

IN SPITE OF ALL!

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



TROUBLOUS TIMES FOR THE TERRIBLE THREE!

(A Screamingly Funny Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale in this issue.)

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



A VILLAGE MELODRAMA.

THE SCENE:

Modest Hamlet, shady dell,
Blacksmith's shop, and village well;
Rustic background—barley crop—
Painted on a canvas drop.

THE CHARACTERS:

City Villain, dark and mean;
Pretty June, the village queen;
Honest Jack, whom she prefers;
And some moss-backed villagers.

THE PLOT:

Pretty June is lured away
By an artifice one day;
Spurns the villain—naught avails;
Villain binds her to the rails.

THE CLIMAX:

Jack has saved her, out of breath,
Drags her from the jaws of death.
Villain gets a hefty buff—
Tumbles down the cardboard cliff.

THE FINALE:

To the village they go back,
Pretty June and Honest Jack.
"Bless you, children!" says her pop.
Let the big green curtain drop.

—Sent in by G. Bird, Bath.

TRUTH WILL OUT.

The little, mild, bald man had settled down in the corner of the railway-carriage to read, but feeling drowsy after a trying day at the office, he fell asleep.

On the hat-rack above was a ferocious crab in a bucket, placed there by a small boy who had been with his parents for a day by the sea.

Pre-ently the crab managed to escape from the bucket, and reaching the edge of the rack, it fell, and alighted on the little, mild man's shoulder; then it grabbed the sleeper's ear to steady itself.

All the passengers waited expectantly for further developments, but all they heard was:

"Let go, Sarah, my dear! I tell you I've been at the office all the evening!"—Sent in by C. Hill, Bethnal Green, E.

THE CERTAIN CURE.

"Good gracious!" sighed the magistrate desperately, as he wiped the sweat from his brow. He had been vainly attempting to make the defaulting Chinese in the dock understand the amount of his fine. Again he tried.

"O-N-E P-O-U-N-D!" he shouted, voicing the letters slowly, the better to hammer their meaning into the imperturbable mask of the yellow man.

"No no savee," retorted the wrongdoer, in a gentle voice, for about the sixth time; and he smiled slightly.

"Let me spake to the hay-then, your worship," broke in the rich brogue of the Irish constable, Mick.

"Very well," said the magistrate; and the Oriental bent suavely forward to listen.

"You yellow-faced tea-caddie," roared Mick in his ear, "you're fined five pounds!"

"Heap big lie!" came the swift retort. "It's only one!"—Sent in by W. Handsecomb, Ampthill, Beds.

HUMOUR AT THE FRONT.

There is at least one choice humorist "Somewhere in France." The following copy of a notice posted in a dug-out he formerly occupied has been brought home by a wounded soldier now in this country:

"IN ONE OF THE CHOICEST LOCALITIES IN NORTHERN FRANCE. TO BE LET.

(Only three minutes from German trenches.) An attractive and well-built bug-out, containing one reception-room, kitchen, bed-room, and up-to-date 'funk-hole,' 4ft. by 6ft. All modern inconveniences, including gas and water. This desirable residence stands about one foot above high-water level, and commands an excellent view of the enemy's trenches. Good shooting (snipe and duck).—Particulars of the late tenant, Base Hospital.

—Sent in by W. McNally, Glenluce.

BEATEN ONLY BY WOLFF'S.

Fishy: "Say, Cherry!"

Cherry: "Hallo! What do you want?"

Fishy: "Guess my pater is doing some biz! He says they are using three gallons of ink a day in his office now."

Cherry: "Why, they are saving more ink than that daily at the 'Magnet' office by not dotting the 'i's'!"—Sent in by R. Beckerleg, Penzance.

TOO MANY.

Everything in the dear old village seemed the same to Jones, who had returned after the absence of four years. The old church, the village pump, the ducks on the green, the old men smoking their pipes while the wives gossiped—it was so restful after the rush and bustle of the city. Suddenly he missed something.

"Where's Hodge's windmill?" he asked a native, in surprise. "I can only see one mill, and there used to be two."

The native gazed thoughtfully round, as if to verify the statement, then he said slowly:

"There bain't enough wind for two of them, so they pulled one down!"—Sent in by H. Martin, Leigh, Lancs.

THE CATCH.

Old Farmer Haggis was paying his first visit to London from the wilds of his native Scotland. The expense of living in the great city, however, sorely tried his heart.

On the day previous to that fixed for his return home he was wandering somewhat disconsolately about the streets, when suddenly he came to a large building with the following notice outside:

"PICTURE GALLERY. ADMISSION FREE."

"Hoots!" cried Haggis. "Here's the very place for me!"

He marched up to the entrance, his previous opinion of London much altered; but he had hardly crossed the threshold when the stalwart door-keeper pounced vigorously upon the umbrella he was carrying.

"Here, you can't take that in there! You must give it to me!" said the attendant.

Farmer Haggis turned and fled from the building, with a groan of despair.

"Ah," he said sadly, "I thoct there was some catch when the notice said, 'Admission Free'!"—Sent in by C. Gerber, Manchester.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

THE BOYS' FRIEND, 1d.,

Published every Monday,

in order to give more of our readers a chance of winning one of our useful Money Prizes.

If you know a really funny joke, or a short, interesting paragraph, send it along (on a post-card) before you forget it, and address it to: The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND and GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, E.C.

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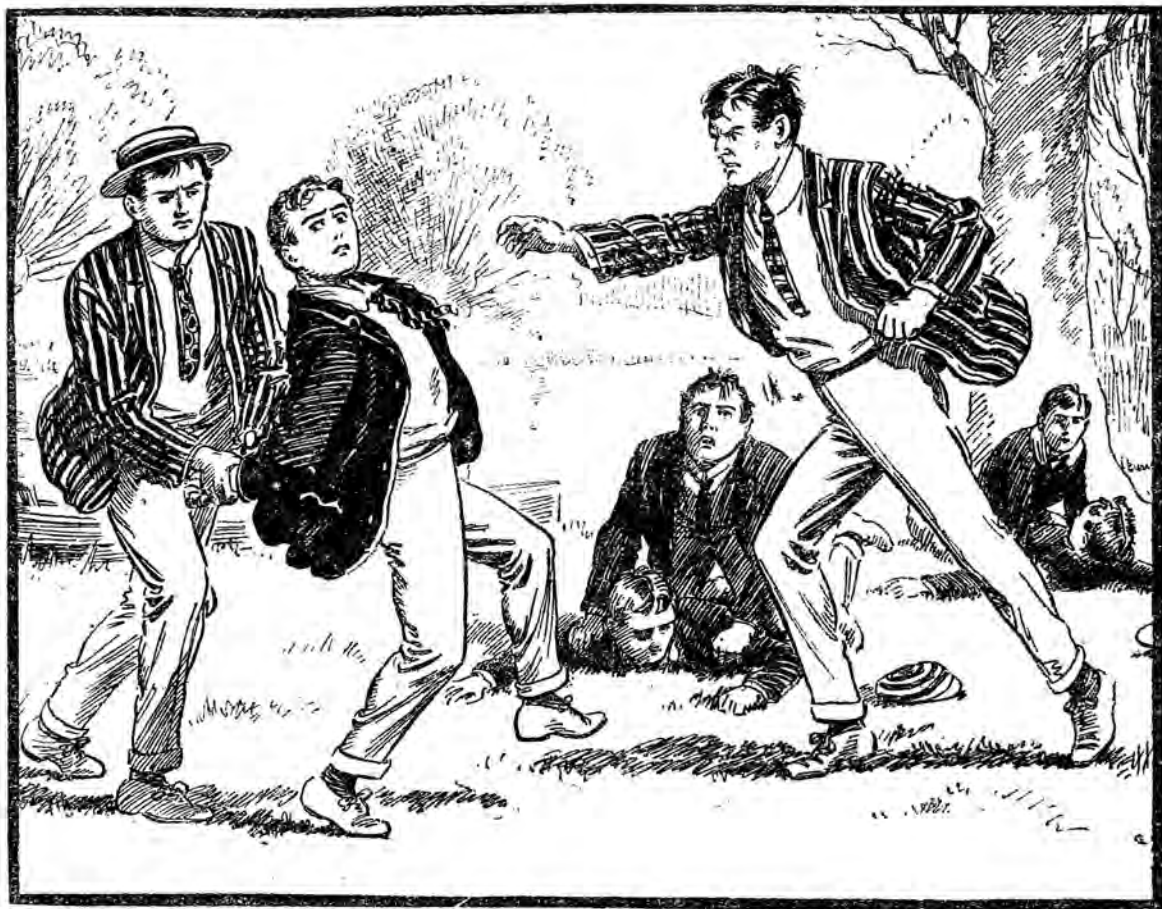


COMPLETE STORIES
FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

IN SPITE OF ALL!

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

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Tom Merry defended himself well, but he was driven back; and St. Leger, with a grin, ran behind him, and caught his arms. "Fair play, you cads!" Tom panted. (See Chapter 5.)

CHAPTER 1.

The Third Form Disapprove.

"COLLAR him!"
"Now then, young Manners——"
"Got him!"

The Terrible Three of the Shell halted as they heard the excited voices under the elms. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were sauntering across the quad to the gates when that outburst of voices fell upon their ears.

There was a crowd of fags under the trees. As a rule, the Terrible Three did not bother their heads much about the vagaries of the heroes of the Third Form; but the mention of "young Manners" drew their attention.

For "young Manners" was Manners minor, the young

brother of Manners of the Shell, and Manners major was naturally interested at once.

"Your blessed minor in trouble again, Manners!" said Monty Lowther. "Looks as if the Third are scalping him."

"The young ass!" said Manners, frowning. "I thought he was getting on better in the Third."

"Let's look into it," suggested Tom Merry.

Manners nodded, and the three Shell fellows strode upon the scene. A dozen fags of the Third, headed by D'Arcy minor, were gathered round Reggie Manners. Reggie had evidently been run down and cornered in that somewhat secluded spot. His cap was gone, his hair was untidy, and his face was flushed and angry. He stood with his back against a tree, with his fists clenched and raised. Round him the fags were gathered in a ring, with threatening looks.

Next Wednesday,

"TRUE TO HIMSELF!" AND "INTO THE UNKNOWN!"

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"Clear off, confound you!" Manners minor was saying, as Tom Merry & Co. came up. "What the dickens are you up to?"

"Collar him!" yelled Jameson.

"Mop him up!"

"Give him the frog's-march!"

Wally D'Arcy raised a commanding hand.

"Hold on!" he said.

"Look here—" began Hobbs hotly.

"Shut up, Hobbs! Hold on, I say! I'm going to talk to the young bouncer like a Dutch uncle," said Wally.

"Now, Manners minor—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Manners minor.

"Do you want a thick ear?" bawled Wally.

"Go and eat coke!"

Wally contained himself with an effort. Wally was the cock of the walk in the Third Form, and it was extremely derogatory to the dignity of that high position for a new boy to tell him to go and eat coke. But D'Arcy minor was unusually patient on this occasion.

"Look here, young 'un," he said, "I'm giving you a chance because you're a new kid here. Your major in the Shell ain't a bad sort, either, and he'd be down on you, too, if he knew your little games."

"Bother my major!" growled Reggie.

The Terrible Three stopped and looked on, unnoticed by the excited fags for the moment. Manners was frowning.

"Bother your major as much as you like," said Jameson, "but you can't bother us!"

"No fear! Scrag him!"

"Order, I tell you!" exclaimed Wally. "I haven't finished yet."

"You never have finished!" grumbled Curly Gibson. "Blessed if I ever knew such a chap for jaw! What is there to jaw about, anyway?"

"Shut up, Curly!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Now, look here, young Manners. I'm going to talk to you," pursued Wally. "In the first place, Cutts of the Fifth is a rank rotter, and the less you have to do with him the better."

"That's my business," said Reggie.

"In the second place," continued Wally, unheeding, "the Fifth have no right to fag anybody in the school—not even the kids in the Second Form. As for fagging the Third, it's pure cheek! We have to fag for the Sixth—but the Fifth are nobody. Any chap found fagging for the Fifth gets a Form-licking."

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You," continued Wally, pointing his forefinger accusingly at Manners minor—"you have been fagging for Cutts!"

Reggie grunted.

"Cutts of the Fifth can't make you fag for him," said Wally. "You're doing it of your own accord. If Cutts tried to make you fag against your will, all the Third would stand by you. But you're doing it of your own accord."

"It's my business!"

"Not quite," said Wally cheerfully. "Now, as you're a new kid at St. Jim's, I'll tell you the kind of fellow Cutts is."

"You needn't trouble!" growled Reggie. "I don't want to hear."

"I'll tell you, all the same. Cutts is a regular black-guard!" said Wally impressively. "He's too jolly cute to be found out, but that's what he is. If the Head or Mr. Railton knew about him he'd be sacked."

"Rot!" said Reggie.

"If you fag for Cutts you'll be got into all sorts of things—such as fetching in smokes for him, and taking messages to shady rotters," said Wally. "It might mean the sack for yourself in the long run."

"Rats!"

"Hark at him!" said Jameson, exasperated. "How long are you going to stand his rotter cheek, D'Arcy minor?"

"Not much longer!" said Wally savagely. "I'm giving the cheeky young cad a chance because my major asked me to, and because he's a new silly kid. But he's got to toe the line. Now, young Manners—"

"Are you going to let me pass?" said Reggie sullenly.

"Not yet. You've got to give up fagging for Cutts."

"Well, I won't!"

"By order of the Form!" said Wally impressively.

"Blow the Form!"

"Look here, that's enough!" roared Jameson. "Collar the young cad!"

The fags made a rush.

"Hands off!" yelled Reggie Manners. "I tell you—Oh—ah—ow!"

The new boy in the Third struggled desperately in the THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 432.

grasp of the Third Form crowd. The Third-Formers were tied up, and it was not surprising. Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another dubiously.

"Bump him!" shouted Jameson.

Bump! Bump!

"Yah! Leggo!"

"I—I can't stand this!" muttered Manners. "I've got to chip in. He's my minor. The pater asked me to look after him."

"He's asked for it!" growled Monty Lowther.

"I've got to interfere!" said Manners doggedly.

Bump!

"Yow-ow-woop!"

"Scrag him, the cheeky cad!"

"Give him the frog's-march!"

"Here, what—Keep off, you Shell cad! Oh, my hat!"

There was a roar of indignation as the Terrible Three rushed in and hurled the fags right and left. With a rush, they reached the unfortunate Reggie, and dragged him out of the hands of his persecutors.

"Cheeky rotters!" yelled Wally. "Go for 'em! Give 'em socks!"

The Terrible Three retreated, Manners dragging his gasping minor along with him. The enraged Third rushed after them, too excited to care for the fact that they were tackling three of the best fighting-men of the Middle School. But just then, fortunately, Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, appeared in sight, and there was a general scamper to escape. Wally & Co. disappeared round the gym, and on the further side they halted, breathless.

"We'll scrag those cheeky rotters for interfering!" gasped Wally. "And as for that rat Manners minor, we'll make the Third Form too hot to hold him!"

To which the Third gave a hearty assent.

CHAPTER 2.

A Little Run for Reggie.

"LET me go!"

Manners minor panted out the words savagely and breathlessly. His brother was still holding his arm.

It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's that afternoon, and the Terrible Three had intended to spend it on the river. But they were not thinking about the river just now. Tom Merry and Lowther easily understood Manners' anxiety for his minor, and they were ready to back him up by wasting time on Reggie. But Reggie did not appreciate their kindness in the least, and he was not in the least grateful, to all appearance, for his timely rescue. His only idea seemed to be to get away as quickly as possible.

"Let me go, Harry!" he repeated angrily. "I've got no time to waste."

Manners did not let go. He kept a tight grip on his brother's arm till they had passed through the gates into the road.

"Look here, what's the little game?" demanded Reggie.

"I'm not going out with you, if that's what you mean."

"Do you think we want your company, you young worm?" growled Manners.

"Well, I know I don't want yours. Let go my arm!"

"I'll let you go," said Manners. "But don't cut off! If you do, I'll take you by the collar!"

Reggie smoothed out his hair, and set his collar straight, and scowled at the chums of the Shell.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded sullenly.

"I want to speak to you," said Manners. "I heard what D'Arcy minor was saying. He gave you a good description of Cutts of the Fifth. I didn't know you were fagging for that blackguard."

"I'm not exactly fagging for him," said Reggie. "Cutts is very decent to me, and he's taken me up. Why shouldn't he?"

"Fifth-Form chaps don't pal with fags in the Third," said Manners.

"Well, if Cutts chooses to, that's his business."

"And mine, too," said Manners grimly. "You're not going to have anything to do with the biggest blackguard at St. Jim's, Reggie."

"I shall do as I please!"

"Have you been in Cutts' study lately?"

"Yes, I have."

"Smoking, I suppose?"

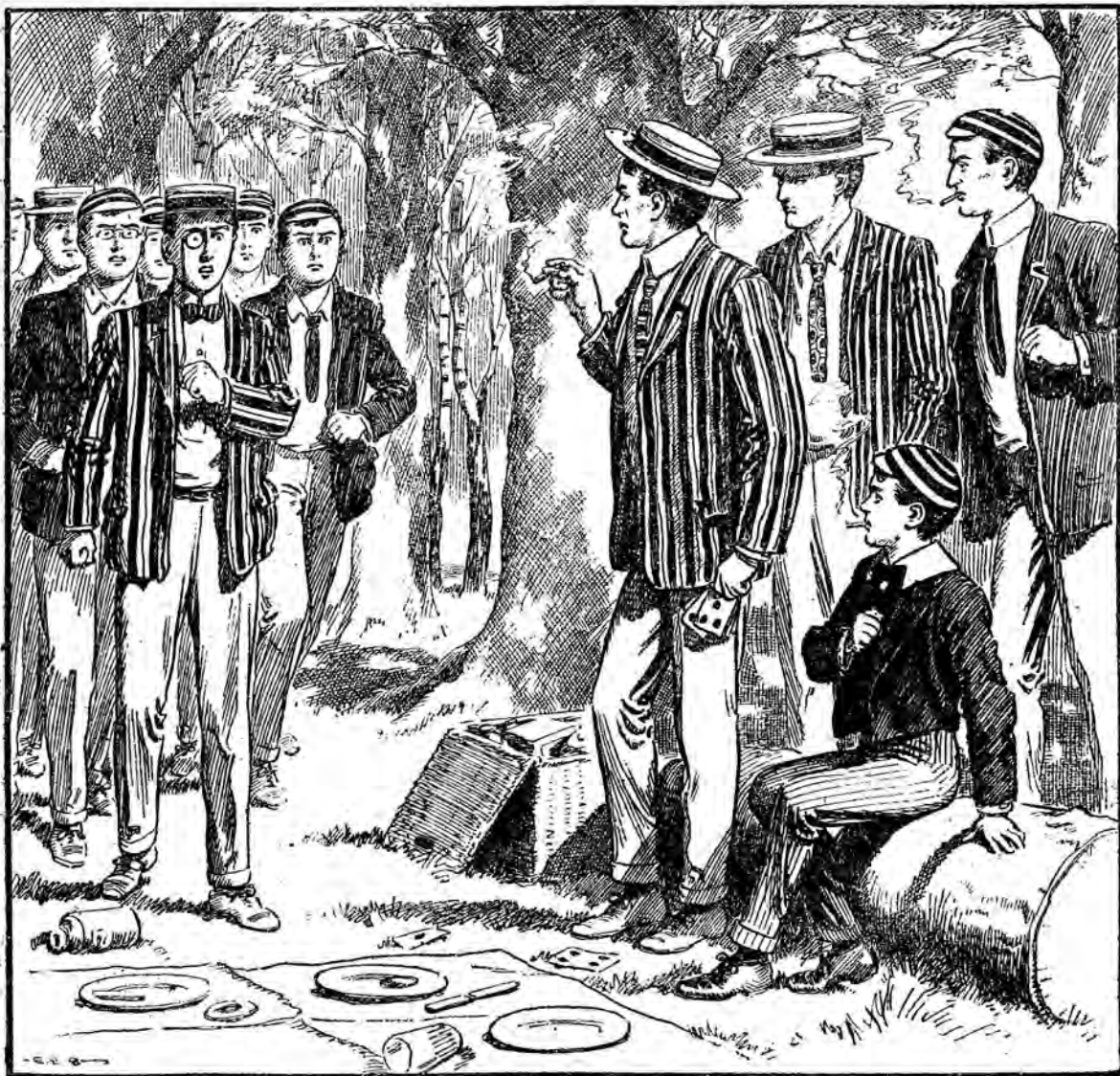
"Don't ask questions, and I won't tell you any whoppers," said Reggie defiantly.

"Have you been playing cards with him?"

"Find out!"

Manners clenched his hand.

"You're asking for a licking, you young rascal!" he said, between his teeth. "You better be careful."



The juniors advanced through the trees, to the grassy spot. St. Leger and Gilmore had risen to their feet, but Reggie Manners was still seated upon a log, with a cigarette in his mouth. (See Chapter 7.)

"Can't you mind your own business?" said Reggie savagely. "I know the pater asked you to look after me. I didn't ask him to. I don't want you to meddle with me. Let me go my own way, can't you?"

"No," said Manners, "I can't. Not the way you want to go. Even if I didn't care myself, the pater would say it was my fault, when you got where you're going—and that's to the dogs. You can't have anything to do with Cutts, Reggie. Have a little sense, kid. What do you think a Fifth-Form senior wants with a fag of the Third?"

"Cutts is friendly to me."

"That means that he sends you on messages, and gets you to bring things into the school for him, and gives you cigarettes to smoke."

Reggie grunted, and did not reply.

"Look here, Reggie, won't you take my advice? I'm your elder brother. Don't have anything to do with Cutts."

"Oh, rot!"

"You see that it makes all your Form down on you."

"Not all," sneered Reggie. "Piggott fags for Cutts, too, when he gets a chance; but Cutts likes me better."

"Piggott's a smoky little cad! I suppose you don't want to be a fellow like Piggott."

"Piggott's my pal," said Reggie sullenly.

"Precious pal for you to have! D'Arcy minor was willing to pal with you, if you'd have let him."

"Hang D'Arcy minor. He's too jolly good for me," sneered Reggie.

Manners' brow set grimly.

"You mean that you're determined to be a young black-guard, and that you won't let your friends stop you!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, don't jaw!" said Reggie. "I had a good time at home, and I'm going to have a good time here. I don't want any sermons, I know that. If you've finished, I'll cut off!"

"Where are you going?"

"That's my affair!"

Manners' eyes gleamed.

"Is it Cutts this afternoon?" he demanded.

"Well, if you want to know, it is. Now I'm going." Reggie gave a yell as his major grasped his collar. "Let me go, you beast!"

"You're going out with Cutts this afternoon?" said Manners.

"Yes, hang you!"

"Wouldn't you rather come on the river with us?"

"No, I wouldn't!"

Manners looked at his chums, who were looking on in silence.

"Do you fellows mind if I bring this young rotter in the boat?" he asked.

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"TRUE TO HIMSELF!"

"Bring him, certainly!" said Tom Merry, at once.
 "We shall be honoured," said Monty Lowther. "The society of Manners minor would be an attraction anywhere."
 "Come along, then, Reggie!"
 "I'm not coming with you!" yelled Reggie furiously.
 "Yes, you are," said Manners coolly. "Will you fellows ran the boat out? I'll bring Reggie!"
 "Right-ho!"

Tom Merry and Lowther cut down to the boat-house, and pushed out the boat from the raft. Manners followed them more slowly, marching Reggie along by the collar. The fag struggled fiercely, but in vain.

"Will you let me go?" muttered Reggie, between his teeth.

"No!"

"You rotten bully!"

Manners shrugged his shoulders.

"Cutts has promised to take me out for the afternoon," said Reggie shrilly. "I'm not going to miss that to please you."

"You may be glad afterwards you've missed it," said Manners. "I know what Cutts' excursions are like. Anyway, you're not going."

"I will go!"

"You won't!"

"I'll kick you!" howled Reggie.

Manners marched him on, the fag still resisting. As they came on the raft, Reggie began to kick savagely. But he had time for only one kick. Manners grasped him with both hands, and tossed him bodily into the boat. Then he jumped in.

Tom Merry shoved off.

Reggie Manners sat up dazedly in the bottom of the boat. The boat was gliding away into the stream, with an ever-widening stretch of water between it and the landing-raft. Tom Merry and Lowther sat to the oars, and Manners took the lines. Reggie stared at the three Shell fellows with suppressed fury. But his escape was cut off, and he could only sit and scowl.

CHAPTER 3.

Gerald Cutts Wakes Up the Wrong Passengers.

"CRICKET! or the wivah?"
 Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form, propounded that query.
 The swell of St. Jim's stood on the steps of the School House, surveying the old quadrangle through his eyeglass.

Blake and Herries and Digby were there. The four chums of Study No. 6 looked very cheerful.

"Coming down to cricket?" asked Reilly.

"Upon the whole, deah boy, we are givin' the ewicket wathah a miss this aftahnoon," said D'Arcy. "But you go and pile in. We don't need so much pwactice as you do, you know."

The Irish junior laughed, and went cheerily on his way. There was a crowd of fellows on the cricket-field, where Piggins of the New House was making mighty hits.

"I think we'll have a boat out," said Jack Blake. "Those Shell bounders have gone on the river. It's ripping on the Ryll to-day. Hallo! Looking for somebody, Cutts?"

Cutts of the Fifth had stepped out of the School House, and was looking round the quad with a puzzled expression.

The dandy of the Fifth turned to Blake as he spoke.

"Yes," he said. "Have you seen that new fag—Manners minor?"

Blake nodded.

"Yes, I've seen him."

"Where?" asked Cutts.

"In the tuckshop."

"Thanks!"

Cutts of the Fifth crossed the quad towards the little shop kept by Dame Taggles. Blake smiled serenely. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not smile. He turned his eyeglass severely upon Jack Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I wegard that as vewy injudicious," he said reprovingly.

"Hallo! What's biting you?" asked Blake cheerily.

"Nothin' is bitin' me, you ass! But I wegard your answahin' Cutts as vewy injudicious. You know perfectly well that Cutts is a wottah."

"Exactly!"

"The less a silly kid in the Third has to do with Cutts the bettah, Blake. Mannahs would be vewy wowied if he knew that Cutts was tukin' up with his minah."

"Shouldn't wonder," agreed Blake.

"Weggie will not learn any good from that feahful boundah."

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"Not likely, I should say."

"Then why," said Arthur Augustus severely—"why have you diwected Cutts where to find the young ass?"

"Fathead!" said Blake. "I told him I'd seen Reggie in the tuckshop. So I did—yesterday afternoon. But Reggie isn't likely to have stayed there till now."

Herries and Digby chuckled, and Arthur Augustus condescended to smile.

"Oh, I see! You were pullin' Cutts' leg?"

"Has that just dawned on your mighty brain?" asked Blake pleasantly. "You ought really to be in the House of Lords, Gussy! A brain like yours is wasted here. Your proper place is the House of Lords, or the Foreign Office, or Colney Hatch, or some place of that kind!"

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake! Bai Jove, heah comes Cutts, and he looks wathah watty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gerald Cutts came striding back towards the House, looking decidedly rattly. He stopped at the steps to bestow a glare upon Blake.

"You told me Manners minor was in the tuckshop!" he snapped.

"I told you I'd seen him there," said Blake calmly.

"He's not there now."

"Go hon!"

"Do you know where he is?" exclaimed Cutts sharply.

"Yes."

"Where, then?"

"Somewhere in England," said Blake, with an air of consideration. "I'm certain of that much. In fact, I'm pretty certain I could narrow it down, and say that he's somewhere in Sussex."

Herries and Digby and D'Arcy chuckled in chorus, and Cutts scowled.

"I suppose that's meant for humour?" said Cutts, with a glitter in his eyes.

Blake nodded.

"Yes. We're rather humorous chaps in Study No. 6, you know."

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard it as quite funmay, Cutts!"

"Well, you can take that for your humour!" said the Fifth-Former, suddenly grasping Blake by the collar and boxing his ears.

"Yaroooh!" roared Blake. "Why, you rotten cad—Rescue!"

"Wush the wottah, deah boys!" yelled Arthur Augustus excitedly.

Blake was struggling in Cutts' grasp. Cutts would have let him go as soon as he had boxed his ears. But Blake, like the Tartar in the story, was not to be let go. He held on to Cutts. Herries and Digby and D'Arcy piled in at once, and the dandy of the Fifth found himself grasped by four pairs of hands.

The tables were turned then.

Cutts of the Fifth was a powerful fellow, but he was no match for four sturdy juniors. He went down on the steps in a sitting position with a bump.

"You young cads, leggo!" yelled Cutts.

"Not till I've boxed your ears," said Blake coolly. "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander!"

"Yaas, wathah! Box his beastly yahs, deah boy!"

Smack, smack, smack, smack!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What the merry thunder!" exclaimed Talbot of the Shell, who was coming out with his bat. "What are you kids up to?"

"Boxin' Cutts' yahs, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me go!" shrieked Cutts, struggling furiously. "I'll smash you! I'll—I'll—"

He hurled off the laughing juniors and scrambled to his feet. His fists were clenched, and his eyes were gleaming. He looked for a moment as if he would hurl himself upon Study No. 6 again. But the Fourth-Formers lined up to receive him, and Talbot lined up with them.

Cutts changed his mind. He ground his teeth, and went back into the House.

Blake chuckled gleefully.

"The mighty get a fall sometimes," he remarked. "Cutts ought to know by this time that he can't box the ears of Study No. 6."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Talbot laughed and went his way to the cricket-field. Study No. 6, greatly elated by their victory over Cutts, strolled down to the gates. Meanwhile, Cutts of the Fifth repaired to his study, where two Fifth-Formers, Gilmore and St. Leger, were waiting for him. They stared at Gerald Cutts' flustered look as he came in.

"Hallo! Been rowing?" asked St. Leger.

"It's nothing! But that young fool Manners minor has vanished somewhere," growled Cutts.

St. Leger yawned.

"Well, we sha'n't miss him much," he remarked. "Blessed if I like the idea of taking a fag along, anyway!"

"There are fags and fags," remarked Gilmore. "This precious kid gets no end of tin from his pater!"

"It isn't only that," said Cutts. "The young rascal's useful. He's got the makings of a precious rogue in him, as a matter of fact; and he knows how to hold his tongue, too. He's ten times more useful than Piggott. That young rascal has squeezed money out of me, after fetching in cigars and things. Manners minor doesn't play tricks like that."

"He'll learn!" grinned Gilmore.

"Well, I suppose we're not going to wait for him," said St. Leger impatiently.

"Of course not!" snapped Cutts. "He may have gone to the island, too—may have mistaken. Anyway, we're going now. One of you chaps can carry the basket, as that fag isn't here."

Gilmore picked up a lunch-basket from the table, and the chums of the Fifth quitted the study. The little excursion in which Manners minor was to have joined was to take place without the assistance of the young rascal of the Third.

CHAPTER 4

Not a Pleasant Afternoon!

"CHEER up, kid!" said Tom Merry kindly.

"Put on a grin!" said Monty Lowther encouragingly.

Reggie responded with a scowl.

The boat was gliding up the river, with Tom and Lowther pulling at the oars. Manners steered, with a grim, glum face. The pleasure of the afternoon was gone for Manners of the Shell. As for Reggie, he was in a savage temper, and he did not seek to conceal it.

The shining river, the deep dark woods on the banks, the sunny blue sky might have cheered up the gloomiest misanthrope; but Reggie Manners refused to be cheered. He was thinking of the little party on the island, to which he had been graciously asked by the seniors. Reggie was proud of being taken up by so prominent and fashionable a person as Cutts of the Fifth.

Cutts was much admired by many fellows in the school. He was wealthy; he was always expensively dressed; he was reckless and hardy. He was a blackguard of the first water, too; but that, apparently, did not lower him in Reggie's estimation.

A good many fellows in the School House knew, or suspected, the kind of fellow Cutts really was; but cunning and good luck had hitherto saved him from discovery by the masters. His coolness and nerve never forsook him, and they had saved him in many an emergency which would have been too much for any other fellow. Reggie regarded him with awe and admiration. His reckless disregard for all the rules of the school added to Reggie's admiration; and the fag was immensely proud of being taken up by the dandy of the Fifth.

Reggie was the spoiled child of a fond father, and he had never been given to reflecting on the consequences of his actions. He had fallen into bad ways at home, and Mr. Manners had hoped to cut him off from evil associates by sending him to St. Jim's, where his elder brother could keep a watchful eye on him. Manners major had a thankless task.

Reggie certainly did not thank him; and as Reggie's letters home generally contained some complaint of his brother, his father did not thank him either. Whether he cared for Reggie, or neglected him, Manners was likely to get more kicks than halfpence, so to speak. It was only his strong sense of duty that led him to trouble himself about the reckless and wilful fag at all.

Any other fag in the Third Form would have been flattered and pleased by being taken out for the afternoon by Tom Merry & Co. Not so with Reggie.

He regarded himself as an injured party, and he thought incessantly of the treat he was missing.

The scowl did not leave his face for a moment, and Tom Merry and Lowther gave up the attempt to cheer him.

They pulled steadily up the river, leaving the fag to scowl in the stern in grim silence as much as he pleased.

It was not till they came in sight of the green, wooded island in the river that Reggie Manners broke his sullen silence.

His eyes gleamed a little as he looked at the island. That was the spot where Cutts' picnic was to take place, followed by cigarettes and cards. Reggie was wondering what his friends in the Fifth thought of his absence. Cutts would think him ungrateful; might refuse to have anything more to do with him. The thought of that made Reggie furious.

"There's the island!" he said abruptly.

Tom Merry glanced over his shoulder.

"Yes," he said. "Like to land there, Reggie?"

Tom was willing to do anything he could to gratify Manners minor, though the sulky fag's scowling was spoiling the afternoon for him. The Terrible Three had shouldered Manners' young brother as a common burden, as it were.

"Yes," said Reggie, his face lighting up. "I've never been on the island!"

"Let's land there, then," said Tom.

"I don't mind!" said Lowther.

"We were going to pull up the river," said Manners, with a grunt.

"Well, if you'd rather—" said Tom hesitatingly.

"Oh, I don't care twopence; but I don't want that sulky little beast to spoil your afternoon!"

"My dear chap," said Monty Lowther, "don't worry about that. The sight of Reggie's smiling face is happiness enough."

Reggie grinned; he could not help it.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Manners peevishly. "Look here, I don't really want to plant that little beast on you chaps. I know it's rough on you!"

"Bow-wow!" said Tom cheerily.

"I've got to keep him away from that blackguard Cutts, but there's no reason why you should be bothered with him," said Manners.

"Tain't a bother—it's a giddy pleasure!" said Lowther.

"I shall remember Reggie's face next time I want to make up as a demon in a pantomime."

"Oh, cheese it!" growled Reggie.

"To hear is to obey!" said Lowther gracefully. "I generally wring a fag's neck when he tells me to cheese it. But never mind!"

"You can wring his neck if you like," grunted Manners.

Lowther did not avail himself of this kind permission.

"Steer for the island, old chap!" said Tom Merry. "We'll have a run ashore, as Reggie hasn't been on the island yet."

"Oh, all right!"

The boat approached the island, a curious grin lurking on Reggie's face. The bows plunged into the rushes, under thick, overhanging trees. Tom Merry jumped ashore, followed by his companions, and the boat was pulled further in.

"Well, here we are Reggie!" said Lowther.

"I'd like a walk about the island," said Reggie. "I suppose we can stay here for a bit?"

"As long as you like, kid!" said Tom Merry, glad to see that the fag was apparently recovering from his ill-humour.

Reggie did not trouble to thank him. He strolled off into the trees and disappeared from sight. Tom sat down on the gunwale of the boat.

"Cheer up, Manners, old fellow!" he remarked. "Reggie's all right. He won't spend this afternoon with Cutts, at any rate!"

Manners made a restless movement.

"I can't always be watching him," he muttered; "and Cutts will do him harm—you fellows know that. Blessed if I haven't a jolly good mind to speak to the Housemaster about it!"

The captain of the Shell looked very grave.

"You can't do that, Manners," he said. "You can't prove anything against Cutts—he's too jolly deep for that. We know a good deal about him, but it would only be our word against his, and he'd lie like a Prussian. Besides, you can't sneak, even about Cutts!"

"I know I can't!" said Manners irritably. "But I'd rather do it than let young Reggie be turned into a vicious little beast like Piggott. What would my pater say if he knew?"

Tom was silent. It was a difficult position. To look after and guide an obstinate and self-willed young rascal, who was determined not to be looked after, or guided, was not an easy task.

"And the young rotter's got something up his sleeve now," continued Manners. "I saw that by the way he was grinning. I suppose he's thinking of dodging us on this island."

"He can't get away!"

"I suppose he can't! But he's got something up his sleeve in stopping us here—I know that! He doesn't want to trot over the island!"

"You're getting suspicious in your old age," said Monty Lowther, wagging a warning finger at Manners.

"Oh, rats!" said Manners.

Tom Merry looked towards the trees several times, as the Shell fellows waited. But Manners minor did not reappear.

"Hallo!" said Monty Lowther suddenly. "We're going to have visitors!"

He pointed to the river.

A boat was pulling from the direction of the distant school.

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Cutts and Gilmore were rowing, and St. Leger was at the tiller. Manners' brow contracted.

"They're coming to the island!" he exclaimed.

"Looks like it!"

"Reggie's party!" said Manners bitterly. "That's why he wanted to stop at the island. He knew they were coming here!"

"My hat!" murmured Tom. "What a deep little beast!" He sprang up. "We'll clear off before they get here, then. Reggie! Reggie!"

"You can shout!" cried Manners. "He won't come!"

"Reggie! Reggie!" shouted Tom Merry and Lowther.

But there was no answer from Reggie. Their shouts could be heard over the whole island, and Manners minor certainly must have heard them; but he gave no sign. The Terrible Three looked at one another.

It was pretty clear that the young rascal had hidden himself in the trees, and did not intend to show up until his friends of the Fifth had arrived.

"We'll find him," said Tom curtly.

"Can't, before those rotters get here!" said Manners.

"We'll try, anyway! Come on!"

Cutts & Co. were very near the island now. The chums of the Shell plunged into the trees in search of Reggie. It was easy enough for scouts like the Terrible Three to pick up tracks in the thick grass, but they had very little time. They were still searching in the wood when they heard the Fifth-Formers' boat bump on the reedy shore, and Cutts' voice came to their ears.

"Hallo! Somebody here already!"

"Some fags," said St. Leger's voice. "That's Tom Merry's own boat!"

"We'll soon clear them off, then!" growled Cutts.

"They're not stopping here with us!"

"No fear! No fags wanted!"

There was a rustle in the underwoods, and Tom Merry looked round quickly. Reggie Manners was dashing down to the shore to join the Fifth-Formers there, evidently to place himself under the protection of Gerald Cutts.

"Stop him!" exclaimed Manners.

Tom Merry sprang after the fag, and caught him by the shoulder.

"Hold on, Reggie—"

"Let me go!" panted Reggie.

"Hold on, you young ass!"

Reggie hit out savagely, and Tom Merry caught the blow on his chest, and staggered back. Reggie broke away, and dashed on; but his elder brother was close upon him, and he grasped the fag by the collar.

"Now stop, you young cad, or I'll give you the licking of your life!" said Manners, between his teeth.

"Help!" shouted Reggie.

"Hallo! What's that?" It was Cutts' voice, beyond the trees.

"Cutts! Help!" yelled Reggie.

"Manners minor, by gum!" exclaimed Cutts. "Come on!"

The three Fifth-Formers burst through the trees.

CHAPTER 5.

A Fight to a Finish.

"By gad!" ejaculated Cutts.

The three seniors stared at Reggie, struggling in the grasp of his major. Tom Merry and Lowther put up their fists defensively.

Three Shell juniors against three seniors of the Fifth was a very unequal match, but the Terrible Three were not daunted. Manners glared at the cads of the Fifth.

"Clear off," he said savagely; "you're not wanted here!" Cutts burst into a laugh.

"So you're there, Reggie? You came out with this precious gang, instead of sticking to your arrangements with me—what?"

"I didn't want to come!" howled Reggie. "They made me! They chucked me into their boat, and made me come!"

"Bullying—eh?" said Cutts.

Manners' eyes blazed at him.

"My young brother doesn't want anything to do with a rotten blackguard like you!" he exclaimed fiercely.

"By gad!" said St. Leger. "Is that how you talk to the Fifth, Manners? You'd better take care!"

"It's how I'd talk to any smoking, gambling blackguard who was teaching my brother to be a cad like himself!" said Manners savagely.

Cutts laughed again. Hard words broke no bones.

"I don't want to stay with them!" shouted Reggie. "Make them let me go, Cutts, please!"

Cutts nodded. His old dislike for the Terrible Three was as keen as ever. He was not likely to allow himself to be

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defied by three juniors of the Shell, and the three juniors he disliked most of all St. Jim's.

"You can take your choice, kid," he said. "If you'd rather be with me, I'll soon put a stop to this bullying."

"You cad!" burst out Tom Merry. "It isn't bullying, and you know it. And Reggie sha'n't come with you."

"I will!" howled Reggie.

Cutts strode forward.

"Let that kid alone, Manners!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Will you let him go?"

"No, I won't!"

"Then I'll make you fast enough!" said Cutts.

He grasped Manners as he spoke. The Shell fellow struck him full in the face, and Cutts gave a howl of rage and closed with him. Tom Merry and Lowther rushed to their chum's aid at once, but they had St. Leger and Gilmore to deal with.

"Down them!" shouted Cutts.

"What-ho!" chuckled Gilmore.

The Terrible Three put up a very creditable fight. But the three big seniors were, naturally, too much for them.

The Fifth-Formers did not stand upon ceremony. They hit out fiercely, as if they were dealing with foes of their own age and size.

Tom Merry & Co. were driven back, and, though they resisted gamely, they knew they had no chance. Manners was the first down, stretched on the grass by St. Leger, with a right-hander on the chest that knocked him flying.

"Sit on him, Reggie!" said St. Leger.

Reggie hesitated a moment. Savage and resentful as he was at his brother's interference he had a quiver of conscience at taking sides against him. But he had no choice now. He could not take both sides at once, and he had thrown in his lot with the blackguards of the Fifth.

"Do you hear me?" shouted St. Leger.

"Ye-ye-yes," stammered Reggie.

And he ran forward and planted his knee on Manners' chest.

Manners looked up at him dazedly.

"Reggie!" he gasped.

"Keep still, and I won't hurt you," said Reggie.

"You young blackguard!"

"Why can't you mind your own business, then?"

Manners struggled to rise. St. Leger had gone to the help of his comrades. Lowther was down, but he had dragged Gilmore with him, and the two were struggling in the grass. Tom Merry was standing his ground against Cutts of the Fifth.

Bigger, older, and heavier as Gerald Cutts was, he did not find the captain of the Shell an easy adversary. Tom Merry was the best boxer in the Lower School, and as hard as nails from top to toe. He stood his ground well, and Cutts had already received almost as much punishment as the junior. One of Tom's eyes was closing, but Cutts' nose was swollen and streaming red. The dandy of the Fifth was attacking furiously, almost white with rage.

"Lend me a hand," panted Gilmore, unable to get rid of Monty Lowther.

St. Leger ran to his help, and dragged Lowther off, and rolled him over in the grass. Gilmore planted himself on the fallen junior, and kept him prisoner.

There was a crash in the grass. Cutts had gone down—much to his astonishment—laid on his back by a drive-right on the point of the chin.

He leaped up in a fury, and rushed at Tom Merry.

Tom defended himself well, but he was driven back; and St. Leger, with a grin, ran behind him and caught his arms. In a moment more Tom was struggling in the grasp of the two seniors.

"Fair play, you cads!" he panted.

Cutts gritted his teeth.

"Bring him to his boat," he said.

Still resisting, Tom Merry was dragged away through the bushes, and pitched into his boat. He lay there dazed and gasping.

"Now the others," grinned St. Leger.

The three seniors seized Monty Lowther together, and he was dragged to the boat and pitched in. Then they returned for Manners.

Manners was struggling furiously to rise; but he was exhausted by the combat, and Reggie's knee was planted on his chest. Reggie grinned down at him.

"N.g." he said. "You should have kept out of this. What did you want to meddle with me for?"

"Oh, you blackguardly young rotter!" panted Manners.

"Mind your own business, then!"

"Now then, all together!" said St. Leger, as the three seniors came up. "Jump off him, Reggie."

Manners was grasped by the trio, and whirled along. They rushed him down to the boat. Reggie followed more slowly. His conscience was pricking him a little.

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Darrel stood in the gap, scanning the field, but the juniors were well hidden now, and he could see nothing.
(See Chapter 12.)

CHAPTER 6. A Little Flutter.

GERALD CUTTS mopped his nose savagely. His nose was bleeding freely, and there were several bruises on Cutts' handsome face, which was not quite so handsome now.

Defeated as they had been, the chums of the Shell had given a good account of themselves, and the Fifth-Formers were not feeling any the better for the encounter. They were feeling, in fact, decidedly the worse for it.

Reggie was silent and unusually thoughtful.

He had cast in his lot with the Fifth-Formers, but he knew in his heart that he was in bad company, and that his brother had meant kindly by him. Perhaps, for the moment, the fag was sorry that he was not in the junior boat drifting down-stream. But it was too late to think of that now. The die was cast.

"Well, we've got rid of them!" said St. Leger. "Blessed if I can see that that howling fag was worth the trouble, though!"

"We couldn't have them here," said Cutts.

"No; that's so."

"I'll make Tom Merry sorry for this!" growled the dandy

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"I—I say, don't hurt him, you know," he faltered. Cutts & Co. were not likely to take much notice of that request. They whirled Manners into the air, and flung him into the boat. Tom Merry and Lowther were scrambling up, and the impact of Manners sent them sprawling again. The three seniors burst into a roar of laughter.

"Now shove 'em off!" grinned Gilmore.

The boat was pushed out into the stream.

It rocked away on the river, the Terrible Three sprawling in it, aching and dizzy. The seniors stood on the reedy bank, and shouted with laughter.

"Rather a lesson for the cheeky young scoundrels!" chuckled St. Leger. "If you come back, you young sweeps, we'll pitch you into the river next time!"

Manners staggered up, holding to the gunwale. His eyes fell on his brother standing among the Fifth-Formers. Reggie shrank a little from his glance.

"You young cad!" said Manners thickly. "You don't want me to interfere with you? Well, I won't. I'm done with you now. Go your own way."

He sank down in the stern and took the lines. His companions sat panting in the bottom of the boat. The boat drifted away down-stream on the current. The Terrible Three's afternoon out had not been a success.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"TRUE TO HIMSELF!"

of the Fifth, as he rubbed his nose again. "How do I look?"

"A bit damaged," grinned St. Leger.

"Nothing to cackle at, you dummy! Anyway, we've got rid of those meddling young cads. What are you scowling about now, young 'un?"

Reggie tried to brighten up.

"Nothing. I wasn't scowling, please, Cutts."

Cutts grunted.

"Well, got that basket unpacked," he said. "We've had trouble enough for you. Now you can make yourself useful."

Manners minor unpacked the basket, while Cutts bathed his painful nose in the river. The lunch-basket was well-supplied, and it was a very handsome spread that Reggie displayed on the grass. The fag was recovering his spirits now, too. His repentance had been only momentary. After all, why couldn't his major let him alone?

"Light the spirit-stove, and make the coffee!" said Cutts.

Reggie obeyed.

The fag was very useful to the picnickers. All being ready, the seniors sat down to their tea, and Reggie was graciously invited to join them. He was kept pretty busy waiting upon the three, but that was only to be expected. It was an honour to wait upon the great men of the Fifth.

It was a pleasant meal enough, under the shady trees, with the shining river flowing past, bright in the summer sunshine. The "blades" of the Fifth felt their good-humour return. Tea over, the three merry youths lighted cigarettes, and Cutts offered his case to Reggie.

Manners minor selected a cigarette, and lighted it, watched with grinning glances by the seniors.

"You've been at that game before, young 'un!" said St. Leger.

Reggie nodded, greatly flattered at being considered dogfish by so extremely dogfish a youth as St. Leger of the Fifth.

"I used to smoke at home," he said.

"What did your pater say to it?" asked Gilmore.

"Well, he licked me," confessed Reggie. "Not very much, though. He used to give me sermons chiefly."

"But I suppose your noble and upright brother sees that you don't get much smoking at school," said Cutts, with a sneer.

Reggie flushed.

"I don't let him interfere with me!" he exclaimed. "Only when he's a beastly bully, and I can't help it, same as today."

"Right-ho!" said Cutts heartily. "Stand up for yourself, and you can depend on me to back you up, kid. Now, then, who's got the cards?"

St. Leger produced the cards, and the three seniors began to play, Reggie watching them with envious eyes. Cutts was utterly reckless of the effect his example might have upon a precocious youth; but he did not ask Reggie to play. Perhaps he had not thought of that; or perhaps he did not think a Third-Form fag's money worth winning. But Reggie soon broke in.

"I say, aren't you going to let me take a hand?" he asked.

Cutts stared at him.

"Do you play nap?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!" said Reggie proudly.

"For nuts, I suppose?"

"No fear! Look here, I've got plenty of tin," said Reggie.

The three Fifth-Formers exchanged a glance.

"Lots of tin, what?" said Gilmore.

"Yes. My pater always sends me money when I ask for it," said Reggie. "He doesn't to my major—he expects Harry to be more careful, you see. Besides, he's fonder of me."

"Naturally," grinned Cutts. "But I don't want to win your two or three bob."

"I've got two pounds," said Reggie loftily.

"My hat! Two quids—a kid like you!"

"Yes; and if I lose it I can write to my pater for some more," said Reggie.

"And tell him how you got rid of this lot?" chuckled Gilmore.

"Oh, no! I'm too fly for that!"

"Yes, you are awfully fly," said Cutts. "Quite awfully fly. Well, you can cut in if you like—half-crown points."

"I don't mind."

"Your deal, St. Leger."

St. Leger dealt, and Reggie joined in the game. Manners minor prided himself upon being "fly," but he was not quite fly enough for the blades of the Fifth.

He proved a harder pigeon to pluck, however, than Cutts & Co. had anticipated.

The young rascal had gambled before, more than once, and he knew something about the game.

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But he was not likely to keep his end up in the long run against such old hands as Gerald Cutts & Co.

His cash passed over to them, slowly but surely, being about equally distributed among the three.

Reggie's face grew somewhat longer as his money fled, and when his last half-crown was gone he looked glum enough. He strove to appear cheerful, however; he would not have his sporting friends think he was "soft," if he could help it. Cutts gave him a curious glance as he drew back a little.

"Fed up?" he asked.

"N-no; but—but—"

"Stony?" said St. Leger, with a loud laugh.

"Yes," said Reggie flushing. "I—I can get some more money to-morrow, though. I shall write to my pater to-night."

"My hat!" said Cutts. "I'd swap paters with you, with pleasure. Look here, if you'd like to go on, I'll lend you a quid. You may win it all back."

"Oh, thank you, Cutts!"

Cutts tossed eight half-crowns across to the fag, who gathered them up excitedly. The gambling fever was in Reggie's veins now, and he would have gambled the boots off his feet if it had been possible.

"I—I say, shall I give you an I O U, Cutts?" he asked.

Cutts laughed.

"No, thanks. I don't collect I O U's from fags."

St. Leger and Gilmore looked rather curiously at their chief. As a matter of fact, the lending of the "quid" was a good-natured action on Cutts' part. In his own way, he rather liked Reggie. St. Leger and Gilmore, however, wondered what purpose he had to serve.

Reggie went on playing eagerly. The party had drawn back among the trees, so that they could not be seen from the river. They were very well aware what would be the consequences if that little game should be seen and reported at St. Jim's.

St. Leger looked up suddenly as there was the splash of an oar in the river.

"Hallo!" he said.

"All serene," said Cutts carelessly. "We can't be seen through the trees."

"It might be—"

"Only a boat passing," said Cutts.

St. Leger nodded, and they went on with the game.

But, as it happened, the boat was not passing.

CHAPTER 7.

A Return with Reinforcements.

"B AI Jovo! It's Tom Mewwy!"

"And Manners! What a set of wrecks!"

"Lowther, old chap, where did you pick up that funny face? You ought to put a photo of it in the comic column of the 'Weekly.'"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Study No. 6 grinned from their boat, into the boat that contained the Terrible Three. The chums of the Shell did not grin back. They were not feeling equal to grinning just then.

Blake's boat was crowded. Julian and Kerruish, of the Fourth, and Kangaroo, of the Shell, had joined Blake & Co. for a run up the river. Seven grinning faces looked at the hardly-used Shell fellows in the other boat.

"What's happened?" asked Blake, as the chums of the Shell did not reply. "Have the Huns landed, and have you met them on the march?"

"Not been fighting one another like naughty boys, surely?" asked Kangaroo, in a chiding tone.

"Oh, rats!" snapped Manners.

"We've been in a row," said Tom Merry, "and we got the worst of it. If you fellows feel inclined to lend a hand, we'll go back and have another scrap."

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"Certainly," said Julian at once. "Is it the Grammarians?"

"Not the Grammarians this time. St. Jim's chaps."

"Figgins & Co.?" said Blake. "Right you are! It's time we showed those New House bounders who's who, and what's what."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "If they've had the feahful cheek to lick School House chaps, you can wely on us to avenge the affwont, deah boys!"

"It's Cutts & Co.," said Lowther sourly.

Blake whistled.

"Scrapping with Fifth-Formers! My hat!"

"Bai Jove! Wathah a big handful for you kids to tackle!"

"Never mind, we'll turn the tables on them," said Kerruish. "How many were there of the rotters?"

"Three!" said Tom.

"Then there's enough of us to eat them. Where are they?"

"On the island."

"Shove your boat round then, and come on," said Herries.

"We'll mop up the island with them, and teach 'em manners."

"Hear, hear!" chimed in Digby.

"I'm not going back," said Manners. "I'm fed up."

"Bai Jove! Surely you're not funkin' a wov, Mannahs. Cheeah up, deah boy! I shall be there," said Arthur Augustus encouragingly.

Manners glared at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Fathead!" he said.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

Tom Merry looked quickly at his chum. Blake & Co. were holding the two boats together.

"Don't you want to go back, Manners?" he asked. "It's a good chance to mop up Cutts & Co., and get our own back."

"Is it young Reggie again?" asked Blake. "Cutts was looking for him just before he came out, but the kid had vanished. If you take your Uncle Jack's advice, Manners, you'll keep your young brother away from Cutts."

"Yaas, I was goin' to speak to you on that subject myself, Mannahs," said D'Arcy. "If I found my minah chummin' with Cutts, I should give him a feahful thwashiin', as an example."

Manners scowled.

"You won't find your minor chumming with him," he said. "Your minor isn't a young blackguard, and mine is. And he can chum with Cutts till they both get kicked out of St. Jim's together, for all I care. I'm done with him!"

"Is Reggie with that gang now?" asked Julian.

"Yes," growled Manners.

"What are they up to?"

"Gambling and smoking, I suppose."

"Dash it all, you ought to get him away from them, Manners!" exclaimed Julian warmly. "Young Reggie don't understand the risks he's running. Cutts would throw him over at once and leave him to fend for himself if there were any danger."

"I know he would."

"Well, then, let's go and mop up the rotters, and have the kid away from them," said Julian.

Manners shook his head.

"Serve them jolly well right to bring Kildare down on them, or the Housemaster!" growled Herries.

"And find 'em picnicking, and not a sign of a smoke or a card to be seen," said Manners. "Do you think Cutts is ass enough to be caught?"

"Well, we can catch him," said Blake. "We won't bother about any evidence. We'll condemn him on suspicion, and execute him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You can go if you like!" said Manners shortly. "I'm not going! You can put me ashore first, Tom!"

Tom looked anxiously at Manners. The Shell fellow's face was hard and gloomy. His expression showed that argument was useless.

"You don't mind us going?" asked Tom.

"You can do as you like. But I'm not going to take a hand in it. I'm done with my minor now!"

Tom took an oar and brought the boat closer to the river-bank. Manners stepped ashore, and, without a word more, tramped away along the towing-path towards the distant school. Lowther whistled softly.

"Poor old Manners!" he murmured. "No wonder he's fed up. But he'll come round, Tom, and he'll be glad we've dealt with those rotters."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Take some of our crowd aboard, Tommy," called out Blake; "we're rather full up. Then off we go!"

"Right-ho!"

Kerruish and Kangaroo and Julian jumped into the Shell fellows' boat. Then both boats pulled away swiftly up the river.

The juniors were looking forward to the "scrap" with Cutts & Co. with considerable glee.

There were nine of them in the party, considerably more than a match for the blades of the Fifth.

The Terrible Three had had little chance against the three seniors; but the odds were on the other side now.

Tom Merry's face was very grim.

He understood clearly enough how bitterly Manners was wounded by his minor's ingratitude and want of feeling, and he was inclined to give the cheerful Reggie the licking of his life. He was still more inclined to give Cutts & Co. the licking of their lives.

"Here we are!" said Julian.

The boats drew in to the island.

The bows plumped into the rushes, and the juniors swarmed ashore. There was a sharp exclamation, and Cutts' face looked through the trees. He looked startled at the sight of the nine juniors.

The dandy of the Fifth had a cigarette between his lips and a bunch of cards in his hand.

Had the new arrivals been persons whom he needed to dread, the cigarette and the cards would have disappeared as if by magic.

But Cutts was quite indifferent to the opinion of the juniors. He made no attempt at concealment.

"What the dickens do you fags want here?" he exclaimed. "We've chucked you out once. Do you want to be chucked out again?"

"No; we've come back to chuck you out!" said Lowther blandly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Go for 'em!" shouted Kangaroo.

The juniors advanced through the trees to the grassy spot where the gamblers had been seated. St. Leger and Gilmore had risen to their feet, but Reggie Manners was still seated upon a log, with a cigarette in his mouth. He stared sullenly at Tom Merry & Co. Arthur Augustus's eyeglass turned upon him with inexpressible scorn.

"You disgustin' little wotah!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"Oh, cheeso it!" growled Reggie. "What have you come here for?"

"You cheeky young boundah—"

"We've come here to fetch you away, Reggie," said Tom Merry.

Reggie scowled.

"I won't come!"

"You won't have any choice about that. You'll get into the boat, or you'll be thrown in!"

"Mind your own business!" howled Reggie. "Cutts, you won't let them take me away, will you?"

Gerald Cutts hesitated.

Nine sturdy juniors were not to be dealt with as three had been. The boat was on the other foot now. Force was on the side of Tom Merry & Co. It was a bitter pill for the dandy of the Fifth to swallow—to give in to a crowd of juniors of the Fourth Form and the Shell. But he had to get it down. St. Leger and Gilmore evidently did not intend to enter into a struggle with a crowd for the sake of the festive Reggie, and their looks told as much.

Cutts burst into an angry laugh.

"Oh, cut off!" he said. "If your father-confessor wants you, you'd better go. You kids clear off at once!"

Tom Merry did not stir.

"We're not clearing off just yet," he said.

"What do you want here?"

"We're going to punish you."

"What!" yelled Cutts.

"You're going to be ragged bald-headed for teaching that kid to smoke and gamble, and for being cads and rotters generally," said Tom. "You can take it quietly, or you can put up a fight. It's all the same to us! Collar the cads, you chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Go for 'em!" yelled Blake.

"Look here!" shouted Cutts. "I tell you— Oh, my hat—"

Cutts had no time to say more; he had to defend himself. Gilmore and St. Leger, almost white with rage, put up their hands, too. The nine juniors came on with a rush, and there was a terrific struggle under the trees.

ANSWERS

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 432.

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

CHAPTER 8.

Something Like a Licking.

GERALD CUTTS fought hard. Tom Merry and Lowther and Blake had collared him, and were grasping him, but the dandy of the Fifth put up a good fight even against the three. But he had no chance.

He was dragged down into the grass, and bumped there, and Monty Lowther planted a heavy knee on his chest.

Cutts struggled in vain under that grinding knee, and kicked out savagely, till Kangaroo stood on his legs, pinning them down.

Then he lay gasping in helpless rage.

His two companions resisted, but not so desperately. They knew that the game was up, and that the juniors meant business.

They went down, and were pinned down, gritting their teeth, but taking care not to provoke the avengers to rough measures.

Reggie Manners stood looking on, his hands clenched, and his eyes blazing. But he did not attempt to help the seniors. He was useless in that kind of a scrap. He made one movement towards the affray, and Blake hurled him aside without ceremony, and after that Reggie was simply a spectator.

"Got 'em!" said Herries. "Better lie still, St. Leger, or I shall jam your napper on the ground—like that!"

"Woop!" gasped St. Leger.

"Are you going to make any more fuss, Gilmore?" asked Julian.

"Nunno!" gasped Gilmore. "Leggo my ears, you young fend!"

"Sorry! They're handy to hold on by," said Julian politely.

"Sit tight on his chest, Dig!"

"You bet!" grinned Dig.

"Have you had enough, Cutts?"

"I'll smash you!" yelled Cutts, struggling furiously under Monty Lowther and the Cornstalk junior.

"Bai Jove! I wathah think you're the partay that's gettin' smashed, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"Let me up, you young demons—let me up, or—"

"Bang his napper on the ground, Kerraish!" said Monty Lowther. "Never mind if you hurt him!"

"I don't!" grinned Kerraish.

Bang!

"Yaroooh!"

"Have some more?" asked the Manx junior, taking a firm grip upon Cutts' ears. "I'll keep it up as long as you like."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let go!" shrieked Cutts.

"Bow-wow!"

"I'll be the death of you for this!"

Bang!

"Oh, oh, oh! Ow!"

"Anything more to say?" asked Kerraish cheerily.

"Don't mind me. I'm going to give you a bang every time, that's all. Go on!"

Gerald Cutts did not go on. His head was spinning, and he did not want any more.

Tom Merry looked down on him, with a curling lip.

"Now, you know what you've done, Cutts, and you know what you're going to get," he said. "If you make a fuss, you'll get hurt a little more. You're going to have nothing more to do with Reggie Manners. Do you understand?"

Cutts choked.

"Every time we find that that silly kid's had any dealings with you, we're going to rag you," said Tom. "Manners minor isn't worth the trouble; but Manners major is—see? Now you're going to have your lesson. Give me that cane, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus handed a cane to Tom—a light Malacca cane belonging to Cutts. Tom Merry swished it in the air.

"Turn him over!"

"Right-ho!"

Lowther and Kangaroo and Kerraish grasped Cutts, and turned him face downward in the grass, in spite of his struggles.

"What are you going to do, you young villain?" screamed Cutts.

"I'm going to flog you!" said Tom coolly.

"Wha-a-at!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 432.

"The Head would flog you if he knew the kind of rascal you were," said the captain of the Shell. "The Head doesn't know, and we can't tell him. You can consider me in the light of a temporary headmaster."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you dare to touch me!" yelled Cutts. "I'll—I'll—Yah! Oh! Yah!"

Swish!

The cane came down, with a sounding thwack.

"Huwway!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "Go it, Tom Mewwy!"

Thwack, thwack, thwack, thwack!

Cutts roared and raved and struggled. But he was held firmly, and the merciless cane lashed and lashed.

Never had the dandy of the Fifth experienced so thorough a thrashing, as well-deserved as it was thorough.

Twelve strokes were laid on by Tom Merry's strong arm; and each stroke was, as Blake remarked, a "corker."

Cutts was almost sobbing with rage when the captain of the Shell had finished.

St. Leger and Gilmore watched apprehensively. They knew only too well that their turn was coming.

Tom Merry turned to them when he had finished with their leader. Cutts lay wriggling and gasping, considerably hurt, but much more humiliated than he was hurt.

"I—I say, keep off!" gasped St. Leger. "I—I hadn't anything to do with that fag coming here. I didn't want the little beast at all."

"You've been gambling with him," said Tom.

"I—I—I—"

"Roll him over!"

"Look here!" yelled St. Leger, as he was rolled over forcibly in the grass. "If you dare to touch me with that cane, I'll—I'll—Yaroooh!"

Thwack, thwack, thwack!

"Go it, deah boy!"

"By Jove, what a carpet-beater you'd make, Tommy!" said Monty Lowther admiringly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

St. Leger roared and howled under the castigation, but he had to take it right up to the twelfth stroke. Then the captain of the Shell bestowed his attention upon Gilmore, who was looking almost sick with apprehension.

"I'll report this to the Head!" hissed Gilmore.

"Report away! The Head may find out a little more than you'd like, if you do," said Tom Merry. "But please yourself. Roll him over!"

"Look here! Yow-ow-ow—"

Thwack, thwack, thwack!

Gilmore went through it, howling like a Hun.

"Tired, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus sympathetically, as Tom Merry rested, breathing rather deeply after his labours.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Not at all! I'm ready for Reggie now."

"Look here, you interfering beast!" began Reggie, in alarm.

"Chuck him over!" said Tom.

"Yaas, the young wascal certainly ought to have a lickin', too," said Arthur Augustus. "I quite approve."

"If Gussy approves, there's nothing more to be said," remarked Lowther. "What on earth are you making a fuss about, Reggie?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Let me alone!" yelled Reggie, struggling and kicking furiously.

"You're jolly nearly as bad as these rotters!" said Tom Merry sternly. "You've cut up old Manners—a chap who was worth a dozen of you. You're a thumping young rascal, and you want a lesson! Your major won't give it to you—I'm going to give it to you. Roll him over!"

"You rotten bully!" screamed Reggie.

Thwack, thwack, thwack, thwack!

Four strokes of the cane, well laid on, made Reggie howl and shriek. Then Tom Merry tossed away the instrument of punishment.

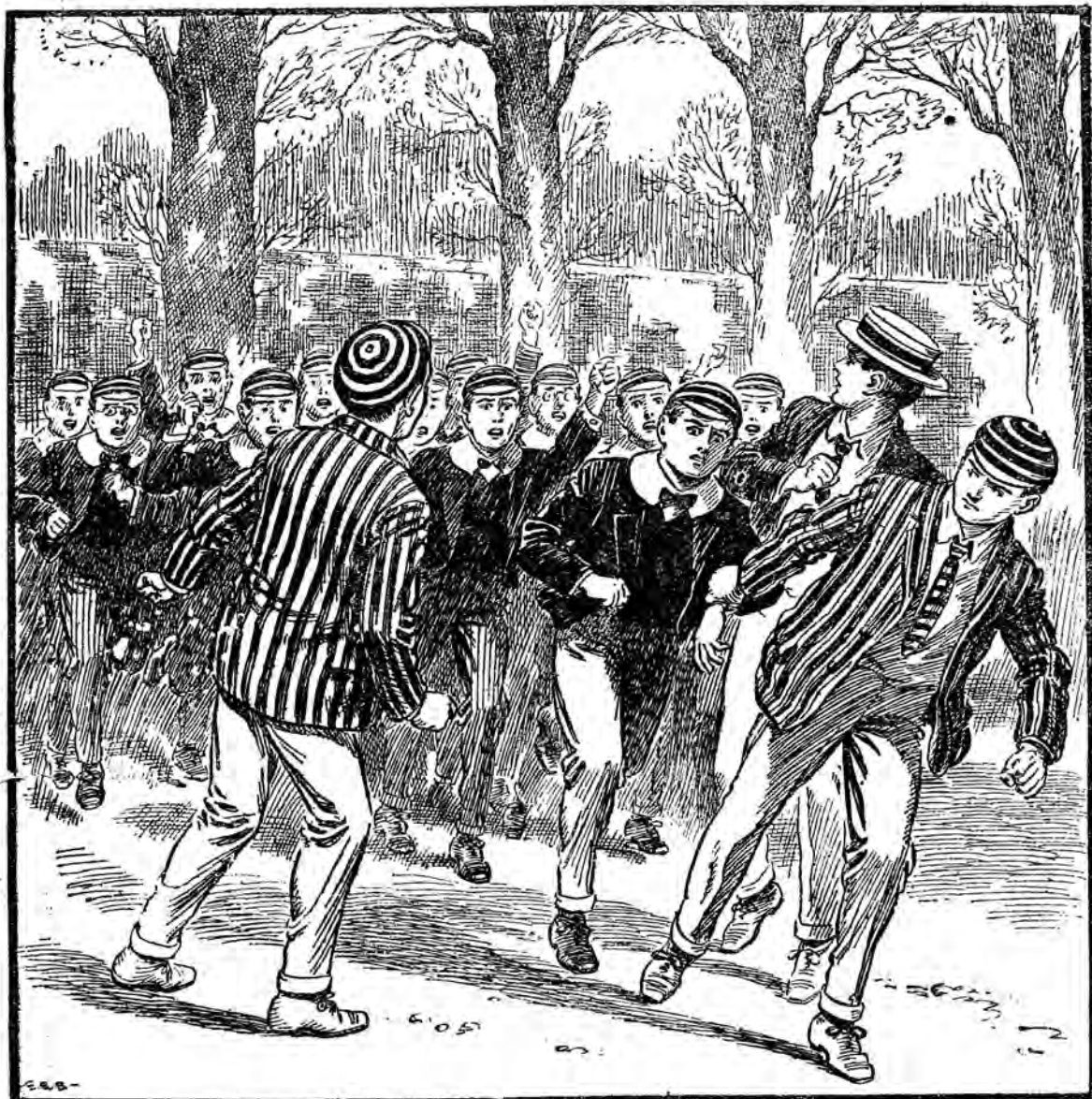
"That'll do!" he said.

"Better give him a round dozen," said Herries.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"That's enough for a beginning. He'll get more next time. Do you

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ONE PENNY.
OUT TO-DAY!**



The Terrible Three retreated, Manners dragging his gasping minor along with him. The enraged Third rushed after them, too excited to care for the fact that they were tackling three of the best fighting-men of the Middle school. (See Chapter 1.)

understand, Reggie? Manners has tried kindness with you, and it doesn't work. Now you're going to get the other thing, and we'll see whether that works."

"Yow-ow-ow!" was all Reggie replied.

"Now go into the boat."

"Yow! I won't! Yow!"

"Chuck him in!" said Tom.

Bump! Manners minor went unceremoniously into the boat.

"Now we're finished here," said Tom Merry. "You've had your lesson, Cutts. You had better keep your rotten blackguardism to yourself in the future. If you don't, you'll get some more of the same!"

The juniors returned to the boats. Gerald Cutts scowled at them blackly, but he did not venture to interfere.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the juniors pulled away. "I wathah wegard that as a good job vevy well done, deah boys!"

"Hear, hear!" said Blake.

On the island, Cutts & Co. looked at one another. Gilmore and St. Leger were mumbling with pain. Cutts was clenching and unclenching his hands, in helpless fury. The blades of the Fifth had been thrashed—by juniors! It was a terrible

humiliation for Cutts & Co., and Cutts fairly writhed at the idea of its becoming the talk of the junior common-room.

"Ow!" groaned Gilmore. "What an afternoon! Ow!"

"Yow-wow!" mumbled St. Leger. "Why couldn't you leave that beastly fag alone, Cutts? Oh, dear! Ow, ow!"

Cutts did not speak. But his looks were more expressive than the words of his disconsolate comrades.

CHAPTER 9.

Estranged!

THE dusk was falling as Tom Merry & Co. came into quadrangle at St. Jim's.

Reggie Manners came in with them.

He did not want to, but he had no choice about it.

Monty Lowther had taken his arm affectionately.

Reggie's face was dark and sullen.

It was not till the juniors were in the School House that Monty dropped his arm, and left him to his own devices.

Tom Merry and Lowther went to their study for tea. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced after Reggie, as he moved sullenly away, and hurried after him and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Weggie, deah boy—" he said mildly.
 "Oh, shut up!" said the dear boy.
 "Wouldn't you like to come to Study No. 6 for tea, Weggie?" asked the swell of St. Jim's, nobly controlling his feelings.

"No, I wouldn't," said Reggie.
 "Leave that little beast alone, and come along, Gussy!" said Blako. "No need for us to bother over the miserable little cad. We were only taking him up to please his major, and his major's fed-up with him now."

"Yaas, but—" "Look here, I'm not going to stand him," said Herries. "If you bring him to the study I shall kick him out."

"Weally, Hewies—" "And I'll lend a hand," said Dig.

The three Fourth-Formers went upstairs, but Arthur Augustus lingered behind. Arthur Augustus flattered himself that he had a good influence over Reggie; and, indeed, the swell of the School House, by persistent kindness, had had some effect on the young rascal in his first days at St. Jim's.

"Weggie, deah boy, don't hurwy away," said Arthur Augustus. "I trust you do not beah malice for that thwashin' on the island. It was for your own good, you know."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snarled Reggie.

"Weally, Weggie—" "Boah!"

Reggie stalked away, leaving D'Arcy with a heightened colour. Apparently Reggie did bear malice for the thrashing, though it had only been for his own good.

Arthur Augustus sighed, and followed his chums up the staircase. The obstinate fag was beyond even his powers of persuasion.

Reggie Manners made his way to the dining-room for tea. Tea in Hall was not nearly so cozy or plentiful as tea in Study No. 6, but the fag was too bitter and resentful to accept D'Arcy's kind invitation.

He was feeling sore, in a double sense, and morose and discontented.

He had been a little surprised that his elder brother did not return with Tom Merry & Co. to the island. Manners was evidently "done" with him, just as he had said; and it seemed that the rest of the Co. had done with him, too. Reggie felt a sense of injury on that point.

His unreasonableness and his pettish tempers had always been a matter of concern at home. It was rather a surprise to him to find that persons whom he had flouted and "cheeked" could, in fact, get fed up with him, and leave him to go his own way.

Certainly, he wanted to go his own way, but not quite on these terms. He preferred to think that people wanted him, rather than that they were glad to be rid of him.

The fags at the Third-Form table did not greet him cordially.

Mr. Selby was at the head of the table, and in the Form-

master's presence they could not give audible expression to their feelings; but the looks they cast on him were dark and contemptuous.

A fellow who would fag for a Fifth-Former, to get into favour with the seniors, was an object of contempt in the eyes of the Third, and they did not take the trouble to conceal their opinion from Manners minor. Indeed, they went out of their way to impress it upon him.

Reggie strove to appear indifferent to the scornful looks of his Form-fellows, but he could not feel quite indifferent.

When tea was over, and the Third came out of Hall, Manners minor was apprehensive of another ragging; but the fags did not take any notice of him. A six-pair "rail" in the Form-room was on, and Wally & Co. were too busy to bother their heads about Manners minor.

Piggott stopped to speak to him in the passage.

The rascal of the Third was almost the only fellow in his Form with whom Reggie found himself on anything like friendly terms. He did not like Piggott; that was scarcely possible; but their tastes were very similar.

Piggott gave him a sympathetic grin.

"You've been through it this afternoon," he said.

Reggie nodded with a scowl.

"Never mind; come and have a smoke in the box-room," said Piggott.

"Good!" said Reggie.

The two young rascals made their way to the upper box-room, a secluded apartment much used by Levson and Crooke and Mellish, and other fellows of the same sort, for their secret smoking-parties.

The room was generally empty; but as it happened, it was not empty just then. The gas was alight, and the door half-open. Piggott paused on the threshold.

"By gum! Your major's there," he whispered.

"I don't care for my major," said Reggie surlily, and he stalked into the box-room, followed more slowly by Piggott.

Manners of the Shell was there. He was sorting over some old boxes, to find one suitable for a parcel he had to send to a relative who was a prisoner in Germany. He glanced at the two fags, and compressed his lips.

Reggie, with a defiant glare, drew a packet of cigarettes from his pocket.

"Got a match, Piggy?" he asked.

"Oh, hold on!" murmured Piggott uneasily.

Manners did not speak.

He picked up the box he had selected, and went to the door. Without a glance at his brother, he quitted the box-room and went downstairs.

Reggie stared after him, the unlighted cigarette between his fingers. Piggott whistled.

"That's a bit of a change," he remarked. "I thought he would go for you, Manners minor."

"So did I," said Reggie.

"Never mind; he hasn't. Light up!"

Piggott struck a match.

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Reggie did not move. His brother's action had surprised him. He knew how angry it made Manners to find him smoking. But the Shell fellow had gone without a sign. It was only too evident that he was leaving his brother to go his own way now.

It was a relief to Reggie in a sense. But somehow it did not come wholly as a relief.

Kind remonstrances or angry orders he would have received with sullen resentment. But to be ignored in this way was not wholly pleasant, either.

"Here, light up!" said Piggott. "Here's a match!"

Manners minor granted discontentedly.

"Oh, hang it, I don't want to smoke!" he said.

"Why, you came here to smoke!"

Reggie stalked out of the room without replying, leaving Piggott of the Third staring.

CHAPTER 10.

Cutts' Revenge.

LEFEVRE of the Fifth looked into Gerald Cutts' study with a grin on his face.

Two of the blades of the Fifth were there—Cutts and St. Leger. Gilmore was not present. Cutts and St. Leger were looking anything but good-tempered; and they looked less amiable than ever as they caught Lefevre's grin.

"Hallo!" said the captain of the Fifth. "I hear you chaps have been through it this afternoon."

"What the dickens are you burbling about?" said Cutts irritably. "We've been out on a picnic."

"Must have been an enjoyable picnic, to judge by what the fags are saying," grinned Lefevre.

"I don't care what the fags are saying!"

"But is it true?"

"How the dickens should I know?"

"There's a lot of jaw going on," said Lefevre. "Some of the juniors are saying that you chaps were licked on the island by a set of fags."

"What utter rot!" said Cutts.

"Then it isn't true?"

"Of course it isn't. Do you think we're likely to let fags lick us?" said St. Leger disdainfully.

Lefevre chuckled.

"As I hear the story, you hadn't any choice about it," he said. "Kerruish of the Fourth was telling the yarn in the common-room when I heard him—"

"Oh, don't inflict it on me, please!" said Cutts. "I'm not interested in fag yarns!"

"But according to Kerruish—"

"Hang Kerruish!"

"It seems that he was there," went on Lefevre imperturbably. "It seems that they didn't like your taking young Manners out—they don't approve of you as good company for kids of tender years. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle!"

"But did they really flog you with your own cane, Cutts, old chap? Awful cheek for juniors to do anything of the sort!" said Lefevre, with a shake of the head.

"Of course they didn't!" yelled Cutts.

"If they did, I'd report 'em to the Housemaster, if I were you. Fags can't be allowed to get their ears up against the Fifth in this way."

"I tell you it's all bunkum, you ass!"

"Oh, all right! Most of the Fifth seem to take it as true!" grinned Lefevre. "Don't be ratty, old chap; of course, I take your word. Queer that the kids should be pitching that yarn, though, if there's nothing in it, isn't it?"

"I suppose I'm not responsible for fags' babble, and I've got something better to do than to listen to it at second-hand!" scowled Cutts.

Lefevre grinned, and went his way, and the blades of the Fifth heard him chuckle as he closed the door. Cutts fixed his eyes upon his comrade, with a gleam in them that startled St. Leger.

"That's the kind of thing we've got to stand now!" hissed Cutts.

"Well, we're denying the yarn," said St. Leger. "I suppose we might have expected the young cads would jaw about it."

"Precious lot of fools it makes us look—seniors, thrashed by a gang of juniors!" said Cutts, between his teeth.

"What about reporting it to Railton, as Lefevre suggests? Railton would be down on the young cads for handling seniors."

Cutts made an irritable gesture.

"For goodness' sake talk sense!" he said savagely. "If we complained about them, the whole yarn would come out—cards and smokes and all!"

"We could deny it. Railton wouldn't take their word against ours. He couldn't."

"But he would jolly well have his eye on us ever afterwards!" growled Cutts. "We should be under suspicion all the time."

"Well, I suppose that's so."

"Pretty story it would make for the Housemaster's ears, wouldn't it—a set of senior fellows leading a fag of the Third into wicked ways?" sneered Cutts.

"What did you want to take up the rotten fag at all for? I was against it."

"You weren't against clearing him out of his tin."

"Blow his tin—a pound or two!"

Cutts set his lips.

"We sha'n't hear the end of this for a long time," he said.

"The whole Form will be grinning at us. Licked—by a set of juniors!" It's all very well to deny it, but the fellows know very well the yarn must have something in it; there's no smoke without fire. And those young cads know that it wouldn't pay us to say a word to the Housemaster."

"Well, we've got to grin and bear it, I suppose," said St. Leger sulkily.

"They're going to smart for it!"

"What's the good of getting into scuffles with a gang of juniors?" growled St. Leger. "They hang together, as thick as thieves."

"I'm not thinking of licking them," said Cutts. "There are other ways—better ways. Manners of the Shell is at the bottom of it."

"It was his concern for his precious minor, I suppose. Blessed if I understand it! If I had a minor in the Third, I jolly well know I shouldn't trouble my head much about him."

"I've heard it all from Reggie. Their father is anxious about the silly little idiot; knows what a bright specimen he is, and thinks that the good, dear elder ought to look after him. If anything happens to dear Reggie, Manners will get it warm from his pater."

"I don't see how the poor beast could help it, with such a young rascal for his minor."

Cutts shrugged his shoulders.

"That's how it is, anyway. That's what I'm thinking of. That's the way to get at those young scoundrels—through Reggie."

"Blessed if I see how!"

"I took the kid up really out of kindness," said Cutts. "He was useful, of course. Little rotter as he is, he's got a sense of honour, and he would be cut in pieces before he would give a chap away. We've nothing to fear from him. I really meant to be kind to him."

St. Leger grinned.

"I dare say his pocket-money came in handy, so far as that goes, but really I meant to take him up, and be decent to him," said Cutts. "Now I've changed my plans a little. He's got us into this; and we owe it to his excellent, virtuous brother. Manners and his pals have humiliated us—we sha'n't hear the end of it this term—on account of that young rascal. Manners thinks my society isn't good enough for his kid brother. He's afraid I shall contaminate him." Cutts breathed hard through his nose. "Well, Manners is going to be right."

"I don't see—"

"I'm going to make the cheeky cad smart through his minor," said Cutts coolly. "We have been through what we've been through this afternoon, because I'm not good enough for his minor to know. I'll show him! I'll make his minor the way of punishing him. When he sees how it turns out, he may be sorry he chipped in; and Tom Merry may be sorry for every stroke he laid on my back!"

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to send Reggie down to the Green Man, as a beginning," said Cutts. "He's going to bring me some whisky and cigars."

St. Leger looked startled.

"Dash it all, that's rather thick!" he said. "Suppose he's spotted?"

"He wouldn't sneak—about me."

"But if he did?"

"Of course, I've guarded against that. I should deny having had anything to do with it, of course."

"Oh, I see!"

"As a matter of fact," continued Cutts coolly, "he will be spotted."

"But—why—"

"Because I shall drop Knox of the Sixth a hint, and Knox will spot him, or else see that some other prefect does."

"Cutts!"

"I think Manners will be rather sorry for himself, when the little beast is kicked out of the school in disgrace," said

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Cutts, his eyes glittering. "And he can face his father afterwards, and give an account of his stewardship. From what I've heard from Reggie, I shouldn't be surprised if the old man takes Manners away from St. Jim's too, as well as rounding on him. Reggie is the apple of his eye, and he puts down all Reggie's shortcomings to Manners."

St. Leger rose to his feet. His face was quite pale. St. Leger was a pretty thorough rascal himself, in many ways; but he had never quite fallen to the same depth as Gerald Cutts. And, although he had supposed that he knew Cutts well, he had never suspected the dandy of the Fifth of being a cool and calculating villain.

"I—I suppose you're joking?" said St. Leger, in an unsteady voice.

"Do you think I'm in a humour for joking?" said Cutts, shifting uncomfortably in his chair. "I'm not, I assure you."

"But—but that kid's done nothing to you," stammered St. Leger.

"His brother has."

"Look here, Cutts, I—I won't have a hand in it! It's too rotten!"

"I'm not asking you to have a hand in it," said Cutts contemptuously.

He rose, and moved about the study, still wriggling with pain from the castigation on the island. St. Leger watched him in silence.

"I've been thrashed," said Cutts; "thrashed by a junior! By gad, I'll make the whole gang of them sorry for it!"

"Any other way," said St. Leger. "But—but—"

"Is there any other way?" snarled Cutts.

"It's rotten—it's too rotten—it's blackguardly! I won't have anything to do with it!" said St. Leger. "You'll think better of it when you feel better. You couldn't play such a dirty trick on a kid."

Cutts shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll see!" he said.

"Well, leave me out of it," said St. Leger. "I'll get out of your study, too. You make me feel ill, Cutts!"

Cutts laughed.

"It's no business of yours, anyway. Keep a still tongue, that's all. They'll be sorry they handled me on the island, I think, before to-morrow!"

St. Leger left the study. Gerald Cutts lighted a cigarette, and smoked it as he thought of the details of his dastardly scheme.

CHAPTER 11.

Put to the Test.

"COME for a run in the quad!" said Tom Merry.

"I'm your man!" said Lowther, pitching Virgil across the study. "Come on, Manners!"

Manners shook his head.

"I'll stay here," he said.

"No you won't," said Lowther cheerily. "No use getting down in the dumps. You'll come out for a run. No good bothering over Reggie now."

"I'm not bothering over him. I'm finished with the young cad!"

"Bow-wow!"

"He was smoking in the box-room when I last saw him," said Manners bitterly.

"Didn't you scrag him?"

"No, I didn't!"

"More doffer you," said Monty Lowther. "The kid's a little beast, but you can't throw him over. It's your duty to give him regular lickings."

Manners shook his head.

"Well, if you've done with dear Reggie, what are you moping about?" asked Monty Lowther, with a grin.

"I'm not moping," growled Manners.

"Then come out for a run. Will you let me take your arm or your ear?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Take his other ear, Tommy!"

"I'll comp," said Manners morosely.

Manners left the study with his chums.

He would not confess that he was in the "dumps"; but, as a matter of fact, he was feeling depressed and harassed. He had plenty of excuse, if that was all that was wanted, for throwing Reggie aside, and leaving him to his own foolish courses. He had made up his mind to it. But his conscience troubled him, all the same. The task that was laid upon him seemed beyond his powers; yet he had a secret feeling that he was bound to stand by it. And yet—what could he do?

His face was gloomy as he went out into dusky quadrangle with his chums.

Tom Merry and Lowther were glad of a sprint round the quad after prep. They broke into a trot, and Manners

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trotted with them. In the darkness of the quad, a figure loomed up.

"Is that Manners?"

Manners halted.

"Here I am," he growled. "What do you want, St. Leger? Another licking like the one Tom Merry gave you on the island?"

"We've got another ready," suggested Monty Lowther. "Wait a minute till I fetch a cricket-stump, St. Leger."

The Fifth-Former scowled.

"I want to speak a word to Manners!" he muttered. "You fellows clear off!"

"No larks?" said Tom suspiciously.

"Manners can please himself about it," said St. Leger irritably.

"Jolly mysterious," said Manners. "Still, you can jaw to me if you like. Don't go too far, you chaps!"

"We won't!" said Lowther, with emphasis.

Tom Merry and Lowther moved off a little, leaving their chum alone with the Fifth-Former.

Manners looked at St. Leger curiously. He could see that the senior was very disturbed.

"Well, what is it?" he asked abruptly.

"About your minor," muttered St. Leger, sinking his voice. "Do you know where he is now?"

"I don't know, and don't care!" growled Manners. "I'm sick of hearing about my minor!"

"Oh, if that's how you take it, well and good!" said St. Leger. "I suppose I was a fool to think of giving you the tip! All serene!"

He turned away.

"Hold on!" said Manners hurriedly. "What's the matter?"

"Do you want to know, or don't you?" snapped the Fifth-Former.

"Yes, yes!"

"Well, where is he now?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen him for hours."

"You'd better find out, then. I think he's gone down to the Green Man," muttered St. Leger.

Manners started.

"So he's got to that!" he said bitterly.

"He's gone there to fetch something, you understand—something that's not allowed to be brought into the school."

"For Cutts, I suppose?"

"Never mind that. There's a prefect on the track, and your minor will be caught. If he's found with spirits and smokes on him, you know what will happen!"

"Oh, the silly young idiot!"

"Mind, not a word about my having told you," muttered St. Leger. "I don't want to quarrel with Cutts!"

"Cutts! I suppose Cutts doesn't want him spotted, if he's fetching in those blackguardly things for him!" said Manners, in astonishment.

"N-no, of course not; but—but not a word, all the same! I've given you a tip, and you ought to be grateful!"

"But—but has Cutts given him away, then?" stammered Manners. "That's what you mean, if you mean anything!"

"I've told you all you want to know," said St. Leger savagely. "I dare say I'm a fool for my pains, too! Only keep it dark, if you're decent. I can't afford to quarrel with Cutts!"

"I shan't say anything to Cutts," said Manners. "I'm grateful for the tip, too. I suppose you needn't have warned me?"

St. Leger nodded, and hurried away.

He had done a good-natured action—or, rather, he had avoided making himself a party to a rascally one. But he was anxious to avoid a break with Cutts of the Fifth. His hope was that Manners would succeed somehow in putting the fag on his guard, and that, by the time Cutts had become cooler, he would be glad that his rascally scheme had not succeeded. But he did not want to risk drawing upon himself the savage resentment of the rascal of the Fifth.

Manners rejoined his companions. He was almost dazed by the information he had received, and the glimpse he had had of Cutts' unscrupulous villainy.

"Well, what's the row?" asked Lowther.

"What's upset you, old chap?" asked Tom anxiously, as he peered at Manners' pale face in the gloom.

"I've got to find my minor," whispered Manners, in an agitated voice. "Help me to find him, there's good chaps!"

"In trouble again?"

"Yes, yes—disgrace and the sack unless we can find him! I—I've got to get him out of it!" groaned Manners. "What would the pater say if Reggie were sent home in disgrace?"

Tom Merry and Lowther did not ask questions. Lowther

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restrained a humorous desire to ask Manners whether he hadn't, after all, "done with Reggie." Even the humorous Monty realised that this was no time for his little jokes.

"We'll find him," said Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three lost no time.

They ran into the School House, and separated there, to search for Manners minor more swiftly.

Manners hurried into the Third Form-room. Evening preparation was over there, and most of the Third were in the room. Manners saw at a glance that his minor was not there, and he called to Wally.

"Oh, blow your minor!" said Wally, in answer to his anxious question. "If you're not fed-up with him, I am!"

"I want to find him," said Manners. "It's rather important. Be a good chap, Wally, and tell me where he is!"

"Don't know," said D'Arcy minor, shaking his head. "He's not here. I dare say he knows it ain't safe for him here!"

"We were going to give him the frog's-march after prep," said Jameson. "But he followed old Selby out!"

Manners set his lips.

"Nobody here know where he is?" he asked.

Piggott gave a giggle.

"Ask Cutts!" he said.

"Has Cutts sent for him?"

Piggott giggled again in his impish way.

"Ask Cutts!" he repeated. "Perhaps he's gone on a message!"

Some of the fags laughed.

Manners quitted the Form-room with a heavy heart. He met his chums in the lower passage.

"He's nowhere in the School House," said Tom Merry.

"I've asked Figgins in the New House, too," said Lowther.

"He's not there. And I've looked in the gym!"

"He's out of bounds," said Manners, in a low voice.

"Shush! Here's Darrel!"

Darrel of the Sixth came towards the juniors, looking very grave. The Terrible Three assumed as careless an air of unconcern as they could.

St. Leger had warned Manners that a prefect was on the track. Manners had thought of Knox of the Sixth. Knox was prying and officious. But he could guess now that it was not Knox he had to deal with.

Big, good-natured Darrel nodded to the three troubled juniors.

"Have you seen your minor lately, Manners?" he asked.

"No, Darrel."

"I suppose he's about the House somewhere?"

"I don't know."

"You might as well keep an eye on the kid sometimes, as he's new here," said the prefect.

Manners flushed.

"I can't always be following him about," he said.

"Well, no; but as his elder brother, you might look after him a bit. However, never mind that. I've got reason to believe that he's out of bounds."

"I don't see why—" began Manners.

"Knox has told me so," said Darrel. "Knox seems to have heard some talk of the fags, which gave him the impression that Manners' minor was going out of bounds. You did not know anything about it?"

"How should I know?"

Darrel nodded.

"Look here, Manners, had you any idea that your minor was getting into bad ways, and was in the habit of visiting such places as the Green Man in Rylcombe?"

"He wouldn't be likely to tell me," said Manners bitterly.

"I'd have thrashed him till he couldn't howl!"

"Well, that would be better than what he'll get now, if he's caught in a place like that," said Darrel. "You'd better look round for him. Knox may have been mistaken, after all. But I've got to look into the matter. Knox has left it to me; he says he's busy. See if your minor is about the House, and come to my study and tell me!"

"Right-ho!" said Manners.

The prefect, with a clouded brow, went back to his study. Manners clenched his hands hard.

He could see it all now.

Cutts and Knox were chums, and it had only been necessary for Cutts to give his friend the prefect a hint. Knox had not cared to appear in the matter himself. He had passed the information on to Darrel of the Sixth, who was bound to take action, as a prefect. Reggie was out of bounds, and when he came back he would be laden with what Cutts had sent him for; and, thus laden, he would fall into the hands of the prefect.

Tom Merry started a little, as he read the misery and despair in Manners' face.

"Back up, old chap!" he whispered. "You don't know for certain yet—"

"I do know!" muttered Manners wretchedly. "This is

Cutts' revenge for what happened this afternoon. He's planted this on Reggie, and given the prefects a hint, so that he'll be caught!"

"Oh, the awful villain!" muttered Tom.

"But—but are you sure?" stammered Lowther.

"St. Leger as good as said so. He's not such a rotter as Cutts, and he gave me the tip. I've promised to keep it dark from Cutts!"

Tom clenched his hands.

Manners went out into the quadrangle again, and his chums followed him, utterly dismayed at the turn affairs had taken.

"Darrel told you to look after him," said Lowther.

"We've looked, and he's not here," said Manners. He caught Tom Merry by the arm. "Look!"

He pointed to the lighted window of Darrel's study.

The prefect could be seen within, putting on his overcoat. Evidently Darrel was going out. The chums of the Shell did not need telling where he was going.

"It's all up!" said Manners huskily. "He's going down to the village for Reggie."

CHAPTER 12:

A Narrow Escape.

TOM MERRY was silent.

There could be no doubt of the prefect's intention.

If Reggie Manners was at the Green Man, or on his homeward way laden with the contraband goods,

Darrel would find him. Darrel was doing his duty—an unpleasant duty to the good-natured prefect. The juniors could see that his face was clouded and concerned, betraying very plainly how unwelcome the task was to him.

"It's all up with Reggie!" said Manners wretchedly. "I—I warned him that Cutts would throw him over if it suited him, and he's done it—worse than I ever thought. Reggie's going to be sucked! What will the pater say?"

"But—but Reggie will own up that Cutts sent him."

Manners shook his head.

"You don't know him. He won't believe a word against Cutts, and he'll stick to it as a point of honour not to give him away. Cutts has counted on that."

"But we can give him away!" muttered Tom fiercely.

"What's the proof?"

Tom set his lips. What, indeed, was the proof? None! St. Leger himself, if called upon as a witness, would deny any knowledge of the matter. They knew that. And they knew Cutts' brazen effrontery. It would not be easy to corner the cad of the Fifth. Such an accusation against a senior would have to be backed up by the most overwhelming proof. And there was none!

Manners was hurrying away in the gloom, and his chums followed him anxiously.

"Where are you going?" said Lowther.

"Out," replied Manners. "I—I've got to find Reggie, and—and warn him."

Tom caught his breath.

"Manners, you ass! You'll be landed in it, too."

"I don't care."

"Darrel will be out in a few minutes. If you find Reggie, Darrel will find you at the same time."

"Very likely."

"Suppose he's still at the Green Man?"

"Then I shall go there."

"Manners—"

Manners was already clambering up the wall, by the aid of the slanting tree. He did not heed the muttered expostulations of his alarmed chums.

"We'll come with you if you must go," said Tom.

Manners looked down from the wall.

"No; don't! It'll be no good. Keep here and keep an eye open for Reggie if I miss him and he comes in. Warn him to get rid of what he's carrying if he comes. You can do that much."

Manners dropped from the wall into the road.

Tom Merry and Lowther stood overwhelmed with dismay.

"Well, this is a go!" muttered Monty Lowther. "As for that young scoundrel Reggie—"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Shush! Here comes Darrel!"

The two juniors backed away into the shadow of the trees as Darrel of the Sixth came down to the side-gate. The prefect let himself out with a key, and the little gate closed.

"About a minute behind Manners," muttered Tom Merry.

"He's bound to spot him."

The chums of the Shell waited restlessly. There was nothing they could do to aid their chum; but they waited by the school wall in the darkness.

Meanwhile, Manners had broken into a run as soon as his feet touched the ground, and was scudding away towards Rylcombe.

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At a short distance from the school, however, he slackened down.

The night was dark, save when the moon emerged from behind the heavy banks of clouds. Reggie was possibly still at the public-house, or he was on his homeward way, and the Shell fellow could not run the risk of missing him.

He passed one or two pedestrians on the road, peering at them keenly in the gloom. But Reggie did not come in sight, and the junior reached the Green Man, on the outskirts of the village of Rylcombe.

There he halted.

Subdued lights gleamed from the inn, and from the bar there came the sound of a raucous chorus.

Where was Reggie?

On such an errand, he must have gone to the back of the house. Even the reckless young rascal would not have ventured to show himself in the light.

The Green Man was, of course, out of bounds to St. Jim's fellows, and Manners hesitated to enter the gloomy garden beside the inn.

He was afraid, too, that he might miss Reggie there.

As he stood in almost agonised doubt and indecision, he heard clear footfalls ringing on the road behind him.

Keeping in the shadow of a tree beside the gate, he looked back. There was a glimmer of bright light as the moon emerged from the clouds. It vanished again in a few moments. But in those few moments Manners had recognised the tall, athletic figure of Darrel of the Sixth striding on towards the inn.

His hesitation was over.

He opened the gate quietly and hurried in, passing almost on tiptoe up the dark, weedy path through the neglected garden.

A dark figure moved in the gloom, coming towards him. Manners gave a gasp of relief, and sprang forward.

It was his brother.

"Reggie!" he panted, grasping the Third-Former by the shoulder.

Reggie uttered a startled cry.

"You! Hang you, what do you want here?"

"Reggie, I—"

Manners minor wrenched himself out of his brother's grasp.

"Let me alone," he exclaimed shrilly—"let me alone, you fool! Why can't you mind your own business, you meddling ass?"

"Darrel's here!"

"What?"

"He isn't a dozen yards from the gate," whispered Manners.

"He won't come in here," said Reggie.

"He's coming to look for you."

"What rot!"

"Cutts has given you away," said Manners fiercely. "Do you understand now?"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Reggie. "Why should Cutts give me away when he sent me here? Don't be an ass!"

"I tell you he has—"

"And I tell you it's a lie!" said Reggie savagely. "Cutts wouldn't. Why should he? You've told me lies about Cutts before."

Manners clenched his hands.

"I tell you Darrel's coming here to find you!" he whispered. "Never mind about Cutts, though it's true Darrel knows you're here!"

"Then you gave me away I suppose?" said Reggie bitterly.

"You young fool! Do you think I'd come here to warn you if I had? Do you know what it means for me if I'm found here?" hissed Manners.

"Well, you needn't have come."

"Get out of this quick! I don't know whether it's too late already," said Manners. "Quick!"

"Look here, is Darrel really here, or—"

"Quick, you young fool!"

Manners grasped his arm and dragged him to the gate. The moon was behind the clouds again, and the road was as black as ink. Manners hurried his minor through the gateway, and fairly dragged him across the road. They almost brushed into a figure in the darkness, and there was a sudden exclamation.

"Who's that?"

It was Darrel's voice.

The two juniors hurried across the road. Darrel's footsteps were heard in pursuit. The prefect had guessed that someone was dodging him, by the quick, panting breath and hurried flight.

"Run!" whispered Manners.

Reggie did not need bidding twice. He understood his danger now. They ran hard up the road towards St. Jim's.

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But Darrel was more than suspicious now, and he followed fast.

There was a white glimmer in the darkness overhead. The moon was beginning to emerge from the clouds again.

Manners suppressed a groan.

In a minute, or less, the lane would be as light as day, and the prefect was not a dozen yards behind!

"Cover!" whispered Manners.

Reggie understood.

The two juniors scrambled into a gap of the hedge, and crouched behind the hedge, striving to still their hurried breathing.

Darrel's footsteps stopped in the lane.

The moon sailed round and clear from the clouds. Light streamed down into the lane, between the rows of shadowy trees.

The juniors lay as still as mice in the damp grass.

Darrel knew that the runners had stopped, from the deep silence that reigned. If the moonlight lasted long enough, he could not fail to discover them. It would not take him long to find the gap in the hedge.

Manners and Reggie hardly breathed, as the prefect uttered a sudden exclamation and started towards the gap.

Reggie made a movement to rise, to run, but Manners' strong grasp pinned him down. To rise was to betray himself. The hidden juniors could only remain where they were and pray that the light would pass.

Darrel was stumbling in the dry ditch. The moonlight was dimming already, as the heavy clouds sailed over the orb of night.

Darker and darker!

Manners almost panted with relief as the light was blotted out at the very moment that the prefect put his head through the gap in the hedge.

Darkness reigned.

"Who's there?" called out Darrel. "Is that you, Manners minor?"

The juniors did not breathe.

"If that is Manners minor, you may as well show yourself," said Darrel quietly. "I shall see you in a few minutes, when the cloud passes."

Reggie shivered.

Manners drew him silently to his feet. Reggie understood. They tiptoed through the grass along the inner side of the hedge, and thrust themselves into a mass of brambles, the glimmer of light announced that the moon was emerging again.

Silver light fell over the wide meadow.

Darrel stood in the gap, scanning the field. But the juniors were well hidden now, and he could see nothing.

The prefect looked puzzled.

After a minute or so he stepped back into the road, and his footsteps rang clearly as he strode away rapidly towards St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 13.

At Last!

MANNERS gave almost a sob of relief.

Darrel's footsteps died away in the distance.

"He's gone!" muttered Reggie.

"Gone back to St. Jim's," said Manners. "He knows somebody was here, and guesses that it was you. He's gone to see if you're at the school. If he gets there first you're done for!"

"And you, too," muttered Reggie, with a touch of remorse.

"You—you shouldn't have come out!"

"He would have caught you at the gate of the Green Man if I hadn't."

"I know he would."

"We've got to cut across the fields and get to the school first," muttered Manners. "It means a hard run, that's all Darrel's walking."

"I'm game!"

"First of all, what have you got about you?"

"What does that matter?"

"You young fool! If you're spotted, do you want to be spotted with spirits and cigars about you?" said Manners fiercely.

"I'll chance it!" said Reggie doggedly. "I've been spending Cutts' money on them, and I've got to take them to him."

"I tell you Cutts put the prefects on your track! I got the tip from St. Leger."

"But—but why?" stammered Reggie.

"To pay us all out for what he got this afternoon!" said Manners bitterly. "To get at me by getting you sacked, you young fool!"

"I—I can't believe it—"

"Please yourself about that. Hand over the things you've got for Cutts!"

"I—I—"

"Do you want me to take them by force?"

Reggie handed over a packet and a wrapped-up bottle. Manners took them and hurled them away with all the strength of his arm. There was a crash in the distance in the field.

"Now come on!" he muttered.

"I'll be here, Harry—"

"Come on, you young fool!"

Manners grasped Reggie by the arm, and they ran. It was a short-cut across the fields to the school, but the way was rough, and in the darkness uncertain. The two juniors stumbled through hedges and ditches, and picked themselves up breathlessly, and ran on again.

They came out into the road near the school and panted on to the wall.

"Quick!" muttered Manners. "Up with you! Listen!"

There were footsteps on the road. They were not far ahead of the prefect.

"You first!" muttered Reggie.

"No, no!"

Manners bunked his minor up the wall, and Reggie clambered over. There was a muttered exclamation within. Tom Merry and Lowther were there.

"Is that you, Manners?"

"It's me—"

"Where's Manners?"

"I'm helping him."

Tom clambered on the wall and hung over and lent a helping hand to his chum outside. A minute more and Manners was safe on the inner side of the school wall, panting.

"Not spotted?" muttered Lowther.

"No; but Darrel's almost at the gate!"

"Great pip! Hook it!"

The four juniors ran towards the House. There was the sound of a key being inserted in the lock of the gate as they ran. The prefect was at hand.

They ran hard, but dropped into a walk as they neared the House. The door was not yet locked, and they slipped in.

There were several juniors in the hall, and they looked curiously at Tom Merry and his companions.

"Hallo! What's the game?" asked Talbot.

"You haven't seen us come in?" gasped Manners. "Clear on before anybody asks you questions."

The four juniors ran upstairs without further words.

Talbot stared, but he hurried away to the common-room, and the other fellows in the hall followed him.

When Darrel came in the hall was empty.

Tom Merry threw open the door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage.

Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy were there, chatting, after having finished their prep. They stared at the intruders.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Ever knocked at a door in your life?" asked Blake blandly.

Tom closed the door after they were inside the study.

"We've got to prove an alibi!" he exclaimed hurriedly.

"Better get up a rag, I think, all ready for Darrel. Don't say we've just come in if he looks in here."

"Bai Jove!"

"Better bump, Gussy!" suggested Monty Lowther.

"That will look like an innocent and quite unobjectionable occupation."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Good egg! Collar him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake & Co.

"Lend a hand, Reggie!"

"Bai Jove! Hands off! I weseue to be bumped! I weseue the suggestion as uttalyh wiculous!" yelled the swell of St. Jim's. "Leggo! Yarooop!"

Bump!

Manners major and Manners minor and Tom Merry had grasped Arthur Augustus. He was bumped—but gently—on the hearthrug. The swell of St. Jim's struggled in their grasp.

"Yawwooh! Leggo! You feahful wottahs, weseue me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help! Weseue! Blake, you gwinnin' ass, lend me a hand!" roared Arthur Augustus. "Gweat Scott! You are wumplin' my clobber! Gwooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The door was thrown open, and Kildare of the Sixth put a frowning face into the study. He had a cane in his hand.

"Stop that thumping row!" roared Kildare. "You can be heard all over the House!"

"Gwooooh!"

"Only bumping Gussy, Kildare," said Monty Lowther.

"Yawwooh! You uttah wottah!"

"Then you can bump him a little more quietly for his own good," said Kildare. "You'll take fifty lines all round."

"Yee, Kildare," said the juniors meekly.

The captain of St. Jim's shook his cane warningly at them, and strode out of the study. He almost walked into Darrel, who was coming quickly along the passage.

"Hallo! Looking for somebody?" asked Kildare.

"Yes. I want to know whether Manners minor is in the House or not," said the prefect.

Kildare laughed.

"Yes. I've just given him fifty lines," he said.

"Oh, then he's in the House?"

"Yes. In Blake's study."

"I'm glad of it," said Darrel quietly.

He went downstairs with Kildare. And the juniors in the study, who had heard that brief colloquy, breathed more freely.

"All serene!" murmured Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus sat on the hearthrug and gasped.

"You uttah wuff asses, I weseue to weseue it as all sewene! I'm goin' to give you a feahful thwashin' all wound!"

"Peace, my infant!" said Tom Merry soothingly. "You've saved our lives!"

"Bai Jove!"

"The beaks were after us, and you've saved us!" said Monty Lowther. "It was worth making your bags a little dusty, Gussy!"

"Undah the cires, I ovahlook the occurence," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "But I weseue you as a set of wuffianly asses, all the same!"

"Hear, hear!"

Reggie Manners paused in the passage and looked curiously at his major. Manners' face was clouded and grim.

"I—I say, Harry—"

"You'd better cut off to your dorm," said Manners gruffly.

"It's time."

"I'm going. But I—I say—"

"Well?"

"It was ripping of you to come after me like that after—after the way I've treated you!" said Reggie repentantly.

"I—I was really sorry—on the island, you know. I was a beast! I'm sorry, truly!"

Manners' face cleared a little.

"I might have got flogged, or sacked, along with you," he said.

"I know. I—I'm not going to have anything more to do with Cutts," said Reggie timidly. "After what you've told me, I—I couldn't! He's a dangerous beast. I—I'll never speak to him again!"

"Honour?" asked Manners.

"Honour bright! You know I don't break my word."

Manners drew a deep, deep breath of relief.

"Stick to that, young 'un, and you're all right," he said.

"Hallo!" It was Cutts' voice. The dandy of the Fifth came along the passage. He was anxious to know what had happened, and already surmised that something had gone wrong with his carefully-laid scheme. "Is that you, Reggie?"

"Yes, you howling ead!" said Reggie promptly.

Cutts jumped.

"Why—why, what—"

"Turn out, Shell!" shouted Manners. "Bear a hand!"

"Bump him!"

Cutts backed away, but Tom Merry and Lowther were rushing at him, with Manners, and at Manners' call a dozen study doors opened, and a dozen fellows dashed out, ready to "bear a hand" in a rag. Cutts was whirled off his feet, and bumped—hard—on the passage floor. Reggie had hold of his ears, and the other fellows grasped him where they could.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Now kick him downstairs!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts made a desperate effort, and broke away and fled. The juniors pursued him as far as the staircase. Cutts did not stop till he was in his own study—panting, dishevelled, and in a state of great astonishment. Exactly how his scheme had gone wrong he did not know, but evidently it had gone wrong, and his hold upon Manners minor was gone. Which was an excellent thing for Manners minor, and a great relief to Manners major.

THE END.

Next Wednesday, another Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, entitled "TRUE TO HIMSELF," by Martin Clifford. Please ORDER your copy of "THE GEM" in advance.

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY

"TRUE TO HIMSELF"

INTO THE UNKNOWN!

The First Long Instalment
of a Magnificent New Serial
Story of Thrilling Adventure.

By DAGNEY MAJOR.

CHAPTER 1.

Into the Unknown.

"There you are, boys!" said Mr. Whittaker, waving his arm towards what seemed an endless infinity of stretching plains, swamps and marshes. "there lies our track into the unknown. If anyone shrinks from the dangers ahead—the raging torrents, swamps, mighty forests, and mountains that we must cross while going through Patagonia in search of the Giant Sloth, let him speak now, and he can turn back!"

The three boys addressed, who were among the little party, looked with suppressed excitement at the expedition leader.

"It'll be stunning, I guess!" said Reggie Whittaker, the only son of Thomas Whittaker, a bright lad of fifteen, with a mop of ginger hair, and a whimsical-looking face almost as red as his top-knot.

"Turn back!" echoed Jimmy Redford and Larry Burt, who, with fifteen and sixteen summers respectively behind them, scorned any idea of leaving their friends in the lurch. "We'll only turn back when we've got the Giant Sloth, if it takes years," said Larry.

"Well, Sing Loo?" asked Mr. Whittaker of his faithful Chinese servant, who had accompanied him on many expeditions, and who was standing just behind a big mule, laden to its utmost capacity. "What have you got to say?"

"Velly small piecee to say," replied Sing Loo, with a smile almost as thin as his wisp of a pigtail. "Me no turnee back. Me velly hon'ble gladee go muchee far with Massa Whittaker. Plenty walkee. Plenty godee chop-chop. Sing Loo plenty glateful for muchee wagee. Sing Loo no fear big Giant Slothee. Me cutee him up in lil' piecee and eat for chop-chop!"

And, with an utter failure at a bland Oriental smile, the Chinaman so far forgot his Far Eastern dignity as to allow his mouth to curve into such a big gap that Reggie feared he was going to swallow himself, pigtail and all.

"Bravo, Sing Loo!" cried out Reggie. "That's how we all feel, but we don't go napee on the chop-chop idea so much!"

"One up to Sing Loo!" yelled Jimmy and Larry simultaneously.

"Quiet, there!" put in Dr. Phenning, the surgeon and botanist of the party. "This is a serious business, and no time for levity!"

"Sing Loo go up where Massa Whittaker go," went on the Chinaman, "up velly high hilly, downee valley, muchee downee—"

With an unexpected dexterity, the mule in front of Sing Loo suddenly lunged out with his left hind-leg and sent the Chinaman spinning down to earth.

There was a roar of laughter from the onlookers.

Quickly Sing Loo picked himself and his pigtail up, and began to rub his shin where the mule had caught it.

"Hurt?" inquired Mr. Whittaker, trying hard to conceal his laughter.

"Heel of mulee no velly softee," replied Sing Loo, hopping
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about on one leg, and looking, as Larry afterwards expressed it, like a lame kangaroo with the tail on the top of its head.

Fortunately for Sing Loo, he had only got the "tail end" of the mule's kick, so his injury was not serious, and the doctor soon made his limb feel easier by applying lint and bandages.

While Dr. Phenning was attending to the Chinaman, Mr. Whittaker's eye took in his stock of animals, native bearers, and equipment. It made an imposing array.

There was a long line of mules, loaded with the heavy baggage, such as food, tents, clothes, and other stores, each accompanied by a Patagonian native, intermingled with a few Spanish, Portuguese, Brazilian, and Mexican natives. Bribed by good pay, these natives had promised to accompany the expedition right into the unknown interior of Patagonia. But secretly Mr. Whittaker's and the doctor's hearts failed them when they thought what the natives might do when they faced the thousand and one difficulties which lay in front of them. However, time alone would prove how many would remain faithful to the expedition.

About a quarter of a mile behind them lay a small, miserable little village, chiefly inhabited by half-caste Portuguese, Mexicans, and a few Indians, Peruvians, and Patagonians, who had drifted so far south—the expedition started at the south-east end of Patagonia—because chance or circumstance had led them there.

Mr. Whittaker gave them all a chance of returning. About half a dozen miserable-looking natives, who funk'd it at the last, turned back. The rest assured their leader that they would go on.

Among the natives whom Dr. Whittaker felt he could really trust was one native of Patagonia, who had worked among English gold prospectors in Tierra Del Fuego. For a native of Patagonia, he was certainly a wonderful fellow.

It was part of his creed to steal a bit now and then, to tell lies, but at bed-rock he was sound and faithful. He knew many of the Patagonian dialects, and from this point alone would prove invaluable. He rejoiced in the name of Phwaa Ben Hu, son of Wild Wind, but as he showed two huge rows of teeth whenever he smiled, which was often, Jimmy Redford had named him Toothy Jim, so Toothy Jim he was called.

Toothy Jim was a strange-looking individual. His face, with prominent cheekbones, was short, his coal-black, straggly hair was long. His eyes were so restless, and twinkled so, that one was apt to get mixed as to which were eyes and which were beads, for he had a large number of these ~~over~~ on his head, about his face, and neck and chest, which also twinkled and sparkled, so that he looked something like a cross between an old lady's bonnet and a beast full of eyes. And he was full of superstitions. Had he realised the important part that he would play in the expedition, his head would surely have swollen to such an extent that it would have blown to pieces under the pressure, and have scattered the beads to smithereens.

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1st.

"Phwa Ben Hu," cried out Mr. Whittaker, in a strange lingo, "take your place at the head of the procession with me!"

Toothy Jim showed every tooth in his head at once, and took his place. Dr. Phenning went to the rear with Reggie, Jimmy Redford and Larry Burt, each armed with a light rifle, were in the middle of the cavalcade, and were told to instantly come up to the head of the expedition if anything went wrong, and to report to Mr. Whittaker. Then the long procession of mules, with native bearers, extending about eighty yards, started out into the unknown.

CHAPTER 2.

Larry's Peril.

Beyond them lay a vast expanse of desolate plain and swamp, dotted with stumpy scrub and bushes.

Though day had just begun to break when the expedition started, the sun had not yet risen, but presently that mighty luminary began to strike a glorious light away in the east. But soon the mist and vapours of the marshes rose up, and wrapped the sun in a thin, misty veil. Soon ominous, low clouds began to form.

Suddenly there appeared in the sky, to the east, an enormous black cloud, which quickly seemed to take the shape of some huge beast half sitting on its haunches, with its fore-paws raised in the air, and his neck stretched out.

"Great Scott!" said the doctor, coming from the rear of the procession, and talking to Jimmy and Larry Burt in great excitement. "An omen, boys—an omen! Just look at that cloud there shaped like a great animal! It's an absolute replica of what scientists say the Giant Sloth is or was like, only, of course, it's bigger than the actual beast. If that isn't an emblem of luck, I don't know what is. See it, Sing Loo?" he asked the Chinaman, who was doing his best to keep his mule from trying to eat some fodder which the animal in front was carrying.

"Me no likee clouddee," said Sing Loo. "It look like a big devil that come fetchee me to my ancestors. It velly bad!"

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Whittaker, who had joined the doctor.

"Poor old Sing Loo!" cried Jimmy. "Don't you worry about your ancestors, although I dare say they were very fine fellows."

"You'd much better worry about yourself, Sing Loo!" said Larry Burt, "for if you don't hold your mule's head up, I reckon you and your pigtail'll want brushing down."

They had reached a very nasty stretch of swamp, which ran parallel with their rough path. The oozy slime and coarse reeds made a desolate-looking waste as it stretched away into a seemingly infinity of sameness.

A thick yellowish grey pallor was creeping over the sky, mantling everything in a sombre veil of drab. And a nasty wind, which blew in fitful gusts, ever increasing in velocity, brought added discomfort, as the light sand and dust from the path, and from miles away to the left, was whirled round in stinging eddies and lashed eyes and faces.

"Hold on to your pigtail, Sing Loo," yelled Jimmy, "or the wind'll blow it off!"

"Me too muchee holdee on mulee to catchee pigtail!" said Sing Loo, in his quaint, pidgin English. "But me velly good on mulee now; me no loseee seatee!"

But just as he spoke, his animal gave a sudden lurch, and the Chinaman all but lost his seat. Larry and Reggie rushed to the rescue, and got him up into a sitting posture.

"Look here, Sing Loo," said Reggie. "I shall tie your pigtail on to the mule's tail and your neck on to your animal's head in a minute, and so tightly that you can't come off, if you don't keep a better seat!"

"Oh, me velly tightee on now, Massa Reggie!" he answered, embracing the animal's neck with both hands, and looking as if he wanted to kiss the animal's head between its ears.

Suddenly there was a yell from Larry Burt to the left. Reggie and Jimmy turned quickly, and saw that their chum's mule had stumbled, and had fallen into the edge of the morass. The beast was up to its stomach in slime in an instant, and was struggling frantically to regain a footing.

Reggie and Jimmy yelled to Mr. Whittaker and Dr. Phenning, and soon they were all endeavouring to reach Larry's bridge. The procession came to a halt:

"Jump off the saddle, boy! Jump off!" cried Mr. Whittaker. "Try and stand on the saddle, and leap towards me and the doctor! We'll catch you! Never mind how you fall! Here, catch this and tie it on to the bridle! I'll hold this end of it!"

As Mr. Whittaker spoke, he threw out a thick piece of rope which Larry deftly caught and fastened to the bridle.

Then, with a tremendous struggle, his legs and feet, covered with slime, Larry tried to stand on the mule's back—no easy thing to do with the frantic struggles of the mule jerking him about.

But at last he managed it. For the fraction of a second he stood on the saddle, then leapt well forward, and high into the air.

The doctor caught him as he fell. Larry was not scratched. "Jimmy, go and tell Toothy Jim he's wanted!"

Jimmy turned his mule's head, and trotted off to the end of the cavalcade. When he returned to the struggling mule in the mush, Mr. Whittaker, Dr. Phenning, Jimmy, and Larry were all tugging at the rope, trying to drag the mule towards firm ground.

Toothy Jim lent his giant strength to the cause, and soon, but very slowly, the poor beast was dragged towards the firm edge of the path. With words of encouragement, with frantic and breathless hauls, with many a heave-ho and a heave altogether, the animal was at length extricated, much frightened and exhausted.

All this time, Sing Loo, contrary to all orders, and glad of an excuse to dismount from his mule, had been jumping round the doctor, Mr. Whittaker, and the rest, clapping his hands, and yelling out:

"Pullee, pullee! Velly bad mulee! Heavee-ho! Makee much pullee! Heavee!"

But he had never attempted to do anything or lend a real helping hand at extricating the beast.

When the mule was on terra firma once more, being rubbed down by Larry, the Chinaman, with a bland smile, turned to Mr. Whittaker, and said:

"Me velly tired with haulee heavee. Me great clever Chinaman to gettee mulee out swampee. Me never let Sing Loo's mulee in swampee. Me velly good Chinaman!"

"Sing Loo," said Mr. Whittaker, looking at him very severely, "you're a humbug!"

"Me hardworkee hon'ble Chinaman. Me no bughunee!"

"Get back to your mule!" roared Mr. Whittaker, lunging out with his right foot, and only missing the Chinaman's back by half an inch.

The three boys yelled with laughter, which was redoubled when they saw the Chinaman trying to mount his steed by throwing both his arms round its neck, and springing on to the saddle.

"Well, Larry, my boy," said Mr. Whittaker, "you've got a bit of a mud-bath. But how did it happen?"

"My mule suddenly shied and stumbled," replied Larry. "The next thing I knew was that we were in the mud."

"It's a good thing we haven't lost both you and the mule," went on Mr. Whittaker, a little severely. "You must be more careful!"

Jimmy and Reggie tittered audibly as they looked at Larry's mud-stained clothes.

"Oh, that's nothing to what may happen to some of us," put in Dr. Phenning, with a smile. "If we none of us get anything worse than a mud-bath, we sha'n't fare so badly. But you'll soon dry in this wind, Larry," he said, with a kindly smile to the boy, who looked upon his little adventure as a huge joke. He did not in the least realise what a narrow escape he had had.

Then the cavalcade moved forward again. Slowly, but surely, the little expedition covered mile after mile, tracking steadily on into the heart of the unknown. Stung and half blinded by the fine grit and sand as it bit their faces, and entered their eyes, as it swirled and eddied in the wind, the party were in great discomfort. But by good luck the wind gradually sheered right round, and blew at their backs. This greatly helped their progress, and cheered them all up. A short halt was made for the midday meal, then on they went again.

Gradually they struck off in a more westerly direction, and the country began to change. In place of the swamps, reeds, and marshes, were little sandy hillocks, bits of dense scrub, and very coarse grass.

Larry, Reggie, and Jimmy, somewhat saddle-sore, were leading their mules when suddenly an evil, small-looking head of a snake showed itself, just by Reggie's foot. It hissed angrily, and quickly glided towards him.

"Look out, Reggie!" yelled Jimmy, for his chum had not seen it.

Like a flash, Jimmy darted forward, and, without giving a thought to his own safety, whipped out his small hatchet like lightning, and made a savage cut at the thing. He caught it full on the neck and the head was completely severed from the body.

"Your first snake, Jimmy," said Mr. Whittaker, who had heard the shout, and had come on the scene.

"And a poisonous one, too!" added Dr. Phenning, as he bent down to examine it.

"My word!" ejaculated Larry. "Wouldn't old Stink-Pot

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Jones at home love to put that in his bottle along with his other specimens!"

At that moment, Reggie's sharp eyes, which were directed towards the western horizon, discerned a low-lying, misty-looking mass, which seemed to be coming towards them.

"What's that moving right over there?" he asked excitedly. The doctor and Mr. Whittaker levelled their glasses, and took a long look.

"A big herd of wild cattle, I fancy," said the doctor.

"Yes," said Mr. Whittaker, and coming our way, too! By Jove," he added, "there's no stopping their onward rush! We shall be lucky if they don't come crashing through our line. Nothing'll stop them in their mad gallop. Anyway, we can have a shot at them. And I don't suppose those beasts have ever heard rifle-shots before, so the noise'll no doubt frighten them off. But no one's to fire till I give the word!"

CHAPTER 3. The Buried City.

Warning word of the approaching herd was passed down the line. Everyone was on the alert. A dull, muffled roar, caused by thousands of hoofs beating on the plains, came to them all as they stood on the qui vive. The dull, thunderous roar grew. Presently the whole herd, en masse, came rushing on, wild, shaggy-looking creatures, with big, rough manes, something like a bison's. A thousand yards away! Eight hundred! Five hundred yards! Would the whole herd come crashing through their lines? Quick as a flash, Mr. Whittaker saw that they were heading, if anything, in a slanting direction towards the head of the cavalcade.

With rifles raised, as steady as if they were at school drill, Reggie, Larry, Jimmy, and the doctor awaited the word to fire.

"FIRE!"

Mr. Whittaker's word of command was instantly obeyed by his and the other four rifles all speaking at once.

The party saw gaps in the ranks of those wild, stampeding creatures. Suddenly they swerved, and, with terrified bellowings, rushed onwards, the first few hundred skimming the foremost mules by only about twenty yards.

Then Larry saw Toothy Jim give one wild leap backwards as the laggards of the wild cattle tore past, trampling and crashing to pieces three of the leading mules.

Mr. Whittaker and his little group stood looking after the flying herd, speechless and breathless.

"Phew!" half-whistled the doctor. "A narrow shave for the whole lot of us!"

"Yes," echoed Mr. Whittaker; "but three of our mules have gone—baggage and all. Phenning, keep the boys near you, whilst I go and see to the damage."

What Mr. Whittaker saw when he reached the mules was no sight for the three boys. Mr. Whittaker even shuddered himself. But with the help of Toothy Jim, the two of them managed to rescue a little of the baggage, mostly materials for tents, spare rifles, ammunition and such like. This, with the help of the boys, Sing Loo and Dr. Phenning, and a few bearers, they loaded on other mules. But their loss was a serious one. Then once more they proceeded onwards.

"The sort of unexpected thing like that," explained Mr. Whittaker to the boys, as, again mounted on their mules, they rode together, "is just what falls to the lot of an expedition like ours. It'll give you a taste of some of the dangers to be encountered."

"Stunning, I call it," said Reggie, "to see hundreds of beasts like that tearing along, snorting and puffing like a blessed engine."

"I'm sure I brought one of them down," put in Larry, with eager excitement.

"And I, too!" cried Jimmy.

"And so you ought to have done, after all my teaching," said Mr. Whittaker, looking proudly at his three charges, whom nothing seemed to dismay.

As they progressed eastward, they saw in the distance a long, low-lying range of hills. The murky sky and yellowish sort of mist had hitherto prevented them from observing the distant range.

"That," said Mr. Whittaker, waving his arm in the direction of the hills, "means that we are nearing a raging ford or torrent. Toothy Jim told me of its whereabouts. We shall have to cross it, and I expect we shall see some fun."

"Hurrah!" cried Jimmy. "P'raps we shall all have a jolly swim."

"Swimming in a torrent like that wouldn't be much fun," put in Dr. Phenning.

"Any big game round this way?" asked Larry, with a lordly air. "When we get among the hills and forests," replied Mr. Whittaker, "there'll be plenty of opportunity of

using our rifles. No; there's hardly what you can call "big game" in Patagonia—except the Giant Sloth, which we are not absolutely sure is alive. I'll tell you about this mighty beast around the camp-fire to-night. But we shall have a chance of bringing down Guanacoos, wolves, plenty of wing game, species of small buck, rabbits and pumas."

"I'll go nap on the pumas and wolves," cried Jimmy. "Can we get up a hunting expedition?" asked Reggie and Larry together.

"We'll have all the hunting and shooting we want presently," replied Mr. Whittaker, and then he began a long account of what luck might bring them in the shape of trophies and flesh with which to stock their larder. And so they came to a great, raging torrent, which flowed about miles from the foot of the range of hills. On the further side, was a belt of low trees and scrub. The difficulty was to find a suitable place in which to cross.

They followed the stream for about a mile and a half, then they saw it became shallower, for sharp, jagged rocks nosed above the swirling waters and tossed the seething eddies into boiling white foam.

It was Mr. Whittaker and the doctor who, hand-in-hand, and letting out the rope which bound them together and connected them with the shore, first negotiated the dangerous stream to test whether the expedition could cross it.

Sing Loo, the boys, Toothy Jim, and two other trusty stalwart native bearers stood by with more ropes, to fling into the stream should the pioneers be swept off their feet.

Slowly the doctor and Mr. Whittaker proceeded up to their waists in the rushing waters. They were half-way across when suddenly there was a yell from Mr. Whittaker, and he disappeared!

There was a horrified cry of dismay from the bank. Then the doctor, quick as thought, let out the rope. Mr. Whittaker had slipped into a treacherous hole, goodness knows how deep.

A yell of encouragement broke from the onlookers as Mr. Whittaker's head appeared from beneath the surging foams. In a flash the doctor tightened the rope, but at that very instant, the terrible current jerked Mr. Whittaker onwards, and in another second Dr. Phenning was pulled off his feet and had also disappeared.

But his head soon popped up again. A great cheer from the boys, a hoot from Sing Loo, and a wild yell from the native bearers gave encouragement to the two men struggling in the water.

"Sing Loo," yelled Jimmy, "throw cut your rope with all your strength, and if you don't throw straight and land it right by the men in the water, I'll pitch you in after them. Now then," cried Jimmy, to the rest, "hang on—Sing Loo's spare coils of rope, while he throws!"

Both the men struggling in the current had managed to grab at some jutting rock, but were getting breathless and exhausted as the terrible tide banged and thumped them against the stones.

"Now!" yelled Jimmy to Sing Loo.

Calmly, with unerring aim, Sing Loo cast the rope. It landed right by Mr. Whittaker. He grabbed it, hauled it in a few yards, threw a few feet of it, after he had tied it round his waist, to Dr. Phenning, who also made himself secure.

"Now," shouted Mr. Whittaker when all was ready, "pull for your lives, boys!"

"They needed no bidding to exert every ounce of strength they had. Natives and whites pulled for all they were worth.

Slowly but surely Mr. Whittaker and the doctor were drawn to the bank. They were hurled against the sharp rocks by the current, swirled about in the rushing eddies, cut and bruised.

About ten yards from the bank, where the current was less strong, Sing Loo saw the doctor's head go under.

"Me lettee go roopee," he cried. "Hangee on like velly devil!"

Then, without a further word the Chinaman leapt into the stream.

With strong, rapid strokes he reached the doctor, whose head soon reappeared. Supporting him by holding his chin up with his hand, the Chinaman swam thus to the bank. Eager hands were stretched out to grab the three exhausted men, and in a few seconds all were on dry land again, the natives yelling, and the boys cheering like mad.

Mr. Whittaker and the doctor soon recovered their strength, and presently were laughing at their little experience.

"Well, Sing Loo," said Dr. Phenning quietly, "about done, and if you hadn't swum out and held me up, I shouldn't have had the strength to hold my head up. I got a nasty bang on the forehead against a rock, and it partially stunned me. I shan't forget it, Sing Loo!"

"Sing Loo velly glad he swimme," said Sing Loo, with a

(Continued on page iv of the cover.)

THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to —
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For Next Wednesday:

"TRUE TO HIMSELF!"

By Martin Clifford.

Next Wednesday's magnificent story of school life at St. Jim's prominently features that irresistible hero, Reginald Talbot, besides introducing Gentleman Jim, an associate of Talbot in the latter's early days. This clever cracksmán comes to the school under false colours as the Head's honoured guest. Naturally, Talbot is seriously alarmed for the safety of the contents of the Head's safe; but his repeated warnings are hotly repudiated, and he finds no one to back him up in his theory that the newcomer is at St. Jim's with ulterior motives. Circumstances, however, so shape themselves that the Head's guest is proved to be a rank impostor, and the junior who was

"TRUE TO HIMSELF"

throughout is acclaimed once again as the hero of the hour.

THE SOLDIER WHO SCOFFED.

Now a Loyal Reader of the "Gem" Library.

One of my Peterborough chums favours me with the following interesting epistle:

"Dear Sir,—This is the first time I have ever written to a real Editor, so I feel a bit nervous.

We have a soldier billeted with us, and one evening, when he had nothing to read, I suggested that he should read a book. He became cynical at this, saying they were kids' tales. Well, I happened to go out, and on my return found he was reading the 'Gem' I had offered him. I settled down in a corner and watched his expression. All was quiet, until presently the Tommy started to chuckle, then to laugh, and after a time his merriment found vent in a yell. When he had read the story right through, I ventured: 'What's your opinion of the "Gem" now?' And, Mr. Editor, his reply would have made you blush, and would cause Mr. Martin Clifford's head to swell out of all proportion.—Wishing your papers every success, your true reader, J. B."

Thank you, J. B.! You have shown yourself to be a good and worthy supporter of the "Gem" Library, for, in face of the soldier's jeer, you stuck to your guns and were not ashamed of your convictions. When next I am in your city I shall visit the principal newspapers, and shall expect them to tell me, with radiant faces, that the good old "Gem" Library is going better than ever, thanks to the whole-hearted support and genial good influence of such fellows as you, J. B.

ANOTHER AMERICAN'S LETTER.

"An American Reader of the Good Old GEM" writes from Toronto to voice his views as to the reply given to the letter from Cyrus P. Crake. The GEM, he says, is one of the best papers going; and, so far, I am most heartily in agreement with him. But when he goes on to give me a few pointers, as he calls them, I do not find myself able to agree with all he says.

You have no right to insult the Americans, as you have done," he says. This is a reference, no doubt, to the characterisation of the Americans as a "precious, sit-tight-and-nothing-race." But they, or their elected Head for them, have earned such epithets as these. Not a word of official protest was sent to Germany by the United States against the atrocities in Belgium, in Poland, in Serbia, or in Montenegro. President Wilson, even after his own people had been ruthlessly massacred, continued to address Germany in friendly language, and to express faith in Germany's promises. His country professes to stand in the very forefront of civilisation, yet these things failed to move him to

declare its belief that the Hunnish hordes are the foe of all that makes life worth living. He speaks for the United States, and if he does not say what the nation believes—well, that is not the fault of anyone on this side of the Atlantic.

"On account of one cad, would you say such things against us?" asks my correspondent. But what I said was not all on account of Cyrus P.—not by any means!

"Are there not 25,000 Americans fighting bravely on the side of the Allies?" Here is another question. My answer is that I do not know, but I doubt whether the number is one-tenth of that. That they are fighting bravely I do not doubt at all. But I certainly do not agree with my correspondent that they are the superiors of Britishers in this respect. He goes on to say: "I guess you are pretty mean, insulting us as you have done. I hope you will not feel insulted, but it is only tit for tat. Three cheers for the GEM, say!"

Let's leave it at that! I like this American a heap better than Crake, though I don't quite feel sure that he cherishes much affection for me as apart from the paper I have the honour to edit.

NOTICES.

Rifleman W. C. Tyrrell, 3530, 1/18 Battalion, London Regiment, London Irish Rifles, 47th Divisional Base Depot, B.E.F., Le Havre, France, would like to correspond with a reader about 17-18.

A. E. Nixon, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, who offered back numbers free, expresses his regrets to all readers whose requests he was unable to meet. The applications were simply overwhelming in number, and his stock soon ran out.

Fred Magee, 276, Hoxton Street, Hoxton, London, N., wants to join a Thursday afternoon cricket club in his neighbourhood. Age 14½. Can be seen at address above any day.

J. A. Needs, 32, Sonning Street, Roman Road, Barnsbury, N., wishes to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League for boys and girls of 14-18 in the North London district, and will be glad if anyone interested will send a stamped and addressed envelope.

S. Silverstein, 3, Cleveland Grove, Cleveland Street, Mile End Road, London, E., wants to buy Nos. 128, 137, and 191 of the "Gem," and Nos. 55, 111, and 171 of the "Magnet."

Norman J. Steel, 7, Tintern Street, Clapham, S.W., wants to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League open to anyone in the United Kingdom, and will be glad if those writing to him will enclose stamped and addressed envelope for reply.

Private G. Walker, 26146, 49th Company, E., 42, East Lines, Machine-gun Corps, Grantham, would be glad to correspond with readers and to receive back numbers of the "Gem" and "Magnet."

Harold Morris, 15, Hodgson Street, Darwen, wishes to form a "Gem" League in his locality, and will be glad to hear from readers interested.

Private E. J. Anstee, 19057, C Company, 13th (S) Battalion, Welsh Regiment, B.E.F., France, would be glad to receive copies of the Companion Papers.

Private Thos. Kiley, 4705, 7th City of London Regiment, No. 11 Camp, Base Depot, B.E.F., France, would be glad to have a correspondent of about 18-19.

Lance-Corporal N. E. Walker, D Co., 3rd Batt., Manchester Regt., Cleethorpes, Grimsby, who comes from Moss Side, Manchester, would be glad to correspond with readers in that district.

J. H. Vickers, 25, Canonbury Square, Islington, N., wishes to form a "Gem" League in his locality, and would be glad to hear from readers interested.

H. Higgins, 230, Thistle Street, Glasgow, D.D., and Charles McBride, 44, Park Street, Cambuslang, are forming a "Gem" and "Magnet" League in their neighbourhood. Will intending members writing to either of them please enclose a stamped addressed envelope?

(Continued on next page, foot of column 2.)

INTO THE UNKNOWN!

(Continued from page 20.)

bland smile. "Sing Loo no wantee friend of Massa Whittaker gooe under."

"Bravo, Sing Loo!" cried the boys together.

"When you ride your mule as well as you can swim, Sing Loo," said Reggie, "we'll give you a new ribbon for your pigtail."

Then Toothy Jim came running up, and in his strange lingo told Mr. Whittaker that one of the Peruvian native bearers said he thought there was a place a few hundred yards up the stream which could be crossed. Accordingly they made for the spot.

The mules were got over first, but it was a terrible business. Two mules, with bag and baggage, containing fodder, food for the party, and some cooking utensils, were swept away and left to their fate.

Sing Loo made a gallant attempt at rescuing one of these animals, but he was very nearly drowned himself that time, and it was owing to Reggie's promptness and presence of mind, by flinging the Chinaman a rope, that saved him.

All the party were wet to the skin. But once across, their difficulties were forgotten as they all became greatly interested in the new conditions of the country over which they now travelled.

Away to the left were the great hills, with broken stretches of ground, covered with rocks and boulders. Now and then came big clumps of stunted trees and scrub. Amidst these tall bushes and growth were great pieces of jagged rock and huge boulders. As they passed a towering slant of rock, Jimmy cried out that there were carvings and strange but rude figures on their surface.

"A buried city," said the doctor. "Here, before, ages before civilisation, was once a city built from the solid rock. Here for thousands of years, perhaps hundreds of thousands of years, it has lain buried. And we are probably the first white men to see it."

"We shall pass more wonderful buried rock cities than this, I can venture to say."

At last Mr. Whittaker gave the order to halt and camp for the night. Quickly the bearers, under the supervision of Mr. Whittaker and the doctor, put up the tents, lit the camp fires, and made things snug. The boys and Sing Loo worked like Trojans. To add to their discomfort, a close fine rain began to fall. The sun went down quickly. There was scarcely any twilight. Night suddenly swooped down on them like a heavy pall. The great silence, when all the work was done, was oppressive. But in front of a huge, cheery fire, a little in front of the front flap, forming a sort of outer roof to Mr. Whittaker's tent, the leader of the expedition, Dr. Phennig and the three boys were admirably waited on by Sing Loo, who seemed to have surpassed himself by his cooking that night.

Sing Loo distinguished himself by tripping up with a pile of tin plates just as he was about to serve the last course.

With a yell, the plates and their contents crashed to the ground, and Sing Loo was all but in the fire. He singed the end of his pigtail badly.

"Oh, gollee!" cried the Chinaman, picking himself up. "Sing Loo velly nearly roast porkee. Me muchee velly sorry no 'sweetee to end mealtee."

"You're a careless rascal!" growled Mr. Whittaker, laughing.

"Sing Loo most hon'ble Chinaman. He no lascal, but clever Chinaman like Sing Loo he makee good brothee from puppy dogee. You catch dogee, then Sing Loo boil him upee. Him velly fine dishee."

And he smiled in his bland way, rubbed his stomach as if in anticipation of a fine feed of dog in the near future, and went away.

"I believe old Sing Loo could make a tasty dish out of pickled cels' feet and some of this scrub and grass," laughed Reggie.

"Why," exclaimed Jimmy, "we've—"

"Hist!" broke in the doctor quickly. "Be quiet!" All were immediately on the alert.

From far away there came the faint sound of dismal howls. "Wolves!" said Mr. Whittaker laconically.

"Cheer-o!" whispered Jimmy. "Now for some fun!" "If they come in a very large pack, which I very much think they will do," went on Mr. Whittaker, "they'll be about as much as we can manage."

He rose, left them for a minute or two, but soon returned. "I've just been to calm the natives," he explained, "and I've told Toothy Jim to look after them. If those black fellows get in a panic, there's no saying what they'll do. And now," he added, "while we're waiting for our friends

the wolves, I'll tell you about the giant sloth we're out to bag—if it can be caught."

"Fire away, gov'nor!" cried Reggie. "It'll be stunning!"

"To put it briefly, it's like this," began Mr. Whittaker.

"Before man came on this earth, it was peopled by gigantic beasts and reptiles. The giant sloth, a huge mammal, as big as an elephant, roamed the plains, swamps, and mighty forests of Patagonia. This giant sloth was covered with thick red-brown hair and fur, sometimes walked on all fours, occasionally rose on his hind legs and shambled along on them for a little. Like a gigantic kangaroo when that animal squats on its haunches, the giant sloth must have resembled it when, crouching on its hind legs, it browsed on the leaves of the high trees, stretching out its somewhat long neck to get at the far-off branches. It must have been a terrible beast to encounter. I have heard rumours that the giant sloth, long since believed to be extinct, is not really so, but that it has been recently seen alive in Patagonia. We're out to bag it."

There was silence. The boys were thrilled, and not a little awed. What an adventure—to capture such a monster!

"And if we do get it, gov'nor," said Reggie, "you'll be famous, won't you?"

"It would certainly add to our laurels," said Mr. Whittaker.

"Then," said Reggie, "I guess we'll capture the brute."

The dead silence of the night was suddenly broken by a terrible howling and shrieking at very close quarters.

"The wolves are on us!" shouted Mr. Whittaker, jumping up and seizing his rifle. "Every one of you up with his gun!"

As he spoke, a number of dim, grey, shadowy forms could be seen by the flickering light of the fire, about fifty yards away. The eyes of the hungry beasts glowed and glittered as the brutes lifted their noses and sniffed, snarling and growling.

Then there came the ear-piercing shriek from a native—the horrid sound of a heartrending snort and shriek of a mule. The wolves had attacked them!

Mr. Whittaker's rifle cracked out, followed by Reggie's, Jimmy's, Larry's, and the doctor's. Again and again, in rapid succession, the rifles spoke. The whole pack seemed to be closing in around them. Several wolves lay dead, but their companions, after tearing at the carcasses, came on again. Scores of them advanced. Once more the rifles spoke, smoke and lead.

"Back, back!" cried Mr. Whittaker. "Back to the river!"

Stumbling in the darkness, firing as they went, the boys followed Mr. Whittaker as best they could. And now they had reached the very edge of the raging waters. Swiftly the wolves seemed to be closing round them, snarling and howling. Suddenly two great fiery eyes seemed to loom close up to Reggie and Jimmy, who were side by side. A dim, grey, shaggy form showed faint through the darkness. Then the brute snarled and leapt. Both boys fired simultaneously, and stepped back. Then they tripped, and with a cry of utter despair, fell headlong into the swirling black waters of the rushing stream.

(Another long instalment of this splendid new serial story next Wednesday. Order your copy early.)

NOTICES—continued.

Arthur I. Crompton, 73, Clithero Road, Longsight, Manchester, wants to buy GEMS or "Magnets" of the 2d. series. Private A. Munns, 4th Northants Regiment, B Co., C Lines, West Camp, Wendover, would be glad to correspond with some readers of the GEM.

Miss G. Cooper, 12, Culmore Road, Ballham, S.W., would be glad to hear from readers willing to assist her in the formation of a "Gem" and "Magnet" League. Will all writing please send stamped addressed envelopes?

Lance-Corporal A. Draper, 10580, A Co., 6th Bedford Regiment, B.E.F., France, would be glad to receive letters from girl readers.

D. S. Thomas, Pontefract, near Newcastle Emlyn, wants to buy Nos. 1—24 of the "Penny Popular."

H. Hindson, 1246, 25 Dormitory, R.N. Barracks, Shotley, would be glad to correspond with readers.

Driver G. Harris, 295, attached 1/3 S.M. Brigade, R.F.A., Ammunition Column, 48th S.M. Division, B.E.F., France, would be grateful for back numbers.

A. Douglas, 13, Richardland Road, Kilmarnock, wants to join some local "Gem" or "Magnet" League.

Stoker J. Baker, 67 Mess, H.M.S. Valiant, c/o G.P.O., London, would be glad to correspond with a girl reader.

Yours Editor