

MR. SELBY'S DILEMMA!

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



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A MAGNIFICENT, NEW, LONG, COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY
OF TOM MERRY & CO. AT ST. JIM'S.

MR. SELBY'S DILEMMA!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

The Sufferers.

"MORE trouble!" sighed Monty Lowther of the Shell.

Tom Merry and Manners followed Lowther's glance.

The Terrible Three were sauntering across the quad at St. Jim's towards the School House. They were feeling in cheerful spirits that sunny afternoon.

But there were three other juniors of St. Jim's who, to judge by appearances, were in anything but cheerful spirits.

Three fags of the Third stood under the trees by the path, rubbing their hands dolorously, and making remarks in a kind of dismal chorus:

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"Wow!"

They were D'Arcy minor, Manners minor, and Levison minor. And the three minors looked very unhappy indeed.

Tom Merry & Co. good-naturedly halted. They were quite ready to extend a kindly word of sympathy to the suffering fags.

"Licked?" asked Tom Merry.

D'Arcy minor—Wally of the Third—left off groaning for a moment and fixed a stare upon the captain of the Shell.

"You ass!" he said ungratefully. "Do you think we're doing this for fun?"

"Yow-ow-ow!" said Reggie Manners dismally.

"Yooooop!" mumbled Frank Levison.

"Well, you look as if you've been through it," said Manners of the Shell.

"What is it this time, Reggie?"

His brother grunted.

"Old Selby, of course! Yow-ow!"

"The old Hun!" groaned Levison minor.

"Well, Mr. Selby would naturally be an old 'un at his time of life," remarked Monty Lowther. "He's fifty, you know!"

Monty Lowther was a humorist. He believed that it was a gift; but other fellows declared that it was a disease. Apparently Lowther thought a pun would have the effect of cheering up the sufferers. If so, he was mistaken. It hadn't.

Wally & Co. glared at him as if they would eat him.

"You silly chump!" growled Wally.

"Is this a time to be funny?"

"Go back to your asylum, and give us a rest!" snorted Reggie. And Frank Levison remarked laconically, but emphatically:

"Dummy!"

Tom Merry smiled.

"Cheero, kids!" he said. "You'll soon get over it."

"You haven't been licked by old Selby!" said Wally. "What you get from Linton or Railton is a merry joke to it. Six each! Think of that!"

"And for nothing, of course?" said Monty Lowther, giving up humour for sarcasm.

"Next to nothing," said Wally. "I

simply stuck a pin in Piggott's leg, to see if he would jump. I didn't know he was going to jump clear of the floor and give a yell like a Hun with a bayonet behind him. The little beast did it on purpose to give me away to Selby. And, of course, our beloved Form-master wasn't going to lose a chance like that. He called me out and licked me, and gave these chaps the same, because they were grinning—and they hadn't anything to do with it, you know."

"Suffering innocence!" sighed Monty Lowther.

"Yow-ow-ow!" said Wally & Co.

Tom Merry frowned a little. Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, was a very severe master, though it was true that the Third Form at St. Jim's required a stern hand.

There was no doubt that Mr. Selby overdid it at times—at all events, in the opinion of the juniors.

"Well, it's rotten," said Tom. "But cheer up. It's a half-holiday this afternoon, and the weather's bright, and everything in the garden is lovely. We're going to Wayland Cinema after dinner. You kids like to come along?"

"Stony!" granted Wally.

"My dear kid, the seats are going to be stood," said Tom Merry laughing.

"Now you're talking," said D'Arcy minor, more cheerfully. "What sort of seats?"

"Bobs!"

"Good! We'll come."

"Hear, hear!" said Reggie Manners, looking a little comforted. "I've wanted to go and see the war-pictures for a long time."

"Same here," chimed in Frank Levison.

And the Terrible Three walked on their way, leaving the fags considerably comforted, in spite of their tingling palms. Manners was looking rather pleased. He was not sorry to keep his minor under his eye for an afternoon. But Monty Lowther seemed to be restive.

"Tommy, you're an ass!" he remarked. "You've loaded us up with three inky fags for the afternoon!"

"Well, they've been licked," said Tom, "and it will run to it. I've had a remittance from Miss Fawcett, you know."

"But we're going to see somebody, as well as the pictures," said Lowther. "You know old Curll's got a job at the cinema in Wayland as a relief pianist. I want to have a jaw with him."

"I know old Curll came to see us here once, and got tipsy," remarked Manners.

"You can blame the booze manufacturers for that," said Monty Lowther. "Old Curll was born thirsty. Look here, he's a good sort, though he's a bit dingy, and it will cheer him up to see us again. But we can't take fags along to see him."

"I don't specially want my minor to know him certainly," said Manners, rather drily.

"I tell you he's a good sort!" said

Lowther warmly. "Look here, Manners—"

"Shush!" said Tom Merry chidingly. "Don't argue in war-time. We'll speak to old Curll, if he's there, and we'll send the fags on their own. We haven't got to carry them home, you know. Hallo, here's old Selby!"

Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, came out of the School House as the chums of the Shell arrived at the steps.

The Third Form master, who always looked sour, looked sourer than ever that sunny afternoon. Mr. Selby's digestion troubled him sometimes; and when it troubled him he was pretty certain to trouble others.

He frowned at the Terrible Three with a kind of dyspeptic resentment of their health and cheerfulness and sunny temper. When Mr. Selby was "in the miseries," he seemed to take it as a personal injury if anybody else looked happy.

"Merry!" he snapped out.

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"Kindly do not be so boisterous in the quadrangle! The school quadrangle is not a bear-garden!"

It was the flimsiest of excuses for finding fault and snapping; but it was good enough for Mr. Selby.

"Not a bear-garden, sir?" asked Monty Lowther, with the silky tone and smile which meant that impertinence was coming.

"Certainly not!" snapped Mr. Selby.

"Then it isn't the place for a bear with a sore head, sir?" said Lowther.

Tom Merry and Manners suppressed a chuckle. Mr. Selby was remarkably like a bear with a sore head just then, and he understood the allusion quite well.

"Lowther!" he thundered.

"Yes, sir."

"How dare you make such a remark?"

"Mayn't a fellow make a remark, sir?" asked Lowther, with a look of innocent surprise. "I thought you had stopped for a little chat, sir."

"Lowther! I—I—if I were your Form-master, Lowther, I should cane you most severely."

"How kind of you, sir!"

"I shall mention this impertinence to Mr. Linton!" fumed the Third Form-master. And he rustled away angrily.

"You ass, Monty!" murmured Manners. "If he complains to Linton, you may get detained."

"What did he want to jaw us for, then?" said Lowther. "We're not in his Form. Hallo, there's grub!"

And the Terrible Three, dismissing Mr. Selby from their minds, joined the army that was marching upon the dining-hall.

CHAPTER 2.

Detained!

"YOU chaps weedy?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy joined a little crowd that was gathering outside the School House after dinner.

The ornament of the Fourth Form was the last to arrive, having delayed some time to give his silk topper an extra polish and to change his necktie, it being borne in upon his mind, almost at the last moment, that the shade of the tie did not absolutely match the tone of his handsome waistcoat.

The other fellows wore sporting caps or straw hats, but Arthur Augustus was doing full justice to the occasion.

The Terrible Three had come out together, and they were joined by Blake and Herries and Digby, and then by Levison, Clive, and Cardew. Then came Wally and Frank Levison and Manners minor. Last of all, but by no means least, came the great Arthur Augustus.

"Yaas, we're weady, deah boy," said Monty Lowther, in a delightful imitation of Arthur Augustus' beautiful accent.

"Then let us pwoceed!"

"Pwoceed, deah boys!" said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—" Arthur Augustus broke off. "Wally, are you goin' out in that collah?"

"Do you want me to go without a collar?" demanded his minor.

"That collah has a spot of ink on it, Wally."

"Only one?" asked Wally.

"Yaas."

"Good! I generally have more than one. You fellows coming, or are you going to listen to a jawbone solo by my major?" inquired Wally.

"You cheekay young boundah—"

Kildare of the Sixth looked out of the big doorway. He glanced over the little crowd.

"Lowther there?"

"Yes, O King!" said Monty cheerfully.

"Mr. Linton wants you!"

Lowther's cheery face fell.

"I say, Kildare, tell him I'm dead, and can't come!" he said beseechingly.

Kildare grinned, and turned away. Monty Lowther gave his comrades an expressive look.

"What a life!" he said.

"Selby's been complaining," said Tom Merry, knitting his brows. "I was afraid he would. Why were you born so funny?"

"Why don't the Huns bomb Selby?" demanded Lowther darkly. "I'd forward them a vote of thanks. This means detention, of course. Br-r-r-r!"

"Lines, perhaps. Go and see."

"It won't be lines—they're getting too economical with the paper. It's detention, and I'm jolly well not going to be detained!" growled Lowther.

And he proceeded to the study of the master of the Shell, to see what Mr. Linton wanted. His Form-master frowned as he came in.

"Lowther, Mr. Selby has reported you to me for impertinence."

"Oh, sir!" said Lowther meekly.

"You will be detained for two hours this afternoon in the Form-room, Lowther."

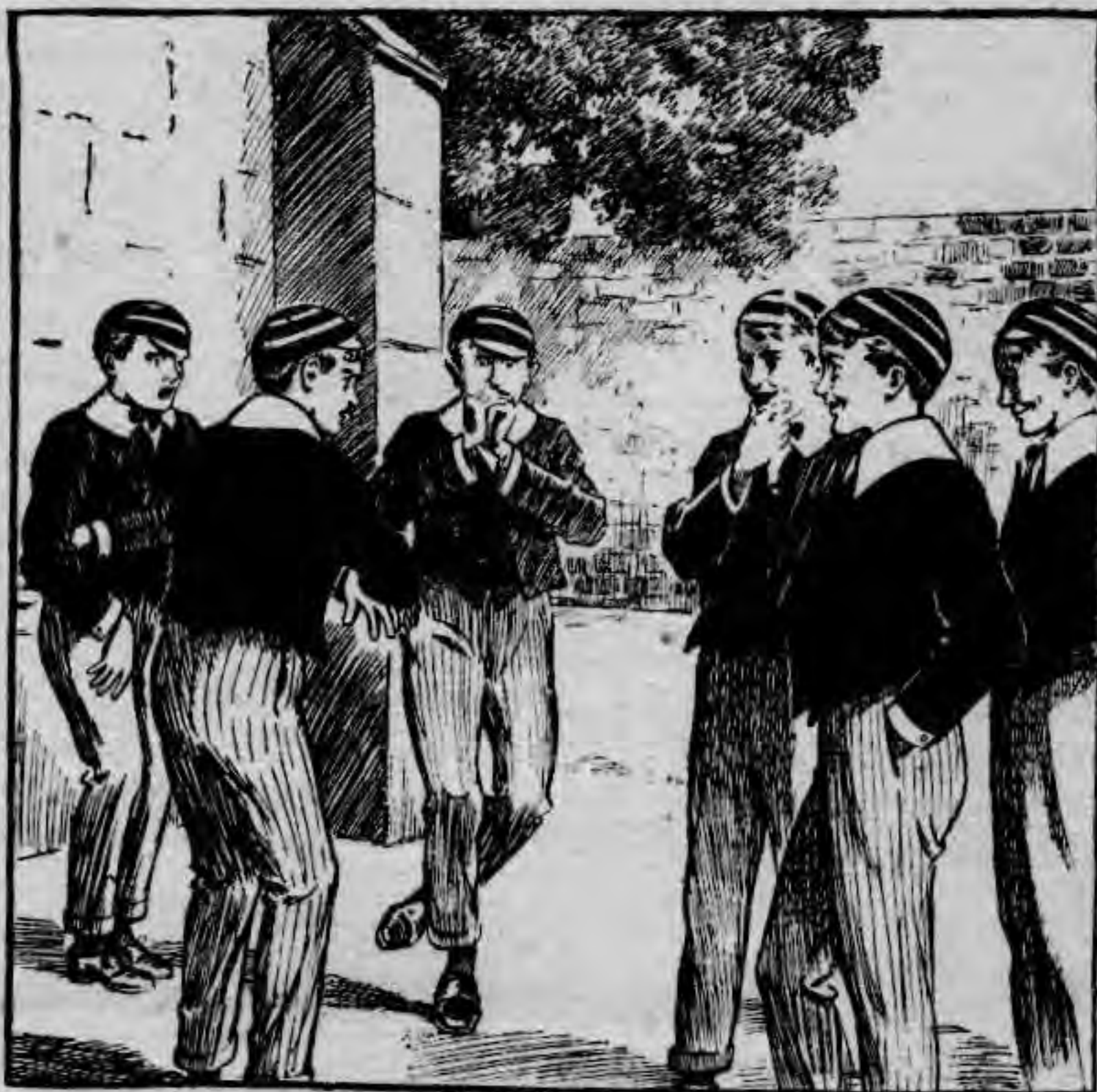
"If you please, sir—"

"You do not deny having been impertinent to Mr. Selby, I presume?"

"Ahem! Mr. Selby may have fancied so, sir; but—"

"He would not be likely to fancy so without grounds, Lowther," said the master of the Shell drily. "You will take your Latin grammar, and devote your attention to deponent verbs, in which you are somewhat backward. I shall question you afterwards as to the benefits you have derived from your extra study, Lowther. You may go!"

There was evidently nothing more to be said, and Monty Lowther went. His brow was grim as he rejoined his comrades.



Mr. Selby has been too kind!

(See Chapter 1.)

"Detained for two hours!" he said blackly.

"Bai Jove! That's hard cheese!"

"I'm coming, all the same," said Lowther. "You fellows get off now, and you'll see me later, when the coast's clear."

"That is wathah wiskay, Lowthah."

"We'll wait for you, Monty," said Tom Merry uneasily.

"You'll miss the afternoon show," said Lowther. "Get off, I tell you, and I'll join you. Shush! he added quickly, as Mr. Selby came to the door.

The Third-Form master stopped. His unpleasant glance was fixed upon the three fags in the party.

"Kindly tell me where you are going!" he said acidly.

"Wayland Cinema, sir!" said Wally, with outward respect. It was not possible to feel much inward respect for Mr. Selby.

"I thought so!" said Mr. Selby grimly.

"I do not approve of wasting time and money at cinema shows in time of war. You will do nothing of the kind, D'Arcy minor. I forbid you to go to the cinema!"

"The Head allows it, sir!" exclaimed Levison minor.

"Silence, Levison minor! As I cannot rely upon your obedience, you will remain within gates this afternoon," said Mr. Selby, turning away.

"Oh!" ejaculated the three fags together.

The juniors were all looking grim. It was plain that Mr. Selby's lunch had disagreed with him, and that this was the outcome. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stepped forward, his cheeks pink with indignation.

"Pway allow me a word, Mr. Selby!" he exclaimed.

The Form-master gave him a steely look.

"Have you anything to say to me, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir! I pwoest against my minah not bein' allowed to accompany me to the tinema!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly.

"That will do, D'Arcy!"

"There are wah pictures on the sceen this aftahnoon, sir, and as our eldah bwotah is in Flandahs fightin' the Huns, we naturally wish vewy much to see them—"

"I have given D'Arcy minor my orders. As you are not in my Form, I have nothing to say in your case, except to express my opinion that you are acting in a frivolous and unpatriotic manner," said Mr. Selby bitterly, and he walked away.

Arthur Augustus stood breathless with indignation.

"The feahful wottah!" he exclaimed. "Fwivolous! Me! Me! Unpatwiotic! Bai Jove, I shall not allow even a Form-master to be so feahfully impertinent without webukin' him."

Arthur Augustus strode after the Third-Form master. Blake and Herries and Digby seized him, as if moved by the same spring, and dragged his back.

"No, you don't!" grinned Blake. "You're not going to get detained, too, and licked into the bargain."

"Welease me, Blake!"

"Bow-wow!"

"I wepeat that I am goin' to webuke that—that person for his feahfully impertinent wemarks—"

"Ring off!" said Herries tersely.

"I wefuse to wing off, Hewwies. I wepeat—"

"Come on, you chaps!" said Blake, and he marched off towards the gates; and as he held D'Arcy's arm in a grip of iron, the swell of St. Jim's had to walk with him, loudly protesting.

Tom Merry & Co. hesitated. Monty Lowther went to the Shell Form-room for his detention—which he did not mean to finish. Wally and Reggie and Frank Levison stayed where they were, looking dismayed and savage and resentful.

"Well, you kids can't come, after all," said Tom Merry. "It's a rotten shame."

"I've a good mind to hook it!" growled Wally. "What right has Selby to interfere?" The Head lets us go to the cinema."

"Better not," said Frank Levison.

"Let's get some footer."

"Oh, bother footer!"

"Let's get off before any more of us are detained," suggested Ralph Cardew. "Old Lathom or Railton may take it into his head to detain somebody next."

"It's rotten that my minor can't come," said Levison of the Fourth, with a frown. "It's sheer tyranny."

"All serene, Ernie!" said Frank cheerfully. "I'll go to footer. Even old Selby can't stop that."

"Beastly Hun!" growled Reggie Manners.

"Oh, come on!" said Cardew.

The juniors started for the gates. They joined the chums of Study No. 6 in the road. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was looking a little ruffled, but he had given up resisting. His devoted chums were not to be argued with. But he was telling Blake and Herries and Dig what he thought of them at great length, his chums listening with undisturbed equanimity.

"Selby is a tyrannical beast," Clive remarked, as they turned into the foot-path to Wayland. "Something ought to be done."

"I've been thinkin' about that!" remarked Cardew thoughtfully. "It's too bad, young Levison bein' detained—such a bright an' entertainin' youth—"

"Oh, cheese it!" growled Levison major.

"But he is a bright an' entertainin' youth," said Cardew calmly. "I've been thinkin' of raggin' old Selby, to make it up."

"Selby's a rather dangerous customer to rag," said Tom Merry. "Better give him a wide berth."

"Yes, I mean to! Chap can be ragged from the end of a telephone-wire," said Cardew.

"Eh? How can you rag Selby by telephone?" asked Manners.

"I'm goin' to drop in at the post-office in Wayland an' try," said Cardew.

And when the juniors reached Wayland High Street, Ralph Reckness Cardew walked into the post-office, and his companions followed him in. They were willing to let the pictures wait for a little while, in order to see how Cardew of the Fourth proposed to rag the unpopular master by telephone. And quite an interested little crowd of juniors gathered round the telephone-box when Cardew was through to Mr. Railton's number at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 3.

A Surprise for Mr. Selby.

BUZZZZ! Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, rose from his armchair by the window, and took up the telephone-receiver. The Housemaster had been gazing out at the green playing-fields, thinking of the trenches on the Western Front, where he had played his part, and received his wound. The buzz of the telephone interrupted his meditations.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo! Is that St. Jim's?"

"Yes; the School House. Mr. Railton is speaking."

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"Very good! It is my duty to make some inquiries concerning a master in your school—a Mr. Selby."

"Indeed! Kindly tell me who you are."

"Mr. Ketch, recruiting-officer."

"Oh! Do you wish to speak to Mr. Selby?"

"Later, yes; but I should prefer to ask you some questions first. You are senior master, I understand, or something of the sort."

"I am Housemaster."

"Yes, yes. Will you kindly inform me whether Mr. Selby is liable to service under the Military Service Act?"

"I think not. I understand that he is fifty years of age."

"You are absolutely assured of that?"

"I have always understood so," said Mr. Railton, puzzled. "Certainly, I have not seen his birth-certificate."

"Is he registered?"

"Undoubtedly."

"I have reason to believe, sir, that he is, to speak plainly, a shirker. Of course, I do not desire to cause any unpleasantness at the school if my impression should be a mistaken one. Will you ask Mr. Selby to come to the telephone?"

"Certainly, at once. Where are you speaking from?"

"Wayland. This is my district."

"Hold on, please, while I call Mr. Selby."

Mr. Railton placed the receiver on the desk, with a puzzled and frowning brow. He left the study, and hurried to Mr. Selby's quarters.

He found the Third Form master at home.

Mr. Selby was in his study reading a newspaper, and frowning over it. Mr. Selby very often frowned.

He nodded to the Housemaster as he came in, and spoke before Mr. Railton could utter a word.

"Scandalous!" said Mr. Selby, in his snappish voice. "Here is a man expressing objections to the raising of the military age—"

"To fifty?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Certainly not! To forty-five!" said Mr. Selby, very hastily. "Fifty would be preposterous, in my opinion!"

Mr. Railton smiled slightly.

"Someone wishes to speak to you on the telephone," he said. "A Mr. Ketch, of Wayland, a recruiting-officer."

"Very good!" said Mr. Selby, rising.

"Doubtless in connection with the meeting I am helping to organise on the subject of combing out shirkers."

"Ahem! Not exactly. Mr. Ketch seems to have an impression that you—ahem!—are liable to service."

Mr. Selby jumped.

"I! Absurd! Preposterous! Unheard-of!" he exclaimed. "What can have put such an idiotic idea into the man's head?"

"That I cannot say. But he desires to speak to you."

Mr. Selby dragged open his desk, and jerked his registration-card out of a receptacle there. He held it up for Mr. Railton to see.

"There is my age!" he said.

"Quite so. I have no doubt that a few words will satisfy Mr. Ketch."

"Oh, I will speak to him, certainly!" snapped Mr. Selby.

He whisked away to Mr. Railton's study, followed more slowly by the Housemaster. He was already seated at the telephone when Mr. Railton came in. His sharp voice was snapping into the transmitter:

"Hallo! What is it? I am Mr. Selby. What do you want?"

"This is Mr. Ketch—"

"Yes, yes; I know that! What do you want with me?"

"Kindly tell me your age."

"Fifty."

"Is that marked on your registration-card?"

"Certainly!"

"Can you show your birth certificate?"

"Eh? I could procure a copy of it, if required, certainly!"

"I have reason to believe, Mr. Selby, that you are a shirker."

"Sir!"

"Will you kindly explain why you have not joined up?"

"I am not bound to do so!" shouted Mr. Selby into the transmitter.

"But you naturally desire to do so?"

"Eh? What? Yes—no! Certainly—I mean certainly not!" stammered Mr. Selby.

"That is hardly clear!" came Mr. Ketch's calm voice. "Am I to understand that you are desirous of putting on khaki?"

Mr. Selby breathed hard.

He would gladly have stated that he was desirous of taking that attractive step; but he was not sure whether such a statement, even on the telephone, might not bind him. On the whole, it was safer to be explicit—from Mr. Selby's point of view.

"No!" he said.

"That is very odd. I understand that you are Mr. Selby, a Form-master at St. James' School?"

"I am!"

"Then you are the Mr. Selby booked as a speaker at a meeting in this town, to draw the Government's attention to shirkers who ought to be combed out?"

"Certainly!"

"Yet you are not desirous of joining up? Will you kindly explain that very remarkable inconsistency?"

Mr. Selby breathed hard.

As a matter of fact, his inconsistency required some explaining, and the explanation was not to Mr. Selby's credit. He felt a certain amount of hesitation in explaining that he believed in the comb being applied to others, and not to his worthy self.

"Did you hear me?" came Mr. Ketch's voice insistently.

"I—I have duties to perform—exact duties!" stammered Mr. Selby at last.

"That is beside the point. Everyone has duties to perform, and all lesser duties must be put aside to perform the greater duty of defending one's country from a barbarous enemy."

Mr. Selby snorted into the transmitter.

"I am the best judge of that!" he snapped. "I prefer to follow my own judgment in my own affairs!"

"All the shirkers in the country would prefer to follow their own judgment, sir, but they are not allowed to do so."

"Sir! You have no right to put these questions to me. This cannot be a part of your duty!"

"Have you read Section 1, File 2, Paragraph 3, of the Instructions to persons in Authority in the Combing-Out Department?"

"Nunno!"

"Then do not talk about matters you do not understand. I have every right to put these questions."

"Sir!"

"I am not satisfied with your answers, Mr. Selby. It appears clear to me that you are a shirker, and it is my duty to comb you out."

"Sir!" stuttered Mr. Selby.

"You may expect me at the school as soon as my duties allow me time to make a call. I shall subject you to a very severe examination, and if I am not satisfied, you will be handed over. Your evasive answers make me very suspicious indeed."

"Sir!" gasped Mr. Selby, between rage and alarm. "I assure you I—Bless my soul, he has rung off!"

The Form-master rose from the chair in great agitation. Mr. Railton was looking at him very curiously.

"It is extraordinary!" gasped Mr. Selby, wiping his brow. "Amazing! This—this man presumes, Mr. Railton, to doubt my word!"

"I am afraid such officers have to do with a great deal of prevarication, Mr. Selby. Naturally he requires proof of your statements."

"Mr. Railton! Is it possible that you—you—Mr. Selby stuttered.

"I must say, Mr. Selby, that it is very odd that Mr. Ketch should have this impression. He has doubtless been making inquiries of some sort. To be quite frank, are you or are you not of military age?" demanded Mr. Railton.

"Sir! Look at me!" shrieked Mr. Selby. "Can you not see—"

"Appearances are deceptive," said Mr. Railton. "Some men of forty look only thirty, and some look fifty. You know best what your age is."

"It is written upon my card—fifty."

"On your own statement to that effect?"

"Yes, of course!"

Mr. Railton hesitated a moment.

"I will be quite candid, Mr. Selby. It is not unknown for false statements to have been made when the people were registered. If you made any—ahem—mistake at the time of registration, it would be advisable to call upon the recruiting-officer at once and explain. Possibly the matter would be overlooked if you joined up at once."

Mr. Selby almost danced with rage and excitement.

"I tell you I am fifty!" he shrieked. "I have not the least intention of joining up. I will not go, sir, unless I am fetched! If this man ventures to call upon me I shall speak to him very plainly. Mr. Railton, do you doubt my word?"

"I am bound to accept your word, Mr. Selby," said the Housemaster drily. "I will only say that it is very extraordinary that this officer should have an impression that you are concealing your true age. I cannot account for it. Can you?"

"I cannot! It is amazing!"

"Very amazing!" said Mr. Railton drily.

Mr. Selby gave him a glare, and strode towards the door. He could see that the Housemaster had at least a lingering doubt. At the door he turned back.

"Mr. Railton! The man says he is going to call here. Is it—do you think it is possible that—that a man might be taken by mistake, though over age?"

"Very improbable, I should say."

"But mistakes are made," said Mr. Selby, with a worried look. "Such mistakes are possible."

"I suppose they are not impossible," said Mr. Railton, "but extremely unlikely, I should think. But, after all, sir, surely it is no very terrible prospect to think of yourself in khaki serving your country?"

Mr. Selby looked at the Housemaster as if he could bite him. Then he whisked out of the study and closed the door with a slam.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Railton.

And he settled down at the open window again with his pipe.

Mr. Selby did not settle down again, however. He paced his study in a state of great agitation. The strange mistake made by Mr. Ketch alarmed him. Suppose—suppose a mistake should be made to the extent of whisking him off into the Army? There was not one chance in a thousand that such a thing could happen; but Mr. Selby was thinking of the one chance, not of the nine hundred and ninety-nine.

He was so disturbed in his mind that he forgot his appointment for that after-

noon, and did not turn up at the meeting in Wayland to advocate the unsparing combing-out of shirkers!

CHAPTER 4.

At the Cinema!

"CARDEW, you cheeky ass!"

"Cardew, you fathead!"

"Cardew, you howling chump!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew grinned as he stepped out of the telephone-box. Tom Merry & Co. had heard his talk with Mr. Selby over the wires, and it had taken their breath away.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "It was awful cheek to speak to Mr. Selby like that, Cardew!"

Cardew chuckled.

"Doesn't it serve him right?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"What a state of mind he will be in!" grinned Levison. "Selby's an awful funk—all the fags heard him stuttering and spluttering when the Zepps came. Good for you, Mr. Ketch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors crowded out, chortling, into the street.

"But, weally, Cardew, it was not quite the thing to wepwevent yourself as a wecwutin'-official!" said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of his head. "I wathah think it is against the law, and you are liable to feahful penalties undah some Act or othah."

"But I am a recruiter," said Cardew.

"Eh? How do you make that out?"

"I was recruiting Selby, wasn't I?" demanded Cardew.

"I hardly think the authowities would take that view, Cardew, if the mattah were bwrought to their knowledge."

"Well, it's everybody's duty to help on recruiting," said Cardew. "I've done my best! After my talk to him, Selby may rush off to enlist, and we shall hear of him in the trenches winnin' V.C.'s and things."

"I don't think!" chuckled Blake.

The juniors could not help grinning over Cardew's talk to Mr. Selby, though at the same time they regarded it as rather near the limit. But if Cardew had rendered himself liable to any penalties, it did not seem to trouble him. He sauntered on cheerfully with the party to Wayland Picture Palace.

"Bai Jove! Heah's Lowthah!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"Monty, o'd chap!"

Monty Lowther was in the vestibule, evidently waiting for them. He had arrived first at the cinema.

"You hooked it, then?" said Clive.

"Looks like it!" said Lowther coolly. "Linton's busy this afternoon; he won't spot that I've scuttled out."

"Selby may, though," said Manners doubtfully.

"It's not Selby's bizney."

"That doesn't make any difference to him."

"Well, I'm chancing it, anyway."

"Bai Jove! I wathah think Selby's got somethin' to think about this aftahnoon," grinned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Poor old Selby is wowwyin' about a bwiek recwutin'-official gettin' aftah him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's that?" asked Lowther.

Cardew's little joke was explained, and Lowther chuckled explosively. It was a jape after his own heart.

"Good for you, Cardew!" said Lowther. "Selby's such a blessed old funk, it's bound to make him sit up. Come on, you chaps!"

The St. Jim's party marched in to their seats.

The lights were down, and the pictures were playing on the screen. From the

orchestra came the sound of a piano playing solo. The orchestra had gone for a rest, and the fiddles and 'cello were silent, and the relief had taken the place of the instrumentalists.

In the relief pianist Tom Merry & Co. were somewhat interested.

For the pianist was their old acquaintance, Mr. Horatio Curll, a gentleman who sacrificed at the shrine of Bacchus, not wisely but too well, but was a very good sort in his way, all the same. Mr. Curll had seen better days, and seen the last of them long ago. The juniors had felt very sorry for this poor gentleman, who had fallen upon such evil days, though chiefly through his own weakness. They had been kind to him; and, indeed, Monty Lowther had once joined him, to try cinema life, on a holiday. That experiment had been enough for Lowther; but poor Mr. Curll had no choice about going on with it.

Tom Merry & Co. could catch a glimmer of the bald spot on Mr. Curll's head behind a baize curtain, as he thumped music out of the piano. The relief pianist, who merely filled in time while the orchestra took a much-needed rest, was not a person of very great account. But poor Mr. Curll had a fixed belief that people came to the cinema specially to hear him play, and that they simply tolerated the orchestra when he was not there.

There was a war scene on the screen, and the pianist was hammering out an adaption of the Soldiers' Chorus from "Faust." The picture changed to that of a troopship, and the tune changed to a "Life on the Ocean Wave." Then came a tropical Indian strand, and palm-trees and natives, in the picture, and the pianist turned on the "Indian Love Lyrics." Mr. Curll was up to his work, though he sometimes smote the keys with an unsteady finger.

"That's old Curll!" grinned Lowther. "Same old grind! I wonder how he's been getting on all this time. We're going to see him afterwards."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am wathah intewested in poor old Curll."

"Must have hit him hard, the booze prices going up!" remarked Levison.

"Wathah a good thing for him, I should think. He won't be able to dwink so much."

The lights went up, and the screen was blank. The juniors, who were in seats near the front, saw Mr. Curll's head rise and the pianist blink over the baize curtain at the house. Poor Mr. Curll was anxious to see the impression his playing had made on the audience.

As a matter of fact, it had made no impression at all. The people in front were waiting for the next picture, and were quite indifferent to Horatio Curll's artistic efforts. But Mr. Curll caught sight of the juniors, and smiled expansively. He was evidently pleased to see his old friends again. Perhaps it was partly because he had seldom met Arthur Augustus without borrowing a half-sovereign of him. And certainly it was partly because the juniors were sympathetic, and listened patiently to the poor gentleman's long stories of his old-time triumphs, when he had been a wonderful tenor in the now defunct Roser-Moser Company. Mr. Curll was one of those numerous artistic gentlemen who dream that they dwell in marble halls.

The juniors smiled recognition. The lights went down again, and the pictures came on; and the piano started to accompany them with Mr. Curll's selections. Later on the orchestra filed in, and the relief pianist was at liberty. Then the violins and the 'cello went

along with the pictures, and Mr. Curll was heard no more.

"We're going to see Curll before we go back," said Lowther.

"Looks an interestin' Johnny," remarked Cardew. "Do you know where he lives?"

"No. Lodgings in Wayland, somewhere. I can send in a note to him, though," said Lowther.

"I wish you'd give me an introduction."

Lowther hesitated. He was a little doubtful about the dandy of the Fourth.

"I don't mind," he said. "Of course, you understand that Curll's got to be treated decently."

"By gad!"

"I mean, he's a decent man in his way, and I don't want him patronised," said Monty Lowther bluntly.

Cardew coloured a little.

"If you think I'm likely to be caddish to a man who's down on his luck—" he began.

"Well, you're rather a swanking ass, you know," said Lowther. "But all serene, if you understand."

Cardew opened his lips again, but closed them without speaking. To do him justice, Cardew's swank was generally inflicted upon people who were as well off in the world's goods as himself, and he had a polite consideration for those lower down in the social scale. But Monty Lowther was not fond of swank of any sort, and he did not mean to risk having Mr. Curll's feelings hurt by a superior youth.

The juniors saw the pictures through, and left the cinema at last. They came out into the vestibule of the picture palace. There Monty Lowther scribbled his note for Mr. Curll, and looked for an attendant to take it to him. Clive and Levison, Blake and Herries, and Digby and Manners, started for home, not being specially interested in a meeting with Mr. Curll. But Tom Merry, D'Arcy, and Cardew remained with Lowther. Three of them knew him, and Cardew was rather curious to know him.

A youth in uniform took Lowther's note, and a sixpence. He disappeared, and a few minutes later returned with the information that Mr. Curll was just leaving, and that he could be seen at the side door. And Tom Merry & Co. quitted the cinema, and walked round to the side door to see Mr. Curll.

CHAPTER 5.

Mr. Curll at Home.

MR. CURLL greeted his young friends effusively.

He had a rather wild look in his eyes as he came out, and the juniors almost suspected that Mr. Curll had already been indulging in the cup that cheers. But, as a matter of fact, that was not the case—yet. It was the confinement in a close space, the incessant strumming on the piano, amid the buzz and whirl of the "movies" so close to him that gave poor Mr. Curll a dazed and feverish look. He shook hands with the juniors all round, and acknowledged the introduction to Ralph Reckness Cardew with stately grace. Even in his latter unfortunate days, and on the solid, unromantic pavement of real life, Mr. Curll did not seem quite able to realise that he was not the Duke in "Rigoletto," or the unfortunate nobleman in "Il Trovatore."

"Delighted to make your acquaintance," said Mr. Curll. "How very kind of you all to give me a look in, now that I am once more within visiting distance of the scholastic precincts of St. Jim's. Gentlemen, I cannot receive you as, a few years since, I might have received you. The days when stately apartments

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were bedecked for the reception of Horatio Curll, when beauteous duchesses waited in their cars in the hope of giving Horatio Curll a lift to his palatial hotel, are gone—gone, my young friends, perhaps never to return."

It did not seem to the juniors that there was much "perhaps" about it, even if it had ever really happened in the past. But they did not say so.

"Oh, never say die!" said Cardew cheerily. "You'll see the merry duchesses again after the war."

Monty Lowther gave him a warning look. He did not want his unfortunate friend's leg pulled.

"Where are you fixed now, Mr. Curll?" asked Lowther.

"My old quarters, in River Street, Master Lowther, where I once had the honour of receiving you," said Mr. Curll. "I am going homeward now, if you care to walk with me."

"Yes, rather!"

"Certainly, sir," said Arthur Augustus, who treated Mr. Curll with the respect due to a man old enough to be his father. "It is vewy kind of you. You are fwee ffrom your dutays for some time?"

"Until seven o'clock," said Mr. Curll sadly. "Then I return to the cinema to play the—ha, ha!—piano! You saw me there, my young friends. You would scarcely believe that in the old days—the glorious old days—of the Roser-Moser Grand Opera Company, I sang to crowded houses four times the size of that building, and that hushed audiences hung upon every golden note from my lips. Yet so it was."

"By gad!" murmured Cardew.

Mr. Curll's excellent opinion of himself as he had been in the dear dead days beyond recall rather astonished Cardew. Mr. Curll had to the full the artist's craving for praise; and if it was not administered by others he was quite willing to administer it to himself.

"And now," said Mr. Curll bitterly, as they turned into River Street, which was close at hand, "now, young gentlemen, I dwell here!" He nodded towards a grim and frowsy lodging-house near the corner of the street. "Such are my quarters! Yet, such as they are, my friends are always welcome to them."

Tom Merry hesitated.

He could guess what Mr. Curll's quarters would be like, and that there was little accommodation for four visitors at once.

He gave Lowther an inquiring look, and Lowther nodded. Monty Lowther had not quite forgotten his old yearning for the cinema life, and he meant to have a jaw with his peculiar friend.

"Come in!" went on Mr. Curll magnificently, as he stood—in an attitude—in the dingy hall of the lodging-house, from the walls of which the paper was peeling with damp. "Come in, gentlemen! You are welcome to the humble quarters of Horatio Curll."

"Bai Jove! You are vewy good, deah boy! It would be vewy agweeable to have a little talk, if we shall not incommodate you."

"Not at all, my young friend. Follow me!"

Mr. Curll's long legs negotiated the stairs, and the juniors followed him.

There seemed hardly an end to the stairs. When they reached the elevated floor upon which Mr. Curll dwelt, the stairs went winding on to dusky heights beyond. They passed two or three slatternly persons on the staircase. From a room above there was a sound of crashing, showing that a family row was in progress somewhere at the top of the building. Mr. Curll unlocked a door and threw it open, with a fine gesture.

"Enter!" he said, in a deep voice.

Tom Merry & Co. entered.

Cardew glanced round him with curious interest. They were in a bedroom, which was apparently also a sitting-room and a kitchen. There was an unmade bed in one corner; in another there was a little oil-stove, with a dirty frying-pan on it. Mr. Curll waved his hand.

"Such," he said, "are the present quarters of Horatio Curll, once the darling of the public."

"Hard cheese, deah boy!"

"Sit down!" said Mr. Curll.

It was not so easy to sit down as to issue the invitation to do so. There was only one chair, and that was standing against the wall, evidently because the wall was needed to keep it standing. Tom Merry sat on the bed, and Arthur Augustus joined him there. Monty Lowther carefully balanced himself on the damaged chair. Cardew found a seat in the window.

"It is a pleasure to me," said Mr. Curll, "after the life I now lead, to find myself once more in the society of my social equals."

"It must be, sir," said Cardew, without turning a hair. His expression did not betray that he was wondering whether Mr. Curll had any social inferiors.

"You understand me," said Mr. Curll. "Few understand me—very few! The manager of the Wayland Cinema, for instance, is a hooligan—a Hun—a Vandal! I scorn him, but I take his pay. Ha, ha!" Mr. Curll had a most sardonic laugh, which he transferred unreflectingly from the stage to his private life. "Ha, ha! I take his pay—such as it is! To such base uses may we come, gentlemen. Yet, brute as he is, he knows enough to engage a first-class pianist for his wretched show. But you would scarcely believe the dismal depths of the ignorance of that man. He fancies—he actually believes—that the people come in, in crowds, to see his absurd pictures."

"Bai Jove! What do they come in for, Mr. Curll?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"They come," said Mr. Curll, "to hear excellent music."

"I don't think much of the orchestra," said Cardew, who had already taken Mr. Curll's measure.

Mr. Curll beamed upon him.

"The band," he said, "is rotten! I have told Mr. Snooks so. Even at the risk of being deprived of my post, I could not refrain from expressing my contempt for his orchestra. I am an artist—I must speak as an artist! But the people who listen with discomfort to the wretched orchestra have, at least, the compensation of hearing excellent piano solos. But that brute, that Hun, that Goth, gentlemen, actually imagines that the people in front are applauding his miserable pictures, when they clap and cheer my music!"

"By gad! Does he?" said Cardew, with an air of astonishment.

"He does!" said Mr. Curll. "And I, an artist, with an artist's soul, have to pass my life among such men! Compassionate me!"

Mr. Curll's visitors did indeed compassionate him. So egregious a vanity must have exposed Mr. Curll to a good many hard knocks during his professional career.

"You may have observed," Mr. Curll continued—the subject of Mr. Curll's conversation was always Mr. Curll. "You may have observed—"

He paused suddenly.

To the astonishment of the juniors, he tiptoed to the door, and closed it very cautiously. There had been a sound of footsteps on the stairs.

"Anythin' w'ong, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus in amazement.

"Hush!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Do you mind speaking in very low voices for a few minutes?" said Mr. Curll, in a tragic whisper. "That step is my landlady's. She will pass my door."

"Oh!"

"I do not desire that good lady to know that I have returned. There is a certain awkwardness between us on the question of rent. A good soul, young gentlemen, a very good soul, but unimaginative. She does not understand an artist."

Thump!

It was a heavy knock at the door.

Poor Mr. Curll's precautions had been in vain. The door opened, and a stout, red-faced dame presented herself with a threatening brow.

"I thought so!" she said emphatically—"I thought so! I thought I heard you come in, Mr. Curll! Now, what about that rent?"

CHAPTER 6.

Cardew to the Rescue!

TOM MERRY & CO. rose to their feet, feeling very uncomfortable. They realised that their visit was paid at an unfortunate moment for Mr. Curll.

That poor gentleman stared at his landlady as at a basilisk. It was quite clear that he was not prepared to discuss the burning question of rent.

"Madam!" he said.

"Not so much of your madam!" said Mrs. Crooge. "Four weeks it is, and never a penny 'ave you paid, Mr. Curll. A dodgin' of me hevery day, and never givin' a pore widow a chance to ask for 'er money."

"Madam, in the presence of these young gentlemen——"

"Huh!"

"On another occasion, madam, I will discuss this matter fully——"

"Huh!"

"I will, in fact, speak to you about it this evening," said the unhappy Mr. Curll. "We will go into the whole question thoroughly——"

"One pound for the rent, which is reasonable enough," said Mrs. Crooge, unheeding. "One pound fifteen for extras. 'Ard-earned money that I've paid out for you, Mr. Curll, with you a-drinking your wages like a hostrich all the time."

"Madam!"

"Two pound fifteen altogether," said Mrs. Crooge determinedly, "and I ain't seen the colour of your money, Mr. Curll, and now I've caught you at 'ome. So I'll be obliged, Mr. Curll, if you will settle."

"At the present moment, madam, there is, unfortunately, a shortage——"

"Huh!"

"I trust shortly to be able——"

"Shortly won't do!" said Mrs. Crooge grimly. "You pay up to-day, or out you go, Mr. Curll!"

Mr. Curll raised his head haughtily.

"Madam, I will shake the dust of these apartments from my feet at once. I will pack my bags——"

"You don't take nothing away unless you square my bill!" said Mrs. Crooge hotly. "Not a single thing, you bad old man, you!"

Arthur Augustus was staring from the window into the dingy street. Tom Merry and Lowther were studying an oleograph on the wall. They were apparently deaf to the interesting conversation that was going on. But Cardew did not pretend to be deaf. He listened cheerfully, and at this point he rose, and came towards Mr. Curll.

"Excuse me, Mr. Curll," he said. "Perhaps you would be kind enough to

allow a friend to extend a little temporary help."

"Sir," said Mr. Curll impressively, "you are a gentleman!"

"Thank you," said Cardew. He opened his handsome pocket-book, and flicked out a five-pound note. "Madam, would you be kind enough to change this?"

Mrs. Crooge's expression became much sweeter.

"Certainly, sir," she said. "It may take a little time to change it——"

"Never mind; hand the change to Mr. Curll, who will settle with me later."

Mrs. Crooge sniffed.

"Young gentleman, it's my duty to warn you as that there Mr. Curll don't never settle with nobody!" she said.

"Madam!" protested Mr. Curll.

"Madam," said Cardew, "I am sure you do my friend an injustice. Mr. Curll is a gentleman whom I respect very highly. I regard it as an honour to know him."

"You heard what my young friend says, Mrs. Crooge," said Mr. Curll crushingly; and the good lady, with another sniff, left Mr. Curll's room.

"Young sir, I thank you!" said Mr. Curll.

"Don't mench!" said Cardew carelessly.

"This sum shall, of course, be repaid almost immediately," said Mr. Curll. "Meanwhile, as you are so kind as to place it at my disposal, I will give some instructions to my landlady. Kindly excuse me one moment."

Mr. Curll followed the dame out on the landing, and a whispered conversation ensued, of which the juniors caught the words "steak-and-chips," "beer," "navy mixture," "cigarettes," "onions," "pickles."

Apparently Mr. Curll's unexpected loan was to materialise in a feast of the gods, as well as payment of his landlady's bill.

Horatio Curll came back smiling into the room.

"Young gentlemen, will you do me the favour of staying to tea with me? Mrs. Crooge, though somewhat crude in her conversation, is an excellent cook."

"By gad, that's a good idea," said Cardew. "Perhaps, sir, while we have tea, you will tell us somethin' about your career. Or perhaps," he added, considerately—"perhaps you don't care to talk about yourself much."

"I seldom do," said poor Mr. Curll. "But I shall be delighted to entertain you—if you can be so entertained—with some brief sketches of an artist's life."

It was an opportunity such as the poor gentleman seldom had for blowing off steam, as it were.

He started at once.

Cardew listened with an air of respectful attention and interest, and the other fellows did their best to follow his example.

Mr. Curll was still talking when Mrs. Crooge brought in tea, which was a decidedly plentiful meal on this occasion, though probably it was not often so for Mr. Curll. That gentleman generally attended rather to his thirst than to his hunger.

Mr. Curll's talk slackened but little during the meal.

Immediately afterwards, it was resumed in full force.

It seemed as if Mr. Curll had got his second wind, if not his third, and he ran on uninterruptedly over his cigarettes.

He told of the more or less imaginary triumphs of his earlier days at inordinate length. Bouquets had showered on him, duchesses had cast him languishing glances, much to the annoyance of their dukes, and, indeed, Mr. Curll's earlier life seemed to have been "roses, roses all the way." He added sadly that his

guests, seeing him now, would hardly believe it. As a matter of absolute fact, they didn't believe it. But they were willing to give Mr. Curll his innings, and he took it. It was not till it was time for him to proceed to the cinema that he rang off.

Tom Merry & Co. walked with him to the picture palace. At the door Mr. Curll bade them an affectionate farewell. He shook Cardew's hand several times over.

"I shall never forget your kind service, my young friend," he said. "Whenever Horatio Curll may be able to serve you, even to the extent of his fortune, command him! He will obey the call!"

The whole extent of Mr. Curll's fortune just then was the change from Cardew's banknote. But his intentions were magnificent.

"I sha'n't forget," said Cardew gravely.

"Remember!" said Mr. Curll impressively. "Remember!"

And the juniors said good-bye. They left Mr. Curll at the cinema door, and walked away. Tom Merry glanced back from the corner of the street, and smiled a little as he saw Mr. Curll dart across the road to the Red Cow, and disappear within the swing-doors. The change from the banknote was burning a hole in Horatio Curll's pocket, and his troublesome thirst had to be dealt with before he turned up to play the relief.

Tom Merry & Co. walked away to St. Jim's. They cast rather curious glances at Cardew.

"That's cost you five quid," said Monty Lowther suddenly. "I suppose you know Curll won't settle up?"

Cardew laughed.

"Of course he won't!"

"Well, if you can afford to give away five quid——"

"My dear chap, I'm a purse-proud boulder rolling in money," said Cardew calmly. "Why shouldn't the poor chap be helped out of a hole?"

"It was vewy kind of you, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus. "I should have wolloed up in the same way if I had had a fivah just now. But I hadn't."

"Well, I had," said Cardew, smiling. "He's a queer fish, that Curll. I rather like him!"

"Not a bad sort, only a little too thirsty!" said Tom Merry. "I hope he won't get squiffy now, and get booted out of the cinema. He did once."

"Bai Jove! That would be wathah wotten!"

And Tom Merry & Co. sauntered homeward in the summer dusk, hoping the best for Mr. Curll.

CHAPTER 7.

Tit for Tat.

THE chums of St. Jim's were met by Kildare of the Sixth as they entered the School House.

The prefect beckoned to Lowther.

"You're wanted, Lowther," he said laconically.

"I?" said Lowther. "Wanted again! It's rather flattering to be so much in demand, isn't it, Kildare?"

"You did not stay in the Form-room for your detention."

"That was over long ago," urged Monty Lowther. "I wasn't to stay in the Form-room till this time of day, Kildare."

"Did you stay there at all?" demanded Kildare.

"Certainly!"

"For two hours, as Mr. Linton ordered?"

"Nunno. Not quite."

"How long, then?"

"About five minutes," said Monty

Lowther meekly. "It was really due to my patriotism, Kildare. I thought I ought not to waste time in war-time. I suppose you know there's a war on?"

"Mr. Selby found that you were absent, and reported you," said Kildare. "You're to go to Mr. Linton. I advise you not to make any little jokes to him, Lowther."

And Kildare turned away.

"More trouble!" said Lowther. "What did Selby want to nose into the Form-room for? He's no business in the Shell-room. I suppose I'd better go to Linton?"

"I suppose you had," said Tom Merry, "and I suppose you'd better buck up, you ass!"

"I thought that telephone-call would give Selby somethin' else to think about," remarked Cardew regretfully. "Perhaps Selby nosed into the Form-room before I called him up, though. This man Selby wants suppressin', dear boys."

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard it as wathah Pwussian of Selby to go nosin' after a chap like this," remarked Arthur Augustus.

Monty Lowther made his way dismally to the study of the master of the Shell. He was feeling extremely exasperated with Mr. Selby. Really, that gentleman might have been better occupied than in spying on a detained junior! Lowther found Mr. Linton with his cane ready at hand.

"Lowther, Mr. Selby informs me that you did not remain in the Form-room for two hours' detention, as ordered."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Mr. Selby visited the Form-room, and ascertained that you were absent a short time after your detention should have commenced."

The Shell-master took up his cane.

"Hold out your hand, Lowther!"

Swish!

"Your other hand, Lowther!"

Swish!

"You may go, Lowther!"

Monty Lowther went. He squeezed his hands under his arms as he went down the passage. He had to pass Mr. Selby's door, and he noted that there was no light under it, though darkness had now fallen. The master of the Third was evidently not in his room.

Lowther's eyes gleamed as he stopped at the door.

His hands were smarting, and he was in a mood to repay Mr. Selby for his unwelcome attentions. He slipped quietly into the study, and closed the door after him.

The room was unoccupied. The last glimmer of daylight from the quadrangle came in at the window, and showed up the dim study.

Monty Lowther took the inkpot from the table, and emptied its contents into the armchair. As the chair was covered in dark leather, Mr. Selby was not likely to observe the ink till he sat in it. Doubtless he would discover it then.

Then the humorist of the Shell opened the clock-face, and inserted several pins into the works, and closed it again. There came a queer sound from the clock, and it ceased to tick. Lowther smiled approval. He felt that he was getting even for the caning he had just received.

He glanced round the study in search of some other little deed of a kindly nature to perform. There were several papers on the table, and he slid them under the hearthrug, perhaps thinking that Mr. Selby would get a little agreeable exercise in hunting for them. There was a folded card of a grey colour lying on the table, and Lowther picked it up to put it with the papers.

Then he paused.

He knew a registration-card when he

saw one. It was Mr. Selby's registration-card, and Lowther chuckled over it. He could guess why the card was there. The telephone-call from Mr. Ketch had caused the Third Form master to get it out from where it was kept. Doubtless he had left it there when he went to Mr. Railton's study to answer the telephone, and had since forgotten it. Mr. Selby had other things to think about that afternoon—visions of determined and ferocious recruiting-officers were haunting him.

Lowther did not intend to damage the card. He knew that it was illegal to do so; and, besides, his little jokes never went to the extent of real damage. He opened the bookcase, slipped the card inside a volume on the top shelf there, and closed the bookcase again. When Mr. Selby looked for the card, he certainly was not likely to find it—till the junior chose to take it out some day and leave it on his table again. Hunting for the registration-card would be exercise for Mr. Selby, and keep him occupied, and less likely to worry Shell fellows, Lowther considered.

Feeling that he had well done his duty in Mr. Selby's study, Lowther left it, and retired to his own quarters.

"Licked?" asked Tom Merry.



"Yes. A twicer."

"Never mind, old chap. The cinema was worth it, and especially the spread at Curl's," said Manners.

Ralph Cardew looked in.

"How did you get on?" he asked.

"Licked."

"Selby found you out, of course?"

"Yes, the rotter! But I daresay he'll be too busy to worry me for a bit after this!" growled Lowther. "I dropped in at his study. The old duffer had left his registration-card on the table. When he misses it, he will have a hunt for it, and I wish him joy!"

"You haven't damaged it, Monty?" exclaimed Tom.

"Fathead! Of course I haven't! Selby will find it all right, when he thinks of looking inside a book on the top shelf of his bookcase."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By gad!" exclaimed Cardew with a chuckle. "What a lark! Selby is expectin' a visit from Mr. Ketch—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

"And he'll want that card to show him," chuckled Cardew. "The visit won't come off, but Selby will be sore about the card bein' missin'. I fancy Selby will be rampin' presently."

Cardew was right on that point.

It was some time later that Mr. Selby came in from the quadrangle, where he had taken a long walk. He had been thinking about Mr. Ketch, and the possibility of that gentleman dragging him off by mistake. Only a very selfish and very cowardly man would have been so dreadfully worried at the possibility, or, indeed, would have thought there was

such a possibility at all. But Mr. Selby was decidedly uneasy about it. He was tired with his walking, and he sank down in the armchair in his study, with a grunt. He had been seated only a few minutes, when he became conscious of a feeling of dampness.

He rose and glared into the chair. It was reeking with ink, and his clothes were dripping with it. Mr. Selby's face was like unto the face of a Hun as he discerned the ink.

About ten minutes later he appeared in the Third-Form room to take his Form in evening preparation. His eyes were glinting, and the fags knew what to expect from his expression.

"D'Arcy minor!" rapped out Mr. Selby.

"Yes, sir?"

"Have you been playing tricks in my study?"

"No, sir!"

"I do not believe you, D'Arcy minor. Stand out here!"

Wally of the Third came out, with a savage look. Perhaps it was natural that Mr. Selby should suspect him, knowing the cheerful young gentleman as he did, and having detained him that afternoon unjustly. As it happened, D'Arcy minor was quite innocent on this occasion, but Mr. Selby felt inclined to punish somebody, and he did not bother about evidence on the subject.

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

Wally went back to his place with feelings too deep for words. And all the Third had the time of their lives during prep that evening. The unanimous opinion in the Third Form of St. Jim's was that nothing less than a Zepp bomb would do justice to Mr. Selby.

CHAPTER 8.

D'Arcy Remonstrates.

"I WEFUSE to allow it!"

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. For once, the swell of St. Jim's seemed to have completely forgotten the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. His noble voice was thrilling with indignation.

"My dear ass—" murmured Blake.

"Wats!"

"You can't do anything, you know!" urged Digby.

"Wubbish!"

"What can you do, fathead?" demanded Herries.

"I can wemonstwat vewy severely with that uttah Hun Selby."

"Bow-wow!" said D'Arcy's three chums, in chorus. Remonstrating with a bad-tempered Form-master was not a step which they regarded as feasible.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Trouble in the family?" asked Tom Merry, coming up with Manners and Lowther. "Tell your Uncle Tom about it, my children!"

Morning lessons were just over at St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the Terrible Three as they joined Study No. 6 in the quad.

"It is simply intolewable, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I wefuse to allow Mr. Selby to ill-use my minah."

"Oh, Wally again!" said Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus' indignation was causing several fellows to gather round. Levison and Clive and Cardew joined the group, and Kangaroo and Julian and several others. And they all demanded to know what the trouble was about.

"It appeahs," said Arthur Augustus, "that some sillay ass went into Selby's study while he was out last evenin'—"

"By Jove!" said Lowther.

"And stopped the clock and hid some papahs undah the hearthwug, and put ink

in the armchair. Mr. Selby sat in the ink—

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not a laughin' mattah, desh boys. The howwid Hun caned my minah vewy severely."

"My hat!" said Kangaroo. "I suppose Wally expected to be caned for a little game like that!"

"Yaas, but Wally did not do it!"

"My minor, perhaps," grinned Levison of the Fourth. "But Franky would have owned up if Wally was called up for it."

"Selby couldn't have waited for any evidence," said Lowther. "The unfortunate fact is that it was I who japed Selby yesterday evening."

"Bai Jove!"

"Of course, I didn't know he was going to jump on Wally," said Lowther. "There can't have been any evidence against Wally."

"Sure, Selby wouldn't mind that," remarked Reilly. "The thafe of the world had to take it out of somebody, and Wally came handy."

"Yaas wathah! It is howwid tywanny."

"The man's a beast," said Cardew. "Somethin' ought to be done."

"Somethin' is goin' to be done," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I am goin' to speak to Mr. Selby vewy plainly."

"Better let him alone," said Clive. "It won't do any good."

"I wefuse to allow him to treat my minah in this way! It is my dutay, as Wally's majah, to see that he is treated with pwopah respect."

"I dare say Wally deserved it for something else," suggested Julian of the Fourth, and there was a chuckle. Julian's suggestion was not at all improbable.

"Wats! I am goin' to put it vewy plainly to Selby," said Arthur Augustus. "I wefuse to allow this kind of thing. Bai Jove, a chap might as well be livin' in Germany among Huns, undah the wule of a disgustin' Kaisah! I wefuse to allow Mr. Selby to pwactice Hunnish oppvession upon membahs of my family."

"But—" said Blake.

"Bai Jove! Here he is!"

Mr. Selby came out of the School House, quite near the group of juniors. Before his comrades could stop him, Arthur Augustus detached himself from the group, and strode towards the master of the Third.

"Gussy!" gasped Blake.

"Gussy!" yelled Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus did not heed. He planted himself in Mr. Selby's path, raising his cap. The Form-master stopped, and stared at him.

"What do you want, D'Arcy?"

"I desiah to wemonstwate with you, sir!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Wha-a-at!"

"Yestahday evenin', sir, you punished my minah unjustly—"

"What!" gasped Mr. Selby.

"Without any evidence whatevah, sir, you concluded that my minah had played twicks in your study, when as a mattah of fact he had done nothin' of the sort."

"D'Arcy!"

"Undah the cires, sir, it was the act of a tywant to punish him, an act worthy only of a Pwussian!"

Tom Merry & Co. stood frozen. They had never heard a Form-master talked to like that before. Mr. Selby was equally astonished. He stood rooted to the ground, apparently at a loss for words.

"I wegard it as imposs, sir, to allow this kind of thing to continue," said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps, sir, you do not mean to be tywannical, and in that case I suggest that should weflect a little befoah administewin' punishment—Yawoooooh!"

Smack!



Lowther is kind to Mr. Selby.
(See Chapter 7.)

Mr. Selby seemed to recover himself all of a sudden.

He strode towards the Fourth-Former, and bestowed upon him a terrible box on the ear.

Arthur Augustus staggered back, taken completely by surprise.

He staggered three or four paces, and then sat down in the quadrangle, gasping and blinking.

Mr. Selby gave him a dark look, and strode on.

Arthur Augustus's chums rushed up as soon as the Form-master was gone. The swell of St. Jim's sat and blinked at them, tenderly feeling his crimson ear.

"Bai Jove!" he said at last. "I have had my eeah boxed!"

"That's just dawned on his powerful brain!" murmured Lowther.

"Bai Jove!"

"My only Aunt Jane!" Wally of the Third came scudding up. "Gussy, old man, what did Selby biff you for?"

"Gwoogh! I wemonstwated with him, Wally, for his weckless tywanny—"

"My hat! You must be an ass!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, my only Aunt Jane!" chuckled Wally. "You take the whole cake, Gussy! I must tell the chaps this!"

And Wally marched off to confide the entertaining incident to his chums in the Third.

"Bai Jove! Wally is wathah an ungwateful young wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as Blake and Herries jerked him to his feet. "Howevah, I am not goin' to stand this! I have had my eeah boxed!"

"Better go after Selby, and give him a dot on the nose!" suggested Clive.

"That is scarcely pwacticable, Clive—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you are wottin', you wottah! Howevah, that disgustin' Hun cannot be allowed to box the eeahs of a D'Arcy! I wefuse to tolewate it!"

"What about calling him out?" suggested Levison gravely. "Coffee for four and pistols for two, you know!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy marched away rubbing his ear.

His remonstrance with Mr. Selby had had a most unfortunate outcome.

The ornament of the Fourth Form had had his ears boxed in open quad, in sight of twenty or thirty fellows! The injury to the dignity of the swell of St. Jim's was almost immeasurable. Mr. Selby had stepped far beyond the limits of his rights and powers in administering that punishment. But it was not quite clear how he was to be brought to book. A complaint to the Head savoured too much of sneaking. That idea was dismissed.

But Arthur Augustus declared that the "wottah" had to be punished severely, and on that subject his chums agreed with him.

Tom Merry & Co. were all fed up, as a matter of fact, with Mr. Selby's bad temper; and it was agreed on all hands that he was to feel the full weight of junior wrath.

Exactly how it was to be done was a question to which it was difficult to find an answer. And, as it happened, it was Ralph Reckness Cardew, of the Fourth, who found the answer.

CHAPTER 9.

Mr. Curll is Required.

THERE was a busy buzz of voices in Study No. 6, in the Fourth-Form passage.

Blake & Co. had finished tea, and they were discussing Mr. Selby. The Terrible Three had dropped in to help in the discussion.

Arthur Augustus' indignation still burned.

Ralph Cardew tapped at the door, and looked in.

"Can I come in?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, trot in!" said Blake. "Add your sweet voice to the jaw. We're holding a council of war, and every fellow's giving his opinion in turn, excepting Gussy, who is talking all the time, as usual."

"Weally, Blake—"

"I've been thinkin' about Selby," said Cardew. "I've got an idea!"

"Trot it out!" said Tom Merry. "We've all been thinking, and we can't think of any way of dealing with Selby. Only getting him somewhere and reading Lowther's Comic Column to him from the 'Weekly'!"

"You silly ass!" roared Lowther.

"And that might be brought in as manslaughter!" said Manners. "Too drastic!"

"You chump!"

"I've got a wheeze, if it will work," said Cardew. "I've told Levison and Clive, and they think it is too steep."

"Go ahead, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus cordially. "Mr. Selby's fearful insult to my personal dig has got to be avenged somehow."

Cardew closed the door.

"You remember my little game with him on the telephone?" he said. "I told him Mr. Ketch would call to see him, just to give him some delightful anticipations. We all know he's a howling funk, and would be a conscientious objector if he were young enough to go."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, Lowther was in his study yesterday, and hid his registration-card in a book or somethin'!"

"Top shelf of the bookcase," said Lowther. "He won't find it in a month of Sundays. Can't have missed it yet, either, or he'd have been inquiring after it."

"Exactly. Well, Selby would be rather in a fix without it if the recruitin'-officer should call in a suspicious frame of mind."

"Ha, ha! Yes. But no such luck."

"But that's the idea!" said Cardew.

"Eh? What is?"

"The recruitin'-officer calls on Selby—Mr. Ketch, you know!"

"You ass!" said Blake. "You were Mr. Ketch on the telephone. Do you think you could palm yourself off on Selby as a recruiting-officer?"

"Imposs, deah boy!"

Cardew smiled.

"I'm not thinkin' of that. It would be impossible, and too jolly risky if it was possible."

"Then what the merry dickens are you thinking of?" asked Tom Merry, mystified.

"That fellow Curll."

"Curll!" exclaimed Lowther.

"Exactly. Curll has been an actor, and I suppose he's played more difficult parts in his time. He told me when we parted that he was awfully obliged to me, and that I could command him if he could do anythin' for me. Well, he could do this!"

"Bai Jove!"

"It would be as easy as fallin' off a form!" said Cardew. "Playin' recruitin'-officer would be baby's play compared with playin' real parts on the stage, and old Curll's done that. I don't say it would work with everybody, but Selby's such a funk that it would work with him. He took the telephone-message quite seriously."

"Yaas, that's so."

"But—but," said Blake doubtfully, "he couldn't come in khaki. It's not lawful to dress in khaki unless you're in the Army."

"That's all right! He could come in plain clothes. Recruitin'-officers don't always amble round in khaki."

"That's so!" agreed Dig.

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"He will be a recruitin'-officer when he comes here," said Cardew, "so he will be stickin' to the exact truth."

"How do you make that out?"

"He will be recruitin' Selby, won't he? If he gets Selby into the Army it will be a national service."

"Lots of good Selby would be to the Army!" grunted Herries.

"My hat! I believe Selby would bunk if there was any danger!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "He certainly wouldn't go unless he was fetched."

"No such luck!" said Blake. "I'd give a week's allowance to see him fetched. That's what he wants—Army training, to take the rot out of him. It would do him no end of good!"

"And, next to that, a jolly good fright would do him no end of good!"

"After all, he's no right to gas about shirkers, an' combin' 'em out, an' all that, unless he's willin' to go himself. It would make him sit up no end if he thought a recruitin'-officer was after him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But would Curll do it?" said Tom Merry dubiously. "It might be a bit risky for him if it came out."

"I don't see it—only a practical joke, if it came out!" said Cardew. "He won't make Selby enlist—wild horses couldn't do that! If he did it would be a stroke of luck for the Third; but there's no such luck. But it will make him sit up no end."

"Bai Jove! I wathah like the ideah! Mr. Curll would play up!" said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Curll could do it quite easily."

"We could fix it to give him a fee for his services," remarked Cardew. "I dare say he's hard up again to-day."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes. That's all right! He's open to take jobs and things," the captain of the Shell remarked. "He's offered his services if we ever want him in our amateur theatricals, for a guinea or so. We'll make it an engagement at a regular fee."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then it's a go?" asked Cardew.

The juniors looked at one another. Cardew's scheme was indeed rather steep, as Levison and Clive had pronounced it. But there were great possibilities of fun in it; and Mr. Selby had to be punished somehow for laying hands upon the angust person of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, not to mention his lesser sins.

"It's a go!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, it's a go, deah boy!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Then one of us had better cut over to Wayland and see Curll," said Cardew. "You, if you like, Lowther, as you know him best."

"I'll come with you if you like!" said Monty.

"Right-ho! We'll bike it."

The council of war broke up. The decision had been taken, and it only remained for it to be carried out. In ten minutes Monty Lowther and Ralph Reckness Cardew were pedalling away to Wayland to interview Horatio Curll.

Tom Merry & Co. looked out for them when it was near time for calling-over.

The two juniors wheeled in their bikes just before Taggles came down to look the gates.

They had to hurry into Hall for roll-call, but as soon as they came out again they were surrounded by inquirers.

"Well?" demanded the juniors.

"All serene!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Curll was on it like a bird."

"Like a merry old bird with a beak," said Cardew. "We've fixed it up as an engagement—"

"Guinea fee!" said Lowther.

"Curll's goin' to get a man to take his

place at the cinema for the piano thump-in' on Saturday afternoon—"

"And Mr. Ketch is going to call here that afternoon!" chortled Lowther.

"Good egg!"

"Curll quite likes the idea," said Lowther. "He was quite ratty when he heard that Selby had biffed Gussy's noble napper. He thinks no end of our member of the House of Lords!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"He offered first to come over here and thrash Selby," chuckled Lowther. "I'd have been glad to agree, but—"

"My hat! That wouldn't do!" ejaculated Manners.

"Ha, ha! I thought it wouldn't, so we didn't arrange that."

"Bai Jove! That would nevah do! However, it was vewy kind of Mr. Curll to make the offah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear old Selby will never know what a narrow escape he's had," grinned Cardew. "But upon the whole, the recruitin' dodge is the best. I think there's goin' to be some fun on Saturday afternoon."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And needless to say, Tom Merry & Co. looked forward to Saturday afternoon with keen anticipations—and about a dozen other fellows to whom they confided the little secret looked forward to the half-holiday with equal keenness. If all went well, the unpopular master of the Third was to have the time of his life when "Mr. Ketch" arrived for him.

CHAPTER 10.

Nice for Mr. Selby.

"DEAR me!" said Mr. Railton.

The Housemaster had settled down in his study to work that sunny Saturday afternoon. Outside the sun was shining, and cheery voices were heard in the quad and on the playing-fields. Mr. Railton was going to be busy with exam papers for some time, and after that he meant to walk down to the vicarage for a jaw with the vicar, who was home from service as chaplain at the Front. And he had only been at work a few minutes when the telephone-bell rang.

Buzzzzzzz!

Mr. Railton took up the receiver.

"Hallo!" came over the wires. "I wish to speak to Mr. Railton."

"I am Mr. Railton."

"Very good. You remember my calling you up the other day—you remember the name—Ketch?"

"Certainly. I do not recognise your voice."

"I find I shall have time to pay my call, as promised, this afternoon. I suppose I can see Mr. Selby?"

"Undoubtedly."

"I trust, sir, that Mr. Selby will have an adequate explanation to make, but I must say that the circumstances are suspicious. Can I rely upon you to see that Mr. Selby is at home to meet me?"

Mr. Railton pursed his lips.

"When will you call, Mr. Ketch?"

"About four o'clock."

"I will speak to Mr. Selby, and request him to make it a point to be in."

"Very good. To be quite frank, sir, I fancy your Mr. Selby is a somewhat slippery customer, and unless he is at home, prepared to meet me, there may be serious trouble."

"You may rely upon it, Mr. Ketch, that Mr. Selby will be here to meet you."

"Very good!"

Mr. Railton put up the receiver, with a very thoughtful expression. He opened his door, and called to a junior in the passage, who happened to be Monty Lowther of the Shell.

"Lowther! Kindly request Mr. Selby to step here as soon as possible."

"Certainly, sir," said Lowther.

He hurried away to Mr. Selby's study. And when he had delivered his message, he hurried to join his comrades, and to acquaint them with the fact that Mr. Ketch, alias Mr. Curll, was at work already.

The Third Form master came into Mr. Railton's study, looking none too amiable.

"You wished to see me," he asked.

"Yes. I have received a message again from Mr. Ketch. He is calling to see you at four o'clock."

The Form-master started.

"Indeed! I—I am not sure that I shall be at home."

"I have answered for you to the recruiting-officer, Mr. Selby," said the Housemaster, with a note of sternness in his voice. "It is absolutely necessary for you to be at home to see Mr. Ketch."

"Really, sir—"

"Surely, sir, you can see that if you refuse the officer this meeting, it can only confirm his suspicions?" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "His next step will be to communicate with the police."

"I—I suppose I had better see him," stammered Mr. Selby. "Of course, the man has no business with me—none whatever."

"You will be able to prove that to his satisfaction, I presume, and the whole matter will drop," said Mr. Railton. "I have to go out before four. I understand, Mr. Selby, that you will remain within doors?"

"I will remain!" snapped Mr. Selby.

"Very good!"

The Third Form master quitted the study with a worried brow. Mr. Ketch seemed an energetic gentleman, and the terrible possibility that he might comb out the wrong man haunted Mr. Selby. It really was not at all likely. Mr. Selby had never heard of such a mistake being made; but the barest and remotest possibility of it was sufficient to arouse his uneasy fears.

He passed Wally and Reggie Manners and Levison minor in the passage, and astonished those young gentlemen by boxing their ears. Then he whisked angrily into his study.

D'Arcy minor rubbed his tingling ears and blinked after him.

"What did the awful beast do that for?" he gasped.

"The—the blessed Hun!" stuttered Manners minor. "He's getting worse every day. The awful Hun!"

Levison minor shook his fist behind Mr. Selby—after that gentleman's door had closed.

They did not know what was troubling their worthy Form-master.

But Tom Merry & Co. knew, and long before four o'clock that cheery company of juniors had gathered to see Mr. Ketch arrive.

Mr. Railton passed them on his way to the gates, and gave the respectful juniors a kindly nod. He little guessed for what purpose they were gathered there. The Housemaster left the gates, and the juniors were not sorry to see him go. They preferred the keen-eyed Housemaster to be off the scene when Mr. Curll arrived at St. Jim's.

Four o'clock boomed out from the tower.

"Time!" remarked Manners.

"Bai Jove! I twust Curll is not goin' to be late," remarked Arthur Augustus. "It would be a fearful disappointment if he dropped in at the Wed Cow and forgot all about it."

"My hat!"

But the juniors' anxiety was soon relieved.

About ten minutes past four a some-

what imposing figure entered at the gates and stopped to speak to Taggles at his lodge. Tom Merry & Co. looked at him—from a respectful distance. They hardly recognised Horatio Curll. He was dressed very quietly and neatly, sported a shining silk topper and an eyeglass, and wore no adornment but a narrow ribbon in his button-hole. That ribbon might have been the insignia of a military order—or it might not!

Mr. Curll had been clean-shaven when the juniors had last seen him. Now he wore a military moustache. He carried himself very uprightly, in quite a soldierly manner. Evidently the one-time ornament of the histrionic boards had thrown himself into the part he was playing, and was putting his beef into it.

Taggles, the porter, saluted the stranger very respectfully. He directed the military-looking gentleman to the School House, to see Mr. Selby.

Tom Merry & Co. gave no sign of recognition as the "officer" passed them in the quad.

With a military stride, Mr. Curll advanced upon the School House.

"Bai Jove! He's wipin'!" murmured Arthur Augustus, in great admiration. "I weally nevah thought old Curll could look so weespectable."

"Quite looks the part!" grinned Tom Merry. "Hallo, there's old Selby at his study window!"

"Watchin' out, like Sister Anne!" chuckled Cardew. "Looks rather pale, don't you think?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Toby, the page, admitted Mr. "Ketch," and took his name to Mr. Selby. He returned immediately to request the gentleman to follow him. With a grim face and a heavy stride, the visitor followed, and was shown into Mr. Selby's study.

And in a few minutes St. Jim's from end to end knew that a recruiting-officer had come from Wayland for "old Selby"—though they did not know the exact name and standing of that officer. And the juniors, and some of the seniors, gathered round in breathless excitement. Figgins & Co. came over from the New House with a rush.

"What's this news?" demanded Figgins breathlessly. "Is it true? You've got a dodger in the School House—what?"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Just like the School House!" said Fatty Wynn disparagingly. "No dodgers in the New House."

"No fear!" said Kerr emphatically.

Figgins & Co. did not make any more remarks. For the next five minutes the School House fellows were busy bumping them in the quadrangle. Meanwhile, the Third Form master was interviewing his visitor.

CHAPTER 11.

Combed Out!

MR. SELBY rose politely and unsteadily as his visitor was shown in.

The law was the law, and Mr. Selby really had nothing whatever to fear from Mr. Ketch, even if Mr. Ketch had been what he represented himself to be. But funk is not amenable to the voice of reason. Mr. Selby's uneasiness was so great that he could scarcely conceal it.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Ketch," he said, with a graciousness of manner which was intended to make a favourable impression upon the terrible gentleman. "Pray take a seat."

"Thank you," said Mr. Ketch grimly. "I prefer to stand."

"My dear sir—" said Mr. Selby feebly.

"My business with you, sir, will be brief."

Mr. Selby sincerely hoped so.

"I have reason to believe, sir," pursued Mr. Ketch, in a deep, booming voice which was audible far beyond the door of the study, and to a good distance outside the open window—"I have reason, sir, to believe that you are a shirker."

"Sir!"

"I do not mince my words, sir—a shirker!" said Mr. Ketch sternly. "It is for you to prove that you are not. Your age?"

"Fifty!" gasped Mr. Selby.

"You can prove that?"

"If—if necessary, undoubtedly."

"Kindly show your registration-card."

"I have no objection to doing so, Mr. Ketch."

"Well, I am waiting to see it," said the military gentleman, in the most uncompromising tone.

Mr. Selby opened his desk.

His fingers groped for the card, and came away empty. He peered into the inside drawer where he usually kept the card.

"Bless my soul! It—it is not here!" he stammered.

The military gentleman gave a sardonic laugh. Mr. Selby was not aware of the fact that military gentlemen do not usually give sardonic laughs, even in dealing with shirkers. It made him shiver.

"Not there!" exclaimed Mr. Ketch sarcastically. "I presume that it is somewhere, sir?"

"C-c-certainly! I—I—" Mr. Selby tried to think. "I—I took it out on Wednesday to show Mr. Railton, and—and I was under the impression that I replaced it—"

"I am waiting to see it."

"I—I remember now that I left it on the table, in my haste to answer your telephone call, Mr. Ketch—"

"I will wait while you look for it, Mr. Selby."

The military gentleman stood stiffly, twirling his moustache—very carefully, however, in case it should come off.

Mr. Selby looked round wildly for his card.

Where was it?

Naturally, it did not occur to him to look inside a book on the top shelf of his bookcase. He was quite unaware of Monty Lowther's little joke.

The terrible results of losing his card, under the present circumstances, almost overcame the master of the Third.

Was Mr. Ketch likely to believe that he had lost it?

Mr. Ketch's face expressed the strongest disbelief. Indeed, his expression showed that he was looking upon Mr. Selby's frantic search for the card as a little comedy got up for his benefit.

Mr. Selby fluttered round the study like a frightened bee, almost buzzing in his excitement.

The military gentleman stood watching him. He placed himself between the scared Form-master and the door, as if to cut off any attempt at escape.

Mr. Selby tore out drawer after drawer, clawed over heaps of paper, turned things upside down in all directions, but the missing card did not come to light.

He stopped at last, beaten and bewildered.

"Well?" said Mr. Ketch, in a grinding voice.

"I—I cannot find it!" stammered Mr. Selby. "I—I assure you, however—"

"Do you think I am likely to accept the bare assurance of a shirker?" sneered Mr. Ketch.

"I—I—I may have taken it with me to Mr. Railton's study. I will ask him—" Mr. Selby broke off again. "How unfortunate! Mr. Railton is out."

"Very unfortunate!" said Mr. Ketch with cutting sarcasm.

"I—I assure you that I am speaking the truth!" stammered the wretched Form-master. "I—I will look in Mr. Railton's study if—if you will kindly let me pass—"

"I will accompany you to that study," said Mr. Ketch. "I can assure you that I do not intend to let you go out of my sight."

"Sir! I—I—"

"Enough! We are wasting time."

"Pip-pip-pray come with me, then!"

"I shall certainly do so."

Mr. Ketch laid a heavy hand on the Form-master's shoulder. The wretched man shuddered. It seemed to him that the unsparing grip of military discipline was falling upon him, never to be relaxed. With a hand upon his shoulder, grasping him, Mr. Selby was marched out of the study.

By luckless chance—as it seemed to Mr. Selby—the passage outside was crowded. As a rule, few juniors were to be seen just at that spot. Now they seemed to have gathered there in dozens.

Mr. Selby glared at them.

Even if he was in the grasp of the military, he was still a Form-master of the school, and a terror to youth.

"Disperse at once!" he rapped out.

"What are you doing here?"

"Weally, sir—" began Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Can we help you, sir?" asked Cardew sweetly. "Is the man taking you away, sir?"

"Disperse!" shouted Mr. Selby. "I order you—Ow! Ow!"

The grip on his shoulders spun him round.

"You are wasting time, Private Selby!" rapped out Mr. Ketch.

"Private Selby!" ejaculated a dozen voices.

"My hat! Then he was a dodger!" exclaimed Glyn of the Shell. "Bowled out at last, by Jove!"

Mr. Selby turned quite pale.

"How—how dare you call me Private Selby!" he gasped. "I—I am not a soldier! I have no intention—"

"Will you, or will you not, show your registration-card?" thundered Mr. Ketch.

"Pray come with me!" groaned Mr. Selby.

He led the terrible military gentleman into Mr. Railton's study. There he made another frantic search for the missing card. But, naturally, he did not discover it.

Meanwhile, the crowd in the passage was growing.

The news that Mr. Selby was a dodger, and that the military had come for him, spread like wildfire.

The St. Jim's fellows hadn't much sympathy for dodgers, anyway; and they were not very likely to waste any on Mr. Selby. That gentleman's general line of conduct was not calculated to make him popular. The Third Form fairly whooped with joy at the news, and they gathered on all sides to see "old Selby" marched off.

Wally of the Third dug his major ecstatically in the ribs.

"Ain't it glorious, Gus?" he yelled.

"Yow-ow!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Let my wibs alone, you young wuffian!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Ketch!" roared Reggie Manners.

"Hurrah!"

"Hallo, what's this thumping row about?" exclaimed Kildare, coming on

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the scene with a frown on his brow, and an ashplant in his hand.

"All serene, Kildare! It's a man come for Selby!"

"What?" gasped the captain of St. Jim's.

"He's a dodger!" trilled Wally. "They're taking him off! He's been dodging. He's got to serve! Hurrah! What an awful rotter, Kildare, isn't he, sticking here and leaving the boys at the Front in the lurch?"

"What rot!" said Kildare, staring.

"Mr. Selby is fifty!"

"Why don't he show his card, then?" drawled Cardew. "He's refused to show his card!"

"My hat!" said Kildare, with a whistle.

"Kildare!" It was Mr. Selby's voice from Mr. Railton's study. "Kildare! You—you have not heard anything of a registration-card being found?"

"No, sir!" said Kildare, with a very curious look at Mr. Selby. "Have you lost your card, sir?"

"It has disappeared in a most unaccountable manner, Kildare! However, you can assure this gentleman that you know me to be over forty-one!"

"I'm afraid I can do nothing of the kind, sir," said Kildare drily. "I do not know your age."

TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT.

If you are unable to obtain this publication regularly, please tell any news-vendor to get it from

Messageries HACHETTE et Cie.,
111, Rue Reaumur,
PARIS.

"You—you are perfectly aware—"

"How should I be aware of it, sir?" said Kildare. "I supposed you were over age as you did not join up; but I know nothing about it."

And the captain of St. Jim's walked away.

Mr. Ketch's grip tightened upon the arm of the Third Form master.

"You will be kind enough to accompany me," he said. "Further subterfuge is useless!"

"I—I assure you that—that the card is lost, most unfortunately," groaned Mr. Selby. "Pray come with me to the Head. Dr. Holmes will assure you—"

"Is your registration-card in the head-master's possession?"

"N-no; but—"

"Has he a copy of your birth-certificate?"

"Certainly not. But—"

"Then it is quite useless for me to see Dr. Holmes; neither have I any further time to waste. You, Private Selby, are not the only shirker I have to comb out! Come with me!"

"I—I assure you—"

"Come!"

"I beg of you—"

"Come!" thundered Mr. Ketch.

Cardew of the Fourth obligingly fetched Mr. Selby's hat. With faltering steps, and a face that was a study in varying expressions, Mr. Selby was led out of the School House into the sunny quad, with the strong grip of the law upon his arm.

CHAPTER 12.

A Very Happy Afternoon!

"SELBY'S nabbed!"

"Selby's combed out!"

"They've got him!"

There was a buzz of voices all through the quadrangle. Fellows came

off the playing-fields in crowds to see the amazing sight. From all quarters juniors and seniors crowded up. Mr. Linton and Mr. Lathom looked out of their study windows, in amazement and consternation.

Through the thronging, grinning crowd, marched Mr. Ketch, with his grip on the arm of his prisoner.

Mr. Selby almost tottered.

He had made what he considered very effective combing-out speeches at Wayland in the past. Now he was on his way there, combed out himself! That made a great deal of difference. As Monty Lowther remarked, there was a tremendous difference between the active and passive of the verb to comb out.

Of course, in a day or two he could procure a copy of his birth-certificate, and then it would be all right.

But, meanwhile? What was to happen meanwhile?

Suppose he was shoved into training at once under some terrible sergeant? Suppose they made him march on route marches, or perform camp fatigues? Suppose—All kinds of awful suppositions flitted through Mr. Selby's mind. And then there was the humiliation of being marched off like this, under the eyes of a grinning and unsympathetic crowd.

The Third Form fags were openly jeering. Their Form-master's frown was nothing to them now. Soon he would have all his frowning taken out of him. He would be shivering himself under the frown of a sergeant. The Third Form chortled with joy.

"Nabbed!" chuckled Wally. "Nailed! combed out! Old Selby! Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" shrieked Reggie Manners.

"Don't let him get away, sir!" yelled Frank Levison. "He'll dodge you if he can, sir! Keep an eye on him! He's slippery!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With a grim brow and a military stride, Mr. Ketch marched on to the gates, the slinking, cringing figure of Mr. Selby faltering by his side, still gripped by the arm.

Half St. Jim's formed up, and marched after them, chortling.

Out of gates they went, old Taggles nearly falling down at the sight of Mr. Selby in that masterful grip, marched away as a dodger.

"My heye!" said Taggles. "Who'd 'ave thought it? My heye!"

Down the road went the prisoner, with his frowning captor. Mr. Ketch was apparently heading for the railway-station, and at the thought of passing through the village in this manner, Mr. Selby almost fainted with rage and shame and humiliation.

"Sir!" he gasped. "Mr. Ketch! I—I assure you, upon my word—"

"Come on!"

"If—if five pounds would be any use to you—"

"You dare to offer me a bribe?" exclaimed Mr. Ketch.

"Ten pounds—twenty pounds!" gasped Mr. Selby recklessly.

To such a depth had Mr. Selby descended! To an attempt—as he believed, at least—to bribe a recruiting-officer! The cup of his shame was full now!

Mr. Ketch halted. As a matter of fact, he could not very well take Mr. Selby much further. The recruiting officials at Wayland would certainly have been very much astonished if he had turned up there with his recruit.

He released the Form-master's arm, and raised his hand, pointing at the wretched man with a finger of scorn.

Mr. Ketch had suddenly become Mr. Curll again.

"Go!" he thundered. "You do not

deserve to have the honour of serving your King and Country! The uniform worn by brave men is not for such as you! Sir, I despise you! I refuse to soil my hands with you further! Your touch is a contamination! Get out of my sight!"

Mr. Selby stood gasping for a moment, hardly believing in his good luck. He did not mind Mr. Ketch's contempt if he could have freedom and safety for his worthless carcass along with it. But he realised that he was free, and he made a jump away from his terrible companion, and ran! Fearful that Mr. Ketch might change his mind, the Form-master fled for the school, and vanished in at the gates with the speed of a deer.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A terrific roar of laughter greeted the unhappy master as he sprinted across the quadrangle.

Mr. Selby did not heed it.

He bolted into the School House, rushed up to his study, and sank panting into a chair. For some moments he could only gasp. Then suddenly his eyes fell upon a card that lay on his table.

He snatched at it. It was his registration-card! He blinked at it in wonder. How had it come there during his absence with Mr. Ketch? That was a mystery Mr. Selby could not solve. But he held on to the registration-card as to a sheet-anchor. He had it now, ready to show to Mr. Ketch if he should return. But Mr. Ketch did not return. In all the circumstances, he was not likely to do so.

Mr. Ketch, indeed, was sitting under the trees in Rylcombe Wood at that moment, roaring with laughter, with his military moustache in his hand, surrounded by hilarious juniors, who were roaring, too. Tom Merry & Co. had joined their histrionic friend in merry mood.

"Did I do it well?" chortled Mr. Horatio Curll. "Was the fellow scared out of his wits—what? I ask you, young gentlemen, whether you have ever beheld an actor worthy to tie the shoe-strings of Horatio Curll?"

"Ha, ha! Never!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Hardly ever!" grinned Cardew.

"Bai Jove! It was a corkah, my deah sir! I wegard you as havin' played up wippingly! It was a weal corkah!"

"Poor old Selby! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors yelled till the wood rang and echoed with their merriment.

Afterwards, Mr. Selby had his suspicions.

He learned that Mr. Ketch was quite unknown to the recruiting authorities at Wayland; and it dawned upon him, when he was calmer, that Mr. Ketch's methods were not exactly those of genuine military men. But it was some time before he could quite realise that he had been the victim of a colossal practical joke. As to who the authors of it might be, he remained in the dark. There were a good many fellows in the Lower Forms at St. Jim's who could have enlightened him; but, needless to say, they did not do so.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"THE ST. JIM'S PARLIAMENT!" by Martin Clifford.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"THE ST. JIM'S PARLIAMENT!"
By Martin Clifford.

The great mind of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is always open to the reception of new ideas, in spite of all that Monty Lowther may say as to its being a thing to wonder at that Gussy should ever have an idea of his own. It occurs to D'Arcy that a St. Jim's Parliament would be quite a good wheeze. Not a mere debating society, to discuss such questions as "Should capital punishment be abolished?" "Should ladies smoke?" "Should schoolboys fag?" and the like—but a real up-to-date House of Commons, with a Cabinet and a Prime Minister and a Government and an Opposition, and—er—all that sort of thing, don'tcherknow. Just precisely what the Government is to govern, or on what subjects the House will debate—these are things best left to the future; and, anyway, the debates will not be used to fill our precious space when—if ever—they come off.

In next week's story we don't get even as far as the elections. The first thing to be done is to secure premises. And it seems best to those concerned that these should be outside the precincts of the school. So—But you must wait until next week to read about how Grundy and Tom Merry both went to hire a barn belonging to Mr. Erasmus Zachariah Pepper, and how—But that would be telling too much—let us say, to read what came of it!

WHO'S FOR THE SEA?

I get lots of letters asking for information about life in the Royal Navy and the Mercantile Marine; and to the best of my ability I reply to them. But I don't know all about it; and I want now to call your attention to a book written by a man who does.

"The Sea Services" is the title of it. At the time of writing it is not out; but it should be by the week in which this appears, and, in any case, if you want to make sure of a copy you will do well to give an order to a bookseller at once, and so make sure of a copy. Price, fifteenpence; publishers, Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton.

The author is Mr. John S. Margerison, and the articles collected in the book were originally published in the "Boys' Friend." They have been rewritten now, and brought bang up to date, and even those who read them at first should be glad to have the book.

Mr. Margerison knows his subject thoroughly. He is an old Navy man, and has seen stirring service in his day. More especially was this the case when in the time of the Boxer troubles in China some of our gallant lads in blue were landed to bear a hand; and Margerison, a young officer then, had the sort of responsibility in circumstances of real peril that so often falls to the

lot of the youthful Navy officer, who learns to do a man's work while yet a boy in years.

Don't omit to get this book, everyone of you who is interested in the sea!

NOTICES.

Back Numbers, etc., Wanted.

By Malcolm Morris, 143, Cornbrook Street, Brooker Bar, Manchester—"Gem" Christmas No., 1916—must be clean.

By A. B. Lowrey, Glenwood, Watford Road, Croxley Green, Herts—"Figgins' Fig-Pudding," "Race to Tuckshop," "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Schoolboys Never Shall Be Slaves," 1s. offered.

By Cecil Lee, 30, France Street, Redcar, Yorkshire—"Figgins' Fig-Pudding," "A Hero of Wales," "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Schoolboys Never Shall be Slaves," "Bunter the Boxer," "Bunter the Blade." Clean.

By H. Newman, 18, White Lion Street, Bishopsgate, E. 1—"Boys' Friend 3d." issues—"The Black House," "The Worst House at Ravenshill."

By R. Simpson, 9, Sigismund Street, East Greenwich, S.E. 10—half price offered for any Nos. of "Gem" or "Magnet" up to 300.

By R. Redding, 14, Prior Street, Lincoln—fourpence each offered for "A Stolen Holiday," and "The Slackers' Eleven."

By C. Walker, Tykillen, Wexford—"Nelson Lee Library," Nos. 104, 106, 113. 3d. each offered.

By W. Newman, Alexandra Road, Wellington, Salop—any Nos. "Gem" or "Magnet" up to June, 1916.

By S. B. Perry, 3, West View Dimsdale, Wolstanton, Stoke-on-Trent—1d. each offered for "Gem" and "Magnet" Supplements, Christmas, 1915.

By Miss Ailsa Hay, Forrest Avenue, Bunbury, West Australia—"Wingate's Folly," and "Wingate's Chum."

By J. Holt, 5, Sloane Street, Bradford, Manchester—"After Lights Out."

By the Editor, for a soldier at the Front—"The Fighting Strain," and "King of the Fags," in "Boys' Friend 3d. Library."

By Leonard Hague, 92, Loxley New Road, Hillsborough, Sheffield—"Tom Merry Minor," and "Gem" Christmas No. 1915.

By J. F. Baron, 426, Ormskirk Road, Pemberton, Wigan—"Race to Tuckshop," "Son of Scotland," "Great Postal-Order Conspiracy," "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Fishy's Fag Agency," "Figgins' Fig-Pudding," Christmas Nos. "Gem" and "Magnet," 1908 to 1915.

By G. W. Keeley, 14, Taylorsen Street, Ordsall Park, Salford—any Nos. "Gem" and "Magnet" up to 400—and "Boy Without a Name."

By C. A. Bidwell, 4, Manor Place, Paddington, W.—"Gem," Nos. 1 to 496.

By M. Perkins, 6, Dodinga, Birchington,

Kent—"Figgins' Folly," "Talbot's Triumph," "Saving Talbot," "Loyal to the Last," "The King's Pardon," "Tom Merry for England," "Kildare for Ireland," "Hero of Wales," "Son of Scotland," "Figgins' Fig-Pudding," "The Bully's Chance," "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Bob Cherry in Search of His Father," "Wun Lung's Secret," "Schoolboys Never Shall be Slaves," and "Tom Merry Minor."

By Ronald Dean, 16, Granger Road, Isleworth—"Gem" and "Magnet's" before 1915.

By L. P. D. Simpson, 71, Palatine Road, Withington, Manchester—3d. each offered for "Tom Merry Minor," "Race to Tuckshop," "Figgins' Fig-Pudding," "Bunter the Boxer"—6d. each for "Through Thick and Thin," "Tom Merry & Co.," "St. Jim's Sports Tournament"—2d. each for Nos. containing Greyfriars Portrait Galleries.

By H. Whitworth, 14, Manlove Street, Wolverhampton—"By Luck and Pluck," "The Eleventh Man," "Rivals and Chums," "Frank Nugent's Folly," "Trickster Tricked," "Schoolboy Policeman," "Parting of the Ways," "Tom Merry's Trip to Paris" any "Magnet" dealing with Penfold, Russell, or Rake—"Gem" Nos. 1 to 203.

Correspondence Wanted by—

Miss M. Gadd and Miss M. Broad, 11, Sorrento Road, Sutton, Surrey—with girl readers.

Jack A. Browne, 245, St. John Street, Launceston, Tasmania—with readers all parts of Empire—especially those who have back Nos. "Gem" and "Penny Popular."

Arthur Sopwell, care of Madame Lucille, 23, Hanover Square, W. 1—with boy reader, 15-17, Canada—exchange picture postcards.

Jack Harrison, Bunker Street, Kurri Kurri, N.S.W., Australia—with boy readers.

Thomas Bray, 10, Derrynane Parade, N. C. Road, Dublin—wants readers and contributors for printed amateur magazine—specimen copy 1d.

A. Sullivan, P.O. Box 82, Cape Town, South Africa—with boy readers anywhere interested in stamp collecting.

P. Chalmers, 73, Sumner Road, Croydon—with boy readers in China, Japan, or India.

Eric A. Bedman, 66, Autumn Street, Geelong West, Victoria, Australia—with boy readers, 15-16, in United Kingdom or Canada.

(Continued on page 16.)

Your Editor



THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA



Our Great New Serial Story.

NEW READERS START HERE.

THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA are PHILIP and PHILIPPA DERWENT, known to their friends as FLIP and FLAP. They have with them a remarkable cockatoo, whose name is COCKY. Flip takes the bird to Highcliffe, to which school he is bound, while Flap goes to Cliff House. They fall in on the way with some of the Highcliffe nuts, and GADSBY forces a quarrel on Flip, and is well thrashed. The Colonial boy, however, makes friends with the other nuts, and especially with PONSONBY, TUNSTALL, and MERTON. But VAVASOUR and MONSON MINOR are less disposed to like him, and MR. MORBS does not take to him at all. Flap meets MARJORIE HAZELDENE, PHYLLIS HOWELL, and CLARA TREVLYN, of Cliff House, and finds chums in them. She gets to know that PETER HAZELDENE, of Greyfriars, Marjorie's brother, is in some trouble—he is, in fact, in debt to Ponsonby, with whom he has been gambling during the holidays. She writes to her brother, warning him against Ponsonby, and Flip does not like it. By the contrivance of Gadsby, Ponsonby sees the letter, but does not appear to mind. He keeps it. Merton and Tunstall go along to Cliff House with a message from Flip to Flap, and plays hockey with the girls. Ponsonby and Vavasour turn up, but the game stops on their arrival. Ponsonby gets Langley, the Highcliffe captain, to give Flip a place in the school footer eleven, with a view to depriving Courtenay's team of his help.

(Now read on.)

Pon's Dodge.

"I'D be glad to see you in the team, Ponsonby, if—"

Langley stopped dead. Who was he to preach, even to the extent of a few words? How could he reasonably suggest that Pon should chuck what he had no mind to chuck himself?

"I'm not askin' you—at present," Pon said. "What about this fellow's own Form team? Courtenay will be wantin' him."

"I suppose the school eleven comes before any Form team, by gad?"

"Accordin' to you, Courtenay an' De Courcy have a different opinion."

"So they have. I can't help that. They ain't in my dashed pocket."

"I've more than half a mind to go in for a real team this term. The best of my scratch lot, Courtenay, De Courcy, this fellow Derwent—if he's as good as you think him—you very likely, if you'll only buck up. It would be worth talkin' over with Courtenay, by Jove!"

"Fat lot of change you'd get out of that! The illustrious an' faultless skipper of my dashed Form would snub you good an' hard, you bet. You ought to hear some of the remarks the Fourth Form angels make about your scratch gang!"

The good temper had all fled from Langley's face now. He knew that Cecil Ponsonby was a liar, but he was not sure that he was lying then.

"I'll see about it," he said, with a touch of snap in his tone. "I must have a squint at Derwent at practice first."

"All serene! That's all right. Shouldn't wonder if you thought more of him than I

do, you bein' so keen, by gad! I'm not, y'know."

Langley had more than a suspicion that it was to serve some end of his own that Pon advocated the claims of the new fellow; but Langley wanted his team strengthened, and did not greatly mind robbing the Fourth to that end. It was all in the game as he saw it; the school eleven had first claim everywhere. It did not often happen at any school that a mere junior was worth a place among the big fellows, but when he was, the captain took him without remorse.

Pon went.

"I shall have to shepherd Derwent between now an' to-morrow," he muttered to himself. "But it ought not to be too hard, by gad! Courtenay won't be fallin' over himself in his hurry to offer a place to a fellow who is known to be in our set."

But it was only twenty-four hours later that Frank Courtenay, coming upon Flip, said:

"I've booked you for the Fourth Form team, Derwent. I suppose I can count on you?"

"Sorry, Courtenay—not regularly, I'm afraid. Langley's asked me to play for the first."

"Oh!"

"It's a big thing for me, of course," said Flip. "I know I'm not a duffer; but I could hardly believe my ears when he spoke to me about it."

"Yes, it's a big thing for you—in a way, Derwent," said Frank Courtenay slowly.

"Every way, I think!"

"Well, yes. I oughtn't to have qualified it. I suppose I wish you luck! You're good enough—I'll say that."

"I'm sorry, too, Courtenay," Flip said honestly. "I can't afford to miss the chance; but I know how jolly keen you are on the Form team, and I could have helped a bit."

"A lot! But there's no more to be said about it, Derwent, except that you can take it from me that there is no ill-feeling."

They parted. It was not until he had talked to the Caterpillar that Courtenay suspected Pon's hand in this affair.

The Caterpillar did not merely suspect—he was sure!

Up Against Greyfriars!

PON had said that he meant to go easy with Hazeldene of Greyfriars.

For a time Pon also went easy with Flip Derwent.

The new boy frankly confessed that he had never gambled in his life.

He had not even taken any interest in card games, he said.

Pon did not press him to play. But Flip slid into a place among the nuts, which meant his getting used by degrees to the notion of playing for stakes that at first seemed to him terribly high. That was their business, however, not his.

As long as they did not expect him to join in, he needed not to worry.

He liked Pon. The fascination held. Pon saw to it that it should.

With Merton and Tunstall he got on capitally. They even joined the footer practices now and then to please him. And they rather shunned Pon's card-parties. Study No. 6 was quite a happy family, and Cocky's popularity was immense. Cocky

called Merton "Algy"—it was not his name, but it was what others called him—and Tunstall "Tun"; and Derwent became "Flip" to the other two. Flip and Tunstall caught themselves saying "By Jupiter!" pretty often; and altogether the sky seemed cloudless.

But three of the nuts disliked Flip.

Gadsby was one, of course. Gadsby knew why he hated the Colonial junior. But on the whole Gadsby dissembled better than the other two, who really didn't know why.

These were Vavasour and Monson minor.

Empty-headed, an utter coward, Vavasour was also jealous. And Monson was sulky and loutish for all his nuttishness. They had little in common with Flip, and they resented the great Pon's absurd liking for him.

Thus during his first week or so at Highcliffe Flip was not so much in dangerous company as he might have been. Merton and Tunstall showed their best side to him, and Drury and others were decent; and there was no clash with the rival crowd, though Flip noticed that Smithson & Co. rather avoided him.

He saw no more of the Greyfriars fellows till the term was eight days old.

Merton and Tunstall and he were out in the Greyfriars direction for a stroll when, from around a bend in the road, they heard a voice shout:

"Highcliffe cads!"

Flip's face flamed. He had not been used to that sort of thing. He had seen nothing yet to cause him to hold the honour of his school as lightly as the nuts held it. Indeed, he had not realised how very lightly they held it.

"That's a nice kind of thing!" he said hotly. "Is it those Courtheld fellows?"

"I think not," replied Merton, quite coolly. "The bellow sounded to me like the mellifluous voice of the boundin' Cherry, by gad! That gang are in the habit of tossin' compliments of the kind at us—though this one don't seem to be hurled at us in particular, for I can hear Vav's squeak."

"Rescue! Highcliffe! Rescue!"

That was certainly Vavasour's voice. And Flip was not surprised that Vav should be the first to yell for help. Vav was capable of doing it although his side had had odds of two to one.

But as he rushed round the corner Flip saw that the sides were equally matched—in numbers, at least.

He did not yet know that Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Hull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Famous Five of Greyfriars, were very much more than a match for Ponsonby, Vavasour, Monson, Gadsby, and Drury of Highcliffe.

He could not have known the first thing about the Highcliffe attitude towards affairs of this kind, or he would have realised that the nuts were astonished when they saw him pull up, and that three of them were ready to accuse him of faking it.

Flip saw that there were five to five, and checked himself. From his point of view, he had no right to plunge into the fray.

But Merton and Tunstall, though they had not kept up with him in his bolt round the corner, yelled to him now to come on, and themselves piled in.

And Pon yelled, too, and Bob Cherry was forcing Vavasour towards a ditch, with obvious intent to duck him.

Bob had good cause; but how should Flip know that?

He only knew of the constant feud. He knew nothing of the scores of dirty tricks on the part of the Highcliffe nuts which had carried rancour into it. He did not know that Greyfriars always fought fair, and that Highcliffe never did.

But he could see that Vavasour had no chance against Bob, and he made in to Vav's help.

A strong hand gripped the burly Bob by the shoulder, and another by the collar, and he was dragged away from his victim.

"I'm nearer your weight!" flashed Flip.

"True, kid—true! But are you really in this?" asked Bob, wrenching himself free.

"Oh, rather! Why shouldn't I be? Put your fists up!"

"Right-ho! You can wait, Vav. It will keep," said Bob grimly.

Pon and Merton together were too much for Harry Wharton. He was down. Tunstall had taken on Frank Nugent, whom Gadsby had found too good for him. Drury was doing his best to hold his own with the Nabob of Bhanipur. Gadsby tripped up Johnny Bull, who was too big a handful by far for Monson alone; and the two sat on him.

Then there came a rush of feet, and a crowd of fellows in caps of blue and white appeared upon the scene. Sampson Field, from Australia, Tom Brown, from New Zealand, Piet Delarey, from South Africa, these three were in the van with Peter Todd; and behind them came Ogilvy and Russell, Bulstrode and Wibley, and Kipps and Hazeldene. But Hazel was well behind. He had no wish for a clash with Highcliffe.

Pon and Merton were down. Gadsby and Monson were rolled off Bull without ceremony. Tunstall and Drury gave up the hopeless struggle.

But on the grass by the side of the ditch Bob Cherry and Flip Derwent were still going it hammer and tongs; and, famous man of battle though he was, the genial Bob had his hands full!

A Champion for the Nuts!

"**H**ERE, hold on!" cried Harry Wharton, as Bob Cherry and Flip Derwent, close by the ditch, kept up the combat after the Greyfriars reinforcements had made the case of the nuts worse than hopeless, and Ponsonby and the rest had chucked it.

Bob dropped his fists at once. So did Flip, though not willingly. He only followed Bob's example, not yet being by any means enough of a nut to seize upon the opportunity to get in a blow over the dropped guard.

"What are we to stop for?" he growled.

"Your side is licked—and admits it!" said Wharton.

"Well, I don't admit it, because I'm not," Flip answered.

"You jolly soon would be, and have the floor mopped up with you, if we all piled in!" said Johnny Bull.

"But you wouldn't do that," Flip answered.

"It would be dead off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Flip turned an angry red. He saw nothing to laugh at. What tickled the Greyfriars fellows was the notion that one of the nuts should consider heavy odds "dead off." The heavier the odds on their side, the more determined the nuts were wont to be.

But the Famous Five knew this junior from the far lands of the South, and the rest had heard of him. He was the fellow who had given Gadsby such a thorough licking.

They imagined it must have been by pure chance that he had waded in when the nuts yelled "Rescue!"

"But you don't quite tumble," said Wharton quietly. "These chaps never mind if the odds are half a dozen to one—on their side—and we've had to adopt some of the enemies' methods, though we ain't keen on them."

"Consequently," said Frank Nugent, "this is a licking for Highcliffe. Pon and the rest have surrendered, and we are showing them mercy. All but Vavasour, that is. Our man Cherry has sworn a mighty swear to duck Vavasour in a ditch, and the thing's got to be did."

"So the best thing you can do, old son, is to stand up and witness the execution," said Squiff.

"You're from Australia, aren't you?" asked Flip quickly.

"I am—and proud of it!" answered Squiff.

"Is that the way they play the game in your State?"

"My word, if you mean that for—"

"Hold on, Squiff!" said Tom Brown, checking his chum. "No use for you to quarrel with him, is it?"

"He seems to want—"

"You haven't any real objection to seeing Vavasour ducked, have you, Derwent?" inquired Frank Nugent. "It will do him good, you know, and he jolly well deserves it!"

"It ain't going to be done if I can stop it!"

No one was more surprised than Vavasour at that announcement. For he had not gone out of his way to be particularly civil to Flip; and if their present positions had been reversed he would not have lifted a finger to help the new boy.

"But you can't, you know, Derwent," said Bob Cherry, in friendly enough fashion.

"If I can lick you that stops it, I suppose?"

"Then there's something wrong with your supposer," Bulstrode growled. "We ain't going to waste time seeing whether you can stand up to Cherry—you needn't think that. You're the only one who's got a kick left in him, and we're quite ready to sit on you if you're going to be troublesome."

"What, a dozen or more of you?" demanded Flip, in astonishment. He had tumbled into a new game, of whose very rules—if it could be said to have rules—he was completely ignorant; and he could not understand a bit why the nuts did no more than wriggle and say lurid things.

They were outnumbered, of course; but even now they could surely put up a fight if they chose.

"No, not so many—only as many as can find room," Peter Todd made answer to the Tasmanian junior.

"Come along and be ducked, ducky!" said Bob to Vavasour. "You asked for it, you know. But perhaps your memory can't carry as far as last term? Anyway, you can take my word that I promised you it; and, with all his giddy faults, Robert Cherry keeps his promises!"

"Just you drop it, Cherry!" snarled Vavasour. And he looked round to Flip for support.

"Yes—drop it!" said Flip sharply.

"Look here, you know, Derwent—"

"Oh, we've had enough of this!" howled Bulstrode, who was particularly anxious to see vengeance wrought upon Vavasour. "Sit on him, some of you!"

"Come and try it yourself, if you're so keen on it!" snapped Flip.

Bulstrode had not seen the whacking of Gadsby. It would not have made much difference if he had, for Bulstrode had pluck enough, and he held Gadsby very cheap indeed. But if he had he might not have felt quite so confident that he could lick this new champion of the nuts.

"Here I am!" he growled, marching up to Flip.

The challenge was plain, and it was of small consequence who struck the first blow, as to which no one was quite sure later.

They went hard at it.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "This, methinks, is where I come in!"

Vavasour had turned to watch the new battle. Bob caught him again by the collar, gave a yank and a heave, and fairly slung him into the ditch.

There was some water in it, and quite a nice lot of mud—but not nice mud, by any means.

"Yoop!" howled Vavasour, as he splashed in.

"That wasn't a clean dive, Vavasour," said Delarey, shaking his head sorrowfully. "You ought to be able to do much better than that."

"Ow-yow! Yarooogh! Gurrerg!" spluttered Vavasour, as he tried to scramble out.

"No, no, ducky—not yet!" said Bob sweetly. "You've to apologise first, you know."

"I—I—"

"Oh, look out, Bob!"

But Harry Wharton's warning came too late.

Flip Derwent, guarding a hefty punch from Bulstrode, had jumped aside and was upon Bob.

"See how you like it!" he yelled, and pitched him forward.

Over the cringing body of Vavasour, forlorn and dripping, shot Bob, and landed in the ditch with a thwack that sent up a fresh shower over his victim.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the nuts.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared most of the Greyfriars fellows.

The manner in which the burly Bob had been dealt with tickled even them. Of course, he had been taken entirely by sur-

prise; but, allowing for that, one had to admit that the job had been very neatly done.

The nuts had found a champion at last!

"Sorry to keep you waiting," said Flip to Bulstrode. He had turned back to his fight at once.

"My hat!" gasped Bulstrode. Peter Todd had always been a cool customer, and so had Dick Rake, and Piet Delarey was a rare cool hand; but it struck George Bulstrode that for coolness not one of them could beat this fellow.

He could box, too! That left of his was a very awkward thing to stop, as Bulstrode was finding—by way of failing to stop it. Flip landed two or three real nasty ones on the Greyfriars junior's face, and then got home with a jab in the ribs that made Bulstrode cough and drop his hands.

"Sail in and finish him, you idiot!" shrieked Gadsby.

But Flip waited, fists down, till Bulstrode was ready again. One or two of the nuts and nearly all the Greyfriars crowd would have been disappointed in him if he had taken Gadsby's advice.

Meanwhile, Bob Cherry had emerged from the ditch. He was angry; but he had not lost his self-control. Bob saw a sort of rough justice in what had been done to him—from Derwent's point of view. The fellow didn't know yet what an utter cad Vavasour was, of course; and Bob was not one to blame anyone for sticking up for his own side.

Flip half turned, and saw Bob. He could not quite smother his grin; but it was with politeness that he said:

"Fraid you'll have to wait now till I'm through with this business—and I may not be on directly after it's over!"

That was the right spirit. He was not taking it for granted that he could lick Bulstrode. The nuts did not much appreciate his modesty, perhaps; but the Greyfriars fellows did.

Now Bulstrode was ready again, piled in hard, did his best, with a very fair amount of skill and plenty of pluck.

But in skill Flip Derwent was his master; and certainly Flip's pluck was not less than his.

The fight had broken out in a moment, and it was fought without rounds or seconds. That fact should not have been against Bulstrode, who had the advantage of Flip in height and weight. But it was, for Bulstrode was less active, his footwork far inferior to that of the Colonial youngster, and he was getting hit oftener and harder than his opponent.

Ponsonby's Proposal.

"**G**O it, Derwent!" yelled the nuts, in glad chorus.

"Buck up, Bulstrode!" roared Greyfriars.

"He'll lick you!" said Vavasour malevolently to Bob Cherry.

Bob did not reply. He was not sure. But if he had felt sure he would not have bragged.

"He's down!"

Bulstrode lay on his back, gasping.

"Two or three of that sort would do you a heap of good, you bullyin' cad!" squeaked Vavasour.

"One of 'em would just about knock all the stuffing out of you—if there was any to knock out; which there ain't!" returned Bob contemptuously.

"Hurrah!" shouted Wibley.

Bulstrode was getting to his feet.

But he got up with difficulty, and he had no notion of going on.

"I reckon I should have been counted out," he said, with a feeble grin. "Anyway, I've had enough for to-day. This keep-on-till-you-are-knocked-out style of slogging ain't quite my line!"

"Any time you like," replied Flip, gripping the hand extended to him.

Bulstrode might want to try his luck again, but there was no malice in him.

"If I ain't too muddy, and you ain't too blown, Derwent," said Bob, "I should rather like to go on with our little argument. It was getting quite interesting."

"I can't complain about the mud," replied Flip, with a cheerful grin. "I'd forgotten when I went for you that we had an unfinished scrap on our hands. Apologies! Yes, I'm ready, but I think I'd like to take my jacket off."

"Can't be did, Bob," said Harry Wharton.

"Why not?"

"Because if you take more than about two minutes over it we shall be late for dinner. We shall have to scoot as it is."

"I can't see either of 'em knocking the other out in two minutes," said Johnny Bull. "By gad, no!" chuckled Ponsonby.

It was not often Pon and Johnny Bull were in agreement, but they were agreed as to that. On the form shown against Bulstrode, Derwent could make even Bob Cherry, the best fighting-man in the Remove, go all the way.

"Make an engagement of it," said Gadsby, who was specially keen on seeing Flip licked—though that was not for love of Bob Cherry.

"Oh, rot!" said Wharton. "It isn't worth while. Let the affair drop."

"Dashed if Wharton ain't afraid the invincible Cherry will get the order of the knock!" said Drury.

"That's a lie, and you know it!" snapped Harry Wharton.

"Can't let it drop, Harry," said Bob.

"Why not? You've no quarrel with Derwent."

"My hat! Hasn't he, though?" growled Johnny Bull. "I jolly well should have if I'd been tumbled into that ditch, like old Bob!"

"Yes, that's got to be wiped out," Bob said. "When will it suit you, Derwent, and where?"

"Any time and any place you like," Flip answered. But he would as soon have let it drop. It was not for him to say so, however—or so he thought.

"Look here," said Ponsonby. "I've got a bright idea, by gad! Let's make it five against five—your crowd, Wharton, you know."

"Yes," said Frank Nugent. "we know our crowd, Ponsonby, but we don't know five fighting-men among your little lot."

"There's Derwent," growled Johnny Bull. "When that's said, all's said. And Derwent can't take on the five of us."

Pon flushed and scowled.

"I'm on!" he snapped. "You, if you like, Bull!"

"That suits all serene," replied the solid Johnny promptly.

"Then there's Gaddy—"

"Oh, leave me out, Pon!" snarled Gadsby.

"Come to that, I'd better!" snapped his chief. "You don't amount to much. Well, then, 's Monson—"

Monson did not say "Leave me out!" But he opened his mouth as if he were going to, and then shut it again without saying anything.

It would have been easy for anyone observing him closely to perceive that Monson was not keen.

But neither Tunstall nor Merton showed any special reluctance. Perhaps Flip's presence accounted for that. Flip had accepted those two as being his own sort. They were not quite that, but something new was slipping in them.

"There's no time to settle anything else now," said Harry Wharton.

He was not very keen. Wharton was by no means a suspicious fellow, but he knew Cecil Ponsonby a bit too well not to doubt whether there might not be treachery behind this challenge.

It was so very unlike any of the nuts to be keen on fighting!

"Oh, I'll send someone over to your show with word as to what time an' place I propose, by gad!" said Pon.

"I rather fancy it's for us, as the challenged side, to settle that sort of thing, isn't it?" returned Frank Nugent.

"Have it your own way. What suits you will suit me," replied Ponsonby indifferently.

That surprised Wharton, but did not serve to make him less inclined to suspicion. Surely there must be something up Pon's sleeve!

And there was. Cecil Ponsonby was looking forward further than the battle of the five against five.

The nuts had found a champion at last—a fellow who really could fight, and seemed to like it!

And Pon wanted to keep him. He wanted to see a deep gulf yawn between these Greyfriars fellows and Flip Derwent.

It would be far easier then to keep Flip away from Courtenay and the Caterpillar; and Pon was very determined about doing that.

"Right-ho!" said Wharton. "One of our fellows will ride over and see you about it after classes this afternoon."

And now the Greyfriars juniors had to bolt. Only by sprinting hard had they any chance of avoiding being late for dinner.

Flip looked rather grave as he walked back with Ponsonby.

Monson, Drury, Merton, and Tunstall were ahead. Gadsby and Vavasour came behind in a state between extreme sulkiness and relief.

Neither of them wanted to be among the chosen five, but both rather resented Pon's passing them over so lightly. He had let Gadsby back out without argument, and had never even suggested Vavasour's inclusion.

"I shall put Pon up to making it a general scramble, not five separate fights," said Gadsby.

"Eh? What's the use of that? Our chaps are bound to be licked, anyway—absolutely bound to be! Serve 'em jolly well right, too—dashed if it won't! I hope Derwent gets it in the neck—the swankin' beast!"

Vavasour's exceeding gratitude for Flip's championship seemed to have stirred him to unusual eloquence.

"If you weren't a dashed idiot," said Gadsby politely, "you'd see that that's just what I'm after!"

"I don't see—"

"Think—if you've got anythin' to think with!"

"I suppose my brains are as good as yours, by gad!" replied Vavasour sulkily.

"Supposin' that proves they ain't. Look here, do you think our five will stand an earthly against those Greyfriars bruisers?"

"I shan't bet on our crowd!" said Vavasour, with an ugly grin.

"I should say not! But if they try it five against five, there will be a dashed warm time for our friend Derwent—confound him! I'll give Monson the tip to be hors de combat pretty quick; he wouldn't stay in it long after he saw a chance of slidin' out, anyway. Sha'n't say anything to Tunstall an' Merton—too dashed risky. They're as thick as thieves with Derwent. But they ain't much. An' old Pon—well, I won't say but he can fight when he chooses, but he don't fancy gettin' hurt. They'll all be done to the wide before Derwent has had enough—he's a regular glutton for punishment—an' then it will be four or five to one against him, an' he'll get the hammerin' of his life! An' we'll be there to see, Vav—we'll be there to see!"

"Oh, absolutely!" said Vavasour; and he felt quite cheerful, in spite of his soaked and muddy clothes.

Flip had never done Vavasour an injury, had never even slighted him. He had stood up for Vavasour against Bob Cherry. But all that counted for nothing to Vavasour's mean and jealous mind, in which there was no spark of generosity.

Pon, to whom Vavasour loathed, upon whom he modelled himself, thought too much of this new fellow; and that was enough to make the Highcliffe dandy hate Flip venomously.

Meanwhile the leader of the nuts and the latest recruit to his forces were discussing the affair.

"It will give you a chance to get even with that boulder Cherry, Derwent," said Ponsonby.

"Not sure that I want to. Of course I sha'n't refuse. Can't very well, as he has something to get even with me for," Flip replied. "But I don't mind telling you that I think Cherry's a dashed good sort. I haven't forgotten that he seconded me in the scrap with Gaddy, either."

"Oh, that's ancient history!" Pon said. "Wait till you know Cherry better, by gad! The chap has his points, but he throws his weight about a lot too much for my likin'."

"Have you fellows always been up against them?"

"Always an' evermore, old sport! Can't be helped. They're not our sort, y'know."

"But Courtenay and De Courcy are chummy with them," Flip said, his brows contracting a little.

Not yet had he got to the bottom of the feud between Ponsonby and his nuts and the rest of the Fourth. It would have been easier for him to understand if he had only begun to understand Cecil Ponsonby.

But he had seen the better side of Pon thus far, and Pon could be very fascinating when he chose.

"When you know Courtenay an' De Courcy better you won't be surprised at that. It's enough, by gad, for any fellow to be up against me, an' those two will welcome him with open arms. I don't ask you to steer clear of De Courcy an' his precious pal, Flip, old pal; but, for your own sake, don't trust them a yard further than you can see 'em. If you do you'll repent it."

Flip did not care for that talk; it was not his style. But the poison worked, as Pon meant it should. He was left with a vague

feeling of distrust of the two fellows in his form who were fittest of all to be his friends.

"Cherry's their best man, I suppose?" he said, preferring to give the conversation a fresh turn.

"Yaas, on the whole. But Wharton's no slouch. He hasn't Cherry's weight or strength, but he's all there. An' Bull's a rare tough handful—that's why I chose him. Nugent an' the Indian merchant are the weakest of the five, but neither's a duffer, by gad, an' they're both stickers!"

"I meet Cherry, you take on Bull. Who's to put his dukes up with Wharton?"

"It's a certain lickin' for the man who does," Pon said, knitting his brows. "None of them will be keen."

"Oh, Merton or Tun won't mind, as far as that goes!" Flip said, rating his study-mates higher than Pon was disposed to rate them. For courage, that is, for, as his next words showed, he had a fairly shrewd notion of their form.

"I can't see either of them thrashin' a chap who can really box, though," he admitted frankly. "Tun had the makings of a boxer; but he's got no punch much. And Merton's slow—too lazy, I think."

"It's a bit of a puzzle," Pon said. "Mon would have his hands dashed full with the weakest of the five—Nugent, for choice. Put Tunstall against the Indian; the darkey don't hit so hard as some of them. An' that leaves Merton for Wharton; which is no go at all—dashed if it is!"

Gadsby and Vavasour came up just then. "You'll make it a general scramble, of course, Pon?" said Gadsby, winking at Vavasour.

"Oh, by gad, that's an idea! What do you think, Derwent?"

"Don't quite see the notion."

"We five against them, an' any chap on either side allowed to give help to anyone else who needs it, by gad!"

"Derwent won't be wantin' much more than Cherry will give him, I fancy!" sneered Vavasour.

Gadsby nudged him.

"Any way it suits you, Pon," said Flip.

"Well, I think Gaddy's notion is a good one. It will buck up the other three," Pon replied.

(To be continued next week.)

NOTICES.

(Continued from page 13.)

L. Taylor, 24, Foxham Road, Tufnell Park, N. 19—with boy readers interested in stamp collecting.

Leslie Plaskett, 16, Holmwood Road, Seven Kings—with boy readers about 16, in Australia and New Zealand.

Victor G. E. Lye, 60, Wyelife Road, Clapham, S.W. 11—will endeavour to obtain back numbers of companion papers for any readers wanting them who will write to him.

Miss Mary K. Turner, Outram Street, Ripley, Derbyshire—wants to exchange picture postcards with girl readers at home and abroad.

Miss Gladys Illingworth and Miss Lily Ravenhall, the Towers, Warwick Road, Coventry—with girl readers anywhere.

Miss Cora Mayor, 14, Station Parade, Portsmouth, Todmorden, would like to correspond with girl readers about 18-20.

Robert Hepburn, c/o the W. H. Malkin Co., Ltd., 57, Water Street, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, with a reader in the United Kingdom.

Football—Matches Wanted by—

BEVERLEY—15—5 mile radius.—S. Ogden, 40, York Street, Blackley, Manchester.

SPENCER UNITED—14—5 mile radius—away matches only.—H. Fargo, 19, Howard Road, Stoke Newington, N.

GORTON JOIERS A.F.C.—15—3 mile radius.—A. Buxton, 7, Newton Street, Gorton, Manchester.

SPEEDS ATHLETIC—18, strong.—R. Filby, 83, Alsen Road, Holloway, N. 7.

LONGLANDS ATHLETIC—16½—5 mile radius.—G. A. George, 17, Northcote Road, Sidcup.

CHRIST CHURCH (OXFORD) MISSION—15½—7 mile radius.—W. F. Haynes, 1, Faraday Road, North Kensington, W. 10.

A Liverpool Club.—16-17—players also wanted.—W. L. Sergeant, 60, Alderson Road, Liverpool.

WATTON—14½—6 mile radius.—H. Andrews, 1, Vicarage Walk, Watton-on-Thames.