

HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER!

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



RACKE HAS NO USE FOR REGGIE!

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HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER!

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

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Called to Account.

"**G**OT your camera?"
Manners did not answer.
Manners of the Shell was standing by the study window, with his hands driven into his pockets, and a deep, dark frown upon his face. A letter lay on the floor at his feet.

Tom Merry looked at him in astonishment from the doorway.

"Hallo! What's up, Manners, old scout?"

Manners grunted.

Tom's eyes wandered to the letter on the floor.

"Bad news?" he asked.

"Oh, no!"

"Then what are you scowling about?"

Grunt!

"Is anything wrong?"

Grunt!

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry, in perplexity.

Monty Lowther, the third partner in the celebrated Co., known at St. Jim's as the Terrible Three, came along the passage, and looked in.

"I'm waiting for you chaps," he said. "Blake's waiting, Dig's waiting, Herries is waiting, Gussy's waiting! If Manners is going to bring that blessed camera, he had better buck up. I suggest leaving it at home. Life's full of troubles, without adding a camera."

"Seems to be something up with Manners," said Tom Merry.

Monty Lowther gave a deep groan.

"Anything happened to the camera?" he asked. "Last time it was lost it nearly turned my hair grey. Lost your camera, Manners?"

"No, ass!"

"Well, where is it?"

"Eh? Oh, somewhere! Bother it!"

Even Monty Lowther became serious at that. When Manners of the Shell expressed impatience with his camera, it was clear that there was something very wrong with Manners of the Shell.

Regardless of the four Fourth Formers waiting at the foot of the staircase, all ready for the little excursion planned for that afternoon, Tom and Lowther came into the study, and the door was shut.

"Now, what is it?" asked Monty Lowther. "Get it off your chest, Henry, my son! Pitch the tale of woe into the sympathetic ears of your Uncle Montague!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Thanks! If it's bad news from home—"

"It isn't."

"Good, so far. That's a letter from your pater?"

"Yes."

"Dear old gent blowing you up?" asked Lowther, with great sympathy. "Warning you not to be extravagant with films in war-time. Bear it with patience, dear boy. I get the same from my uncle. Money's tight—remittances grow scarcer and scarcer. You write home for tin, and you get a sermon instead of cash. It's the common lot;

one of the ills that flesh is heir to in war-time. Let me make a suggestion."

"Grunt!"

"I've got a good idea," continued Lowther. "Give up photography for three years, or the duration of the war. After all, why add to war worry? We've stood that camera a long time. I don't think we ought to have to stand that and the war together. Send it to a fund, and be happy!"

"You silly ass!" roared Manners.

"If that's what you call gratitude for a friendly suggestion, Manners, I can only say that your idea of gratitude is more worthy of a Hun than a human being," said Monty Lowther severely.

"Dry up, Monty!" said Tom Merry.

"Now, Manners, old man, what's the trouble? Don't mind Monty. He was born funny. What's worrying you?"

"Everything!" grunted Manners.

"Well, that's a big order!" commented Lowther. "What special variety of everything, at the present moment?"

Manners picked up the letter from the floor.

"This is from my pater," he said.

"Alas! Those paters!" murmured Lowther. "Twas ever thus!"

"It's about my minor."

"Oh!" said Manners' chums simultaneously.

They understood now.

Reggie Manners of the Third Form, was something of a thorn in the side of his major. Every fellow who had a minor in the school agreed that it was not all lavender, so to speak—excepting Levison of the Fourth, whose minor was a pattern to all minors, according to Levison.

"What's Reggie been doing?" asked Tom. "Nothing very serious surely?"

"The little beast!"

"Draw it mild, old chap!" said Tom uncomfortably.

"You fellows can get off," said Manners; "I'm not coming out this afternoon. I don't feel like it. Cut off!"

"Rats! What about your minor?" asked Lowther.

Manners gave a snort. As a rule, Manners was rather a quiet fellow, and seldom expressed strong feelings or strong opinions on any subject. He talked less than his comrades, but perhaps he thought more. It was odd and unusual to see Manners disturbed like this.

"Haven't I looked after him?" he demanded, glaring at Tom Merry and Lowther as if they had accused him of not looking after Reggie.

"Of course you have, old scout," said Lowther. "Like the merry apple of your eye."

"Wasn't he a spoky little beast when he came to St. Jim's?"

"Ahem! He was."

"Didn't he get taken up by Cutts of the Fifth, and didn't I put a stop to it?"

"Quite so."

"Didn't I thrash Racke of the Shell for giving him a cigarette?"

"I held your jacket," said Lowther. "Like me to hold it again? Thrashings are good for Racke."

"Haven't I jawed him?"

"You have—from firstly unto eleventhly," said Lowther.

"And now he's been home for the week-end, and the pater's caught him smoking!" howled Manners. "So he comes down on me."

"Oh!"

"How can I help it? I've done all I can except licking him. And if I licked him, and the pater got to hear of it, there would be another row. He would call that bullying my young brother," said Manners bitterly.

"Manners, old chap—"

"Oh, don't 'Manners, old chap' me!" snorted Manners. "It's always the same. The pater thinks the whole world of Reggie, and I come a bad second. I've always known that, and got used to it. I haven't grumbled. Reggie always has money to spend on cigarettes, when I can't afford a new roll of films. I haven't complained. I—I don't care! I don't care a rap! What does it matter? But—but how can I stop Reggie smoking, if he won't listen to me when I tell him not to? I can't help it, can I?"

"But I thought Reggie had given up that silly rot," said Tom Merry. "I thought he was going straight."

"So did I. I suppose he's broken out again. Racke chipping in very likely," Manners clenched his hands. "You know how Racke tried to get even with Levison, by getting his minor into his rotten ways. He didn't score there. I suppose he's at the same game with my minor. I can't be watching the kid all the time, can I? I'll give Racke another hiding, anyway."

"Easy does it," said Tom. "You don't know that Racke's done anything yet. Has your pater been ragging you?"

"Listen to this!" said Manners bitterly. And he read jerky extracts from the letter. "Surprised to find Reggie in bad habits—fully believed and trusted that you would keep him under your eye—bitterly disappointed—make an appeal to you to show your young brother, little more than a child, every care, even at the cost of sacrificing your own pleasure." Manners crushed the letter in his hand. "Just as if I were always thinking of myself," he went on, "and never caring about Reggie! I'll bet you there isn't a chap in the school who's worried about his minor as I have."

Tom Merry and Lowther were uncomfortably silent.

They had seen Mr. Manners several times, and they had not failed to observe his partiality for his younger son.

It was bitterly unjust, for Manners was well worth a dozen of Reggie, though Reggie was a good little fellow in his way. His faults were chiefly those of a thoughtless lad who had been too much petted and spoiled at home. And they knew that Manners had a strong affection

for his brother, worry as he was, and that his affection and respect for his father had never faltered, though sorely tried.

This outburst from poor Manners showed only too plainly how deeply the sense of injustice rankled in his breast for once.

The chums of the Shell hardly knew what to say.

Manners thrust the letter into his pocket at last, a flush creeping into his cheeks.

"I didn't mean to tell you fellows about this," he muttered. "I've let my tongue run away with me."

"Rot!" said Tom. "We'll take Reggie in hand again, old chap. He's a good little bouncer, really. His faults are only on the surface—"

Manners brightened a little.

"That's so," he said. "He's all right; only he's had his way too much. He's only kicked over the traces because some

on Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "to inform you fellows that we are waitin', and we are weady to win the boat out."

"Sorry!" said Tom Merry. "The fact is—"

"You fellows clear off!" said Manners.

"I'm going to see Racke."

"Not without you, fathead!"

"I tell you I'm going to thrash Racke!"

"Bai Jove! You weally cannot expect us to wait about while you are thwashin' Wacke, Manners."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Is anythin' the mattah?" asked Arthur Augustus, his noble brain realising at last that there was a thunderous atmosphere in the study.

"Well, yes," said Tom.

"Bai Jove! I am sowwy I intwuded, then. If there is anythin' the mattah, howevah, I wecommand you to confide it to me, and I will advise you," said Arthur Augustus graciously. "You can

head of the stairs. Blake and Herries and Digby were leaning on the banisters on the lower landing.

"Well, are you coming?" shouted Blake.

"Pway come up heah, deah boys! Mannahs is goin' to thwash Wacke befoah we go on the wivah."

"Blow Racke!" grunted Herries. "Can't he thrash Racke after we come in?"

"It appeahs not, deah boy."

"Well, we can spare a few minutes to see Racke thrashed," remarked Digby. "Come on! It will do Racke good."

"Yaas, it's up to us, as scouts, to do a good turn every day, deah boys. Let's go and watch Mannahs doin' Wacke a good turn."

And the chums of Study No. 6 came along the Shell passage to look on.

Meanwhile Manners was kicking the locked door of Racke's study.

"Who the thunder's there?" shouted Racke, from within.

"I am. Open the door!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Will you open the door, Racke?"

"No, I won't!"

Kick, kick, kick! Thump! Bang!

"Bai Jove, you'll have the House-mastah up at this wate, Mannahs!" remarked D'Arcy. "Do you want Waiton heah?"

"I don't care twopence!"

Kick, kick, kick! went Manners' boot on the study door.

The door was suddenly unlocked, and thrown open. Manners might not care twopence, but Aubrey Racke certainly cared more than that sum whether Mr. Railton was brought on the scene just then.

Racke looked out with a furious face.

"What do you want, confound you? How dare you—"

Manners thrust him roughly aside, and strode into the study. There was a haze of cigarette-smoke in the room.

Manners minor of the Third was standing by the table, with a startled face. Crooke of the Shell was seated there, grinning.

"Reggie!" rapped out Manners.

Reggie Manners looked sullen.

"Well?" he snapped.

"What are you doing here?"

"I suppose I can come here, if I like?" said Reggie defiantly.

"Bravo, young 'un!" said Crooke.

Manners turned to Crooke. He was in a towering rage, very unusual for the quiet, self-controlled Manners. Somebody was wanted as a scapegoat, and Crooke's remark brought Manners' wrath boiling down on him.

Manners did not speak to the cad of the Shell. He spun round on him, caught him by the collar, and dragged him over the back of his chair. The chair went flying, and Crooke sprawled on the floor with a fearful yell.

"That's enough for you!" panted Manners. "Hold your tongue now!"

"If you've come into my study to bully—" began Racke.

He got no further.

Manners rushed at him, and Racke put up his hands just in time.

"Bwavo!" shouted Arthur Augustus, waving his eyeglass in great excitement in the doorway. "Give him jip, deah boy! Whack him!"

"You mad fool, keep off!" yelled Racke, backing away and defending himself at the same time as best he could.

Crooke sat up, gasping and blinking. He would have joined in to help Racke, but Tom Merry & Co. were there to see fair-play. Crooke sat and gasped.

Racke was driven across the study under Manners' furious attack. His defence was soon beaten down, and he caught Manners' knuckles with his nose.

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Manners and His Minor.
(See Chapter 2.)

sneaking cad has been taking him in hand. I'll jolly well see Racke— Oh, clear off, fathead!" he broke out, as a tap came at the door.

But the door opened, and an eyeglass glimmered into the study.

"Waitin' for you, deah boys!" said a cheerful voice.

"Oh, rats!"

CHAPTER 2.

Rough on Racke!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY of the Fourth Form turned his eyeglass upon Manners, with a lofty and severe stare. The swell of St. Jim's was offended.

"Did you say wats to me, Mannahs?" he inquired icily.

"Yes, ass!"

"Then I can only wegard you, Mannahs, as a wude Hun!"

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

"I do not wegard that as an intelligent wemark, Mannahs. I came heah," went

wely on a fellow of tact and judgment, you know."

"Br-r-r-r!" grunted Manners. "I believe Racke has been getting at my minor, and I'm going to thrash him. That's all."

"I compwehend," said Arthur Augustus. "I was weally thinkin' of mentionin' to you, Mannahs, that I heard your minah speakin' in Wacke's studay as I came heah. I do not wegard Wacke as a fit associate for any chap's minah. I should wefuse to allow my minah to associate with him."

"In Racke's study—now?" exclaimed Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'll jolly soon put a stop to that!"

Manners strode to the door, and went striding along the Shell passage to Aubrey Racke's study.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Weally, you fellows—"

But Tom Merry and Lowther had gone.

Arthur Augustus ambled along to the

With a yell he stumbled back over Crooke, and rolled upon him. There was another yell from Crooke.

"My hat! Who's being slaughtered?" asked a cool voice, as Levison of the Fourth came along the passage, with Clive and Cardew, his study-mates.

"Wacke," chuckled Arthur Augustus, "Mannahs has got his wag out, it appears!"

Manners stood looking down on Racke, his fists clenched and his eyes blazing. The juniors watched him in wonder and curiosity. They had never seen the quiet Manners like that before.

"What's Racke's awful crime?" yawned Cardew. "Been teachin' the young idea how to shoot—the wrong way?" He glanced at Reggie.

"Serve the cad right!" growled Clive. "I've noticed that young fool coming to this study. If he were my minor, I'd wallop him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Reggie Manners gave a defiant look. He had looked a little ashamed when he was found in Racke's study, but shame had given place to angry resentment.

"Mind your own bizney!" he rapped out. "What's it got to do with you, anyway?"

"Nothin', dear boy," smiled Cardew. "I believe in lettin' every silly ass go to the dogs his own way."

"Are you going to get up, Racke?" asked Manners, between his teeth.

"Hang you!" gasped Racke. "I'm done!"

Manners turned his back on the gasping rascal of the Shell. His eyes were fixed on his young brother now.

"You came here to smoke with those cads, Reggie?"

"Find out!" said Reggie sullenly.

"You've been playing cards, too, I suppose?"

"Find that out, too!"

Manners trembled with anger. Tom Merry made an involuntary step forward, his hand outstretched to stop him.

Manners gave him a look.

"I'm not going to touch him," he muttered. "You needn't interfere!"

"Pewwaps we had bettah wetiah, you fellows!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "This is wathah a delicate mattah!"

The same thought had occurred to the other fellows. Blake & Co. walked down the passage, and Levison and his chums followed. They did not want to hear the talk between Manners and his minor. Tom Merry and Lowther remained with their chum. Manners stood for a moment or two in thought. Then he looked round the study, and dragged open the drawer of the table.

"What are you going to do, you cad?" panted Racke from the floor.

Manners did not heed. In the table-drawer, as he suspected, were the cards and the box of cigarettes which had been thrust out of sight when he kicked at the door.

There was a crash as Manners dragged the drawer right out of the table, and articles of all kinds were scattered over the floor.

The Shell fellow stooped and picked up the cards and the cigarettes. Racke watched him with burning eyes. He did not dare to interfere.

With hasty hands Manners tore the cards in pieces and threw the fragments into the grate. Then he set his boot upon the cigarette-box, and ground it and its contents to ruins.

Racke gritted his teeth as he watched. "Now come with me, Reggie!" said Manners, in a choking voice.

"I won't!"

The elder brother, with a great effort, controlled his anger.

"Reggie, father's written to me about THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 494.

you to-day. He caught you smoking when you were home at the week-end. He thinks I've been neglecting you."

Reggie grinned.

"I've had a sermon about that from the pater," he said. "I'm not going to stand another from you, Harry!"

"Come away with me, Reggie!"

"I won't, I tell you!"

"You can't stay in this study."

"I'm going to!"

Manners drew a deep, deep breath.

"Reggie, you can't stay here! If you won't come away I shall have to take you. Don't drive me to doing that!"

"Let me alone!" said Reggie savagely.

"I've had enough of your dashed interference. Other fellows' majors don't keep on bossing them. D'Arcy minor wouldn't stand it from his major, and Frank Levison wouldn't."

"D'Arcy minor and Frank Levison wouldn't play the low, rotten blackguard as you're doing, Reggie!"

"Oh, cheese it! I've had enough of that!"

"Will you come away?"

"I've said I won't!"

"Then I shall take you."

Manners started towards the bag. Reggie looked at him incredulously at first. His experience of his brother had been that Harry's good-temper was equal to any strain. But Reggie had passed the limit this time.

He gave a passionate cry as his major's grasp closed on his collar with a grip that was like iron.

"Let me go! Let me go, hang you! I'll kick your shins! Let me go!"

Manners made no reply. He forced the bag towards the door. Tom Merry and Lowther silently making way for him. Reggie struggled furiously, and kicked out with savage force. Manners turned quite pale as he received a fierce back on the shin. He swung the bag out of the study, and sent him spinning into the passage.

"Now clear off!" he said thickly.

Reggie reeled against the wall, and looked at his brother with savage eyes.

"You bully!" he panted. "You rotten bully! I'll be even with you for that! You rotten bully!"

With unsteady steps, his breast heaving, the bag went down the passage. Manners stood looking after him till he disappeared in the staircase. The Shell fellow was limping a little; that savage kick had hurt him. But the anger slowly died out of his face. A look of utter despondency came into it instead. It was the reaction after the gust of rage that had passed over him.

"I—I'm not coming out this afternoon, you fellows," he muttered. "You get off. I'd rather be alone."

He went back into his study with that, and closed the door. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther looked at one another glumly.

"Nice afternoon!" murmured Lowther.

"I don't feel much inclined for the river," said Tom.

"Same here!"

"I'll tell Blake."

Manners remained shut up in the study. His chums did not disturb him. But they did not join the party for the river; they were too concerned about Manners. Levison & Co. joined Study No. 6 in the boat, and Tom Merry and Lowther remained in the school, in much less than their usual spirits.

CHAPTER 3.

Tact and Judgment Required!

"I'VE been thinkin', deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that announcement as he lay back on the cushions in the stern of the boat, which was floating homeward on

the current of the Ryll. The sun was setting, and Arthur Augustus' straw hat was tilted over his noble nose to shade his eyes.

Blake rested on his oar.

"You have!" he ejaculated.

"Yaas"

"Well, my hat!"

"Pway, don't be a funny ass, Blake! You can leave that to Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I have been thinkin', and I have decided what to do!"

"Going to take your turn with this oar?" asked Digby.

"You can go on wovin', Dig. I have been thinkin' about Mannahs minah."

"Blow Manners minor!" said six voices in unison.

"Weally, you fellows!"

"I wonder Manners don't wring his neck!" remarked Herries, in a reflective way. "I would!"

"There are othah ways of dealin' with a welfactowy minah, besides wingin' his neck, Hewwies. Look at my minah, f'winstance, and the way I manage him!"

"Do you?" said Clive.

"Yaas, wathah! Wally is an untidy little wascal, and his collah is nevah quite without wepwoach, but he is as stwaight as a stwing. I have wathah a way of dealin' with yougstah!" explained Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' to cackle at in that wemark, deah boys! Now, I am goin' to take the mattah in hand. Mannahs minah isn't a bad little beast, but he is easily led, you know. When Cutts of the F fish took him up he took to smokin', but he dwopped it when Mannahs made Cutts dwop him. Now Wacke has taken him in hand, it appears, and made the young ass think it is awf'ly dashin' to play the giddy ox!"

"Silly little idiot!" grunted Herries.

"But it is nevah too late to mend, Hewwies. A fellow can be set on the wight path. F'winstance, look at Levison."

"Eh! What about me?" demanded Levison.

"I am only mentioning you as an illustration, Levison. Look at Levison, deah boys. He used to be a wegulah wottah!"

"You silly chump!" growled Levison.

"I am only statin' the facts, Levison. You wemembah you used to gamble with Wacke, and smoke, and sneak down to the Gween Man to play billiards with that sportin' wascal Lodgey—What are you kickin' my foot for, Blake?"

"Ahem!"

"I am suah, Levison, that I do not mean to offend you in any way. I am merely weferrin' to your pwevious wottenness as an illustwation!"

"Would you like me to jam this oar under your chin?" asked Levison unpleasantly.

"Bai Jove! No! I wegard that as a widiculous question."

"Then you'd better find some other illustration if you must go on wagging your jaw!" said Levison tartly.

"I wefuse to have my wemarks chawactewised as 'waggin' my jaw,' Levison! I was merely weferrin' to your past, deah boy, as an illustwation of the fact that a wegulah wottah can be induced to leave the wotten downward path, you know, and become quite decent. You will wemembah that I backed you up when you were turnin' ovah a new leaf, and givin' up your wotten—Yawwooh!"

Arthur Augustus' tactful reminiscences were suddenly cut short as Levison jammed the end of the oar on his chest.

The swell of St. Jim's collapsed backwards on the cushions.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the boat's crew.

Arthur Augustus sat up dazedly.

"Gwooh! You uttah ass! You feahful wuffian! Gwoogh!"

Levison grinned, and dipped his oar again.

"I twust, deah boys, that it will not cause you any inconvenience if I give Levison a feahful thwashin'—"

"We shall cause you some inconvenience if you begin," said Blake. "Do you want my oar on your silly neck, too?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Dry up, ass!" grunted Herries.

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Hewwies! I will thwash you pwesently, Levison, you wuffian!"

"Hear, hear!" said Levison.

"To wesume my wemarks," said Arthur Augustus, with a glare at Levison.

"My opinion is that a chap can always turn ovah a new leaf if he wants to, if he is assisted by the advice of a fellow of tact and judgment. For that weason, I am goin' to take Mannahs minor in hand. Mannahs is a vewy decent sort, though he does wathah wowwy a fellow with his camewah, and I am goin' to look aftah his minah for him. I wegard it as bein' up to me."

"Better leave it alone," grunted Herries. "You'll only make matters worse."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"You always do, you know."

"You'll admit that, Gussy?" said Dig.

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort, you ass. My ideah is to speak to my minah in the Third Form, and bwing him to beah on youag Weggie. I shall also speak to Weggie personally, and I have not the slightest doubt that I shall be able to bwing him to see mattahs in the wight light."

"Bow-wow!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Rats!"

Arthur Augustus relapsed into indignant silence.

After all their experience of his well-known tact and judgment, it was really surprising that his chums had so little faith in it.

The swell of St. Jim's disdained to pursue the subject. He was willing to let events speak for themselves. When he had rescued the recalcitrant Reggie from the downward path he would be able to point to the result, and intimate gently to these doubting Thomases that he had been right all along.

Arthur Augustus was so full of his kind intentions that he quite forgot about giving Levison a fearful thrashing when the juniors landed on the St. Jim's raft.

Study No. 6, hungry after their row, started for the School House at once for tea, but Arthur Augustus stopped as he spotted the Terrible Three in the quadrangle.

"Bai Jove! There's Mannahs!" he said.

"Come on, fathead!"

"I am going to speak to Mannahs, Blake."

"You won't find much tommy left in the study, then!"

"Wats!"

"Look here, ass!" said Blake, taking his elegant chum by the ear. "Don't you shove your hoof into delicate family matters. Let Manners and his blessed minor alone. Savvy?"

"Pway welease my eeah, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, with cold dignity.

"Come in, then."

"Othahwise, I shall punch your nose, Blake!"

"Will you come in to tea, and not put your hoof into Manners' family concerns?" demanded Blake, exasperated.

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus jerked his noble ear

away, and left his chums. Blake and Dig and Herries went on, fully determined to consume Gussy's tea as well as their own if he did not turn up in time to save it. Heedless of that danger, the swell of St. Jim's approached the Terrible Three.

The chums of the Shell had not had a happy afternoon. Manners had remained a long time in the study by himself, till at last his chums routed him out, and made him come out for a trot in the quad. Manners was still looking gloomy, and Tom and Lowther were not very cheerful, as they walked almost in silence under the leafy elms.

"Hallo! Had a good time?" asked Tom, as D'Arcy came up.

"Yaas, all sewene," said Arthur Augustus. "You are lookin' wathah down in the mouth, Mannahs."

Mannahs gave a grunt.

"Still wowwyin' over your minah, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy sympathetically.

Grunt!

"The fact is, Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus, beaming with good-nature and good intentions. "I'm goin' to take your minah in hand."

"Eh?"

"I am goin' to look aftah Weggie. You fellows pwobably noticed that I had a vewy gweat deal to do with Levison turnin' ovah a new leaf—"

"I didn't," said Lowther.

"You are a wathah unobservant chap, Lowthah. It is a fact, all the same. I am goin' to do the same for Weggie."

"You needn't trouble," grunted Manners.

"No twouble at all, deah boy."

"You can leave my minor alone, fathead!"

"Ahem! The fact is, Mannahs, Weggie wequiah wathah a guidin' hand, you know," explained Arthur Augustus. "That's what he wants—a guidin' hand. I am goin' to guide him."

"Silly ass!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Don't you think Manners can give his minor all the guiding he wants?" asked Tom Merry.

"Judgin' by results, Tom Mewwy, I should say not."

"You thumping ass!" exclaimed Manners angrily. "Look here, if you want me to speak plainly, I don't want any interference from a silly Fourth Form fathead! Is that plain enough?"

"Yaas, Mannahs, that is quite plain enough—wathah too plain for politeness," said D'Arcy calmly. "I excuse your bad mannahs, deah boy, as I am awah that you are in wathah a wowwied state of mind, and I shall go ahead, all the same."

And Arthur Augustus walked away.

"You silly clump!" roared Manners. Manners was undoubtedly in a worried frame of mind, and Gussy's well-meant intervention seemed to him the last straw.

D'Arcy turned back.

"Mannahs, I wegard your language as the weverse of bein' in good taste."

"Well, don't be such a silly idiot!" said Manners surlily.

"I wefuse to be called a sillay idiot, Mannahs. I wegard you as a Hun, and but for the fact that I sympathise with you, I should give you a feahful thwashin'!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly.

And the swell of St. Jim's stalked away, with his noble nose high in the air. His colour was a little heightened as he came into Study No. 6.

"Hallo! Had a nice talk with Manners?" grinned Blake.

"Mannahs is wathah a Hun, Blake. Where is my tea?"

"Oh, where, an' oh, where can it be?" sang Blake tunefully.

"Have you fellows bolted my gwub?"

"We have—we has!"

"Alweady, you hungwy Huns?"

"No good losing time," said Digby. "You're just in time to save the last sardine. There's a bit of biscuit to go with it. You can have both."

"I wegard you as uttah wottahs! I do not considah this chummay at all!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "What am I goin' to have for tea?"

"Well, you've still got your tact and judgment," remarked Blake. "Keep them for yourself, and let poor old Manners off."

To which Arthur Augustus replied only "Wats!" His celebrated tact and judgment were going to be exercised in healing the breach between Manners major and Manners minor—though whether the result would be a success was a question open to considerable doubt.

CHAPTER 4.

Black Ingratitude!

"WEGGIE!"

Manners minor stopped, with an impatient look.

The Third Form had finished evening preparation, and some of the fags had come out of the Form-room after Mr. Selby had done with them. Wally and Levison minor and Joe Frayne came out together. Reggie Manners was scuttling away by himself when Arthur Augustus hailed him.

The swell of St. Jim's had evidently been lying in wait for Manners minor.

He tapped the fag on the shoulder, unheeding the impatient look on Reggie's face.

"Well?" grunted Reggie.

"I want to speak to you, deah boy. Will you come up to my studay?"

"Can't! I'm in a hurry!"

"Lines?" asked D'Arcy.

"No."

"It is wathah an important mattah, Weggie," said Arthur Augustus gently, and in a low voice. "The fact is, you have been playin' the giddy goat."

Reggie stared.

"What are you driving at?" he demanded.

"I am weferrin' to your fwiendship with Wacke of the Shell, Weggie. Aubwey Wacke is a wegulah wascal!"

"You can say that to Racke, not to me," sneered the fag.

Arthur Augustus coloured.

"Bai Jove! If you mean to imply, Mannahs minor, that I am wunnin' a chap down behind his back—"

"Well, what are you doing, then?"

The swell of the Fourth breathed hard through his nose. Managing Manners minor was not easy, even for a fellow of tact and judgment.

"I have often made the same wemark to Wacke himself, Weggie. That uttah wottah is leadin' you into bad ways."

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Cheese it!" said Reggie.

"Bai Jove!"

Reggie Manners went on up the stairs, leaving the swell of St. Jim's rooted to the floor for a few moments. But Arthur Augustus was a stickler. He recovered himself, and pursued the fag up the staircase, overtaking him on the landing.

"Weggie, I insist upon speakin' to you!" Reggie did not stop, and D'Arcy walked on beside him resolutely. "You are gettin' into bad ways, Weggie, and wowwyin' your majah—"

"Blow my major!"

"The way you are goin' on, Weggie, you will bwing down the gwey hairs of your wespected pawents in sowwow to the gwave!"

"Oh, don't be funny!"

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"I am not bein' funnay, you cheekay young wascall!" shouted Arthur Augustus, very near to losing his temper at last. "I am disgusted with you, Weggie!"

"Well, don't tell all St. Jim's about it," growled Reggie. "Can't you mind your own bizney?"

"Where are you goin', Weggie?" asked D'Arcy, as the fag stopped at the foot of a staircase that led up to the box-rooms.

"Find out!"

"If you are simply twyin' to avoid my wemarks, Weggie—"

"Great pip! Are you wound up?" exclaimed Reggie. "Can't you chuck it?"

"I wefuse to chuck it, Weggie. I am speakin' to you for your own good," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I wefuse to allow you to keep on in this way. If you were not a young ass, you would see that Wacke is only leadin' you into wascality, because he is up against Mannahs. As a mattah of fact, he must be laughin' at you in his sleeve all the time."

Reggie's eyes burned. It did not occur to the swell of St. Jim's that this was not the most tactful way of addressing an obstinate, self-willed, spoiled boy.

"Is that all?" snarled the fag.

"I appeal to you, Weggie, to chuck it!" said Arthur Augustus. "I want you to pwomise me to have nothin' more to do with Wacke."

"Well, I won't!"

"Weggie!"

"For goodness' sake, give a chap a rest!" exclaimed Manners minor. "Don't interfere with me, you silly chump!"

"Bai Jove!"

With that Manners minor ran up the staircase.

Arthur Augustus' eyeglass almost glittered with wrath. He ran up the staircase, but stopped, as he saw three fellows on the landing above. Racke and Crooke of the Shell, and Mellish of the Fourth, were there, and Reggie Manners was safe behind them.

"Bai Jove! Let me pass, you wottahs!"

"No admittance except on business," grinned Mellish.

"Chuck him down!" said Racke.

"If you venchah to lay a singah on me, Wacke— Bai Jove! Yaw-oooh!"

The three juniors collared the swell of St. Jim's before he could finish. He was taken at a disadvantage, with the trio above him on the landing, and three to one against him. There was a sound of loud bumping as the swell of the Fourth rolled down, helped by thrusting boots from above, and a yell of laughter followed him.

Arthur Augustus clung to the banisters half-way down, gasping. He was feeling very bumped and dishevelled.

"Gwoogh! Oh, deah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the landing above.

"Gwoogh! You uttah cadah!"

"Come up again!" chortled Crooke.

Arthur Augustus did not need asking twice. Gussy never counted odds. He charged furiously up the stairs, meaning to take instant vengeance upon the black sheep of the School House.

This time Reggie lent a hand, and four pairs of hands were laid on the swell of the Fourth as he reached the landing.

Bump, bump, bump!

Once more Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went rolling down the stairs, and this time he reached the bottom before he came to a halt.

"Ha, ha!" roared Racke. "Try it again!"

But Arthur Augustus did not try it again. It had dawned upon his aristocratic brain that it was too big a proposition. He shook a furious fist up the staircase, and limped away, deferring vengeance till a more convenient opportunity.

Racke & Co., chortling gleefully, went into the box-room.

CHAPTER 5.

Wally Takes a Hand!

A DEEP and earnest consultation was proceeding in the window recess, at the end of the Form-room passage, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy returned thither. D'Arcy minor and Frank Levison, Joe Frayne and Curly Gibson were debating a most important matter.

The matter was nothing less than supper in the Third Form-room. Mr. Selby having cleared off after prep, the fags had the Form-room to themselves and were at liberty to prepare their supper there—if they had anything to prepare. The food regulations, added to shortness of cash—perennial in the Third Form—made the matter one for deep and anxious consideration.

"There's four of us," Wally D'Arcy was remarking thoughtfully. "I must say sevenpence isn't much for four."

"With the dashed grub rules thrown in," said Curly Gibson discontentedly. "I don't see stopping cakes. Why can't they stop something else?"

"Well, you see, they're jolly old fogies who make the laws," said Wally sagely. "I don't suppose they care much for cakes."

"There isn't anything to make the cakes of, perhaps," suggested Levison minor. "Food's short, you know."

"That's all very well," said Curly. "If I was the Government, I should sink the German submarines instead of stopping cakes. Wouldn't that be better?"

"Well, you ain't the Government," remarked Joe Frayne; "and until you are, Curly, we shall have to get on without cakes. Besides, we couldn't get cake all round for sevenpence!"

"Manners minor has got some money. I saw him with a currency note to-day. Where's he got to?"

"He's always scuttling off somewhere lately," growled Wally. "If he's got a currency note, that would see us all through. Anybody know where he is?"

"Oh, gone off somewhere."

"Well, I think we'd better have herrings," said Wally. "Tuckshop ain't closed yet, and there's no rot about not having herrings. You know how I cook herrings, too."

"I jolly well do!" said Curly. "And what I say is—don't let's have herrings."

Wally gave his chum a glare. The implied criticism of his cookery was not flattering.

"If you don't like the way I cook herrings, you needn't have any, young Gibson! I vote for herrings," said Wally. "You get most for the money. Besides, they're filling—I saw that in the paper."

"We haven't any bread," suggested Frayne.

"Well, we can do without. Bread's allowanced, and herrings ain't. We've got to get used to living without bread. I don't suppose there'll be any at all next winter, if the war goes on. I'm not gone on bread, anyway," said Wally disdainfully. "I'd go without it for ten years to beat the Huns."

"Well, make it herrings," said Levison minor. "We sha'n't have time to cook anything at all if we jaw about it much longer!"

"Wally, deah boy—"

"Hallo, cocky!"

Arthur Augustus frowned. His minor met with his lofty approval in many ways, but his manner could not be called meek or respectful.

"Pway don't be so beastly slangay, Wally! I have a wathah sewious mattah to speak to you about."

"Then you can leave it till the vac," said D'Arcy minor promptly. "No time for your giddy sermons now, Gus, old scout!"

"Pway listen to me, Wally! It is about Mannahs minah."

"Oh," said Wally, "Do you know where Reggie is? Curly says he's got a currency note."

"I understand, Wally, that Weggie is a friend of yours."

"Oh, yes, we get on all serene," said Wally indifferently. "Blow that! Where is he? He's got to whack out that currency note, if he's got one."

"Weggie is in wathah a bad way, Wally."

"Rot!" said Wally. "I saw him not half an hour ago, and he was all right. What's the matter with young Manners, then?"

"He is goin' on the downward path, Wally."

"The which?"

"The downward path."

"Do you mean he's going downstairs?"

"No, you young ass! He is goin' to wack and wuin!" said Arthur Augustus impressively. "I have wemonstated with him, but he wefuses to pay attention to my wemarks!"

"No wonder! You're a beastly bore, you know!"

D'Arcy's eye gleamed behind his monocle as the fags chuckled.

"I should be sowwy to thwash you, Wally—" he began.

"You'd be sorry if you started," agreed Wally. "Cut that out, Gussy! Where's young Manners? Do you know whether he's really got a currency note? Curly says he saw it!"

"I am goin' to make an appeal to you, Wally, and to Fwayne and Levison minah and Gibson," said Arthur Augustus. "I wequest you to look aftah Weggie, and help to keep him out of wotten ways. Pwayaps you are not awah that he has chummed up with Wacke of the Shell?"

"I've noticed him speaking to the cad, now you mention it," said Wally. "But he hasn't chummed with him. We don't chum with the Shell!"

"No fear!" said the fags loftily, in chorus.

"Wacke is leadin' him into smokin' and playin' cards, Wally—"

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"Gammon!" said Frayne.

"I want you youngstahs to wally wound him in his hour of need," said the swell of St. Jim's, with great earnestness. "You must tweek him vevy gently, and in a vevy kind and fwiendly way endeavah to lead him back to the wight path. You undahstand?"

"Let me catch him blagging with Racke, and disgracing the Third, that's all!" snorted Wally. "I'll lead him back to the right path quick enough—so quick it will make his head spin round like a giddy top!"

"But it can't be right!" said Levison minor. "Reggie isn't that sort of an ass!"

"I am sowwy to say it is only too twue," said Arthur Augustus sadly. "At this vevy moment he is in the top box-room with Wacke and Cwooke and Mellish. My endeayahs have been in vain, so fah; but if you act in a vevy kind and gentle mannah with him, deah boys, I feel suah— Where are you going?"

"Come on, kids!" said Wally. "We'll

jolly soon see whether there's anything in it, and if there is—my hat!"

"You will be vewy gentle, Wally?"

"Oh, yes! We'll coo over him like a whole family of turtle-doves!" said D'Arcy minor sarcastically. "We'll take him to our waistcoats and weep over him—I don't think! Come on, you chaps!"

The fags scuttled off, leaving Arthur Augustus standing with a very dubious expression on his face. Judging by appearances, Wally & Co. were not likely to be very kind and gentle with Reggie if they found him "blagging" with the cad of the Shell. There wasn't room for an amateur blackguard in the Third so long as Wally was the head of that important Form.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I twust Wally will be vewy tactful with the young ass—though he is wathah wantin' in tact, I feah. Howevah, I am suah I have acted for the vewy best. I have done old Mannahs a weally good turn!"

And the swell of St. Jim's walked away, greatly comforted by the reflection that he had acted for the very best, and with great tact and judgment.

Meanwhile, Wally & Co. had reached the top box-room in a whooping crowd.

It was a secluded spot, and it was not uncommon for doggish fags to retire there to smoke cigarettes in dead secret, with a solemn pretence of enjoyment.

But Wally was very much down on doggishness in the Third Form. He had licked Piggott of the Third a dozen times for over-doing doggishness, and he was quite prepared to deal in the same drastic way with Manners minor.

"Hallo, the door's locked!" said Curly Gibson, trying the handle.

"We'll jolly soon have that open!" said Wally. "Hallo! I say, Reggie! Are you in there, Manners minor?"

There was no reply from within the box-room.

"We know you're there!" shouted Joe Frayne. "Let us in, Reggie! We're going to snatch you bald-headed!"

Probably Reggie did not regard that offer as a tempting one. At all events, the door did not open.

"We'll smash it in," said Wally.

"There'll be a row," said Frank Levison. "Look here, you wait till I fetch my screwdriver, and we'll have the lock off!"

"Good egg!"

The door opened, and Crooke of the Shell looked out angrily.

"You cut off, you cheeky young wasters! Don't make a row here!"

"We want Manners minor."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Wally and Levison minor pushed on the door, Crooke, however, keeping his foot against it. Through the opening the fags could see Racke and Mellish and Reggie Manners, whose face was red.

"Come out of that, young Manners!" roared Wally.

Manners minor rose from the box he was sitting on. He was evidently ashamed of being caught by his Form-fellows in company with the black sheep of St. Jim's.

"Don't go, you young ass!" said Racke scornfully.

Reggie hesitated.

"We're not going without him," said Wally determinedly. "And if you interfere, Racke, you'll get a hiding!"

"You cheeky cub—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Wally.

"Help me kick the young cads downstairs!" said Crooke savagely.

"Begin as soon as you like," retorted D'Arcy minor. "It won't be us who'll go down the stairs, my pippin!"

"Ear, ear!" chuckled Joe Frayne.

"Are you coming, Manners minor?"

"I—I'll come!" muttered Reggie.

He glanced at his companions; but Racke did not speak again. The heir of Messrs. Racke & Hacke did not want a pitched battle in the box-room. It might have attracted too much attention to him and his sportive pursuits.

Reggie Manners stepped out on the landing. Crooke, with a muttered oath, slammed the door after him, and locked it again. On the landing, Reggie's friends looked at him very grimly.

"You're a pretty specimen!" said Wally scornfully.

"Oh, rats!" muttered Reggie. "No harm—"

"Come away, you shady young cad!"

"Look here, Wally—"

"Shut up, and come away!"

Reggie looked sullen, but his friends closed round him, and he was marched down the narrow stairs in the midst of the Third-Formers.

The amateur black sheep had been snatched like a brand from the burning, but he did not look grateful for the kind intervention of his Form-fellows. And he had a well-founded apprehension that there was more to come!

CHAPTER 6.

Trouble in the Third.

"CHEER-IO, old scout!" murmured Monty Lowther.

The Terrible Three had been working at their prep in the study. Manners had left his work quite half-undone, however. He was usually a keen and steady worker, but he was quite off his form now.

His chums had seen him take out his father's letter, and read it twice again. The bitter injustice of that letter weighed on Manners' mind, and worse than that was the knowledge that he could not do what he was expected to do.

Reggie seemed to be going from bad to worse, and his major could not stop him. He could not watch the fag all the time, and see that he had nothing to do with Racke & Co. Even if he did, there were plenty of other ways in which the reckless fag could play the giddy goat if he chose.

It was not that Reggie had vicious tendencies. It was only that he was self-willed and obstinate, and resented any sign of opposition. It had been easy for the cunning Racke to flatter him and instil into his mind a distrust and suspicion of his brother.

Racke's motive was dislike of the Terrible Three, and a desire to make them sit up. Manners' minor was worth nothing to him. Racke, the son of an enormously wealthy war-profitier, did not care for the wretched shillings he might win from the fag at nap or banker. He was deliberately leading the boy into evil, partly from a sardonic sense of amusement, and partly to pay off old scores against Manners and his chums.

How was Manners to deal with that? How could he make it clear to his father, who expected so much of him?

Any explanation of his own helplessness in the matter would sound like an accusation against Reggie, which would be flatly disbelieved. And Manners could not say out what he knew to be true—that it was the petting and spoiling he received at home which were at the bottom of the whole trouble with Reggie. Respect for his father prevented that.

And Manners' sense of duty was strong. He could not ask, like Cain of old, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

It was no wonder that Manners was despondent that evening. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther were sympathetic, but they found the atmosphere of the usually cheery study depressing.

Manners rose to his feet at last. He was quite unable to put his mind into his

work. His face was flushed as he looked at his chums.

"I'm sorry I've been such a dashed wet blanket, you chaps," he said. "I know it's rotten! But I feel rotten! I'll get out for a bit."

"Don't mind us!" said Tom Merry. "I wish we could do something to help, Manners, old chap."

"I—I think I was a bit hard on Reggie, perhaps, when I found him in Racke's study this afternoon," said Manners. "It's no good quarrelling with the kid—that won't do any good. I think I'll trot along and see him."

He left the study.

"A bit hard on him!" said Lowther reflectively. "If the little rotter were my minor I'd skin him! I'd scalp him! I'd boil him in oil! If I were Manners I'd borrow Herries' dogwhip, and give him a really thorough lesson."

"You wouldn't!" said Tom. "I don't think it would do any good, either. What Reggie wants is a firm hand at home, and poor old Manners knows it, only he can't say so his pater. Br-r-r-r!"

The chums of the Shell went on with their prep, while Manners, his hands in his pockets and his face clouded, passed down to the Form-room.

He knew that Third Form prep had been over some time and he expected to find his minor there.

There was a vague idea in Manners' mind of appealing to the little scape-grace, and touching his better nature. He knew that Reggie's heart was good, with all his faults, and perhaps by patience and kindness he could succeed in making the fag look at things as he did. It was youthful thoughtlessness that was hardest to combat; even the fact that Manners was generally blamed for his minor's shortcomings seemed more or less a joke to Reggie.

A loud buzz of voices sounded in the Third Form-room when Manners reached it. Something unusual was evidently going on in the purlieus of the Third. The Shell fellow opened the door, and looked in.

More than half the Third were present at the farther end of the room, gathered round Manners minor. All attention was upon the proceedings in hand, and the fags did not notice Manners at the door. The junior paused quietly, and looked on at the scene. It was plain enough that his minor was in trouble with the Third.

Reggie looked savage and sullen. Many of the fags were grinning as they crowded round him, but some of them seemed shocked and disgusted.

Wally was pointing an accusing finger at his erstwhile chum.

"Look at him!" said Wally accusingly.

"We're looking!" grinned Jameson.

"We are—we is!" chortled Hobbs.

"This isn't a laughing matter, young Hobbs. Reggie has disgraced the Form!"

"Awful!" sniggered Piggott.

"We found him," continued Wally—"we found him in the top box-room, playing cards with Racke and Crooke and Mellish. They were all smoking."

"Horrid!" said Piggott.

"Dashed young blackguard!" said Jameson.

"That kind of dirty rot is good enough for the Shell," went on Wally. "It's not good enough for the Third. If a chap's sacked from St. Jim's for blagging, it's not going to be a Third Form chap!"

"Hear, hear!"

"What have you got to say for yourself, young Manners?" demanded Wally.

Reggie scowled.

"Speak up!" said Hobbs.

"I've got nothing to say, except that I won't be interfered with!" growled Reggie. "Can't you let a fellow alone? I have had jaw from my major, more

than enough; I've had jaw from D'Arcy major, who can't mind his own bizney. Well, you chaps mind your own business—see?"

"Ain't you ashamed of yourself?" demanded Frayne.

"No, you ass!"

"Then you jolly well ought to be!"

"Oh, rats!"

Manners' minor was evidently unrepentant. His chief feelings at that moment seemed to be exasperation.

"That's all he's got to say!" said Wally, greatly incensed. "That's a chap who's been our pal, and now he's chumming up with Shell fellows, and picking out the shadiest of the whole gang to chum with! Why, chaps in his own Form don't speak to Racke—most of 'em wouldn't touch him with a barge-pole!"

"Racke ain't a bad sort," muttered Reggie.

"Hark at him!" exclaimed Wally, exasperated. "Look here, young Manners, I don't want to be hard on you. I'll only make you give your word, honest Injun, never to speak to Racke again, and to hit him if he speaks to you."

"Well, I won't!" said Reggie sullenly.

"You stick to that?"

"Yes I do."

"Then you'll get the frog's-march, for your cheek," said Wally darkly; "and after that, you'll be sent to Coventry by the Form, to last as long as you speak to Racke! What about that?"

"I don't care! I don't want to speak to you!"

"Don't you, you cheeky sweep? Collar him, you chaps, and give him the frog's-march!" exclaimed Wally wrathfully.

The next moment Manners minor was struggling furiously in the grasp of Wally & Co. He was swept off his feet, and bumped along the floor of the Form-room in the midst of a whooping mob of fags.

Manners of the Shell stood irresolute in the doorway.

If ever an obstinate and defiant young rascal deserved his punishment, Reggie did. But it went against the grain with the elder brother to see him bumped along, struggling madly and yelling, by the excited fags. Manners' irresolution lasted only a minute or two, and then he ran into the Form-room.

"Stop that!" he shouted.

There was a roar of wrath at once. Interference from a fellow in an Upper Form in their own quarters was an outrage the Third Form of St. Jim's would never tolerate for a moment.

"Yab!"

"Shell cad!"

"Kick him out!"

It was a deafening roar. Manners had caught Wally by the shoulder, and in a moment the whole mob of fags turned upon him. Reggie was dropped to the floor, and in the excitement he scrambled up and dodged out of the Form-room.

Manners was not so fortunate. He received the frog's-march instead of his minor, going right round the room by that uncomfortable method, and finishing up by being hurled into the passage.

The Shell fellow scrambled furiously to his feet. The doorway was crammed with defiant fags.

"Come back if you like!" hooted Wally.

Manners looked for a moment as if he would charge into the crowd. But he restrained himself, and turned breathlessly away, followed by a howl of derision from the victorious Third.

He had signally failed all along the line. His mind was quite beyond his control. He knew that. And Reggie's association with Racke would not come to an end because of any punishment the Third might decree.

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CHAPTER 7.

Unexpected Results!

"COME along, fathead!" said Jack Blake politely.

The chums of the Fourth had come out after morning lessons the following day, and they were heading for the cricket-ground when Arthur Augustus paused.

"What are you hanging about for?" demanded Digby. "We haven't much time for the nets before dinner."

"I am goin' to speak to Mannahs minah, deah boys. Pway come with me. I want you to see the result of my steppin' in," explained Arthur Augustus.

"Bow-wow!" grunted Herries.

But D'Arcy's chums assented, and they accompanied him as he bore down on Manners minor. They were really rather curious to see whether Gussy's kind intervention had done any good. They had strong doubts on the subject.

Manners minor was walking in the quadrangle by himself, with his hands driven into his pockets, and a moody look on his face. As the chums of Study No. 6 approached, Wally & Co. passed Manners minor, with their noses in the air, and without speaking to him.

The Fourth-Formers viewed that proceeding with astonishment. Evidently Reggie was on bad terms now with his former chums in the Third.

Wally & Co. ignored the fag in the most pointed manner. Wally curled his lip at him; Levison minor coloured, and looked another way. Joe Frayne sniffed; Curly Gibson snorted.

They walked on, leaving Reggie crimson with anger.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "The young ass has been quawwellin' with his friends now. Pewwaps I shall be able to set the mattah wight, howevah."

"Or make it worse," suggested Dig, with a grin.

"Wats!"

"Well, you know what you are!" said Dig, in an argumentative tone.

Arthur Augustus disdained to reply to that remark. He tapped Reggie Manners on the shoulder, and the fag looked round with a sullen brow. His eyes glinted at Arthur Augustus.

"Well, how are you gettin' on, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy encouragingly.

"Find out!"

"Ahem! I twust Weggie, that you are gettin' on all wight, and—"

"You rotter!" growled Reggie.

Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove! Wha-a-a-at did you call me, Mannahs minah?"

"Rotter!" shouted Reggie. "Sneaking tell-tale!"

"Gwest Scott!"

"If I were as big as you, I'd give you a jolly good licking!" said Reggie, glowering at the astounded and dismayed swell of St. Jim's. "That's what you want, you meddling, tale-telling rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake and Herries and Digby, in chorus. They could not help it. This result of his benevolent interference had taken Gussy so utterly aback, that he stood with his mouth open, like a fish out of water, blinking at the angry, sullen fag.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped, at last.

"Weally, deah boys, this young cad's feahful impertinence is not a laughin' mattah."

"Shall we go down to the cricket now?" grinned Herries.

"Wats!" Arthur Augustus recovered himself a little. "Weginald Mannahs, pway explain what you mean by applyin' those exceedingly oppwobvious expwessions to me!"

Reggie grunted, and turned away. But Gussy's hand on his shoulder stopped him, and spun him round again.

D'Arcy's eye was gleaming behind his monocle now. His temper had been ruffled.

"I have asked you to explain your expwessions, Mannahs minah!" he said icily. "I am waitin' for your explanation. If it is not immediately forth-comin', I shall pwoceed to administah a feahful thwashin'."

"Hear, hear!" said Herries. "That's what the young cub has wanted all the time!"

Reggie glared at the chums of the Fourth.

"You've been telling tales about me," he said sullenly.

"I weject the insinuation with scorn!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in great indignation. "How dare you make such a suggestion, you young wascal?"

"You know you have!" howled Reggie. "You told Wally and the rest that I was with Racke in the box-room. You know you did!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You can't deny it!" sneered Reggie.

"I have no intention of denyin' it," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I felt it my duty to acquaint my minah with the cires, so that he could bwing his influence to beah upon you, Weggie. If you wegard that as tellin' tales, I can only say that you are a sillay young wascal. I wequested Wally to tweek you with kind and tactful considewation, and lead you back into the wight path—"

"You silly chump! They ragged me in the Form-room, and now they've sent me to Coventry!" snarled Reggie.

"Oh, deah!"

"And I've got you to thank for it, you meddling idiot!"

And, with that polite remark, Manners minor swung away, and this time the swell of St. Jim's did not detain him.

Arthur Augustus looked at his chums. They were grinning. The seriousness of the matter seemed quite lost upon Blake and Herries and Dig.

"This is wathah wotten," said D'Arcy, after a pause. "I do not seem weally to have impwoved mattahs, somehow."

"Did you expect to?" chortled Blake.

"Yaas, I did, Blake. Sendin' the kid to Coventry is not the wight way to bwing him back to the wight path," said Arthur Augustus, in distress. "I shall have to speak to Wally vewy severely."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, pway don't cackle! There is nothin' whatevah to cackle at."

Wally & Co. had gone down to the cricket-field, and Study No. 6 followed them there. Wally was starting to bowl to Levison minor when Arthur Augustus stopped him.

"Wally, you young wepowobate—" began D'Arcy major sternly.

"Oh, don't you begin now, Gus!" said Wally imploringly. "Life's too short for your chinwag, you know."

"You young wascal!"

"Well, you old rascal!" said D'Arcy minor.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus choked down his wrath at this undutiful rejoinder. "Bai Jove! Wally, it appeahs that you have been waggin' Mannahs minah—"

"Smoky little beast!" said Wally. "Yes, rather, and serve him right! His major chipped in, and we ragged him, too."

"You have sent Weggie to Coventry, it appeahs."

"Yes, ass!"

"That is not the pwopah way to tweek him, Wally. I wequested you to tweek him with tact and considewation—"

"Well, we've sent him to Coventry instead," grinned Wally; "and nobody in the Third is going to speak to him so long as he pals with that cad Racke!"

"You show a feahful want of tact and judgment in tweekin' him in this way."

Wally," said Arthur Augustus, in distress. "He is an obstinate little boundah, and this will make him stick to Wacke all the more."

"Let him! We don't want him!"

"That is not the way to look at it, Wally."

"It's the way I look at it," said D'Arcy minor cheerfully.

"Yaas, but you are undah a misapprehension. Now, as your eldah bworah, it is my dutay to say—Yah! Yaw-oooh! You young wuffian!"

Arthur Augustus had not intended to conclude his remarks in that manner. He did so because Wally had suddenly tapped him forcibly on his aristocratic nose with the cricket-ball.

The swell of the Fourth staggered back, and Wally grinned, and went on the field, amid a chorus of chortles from the Third-Formers.

"Gwoogh!" gasped Arthur Augustus, feeling his nose, perhaps to ascertain whether it was still there. It felt as if it wasn't. "Gwoogh! Oh, dear! There is nothin' to sniggah at, Dig!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway hold my eyeglass while I give my minah a feahful thwashin', Blake."

"I'll hold you instead," grinned Blake.

"Welease me, you ass!"

But D'Arcy's chums had not come to the cricket-ground to see a dog-fight, as Blake expressed it. They laid hold of the Honourable Arthur Augustus, and marched him off the fag ground. Arthur Augustus went wriggling, but he had to go.

"Now," said Blake, "you're going to keep the peace—dog-fights are off—"

"Chastisin' my minah is not a dog-fight, you cheeky ass—"

"Same thing! You see that puddle by the pav? Well, if you don't keep quiet, we'll sit you down in it!"

"You—you feahful wuffian! Upon the whole, I will let the mattah dwop!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

And Study No. 6 played cricket till dinner, Wally remaining unchastised, and Arthur Augustus in a mood of suppressed wrath and indignation.

CHAPTER 8.

The Only Way.

"YOU fellows coming with me?" asked Manners.

"Anywhere you like, my son," said Monty Lowther.

"Cinema at Wayland?"

"Blow the cinema!"

"Ahem! Certainly! Nice little walky-walky on the towing-path?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

Monty Lowther smiled genially, and Tom Merry laughed. The affair of his minor was evidently still on Manners' nerves, and his words could not be called polite. But the Terrible Three had learned to tolerate one another's little failings.

"Well, what's the game?" asked Tom Merry good-humouredly. "We'll come anywhere you like, old scout. Taking your camera?"

"Hang the camera!"

"Oh!"

"What I like about Manners," said Lowther reflectively, "is the nice, polite, genial style of his conversation."

Manners gave his chum a wrathful look. But the dark expression faded from his face in a moment.

"Don't mind me, you chaps," he said.

"You'd better let me alone for a bit, I think. I know I'm like a bear with a sore head now. I can't help it, and you'd better keep clear of me."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "You can be as grumpy as you like, old chap. If a chap can't slang his own pals, who is he to slang?"

Manners grinned faintly.

"Well, come on, then," he said.

"Right! But where are we going?"

"I'm going to look for Racke."

"Oh, Racke!"

"I'm going to thrash him!" said Manners grimly.

"Ahem! You thrashed Racke yesterday, old fellow!" murmured Tom.

"Don't you think—ahem!—that enough's as good as a feast?"

"Even thrashing Racke palls in time," ventured Monty Lowther.

"I'm going to thrash Racke!" repeated Manners stubbornly.

"H'm! Of course, I wouldn't dream of interfering with your agreeable little relaxations," said Lowther. "Must do something to get rid of war-worry. But you will get fed-up on thrashing Racke in the long run. Why not chuck it now?"

"I'm going to thrash him every day!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I can't stop Reggie; but I can stop Racke. I've asked Reggie to chuck him, and he won't. I've asked Racke to chuck Reggie, and he won't! I'm going to thrash Racke every day till he leaves off having anything to do with my minor. That's the only way I can think of."

Tom Merry and Lowther could not help thinking that the proposed drastic measures were as applicable to Reggie as to Aubrey Racke. But they did not say so. Many considerations withheld Manners from taking such measures with his minor. But to Racke, the blackguard and rascal, he owed no consideration.

"That's what I'm going to do," said Manners, as his chums were silent. "Whether it looks like bullying or not, I'm going to do it. You can suit yourselves about coming with me and seeing fair play."

Manners strode away, and Tom Merry and Lowther followed him at once. They could not quite approve of the scheme,



Cruel Only to be Kind!
(See Chapter 10.)

"Manners, old chap," said Tom seriously, "I'd let him alone. That weedy slacker can't stand up to you, and—and it will look—ahem!"

Manners' lip curled.

"He's bigger than I am," he said.

"But he can't handle you, old chap. He's got no chance against you. You don't want fellows to hint that—that—"

"That I'm bullying a fellow who can't hold his own?" sneered Manners.

"Well, we know you wouldn't; but it will look a bit like it if you don't let Racke alone," said Tom candidly.

"Let it! Last evening my minor was ragged in the Third Form-room, and I got a dose of it trying to help him out. I find that he's been sent to Coventry by the fags, too. They found him chumming with Racke. That was after I licked him in his study."

"I don't see how you can stop him, Manners, if he won't listen to you. You're not Reggie's guardian."

which was distinctly high-handed, and did not seem to them likely to be a success. But they meant to see Manners through anyway.

It did not take long to find Racke. He was discovered under the elms in the quadrangle, talking to Crooke and Melish and Manners minor. Reggie gave his major a defiant look as he came up. In his present mood of stubborn and sullen defiance, the reckless fag was glad that his brother had arrived just then.

Manners came directly up to Racke of the Shell.

"Put up your hands, you cad!" he said.

Racke backed away, with a bitter look.

"So you want to fight me again?" he said.

"I'm going to!"

"And what for?"

"I'm going to thrash you every time you speak to my minor," said Manners steadily.

Racke stared at him, and burst into an angry laugh.

"My hat! So that's the programme, is it?"

"That's the programme. Put up your hands."

Aubrey Racke put his hands into his pockets.

"I'm not going to fight you, Manners," he said, closing his teeth hard. "I had a fight with you yesterday, and I gave you best. That ends it. A fellow can't be called on to fight every day if he don't choose. I've had enough of you, and if you touch me, I'll complain to a prefect."

"Right," said Crooke. "You won't find us standing any of your bullying, Manners!"

"I should jolly well think not!" chimed in Mellish. "You can leave that kind of thing to Grundy, Manners."

Manners did not heed them. He advanced on the cad of the Shell. Racke backed away under the trees.

"Suit yourself about complaining to a prefect," he said. "You'll have the pleasure of telling him what I licked you for—if you like. I don't think Kildare or Durrel would be down on me for it exactly, if they knew the facts. But suit yourself. Now put up your hands."

"I won't!" hissed Racke.

"Then you'll be licked without!"

"You rotter!" shouted Reggie. "Leave Racke alone!"

Tom Merry took the fag by the collar and swung him away.

"You be quiet!" he said savagely. And Tom's usually merry blue eyes were flashing so ominously that Reggie decided to be quiet.

Smack!

A blow full in the face made Racke stagger against a tree. His hands came out of his pockets then, and he sprang at Manners.

In a moment more they were fighting fiercely.

Racke, if he had troubled to keep himself in condition, would have been a good match for Manners. But the weedy, smoky black sheep was never in good condition. He stood up savagely to his opponent, but he was knocked to and fro by Manners' lashing fists, and in a few minutes he went down heavily.

"Stop! Stop this at once!"

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, came hurriedly on the scene. Manners looked at him surlily.

"Manners!" Mr. Linton's voice was like the rumble of thunder. "How dare you be guilty of such ruffianly conduct! I saw you strike Racke when he had his hands in his pockets! Not a word! Go to my study, and wait for me there!"

Manners turned away in silence. The Form-master followed him to the School House.

Racke crawled to his feet, dabbing his nose, but grinning savagely. He had been hurt, but he had an idea that Manners was going to be more severely hurt.

He was right. Tom Merry and Lowther, with glum faces, waited for their chum at the end of the passage, and heard the sound of heavy swishing from Mr. Linton's study. When Manners came out of the study his face was white.

He did not speak a word, but went directly up to his own study. He had received a severe caning—more severe than the master of the Shell often inflicted. Mr. Linton, knowing of the matter only what he had seen in the quadrangle, had naturally decided that it was a case for severe punishment, and Manners had said no word.

Manners was not seen again until he came into the Common-room that evening.

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ing, and then his face was still looking strained. Racke and Crooke grinned at him. Racke had recovered from his punishment, but Manners had not.

A good many of the fellows in the Common-room were grinning.

The affair of Manners and his minor was the talk of the Lower School now, and to most of the juniors it appeared in a comic light. The idea of the elder brother exercising fatherly care over the younger, and thrashing his bad acquaintances to keep them away from him, appealed to a good many as a joke. Manners, who was very sensitive, realised that he was in danger of becoming an object of ridicule, and it stung him keenly.

"I say, Manners!" sang out Baggy Trimble. "May I speak to your minor?"

Manners stared at him.

"May I?" chortled Scrope.

"You won't thrash us if we do?" giggled Trimble. "I say, Manners, why don't you keep your minor under a glass case?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or put him in a museum!" chuckled Gore.

"Or put a notice on him, that naughty boys mustn't come near him!" roared Grundy. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners' face was crimson. He went straight up to Racke, who eyed him with a bitter sneer.

"I mean what I said to you to-day, Racke," said Manners quietly. "You're going to leave my minor alone. If I find that you've spoken a single word to him, you'll get again what you got to-day—even if Linton licks me every time!"

"Oh, confound you, and confound your minor!" growled Racke. "I'm fed-up with the pair of you!"

"I say, Manners—" began Trimble again; but he left off and yelled as Sidney Clive took hold of his fat ear and pinched it. "Yaroo! Leggo!"

"Shut up!" growled Clive.

Manners went out of the Common-room without a glance to right or left. He left most of the juniors grinning. But his warning to Racke seemed to have had its effect, for the next day the cad of the Shell was not seen to exchange a word with Manners' minor.

CHAPTER 9.

Up the River!

"WIPPIN' aftahnoon for a wow!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy on Saturday afternoon.

"Topping!" said Tom Merry cheerily.

Seven juniors came down in a crowd to the landing-raft on the Ryll. The Terrible Three were in their old spirits that afternoon. Tom Merry and Lowther had naturally shared a good deal of Manners' worry. But that worry seemed to be lifted at last. Manners was looking more like his old self.

His chums had had their doubts about the success of his somewhat novel method of dealing with Racke. But it seemed to have been successful. For a couple of days now, so far as Manners could see, Racke had dropped the fag. Certainly Reggie had not come to Racke's study in that interval, neither had they been seen in talk in the quad or the passages. It looked as if Aubrey Racke had learned his lesson.

Indeed, as the Shell fellow's only object in taking Reggie up at all was to get even, for old scores, with the Terrible Three, it was natural enough that he should decide that the game was not worth the candle. A thrashing every time he spoke to Reggie was not good enough. The method was somewhat

peculiar, but it seemed to be a success. So long as the reckless fag was removed from the evil influence of the cad of the Shell, that was all that was needed. He was not naturally viciously inclined, and once Racke's influence was removed, it was probable that he would make friends with Wally & Co. again, and give up playing the giddy ox.

Manners hoped so, at least, and it seemed to be the case, and he allowed himself to dismiss that worry from his mind for once. Tom Merry and Lowther were glad enough of the change. They had borne patiently with their chum, but his despondent moods were a trial in the study.

A good many boats were going out that afternoon. Levison, Clive, and Cardew were taking out Cardew's own handsome skiff. Talbot and Kangaroo and Bernard Glyn were launching another. Wally & Co. were in a boat, catching crabs in great profusion. Figgins & Co., of the New House, were just floating off, when Tom Merry's party arrived on the raft.

"Race you to the island, Figgy!" called out Blake.

"Done!" said Figgins, at once.

Cardew of the Fourth looked round from the skiff he was helping to slide into the water.

"You fellows goin' to the island?" he asked.

"Yaas, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"Come the other way, and we'll race you," said Cardew.

"We're racing Figgins," said Tom Merry.

"Goin' to land on the island?"

"Yes; we're going to have tea there," said Tom.

"Oh!"

Cardew seemed about to speak again, but he did not. Clive and Levison regarded him curiously as the boat floated off.

"Why don't you want those fellows to go to the island?" asked Levison.

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"I had a merry invitation from Racke for this afternoon," he said. "There's a jolly little party on the island. I declined the invitation; I was afraid of shockin' Clive."

"Ass!" said Clive.

Levison whistled.

"Manners' minor going to be there?" he asked.

"I don't know; but I gathered that that delightful youth was goin' to be one of the party. But it wouldn't do to mention it; that would only make Manners keener on goin'. He seems bent on doin' his comic turn as moral censor and guardian to the enterprisin' Reggie."

"Quite right, too!" growled Clive. "I suppose you wouldn't leave a kid brother in the hands of a shady rotter like Racke, would you, without interfering?"

Cardew yawned.

"Oh, I don't blame Manners! He's quite entertainin'," he said. "But if he keeps on like this, he will become a standin' joke in the House. I'd let the young beggar rip. Now, don't jaw me. Clive! Shove out your oar, and let's get goin'. I've tried to save Manners' major from a painful interview with his minor, haven't I? You can count that among my good works."

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. had launched their boat, and were pulling up the Ryll, Figgins & Co. pulling abreast. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn had accepted Blake's challenge at once, but as they were two oars against six, they were not likely to have much show in the race to the island. Tom Merry & Co. pushed off, and Arthur Augustus sat at the lines, steering with one hand, and waving his

eyeglass with the other at the New House boat. The New House boat speedily dropped behind.

"Good-bye, deah boys!" chortled Arthur Augustus. "Keep on wowin'; it's time you New House boundahs learned how to wow! Ha, ha, ha!"

"And time you learned how to steer!" roared Blake, as the boat swerved and nearly bumped into a senior boat, containing personages of no less importance than Kildare and Darrel of the Sixth. "Look ahead, you ass!"

"Bai Jove!"

Steering with one hand, and looking over his shoulder, had nearly brought about disaster.

"Hallo! Where are you fags running to?" roared Kildare, from the senior boat wrathfully.

"Running into you, dear boy," said Monty Lowther. "Don't mind us; it's only the patent D'Arcy steering method."

Kildare picked up a boathook, but fortunately the junior boat pulled off before he had time to give Monty Lowther the lunge he evidently designed. The juniors pulled away steadily up the river, and the landing-raft and the school, and the New House boat, disappeared behind.

"Steady does it, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "You are not keepin' vewy good time, Blake."

Blake glared.

"What do you know about rowing, fathead?"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead, Blake! I must weally wemark that you are supposed to be wowin', and not diggin' for buried tweasuh in the wivah."

Jack Blake released one foot, and planted it on the waistcoat of the steersman. There was a roar from Arthur Augustus.

"Yah! You howwid ass, you have wined my waistcoat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll give you the other boot next," said Blake. "There's some mud on that, too."

"I wegard you as a howwid wuffian, Blake!"

Arthur Augustus did not make any more remarks about Blake's rowing, however. His criticism seemed to be dangerous to his elegant clobber. He turned his attention to Manners.

"Vewy glad to see you lookin' so cheewy, Mannahs," he remarked. "You have been wathah a beah with a sore head lately, deah boy."

Manners grunted.

"How is your minah gettin' on, Mannahs?"

Grunt!

"He seems to be wathah in twouble with the Third," remarked Arthur Augustus. "That is a vewy unforeseen weseult of a well-meant act of kindness. But I have noticed, Mannahs, that he has had nothin' to do with Wacke lately. I take the credit of that."

Grunt!

"I have not the slightest doubt that he has now taken my wemarks to heart," said Arthur Augustus, beaming. "You can always wely on a fellow of tact and judgment, you know. I weally wish you had placed the mattah in my hands befoah, Mannahs."

"Oh, dry up!" said Manners, at last.

"Weally, Mannahs— Blake, you howwid Hun, if you thwust your wotten boot neah my waistcoat again, I shall stwike you!"

"Well, ring off," said Blake. "This is a row on the river, not a jawbone solo. Give your lower jaw a rest, old chap."

"I wegard your wemarks with scorn, Blake."

"Bow-wow!"

"Bai Jove! There's the island! Pway

be careful, deah boys. You can wely on my steewin'." The boat glided under the thick trees on the shore of the island. "Back water, deah boys! As I was wemarkin', Mannahs, I am vewy pleased that owin' to my intahvention, your minah has given up havin' anythin' to do with that uttah wottah, Wacke—"

Arthur Augustus was interrupted. A voice floated through the trees, as the boat rocked by the island.

"Your deal, Reggie!"

It was the voice of Aubrey Racke.

CHAPTER 10.

Brought to Heel!

MANNERS got up in the boat. He did not speak; but the sudden clouding of his face told his chums how he felt. Racke's strident, unmusical voice had come clearly through the trees. Arthur Augustus started, and was silent. A general silence fell upon the cheery boat's crew.

Pop! The sound came from the wood. It was the opening of a ginger-beer bottle.

Crooke's voice was heard.

"Jolly comfy here! Pass those choes, Mellish."

"Here you are!"

"Cut for deal!" It was Reggie's voice this time. "You cut, Crooke."

Manners stepped out of the boat into the rushes. His face was set, and his eyes gleamed.

He understood well enough now.

His measures with Racke had not been so successful as he had supposed. They had only forced the cad of the Shell to caution.

The evil influence over Reggie was not removed. It was more dangerous because more secret. Manners understood.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, in distress. "That young wascal is a weglah wottah. I do not seem to have impwoved him, aftah all! That is vewy surpwisin'."

"Awfully!" growled Blake sarcastically.

"Weally, Blake—"

The juniors jumped ashore on the grassy bank. Manners was already plunging into the trees, and his chums followed him rather anxiously. They did not quite like the look on Manners' face.

They came suddenly on the scene— Racke and Crooke, Mellish and Manners minor, seated in the grass under the shady trees. Manners minor was dealing the cards. All four looked up, startled, as Manners came on the scene. Reggie hesitated a moment, and then, with a sullen, defiant look, continued to deal. Racke's hard face was savage. Probably he foresaw some more of Manners' drastic measure now that he was found out.

"Spying, eh?" sneered Crooke.

Manners did not answer him. He did not even seem to hear. His eyes were fixed on Reggie.

"Get up, Reggie!" he said very quietly.

"I won't!" said Reggie.

Manners glanced round at his friends.

"Will you fellows ferry my minor across to the towing-path, so that he can walk home?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!"

"I won't go!" shouted Reggie.

Manners did not answer him in words. He stooped, grasped the fag by the collar, and swung him to his feet. The cards scattered into the grass. Reggie struggled and kicked; but he was carried, struggling, through the trees to the boat, and tossed bodily into it.

The fag sprawled into the boat, and Tom Merry and Lowther stepped in after

him, and pushed off. Reggie scrambled up.

"Put me back on the island!" he yelled.

The Shell fellows did not answer.

They had the oars out, and were pulling across the channel towards the bank.

Manners minor clenched his hands with rage, and panted; but he was helpless to resist. He flung himself savagely down into the stern.

Not a word was spoken till the bows of the boat bumped into the rushes by the towing-path. Then Lowther spoke.

"Get out!"

"I won't!"

Monty Lowther grasped the sullen fag, and pitched him out on the towing-path. Then the Shell fellows shoved off again, and pulled back to the island, Reggie shaking a furious fist after them from the bank.

The boat reached the island, and Tom Merry and Lowther jumped out, Manners awaiting them there. He had watched them ferry Reggie across.

"That's done," said Lowther. "Let's clear those smoky rotters off the island, too. They must have a boat here somewhere."

"I'm going to speak to Racke," said Manners.

He strode back into the trees, and his chums followed him.

Racke and Crooke and Mellish looked very uneasy. They fully expected a ragging, and Racke's anticipations were most painful of all. But he gave Manners a glare of sullen defiance as the Terrible Three came up.

Manners did not look warlike, however. Racke realised that there was not to be a fight this time, and he breathed more freely.

"So you won't let my minor alone, Racke?" said Manners, in a low, quiet voice. "You won't be satisfied till you've taught him to be as big a rascal as yourself?"

Racke sneered.

"He doesn't want much teaching," he said.

"He was all right till you took him up. I know why you're doing it, too. You don't want a fag's company, and you don't want the few shillings you win from him at cards. You want to make him into a smoking, gambling, rascally little scoundrel, like Piggott, because you've got a grudge against me—and because you're an evil brute yourself, and take pleasure in doing dirty tricks!"

"Thanks!" yawned Racke.

"I quite agree with Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus. "I wecommend givin' Wacke a feahful thwashin'."

"I've tried thrashing Racke," said Manners, with a bitter smile. "That's no good; it only makes him more treacherous. I'm going to try another way now, that will be rather better."

"And what's that?" yawned Racke.

"I am going to explain the whole circumstances of the case to our House-master, and leave it in his hands!" said Manners steadily.

Racke started back, his face changing colour. Evidently he had not expected that.

"You—you hound!" he shouted. "You mean you're going to sneak to Railton!"

"You can call it that if you like," said Manners calmly, though he winced. It had cost him something to come to that resolution. "My minor's future is at stake, and I'm not going to have him corrupted by a rotter like you, Racke! I've given you every chance, and you won't leave him alone. Mr. Railton can stop you, though I can't."

There was a dead silence. Manners'

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friends did not speak—though his words had come as a shock to them. It was breaking the unwritten code of school-boy honour to give information to a master. But they did not think of blaming Manners. It was the only course Racke had left open to him, and he intended to take it, for the sake of the foolish, reckless fag whom it was Racke's deliberate intention to corrupt.

Aubrey Racke was deadly pale now. It had never even crossed his mind that Manners would take such a step. Manners would be called a sneak, and he would have to endure that. His clear duty as an elder brother came first, whatever the consequences to himself.

And Racke knew what the result would be! Mr. Railton had only to learn his true character, and he would be taken to the Head to receive the inevitable sentence of expulsion from the school. That would save Reggie from his evil influence, beyond all doubt. Racke had always been carefully cunning in keeping his rascalities secret; but he was at the mercy of the junior he had wronged, if Manners chose to speak.

"I considah Mannahs quite justified," said Arthur Augustus, at last. "Weggie will get a floggin', and Wacke will be sacked, and I wegard it as a weally good thing for both of them. Let us get away from heah, deah boys. Those howwid wottahs make me feel ill!"

"Come on!" said Tom.

"You can land me, and go on without me," said Manners. "I've got to get back to St. Jim's."

Racke started forward, panting.

"Manners! You—you rotter! You're going to Railton!"

"I've said so."

"You're going to give me away?" hissed Racke.

"Yes."

"And be sent to Coventry as a sneak by the whole school!" shouted Racke. "It'll come to that, and you know it. Whether the fellows take your side or mine, they'll all be down on you for sneaking to a master, except your precious pals here. You know it!"

"Very likely," said Manners, unmoved. "Anything more to say before I go to Mr. Railton?"

"Sneak!" said Crooke.

"Your minor will be flogged," said Mellish.

Manners shrugged his shoulders. There was too much at stake for him to care for that.

"You—you mean it?" panted Racke.

"Every word," said Manners grimly.

"You've left me no choice. You'll be sacked from the school to-day, Racke. I wish you a pleasant journey home!"

He turned away.

Racke swept a savage glance round at the silent juniors.

"And you fellows will be witnesses?" he hissed.

"If necessary, yes," said Tom Merry quietly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Racke clenched his hands convulsively. "Hold on! Manners! Stop, hang you! If—if you like, I'll promise to let your minor alone. I'll never speak to him again, honour bright!"

"I can't trust your promise, Racke, and it's useless for you to talk about honour. You don't know what the word means!"

"I'll let him alone!" shouted Racke, thoroughly scared now.

He could imagine the reception he would get at home when he arrived there, expelled from his school in disgrace. Mr. Racke, the wealthy war-profiteer, had sent his son to St. Jim's to get public-school polish, and to "get a footing with the nobs," as he elegantly expressed it.

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His feelings, when his hopeful son was kicked out of the school with contumely could be imagined, and it scared Racke to imagine them.

"Manners! Speak to the fool, Merry! Stop him! I'll let the young cad alone! I'll kick him out if he comes to my study again. I give you my word!"

Tom Merry caught his chum's arm.

"Hold on a minute, Manners!"

"What's the good of listening to him?" asked Manners impatiently.

"He's a liar and a rogue. He's driven me to it, and I'm going to do it!"

"I'll promise," shouted Racke desperately.

"Oh, shut up!" said Manners contemptuously.

"I—I think I'd give him another chance, old scout," muttered Tom Merry uneasily. "You—you don't want to do such a thing unless you're forced. He deserves it, but—but I think he'll keep this promise, Manners. You can always give the cad away if he doesn't keep it. He'll be afraid to break it."

Manners hesitated, and turned back.

"You fellows think the same?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah! The w'etched funk will be afwaid to bweak that pwomise," said Arthur Augustus, with a curl of the lip at the terrified cad of the Shell. "If he does bweak it, you can go diwectly to Mr. Wailton without even speakin' to him first."

"I'll keep it," muttered Racke. "I'm fed up with your rotten minor, anyway. It—it was only a lark, too. The sneakin' little beast amused me. I'll have nothin' more to do with him—hang him!"

"I'll give you the chance," said Manners—"this one chance! Mind, I'm going to keep my eyes open, after this, and if I find you so much as saying 'Good-morning!' to my minor, I go straight to Mr. Railton, and pitch him the whole story! I give you my word about that, so you know what to expect."

And with that Manners walked away. Tom Merry & Co. got afloat again. They did not want to share the island with Racke & Co.

CHAPTER 11.

Reggie's Last Word!

MANNERS' minor was hanging about the Shell passage when the Terrible Three came in. He gave his brother a sullen look, but did not speak, and the chums of the Shell went on to their study to tea.

The fag wandered restlessly to the head of the stairs. He was waiting for Racke to come in.

Blake & Co. came upstairs together, and Arthur Augustus paused to speak to Reggie.

"You had bettah cut off fwom heah, Weggie," he said mildly.

"I'll please myself about that!" said Manners' minor tartly.

"You won't please yourself, you sneaking little cad!" said Herries, taking him by the collar. "You'll clear off!"

And the fag was spun down to the next landing, and Herries' heavy boot helped him to descend the lower stairs.

Reggie realised, then, that he had exhausted the patience of Study No. 6.

When Racke and Crooke came in Reggie was not on the scene. But about half an hour later, when the two black sheep of the Shell were finishing tea in their study there was a tap at the door, and Manners' minor came in.

Aubrey Racke gave him a deadly look.

Racke meant to keep his promise to Manners. He dared not break it. Secrecy was no use; there was always the possibility that any further dealing with Manners' minor might come to light, and

he knew what to expect in that case. And the rage and humiliation he felt after the scene on the island rankled bitterly in his breast. His abject surrender had drawn mocking sneers from his own associates.

Reggie was the cause of it, and Racke's feelings towards his wretched dupe and victim were as bitter as towards Manners of the Shell.

Reggie came in timidly, never doubting, however, that he was welcome.

"I say, Racke," he stammered, "I'm sorry about—about this afternoon! I'll make my major pay for chipping in like that, somehow—"

He broke off as he caught the expression on Racke's face.

The Shell fellow did not answer a word. He rose, and grasped his visitor by the collar.

Reggie started back in surprise and alarm.

"Racke! What—"

Crooke chuckled. The dismay and amazement in the fag's startled face amused him.

Without a word Aubrey Racke swung the fag out of the study. But he did not release him there. With an iron grip on his collar he marched him along to Tom Merry's study.

Reggie struggled savagely.

"What are you up to?" he exclaimed shrilly. "Let me go, Racke! What fool game are you playing now?"

Racke did not answer.

With his free hand he opened Tom Merry's door and propelled the fag into the study with the other hand.

There he released him, pitching him fairly into the room. Reggie brought up against the bookcase, gasping.

The Terrible Three started to their feet.

"What the dickens—" began Tom Merry.

Racke fixed his eyes on Manners.

"Your minor's just come to my study, Manners," he said. "I've brought him to you. Will you be good enough to make him understand that I don't want the sneaking, rotten little mongrel in my quarters?"

"What?" panted Reggie.

His eyes burned at Racke. This was new language for him to hear from the cad of the Shell.

"The young rotter shoved himself into my study unasked," said Racke. "As his major, you may be able to explain to him that he's not wanted there, and that he'd better keep clear. If he comes into my quarters again, I'll lay a cricket-stump round him!"

And, with that, Racke strode out of the study, and slammed the door after him.

Manners of the Shell looked grimly at his minor. Tom Merry's face was grave, and Monty Lowther suppressed a grin.

Reggie stood against the bookcase. Racke's savage, insulting words had been a bitter opening of the eyes to the fag. He understood at last the estimation in which he was held by the rascal who had fooled and flattered and duped him. It was a bitter blow for Reggie.

"Well?" said Manners, at last. "You hear what Racke says, Reggie? You're to leave the cad alone."

Reggie panted.

"You've done this!" he said, in a choking voice. "You've done something to Racke—you've made him act like that—"

Manners nodded.

"That's right!" he said.

"It was you! Now Racke won't speak to me!" There was a suspicious catch in the fag's voice. His feelings had been bitterly wounded. "You've come between me and my friends—"

"If Racke's your friend, I have," said Manners. "You must learn to do without friends like Racke, Reggie."

The fag clenched his hands.

"I won't! I won't! You're not going to bully me! It's your fault that I'm sent to Coventry in my own Form—all your fault and D'Arcy's! Why can't you let me alone?"

"Wally and the rest will be all right now you're done with Racke. I know all about that."

"I don't want them! I'll do as I like! You think you're going to bully me. You sha'n't!" Reggie came nearer to his brother, his eyes burning. "If I were big enough I'd lick you! But you're not going to stop me doing as I choose! Now Racke won't speak to me. But there's others—plenty of others—"

"You may as well understand first as last, Reggie," said Manners patiently. "You've done with that whole set. They know that if they have anything to do with you I'm going to appeal to Mr. Ralston."

"So that's what you said to Racke?"

"That was it."

"You sneak!"

Manners' lips quivered. He opened the door of the study.

"You'd better go, Reggie," he said quietly.

"Oh, I'm going! But you sha'n't interfere with me, all the same!" A sneer came on the fag's face—a savage sneer very like Aubrey Racke's own. "You can stop me here—by sneaking! But you can't stop me outside the school! And I can tell you I know fellows outside. Lodgey spoke to me the other day, and Mr. Banks asked me to come along with Racke for a game of billiards at the Green Man. I didn't go. But now I will! If Racke won't go with me, I'll go alone! You'll see whether you can boss me, you meddling bully!"

And Reggie Manners tramped out of the study, slamming the door behind him with a crash that rang the length of the passage.

Manners stood motionless.

"Cheer-ho, old chap!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Don't take any notice of the kid—it's only gas!"

"That's all, Manners," said Tom Merry. "You've done right, and it's for Reggie's good, and he'll see it when he's got over his silly temper. He's done with Racke & Co., anyhow—and the rest is only gas!"

Manners drew a deep breath.

"I think I've done right," he said. "I know I meant to. I know it's what the pater would have expected of me, if he'd known. But—but if I've only made matters worse—if—if—" He broke off.

"You haven't," said Tom.

Manners did not reply. He had done right—as he saw it. But if he had only driven the obstinate, wilful young scape-grace from bad associates to worse—what then?

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—**"A SON'S SACRIFICE!"** by Martin Clifford.)

The Editor's Chat.

For next Wednesday:

"A SON'S SACRIFICE!"

By Martin Clifford.

This story tells what happened to Manners major and his very troublesome young brother in consequence of Reggie's desire to play the gay dog.

Grundy's interference, well-meant as it is, does no good. In some ways Reggie Manners is a very hard case indeed. He has been spoiled at home, and he looks upon any attempt to check him as butting in.

Reggie brings heavy trouble upon both his brother and his father, though the case is not so bad as it may appear against him. How it came about that he was suspected of a very grave crime, and how the suspicion was lifted from him, to fall elsewhere, you will read next week.

Woven into these three stories, like a gleam of gold in a stuff of more sober colours, shines the thread of the strong, real friendship which binds the Terrible Three. They have other chums, of course. Talbot counts for much to Tom Merry, and Blake & Co. and Figgins & Co. are near and dear. But in the last resort it is they three against the whole crowd if need be, shoulder to shoulder, back to back, with faith unswerving and courage unfaltering. Read of how Tom and

Monty stood by their chum in this trouble—as Tom and Manners stood by Lowther in his lately, though he made it more than a little hard for them—as two of them have stood by the third before that. These three stories—of which this week's is the first—are as good as any of the Levison or Cardew series lately appearing. And this is very high praise indeed.

A PLEASANT LETTER.

It is only once in a way that I print a letter of praise, for, quite naturally, these are apt to read very much alike, and to give many of them would prove rather monotonous. But here is one which is a fair sample of the rest, but goes somewhat more into detail than most, and seems to me particularly pleasant.

"Dear Sir,—I do not write you to complain of the stories falling off, or to accuse you of being a cheat, as some of your readers have done. But I should like to say which stories I liked the best. I can honestly say I have never read any stories to compare with those in which Ernest Levison has played a prominent part; and my opinion, like that of several others whom I know, is that Mr. Martin Clifford's "After Lights Out" is one of the best stories ever penned.

I don't want you to think, though, that these were the only stories we liked. The stories in which Parker took a part were splendid. So are the Cardew yarns, and we are waiting to see the finish, and all hoping that Cardew will clear himself somehow, for we feel sure he was guiltless. I must make one complaint. There are not enough 3d. books dealing with Tom Merry & Co. But we know that Mr. Clifford is pretty busy. I should be glad if you could find room to publish this to show what we think of your stories. We sign ourselves,

"LOYAL REDDITCH READERS."

"I" becomes "we" in the course of the letter, but except for that—and that is easily seen through—it is very clearly expressed, and very grateful to read. Everybody cannot expect to be equally pleased with every story which appears, but my Worcestershire friends in the town where they make the needles don't find much fault, you see!

Your Editor

REVENGE!

A Pathetic, Patriotic Poem of Grub and Glory.

By W. G. BUNTER, of the Remove Form.

(Editor's Note.—The spelling is not Bunter's.)

The scene is in Belgium, the fine little place Where our brave Allies have to line up and face

The cowardly Germans, who cry as they race,

"Revenge!"

A poor, starving Tommy—as hungry as me!— Was strolling into an old maysong for tea, And heard a harsh voice from within grunt in glee,

"Revenge!"

And what he saw made his true blood boil with rage—

A German was gorging fried onions and sage; A poor Belgian cried as he died of old age,

"Revenge!"

"You beast!" cried the Tommy. "Give that chap some grub!"

"Mein hat!" gasped the German. "You cheeky young cub!

When I've finished this into you I will rub

Revenge!"

The Tommy jumped on him, and shouted "Hooray!"

The yell he emitted was heard miles away, And that Hun was thrown out before you could say

"Revenge!"

The Belgian got up, for he was not quite dead.

"Gra' mercy!" he cried. "Pray sit down and be fed!"

I'm sure, but for you, he'd have had, as he said,

Revenge!"

The Tommy said, "I'll have a little snack here!"

But barely had he drained a glass of old beer, When that German Uhlan fired at him from sheer

Revenge!

The Tommy fell mortally wounded to earth. The German, who'd been a base villain from birth,

Looked sneeringly at him, and chirped in great mirth,

"Revenge!"

The Hun settled down to a royal repast; How little he dreamed that that meal was his last!

And poor Tommy murmured—he was dying fast—

"Revenge!"

He'd neither a tart nor a bun nor a scone— Not even a doughnut at Tommy was thrown; So all he could do was to gasp, and to groan

"Revenge!"

He suddenly sprang to his feet with a shout, And stabbed the vile heart of that Germ—

Hunnish lout; Then waved the French flag in the air, and cried out

"Revenge!"

He died as he ate up a prime chicken's wing; So that's how this fine man of whom I do sing

Was killed by that weird and horrible thing—

Revenge!

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Extracts from "Tom Merry's Weekly."

JOHNNY GOGGS AT ST. JIM'S. By Clifton Dane.

(Continued from last week's number.)

III.

"Do you care about some practice this evening, Goggs?" inquired Tom Merry after tea.

"I thank you, Merry, but I think not. Do not let me keep Dane from the nets, however."

"You're not going to," said Tom. "I'll look after that. Come along, Dane."

"What will you do with yourself, Goggs?" I asked. "There's no limit, you know. Go where you please and do as you like. But don't get across with Ratty of the New House, because when he's nasty he's not nice at all."

"I think that I will pay Grundy a visit," Goggs replied. "He asked me to look in."

"Every man to his taste. Grundy ain't mine," said Tom, grinning.

Goggs did not ask the number of Grundy's study, and the natural presumption was that Grundy had told him it. I don't know whether this was so, or who was to blame for the mistake that occurred.

Anyway, it was at the door of No. 7, not at that of No. 8, that Goggs tapped.

Crooke and Racke share No. 7. Scrope was there with them, and the amiable three were playing nap.

Goggs gave a little, modest tap that could not possibly have been produced by the knuckles of a master or a prefect. So the merry gamblers thought,

"Come in, idiot!" howled Crooke.

They did not even trouble to shift the cards from the table, and the room was choky with cigarette-smoke.

Goggs coughed. Crooke, whose eyes had been upon the cards, looked up.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he said unpleasantly.

"Is this the merchant?" asked Racke. "Go for him, Crooke! See if he can put you over again."

"That's the dodge," chimed in Scrope. "Must have been a fluke, old scout. This mollycoddle don't look as if he could tumble over a rag doll."

"Pardon me. I fear that I have come to the wrong study," said Goggs, paying no apparent heed to either Racke or Scrope.

"Unless you've come for a thick ear, I'm jolly well sure you have!" snarled Crooke.

Of course, Crooke alone had no confidence in his ability to give Goggs a thick ear or any little token of esteem in that way. But Racke and Scrope were there, and Crooke would not have minded hitting Goggs while Racke and Scrope held him. That is just about the measure of Crooke's heroism.

"Er—what is a thick ear?" inquired Goggs. The three gay dogs stared at him.

"Mellish says you let that specimen put you on your back, Crooke," said Racke.

"My hat! Show him what a thick ear is!" I don't a bit believe Crooke wanted to risk it.

But there did not seem much risk. Surely it must have been by a sheer fluke that Goggs had put him over in their brief encounter near the station! It was impossible that he should be able to repeat the performance, Crooke thought.

So he advanced, looking as warlike as he knew how.

"Do you propose to accord me an ocular demonstration, or will you be so kind as to explain by word of mouth?" asked Goggs mildly.

"I'll explain by word of fist!" howled Crooke.

But there Crooke erred.

As he dashed in Goggs' left shot out.

And I do not believe that it was a mere coincidence that Goggs' left landed fully and fairly upon the right ear of George Gerald Crooke.

Crooke's dash to the attack suffered the most sudden of slumps.

"Yarooogh!" he roared, with a hand to his ear.

"Oh, stop that silly row!" snapped Racke. "You'll have a master or a prefect stickin' his silly nose in!"

"Have I given you a—er—thick ear, Crooke?" asked Goggs, with much solicitude.

"If so, will you let me examine it in order that I may become better acquainted with the nature of the article—or ought I to call it a catastrophe? From your loud expressions of pain and surprise, I gather that it appears to you in the light of a catastrophe."

"Yow! You goggled young beast! I'll—"

"I trust that you will not hurt me, Crooke. I do not like being hurt. Will you kindly allow me to see your—er—thick ear? If it is not quite as clean as it might be, I will make what excuses I can for its dingy condition. It is very near the end of term, and possibly you have had no inspection for ears and neck since you last left home."

Old Goggs has the most matter-of-fact way of saying these things. You would never dream that he was pulling a chap's leg all the time. He is as solemn as if he were reading out a genealogical table in Divinity class.

"You—you—you— Oh, I'll—"

Thus panted Crooke. But he did not return to the attack. And the interest of Goggs in the subject of thick ears suddenly waned.

He turned to Racke.

"Do I understand you to mean that the authorities here disapprove of your playing cards and smoking cigarettes?" he asked.

"You can understand what you jolly well like—if you're capable of understanding anything with a dial like that!" snapped Racke.

"Pardon me. If by dial you mean my face, it is not with one's face that one comprehends. As for understanding what I like, there you err again. One can no more understand by choice than one can believe. I might try to believe that you were a polite and pleasant individual, but I am sure that I should not succeed."

"Get out! Take that face somewhere else! It hurts me to look at it!" Racke howled.

"Considered in the light of repartee, that is very poor—very poor indeed!" replied Goggs, wagging his head. "As abuse, it strikes me as unoriginal. I have heard something very like it many times before."

"I shall strike you if you don't bunk!" yelled Racke.

"Probably heard it hundreds of times before," said Scrope, feeling safe on the other side of the table. "Chap with a mug like that would be sure to."

"Dear me! Dear me! I did not imagine there were so many extremely rude persons at St. Jim's," Goggs answered. "May I ask your name?"

"My name's Walker," said Scrope untruly.

"Er—a Walker in Crooked ways, I apprehend? Take care that such walking does not lead you to Racke and ruin!"

"Oh, I'm fed up with all this! Rush the sitter!" yelled Racke.

Goggs is anything but a sitter. But three to one is longish odds, however hefty the one may be.

Crooke and Scrope must have realised that, or they would not have obeyed Racke's call.

The three came on together. Goggs disregarded Crooke and Scrope for the moment, and hit straight out at Racke.

"Ow!" howled Racke, taking a bony fist on his nose.

"In the words of the prophet, Horatio, 'Why is the red blood flowing?'" inquired Goggs, in well-pretended surprise. "Surely that gentle touch—"

Then he went down under the joint attack of the other two.

He admitted afterwards that he had underrated them. He did not think they would persist, after seeing Racke's claret tapped. He didn't say "claret tapped," though. I think he said "the sanguine flow from the nasal organ of Racke."

But he had not to pay dearly for his mistake.

He was down, but he had gripped the left

arm of Scrope. He did something scientific and ruthless to that left arm. It left no lasting ill-effects, but at the moment Scrope felt quite sure he would never have the use of that arm again.

Scrope howled a mournful howl, and rolled off.

Then something happened to Crooke. The slim body under him, as if impelled by steel springs, gave a kind of upward push and jerk, and Crooke shot clear of Goggs, to bring up hard against the wall.

The wall turned out to be harder than Crooke's head, and he lay there half stunned. Goggs got up without haste.

"At Frankingham," he said, more in sorrow than in anger, "we do not treat visitors in this manner."

"Oh, hang you!" returned Racke, mopping his nose. "Who asked you to come from Whatitsname to treat us like this?"

"Anythin' w'ong, deah boy?" asked a voice at the door. "If you wequiah any help in dealing with these wottahs, I— Oh, beg pardon! I was not awah that it was a stwangah I was addressin'."

"The stranger is infinitely obliged to you," replied Goggs, bowing politely. "I think I may say that I do not require any help, however. My hospitable reception here appears now to be at an end. I will therefore retire."

"Weally, Wacke and Cwooke, I am uttably ashamed of you—and of you also, Scwope, although, as this is not your studay— What are you makin' that silly fuss about, you ass?"

"Groooh! That bounder's broken my arm!" said Scrope savagely.

"Ow-yow! He's busted my napper!" moaned Crooke.

"And he's smashed by dose!" snuffled Racke.

"All through mistaken kindness—nothing else, I assure you. I was remonstrating with these persons on the error of their ways. I am afraid their disposition towards strangers is not kind," said Goggs sadly.

He and Arthur Augustus left the study together.

"My name is Goggs," said the Franklingham junior. "I am here on a visit to Dane of the Shell."

"Vewy pleased to meet you, deah boy!" replied Gustavus. "I am D'Arcy of the Fourth. Are you comin' to cwicket?"

Gussy was in flannels.

"I thank you, no. I play the game to some slight extent, but I will not exhibit myself to-night, I think."

"You are not a vewy good playah, then, Goggs?"

"I am useful, I believe, in my own class." If Gussy had not seen those three beaten rotters he would not have expected anything of Goggs. As it was, he wondered what Goggs' class at cricket might be. He seemed quite a useful person to have on one's side in a free fight, though he did not look it.

"May I ask you which is Grundy's study?"

"I say, deah boy, don't get wipin' up the giddy floor with Gwunday, you know!" said Arthur Augustus, in alarm. "Gwunday's not like those wottahs. He's a beefy bwute—fellow, I mean—and he nevah funks anything."

"Oh, I assure you that I am not in the least likely to quarrel with Grundy!" replied Goggs. "He and I are friendly."

"Oh!"

"Yes, quite friendly."

"Oh, weally! Ah—did you know Gwunday before you came deah?"

"No."

"But—well, weally, you know—"

"Something appears to be upon your mind, D'Arcy. May I inquire—"

"No, it's nothin' weally. Only—"

"You are pleased to be mysterious," said Goggs.

"Not at all, deah boy, I assuah you. But—well, Gwunday—Gwunday's— But if you are a fwend of his, of course, it's all wight. I must weally be twottin' along, deah boy!"

IV.

"MOST of them are asses," said Grundy, in his most superior way. "Well-meaning enough, but asses all the same. But, of course, you have twigged that. You see a heap more than most of them fancy, Goggs. You noticed at once that I was out of the common ruck."

Wilkins and Gunn had gone to cricket, and Grundy had Goggs all to himself. He was improving the occasion.

Goggs solemnly admitted that he had noticed that.

"There's Merry, quite a decent sort, though with no judgment. I don't know how he would get on as captain of the Form if I didn't take matters out of his hands now and then. A case lately might interest you. Chap named Cardew—you'll meet him, no doubt. Story got about that he had been sacked from his last school for theft. Merry didn't want to stir a hand."

"Very remiss of him," murmured Goggs.

"So I waded in. Took a strong line, you know, and put the thing through."

"And did it turn out that he was guilty?"

"Well, no, he wasn't exactly guilty. He wouldn't be here now if he had been."

"And was it true that he was sacked?"

"Well, no, that wasn't true either. But the principle's the same, you know. A strong lead was needed, and I supplied it."

Goggs did not reply to that. He was acute enough to see that Grundy must have hinted in.

But old Grundy is not sensitive. He took Goggs' silence for awestruck admiration, no doubt.

"There's no doubt about those rotters, Racke and Crooke, though; everybody knows about them," said Grundy. "And I think it's up to me to get going and stop their little game. If I put my foot down firmly now things may be very different next term. It's possible, too, that the fellows may come to their senses and elect me as captain. Mind you, I don't say it's certain, and I shall feel rather sorry for Merry if it happens, but I think it's very likely indeed; and he won't be able to deny that he brought it on himself."

If Goggs had not had some evidence as to the gambling and smoky propensities of Racke and Crooke, he might have fancied that Grundy had merely discovered another mare's-nest.

And if Racke and Crooke had not offended Goggs, I don't think he would have come into the scheme with Grundy.

But those other Franklingham fellows told me that offending Goggs purposely is a mug's game. He isn't a chap to take offence where none is meant; but Nemesis generally drops upon the people who go out of their way to be rude to him, and Goggs seems to be around giving Nemesis a helping hand every time.

This time he let Grundy play Nemesis.

How he got Grundy's consent I don't know. Seeing how jolly sure old Grundy is that he is no end of an expert at ventriloquism, it is a bit surprising that he did not insist on doing that part of it himself.

And if Grundy had ventriloquised, Racke & Co., not being absolute fools, would have twigged it at once. One of the weak points about Grundy's ventriloquism is that you know it's Grundy all the time—simply can't be off knowing. And there are other weak points as well.

But Goggs is a ventriloquist of quite another sort.

"Dane mentioned a New House person—a master, I fancy—whom he called—er—Ratty, and who would appear to be of a nature resembling his name," he said to Grundy. "Would it be possible for me to hear this gentleman speak?"

"I should think it might," answered Grundy. "Ratty's no friend of mine, but—"

"You have friends in the New House, I take it?"

"Wait a moment, young Goggs. Don't you bother yourself to do the thinking; I'll do that. Yes, I've got it."

"Of course he may not be on view if we go across—"

"Oh, he'll jolly well be on view!" replied Grundy, with a sniff. "I'll settle that. I shall just go and make a jolly row under his window. He'll soon show up then."

"But really, is it not possible that he may be annoyed?"

"It ain't possible, it's jolly well certain. But, then, Ratty always is on his ear about something or other, so that's no odds."

"Perhaps I could—"

"You keep your ventriloquism for to-night. It will come in usefully enough then, because the chaps in our dorm might be on to my voice, you know, or something or other. But I can take in the Ratty bird."

They went out together. I am not prepared to say that Goggs had faith in Grundy. Goggs is quite intelligent, though he may look otherwise. But he saw that the old ass could not come to any very serious trouble in this matter; and, sharp as he is, I don't suppose he realised just what Grundy meant to do.

Over in the New House a whiskered and acid face appeared for a moment at a window.

"That's Ratty!" said Grundy. "Sweet-looking specimen, ain't he? Now you just stand by, and you'll see something."

And at the top of his voice Grundy yelled: "Ratcliff!"

Goggs was almost startled. It was not the custom at Franklingham for boys to hail masters in that way.

The acid and whiskered face appeared again, and a window-sash shot up.

"Grundy, how dare you! Can I believe my ears?"

"W-w-w-what's the matter, sir?" burred Grundy. He had meant that for the voice of Mr. Linton, and he really had not doubted that Mr. Ratcliff would take it for the Shell master's accents.

"Your insufferable impertinence, Grundy, has carried you too far this time!" stormed the New House master.

"Mum-mum-my impertinence, sir?"

Grundy spoke as if he could hardly believe his ears. He did not feel guilty. In propria persona Grundy would not have thought of yelling out "Ratcliff!" But it would have been nothing out of the way for Mr. Linton to do so. And Grundy had spoken for Mr. Linton, as it were.

Unfortunately for him, Mr. Ratcliff appeared not to have the remotest idea of that.

"Will you take five hundred lines, Grundy, or shall I take you across to interview your own Housemaster?"

"I—I'll take the lines, sir," mumbled Grundy. He had had quite as much attention from Mr. Ratcliff that term as he had any use for.

"Very well, very well! You will show them up to me to-morrow evening. But if this sort of thing occurs again—"

The sash went down with a quickness which suggested to Goggs that next time it occurred Mr. Ratcliff would use the guillotine, and Grundy would cease from troubling for ever. Just like the guillotine, the way that window-sash went down was, Goggs said.

Grundy looked at his new disciple. If Goggs had grinned ever so little a grin Grundy would not have liked it.

But the face of Goggs was as the face of a graven image, and if his eyes smiled, it was behind his glasses, and Grundy could not see.

"Quite effective," said Goggs. "But I regret that you should have got five hundred lines, Grundy."

"Oh, that's no odds!" replied Grundy. "You wanted to hear Ratty roar, and you've heard him. But perhaps it wasn't enough. If—"

"You are the most truly hospitable individual I ever met, Grundy; but really—"

Right in upon the voice of Goggs, so it seemed—struck the roar of Mr. Ratcliff, calling:

"Grundy!"

"Oh, hang him! I suppose the bouncer's changed his mind, and thinks he'd enjoy caning me more."

Grundy turned, but the window-sash had not gone up again, and the acid and whiskered face was invisible.

"It was not Mr. Ratty—er—Ratcliff. It was I, Grundy," said Goggs, in his still, small voice.

"You? But-but it sounded exactly—"

"But it was I, I assure you."

"Well, of course, if I can imitate Linton's voice, there's no reason why you shouldn't imitate Ratty's. It's pretty smart, though. You'd only heard him say about a dozen words, and you've got it to a T."

It was the first intimation Goggs had had that Grundy had believed himself speaking in the voice of another. But Goggs, like Brer Rabbit, lay low.

He insisted on reeling off a lot of old Grundy's lines, though his small, neat list had to be altered considerably to make it look like Grundy's sprawly handwriting.

Grundy fairly loved him. Never had Grundy come across another fellow who

suited him as well as Johnny Goggs—as he imagined Johnny to be.

But Goggs really liked Grundy, and that was rummier still.

In the course of the evening Goggs made the acquaintance of Kildare. I don't suppose our skipper was taking the match next day quite as seriously as Tom Merry was. If he had been he might not have been so willing to give Goggs a place in his eleven, for it must be owned that Goggs did not look a cricketer.

I did not tell Kildare that this queer-looking image was one of the best men in the Franklingham First Eleven. He might not have believed it.

Bed-time came, and Goggs retired with us, as if he were quite at home at St. Jim's.

After a bit talk died down, and most of the fellows slept.

I was awakened by the voice of Kildare, coming from outside the door. It was not loud. He spoke in conversational tones, and as if to Baker or some other prefect.

"Yes, I heard rather suspicious noises here. But I can't hear anything now. I really don't think there is much in it."

Inside the dormitory there were sounds which suggested that somebody was holding his breath, and I could just make out a dim shape against Racke's bed.

I turned my head, and saw another dim shape in the neighbourhood of Crooke's. And I rather fancied that further down the dorm Serope was also in trousers and out of bed.

To me it seemed a bit of luck for them that Kildare should have spoken just at that moment.

No doubt they thought so, too. But they would not have thought so had they known that it was Goggs, the ventriloquist, who had spoken in Kildare's voice.

I listened for the sound of retreating footsteps, and I don't doubt that Crooke and the other blades listened too—and far more intently.

But I did not hear any footsteps, and they could not have done, because there were none to hear.

A minute or two passed. Then a dim figure joined the nearest dim figure to me, which I knew to be Racke.

"I didn't hear them go," Crooke said, in carefully muffled accents.

"Must have been wearing slippers," replied Racke. "They've gone now, anyway. They wouldn't stand outside like that."

A third dim shape joined the other two, and Serope said, in rather a quavering tone:

"I say, you fellows, do you think it's safe to go?"

Serope is not a bold blade. When he has agreed to go on one of these expeditions I fancy he always begins to repent of it beforehand, and to think out reasons for calling it off.

"You're a blessed funk!" hissed Racke.

I guessed that his nerves were a trifle on edge. But he seemed to have some very special reason for wanting to go that night, for he went on:

"We can't chuck it. Clampe will be waitin' for us."

"Oh, hang Clampe!" retorted Serope. "I'm not going to risk the giddy sack in order to keep an appointment with Clampe!"

Which would certainly have been Racke's sentiments also if there had been no more in the matter than keeping his word to the New House waster.

"We'll wait a few minutes. If we don't hear anything then, we may be pretty sure the coast is clear," said Crooke.

Something between a sport and a chuckle came from Grundy. The three black sheep seemed to take it for granted that it was no more than a half-strangled snore. Grundy does snore at times, though he will never admit it.

But I smelt a rat now. I remembered Grundy's threat to deal with Racke & Co., and the curious alliance between him and Goggs, and Goggs' ventriloquism.

And I doubted very much whether Racke & Co. were going to enjoy themselves. But I felt sure that if I was not ass enough to go to sleep again I should enjoy myself.

(To be continued next week.)

NEXT WEEK!
Continuation of
"JOHNNY GOGGS AT ST. JIM'S"
and
"GUSSY'S PATRIOTIC OFFER."

THE TRAGEDY OF THE TOPPER!

By SIDNEY CLIVE.

"WUINED, bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered this exclamation in tones of deep wrath and indignation. He held up a silk topper in Study No. 6. Blake and Herries and Digby grinned; but Arthur Augustus' face was dark with wrath. Round the topper was gummed a strip of paper. On the paper was written in large letters:

"WAR ECONOMY! DON'T BUY SILK TOPPERS IN WAR TIME!"

"Wuined?" repeated Arthur Augustus. "Fancy anybody bein' such a ghastly Hun as to stick gum on a fellah's toppah! Gum, you know! The nap is uttably wuined! I shall nevah be able to weah that hat again!"

"Well, you've got fifteen others," said Blake.

"I have nothin' of the kind, you ass! I nevah have more than thwee silk hats. I am not likely to waste money, when ewevy pennay is needed to beat the Huns!"

"You can wear it with the label on," suggested Digby.

Arthur Augustus gave his chum a withering look.

"I wegard you as an ass, Dig!"

"Scrape it off, then," suggested Herries.

"Take the fire-shovel and scrape it off!"

"What will the toppah be like then, Hewwies?"

Herries chuckled.

"Something like a busby, I should say. What does it matter?"

"Wats! My toppah is wuined! I shall nevah be able to wear that toppah again! I suppose I had better give it to some poor boy in the village!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cacklin' at, you duffahs? There are lots of poor chaps in the village who cannot afford to buy toppahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake. "I can see a village kid going about in your topper, Gussy!"

"I weally do not see why not, Blake. Howevah, that is not the point. My toppah has been wuined, and I shall be put to the expense of twenty-seven and six to weplace it in war-time!"

"Why not take the hint?" asked Dig.

"Don't buy toppers in war-time!"

"A chap must be respectable, Dig. I am willin' to sacrifice as much as anybody in war-time, but it is necessawy to keep up a respectable appearance. That is Monty Lowther's willin' on that wascally label! I am goin' to punish Lowther for spoilin' my hat!"

"Going to strew the hungry churchyard with his bones?" asked Blake humorously.

"Wats! Lowther is such a funnay ass that it is no use thwashin' him. I am goin' to punish him more severely!"

"Something lingerin' with boiling oil in it—what?"

"I am goin' to wuin his silk hat!" said Arthur Augustus, with deadly determination.

"Great pip!"

"I mean it! As a wule, I wegard it as highly impwopah to damage a fellah's clobber. But there is no othah way of teachin' that funnay ass to respect my hats! I am goin' to get at his vewy best toppah, and wuin it!"

Blake & Co. grinned. Gussy evidently regarded this as the deadliest injury he could inflict upon the practical joker who had gummed a label round his silk hat.

"Lowther will be sowwy for his wotten conduct when I have uttably wuined his toppah!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "It is wathah a howwid pwocceedin', but I wegard it as bein' justified undah the cires!"

"Mercy!" said a voice at the door, as Monty Lowther's smiling face looked in.

"Lowther, you uttah wottah!"

"No charge for that!" said Lowther, nodding towards the gummed topper. "I did that entirely for your good, Gussy. Are you going to take the tip?"

"Bai Jove! I wathah think I will give you a feahful thwashin' as well as wuinin' your

toppah, you uttah sweep!" shouted the swell of St. Jim's.

And he made a rush at the Shell fellow.

Monty Lowther slammed the door, and fled. Arthur Augustus dragged at the door, but it was held fast outside. Tom Merry and Manners were there, and they were holding on to the handle.

"Let go, you wottah!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Patience, dear boy! We're only giving Monty time to escape with his life!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Welease that door-handle, Tom Mewwy!"

"Bow-wow!"

"I wegard you as a wottah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I look upon you with despisery—I mean, contempt!"

"Go it!" said Tom Merry cheerily.

"Blake, you gwinnin' ass, come an' help me with this w'etched door!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Any old thing!" yawned Blake.

The chums of Study No. 6 dragged on the door together. It came open suddenly, and four juniors sprawled on the study carpet, roaring. They had not expected it to yield quite so suddenly as that.

"Yawwoh!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Gerroff! Ow!"

"Gwoogh! Take your sillay knee out of my eye, Hewwies!"

"Oh, dear!"

Study No. 6 jumped up wrathfully, and poured into the passage. But Tom Merry and Manners were gone, and there was no sign of Monty Lowther.

"Stole away!" said Dig, rubbing his nose.

"Never mind, let's go down to cricket!"

"Pway wait while I look for Lowther's toppah!"

"Oh, bother Lowther's toppah!"

"He has wuined my toppah, Dig—"

"Blow that, too!"

"And I am goin' to wuin his," said D'Arcy firmly. "I wegard it as a duty. Pway wait while I wun to his studay!"

And Arthur Augustus scuttled along the passage to Tom Merry's study.

He was quite prepared to give the Terrible Three a terrific thrashing if he found them there. But the study was empty. On the table, however, just as if Lowther had intentionally left it at the enemy's mercy, was a handsome silk topper.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

He strode towards the silk hat.

"I wondah if this is Lowther's or Tom Mewwy's or Mannahs?" he murmured. "I do not want to injah anybody's toppah but Lowther's. Bai Jove, heah's the wottah's name in it!"

In the lining of the hat a card was stuck on, and on the card was written the name, apparently, of the owner—"M. Lowther."

There could be no further doubt as to the ownership of the hat.

Arthur Augustus picked it up, and carried it out into the passage, with a deadly gleam in his eyes.

"Hallo! Is that Lowther's?" asked Blake.

"Yaas; his name's in it!"

"What are you going to do with it?"

"Jump on it!" said Arthur Augustus ferociously.

"Great Scott!"

"I say, that's an expensive hat," said Herries. "Looks a bit more swanky than Lowther usually wears. Better go easy!"

"I wefuse to go easy! Lowther has wuined my hat, and I am goin' to wuin his as a seycash lesson! Why, the practical jokin' wottah might begin on my neckties next—or my waistcoats!"

"Awful!"

Arthur Augustus placed the silk hat carefully on the floor, as if it were a rugger ball placed for a goal-kick. Then he retired a pace, and jumped.

Crunch!

Both Arthur Augustus' elegant boots came down on the hat.

It fairly crumpled up.

"Well, you've done it now!" grinned Blake.

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus gazed at the hat. Cer-

tainly he had done it. The hat bore some resemblance to a concertina, but little resemblance to a topper. Even a rag-and-bone man would have declined to wear that hat.

Perhaps there was a touch of remorse in Gussy's noble countenance, but he was firm.

"Lowther asked for that," he said. "I do not weget inflictin' this feahful punishment upon him. A pwactical jokah must expect to suffah!"

Arthur Augustus kicked the wreck of the hat back into the study, and the chums of No. 6 went downstairs.

Vengeance was satisfied.

The Terrible Three were sauntering in the quadrangle. They paused as the Fourth Formers came out. Arthur Augustus strode straight towards them, frowning.

"Lowther!" he rapped out.

"Yes, my lord?"

"I have wuined your hat!"

"My hat!"

"I wegard it as absolutely necessawy to teach you a seycash lesson, Lowther, on the subject of waggin' othah chaps clobber!"

said Arthur Augustus sternly. "I have therefoah taken your silk toppah and jumped on it. It is now an uttah w'eck!"

"Well, you fewocious Hun," said Monty Lowther. "I'm shocked at you, Gussy!"

"I wegard it as justifiable undah the cires, you pwactical-jokin' sweep!"

"But what puzzles me is how did you get hold of my toppah?" asked Monty Lowther, looking perplexed. "I keep my toppah locked up."

"I found it in your studay."

"Oh!"

"Your name was inside."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' whatevah to cackle at, Lowther, unless you wegard it as funnay to have your toppah w'ecked."

"You see, that wasn't my toppah," explained Lowther cheerfully.

"Wh-a-at! Bai Jove, I am sowwy if it was Tom Mewwy's toppah, or Mannahs'; but your name was in it—"

"Yes; I put that there," assented Lowther. "I thought you were going to my study to smash my toppah. You said so."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake.

"There is nothin' to laugh at, Blake, in Lowther's unfeelin' action. He has made me smash the w'ong toppah. It was a wotten twick. Lowther, to make me think Tom Mewwy's toppah was your toppah—"

"But it wasn't Tom Merry's!"

"Well, Mannahs' toppah, then—"

"But it wasn't Manners," said Lowther.

"I got that topper specially there for you, Gussy. You know what an obligin' chap I am. I borrowed it out of a hat-box in a dormitory."

"Gweat Scott! I wegard this as wottenah and wottenah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"You have taken the toppah of a Shell chap—"

"A Fourth Form chap," corrected Lowther.

"Bai Jove! A chap in my Form! You uttah wottah! I shall have to explain to the chap and apologise to him. Whose was that toppah, Lowther?"

"Yours!"

The Terrible Three sauntered on, leaving Arthur Augustus rooted to the ground.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake and Herries and Digby, in hysterical chorus.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mum-mum-my toppah!" Arthur Augustus was dazed. "My toppah! Why, the toppah in my hat-box in the dorm was my best Sunday toppah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked his chums.

"And—and now I have jumped on it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cacklin' asses— Bai Jove, I am goin' to slaughtah Montay Lowther! I am goin' to pulvewise him!"

But Monty Lowther was gone!

THE END.

In This Week's
"MAGNET":
"THE GREYFRIARS VENTRILOQUIST!"
and
"TURNING THE TABLES!"