthur Augustus beamed.

"Wight-ho, deah boy! It's all wight. Fvrom one gentleman to anothah, an apology is all that is wequiahed. Pway say no more."

And Arthur Augustus marched on, much comforted. Arthur Augustus had a theory that there was some good in Manners minor, and that he, as a fellow specially endowed with tact and judgment, was the very fellow to bring it to light. And really it looked as if he were making headway.

CHAPTER 5.

Tact and Judgment!

THE bunshop in Rylcombe was a very cosy place. Arthur Augustus and his protege sat at one of the little tables in a corner, with a big fern beside them. Miss Bunn—with a specially gracious smile for Gussy—served them with delectable fare. Reggie, though determined to be sulky and to feel injured, brightened up considerably at the sight of jam-tarts and cream-puffs and cake and meringues. He found that he was hungry, and he did full justice to the little spread, and his good-humour increased. The old maxim of "Feed the brute" has much of truth in it.

Arthur Augustus felt that he was getting on. With pardonable satisfaction, he looked forward to the hour when he would be able to present Manners of the Shell with a reformed minor. Reggie was getting quite civil; he even passed things to Arthur Augustus, instead of concentrating his whole attention upon himself as usual.

Arthur Augustus' face fell a little, however, when Reggie produced a cigarette to wind up the feed. He knew the trouble that had followed Manners' remonstrances on that subject, and he felt that he was on delicate ground. Fortunately, Miss Bunn came to the rescue.

"Smoking is not allowed here, sir."

Reggie grunted discontentedly, and shoved the cigarette back into his pocket.

"Do you smoke?" he asked his companion.

"No," said D'Arcy mildly.

"Why not? It's fun!"

"It is vewy bad for the inside, deah boy. It is considahed bad form, too. A chap should always wegard good form."

"I wasn't asking for advice," said Reggie.

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Arthur Augustus coughed.

"My brother gives me plenty of that," sneered Reggie. "I'm fed up with it. I had it from the pater, too, before I left home. Preaching all day long because a chap smoked a fag or two, and played a game of cards every now and then. That's as much as anything why I was sent to school—for Harry to look after me! Let me catch him looking after me, that's all. I'm going to do as I like."

"Wasn't it wathah a wowwy to your patah, Weggie?"

"Eh! Yes, I dare say it was."

"Do you think it quite wight to wowwy your patah?"

Reggie was silent.

"How do you get on in the Third?" asked Arthur Augustus, changing the subject.

"Beastly! They're all against me, because I made old Selby punish a rotter who locked me in a box-room."

"That can't be vewy pleasant."

"It's rotten!"

"It's all because of your speakin' to Selby," said D'Arcy. "That kind of thing is called sneak in' at school. Of course, you didn't understand that."

"Of course I didn't," said Reggie. "I always told my father things when anybody was rotten to me."

"Ahem! But it was a wathah bad move at school," said D'Arcy patiently. "Suppose, fwinstance, one of the chaps told Mr. Selby about your smokin'."

"That would be a caddish trick!"

"It would get you a feahful thwashin', you know. You would wegard such a fellah as a wotten sneak!"

"Ye-es," said Reggie slowly.

"So you can't weally be surprised at the fags wegardin' you in that light, can you, deah boy? They don't understand that it was simply inexperience on your part," said Arthur Augustus diplomatically.

"Yes, that's what it was, inexperience," said Reggie, with some eagerness. "Now I've thought it over, I-I wouldn't do it again."

"That's wight. As a weally honouwable chap, you couldn't. I'm suah that you nevah even thought you were doin' anythin' disgwaceful."

"I—I didn't. I—I shouldn't like to do anything rotten, of course," said Reggie. "It never struck me as sneaking. I wouldn't sneak, of course. It's mean."

"Yaas, wathah! It's weally a misunderstandin', and if you stick to that, deah boy, the fellahs will soon come wound."

"I don't know that I want them to," said Reggie sourly.

"Bettah to make fwriends than enemies, Weggie. Besides, it will be more comfy. It's awf'ly jolly at our school, if you go the wight way to work."

"Is it?" said Manners minor doubtfully. "I haven't found it very jolly."

"No, you made a bad beginnin', owin' to—to inexperience. You mustn't mind a little wuffness in the Third. Fags are wathah wuff, you know. You don't want to be wegarded as soft."

"I'm not soft," growled Reggie.

"That's wight! Nevah be soft, and nevah complain. Then you'll get on wippin', and be populah. It's wathah nice to be populah, you know. When your people come down to see you, you don't want them to see you hangin' about by yourself, without a fwend in the school. It would wowwy them, and I know you would despise a wottah who wowwied his pawents."

"Oh!" said Reggie very slowly.

Arthur Augustus rose, and paid his bill, and the two juniors walked out of the bunshop. Reggie was looking very thoughtful, and Arthur Augustus was feeling inwardly elated. He could see that he had made an impression on the fag, and it enhanced his already good opinion of his own tact and judgment.

The swell of St. Jim's called upon Mr. Wiggs, the local tailor, to look at some neckties, and Reggie waited, with unusual patience, till he was finished. Then they walked home to St. Jim's. The Terrible Three arrived at the school gates, from the opposite direction, at the same time. Tom Merry, in spite of himself, was limping a little. He had a huge, blue bruise on his shin, and it hurt.

"Bai Jove! Had an accident, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy

"Not at all," said Tom cheerily.
Reggie was silent, and the colour flushed into his cheeks. He knew what caused the captain of the Shell to blimp.
"But what's the mattah with your leg, deah boy?"
"Only a knock—nothing."
"My precious minor hacked his shin," growled Manners.

Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove! Oh!"

He went in, a sombre look on his face. Reggie walked beside him with crimson cheeks. For the first time in his life, Reggie was feeling ashamed of himself.

"I—I say, D'Arcy," he stammered.

"Well?" said Arthur Augustus coldly.

"I—I—I'm sorry I hacked Tom Merry's shin, you know. I—I was in a temper, and—and I didn't mean to hurt him, not really."

"It was a wotten thing to do, Weggie. It is howwid to kick anybody?"

"He was holding me, and wouldn't let go," said Reggie sulkily. "But—but I was in a temper, too."

"Wathah lucky for you Tom Mewwy wasn't in a tempah, too," said D'Arcy drily. "I don't think many chaps would let their shins be kicked."

"I know it was rotten."

"Suppose you tell Tom Mewwy so?" suggested Arthur Augustus. "If you are sowwy, you can say so. Only a cad would be afraid to say he was sowwy."

Reggie hesitated. Then, making up his mind suddenly, he ran towards the three Shell fellows.

"I—I say, Tom Merry—" he stammered.

"Yes, kid?" said Tom, cheerily enough.

"I'm sorry I hacked your shin."

Having made that statement, Reggie Manners hurried away before the captain of the Shell could reply. Tom Merry whistled.

"Gussy's had a wonderful effect on the young rip," grinned Monty Lowther. "Reggie is learning the manners of Vere de Vere."

"Well, he's improving," grunted Manners. "He could do with it, too!"

"According to Gussy, an apology from one gentleman to another sets everything right," said Lowther. "Is your shin all right now, Tommy?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Not quite, but I'm glad the young rascal has owned up, all the same. I believe he's got his good points, after all."

"I wish I did!" growled Manners.

But even Manners looked a little less gloomy, and wondered whether Reggie might become, after all, a little less of a discredit to his school and to his major.

CHAPTER 6.

Trouble at Prep.

MANNERS MINOR came into the Third Form-room for evening preparation, looking much more cheerful than usual.

His afternoon out with Gussy had done him a great deal of good.

He dropped into his place, and two or three fags ostentatiously shifted along to give him plenty of room. Reggie's eyes began to gleam. But Joe Frayne, who was on the same Form, did not move. He met Reggie's glance and nodded to him. Reggie, to his surprise, nodded back.

"Leave that fellow alone, Frayne!" growled Hobbs.

Mr. Selby had not made his appearance yet, and there was a buzz of voices in the Form-room.

"Get off that Form, Joe!" said Wally. "There's plenty of room here, and you needn't sit beside a sneak!"

"I'm all right 'ere," said Frayne, mindful of his promise to Tom Merry.

"Are you palling with that cad?" demanded Jameson.

"I'm stayin' 'ere," said Frayne.

"Do you want a thick ear?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, you, Frayne—"

"Got your books 'andy, kid?" asked Joe.

Reggie stared. He had expected anything but kindness from Joe Frayne.

"Yes; I've got them here," he said, "thank you."

"Been out this afternoon?"

"Yes, with D'Arcy."

"You're speaking to that worm, Joe," said Wally. "What are you driving at? You know he's in Coventry."

"Ain't that gone far enough?" said Joe. "Where's the 'orm in speaking to the kid? Give 'im a chance."

"Give 'im a hiding, you mean!" growled Wally. "I'll wallop you aft-er prep, Joe!"

"I 'ope you won't, Master Wally, 'cause I won't 'it back if you do," said Frayne.

"Fathead!"

"Same to you, and many of 'em!" said Joe.

Mr. Selby entered the Form-room then, and there was instant silence. The fags did not venture to chatter in the presence of the sharp-tempered Form-master. But a good many grim looks were cast at Joe Frayne and Reggie Manners.

Mr. Selby was cross that evening. He often was cross at evening preparation. The Third Form were something of a trial to the most patient master, and Mr. Selby was not patient.

Lines were handed out, and there were some swishes with the cane, and the Third were soon in a state of suppressed ferocity, and the Form-master in a state of unsuppressed irritability.

It was natural that Reggie should get into hot water, under the circumstances. When he was found fault with he looked sullen, and Mr. Selby was about the last man in the world to put up with sullenness in a pupil. A sullen glare from Reggie earned him two strokes with the cane, and after that he sat rubbing his hands and simmering with fury.

"'Ard lines!" said Frayne, in a consoling whisper. "Selby's on the warpath this evenin'. Better be werry careful."

Mr. Selby spun round.

"Someone was chattering."

The Third sat like stone images. Joe's eyes were on his desk.

"Manners minor, were you speaking?"

"No, sir."

Reggie flushed. He had not been speaking, but he had been spoken to. Mr. Selby's sharp eyes searched his face.

"Are you speaking the truth, Manners minor?"

"Yes, sir!" growled Reggie.

"The sound came from your direction. Was someone speaking to you?"

Reggie was silent.

"Answer me, Manners minor!"

"Yes, sir," said Reggie.

The Third-Formers exchanged furious looks. They had not the slightest doubt that the sneak was about to betray Joe Frayne. Frayne himself thought so, and he rubbed his hands under the desk in rueful anticipation.

"Who was it, Manners minor?"

Reggie did not answer.

"Do you hear me, boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who was speaking to you?"

Silence.

"Come out before the class, Manners minor!"

Reggie rose and stepped out. His lips were set in an obstinate line. He had not forgotten his talk with Arthur Augustus. He was as full as ever of resentment against the Third, but he would not give them the right to call him a sneak. He stood before Mr. Selby, with a sulky, obstinate face. The Form-master picked up the cane from his desk.

"Give me the name of the boy who was speaking to you, Manners minor!" he rapped out angrily.

"I can't, sir."

"My only 'at!" murmured Frayne, in astonishment.

And Wally whistled softly. The fags looked on at the scene in amazement.

Mr. Selby seemed at a loss for words for a moment.

"You cannot?" he stammered.

"No, sir."

"Do you mean that you will not?"

"Yes, sir."

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally, almost overcome.

Even that nerry and hardened young scamp would

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scarcely have ventured to talk to his Form-master like this.

"Manners minor," thundered Mr. Selby, "you—you refuse to answer my question! You refuse to obey my order! I—"

Up jumped Joe Frayne.

"If you please, sir—"

"Silence! Sit down!"

"It was me speaking to Manners minor, sir."

"Indeed! Then you will take a hundred lines, Frayne!"

"Yessir!"

"Now sit down, and hold your tongue!"

Joe sat down and held his tongue. He hoped that his prompt confession would save Manners minor. He was mistaken. Mr. Selby was not disposed to allow his prey to escape him so easily.

"Manners minor, you have deliberately refused to obey my order! This is the climax of the impertinence of which you have been incessantly guilty since you came into my form! Hold out your hand!"

Reggie sullenly held out his hand.

Swish!

Mr. Selby laid that stroke on with great vim. Reggie's howl of pain rang through the Form-room.

"Now the other hand!" snapped Mr. Selby.

Swish!

"Now the other again!"

Reggie's eyes blazed. He put both hands behind him.

"I won't!" he said, very distinctly.

There was a gasp from the Third Form. Wally's eyes opened wide.

"Manners minor, hold out your hand!" spluttered Mr. Selby.

"Sha'n't!"

"Sha'n't!" from a member of his Form was more than enough for the Form-master. He grasped Manners minor by the collar and swung him round, and the cane rose and fell like lightning.

Reggie struggled and yelled, and at last kicked. The fags gasped as they saw it. It was only a little kick, and it took effect chiefly on Mr. Selby's gown. But it earned a terrific punishment. The cane swished on Reggie's back till Mr. Selby's arm was tired.

"Now go back to your place, Manners minor," panted the Third-Form master.

Reggie crawled back to his place, aching and groaning. It was the severest thrashing he had ever received in his life, and he felt dizzy with pain. He sat dazed, but with burning eyes, while preparation ran its weary length.

CHAPTER 7.

Arthur Augustus is Pleased.

PREPARATION was over at last, and Mr. Selby quitted the Form-room, leaving the Third to their own devices.

The fags crowded out of the seats, and gathered round Reggie.

Reggie sat, still aching, his eyes burning. He was not a pleasant object to look at, at that moment. But in the eyes of the fags the fellow who had defied the Form-master was something of a hero. A revulsion of feeling had taken place, as was natural under the circumstances.

Wally D'Arcy patted him on the shoulder.

"Good for you, young 'un," he said. "Blessed if I thought you had it in you! You stood up to him a treat!"

"Right as rain, he is," said Frayne. "I'm sorry you've 'ad it so 'ard, Manners minor."

"Selby's a beast!" said Jameson. "Fancy a Form-master asking a chap to sneak! Selby always was an outsider!"

"Rotten, rank outsider!" said Hobbs. "But what I can't make out is, why didn't the fellow sneak? He sneaked before, without being asked."

"Never mind that," said Wally. "If Manners minor is going to play the game, I'm down on being down on him."

"Well, he sneaked before," said Picke.

"Some blokes would 'ave sneaked jest now, with Selby glowering at 'em like a tiger," said Frayne. "You would have, Picke."

"So he would," agreed Wally. "You shut up, Picke!"

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You wouldn't have had the nerve to kick Selby, I know that."

"Shouldn't be such a fool," said Picke.

"Well, it was rather fatheaded," agreed Wally. "Not that Selby didn't deserve it, the way he was going for him. Feel pretty bad, young Manners?"

"Ow!" groaned Reggie.

"It'll pass off in time," said D'Arcy minor comfortably. "I've been there, and I know. Hallo! What do you want, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus' eyeglass gleamed in at the door.

"Just lookin' in to see how you kids are goin' on," said the swell of St. Jim's cheerily.

"Not so much of your 'kids,'" growled Jameson.

"Sowwy—I mean young gentlemen," said Arthur Augustus. "Anythin' for a quiet life. Bai Jove! What's the mattah with Mannahs minor?"

"He's hurt."

"Wally, you young wascal, if you have been waggin' my friend Reggie—"

"Oh, dry up!" said D'Arcy minor disrespectfully.

"Selby's been ragging him, like thunder. The old sport was on the warpath this evening."

"You should not allude to your Form-mastah as an old sport, Wally."

"Bow-wow!"

"Weggie, deah boy, I twust you are not much hurt."

"Yow!" groaned Reggie.

"I—I hope he wasn't cheeky to Mr. Selby," said Arthur Augustus dubiously.

"Selby wanted him to sneak about a chap, and he wouldn't," said Wally.

"Gweat Scott!"

"He's the right stuff, after all," said Wally graciously. "We're not down on him any more. The Third's going to give him another chance."

"Ear, 'ear!" said Joe Frayne.

Reggie Manners rose. His back was stiff and aching with the pam or the licking. He did not answer a word to his Form-fellows.

"Don't run away, kid," said Wally kindly. "We're going to have herrings for supper. You stay here."

Reggie shook his head, and left the Form-room. Even herrings for supper could not comfort him in the state he was in.

Arthur Augustus followed him out. The Third were left in a buzz, discussing Manners minor and his remarkable "standing-up" to "old Selby." Reggie's peace was made with the Third—until the next offence.

"Pway come with me, Weggie," said Arthur Augustus, joining the fag in the passage. "We've got some chestnuts in No. 6. I suppose you are feelin' wathah wotten."

"Awful!" groaned Reggie.

"You are lookin' wathah pale. Pway come along, and you can sit in the armchair and take it easy."

Reggie groaned, and allowed himself to be led away. Mr. Selby had laid on the cane not wisely but too well. Even Wally, hard as nails as he was, would have suffered severely from such a castigation, and to Reggie, soft from a luxurious home, it came with tenfold severity.

There was a little crowd in Study No. 6. Blake and Herries and Dig were there, and the Terrible Three and Talbot had dropped in to help them dispose of the chestnuts. They all stared at Reggie's white, strained face, as Arthur Augustus led him into the study.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Manners breathlessly.

"Our young friend has been through it," said Arthur Augustus. "He wofused to sneak about a chap, and Selby thrashed him."

"Refused to what?"

"Sneak!"

"My hat!"

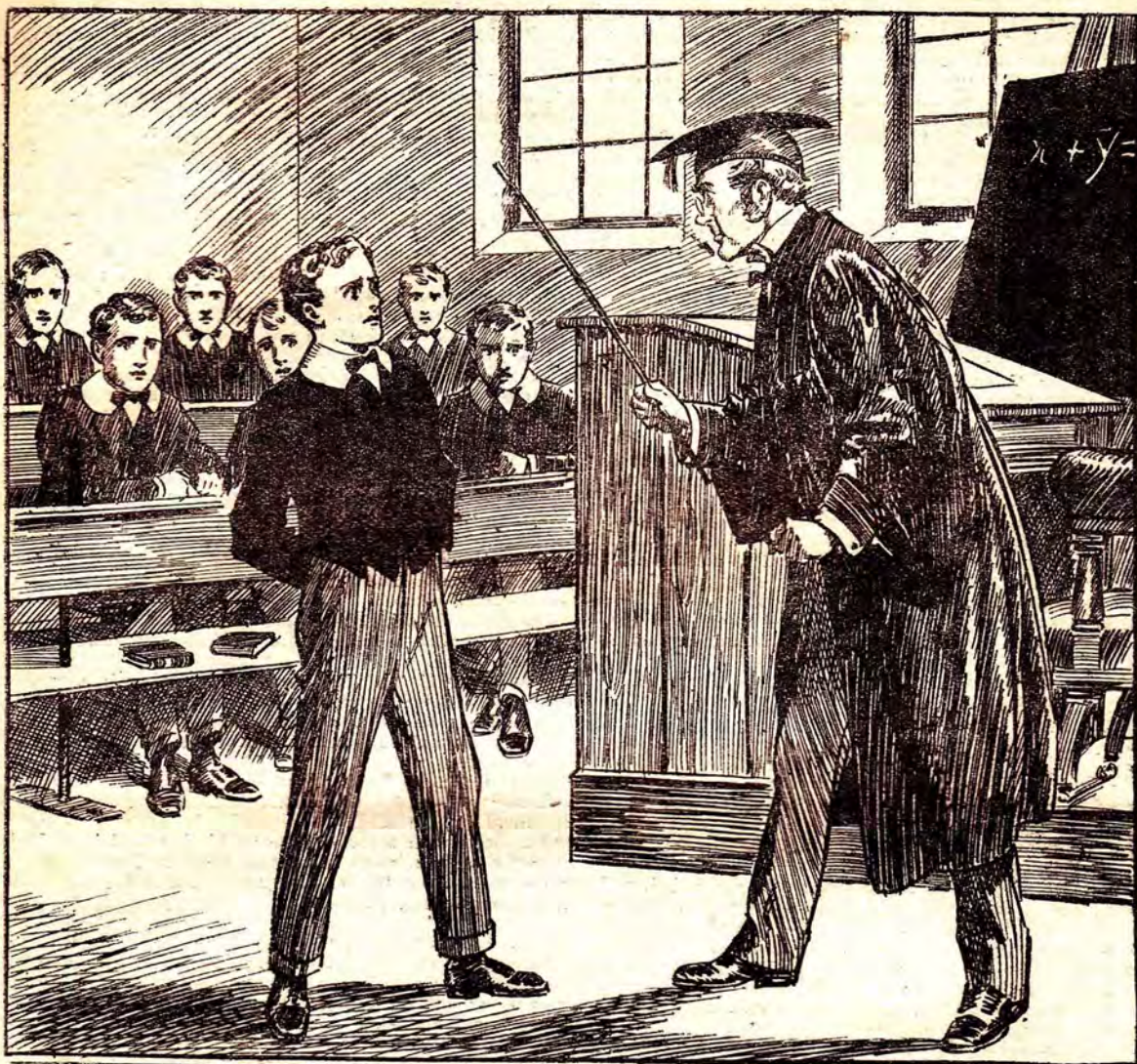
"Good man!" said Tom Merry.

"Well, this beats it!" said Manners, his face softening a good deal. "Here, take the armchair, Reggie, kid."

Manners minor sank into the armchair.

"I say, was it awfully rough?" asked Manners anxiously.

Reggie nodded without speaking. Even his unreason-able ill-will towards his brother seemed to be gone, in the pain he was suffering.



"Now the other again!" snapped Mr. Selby. Reggie's eyes blazed. He put both hands behind him. "I won't!" he said, very distinctly. There was a gasp from the Third Form. "Manners minor, hold out your hand!" spluttered the Form-master. (See Chapter 6.)

"Let's see your hands," said Dig.
"It's my back," groaned Reggie. "I kicked him, you know."

"You shouldn't have done that, kid," said Talbot gravely.

"He was thrashing me!"

"H'm!"

"Does your back hurt now?" asked Manners.

"Ow! Yes."

"Might wub it with something," said Arthur Augustus. "Take your jacket off, Weggie, and let's see."

"It's all right."

"Wats! I've got some embvocation heah."

"It surely can't be bad enough for that," said Talbot.

"Weggie looks as if it is."

"Take your jacket off, Reg," said Manners; and he helped his minor off with the jacket, and pulled down the shirt, while Arthur Augustus opened the bottle of embvocation.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Blake.

Manners' brow grew as black as thunder. Reggie's back was scored with deep, red marks, showing how cruelly the cane had lashed.

"The awful wottah, to tweek a kid like that!" said Arthur Augustus, his voice trembling with anger. "He

wouldn't dare to do it in a County Council School. He would be summoned."

"Yow! Don't touch me!" mumbled Reggie.

"I'm goin' to wub it with embvocation, kid. It will make it feel evah so much bettah."

"I'm going to the Housemaster about this!" exclaimed Manners. "Selby's got no right to treat my minor like that, whatever he did. Come on, Reggie, and let Mr. Railton see it."

"Sha'n't!" said Reggie.

"Don't say sha'n't, Weggie!" murmured D'Arcy. "It's wathah wude, you know."

"Well, I won't, then," said Reggie.

"Why won't you?" demanded Manners angrily.

"I'm not going to sneak."

"Oh, my hat!"

Manners sat down helplessly. That reply from Reggie quite overcame him.

"The kid's right, Manners," said Tom Merry. "Better grin and bear it. You'll feel better presently, Reggie."

"I'll pay him out for it!" muttered Reggie, gritting his teeth. "The beast! I'll make him sorry for it, somehow!"

"Don't talk like that, Weggie, please!"

Reggie snorted, and relapsed into silence. The application of the embvocation to his back gave him some

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"BY LUCK AND PLUCK!"

relief, and when he left the study at bed-time he was feeling better. But his eyes were still burning savagely, and there was only one thought in his ill-regulated mind—vengeance, by some means or other, upon the master who had ill-used him.

After the guests had departed from Study No. 6 Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Blake and Herries and Dig with excusable triumph.

"What did I tell you, deah boys?" he demanded.

"Blessed if I know!" said Blake, with a yawn.

"About Mannahs minor, I mean."

"Did you tell us anything?"

"Weally, Blake, I wemarked that there was some good in him, and that it could be got at by a fellah of tact and judgment. The pwoof of the puddin' is in the eatin', you know. I wegard him as havin' impwoved enormously already."

"Well, he doesn't seem such a sneaking worm," admitted Herries.

"Wathah not!"

"But he's as full of spite as an egg is of meat," said Blake, "and he'll be getting into more trouble with Selby, from his looks. Jolly glad that he isn't my minor, that's all."

"I shall continue to keep an eye on him, Blake. Selby has acted wottenly, but I admit it is distwessin' to heah Weggie speak so wevengefully. I shall ewadicate that twait fwom his chawactah."

"Bow-wow!" said Blake.

"I do not wegard that as an intelligent wemark, Blake. We shall see what we shall see," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

And Arthur Augustus' chums agreed that they would.

CHAPTER 8.

The Letter from Home.

TOM MERRY & Co. looked for Manners minor after morning lessons the next day.

Reggie came out of the Form-room with Frayne and Wally.

He seemed to be on speaking terms with the Third, and Frayne was sticking to him in quite a pally way. Wally was very civil, too. Wally could not like Reggie, but he had a great respect for pluck, and Reggie had shown plenty of pluck. It was allied with obstinacy and wilfulness and revengefulness, but it was there.

"Feeling better to-day, kid?" asked Tom Merry kindly. Reggie nodded.

"Yes, thanks! I—I hope your shin doesn't hurt now." "Only a bruise," said Tom. "That's ancient history now. By the way, Reggie," he added, as Wally and Frayne went on, "I hope you're not thinking anything more about what you were mentioning last night, about Mr. Selby."

Reggie's eyes glittered.

"Yes, I am!"

"You can't do anything, you know. Better take it like a little man."

"I can do something, and I'm going to!" growled Reggie.

"What idea have you got in your head now?" asked Manners uneasily.

"Find out!" said his minor.

"Come, come," said Tom. "That isn't the way to talk, Reggie."

"Well, I'm not going to tell anybody anything," said Reggie.

"Why not?" asked Lowther suavely. "Confide in your kind uncles, Reggie. Tell us the scheme for dire revenge, and perhaps we may help you to get rid of the body afterwards."

"Oh, don't rot!" growled Reggie. "I'm not going to tell anybody. There'll be a row when I go for Selby, and I suppose you don't want to be hauled up for knowing all about it, do you?"

Manners looked oddly at his minor. It was a new experience to hear Reggie speaking as if he had learned to consider others a little.

"No; that's right enough," said Tom Merry. "But I wish you'd chuck up the idea, whatever it is, Reggie. It's rotten to be revengeful. It's not British."

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"It's Prussian!" said Lowther.

"Oh, rot!"

Reggie stalked away with lowering brows. The pain had not yet all departed from his back, but even if it had it would have made no difference to him. His mind was made up and all his obstinacy was aroused.

Tom Merry whistled.

"Perhaps the little ass is only gassing," said Monty Lowther. "After all, what can he do to Selby?"

"Nothing, I suppose," said Tom. "He can't punch his head or hack his shins."

"You don't know him," said Manners, with a troubled look. "The kid's got his good points, you admit that?"

"Certainly, old chap!"

"But he's beastly spiteful," said Manners, with a sigh. "He seems to have learned not to sneak; but he's got a lot to learn yet. I'm afraid there's going to be trouble. I shall keep an eye on him as well as I can. I don't know whether I've done my best so far. I've tried to."

"You couldn't do more than you've done, that I can see," said Tom. "He set himself against you of his own accord. But now he's coming round, I think it might be just as well to forget bygones, and treat him just as if nothing had happened, if you don't mind my giving you a tip. After all, he's your brother."

Manners nodded.

"That's exactly what I'm trying to do," he said. "And when I speak to him I generally get 'Shan't!' or 'Find out!' for an answer. Tain't easy to look after a kid on those lines. Hallo, here's a letter for me!"

Manners took a letter from the rack. It was in his father's hand.

"Go ahead!" said Tom Merry. "If there's a remittance, we'll have an extra sardine for tea."

Manners read the letter, and his face paled a little, his brows wrinkling darkly. His two chums looked a little anxious.

"Not bad news?" asked Lowther.

Manners held out the letter.

"Read it," he said.

He stood with a clouded brow, his hands driven deep into his pockets, while his chums read the letter. Their brows grew dark, too, as they read. The letter was from Mr. Manners, and it ran:

"Dear Henry.—I have received no fewer than three letters of complaint from Reggie since he has been at St. Jim's. In each letter he urges me to take him away, and says that he is miserable at the school, and misunderstood, and that you have not helped him in any way or made things easier for him. That is not what I expected of you, Henry. I cannot doubt that you have some natural affection for your younger brother and some respect for my wishes. That Reggie has faults, I know only too well, and it was in the hope of seeing an improvement that I have placed him in your school. I did not think it was necessary for me to repeat my request to you to look after him, and to make him as comfortable as circumstances permit. It seems you quarrelled with him on his first day at school, and deserted him, and he was subjected to unpleasant practical jokes. I suppose you have acted thoughtlessly, having many interests of your own that have prevented you from giving time and attention to your young brother."

"I'm not angry with you, Henry; but I am surprised and shocked. It is not what I expected of you. Once more, I ask you to do what I hoped the natural affections of your own heart would have dictated, and to make a friend of your brother—surely that is not much to ask!—and to bear with him patiently.—Your affectionate father, J. MANNERS."

Tom Merry felt his cheeks grow hot as he read that cruelly unjust letter. Monty Lowther scowled at the wall. Manners stood grim and despondent.

"That's the pater all over," said Manners wearily. "Everything Reggie says in his skulking, whining letters is taken as gospel, and I'm not even asked for my version of the case—not that I'd give it. The pater cares more for Reggie's little finger than for all of me. Oh, it makes a chap feel rotten! The whining young cad, to write home and worry the pater!"

"It's hard cheese, old scout!" said Tom, handing back the letter. "Chap's do get misunderstood at times, and the only thing is to grin and bear it. I suppose Reggie hasn't mentioned that your row with him the first day was over his smoking, and you can't very well let that out."

"Of course I can't! But—but—" Manners choked a little. "Well, this doesn't make any difference, anyway. It isn't the way to make me fond of Reggie, if the pater only understood that; but I sha'n't let it make any difference that way. I'm going to look after him just the same."

"That's right!"

The Terrible Three sauntered out into the quadrangle and punted a football about till dinner, and the clouds cleared from Manners' brow. Figgins & Co. of the New House captured the ball, and there was an exciting chase in the quadrangle, and the Terrible Three came in to dinner ruddy and cheery. But at the dinner-table Manners' face clouded over again.

His father believed that he was neglecting his minor—occupied in his own pursuits and neglectful of his brotherly duty. His father believed it because Reggie believed it—he wouldn't change his opinion unless the lordly Reggie changed his. For all Reggie's woes at St. Jim's Manners was held accountable—not Reggie's own faults and his bad training at home. The injustice of it rankled deeply. But that was not all the trouble. Manners knew that even then his minor was planning some wild scheme of vengeance on Mr. Selby, and if it came to anything there would be serious trouble—Reggie might be flogged, or even expelled from the school.

How was he to help it? What could he do? For if it came to pass the responsibility would be laid upon his shoulders at home. Yet what was there that he could do, when the obstinate fag refused even to listen to him? Was he expected to shadow Reggie and watch him every hour of the twenty-four?

After lessons that day Manners looked for his minor. Reggie met him with a sullen face. He was getting on better in the Third, but his grievances against his major were as strong as ever.

"I've had a letter from home, Reggie," said Manners.

"Oh!" said Reggie. "Is the pater going to take me away?"

"No. You're staying here."

"Well, I don't know that I mind. Some of the chaps in my Form are jolly decent," said Reggie, after consideration. "I shouldn't have quarrelled with them so much if you'd stood by me."

"The pater blames me for all the troubles you've had and that you've told him about."

"Well, so you are to blame, ain't you?"

Manners compressed his lips.

"Reggie, have you still got that silly idea in your head of scoring off Mr. Selby?"

"Yes, I have."

"Won't you tell me what you're going to do?"

"No, I won't."

"It means jolly serious trouble."

"I don't care!"

"Reggie—"

Reggie turned his back, and walked away, whistling. Manners looked at him in dismay, mingled with anger and apprehension. Certainly, it did not look as if he could carry out his father's wishes. How was he to look after Reggie?

CHAPTER 9.

Frayne's Warning.

"LOOKIN' for you," said Joe Frayne cheerfully.

Manners' minor nodded cordially enough to Joe. The waif of the Third had run him down in the quadrangle.

"We're going to have tea in the Form-room," explained Frayne. "You'd like to come—wot?"

Reggie hesitated.

"I look here, Frayne," he said slowly, "we had a fight yesterday—"

"Bless your 'art, that's nothing!" said Joe. "I've 'ad more fights than I can remember since I've been 'ere."

"And you stuck to me afterwards, and the other fellows would have been down on you for it, especially D'Arcy minor."

"That's all right now, arter the way you stood up to Selby," said Joe.

"But what did you do it for?"

Joe shifted uncomfortably.

"Well, a chap don't bear malice, you know," he said.

"Besides, Master Tom wanted us to go easy with you, young Manners. And your major is a good chap, too. Werry kind he was to me when I first come 'ere."

"Was he? He hasn't been kind to me."

"Oh!" said Joe.

"It was jolly decent of you!" said Reggie. "I spoke to you like a cad when you came into the Form-room yesterday. It was my rotten temper, and I was sorry afterwards. I ain't a silly snob, really, but—but you must have thought I was a rotter. I—I hope I didn't hurt your nose much?"

"Right as rain!" said Joe. "Wot about your eye?"

Reggie rubbed his eye.

"It blinks a bit," he said, "but it hasn't gone black. Look here, Frayne, suppose you were to help me—"

"Any old thing!" said Joe cheerfully. "Wot is it?"

"About that beast!"

"Eh—wot beast?"

"Old Selby!"

"He is a beast, ain't he?" said Joe. "If Mr. Railton knew how he larruped you yesterday there would be a row."

"I'm not going to tell Railton," said Reggie, flushing. "I—I didn't understand at first, but I do now. I'm not going to sneak."

"That's the right sperrit!" said Joe.

Reggie did not ask him what a "sperrit" was, as he had asked the previous day. He coloured instead at the recollection of his own rudeness.

"I'm going to make him sit up for it!" he said.

Joe looked grave.

"I don't like 'im any more than you do," he said, "but—but it's a rather queer bizney, going for a Form-master. What're you thinkin' of?"

"What about catching him in the quad after dark and thrashing him?"

Frayne jumped almost clear of the ground.

"Thrashing him!" he gasped. "Thrashing a Form-master! Oh, 'oly smoke!"

"He wouldn't know us," said Reggie eagerly, "in the dark, you know. You could hold him while I pasted him."

"Good lor!" said Joe.

"He's a slacking, unfit beast!" said Reggie. "He couldn't put up much of a scrap. We could do it!"

"I dessay we could," said Joe, aghast; "and I dessay we could be flogged and booted out of the school arter it!"

"If you're afraid—" began Reggie, in quite his old supercilious manner.

"I ain't exactly afraid," said Frayne. "Tain't that. But I don't want to be kicked out of the school, young Manners. Besides, it would be rotten!"

"Would it?" growled Reggie.

"Yes, it would, really, Manners' minor. 'Tain't the right thing to hit a man of his age, wotever he's done."

"He hit me."

"Ye-es, I know; but you're only a kid! You see, a—a chap has to respect a master, you know, though he ain't a good sort. Look at some of the fellows—like Grundy of the Shell, frinstance. Grundy could knock Mr. Linton into a cocked hat if he liked, but he lets Linton cane him."

"I wouldn't!"

"You see, it's what they call discipline," said Joe. "Backing up against the masters ain't considered playing the game, not to that extent. Master Tom would tell you so in a minute. If it was a jape, I'm on—such as putting glue in his slippers, or carbide in the lining o' 'is 'at. But not hitting him. That's a bit too thick."

"You won't help me, then?"

"I couldn't, kid, and no more could any feller. You'd better give up the idea," said Joe, in alarm. "You'll be flogged."

"I don't care!"

"Ave you ever bin flogged?" asked Joe.

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"Of course not."
"Oh, that explains! If you 'ad, you wouldn't want it a second time. I've seen a chap flogged, and it curled him up. Worse than what Selby gave you last night—ten times worse."

"I'm not afraid."
"You takes off your jacket, and get it 'ot?" said Joe. "The Head lays it on with a birch. It's 'orrid!"

Reggie shuddered a little. Certainly he did not want that.

"But he wouldn't know who it was," he said. "In the dark—"

"Selby's 'orrid sharp," said Joe sagely. "Lots of fellers think a master won't know things, but it generally turns out somehow that he do know."

"Look here, I've got a dog-whip. I got it out of Blake's study. I think it belongs to Herries. You could hold him—"

"For goodness' sake, chuck up the idea!" said Joe, in great alarm. "Come and 'ave tea, and forget all about it. 'Sides, Selby's going out this evenin'; he's goin' to a conscription meeting in Wayland. Awfully keen on conscription, old Selby is—till they put up the age to fifty and take him in. I fancy he'll cool off then!"

And Joe chuckled. He knew his Form-master.

"Going out, is he?" said Reggie. "What time?"

"Dunno. The meetin's at 'arf-past eight, so he'll be gone before eight. So you can't do it this evenin', you see. Come and 'ave tea, and don't think about it no more!"

Reggie shook his head.
"I wish you'd come," said Joe. "Look 'ere, we've got a good spread, and we sha'n't be interrupted, as Selby's going out. We fixed it for jest eight, so that he can't worry us. Wot do you want to 'ang about 'ere in the dark for?"

"I'll come in presently," said Reggie. "Thank you for asking me."

"Not er tall," said Joe. "I wish you'd come now."

"I'll come presently."
Joe Frayne gave it up, and walked away towards the School House through the deep dusk, looking troubled.

For Tom Merry's sake he took an interest in Manners minor, and he was worried and alarmed about the reckless fag. Joe understood much better than Reggie did what was likely to be the result of such an outbreak on the part of the unruly boy. He was shocked, too, at the spite that was nourished in Reggie's heart. Whatever Mr. Selby had done, there was no justification for bitter malice and revengefulness.

Frayne paused in the passage before going to the Form-room. After a little mental debate, he turned his steps in the direction of the Shell passage. The Terrible Three were in their study when Joe's little rugged face looked in. They were at work on their preparation.

"Hallo, kid!" said Tom Merry. "Why aren't you in the Form-room? You'll have Mr. Selby down on you."

"Selby's goin' out," said Joe. "We've 'ad prep early, and it's hover now. Selby's going to the conscription meeting."

The Terrible Three chuckled. They knew all about Mr. Selby's compulsionist proclivities. Mr. Selby was never happy unless he was compelling somebody to do something against his inclination. The Third Form's keenest desire was for conscription to come in if the military age were raised to fifty. They would have enjoyed seeing Mr. Selby's face turn green and yellow when he was called up.

"I come 'ere to speak to Master Manners," said Joe hesitatingly.

Manners looked up from his work.
"Go ahead!" he said.

Joe flushed.
"It's about young Reggie!" he said. "I—I don't know whether I ought to tell you, but—but he's got a fool idea in his 'ead, and I'm afraid it's going to cause him trouble. If you could—could speak to 'im, Master Manners—"

Manners rose.
"Where is he, Joe?"

"Under the helms in the quad."

"What on earth's he doing out there in the dark?" exclaimed Lowther.
"I—I—nothing—only I think if Master Manners was

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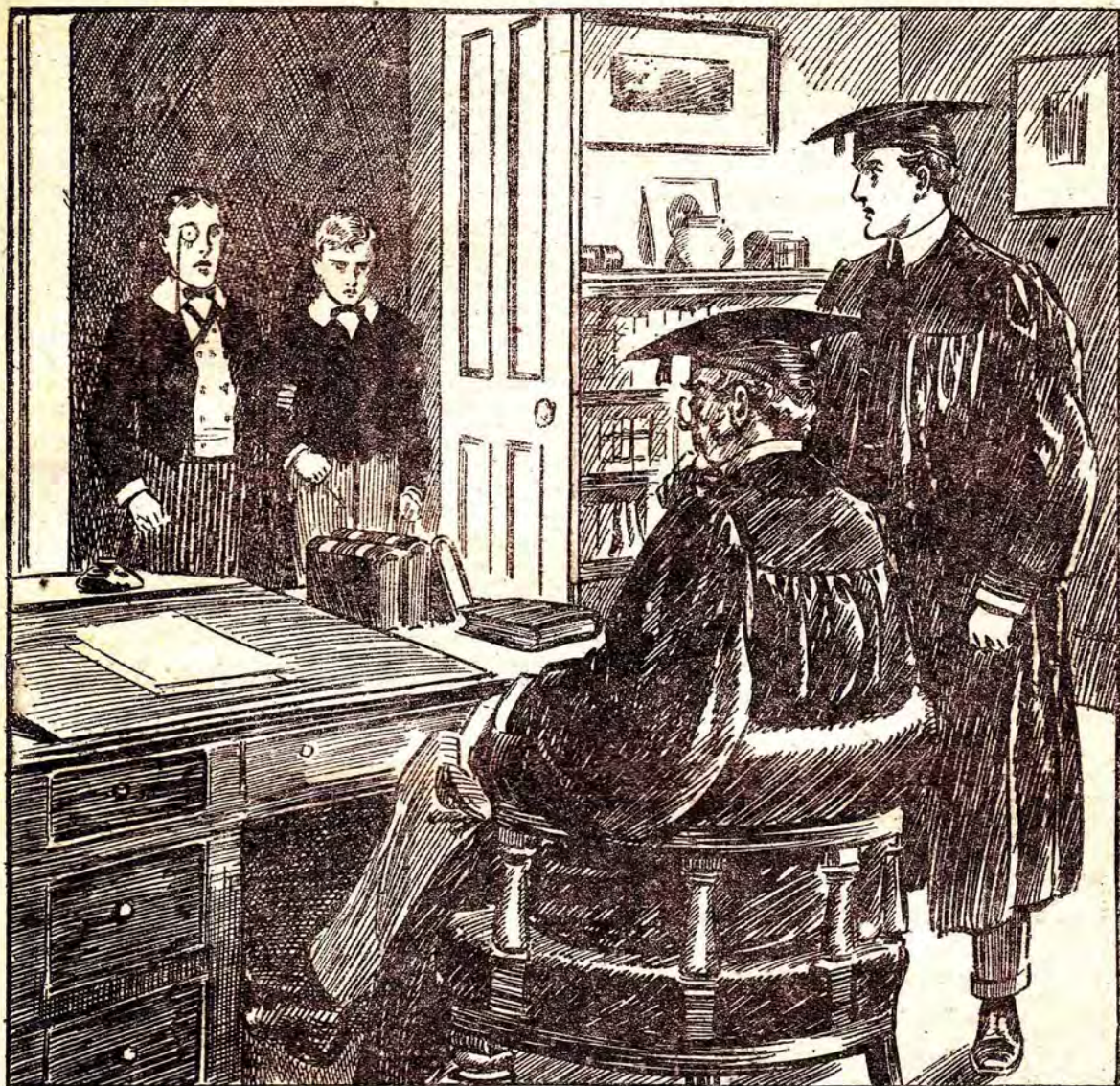
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D'Arcy opened the door and walked in, still holding Reggie's arm. The fog, his heart thumping almost to suffocation, had to follow him in. Both Mr. Railton and the Head looked at them in surprise. "What does this mean?" said Dr. Holmes sternly. (See Chapter 11.)

to speak to 'im, it might do some good!" stammered Joe.

"I think I can guess what it is!" said Manners quietly. "Thank you for coming to me, Joe. You're a good kid!"

"I should not like 'im to git flogged!" said Joe.

Manners quitted the study quickly. Joe followed more slowly. He had felt that Manners ought to be told, so that he could look after his minor.

"Shall we come, Manners?" called out Tom Merry.

"No—better not!"

"What's the young idiot up to now, I wonder?" said Lowther, when he was left alone in the study with Tom Merry.

"Goodness knows. I suppose we should do more harm than good; he's an obstinate little beggar."

"If he were my minor—" began Lowther. He did not finish, but his look was eloquent. The chums of the Shell went on with their work.

CHAPTER 10.

Too Late!

MANNERS hurried along the passage to the stairs. His brows were knitted. He had little doubt of what was the matter. Talbot of the Shell was in the hall, talking to Kangaroo, and Manners paused a moment to speak to them.

"Has Mr. Selby gone out, do you know?" he asked. Talbot nodded.

"Yes, a couple of minutes ago!"

"Thanks!"

Manners ran out into the quadrangle. The two Shell fellows looked after him in surprise. Kildare of the Sixth, who was standing at the notice-board a short distance away, also glanced at him. Manners' knitted brows and hurried manner struck him as odd.

Manners ran down the steps and into the quadrangle. He knew that Reggie had a wild scheme in his head for revenge on the Form-master—and Reggie was lurking under the elms in the darkness, and Mr. Selby had just gone out—and then there was Joe's warning. Manners realised that the trouble he had feared was probably imminent, and that not a moment was to be wasted.

ANSWERS

It was very dark in the quad. Manners ran along the path, breathing hard. From the direction of the big, shadowy elms there came a sudden uproar. A series of loud shrieks, followed by a heavy fall. Then a sound as of beating carpet.

Manners' heart throbbed. Through the darkness rang the well-known voice of Mr. Selby.

"Help, help!"

Manners ran on.

The sound of blows suddenly ceased, and was followed by footsteps. Somebody was fleeing from the scene of the attack—Manners could guess who it was. Under the elms, Mr. Selby was still shrieking.

Crash!

Right into Manners dashed a fleeing form, and he threw out his arms and grasped it. There was a violent struggle.

"Reggie!" panted Manners.

The dim figure ceased to struggle.

"Oh, it's you, Harry!"

"What have you done?"

The fag's face gleamed white in the gloom; his eyes were burning.

"I've paid him out! I've paid him out."

"Reggie!" groaned Manners.

"Let me go! You fool, they'll find me! Let me go!" said Reggie, in a hoarse whisper.

Manners stood almost overcome. He had come too late to prevent the outrage. His only resource now was to save his brother, if possible, from the consequences of it.

"Don't go towards the House, you young fool!" he whispered. "You'll be spotted as soon as you get into the light."

"But I—I—"

"Cut round the back, and get into a window—get to the Form-room as quick as you can, and don't say a word!"

"Keep it dark, Harry!"

"Of course—of course! Run for it!"

The fag, panting, disappeared into the darkness.

Manners stood almost overcome. Under the elms Mr. Selby was screaming for help. From the School House a dozen fellows were dashing in alarm.

"What's the row?"

"Who's calling?"

"What's the matter?"

"Bai Jove! That's Selby's voice!"

"He's under the trees! Come on!"

"Help, help!"

"Hallo! Who's this?"

"Manners!"

Kildare's grip fell on Manners' shoulder. He swung the Shell fellow round, and peered grimly into his white face in the gloom.

"What's happened to Mr. Selby, Manners? Where is he?"

"I—I don't know!" stammered Manners.

"Here he is!" shouted a voice. "Bring a light!"

Fellows were crowding up from all quarters. Mr. Selby's frantic yells were heard all over the school, and fellows were pouring out of the New House, on the other side of the quadrangle, as well as from the School House.

"Here he is!" It was Figgins' voice that shouted, under the dark trees. "Get a light here, somebody!"

"Bai Jove! I've got a flash-lamp, deah boys!"

"Hurry up!"

Kildare's grasp was still on Manners' shoulder, as the captain of St. Jim's hurried to the spot. Manners went with him perforce.

D'Arcy had turned on the light of his little electric lamp. It gleamed upon Mr. Selby's pale and agitated face.

Figgins of the Fourth was kneeling on the path, supporting the Form-master.

Mr. Selby had ceased to shriek now; he was panting and gasping, evidently in a state of shaken nerves.

"What has happened, sir," exclaimed Kildare.

"I—I have been attacked—suddenly attacked in the darkness!" panted Mr. Selby. "I—I was hurled down, and struck with a whip."

"Good heavens!"

"My only hat!" said Blake. "Who the merry dickens—"

"Couldn't have been a St. Jim's fellow," said Darrel of the Sixth. "That's impossible. Some tramp—I'll see if the gates are closed!"

"The gates must be closed at this hour!" muttered Kildare.

Darrel ran towards the gates, as Mr. Selby was helped to his feet. The Form-master was trembling in every limb from pain and passion and excitement.

Kildare had released Manners now. Manners stood pale, and sick at heart. He alone knew who had assaulted the Form-master, and it was borne in upon his mind that he would be questioned. Kildare's suspicious looks could mean nothing else. He would be questioned—and he knew!

Darrel came back.

"The gates are locked," he said.

"It was nobody from outside," said Mr. Selby, in trembling accents. "It was not a man who attacked me. I could not see him, but I know it was a boy. I was felled by the suddenness of the attack, and then he lashed me—with a cane or a whip. It was a boy of this school!"

"Better let us help you indoors," said Kildare.

Kildare and Darrel helped the unfortunate Form-master towards the House. The juniors followed, in a buzz of wonder.

"Trouble for somebody!" Figgins murmured to Blake.

"Well, the chap ought to be flogged, whoever he is," said Blake. "Selby is rather a beast, but that's a bit past the limit."

"Yaas, wathah! It's fwightfully diswespectful to thwash a Form-mastah!" said D'Arcy. "I—I hope—" The swell of St. Jim's turned quite pale. "Bai Jove! That young ass Wally—you wemembah he went for Selby once—aftah bein' tweeked vewy wuffly—"

Arthur Augustus ran to the School House. He headed for the Third-Form room at top speed, a prey to the keenest anxiety. As he reached the Form-room door, a fag reached it from the opposite direction, from the back of the House. It was Manners minor.

"Is Wally here, Weggie?" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Wally? I don't know—"

"Somethin' feahful has happened!"

Arthur Augustus tore open the Form-room door and rushed in. A crowd of fags were gathered before the Form-room fire, and there was a smell of cooking. The fags looked round in surprise as D'Arcy rushed in breathlessly. Reggie sidled in, unnoticed, after him.

"Wally—"

"Hallo, cocky!" said D'Arcy minor. "Have you come to tea, and feel afraid that all the herrings are gone?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, you young ass! Have you been out in the quad?"

"Not for an hour," said Wally. "What's the row? What was all that yelling about, too? A New-House raid?"

"Mr. Selby has been attacked and thwashed in the quad."

"My only Aunt Jane!"

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"I feared that you might have had a hand in it, you weckless wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Wally chuckled.

"Well, I haven't. But good luck to the chap, whoever he was! Selby has wanted thrashing for a long time."

"Hear, hear!" said the fags, in cordial agreement.

"Oh, crikey!" said Joe Frayne.

He said no more, however. He knew who must have done it, but his lips were sealed. Not even to his chums in the Third would he breathe a syllable of what he knew. Arthur Augustus quitted the Form-room greatly relieved. His fears for his minor had proved unfounded. But the news had not brought a shock of horror to the Third, such as any other junior Form at St. Jim's would have felt in like circumstances. It was Mr. Selby's own fault if his pupils hailed the news with glee.

"Kids," said Wally, looking round—"kids and kid-lets, I don't know who's biffed Selby, and I don't want to know—but three cheers for him, and more power to his elbow!"

And the Third Form gave the cheers heartily. Which would have been very pleasant for Mr. Selby, if he could have heard!

CHAPTER 11.

The Head Inquires.

MR. SELBY had been assisted to the Head's study. Dr. Holmes had been alarmed by the cries from the quadrangle, and he was almost petrified at the sight of the Third Form-master, pale and panting, leaning on Kildare and Darrel.

"In Heaven's name, what has happened?" he exclaimed.

Mr. Selby sank into a seat.

He was breathless.

"Mr. Selby has been attacked in the quadrangle, sir," said Kildare quietly. "Someone pushed him over, and attacked him with a whip or a stick."

"Good heavens!"

"I leave the matter in your hands, Dr. Holmes," gasped Mr. Selby. "You see how I have been treated!"

"Surely no boy of this school—"

"The gates were locked, sir."

Dr. Holmes' brow grew grim and dark.

"I shall inquire into the matter at once," he said. "Rely upon it, Mr. Selby, that a terrible example shall be made of the miscreant. Has he been discovered, Kildare?"

"No, sir."

"You saw nothing of him?"

"Nothing, sir, in the dark."

"Kindly make inquiries at once as to what boys were out of the Houses. Mr. Ratcliff will lend you every assistance as to the New House. Make, also, a search in the quadrangle; it is possible that the miscreant may have left some traces."

"Yes, sir."

The two prefects quitted the study.

In the passage there was a buzzing crowd. Kildare glanced round for Manners, but he had gone to his study. Darrel fetched a bicycle lantern, and a search was made under the trees.

In the Head's study Mr. Selby sat and gasped. Now that the matter was over and he was safe again he was a little ashamed of the terror he had shown. But the sudden attack in the dark had been sufficient to try any nerves. He was not very much hurt, either, when he came to think of it. His overcoat had taken the force of the blows. Only one, which had caught him across the face, had really hurt. It had left a red streak down the face and across the chin. He rubbed it very tenderly. But it was the indignity, more than anything else, that ruffled the Form-master. He had bestowed numberless thrashings in his time; but receiving one was altogether a different matter. It was said of old that it was more blessed to give than to receive, and this particularly applies to thrashings.

"I cannot say how shocked I am by this unparalleled occurrence, Mr. Selby," said the Head. "The punish-

ment shall be equal to the offence, when the delinquent is discovered. It cannot be a matter of more than a few minutes, I hope."

"I hope not," gasped Mr. Selby.

"Ah, here is Kildare!"

The prefect had returned. Kildare held a dog-whip in his hand.

"That was lying under the elms, sir. I found it there."

"A dog-whip!" said the Head. "Might that have been the instrument, Mr. Selby?"

"I am sure of it, sir. It was dropped by the rascal in his flight, I have no doubt."

"Are you aware of the owner's name, Kildare?"

"I think it belongs to Herries of the Fourth, sir."

"Let Herries be brought here at once!"

Kildare left the study, and returned in a few minutes with Herries, who was looking astonished. Dr. Holmes fixed his stern glance upon the Fourth-Former.

"Is that whip your property, Herries?"

Herries looked at it.

"Yes, sir."

"Are you the person who assaulted Mr. Selby?"

Herries jumped.

"I, sir? No, sir! Certainly not!"

"Your whip appears to have been used."

"I didn't use it, sir."

"Did you lend it to anyone?"

"No, sir."

"Then how came it on the scene of the outrage?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Were you in the quadrangle at the time?"

"No, sir."

"Where were you?"

"In my study, sir, doing my prep—I mean, preparation."

"Was anyone with you?"

"Blake and Dig, and D'Arcy, sir. We were all doing our prep," said Herries. "We came down when we heard Mr. Selby yelling—I—I mean, calling for help, sir."

"Call Herries' study-mates, Kildare!"

Kildare looked out into the passage.

"Blake, Digby, D'Arcy!" he called out.

The three juniors entered.

"Blake, Herries states that he was in your study when this outrage upon Mr. Selby occurred. Do you bear out his statement?"

"Certainly, sir," said Blake, in wonder. "We were all doing our prep; we usually are at this time."

"Yaas, wathah, sir. Hewwies' statement is quite cowwect. I twust, sir, that you do not considah that Hewwies might have been concerned in thwashin' Mr. Selby?"

"I am inquiring into the matter, D'Arcy."

"Vewy well, sir; but I should like to remark that it is uttaly imposs. for any member of Study No. 6 to be concerned in such a vewy diswespictful pwoccedin'." said Arthur Augustus. "Although we do not like Mr. Selby—"

"What?"

"Although we do not like Mr. Selby—gwoogh, stop tweadin' on my foot, you duffah!—although we do not like Mr. Selby, sir, we should nevah dweam of such a thing. I wegard stwikin' a mastah as in the vewy worst of taste!"

"Shut up!" murmured Blake ferociously.

"I wefuse to shut up, Blake! I desiah to cleah the weputation of Study No. 6 of any possible suspish."

"That will do, D'Arcy. Herries, your dog-whip has been used by the miscreant who assaulted Mr. Selby. Where do you keep it?"

"Anywhere in the study, sir."

"Was it taken away without your knowledge?"

Herries reflected. He was not a quick thinker.

"Yes, sir; I suppose it must have been, because I didn't know it was gone," he replied.

"You do not know who took it away?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"Very well, that will do, Herries. You may go."

Blake & Co. quitted the study, feeling relieved. They were innocent of all knowledge of the matter, certainly, but they felt uneasy in Mr. Selby's presence. It was

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only too clear that the Third Form-master was keenly desirous of punishing somebody, and that he would have been satisfied with very little evidence.

"The owner of the whip appears to be cleared," said the Head. "Have you ascertained, Kildare, what boys were out of the houses at the time?"

"I have not inquired in that direction yet, sir, but I am aware that one boy, in the Shell, was out of the house, and I myself encountered him very near the spot where Mr. Selby was attacked."

Mr. Selby's eyes glittered.

"His name, Kildare?" he exclaimed.

"Manners, sir."

"Manners!" exclaimed the Head. "A very quiet and studious boy—not at all the kind of boy to commit an act of this description."

"No, sir," said Kildare. "I should not have dreamed of suspecting him but for certain circumstances. But if you question him, sir—"

"I may say," said Mr. Selby, "that yesterday I had occasion to punish Manners' young brother, and that may have furnished the motive."

"Ah!" said Dr. Holmes. "Manners minor is, of course, in your Form. Are you aware, Kildare, whether there is any great attachment between the two brothers, such as might lead Manners major into an act of revenge?"

"I cannot say so, sir. In fact, they seem on bad terms, so far as I have noticed them."

"I am sorry for it; but it is a point in Manners' favour, so far as this incident is concerned. What led your thoughts to Manners, Kildare?"

"A few minutes after Mr. Selby went out, Manners came downstairs in a great hurry, and inquired whether Mr. Selby had gone. He looked very excited, and ran out into the quad. Within two or three minutes I heard Mr. Selby calling for help."

The Head's face became very grave.

"Manners, at least, must explain his interest in Mr. Selby's movements," he said. "I shall be astounded if Manners proves to be the author of this outrage. Will you bring him here immediately, Kildare?"

"Certainly, sir."

And once more Kildare left the study.

CHAPTER 12.

The Blow Falls!

MANNERS was seated at the table in Tom Merry's study, but he was not working.

Tom Merry and Lowther had ceased to work, too.

Manners was pale and harassed and troubled, and his looks alarmed his study-mates. He had come back into the room just as Tom and Monty were thinking of going down to inquire into the cause of the disturbance.

But he had not answered their questions. He sat at the table as if stunned. Tom and Lowther exchanged hopeless looks. Tom rose at last, came round the table, and dropped his hand on Manners' shoulder.

"What's the matter, Manners?" he asked quietly.

"Tell us, you duffer. Three heads are better than one."

Manners gave a groan.

"It's all up," he said. "What the pater will say, goodness knows. Look here, you—you remember Reggie was talking some rot in Blake's study last night about revenge on Selby."

"Yes."

"Mind, don't say a word about it—not a syllable. Go and see Blake and ask him to say nothing—not a whisper."

"But—why?"

"Selby's been knocked over in the quad and thrashed with a dog-whip."

Tom Merry started, in utter stupefaction. Monty Lowther stared blankly at Manners across the table.

"Good heavens," said Tom, "it must come out, Manners—it must! They'll turn the whole school inside out to find the chap. It must come out!"

"Don't say a word about Reggie," groaned Manners.

"Of course we won't. But—"

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"Honour bright?"

"Honour bright," said Tom, a little indignantly. "Of course. But what do you mean? Do you think we'd give Reggie away?"

"You might—to save me!" said Manners in a low voice. "But I know you won't break a promise."

"To—to save you!" stammered Tom Merry.

"I saw Reggie. I ran out to stop him. I guessed what he was up to. Kildare caught me close to the place, and collared me. I could see in his face what he was thinking."

"He—he thought it was you!" gasped Lowther.

"Yes."

"Manners!"

"I could see it in his face, and he's bound to report it to the Head, as a prefect," said Manners. "I knew what he meant when he gripped my shoulder. I'm expecting to be called down any minute now. I don't understand why they're so long about it. Get to Blake and give him a hint to keep quiet about Reggie."

"But—but you can't—you sha'n't! If you're suspected, you've got to tell the truth about it!" almost shouted Tom.

"I sha'n't tell any lies," said Manners, "but I sha'n't say what I know. Do you think I'm going to sneak about my own brother?"

"Well, no. But—but—"

"I promised him I'd keep it dark, too. It was rotten of Reggie to do it, but old Selby brought it on himself. You know how he marked Reggie. The little fool couldn't have understood the consequences."

"A flogging at least," said Lowther—"a flogging for him. But, as you're older, Manners, it means the sack too. They wouldn't sack a kid in the Third, but they will a Middle School fellow. You're not going to have it."

"I'm going to hold my tongue," said Manners, "and you're going to hold yours. If Reggie were sent home in disgrace like that, it would break the pater's heart, I believe."

"No worse than if you're sent home in disgrace, I suppose?" said Lowther hotly. "It's worse disgrace in your case, as you're older."

Manners smiled bitterly.

"That won't hit the pater so hard," he said.

"But look here, old chap—"

"Hush!"

There was a knock at the door, and it opened. Kildare, with a grim face, looked in.

"Follow me to the Head, Manners, please," he said curtly.

"Yes, Kildare."

"Can we come?" asked Tom Merry.

"No."

Manners followed Kildare down the passage and the stairs. His white face and downcast eyes attracted glances from every fellow he passed. Arthur Augustus spotted him in the lower hall, and gave a jump and dropped his eyeglass.

"Bai Jove, look at old Mannahs!" he muttered. "It—it can't be Mannahs that did it with your dog-whip, Hewwies?"

"Good Lord!" murmured Blake. "He wouldn't do it just because Selby licked his minor, would he?"

Unheeding the startled chums of Study No. 6, Manners followed Kildare into the Head's study.

His white, strained face caught the Head's glance at once, and Dr. Holmes' brow grew darker and sterner. If ever there was guilt in a human face, it seemed to be in Manners' face now.

Mr. Selby's eyes gleamed. One look at Manners was enough for him. The Third Form-master felt that he had found the culprit—and his victim.

"Manners," said the Head, "you are aware of the unprecedented happening of this evening. I have sent for you to inquire if you have any knowledge of it."

Manners did not speak. He had knowledge of it, but knowledge that he intended to keep to himself, whatever might betide.

"A dog-whip was taken from Herries' study, and used to assault Mr. Selby," said Dr. Holmes. "Did you take it, Manners?"

"No, sir."

"You deny having attacked Mr. Selby?"

"Yes, sir."

"The boy is evidently lying," said Mr. Selby in a grinding voice. "His face is enough for me."

Manners' pale face flushed.

"I am not lying," he said in a low voice. "I did not attack Mr. Selby."

"You will have every chance of proving your innocence, Manners, if you are indeed innocent. You were in the quadrangle at the time?"

"Yes, sir. Kildare found me there."

"What were you doing there?"

"I—I had gone out."

"For what purpose?"

Silence.

"You have not answered that question, Manners. I will ask you another. Just after Mr. Selby had left the house, you came downstairs in a hurry, and asked if he was gone?"

"I did, sir. I asked Talbot."

"Kildare heard you ask the question, and saw you run out into the quadrangle immediately you learned that Mr. Selby had gone out. Within two or three minutes, the assault took place."

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you ask that question concerning Mr. Selby's movements?"

No reply.

"How did it concern you whether Mr. Selby had gone out or not?"

Silence.

"Why did you, on hearing that he had gone out, hurry after him?"

The Head paused, but Manners did not speak. Mr. Selby's face was growing harder and more bitter. The Head's was like a rock.

But the Head, indignant and angry as he was, was just. The unfortunate junior was to have every chance to defend himself. For several minutes there was silence in the study while he waited for Manners to answer. But no answer came. The Shell fellow's eyes were fixed on the floor; his lips did not move.

"Will you not answer me, Manners?" said the Head at last.

"I—I've nothing to say, sir."

"You are aware that by refusing to explain you render it perfectly certain that you were guilty of this attack on Mr. Selby?"

"I suppose it looks like it, sir."

There was another long pause. It was broken by Kildare, who was looking very curiously at Manners.

"May I speak, sir?"

"Certainly, Kildare!"

"Manners may have seen another boy in the quadrangle, and may feel bound not to mention it, sir. Most fellows would."

Dr. Holmes pursed his lips.

"That would not explain Manners' hurrying out into the quad after Mr. Selby, Kildare. However, I will put the question. Manners, did you see anyone in the quadrangle before help arrived for Mr. Selby?"

"I have nothing to say, sir."

"I command you to answer 'yes' or 'no'!" exclaimed the Head.

Manners set his lips obstinately.

"Very well!" said the Head, also compressing his lips, his anger at white heat now. "You may go, Manners. You are adjudged guilty upon the clearest evidence of brutally attacking and injuring a Form-master in your school. For that offence you know the punishment. To-morrow morning you will be flogged in public before the assembled school, and immediately expelled. You may go!"

Manners, white as death, went unsteadily from the study.

CHAPTER 13.

The Cross-roads.

"FLOGGED!" said Wally. "Sacked! My only hat!"

Joe Frayne had just brought the news into the Third Form-room where Wally & Co. were finishing the herrings. The startling happening of the evening, and the punishment bestowed on their Form-master, had not affected the appetites of Wally & Co. to any perceptible degree. The herrings were finished up to the last cinder.

Reggie Manners was not joining in the feast. He was seated apart among the forms looking at a book. But he was not reading. After the excitement of his wild and reckless deed, the reaction had set in, and he felt dispirited and wretched.

The terrific uproar which had resulted from his attack on the Form-master had scared him. He realised clearly enough now the serious nature of what he had done. The severest possible punishment awaited the delinquent when discovered. And how could he be sure of remaining undiscovered? Frayne knew—Frayne, whom he had sneered at, and called a guttersnipe—his major knew—his brother, whom he had flouted and disregarded. Half a dozen fellows in Study No. 6 knew enough to enlighten them when they recalled his sulky threats. The miserable fag was in an unenviable state of mind and nerves when Joe Frayne brought exciting news to the fags in the Form-room.

"Flogged! Sacked!" said a dozen voices, echoing the news on all sides; and Reggie dropped his book, and sat bolt upright.

"'Orrid, ain't it?" said Joe.

Reggie ran forward.

"Who's going to be flogged and sacked?" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"The chap who biffed old Selby," said Hobbs.

"But—but they haven't found him."

"It's your major," said Wally.

Manners minor staggered.

"My major! My brother Harry!"

"That's it!" said Frayne, with a very queer look at Reggie. "That's the noos, young Manners! He's been up afore the 'Ead, and the whole 'Ouse is a-buzzing with it! He's going to be flogged in the morning after prayers."

"Oh!"

"Blessed if I know what Manners major did it for," said D'Arcy minor, puzzled. "Selby ain't his Form-master. He won't have anything to do with Selby."

"Might be on young Manners' account," said Curly Gibson. "He must have done it for something. P'raps because Selby walloped young Manners last night. I'm sorry he's found out!"

"Same here!" said Wally heartily. "It's rotten! Poor old Manners! He was a decent sort, though he was only a Shell-fish!"

Reggie Manners left the Form-room, and Frayne followed him quietly, and stopped him in the passage. Reggie looked at him with terrified eyes.

"It wasn't Manners major who did it," said Joe, in a low voice.

"I know."

"It was you!"

"Hush!"

"I knowed there was something on when you come sneaking into the Form-room after D'Arcy. And I knowed what you was up to, and I told your major, and he came to stop you," said Joe.

"You—you fool! It would have been all right if he hadn't come!"

"If he'd been a minute or two quicker, it wouldn't 'ave 'appened!" said Joe. "But this wasn't his fault, nor mine. What did you go for to do it for, arter what I warned you? Now, what are you going to do?"

"I—I don't know. You—you won't—"

Joe's lip curled.

"I shan't say nothing, if that's what you mean. I ain't a sneak!"

Manners minor panted with relief.

"But I'd be cut into little pieces afore I'd let another chap take my gruel, and that chap my brother, if I 'ad

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one," said Joe. "You know what you oughter do. There ain't no need fur me to tell you, young Manners."

And Frayne went back to the Form-room without waiting for a reply.

Reggie, feeling dizzy and sick, crept away to Tom Merry's study. He knew that he would find his brother there. He found all the three there, looking in the depths of misery. Tom Merry and Lowther gave the miserable fag bitter looks; they could not help it. Manners did not. The blow that had fallen upon him was too heavy for reproaches to be any solace.

"I—I want to speak to you, Harry," stammered Manners minor.

Tom Merry gave Lowther a look, and the two quitted the room, leaving the brothers alone.

"I—I've just heard," said Reggie, in a shaking voice. "Harry, is it true you—you are going to be—" His voice trailed off.

"Flogged!" said Manners dully. "Expelled! Yes."

"But—but you haven't done anything!"

"They think I have."

"But why? Because you were there?"

"Yes, and other reasons."

"You could have told—"

"Don't be a young ass," said Manners roughly—"and don't blub! It's all right for you! You won't miss me much when I'm gone, anyway; you'll be able to smoke without getting your silly ears clouted, too!"

"I—I say—I—I'm sorry, Harry!"

"Sorry enough to own up and tell the truth?" said Manners sarcastically.

Reggie shuddered.

"I—I couldn't face the Head. I—I couldn't face the flogging! I thought that nothing would come out. The beast couldn't see me in the dark! If—if you hadn't come, it would have been all right. Why did you come here at all?" muttered Reggie passionately.

"Why couldn't you leave me alone?"

"You young fool!" said Manners. "Do you think a thing like that could happen without a chap being punished? They've fixed on me, as it happens; but if they hadn't, they'd have sifted and sifted till they got somebody. It might have been Herries, as you used his dog-whip, and it seems you were imbecile enough to drop it there. Or it might have been young D'Arcy, as he's known to have gone for old Selby once before. Most likely, they'd have fixed on you—half a dozen fellows heard you gassing about what you'd do, and something would have come out. You'd have been bound to be spotted in the long run. If they couldn't find the chap, they'd make every fellow account for every minute of his time this evening. And where would you come in then?"

"But—but—"

"But it's all right now; you're safe. They've got a victim," said Manners bitterly. "Selby don't care much who it is, so long as somebody gets it all right in the neck. You'd better pull yourself together a bit, though, or chaps will guess things from your face. Or perhaps they'll put it down to grief for me, though," added Manners, with bitter irony.

Reggie shuddered again. His brother's tone cut him like the lash of a whip. This was the brother he had disliked and flouted, whose warnings he had despised, whom he had taken delight in defying and disregarding. One word from his brother was enough for justice to be done, and punishment to fall on the guilty shoulders. And Manners would have died before he would have uttered that word.

The utter misery and white wretchedness in Reggie's face touched Manners' heart a little, and his look changed, and became more kindly.

"Don't blub, kid, for goodness' sake!" he said. "It's done now, and can't be helped. I've got to stand it, and—and the pater would think I ought to, too—I'm the elder. You were bound to get bowled out if I hadn't chipped in, and the pater would rather it was I than you. You're safe."

"What's that you said about D'Arcy minor?" muttered Reggie. "You said he went for Selby once—"

"Yes, and might have been suspected this time if Kildare hadn't spotted me, poor little beast!"

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"But he—he wasn't expelled?"

"No; flogged."

"Then why are they going to expel you?"

"I'm older, you young ass! It's different with a kid in the Third. I'm in the Shell, and supposed to have more sense."

A strange expression came over Reggie's face.

"Then they wouldn't expel me if they knew?" he said.

"I don't know; most likely not, but you'd get the flogging. What do you mean? Not thinking of owning up, are you?" said Manners sarcastically.

He burst into a bitter laugh at the thought.

"I—I'll get out, if you're only going to say rotten things to me!" said Reggie, with quivering lips.

"Do you want me to say nice things, when I'm going to be flogged and booted out of St. Jim's? I don't feel up to saying nice brotherly things. I don't feel very brotherly just now," growled Manners.

Reggie went out without replying, and closed the door. He passed Tom Merry and Monty Lowther in the passage, and they did not speak to him. But as he reached the landing he paused. Then he slowly turned towards Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 14. The Right Stuff!

"IMPOSS, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus spoke with conviction.

Blake and Herries and Digby snorted in chorus.

"Of course, young Manners did it!" growled Blake. "Old Manners is keeping it dark, and I suppose we've got to keep it dark, too. But it's rotten!"

"Imposs. I have made a friend of that young person, and have talked to him severely, and you fellows have acknowledged that he had improved wonderfully. I refuse to admit that my young friend would be such a misewable skunk as to remain silent and allow old Mannahs to suffah in his place. I am quite suah that if Weggie had done it he would own up."

"Catch him!" said Herries, with another snort. "The young villain took my dog-whip, too. Of course, I'd have lent it to anybody with pleasure to wallop Selby. But now Manners is cornered, the little beast ought to own up. But he won't."

"Wats! Bai Jove, come in, Weggie!"

Reggie's white face looked in at the doorway. Blake & Co. softened a little at the sight of him. The young rascal was suffering for his sins, there was no doubt about that. Reggie looked at them timidly.

"C-c-can I come in?" he faltered.

"Yaas, deah boy. We were just talkin' about you," said Arthur Augustus.

"I—I heard you," said Reggie, his cheeks flushing.

"Then you know our opinion of you," granted Herries, "and you're welcome to it!"

"Yes, I—I know."

"Pway don't be downhearted, Weggie. I am convinced that you are an honourable chap and uttaly incapable of the howwid meanness of lettin' your bwotah suffah for you, if it was you who did it."

Reggie's pale face was crimson now.

"Will you come with me, D'Arcy?"

"Certainly, deah boy. Where?"

"I—I want to go to the Head, and—and I'm afraid to go alone," groaned Reggie. "I wish—I wish I hadn't done it now."

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Gweat Scott! W-w-was it you thwashed old Selby, aftah all?"

"Yes," mumbled Reggie.

"Oh, bai Jove! But you haven't owned up," said Arthur Augustus, in perplexity. "If you did it, how is it you haven't owned up, now old Mannahs is gettin' it in the neck? That is very remarkable!"

"You silly ass!" hooted Blake. "He hasn't owned up because he's a sneaking little cad, and wants to skulk behind old Manners, and get off! Can't you understand?"

"I certainly refuse to undahstand anythin' of that sort, Blake. I am suah that Weggie is incapable—"

"Will you come with me, D'Arcy?" groaned Reggie.

CORGEIOUS TUCK HAMPERS FOR READERS OF THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD," 10.

"I—I shan't be able to do it if I stop to think about it, I know that."

"What are goin' to do, Weggie?"

"Tell the Head!"

Arthur Augustus smiled with satisfaction and turned his eyeglass witheringly upon his study-mates.

"What do you say now, you duffahs?" he demanded triumphantly.

"I say Reggie had better buck up, before he changes his mind," said Blake.

"Yaas, pewwaps there is somethin' in that. Come on, Weggie! Wely on me to see you through!"

Arthur Augustus took Reggie's limp arm, and led him away. In his satisfaction at this proof that his judgment was right, Arthur Augustus smiled cheerfully, rather forgetting the painful ordeal that lay before his young friend. Blake and Herries and Digby blinked at one another.

"Well, my hat!" said Blake.

Arthur Augustus piloted his young friend triumphantly to the Head's study. There was a murmur of voices in that dreaded apartment; the deep tones of Mr. Railton mingling with the Head's fainter voice. Arthur Augustus raised his hand to knock, and Reggie jerked him back.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah, Weggie?"

"D-d-don't!" panted Reggie. "Wait a minute!"

"Bettah get it ovah, deah boy!"

"Wait—wait a minute!" groaned Reggie. "I—I can't go in! I—I can't—I can't be flogged! I can't—I—I—"

Arthur Augustus raised his hand again, and knocked firmly at the door.

"Buck up, Weggie!" he murmured. "You're doin' the wight thing, you know; and when a chap's doin' the wight thing, he should go full steam ahead."

"Come on!"

D'Arcy opened the door and walked in, still holding Reggie's arm. The fag, his heart thumping almost to suffocation, had to follow him in. Both Mr. Railton and the Head looked at them in surprise.

"What does this mean?" said Dr. Holmes sternly.

"Pway excuse this intwusion, sir—"

"I shall not excuse you, D'Arcy, unless you can give a very good reason for it," said the Head tartly. "Why have you brought Manners minor here?"

"I have not bwrought him, sir. He came of his own accord, and I merely came with him to back him up," explained Arthur Augustus. "Weggie has somethin' to tell you, sir."

"Indeed!"

"Go it, Weggie. Dr. Holmes is waitin' for you. Wemembah you are doin' the wight thing, and showin' that you are the wight stuff, deah boy."

"What can this mean?" said Mr. Railton.

Reggie licked his dry lips, with a frightened glance at the two stern faces.

"I—I—I—" he stammered.

"Have you anything to say to me, Manners minor?"

"Yes, sir. D'Arcy knows. I—I—"

"You need not be afraid, my boy," said the Head kindly. "Pray speak out quite frankly. What is the matter?"

"I—I did it, sir!" gasped Reggie.

"You did what?"

"It, sir—I did it!" groaned Reggie. "It was because he thrashed me, sir. I'm sorry I did it now. I—I—"

"What is the boy alluding to, D'Arcy?"

"Thwashin' Mr. Selby, sir," said the swell of St. Jim's cheerfully.

"What!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir! Findin' that his bwothah was goin' to be punished, Weggie vewy pwopahly wesolved to own up, sir. As an honourable chap, he could do nothin' else."

"Is it possible," ejaculated the Head, "that that child attacked Mr. Selby?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" said D'Arcy. "Lots of us knew it, but we couldn't give him away, of course. Old Mannahs asked everybody to keep it dark."

"This is extraordinary!" said Mr. Railton.

"Very extraordinary," said the Head. "Manners minor, if you really did this wicked thing, why did you do it?"

"He—he licked me, sir," faltered Reggie. "I—I was never licked at home, sir. And—and everybody said he was a beast to lick me so hard, sir, only because I wouldn't tell tales. The fellows had been ragging me for telling tales, and then Mr. Selby ordered me to, and—and I wouldn't, and—and—and—"

The fag's voice broke, and he burst into tears. Dr. Holmes' stern brow relaxed.

"I shall inquire into all the circumstances of this matter, very strictly," he said. "For the present, you may take Manners minor away, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, sir."

Arthur Augustus marched his young friend out of the study. Dr. Holmes looked at Mr. Railton.

"What do you think of this, Mr. Railton?"

"I think, sir, that it is a case for a merciful view to be taken," said the Housemaster. "I have noticed that boy already, and remarked that he shows every sign of a bad home-training. Nothing, of course, can excuse his attack upon his Form-master. For that he should be severely punished. But—but the unfortunate lad was in a difficult position. If his Form-fellows had been punishing him for tale-bearing, and then his Form-master ordered him to repeat the same offence—for it is clear the boy is speaking the truth—some allowance should be made for him. Mr. Selby does not appear to have acted judiciously."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"I shall speak to Mr. Selby, and we will see!" he said.

Manners jumped up as Tom Merry and Monty Lowther rushed into the study. For a moment he thought his chums had taken leave of their senses. For they seized him, yanked him out of his seat, and waltzed him round the study table, chortling and cheering like a pair of lunatics.

"What the thunder—" began Manners, dragging himself away at last. "What the thumping dickens—"

"Reggie's owned up."

"Impossible!"

"Fact my infant. Owned up like a little brick."

Manners drew a deep, deep breath.

"And faced the flogging—and the sack!" he said. "I—I wish he'd held his tongue. The pater—"

"No flogging, and divil a sack!" said Monty Lowther.

"The Head's had Selby in his study, jawing; and I fancy it's come out about that awful licking Reggie had, and why he had it. Anyway, Reggie's been caned by Selby, and that's the end of the matter. Floggings are off, and you're to go to the Head and be jawed for not telling him the facts."

"Well, I don't mind that," grinned Manners.

Manners was only five minutes in the Head's study, and he came out looking quite cheery. A crowd of juniors greeted him joyfully when he emerged; among them Reggie, rubbing his hands, but quite happy. Mr. Selby had laid the cane on with even more than his usual vim; but Reggie was happy, all the same. The clouds had rolled by. Among the buzz of congratulations poured upon Manners, the voice of Arthur Augustus-D'Arcy could be heard.

"I twust, deah boys, that in futnah you will wely on a fellah's tact and judgment. I remarked that Mannahs minah was the wight stuff, and I wathah think you will have to own up that he is the wight stuff—what?"

And every fellow in the School House was willing to admit that Manners minor, with all his faults—and their name was legion—was the right stuff!

THE END.

Next week's grand, long complete story of the Chums of St. Jim's is entitled "BY LUCK AND PLUCK!" by Martin Clifford.

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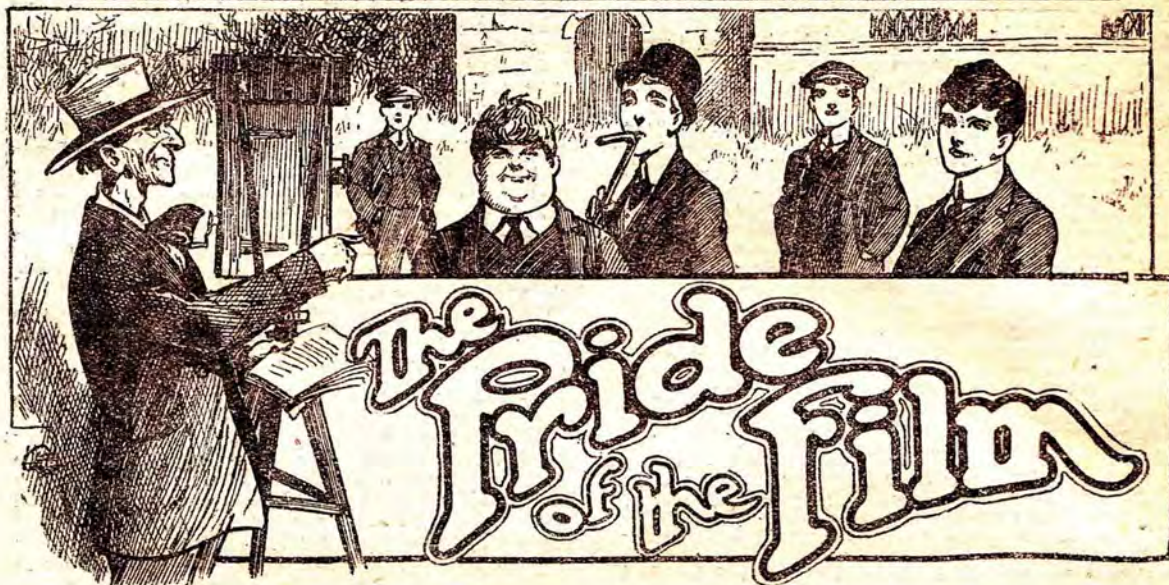
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START OUR GRAND NEW SERIAL STORY TO-DAY!



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 TURNEY, 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.

After a dastardly attempt on Reggie's life, Hubert Nixon is supposed to have gone to America.

A film belonging to Mr. Dell is stolen, and, suspecting that Hubert is still in England, Reggie believes him to be the thief.

He keeps watch, therefore, on a site acquired by the elder Nixon for a new picture-palace, and eventually comes face to face with Hubert.

Mr. Nixon then appears on the scene, and Reggie is flung into the passage of an old dwelling-house.

(Now read on.)

Let off With a Caution.

Inside the house, Reggie found himself confronted by the two Nixons, father and son, both in a dangerous frame of mind. They pushed and dragged him into a room in the rear of the house.

This room had a cupboard that had probably once served the double purpose of pantry and wine-cellar, and, judging from its condition, at a later period had been used for the storage of coals.

For the purposes of the two men, it had the advantage that it could be locked or barred some way outside, and thus a snug and compact little prison was improvised.

The room, once a back parlour, seemed to be Hubert's.

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Nixon's general apartment, for it had a lamp, a camp-bed, a table, and a chair or two. Otherwise, the echoes of the house revealed that the other rooms were vacant of furniture.

The Nixons held a council of war in the room, while their captive tried to make himself comfortable in the cupboard. They spoke in undertones, but Reggie's quick ears heard a few words here and there, especially as the sentences became more and more audible in the ordinary process by which a sustained conversation in whispers becomes more sharp and sibilant.

One fact was clear quite early—that they were discussing their prisoner's fate, and were inclined to be merciful, not because they loved mercy, but because they saw no object to be gained in being otherwise.

What they said, and what they finally agreed upon, Reggie could not hear very plainly; he could just make out the trend, and that was all.

It was when the subject changed, and John Nixon was lecturing his son, that some sentences became more clear.

"Remember," he said, "you are called Nixon now. You must forget the name Causeway, as if you had never heard it. If Mrs. Dell once heard the name Causeway, of Bampton, it would be quite enough to settle us."

This was the complete sentence that Nixon spoke. Reggie only got the drift of it. But the words "Causeway, of Bampton," took hold of him, and he vowed to remember them.

It was five minutes after this that the cupboard was opened.

"Come out!" said John Nixon.

Reggie obeyed.

"I'm going to open the front door and let you go, and I hope I shall see no more of you," went on Nixon. "I am treating you gently, not out of any sentiments of pity, but because you're not worth powder and shot. But you will be wise to take my advice. Don't ever cross my path again. Understand?"

"I will try to avoid doing so if I can," said Reggie, with mock politeness.

Nixon frowned at the satire, but went on:

"I am going to let you out of this house, and when you are in the street you can do whatever you like. I know all about the falsehoods you have told about me out of a wish to look like a hero, and sha'n't be worried if you tell a hundred more as long as they are only to make yourself look glorious. But let me warn you, they had better not drag me or my son into any more of them. Come!"

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He led the way to the front door, and Reggie followed him, glad, in the circumstances, to get away from the house so easily.

"Now," said Nixon, at the entrance, "you can fetch a policeman over here if you like and try to give us in charge, or you can take any other line that pleases you. I'm not afraid, whatever you do. Get!"

The last word accompanied a savage kick, which Reggie turned to his own advantage. Avoiding the boot, he caught Nixon's leg on its uplift and raised it even higher than that villain had planned. In consequence, Nixon came violently down on the back of his head in the passage.

And, with a chuckle, Reggie walked away.

About an hour later Reggie was giving Mrs. Horace Dell the benefit of his experiences.

"And you tell me all this from memory, boy?" gasped Mrs. Dell.

"Yes."

"You little idiot!"

The lady startled him with her abrupt retort. Of course, this was along the line of her usual method, and he ought to have been prepared. But, seeing his distress, Mrs. Dell hastily withdrew the statement.

"There, there! That's my wicked tongue again—and you the most splendid boy in the world! I'm ashamed of myself!"

In sheer contrition at her own hasty remark, she suddenly caught Reggie and kissed him. It was such an undoubtedly motherly kiss that it touched the lonely orphan boy very deeply indeed. He had such an understanding of Mrs. Dell's kind heart that he had, usually been very apt to forget her abrupt ways.

Then she seized a sheet of paper, and wrote something upon it. Reggie saw that there were only two words:

"Causeway. Bampton."

"That is what I meant," she said, in a voice that was all the kinder because she still seemed so sorry for her outburst. "Never depend on memory for important things like names or addresses. Are you sure that these were right?"

"Quite certain," replied Reggie.

"Well, I am going to follow up this case. I'll find out all about all the Causeways who have ever lived within a hundred miles of Bampton. I needn't fear to put detectives on this search, as the coolest bloodsucker or blackmailer of the batch can't use my secret against me when he doesn't know where I appear in it."

"Unless he discovers enough to make him come to terms with Mr. Nixon. After that he might learn the connection," said Reggie.

"Eh—what? Bless the boy!" cried Mrs. Dell. "What a quick brain you've got! Quite right, too. Those detectives are quite as dangerous to hold one's secret as anyone. I will follow up this case myself."

It was too late to do anything that night, so Reggie left her and made his way back to his lodgings.

The next day he had to pack up, with other members of the company, to start for the long-projected trip to the house that Mr. Dell had engaged for the completion of the haunted house scenes.

Owing to the necessary remaining work on this film, and his absence from London, Reggie was not able to hear any more news of Mrs. Horace Dell for over a week. But when he met her she had startling news for him.

"Your clue did it, my dear boy," she said. "I have followed up all the points myself. I found at Somerset House that a Mr. John Nixon Causeway got married at Bampton, in Devonshire, twenty-three years ago. Eighteen years ago he was imprisoned for fraud, and since then he has not been in or near that town."

"But the important thing," she went on, "is that his wife still remained in Bampton, where she carried on a small business, for a period later than my marriage to him, for she was alive three years ago. That point is what I wanted to find out. You see, it proves that I never was really married to him, and it makes him guilty of bigamy, instead of me."

"And I suppose that Causeway is the same as Nixon?" asked Reggie.

"Of course he is," replied Mrs. Dell. "Bless me! Didn't I tell you? Well, you are home just in time to see him when he is being informed of the fact."

Reggie knew Mrs. Dell's manner by this time, and was prepared for something startling.

"Mr. Tony has been a brick," she went on, with an unusual admiration for her brother-in-law. "He arranged the whole affair for me. What do you think of a crowded meeting in a picture-palace, with the mayor of the borough in the chair? Isn't that a splendid place to explode a bomb-shell on John Nixon?"

Reggie didn't understand.

"You'll have to dress in your best clothes to-night," declared the lady darkly, "and you must be at my apartments

not later than seven, as the new picture-palace in Edgeware Rise will be opened at eight."

She would tell him nothing further just then; but that evening Reggie understood better the meaning of her vague hints and promises.

Mrs. Dell and Dolly rode out from the apartments in a taxicab, taking Reggie with them, and arrived at the new palace in good time for the opening ceremony. The building was already well filled, for the local mayor had consented to open the place, and complimentary tickets had been sent out on a large scale.

The mayor was supported by no less a personage than John Nixon, who had been induced, by means of some ingenious wire-pulling on the part of Tony Dell, to come and say a few words.

The meeting began. The mayor, in a neat little speech, pointed out the educational value of moving pictures, and declared the palace open. Then he called upon Mr. Nixon to speak, and in doing so referred to him as one of the chief pioneers of the newest of our great industries.

"Mr. Nixon is going to propose a vote of thanks to the mayor for coming," whispered Mrs. Dell to Reggie. "The man who seconds the vote is a discovery of my own, and somewhat of a caution. You will be surprised at his speech."

Really, Nixon made quite a brilliant speech. He was a very able man in many ways, and he had a knack of pleasing when he wished to do so. Without being an orator, he knew the points that tell in making a speech, and he brought out his remarks in the clean-cut simple manner that folk like nowadays in a platform speaker. Then the mayor called on Mr. Droosman of Devonshire to add a few words.

John Nixon started slightly when he heard the name, but he went all sorts of colours as a huge man with a jolly, round face made his way on to the platform.

Droosman spoke with a pronounced Devonshire accent, and, though slightly ungrammatical, had a pleasing way with him, and an ingratiating smile.

"It be a proud day for me," he said, "to see one of my own townsfolk climb up so high like as the gent I have to follow. In fact, hearing him as almost made me forget about picture-palaces. I feel I want to say a word about Mr. Nixon, for he does do our little town proud. Here he be a picture-palace great gun, and I mind the de-ay when he warn't worth a box of pilchards!"

The crowd looked puzzled at the words, though they applauded them. They had not come to hear Nixon discussed, but as they saw how awkward he looked, they were mystified, and wanted to hear more.

"I'm told," went on the Devonshire man, "as how my old kinsman"—he pointed bluntly at Nixon—"owns a lot of picture-palaces on his own, and has his finger in a good many other pies what ain't all his, and that he is one of the richest in the trade. We should never 'ave guessed that of him down Bampton. But one thing do puzzle me. In those days he was called John Nixon Causeway, and now he has become so modest with his new riches that he drops the swellest name of the three!"

"Mr. Mayor," interrupted Nixon, "this gentleman is making some mistake, or trying to attack my reputation. I never was called Causeway!"

"Oh, yes you was, Jacky!" cried a man in the audience. "I was on the jury that convicted you!"

There was a howl of laughter from the audience, though most people took this remark as a joke. Nixon's sudden ferocity of manner caused some to see that it meant more than a joke to him.

"I warn you that that is a libellous remark," said the mayor, addressing the man in the audience.

"Tain't libel; it's true," said the man.

"So it is!" shouted another by his side. "Everyone down in Bampton knows that."

"We'll have on the pictures now," said the mayor briefly. Nixon made his way down from the platform. But in the aisle Mrs. Dell stopped him.

"I brought those three men from Bampton and paid their expenses," she said. "Two of them dealt at your wife's little shop up to three years ago. I hope she made money in her business, and was able to leave you some, as you will get no money from any other wife."

Nixon muttered an angry word and darted on.

At supper that evening at Mrs. Dell's, Reggie met the three men from Bampton, and found them "good fun." Mrs. Dell had brought them up to London for the purpose of exposing her persecutor by identifying him, and very well paid they all found themselves, with a week's entertainment in London, and a handsome fee.

"I think that our exposure has settled him as far as I am concerned," she said. "I shall get no more trouble from any of his blackmailing threats."

It was about a week after this event when a couple of short

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pictures in which Reggie took a leading part had been completed that Mr. Dell sent for him.

He found a young man in the millionaire's office.

"Reggie," said Mr. Dell—somehow he generally called the boy by his Christian name—"this gentleman is Mr. Samson Skewes, and he has brought me a jolly good plot. Mr. Skewes is an author, and, though this is, I believe, one of his first attempts, he has hit the nail straight on the head."

"It is very kind of you to say so, Mr. Dell," said the author, in a pleasant voice. "The Pearl Light Company called my story rubbish."

Tony Dell laughed.

"You can bring me any stuff the Pearl Light turns down," he declared, "and I can almost promise to accept it. The fact that they refuse a synopsis is almost proof that the story is excellent, and is well worked out. Good Jupiter! Why, they refused 'The Glow of City Fires,' a film that has done return visits by request in half the picture-houses of England, and I know for a fact that they could have had Billy Chanson as their star with a two years' engagement at almost nothing a week, and Billy getting a thousand a month at the present moment. Don't talk to me of what the Pearl Light turns down. They'd turn down Charlie Chaplin."

"However," he went on, "this youngster here has been in a few films for me, and he does his part simply A. 1. Now, you've got a young man in your story that fits this youngster to a T, excepting that your young man is twenty-four and married, and this youngster is in his teens and a bachelor."

"Yes—and you want me?"

"I want you to get rid of your wife and tone down his age a bit, and build the thing around this lad."

The author looked taken aback and a little blank, but raised no difficulty.

"I'll do it!" he said. "I'll do it to-day!"

"Right you are," said Mr. Dell. "Get right home, and you can post the manuscript to me to-night."

He waved his hand to the door, as if that ended the interview. The author suddenly looked ill at ease, as if he had something more to say.

"I want you to forgive me, Mr. Dell," he said, "for requesting a favour. I don't know if it is against the rules to ask for a little money on account—a sovereign would do."

Mr. Dell looked up and took him in with a quick glance.

"By all means," he said, taking out his note-purse. "I generally do pay in advance. It was careless of me to forget. Besides, I fancy I shall take those other two stories as well."

Then he laid the note-purse on the table.

"You must pardon me, Mr. Skewes," he said, "if I am on delicate ground, but is this hero of the story yourself?"

The author hummed and hawed a little.

"One can't very well keep oneself out of these things," he replied.

"Not," said the millionaire. "I believe that is true, at all events, of the beginner in any art, whether story-writing or plot-forming. But you see where it leads me. If one character is true to life, why not all? And why shouldn't the incident be true?"

"What of that?" asked Skewes.

"That you may get me into a thumping big libel action. The villain of your story is something like a villain."

The author looked floored.

Mr. Dell smiled again, and did something remarkably characteristic.

He threw the note-purse across the table.

"We're not discussing it on the money," he said. "As regards that, take out as many of these notes as you require, and come for more if you want them. I'm interested in that story, and I want to tell you that I like the other two as well, and fancy we can beat them into shape. Also it's as likely as not I can fix you up here as a perpetual tame poet with a weekly screw. But I want to know where I am. If you desire to get your own back against any person living who has wronged you, and you think my films are the best means to adopt, I want to know all about it first, so as I can be with you in the business heart and soul and special kicking-boots. But I want to know where I am."

Mr. Skewes nodded.

"You are a very fair and just man, Mr. Dell," he said. "I think I can answer you satisfactorily. This plot is my life-story. But it is so arranged that you need fear no libel action."

Then Tony Dell got excited.

"For goodness' sake why?" he asked.

"I don't understand," said Skewes.

"Good heavens, man!" cried Dell excitedly. "If that story is true, you have been execrably treated, and the villain deserves exposure. Don't ever you think for a moment that Anthony Dell is afraid of a libel-action if there is a

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good cause behind it. By jingo, sir! If I were telling such a story as yours, I'd paint the man as he is, and call the story, 'The Crime of Blank Blank,' filling in the blanks with the creature's real name."

"You would?"

"I would!"

"But would any picture-palace show it?"

"My experimental theatre would, and Blank Blank would have a seat reserved for in the best row. We've done that sort of thing before. Haven't we, Reggie?"

"Yes, indeed, sir!" said Reggie.

"Mind, I'm not saying that we will do it this time," went on Tony Dell hastily. "My business is moving-picture making, and not assisting justice. The point is, after all, that I like to know just where I am. I am out to produce a good story in pictures, and I have a fair love of a row with a villain. But probably the two tunes are best played separately."

"I agree with you," said the author.

"Very well. Now, you take that boy with you for a walk, and outline your plot to him, and see where he can fit in. Then get on with the alterations, and when you have done them you shall tell me what parts of the story are true and what parts are false. Reggie, wait outside for Mr. Skewes."

When Skewes came out a moment later he was folding some notes into his waistcoat-pocket.

"Mr. Dell is a generous man," said Skewes.

"He's the best man in Europe," assented Reggie warmly. "If you get well in with him, you won't want to leave him in a hurry!"

"He speaks very highly of you," said Skewes, with a smile. "Really, I feel rather afraid to walk with anyone quite as clever as he makes you out to be!"

The remark was a joke, of course, but really Reggie had taken to his work as a film actor with remarkable energy and with startling success. As yet he was hardly on the market, for the general public had scarcely had time to see the films in which he appeared; but the public's verdict is generally guessed at beforehand, and everyone who had seen the pictures knew that Reggie was marked out for a great future.

Samson Skewes outlined the picture play that he had sold to Mr. Dell, and discussed the parts that would be played by Reggie.

The main idea of the whole story was of a young man being brought up to expect a big inheritance when he came to be twenty-four years of age, and suddenly realising on the first morning of his honeymoon that his guardian had squandered all the money.

There was a rather clever little plot woven into the story, in which a benevolent rogue, who had worked hand in hand with the wicked guardian, or had appeared to be doing so, was in real fact protecting the hero's property, and diverting it all into his own bank for the good of its rightful owner.

At the proper time this gentleman explains what he has been doing, and passes over the wealth to the much-wronged hero.

"And you say that this is partly your own story?" said Reggie.

Samson Skewes nodded.

"Only, unluckily, there was no benevolent rogue in my case," he added. "My guardian spent all the money, and is probably as poor as myself at the present moment."

"The wicked part of it all," he went on, "is this—that he stopped me at every turn. He wouldn't allow me to learn a business or profession. He took me early from school, and tried to make me a mere idler."

"What's the good of your working at any calling?" he would say. "You will be rich without work one day."

"The bubble burst the day after I got married. My guardian saw us off at the station, and bought our tickets for Llandudno, and passed me a sovereign."

"I'll wire you some money in the morning," he said. "I stupidly forgot to cash a cheque."

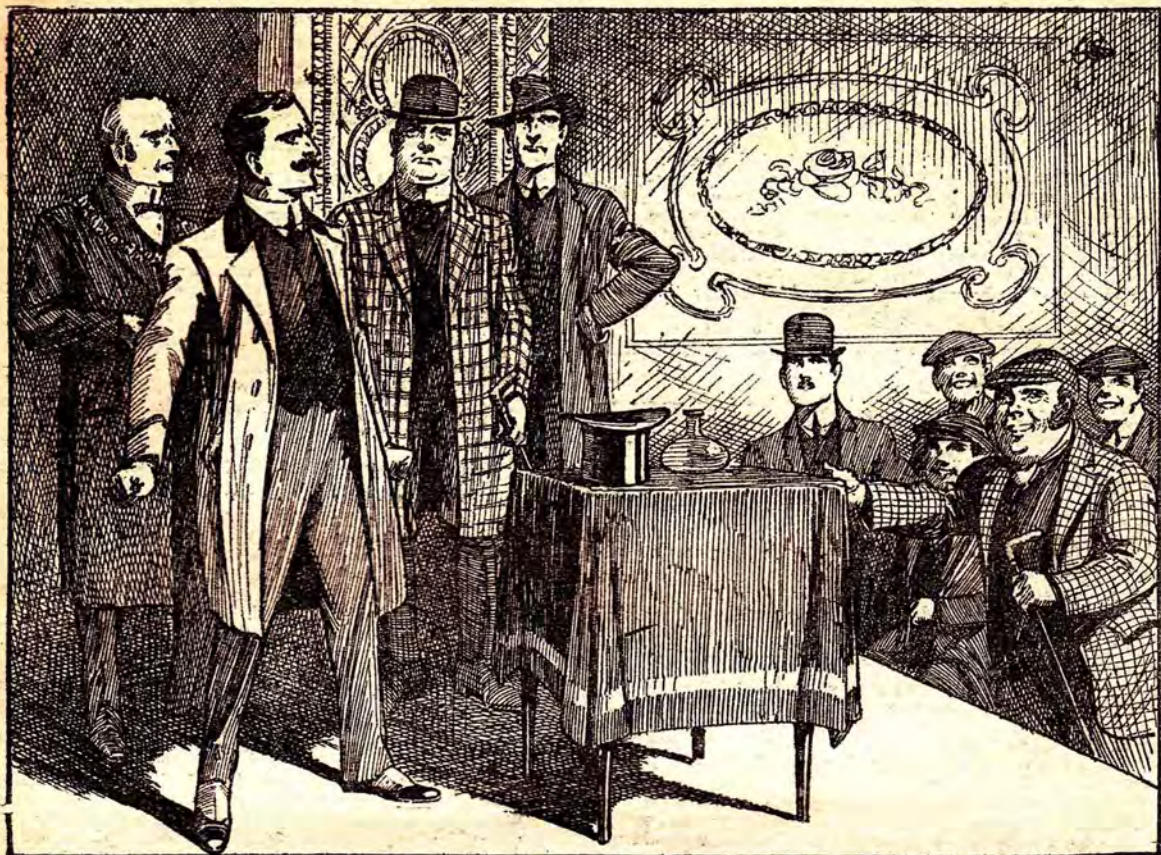
"And none came?" asked Reggie.

"Yes. A wire came. It said: 'There isn't any more money left. You and I will have to work now.'"

"It must have come as a terrible surprise!" said Reggie.

Samson Skewes told him about his experiences and adventures since then. He had never learned a trade or a business, and had no knowledge of the way in which people earned their living, and, more than that, he suffered from bad health.

"I wanted to enlist, of course," he said, "but they wouldn't pass me. But, on the whole, we managed somehow, till I suddenly got bitten with the idea of writing stories. Since then my luck has been out—that is, till I met Mr. Dell."



"Mr. Mayor," interrupted Nixon, "this gentleman is making some mistake, or trying to attack my reputation. I never was called 'Causeway!'" "Oh, yes, you was, Jacky!" cried a man in the audience. "I was on the jury that convicted you."

Reggie had walked along with him, and by this time they were nearly in Streatham.

"But what about the man who stole all your money? Couldn't you get any back from him?" he asked.

"He had none to give," replied Skewes. "He had gambled it away. He himself had just got hold of a job as a time-keeper at a factory the last time I saw him."

"What factory?"

"He didn't tell me."

"What was he called?" asked Reggie.

Before there was time for a reply, Skewes suddenly pointed to a passing motor-car.

"Look! There he is," he said, "in the car!"

"What, the driver?"

"No; the man in a brown Norfolk coat—that's my guardian."

"But I know him," said Reggie. "He was never a time-keeper in a factory that ever I heard of. He—"

"But that is my guardian. His name is Benjamin Rankin."

"You have made a mistake," replied Reggie. "That is Mr. Startlefield, who lives in the big mansion we passed just after leaving the picture factory. I know him, because he had a fuss with Mr. Dell, and wanted his business stopped as a nuisance to residents."

"But I am positive," declared the author. "I never forget. Do you think that I would make a mistake in the man who ruined me? Just tell me where that man lives, and I'll go there now and see him."

"Very well; I'm game," said Reggie.

They caught a tram which took them a good part of the way, and walked the rest. Very soon they were at Mr. Startlefield's house.

Here, however, the servant stated that Mr. Startlefield was not at home.

"He has just returned in the car," she said, "but he has gone out again on foot. I shouldn't think he would be long."

They promised to return later, and strolled out through the carriage drive into the road, and towards the kinema works.

"There he is!" said Skewes suddenly.

And, sure enough, Mr. Startlefield was seen coming out of Tony Dell's premises. In the road he stopped and did an unusual thing. He turned and shook his fist at the whole Dell establishment, and particularly at the place where Mr. Dell's office might be.

Then he came swinging along the road.

"Good-day, Mr. Rankin!" said Skewes.

"Eh? What?" gasped the man. Then, as he saw who had addressed him, "I'm not called Rankin," he declared. "I don't know you. Go away!"

"I thought you had a job as timekeeper in a factory," said Skewes bitterly.

"Do I look like it?" replied the man.

"I am glad to see that you don't," returned Samson Skewes. "There is more chance of getting my money back—or some of it!"

"Oh, go to Colney Hatch!" said the man vehemently. "I don't want any more of this nonsense!"

And he passed on.

For a moment the author stared after him.

"That is Mr. Rankin," he said vehemently. "Did you see how startled he was? That is the man who stole all my money!"

"What are you going to do about it?" inquired Reggie.

Mr. Dell in Council.

Almost as if in answer to the question, a voice broke in upon their consultations—the voice of Mr. Dell, who had approached without being noticed.

"Well, have you two been able to fix up the plot a bit?"

"We are getting on with it, Mr. Dell," replied Samson Skewes, a little awkwardly.

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"BY LUCK AND PLUCK!"

"Well, if you have nothing better to do, you can come back to the office and tell me the results of your discussion. I've just been in the wars with a neighbour, and I need something to cool me down."

The two followed Mr. Dell back to his office. On the way Reggie whispered to Skewes:

"Why don't you tell Mr. Dell? He is a very clever man."

Samson Skewes was just in the mind to tell anyone. Not gifted with a remarkably secretive nature, and somewhat carried away by the startling nature of his discovery, he was just in the mood to proclaim his wrongs anywhere, or even from the housetop. Indeed, it is doubtful whether he required Reggie's suggestion to make him unburden his soul to his new friend.

So he came to the subject very quickly, telling the same story about his guardian as he had told Reggie, and concluding by the recital of the fact that he had recognised Rankin in a motor-car, had called on him at his house nearby, and had accosted him in the road.

Tony Dell listened attentively.

"You say that this Mr. Rankin is living here under an assumed name?" he asked. "What name is that?"

"James Startlefield," replied the author. "His house is almost next door to you."

Tony Dell laid down his cigar and stared.

"No!" he said. "I won't have that! Startlefield is not Rankin. I've known the man a good long while, and have been in many a deal with him."

He shook his head very decisively, and showed plainly that he had no faith whatever in the truth of Samson Skewes' discovery.

"Come now, my boy!" he said to the author in quite a kind way. "Isn't your imagination a bit overheated? I'm not doubting your story at all; but you author chaps—and I can tell from your film stories that you really have an author's nature—often get a knack of mixing up what is unreal with what is real. I suppose you can't help it. A tale comes alive to you, or it isn't worth telling."

"I don't follow," said Skewes.

"Well, I knew a bit of a writer once," explained Dell, "only he didn't touch our line. He went in for six shilling sentimental novels. He used to believe his own stories so completely when he had finished them—that he was sometimes afraid to publish a book because he was so sure it was all true."

"Now that's what you've done, friend Skewes," he went on. "Once you were cheated by a man called Rankin, and the first fellow you meet who looks prosperous and bears a resemblance to him is your Mr. Rankin, with a ready-made explanation, in his riches, of your old problem of what became of your money."

"But I am sure—" began Skewes.

"Besides," added Dell, "I've known Startlefield for some years. I came here to Mitcham through him. He told me about this place to let, and wanted me to rent it. We've had a bit of a fall out over the deal, because, instead of renting, I bought, and upset some little plan of his for making money. We've quarrelled some, as old friends will do. But there is no mystery about him. He's been James Startlefield, of Cannon Street and Mitcham, for a dozen years to my knowledge. His cheque for five figures would be taken anywhere in the City."

"But I am sure that he is my guardian," persisted Skewes. "He used to come to Birmingham very frequently to see me."

Dell uttered a little gasp.

"Birmingham!" he repeated. "Did you live in Birmingham?"

"Yes." But first of all I was in Newcastle, where my father made his money. He died thirteen years ago, when I was about nine. And Rankin was his partner, and became my guardian."

Tony Dell didn't notice this explanation. He was thinking hard.

"You said Birmingham! Well, that's queer—that's very queer!"

Then he asked abruptly:

"How did your Mr. Rankin dress?"

"Always the same way," replied Skewes—"in very shabby black. He seemed mean and miserly to me."

Dell jumped from his seat.

"That's got it!" he cried. "Now I'll tell you something. Mr. Startlefield, my neighbour, always dresses like a rather stylish country squire. He favours Norfolk coats, gaiters, velvet corduroys, brilliant shades of green and brown. I have known him many years, as I have told you, and I always admired his bold taste in dress."

"Well, now, here's the thing that puzzles me. About three years ago I was in Birmingham, and suddenly ran bang into Startlefield. But he was dressed differently from usual. Indeed, I doubt if a second-hand clothes-dealer would have given half-a-crown for his whole rig-out."

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"I nodded and passed on. The next week I met him again, in a terribly stylish cut of garments of the abrupt gigantic check description. I referred to having seen him in Birmingham."

"Oh, no!" he said. "I have been at Nice for a fortnight, and only got back yesterday."

"And did you believe him?" inquired Samson Skewes.

"I didn't trouble one way or the other," said Dell, pushing the cigar-box across the table.

"But the point is this," he went on. "If I was mistaken in the recognition, you might be also. My experience confirms your story, but it doesn't prove that Startlefield is Rankin. It only proves that two separate men may look very much like each other. Why, my dear man, I have an uncle who is alive at the present moment who was almost the image of the late Lord Roberts. The amount of cheering he got if he went for a motor-drive used to make the poor old boy blush till he got used to it."

"But mine wasn't a mistake," said Samson Skewes firmly. "That man is my guardian, Benjamin Rankin."

"Excuse me, sir," put in Reggie to Mr. Dell, "but weren't you a little doubtful yourself about Startlefield that time he denied being in Birmingham?"

"Why do you ask, boy?"

"I thought you seemed so when you told the story."

Dell laughed.

"Well, I'll tell you this much," he admitted. "When Startlefield assured me that he had been at Nice instead of Birmingham, I did him the credit of writing him down the frankest liar I had ever met in my life!"

Just at that moment the millionaire's secretary brought in a card. Dell opened his eyes wide and chuckled.

"Show him right in," he said.

A moment later the caller was shown in. He turned out to be James Startlefield himself.

"I called," he said, speaking as he entered, "to tell you that I was wrong, Tony. I'll sell you the orchard after all. I—"

Here his eyes suddenly rested on Skewes and Reggie.

"What are they doing here?" he asked.

"Two of my staff," said Dell.

"Your staff!" repeated Startlefield, looking suspicious. "Oh, well, I'm afraid I interrupt."

"Not a bit," said Dell. "You were saying that you would sell the orchard, after all. Come, that's better! We used to be good chums once, Jim. I can't think what has made us such bad neighbours. The price—"

"There's my price," said Startlefield, putting a piece of paper on the table. "And as you are busy now I'll call in another time to discuss it."

"No, no!" said Tony. "Let's settle it up now. You're willing to sell, and I'm willing to buy. I don't mind paying a bit extra to secure a good neighbourly feeling."

Reggie suddenly noticed that Samson Skewes was looking feverishly through an ancient weather-beaten pocket-case. Just at this moment he found a paper.

"Your offer," went on Tony Dell, reaching out his hand toward the document Startlefield had brought—"your offer—"

"I'll take the offer," broke in Skewes as he grabbed the paper. "I saw that the writing was very similar to that of a poor man I once knew, called Rankin, now timekeeper in a factory."

He put the paper side by side with the one he had produced from his pocket. The writing was similar.

But Startlefield was prepared. Taking a monocle from his pocket, he fixed it in his eye, and stared at Skewes.

"Is this young man insane?" he asked Mr. Dell.

"He has had a lot of trouble, I believe," replied Dell off-handedly. "Now, my price for the orchard—"

"Won't you send these clerks away first?" persisted Startlefield.

"You two go away," said Dell to Reggie and the author.

"I have business with Mr. Rankin."

The visitor dropped his monocle, and went white.

"Rankin!" he said. "My name is—"

"Of course," said Dell. "I'm always making silly mistakes. Where ever did I get the name Rankin? Ah!" He pointed to Reggie. "You were telling me about someone of that name, weren't you?"

"Your other clerk addressed me as Rankin just now," said the caller.

He put an emphasis on the word "clerk" for some reason. "Ah, that was it! I know I had heard the name somewhere. But let's get to business."

"Not to-day," retorted Startlefield—"not to-day."

And he bounced out of the room.

(Another long instalment of this splendid new serial story next Wednesday. Order your copy early.)

A BEAUTY GIFT EVERY WOMAN WILL PRIZE.

SENSATIONAL SUCCESS OF THE NEW "ASTINE" VANISHING CREAM.

A Beautiful Complexion, White Throat, Hands & Arms for All.

SEND FOR YOUR BEAUTY OUTFIT FREE.

The sensation of the Season among women has been the introduction of the new "Astine" Toilet Cream, which, whilst creating beauty almost immediately on application, vanishes from sight as soon as it comes into contact with the skin.

Leaders of Society, most famous for their beauty, popular Actresses, as well as thousands of beautiful women in ordinary walks of life, have expressed their enthusiastic approval of this almost marvellous toilet cream.

And it may be stated at once that any lady who desires complexion beauty, who realises the pleasure of possessing a white throat, hands, or arms, need not any longer remain in doubt as to what this preparation is, for the Proprietors have decided to send 10,000 supplies free of cost to the public.



Photo] [See on p.]

MISS ELISE CRAVEN, one of the most charming of British artistes, advises all to use "Astine" Vanishing Cream. You may obtain a test supply free of cost.

at all, there blooms in the complexion a pink-and-white colouring, a fresh, healthy appearance that is the pride of every sensitive woman.

"Astine" Vanishing Cream is a true tonic food to the skin. Lightly applied according to the instructions given, every little cell of the skin takes into itself the refreshing cream, and immediately stimulating nerves and millions of tiny little blood vessels to healthy action. Complexions, hands, etc., which have for years worried their owners, become in a few days soft, smooth, and comely. The rough skin disappears, the seamy lines are obliterated, the coarse red tints give place to that creamy whiteness which is so universally admired.

It is impossible in this space to mention the great number of those who have endorsed the beauty-creating qualities of "Astine" Vanishing Cream.

The world's most famous and beautiful actresses have accorded a wonderful welcome to the new "Astine" Vanishing Cream.

Miss Elise Craven, the youthful and charming dancer, says: "I think 'Astine' Vanishing Cream delightful."

Miss Phyllis Bedells, the English Pavlova, says: "I have thoroughly tested 'Astine' Vanishing Cream. It makes the skin beautifully white and fresh."

Miss Yvonne Arnaud, of "The Girl in the Taxi" fame, says: "Your Cream is excellent; I want to use it always."

Miss Ellaline Terriss says: "I consider the Cream very excellent."

Miss Elsie Janis repeats the same opinion.

Miss Ethel Levey, the "Queen of Revue" praises "Astine" Vanishing Cream in the same cordial terms.

Why not test "Astine" Vanishing Cream for yourself to-day free?

GAIN BEAUTY THIS WAY FREE.

If you desire complexion beauty, if you are troubled with

Crows' feet,

Lines round the mouth,

Blackheads,

—send for your free supply of "Astine" Vanishing Cream. You may at once in your own home commence a delightful beauty course.

The gift sent you is indeed a three-fold one, for you will receive:

1. A generous trial supply of the new "Astine" Vanishing Cream, the wonderful toilet discovery which, whilst creating complexion beauty, and giving to the arms, throat, and hands an alabaster-like whiteness, immediately vanishes on use.

2. A dainty tablet of "Astine" Toilet Soap, a delightful emollient preparation, which cleanses the skin, and may be used on the most delicate complexion without fear of causing roughness.

3. A specially-written illustrated Pamphlet, comprising complete Rules for Beauty Drill, the following of which will assure to any woman, no matter how troubled she

may now be with her complexion, an added charm and fascination. "Astine" Vanishing Cream has entirely surpassed the old fat-laden products. It is a delicately-perfumed, grease-free product, which the daintiest of ladies will appreciate.



Photo] [Dover St. Studios.]

MISS YVONNE ARNAUD, the delightful musical comedy actress, gives her testimony that proves that you should send for your free supply of "Astine" Vanishing Cream.

no matter how troubled she may now be with her complexion, an added charm and fascination.

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Send for your Free Supply, filling in, posting the form below. Apply "Astine" Vanishing Cream night and morning to the skin, according to the directions given, and you will enjoy a beauty course that might in the ordinary way cost you two or three guineas.

Once you have proved to your own delight and satisfaction the marvellous difference even the first application of "Astine" Vanishing Cream makes to the complexion and the skin generally, you will find that you can obtain further supplies from all Chemists at 1s. and 2s. 6d., or direct, post free, on remittance, from Edwards' "Harlene" Company, 20-26, Lamb's Conduit Street, London, W.C.

To procure your Free Supply, send the form below, together with 2d. stamps to cover cost of postage and packing.

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To EDWARDS' HARLENE CO.,

20-26, Lamb's Conduit Street, London, W.C.

Dear Sirs,—Please send me a Free supply of the new "Astine" Vanishing Cream, together with Sample of "Astine" Toilet Soap, and the course of beauty lessons. I enclose 2d. stamps for postage and packing.

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GEM, March 11th, 1916.

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THIS WEEK'S CHAT

Whom to Write to — — — — —
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For Next Wednesday:

"BY LUCK AND PLUCK!"

By Martin Clifford.

The fine, long, complete story which is due for next Wednesday is in every respect one of the best. It tells in Martin Clifford's most graphic style of the tenant of High Moor House, a rascally naturalised German, who refuses shelter to the four Fourth-Formers from Study No. 6 when they are caught in a storm, with the result that our friends Blake, D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby all have to go to the sanatorium as a consequence of their wetting. Their chums are naturally indignant, and vow dire vengeance on the surly Hun. Kerruish leads one avenging band, but his little army is forced to retire discomfited. Figgins & Co. pay a visit by themselves, and have a share in the exciting events which follow. But it is to the Terrible Three and Talbot that the credit of seeing through the nefarious designs of Herr Schultz, and the still greater credit of making a really important capture, fall. In very trying circumstances they show the splendid British stuff that is in them, and they win through.

"BY LUCK AND PLUCK!"

A GENUINE TREAT!

During the last few weeks several readers have written me to suggest a monthly threepenny "Gem and Magnet" Library, on the lines of the "Boys' Friend" Threepenny Library. They are evidently not satisfied with an occasional Greyfriars or St. Jim's story in the latter series. The suggestion is quite a good one from some points of view; but there is no chance of its being carried out at present, simply because, with the threatened shortage of paper, so important an addition to my family of journals cannot be managed. The best I can do for my readers is to give them a St. Jim's or Greyfriars story in the "Boys' Friend" Library as often as possible, and that I am doing. The current batch of four of these most popular publications includes a ripping yarn, entitled

"RIVALS AND CHUMS!"

Mr. Frank Richards is the author, a fact which is enough in itself to guarantee that the story is a really great one; and although I know that my chums, who put the good old "Gem" first in their affections, would prefer a Martin Clifford book, I give them credit for judgment too good to allow of their missing this treat, just as I know that when the next St. Jim's threepenny book comes along the staunchest of Magnetites will recognise it as something that he can afford to let slip past him.

BUY IT TO-DAY.

I want you one and all to buy "Rivals and Chums" to-day. You may miss it altogether if you fail to do so. But that is not all I want. I told you last week something about the shortage of paper, which is the result of the Government's action in cutting down imports of the pulp from which the paper is made. Preaching economy is one thing—quite an easy thing, of course. Practising is another matter, and a far more difficult one. We have simply got to practise it, and my business just now is to arrange so that my share of the enforced economy does not take the form of stopping one paper entirely so that the rest of my lot may have enough to live on. I do not want this to happen. But it might be unavoidable in certain circumstances.

You can help me in one way, and in one way only. That is by ordering in advance. I don't mean by saying to your newsagent: "I shall want next week's number, too." That will not help either him or me much. Give a standing order for the papers to be delivered to you or kept for you every week until further notice. Now I have always maintained that no editor in the world has more enthusiastic and loyal readers than I have. I want you to prove me right by doing what I ask, and so helping to keep afloat the whole of my little fleet of journals. Keep the flag flying, boys and girls—that's the motto for us!

ABOUT OUR NOTICES.

I am going a trifle outside our ordinary rules this week, and I am inserting a few notices from readers who are anxious to obtain back numbers of our journals. Will other readers please note that this does not mean that I have any intention of opening a Sale and Exchange column? I shall not insert any notice on behalf of readers who want to sell back numbers. These should keep their eyes open for the notices of buyers. The one reason why I am making this departure is that it seems to me rather hard lines on a keen reader wanting numbers with which others are quite willing to part that he should not be able to get them, and advertising for them elsewhere, apart from the question of expense, might not bring them after all.

NOTICES.

The readers whose names and addresses are given below would be glad to receive back numbers of the companion papers, and more particularly of the "Gem" and "Magnet":

Gunner A. Horsnall, 76953, 55th Battery R.F.A., 128th Brigade, 18th Division, B.E.F., France.

Private S. G. Halben, 10614 "B" Coy., 9th Battalion Essex Regt., B.E.F., France. (Our friend Halben would also be very grateful for the gift of a mouth-organ.)

Seaman G. Poppy, No. 7 Mess, H.M.S. Edinburgh Castle, c/o G.P.O., London.

Private F. Fiveash, 35285, 18th Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers, "C" Coy., Camp 20, Hut 37, Kinnel Park, near Rhyl.

Drummer H. Wate, 2763, 2/7th Battalion Middlesex Regt., Citadel Barracks, Cairo, Egypt. This reader would like some reader to send him the "Gem" regularly each week after reading it, and would be glad of the last few back numbers.

Lance-Corporal A. F. Smith, 1556, "E" Coy. 1/6 Hants Regt., Akbar Barracks, Agra, India.

Laurence Murphy, C.C., has formed a district branch of "Chuckles" Club in Liverpool, and would be glad to hear from members wishing to join. Address: 142, Stanley Road, Kirkdale, Liverpool.

J. T. Booth, Dormans, Formby, Lincs, is in need of Nos. 336 to 341 (both inclusive) of the "Gem," and Nos. 715 to 720 (both inclusive) of the "Boys' Friend." Will any reader who has them to dispose of write to him?

F. Sunderland, 31, Farmer Street, Heaton Norris, Stockport, would be glad to have back numbers of the "Gem" earlier than 410, to send to his uncle, serving in France. He pledges his word of honour, as a member of the "B. B.,"

(Continued on page iii of cover.)

NOTICES—continued.

that he wants them for this purpose only, and is not trying to secure them cheaply for himself.

Will the reader at Bounds Green, who lately asked for particulars as to where cigarette-cards could be bought apply to E. S. Eddleston, 2, Holme Slack Lane, Deepdale, Preston, Lancs?

Will any reader having Nos. 1 to 300 of the "Gem" for sale write to H. Sommer, 61, Maryland's Road, Paddington, W.?

R. Quarendon, 15, Tantallon Road, Balham, S.W., who is secretary to the Heather F.C., would be glad to hear of any football clubs (average age not over sixteen) willing to fix up matches with his club, either at Balham or away.

H. Pearson, Box 1046, Durban, South Africa, would like to correspond with some members of the "Chuckles" Club in the homeland.

B. A. Woodward, 1526, 25 Mess, H.M.S. Ganges, R.N. Barracks, Shotley, Harwich, would be glad to correspond with readers of the "Gem."

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Jack G. (Kilkenny).—And I think Lowther is, but you may be right!

"Freckles."—Can't you induce mother to read one? Tell her I think it is not quite fair to condemn the stories without doing so, and that I should be glad if she would, as I am sure she does not mean to be unfair.

C. H. (Berkshire).—I cannot understand the sort of idiot who thinks we shall take the trouble to invent replies by the hundred. He ought to see our day's pile of letters! Sorry, but I can't help you with your serial. No copy of the "Gem" in which Talbot made his first appearance is available. Mr. Clifford has been the author from the first. No photos to send. Cannot recall having heard of "Cast up by the Sea." Would have written direct, but you say you want a reply in the paper, to convince the doubters, so here you are!

F. C. (Sunderland).—Your photo is too small for the purpose. Will return it if you send address. Sorry! Should have liked to use it.

S. E. (Winton).—First to Sixth, with some Forms subdivided into Upper and Lower, and the Shell coming in between the Upper Fourth and the Fifth.

W. H. (St. Helens).—Yes, write when you like. If the King followed the ordinary course as to surnames, his would be Wettin—that of his grandfather, the Prince Consort. The surname of Queen Victoria's father was Guelph.

"Ye Ken."—You are one of those who appear to take a lot of interest in minor characters. But it is impossible for any writer to keep so many characters going. These come into a story, and then subside into obscurity.

N. G. McD. (Leicester).—We had a good many readers in the Dardanelles, but they have all changed their addresses now.

Miriam H. A. (Johannesburg, South Africa).—We could not run the puzzle-pictures on lines that would enable Colonial readers to compete. Will see what can be done about a special competition when more time is available.

W. L. (Earl's Court).—(1) No, I cannot obtain such a plan for you. (2) The character mentioned is not at St. Jim's. I don't think you ought to grouse about your disappointment in the matter of the prize. Try to believe that the judge dealt fairly. Your paragraph is ingenious; but we cannot print a lot of these things, and since we printed one they have come in by scores.

L. N. (Cape Town).—I do not contemplate—at present, anyway—a change in the size and style of the "Boys' Friend." When a paper has reached the age of twenty-one, one does not wish to make drastic alterations in it. As to the "Herald," I am afraid arguments based on the price charged overseas cannot be considered as strong, and in spite of our loyal and numerous Colonial following, the very great majority of our readers live in the United Kingdom.

"Mosso."—The 3d. book mentioned is out of print. Yes, the volume-numbering is due to an error. It does not really matter much. Those who bind their copies will find twenty-five make a convenient volume. Three books come out in the "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library every month, and the editorial responsibility is divided—see? I was in at the birth of both the "Gem" and "Magnet," and have never left them.

"Fatty."—The reason why the "Herald" was given precedence over "Tom Merry's Weekly" has been explained many times. It received more votes. Don't let little things like a St. Jim's defeat worry you. Tom Merry & Co. don't worry. They only make up their minds to do better next time.

"Three Loyal Gemites" (Droxford).—A 3d. book dealing with St. Jim's will appear in due course. Some people say Tom Merry is too much in the limelight. Anyway, he is never very long out of it, is he?

H. P. (Durban).—Unfortunately, I cannot control in any way the supply of the papers in the Colonies. Everything possible is done to get the agents concerned to deal with the matter properly. Thanks for getting new readers!

"Splinter."—I do not think your complaint justified, for I fail to see anything misty about the front cover illustrations. You say it seems to be made up of a number of small dots—a bit dotty, in short! But I cannot see it.

"A Hampstead Reader."—To give the names and addresses of the slanderers might be held an incitement to a breach of the peace. Anyway, I cannot do it. As regards the other query, it is not the correct thing to give information of the sort. If stories or articles are unsigned, the readers must take it that writers prefer to remain anonymous.

"An Interested Actress."—Of course everybody knows all actresses are not "as old as the hills." You are only seventeen now, and I don't suppose it will take you more than thirty years or so to reach twenty-seven! Thanks for suggestion! I am not sure that it is workable. We do not care for too much of the sentimental element. But we'll see.

Lily G. (Cardiff).—Characters imaginary. It takes all sorts to make a world, you know, and I suppose the slanderers come in with wasps and hornets and stinging-nettles. Not that they sting as much. But one cannot easily see a use for these things, yet doubtless they have their uses.

W. A. (Liverpool).—Try some paper which has a sale and exchange column. The "Gem" has not.

"A True 'Un" (Birmingham).—Glad to hear your father allowed himself to be converted by the reading of a story or two. Thanks for good work done in getting new readers!

"A Girl Reader" (Llandudno).—The Shell is higher than the Fourth.

C. H. S. (Colchester).—There are plenty of football competitions already, and we do not care for them.

D. B. (Sutton Coldfield).—Your brother is right. Tragic news, is it not? The St. Jim's colours are red and white stripes.

F. B. (Loughborough).—Can't you persuade the musical genius next door that immediate enlistment is his game? Tell him the Army pines for him. Another Jack, Sam, and Pete story in book form will appear some time before long.

E. A. H. (Yarmouth).—The first number of the "Gem" was not a St. Jim's story at all. Tom Merry came on the scene three or four weeks later. I think either Manners or Lowther could beat D'Arcy. Hope you won't miss your promised tip.

"Two Constant Readers" (Montreal).—Sorry, but it's quite impossible to keep the "Herald" competitions open long enough for Colonial readers.

A. H. and E. L. (Toronto).—See reply above. Afraid Mr. Clifford has not time for "Boys' Friend" stories. What's the matter with Jimmy Silver? Drawing fair.

Rifleman E. Holmes. I don't think it would answer to combine the "Herald" and "Tom Merry's Weekly" in our penny papers. Thanks for suggestion, however.

F. G. (Weymouth).—We have no bound volumes of the "Gem" for sale at all.

A. G. H. P. (Weymouth).—I am sorry your letter should have got mislaid, and have gone so long without an answer. There is no way known to me of bringing about what you wanted—an immediate and substantial increase of height. There are exercises which will sometimes work a slight change, but it is of no use to hold out hopes that they will do it quickly.

"A Staunch Backer-Up" (Burton-on-Trent).—Most of the characters you name are no longer at St. Jim's. I am afraid you will never manage to get anything like a complete list of the boys there. After all, what do those who play no part in the stories matter?

J. B. (Annandale, N.S.W.).—Tom Merry is just a trifle ahead of Gordon Gay as a boxer.

B. H. Holles (Edinburgh House, Hooper Street, Cambridge) wrote on November 10th to inform me that he had started an Anti-Gem League in Cambridge. I have been waiting ever since in dreadful suspense; but as I am still alive, and nothing very terrible has happened to me, I am now beginning to breathe freely again and stop shivering. By the way, it seems rather a mistake for our friend Holles not to have learned to spell "Edinburgh" before he invented his address. But I should not be at all surprised to discover that the name he has signed belongs to someone else!

"Australian" (Boulder City).—You are right. Long before your letter reached me I had received hundreds of letters telling me what my readers thought about Malpas. But I am glad to know the opinion of my chums down under even on so unimportant a subject as poor Malpas.

"Two Sydney Gemites."—I am sorry that I cannot insert your notice. The Correspondence Exchange is closed, and to make exceptions, even in cases such as yours, where we should really like to do so, would entail dissatisfaction.

Your Editor

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

NOT QUITE = (EQUAL) TO ANYTHING.

A schoolboy who could construe Græc.

To Homer thought his talent —

But when poor Billy had

Commenced the "Iliad,"

An utter failure was the s—

—Sent in by D. J. Collins, Dublin.

A SURE SIGN.

"What makes you think that Johnnie will be a great politician when he grows up?" asked Mrs. Jones of her husband.

"I'll tell you," said Mr. Jones proudly. "Our Johnnie can say more things that sound well and mean nothing at all than any other kid I know." —Sent in by W. Johnson, Bradford, Yorks.

SHE KNEW THEM.

"My good man," said the kind old lady, stepping before cell No. 41144, "what are you in prison for?"

"Robbing the guests in a hotel, mum!"

"Umph! Were you the proprietor or the head waiter?" —Sent in by Miss Trixie Lloyd, Guildford.

"SUIT" ABLE.

Secondhand Clothes Dealer (to assistant): "We can't mark this suit 'Fashionable,' it's much too shabby!"

Assistant: "No; but we might mark it 'Very Much Worn,' sir!" —Sent in by L. W. Offord, Brighton.

THE AVENGER.

"I want to have a tooth pulled," said the small boy with the steely-grey eye, "and I want gas, please."

The dentist shook his head.

"You are too young to have gas, my little man. Besides, I am sure you aren't afraid of being hurt."

"It's not that," said the boy; "but I'm afraid I sha'n't be able to prevent myself from squealing."

"Well, that won't matter, my boy. I sha'n't mind that in the least," said the dentist.

"No; but I shall. Just look out of the window."

The dentist did so, and was surprised to see a group of grinning youngsters.

"They're all the kids I've fought and whacked," explained the boy, "and they're waiting to hear me scream." —Sent in by T. Beavan, Tottenham, N.

WHAT HE WANTED TO KNOW.

William, like many another patriot, had joined the Army. He had not yet, however, learnt the meaning of strict military discipline, and although he wore the King's khaki, he fancied he was just as much his own master as when he wore civilian clothes.

When he was in camp for the first time, he thought it would be rather dignified to ignore rules; so when "Lights out" was sounded, he insisted on his comrades leaving the light burning.

"Now then, there, put that light out!" shouted an officer on inspection duty.

"H'm!" exclaimed Wilful William. "And pray who are you to dictate thus?"

"I'm the officer of the day!" came the sharp retort.

"Then what the dickens are you prowling about in the night time for?" asked William, in an injured tone. —Sent in by H. G. Dickie, Glasgow.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

"Mother," said the college student, who had just brought his chum home for the holidays, "permit me to introduce to you Mr. Specknoodle."

The old lady, a little hard of hearing, placed her hand to her ear.

"I'm sorry, George," she said, "but I didn't quite catch your friend's name. You will have to speak a little louder. I'm afraid."

"I say, mother," shouted George, "I want to introduce to you friend Mr. Specknoodle!"

"I'm sorry, George, really; but Mr.—er—er—what did you say his name is?"

"Mr. Specknoodle!" George yelled.

The old lady shook her head sadly.

"I'm sorry, George," she murmured, "but I'm afraid it's no use. It sounds just like 'Specknoodle' to me." —Sent in by Alan Gray, Harrogate.

NOT UP TO EXPECTATIONS.

Farmer (whose son fought in the Dardanelles, discussing the abandonment of the peninsula with his wife): "What do you say, my dear? Don't you think they have done the right thing?"

Wife: "All I can say is that I'm awfully disappointed in our Jack." —Sent in by P. Macdonald, Inverness.

THE LATEST VICTIM.

Mary had a little ring,

'Twas given her by Joe.

And everywhere that Mary went

That ring was sure to go.

She took the ring with her one day

When she went out to tea,

Where she might show it to the girls,

Who numbered twenty-three.

And when the girls all saw that ring,

They made a great ado.

Exclaiming with one voice: "Has it

At last got round to you?"

—Sent in by Miss Annie Fletcher, Burton-on-Trent.

THE SPECIMEN.

Great was the excitement in a certain small town. The local ladies had decided to hold an exhibition of woman's work, with a view to providing a treat for the poor children of the parish out of the entrance fees.

Whilst the committee were busily engaged in arranging their exhibits to the best advantage in the parish hall, there came a timid knock at the outer door. When the door was opened, a strange-looking object entered.

"It—or, rather, he—was a man. His face was a mass of scratches, his hair stood out round his head like tufty grass, his collar was dangling loosely behind, and his clothes were little better than rags.

"P-please, I've come!" he said simply.

"But—but," stammered the honorary secretary, "the local ladies have decided to hold an exhibition of women's work only!"

"That's all right, then," said the man. "I'm a specimen!" —Sent in by Miss Annie Wigley, Sheffield.

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.

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Look out for YOUR Prize Storyette in next week's GEM or BOYS' FRIEND.