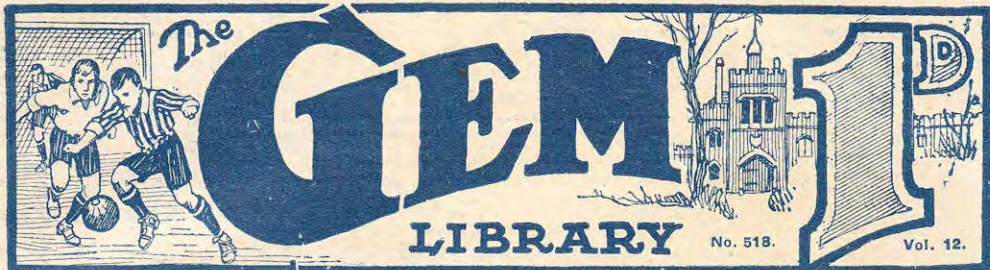


MANNERS' VENDETTA!

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



MANNERS MINOR GIVES TROUBLE!

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

MANNERS' VENDETTA!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

The Polite Thing.

"KILDARE'S playing a ripping game just now!" remarked Tom Merry.

"Let him play!" said Manners grumpily.

"There's a new war film at the Wayland Cinema," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Bother the cinema!"

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther exchanged a glance, and groaned simultaneously.

Manners was already sorting out his camera. There was no doubt as to how Harry Manners wanted to spend that half-holiday.

"It's a First Eleven match, and there'll be something worth watching!" Tom Merry said temptingly.

"First Eleven matches are small beer. It's junior matches that matter. You've said so yourself, lots of times," said Manners.

"Ahem! Yes; but—"

"We haven't been to the cinema for some time," said Monty Lowther sorrowfully.

"Better to save your money in wartime."

"What about your films?" demanded Lowther warmly. "Do you get your films for nothing?"

Manners chuckled.

"Yes; my pater sent me this lot."

"That means that we're going out with a camera this afternoon, I suppose?" said Tom Merry. "Well, let's go!"

"Look at the weather," said Manners. "Clear as anything—topping for taking a few good pictures! But you fellows can go and eat coke, if you like. Don't let me drag you away from your blessed cinemas and First Eleven matches!"

The Terrible Three of the Shell had been discussing what to do with that half-holiday. There was no match on, and there was nothing to do on the school allotments for the nonce. Manners seemed to have decided the question—or, rather, it had been decided for him, by the fact that his pater had sent him a roll of films by way of a present.

"Oh, we'll come!" said Lowther.

"We'll come!" sighed Tom Merry.

"If you fellows had a scrap of sense," remarked Manners, "you'd be as keen on photography as I am. But if you'd rather mooch about, wasting your time, I don't mind. I'll take young Reggie with me!"

"Well, I'd like to see Kildare kicking goals against Abbotsford," admitted Tom Merry.

"And to tell the frozen truth, I'd like to see the new war films," said Monty Lowther.

Manners grunted.

"It's a go, then! See you again at tea-time!"

"Right you are!"

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther left the study, cheerful in looks. Usually the Terrible Three were inseparable; but there were occasions when tastes differed.

Tom and Monty bore with their chum and his devotion to his camera nobly. But it was possible to get fed-up with cameras.

Tom headed for Big Side, where a number of fellows were gathering to watch the senior football match. Monty Lowther wheeled out his bike to ride over to Wayland. Manners went on methodically preparing his camera and films for a joyful excursion. He was quite satisfied to take his young brother with him for the afternoon. He liked to keep an occasional eye on Reggie Manners, and see that he was keeping out of mischief. Reggie was a decent little fellow in his way, but he showed occasional inclinations towards kicking over the traces.

Manners had just slung on his camera, and was prepared to start, when the door opened, and the celebrated eyeglass of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth glimmered in.

"You fellows heah— Hallo, Mannahs, deah boy!"

"Hallo!" grunted Manners.

"Tom Mewwy and Lowthah gone out?"

"Yes."

"Bai Jove! I was goin' to suggest a wippin' way of employin' your half-holiday," explained the swell of St. Jim's. "There's a new chap comin' this afternoon."

Manners, buckling the strap of his camera, showed a striking lack of interest in the new fellow.

"Chap named Woylance!" added Arthur Augustus.

"Ye gods! What a name!" said Manners.

"He's comin' fwom New Zealand."

"Long journey to make in an afternoon."

"Weally, Mannahs, you must be awaah that he is not comin' fwom New Zealand this afternoon, as he is awwivin' at St. Jim's to-day! I have heard about him. He came ova fwom New Zealand with his patah, who is goin' to the Fwont, and leavin' him at St. Jim's. See?"

"I see!" yawned Manners.

"His patah is in the camp at Abbotsford, and he is puttin' him in the twain for St. Jim's," explained Arthur Augustus. "Twimble says so. I do not know how Twimble knows. He seems to know ewewythin'. It flashed into my bwaah that it would only be the right thing to meet the chap at the station."

"No harm in that," agreed Manners.

"I consided that you fellows might go. As the othahs have gone out, pewwaps you would care to go on your own, Mannahs."

"I'm going out with my camera," explained Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs, you could put that wubbish aside for once, in ordah to do the polite thing—"

"That what?" demanded Manners.

"Wubbish, deah boy!"

"You silly ass!"

"Fway do not uttah offensive weemarks, Mannahs! I weally think that

somebody ought to meet this chap Woylance—"

"Can't he take a cab from the station without somebody to put him in it?" asked Manners.

"I am thinkin' of the polite aspect of the mattah."

"Well, why don't you go?"

"I should be vewy pleased to go, Mannahs, but I am goin' to watch the football match."

"Put that rubbish aside!" suggested Manners, with a grin.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Good-bye, Gussy!"

Manners gently twirled the swell of St. Jim's out of the way, and walked down the passage. Arthur Augustus looked after him more in sorrow than in anger.

"Bai Jove! I cannot help regardin' Mannahs as wathah lackin' in pwopah taste!" he murmured. "Hallo! Held on, deah boys!"

Kangaroo and Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn were coming down the passage.

"Can't stop!" said Kangaroo.

"I was goin' to suggest—"

"Good-bye!"

The three Shell fellows pushed Arthur Augustus against the wall, and walked on, grinning. Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

Jack Blake yelled from the staircase.

"Where are you, Gussy? Are you coming, ass?"

"I wufuse to be called an ass, Blake!"

"They're just going to kick off!"

hooted Digby.

"Come on, fathead!" roared Herries.

Arthur Augustus hurried to the stairs to join his chums. Nobody seemed keen on listening to his suggestions with regard to the new boy, and the swell of St. Jim's had to give it up. Somehow it did not occur to his mighty intellect to go to the station himself. He walked down to the football-ground with Blake and Herries and Digby, shaking his head solemnly. He felt that there was a good deal of selfishness about that afternoon.

Meanwhile, Manners of the Shell was looking for his young brother, with the benevolent intention of taking him out along with the camera. Manners was popularly supposed to be nearly as much attached to his minor as to his camera. But he did not find the festive Reggie. Jameson of the Third informed him that Manners minor had gone out with Wally and Levison minor, and added, quite superfluously, that he didn't suppose that Reggie would be found dead with that camera, anyway.

Somewhat annoyed, Manners started out by himself. He did not want to go alone, and he had considered that the excursion would be a treat to Reggie. Possibly he was mistaken on that point.

But the cloud soon disappeared from his brow when he got to work with his beloved instrument. He enjoyed that afternoon quite as much as Monty Lowther did at the cinema, or Tom Merry on the football-ground. But the afternoon, as it happened, was not

destined to end so peacefully as it had begun.

CHAPTER 2.

Reggie Asks for It.

"I'VE got an idea!"

Reggie Manners made that remark in Mrs. Murphy's tuck-shop in Rylcombe village. The three fags had gathered there, to take advantage of the fact that a Ginger-pop Controller had not yet been appointed.

"Go it!" said Levison minor.

"Oh, pile in!" said Wally, somewhat disparagingly. D'Arcy minor did not appear to think that Reggie's idea was likely to amount to much.

"There's nothing doing, is there?" demanded Reggie.

"Well, I was thinking of calling a meeting of Third-Form members of the St. Jim's Parliament," said Wally thoughtfully. "I'm not satisfied with the Old Gang. It's about time they were turned out of office, you know. Tom Merry doesn't make much figure as Prime Minister. Now—"

Manners minor yawned.

"Let's dig up something more lively," he suggested.

"Most of the Parliament meetings are lively enough," grinned Levison minor.

"Wally got a thick ear at the last one, and my nose isn't quite well yet!"

"You see," went on Wally. "I think younger blood is needed. Those old fogies in the Shell ain't much good. We want a War Cabinet with plenty of push and go, you know, and my idea is—get rid of the Old Gang!"

"Hear, hear!" said Levison minor.

"Oh, give us a rest!" said Reggie.

Wally frowned.

"Well, what's your precious idea, then?" he demanded.

"There's a new chap coming this afternoon. Trimble says he's going into the Fourth," said Reggie. "New kid, you know. Some moon-faced booby, I expect! Let's rag him!"

"Taint so jolly long since you were a new kid yourself; and if you talk about moon-faced boobies—" said Wally.

"Look here, Wally—"

"I don't like the idea. Ragging new kids is all very well for chaps like Crooke and Racker, or Clampe! Taint good enough for us. Let the poor beast alone!"

"I'm not suggesting hurting him, you dummy. There's a lot of snow on the ground. We can give him a run to St. Jim's snowballing him."

"Nice impression to make on a new kid!" grinned Frank Levison. "He will think we're a lot of hooligans at St. Jim's!"

"Oh, rot! It's only fun!"

"Don't like the idea," said Wally. "We'll go and look for the Grammar cads, if you like, and snowball them. Let the new kid alone!"

Reggie flushed angrily. Disapproval was always enough to make the wilful fag angry.

"Are you going to set up as a Good Little Georgie?" he demanded sarcastically.

"If you say I'm good, I'll give you a thick ear!" retorted Wally. "I tell you I don't like the idea! It's caddish ragging new kids!"

"So I'm a cad, am I?" demanded Reggie Manners.

"Oh, don't yell at me!" said Wally disdainfully. "I say it's caddish to rag new kids; and so it is!"

"Order!" murmured Levison minor, the peace-maker. "Let the new kid alone, Reggie. I hear he's coming from some colony or other, and he's got relations in the Army. Let's get back, and call Wally's meeting!"

Reggie Manners' face set obstinately. "I'm going to snowball the new kid," he said deliberately; "and if you don't like it, you can lump it!"

Wally pushed back his cuffs, taking that as a defiance of his lofty role as chief of the Third Form. But Frank caught his arm.

"Hold on, Wally! You're not going to scrap!"

"Look here—"

"Let's get back! Reggie will come when he's got over his sulks."

"Who's sulky?" roared Reggie.

"You are, old chap! Come on, both of you!"

Frank Levison fairly dragged Wally out of the tuck-shop. Reggie Manners followed them more slowly, with a clouded brow. Frank and Wally started for the school, but Reggie remained. He had proposed snowballing the new kid carelessly enough, not caring much about it either way; but opposition made him obstinate. He was going to look for the new arrival, now, and give him a hearty snowballing, just by way of putting Wally in his proper place. Which seemed to indicate that Levison minor was right in remarking that Reggie was sulky.

Manners minor mooched about the lane with his hands in his pockets, and a determined and obstinate expression on his face. He knew from Trimble—the Peeping Tom of the School House—that the new boy was coming early that afternoon. As a stranger in the district, he was sure to follow the high road to the school—not one of the short cuts—and so the fag was certain of meeting him.

Reggie improved the period of waiting by kneading several snowballs with great care.

Wally and Frank had long been out of sight when a sturdy lad came swinging down the lane from the village. Reggie watched him as he came along. He was a good deal bigger than Reggie, and his face, a little sunburnt, was very good-looking, and glowing with health. He was wearing an overcoat, and had a bag in his hand. Reggie wondered whether this was Dick Roylance, the new junior for the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. He did not want to begin on the wrong party.

As the sturdy lad came swinging up, with a springy stride, Reggie shouted.

"Hallo!"

The newcomer paused.

"Hallo!" he responded, evidently surprised at being hailed by a stranger.

"You the new kid for St. Jim's?"

"Oh, yes! I'm going to St. Jim's, certainly."

"Name's Roylance?"

"Yes."

"Oh, good!" said Manners minor. He had his hand behind him, with a snowball in it, and, having thus ascertained the identity of the stranger, he brought the missile suddenly into view, hurling it with unerring aim.

Whiz! Smash!

The sudden missile took Roylance quite by surprise. It smashed on his chin, and he staggered back, gasping.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Reggie.

He whizzed a second snowball, which caught the new junior on the nose.

The New Zealander staggered.

Reggie Manners' idea was that the new fellow, being a new, sheepish chap and a "moon-faced booby," would run for it, and he, Reggie, was going to pursue him to the school, pelting him all the way.

But Reggie's calculations were a little out.

The new junior was taken by surprise, and for a second or two he rubbed his face, gasping. But he was very quick to dodge the third snowball that flew from Reggie's hand.

"Oh, that's the game, is it?" he ejaculated.

He jumped to the roadside, where snow was piled thick under the trees. In a twinkling he grasped a good handful, and a snowball whizzed back at Reggie, who was about to deliver a fourth shot, and not at all expecting that prompt return.

Smash!

"Yarrah!" howled Reggie.

The newcomer's missile smashed in his face, and Reggie sat down suddenly in the snow. The new junior chuckled, and gathered up snow at a great rate, pelting the fag right and left.

That was not at all according to Reggie's programme. The matter was not turning out so funny as he had anticipated.

The new junior, chortling, pelted the fag incessantly, and Reggie scrambled wildly right and left to dodge the missiles, having no time to return them.

"Had enough?" chuckled Roylance, at last.

"Yow-ow! You rotter! Yow-ow! You cad!" howled Reggie.

Roylance came towards him, smiling. "I say, isn't that rather thick, as you started it?" he asked. "I didn't call you names when you biffed me!"

"Yow-ow!" gasped Reggie, sitting up in the snow and blinking at him furiously. "Oh, you rotter!"

"Oh, come now; you're not hurt!" said Roylance, rather contemptuously. "Let me give you a hand up!"

He stooped, and caught the fag by the shoulder, and lifted him to his feet—so easily as if he had been an infant. Reggie's face was crimson with anger and chagrin. He had completely lost his temper.

"Let me alone, you cad!" he howled, jerking himself away. "Get away, you rotter! Take that, hang you!"

"Ow!" yelled Roylance, as the angry fag hacked at his shin. "Oh, my hat! Why, you cowardly little beast, I'll squash you!"

Reggie, ashamed of his passionate action the moment it was done, was too obstinate to admit repentance. And he had not much time to speak. Roylance seized him by the collar, and shook him like a rat. Reggie's teeth fairly clattered together as he was shaken by that strong arm.

"Leggo!" he yelled.

"You young rotter!" panted Roylance. "If you were big enough to stand up to me, I'd give you the licking of your life!"

Shake! Shake! Shake!

"Yarrah! Leggo, you rotten bully!" shrieked Reggie.

There was a sudden footstep, and a fellow with a camera flung over his shoulder brushed through a gap in the hedge, and leaped into the road.

"Let him go! Let him alone, you cad!" he shouted. And Manners of the Shell grasped Roylance by the shoulder, and swung him away from the panting fag, with a swing that sent him spinning into the road.

CHAPTER 3.

A Fight to a Finish.

BUMP!

Dick Roylance, of New Zealand, sat down in the middle of the lane with a heavy jar.

Manners glared at him.

Reggie grinned.

His elder brother had come along just in the nick of time from Reggie's point of view. If Manners had known what had preceded this shaking bestow on his minor, he would not have acted as he had done. But he knew nothing of all that. He had sighted Reggie squirming

in the grasp of a powerfully-built fellow, who was shaking him like a rat, and he had dashed up to interfere, as in duty bound.

"Oh!" gasped Roylance.
 "You rotter!" shouted Manners. "If you want to tackle somebody, pick a fellow as big as yourself. I'm ready!" Roylance staggered to his feet.

His handsome, sunburnt face was very grim and angry now. His shin was aching from the cruel back of the fag's boot, and the names applied to him were very disagreeable.

"Good!" he said quietly. "Step into the field here, my son, and I'll do my best to make you sorry for yourself!"

"I'll give you a chance!" growled Manners. "Take hold of this camera, kid."

He unslung his beloved instrument, and handed it to Reggie.

Manners was a most peaceable fellow, as a rule, but he was angry now; and, quiet fellow as he was, he was by no means to be despised in a scrap. There was a reserve of force in Manners of the Shell, and he had plenty of pluck, though not of the loud variety.

He stepped through the gap in the hedge, and Roylance followed him. If the fellow wanted to fight, Manners was ready to fight him. Who Roylance was he had not the faintest idea, and he did not care.

Roylance threw off his overcoat, and pushed back his cuffs.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Yes, you rotter!"

"I'll make you take that name back!" said Roylance quietly.

"Rats!"

And they began.
 Reggie looked on with a grin. His sulky temper was still in the ascendant, and he keenly anticipated seeing the new fellow licked. Manners was the taller of the two, and somewhat older, and he looked like having an advantage, though he was not thinking of that.

As a matter of fact, however, the new junior was a good deal stronger than Manners. Manners made that discovery after a few minutes of combat. The new fellow, too, knew a great deal of the manly art of self-defence—another discovery that Manners soon made.

There were no rounds in that fight. It was hammer and tongs from start to finish. But when Manners, who was tired with a long tramp over the hills that afternoon, gave ground, breathing hard, Roylance instinctively paused, and gave him time to recover.

Manners came on again, annoyed by being granted a concession by a fellow to whom he had taken a dislike. He attacked hard, and Roylance staggered under two or three blows that got home with great effect.

"Bravo!" chirruped Reggie.

Roylance did not go down, however. He recovered, after giving ground, and then attacked hard. To Manners' surprise, his defence was knocked to the winds, and knuckles that seemed of iron were planted on his nose like a hammer.

Crash!
 Manners of the Shell went down on his back, hard.

"Oh!" gasped Reggie blankly.

Roylance stood back.

The Shell fellow stood up dazedly. His nose was streaming redly, and his eyes ran water.

He scrambled up in fury.

"Take a rest," said Roylance. "No hurry, you know."

"Look out for yourself, you cad!" shouted Manners, rushing on him furiously.

"Oh, all right."

It was hard and fast fighting now, and punishment was given and taken at a

great rate. Reggie looked on wide-eyed. It was dawning on him that the new junior, though not so old as Manners or quite so tall, was stronger and fiercer in nearly every way at scrapping.

Reggie had seldom, if ever, seen a fight of such bitter determination, and he had never dreamed that his major could stand up to punishment like this.

Harry Manners had never appeared as a heroic fighting-man in the eyes of his minor before. But there was real heroism in the way Manners was standing up to his opponent now, though the bitter realisation of defeat was already in his mind. He would not admit that he was beaten, and he fought on fiercely while an ounce of strength remained in him.

But he was spent at last.

A heavy right drive sent him whirling, and he crashed to the ground again. He made a fierce effort to rise, and sank back again from sheer weakness.

Roylance blinked down at him.

The new fellow's right eye was closed, and rapidly darkening. His nose was swollen, and his lip cut. He had won, but he had paid for his victory.

Reggie ran to his brother.

"Harry, old chap!" he muttered.

He helped his major into a sitting position.

"Do you want to go on?" asked Roylance quietly, and without a trace of swank. "I'm satisfied if you are."

Manners panted.

"I can't go on, or I'd smash you!" he muttered.

"Right you are."

"You rotten bully!" shouted Reggie.

Roylance looked at him.

"I won't touch you," he said.

"You're not worth it, anyway. I don't see what that chap wanted to stand up for you for, you sneaking little cad!"

"You rotten brute!" snarled Reggie.

"Get away from here, you hooligan!"

The new junior made a movement, and Manners staggered up and interposed.

"You've licked me," he said bitterly, "but if you touch my brother again you've got me to deal with, all the same. Come on, if you like!"

Roylance stepped back.

"Your brother, is he?" he answered.

"Brother or not, you might stop to inquire a little before you mix in his rows next time. But I'm not going to touch him."

Roylance did not add that Manners could not have stopped him if he had wanted to, though it was plain enough.

He picked up his overcoat and donned it, picked up his bag, and went back into the road.

Manners stood breathing heavily, while the new junior tramped on, rather slowly, and disappeared up the lane.

"You're hurt, Harry!" said Reggie.

Manners' bruised face reddened with humiliation. He had chipped in to protect his brother, and he had been licked under the fag's eyes. It was not a pleasant or gratifying result.

"You put up a jolly good fight," said Reggie consolingly. "You couldn't help it if he was better than you."

"Oh, dry up!" snapped Manners, not at all consoled by that tactful remark.

Reggie looked sulky at once. He did not make any allowance for his brother's humiliation and his physical sufferings at that moment.

"Well, you were licked," he said.

"You're bigger than he is, too."

"Shut up, I tell you!"

"Here's your old camera!" growled Reggie. "I'll clear if you're going to slang me just because you're licked. I didn't ask you to chip in, either!"

Manners took the camera in silence, and Reggie stalked away.

The Shell fellow moved away slowly and heavily to bathe his face in the

brook across the field. But, with all he could do to his face, it remained a startling sight. A hard fight without gloves cannot fail to leave traces, and poor Manners looked as if he had been through a prize-fight.

He was not feeling happy as he moved off towards the school at last. He had been licked by a fellow he had never seen before, and so far as he knew, was not likely to see again. He was feeling tired, humiliated, and spent, and there was an unaccustomed bitterness in his breast—a feeling that was something like hatred of the unknown opponent who had defeated him.

CHAPTER 4. Noblesse Oblige.

"B WAWO, Kildare!"

"Goal!"

"Good old Kildare!"

The football match on Big Side had ended, Kildare kicking the winning goal almost on the stroke of time.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy waved his eyeglass in great excitement and glee. But as the footballers came off the field the swell of St. Jim's jammed his celebrated monocle into his eyes, and turned it on his chums.

"I wonder if that new chap's awright!" he remarked.

"What new chap?" yawned Blake.

"The new chap from New Zealand, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "I was thinkin' of lookin' for him, and givin' him a word of welcome! It will make him feel wathah at home, you know."

"What about tea?" asked Herries.

"Nevah mind tea now, Hewwies."

"But I do mind!" grunted Herries.

"I'm hungry!"

"Same here!" remarked Digby.

"Let's scout for tea, and let the new fellow go and eat cake!"

"Hear, hear!" chimed in Blake.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I regard it as bein' up to us," he said.

"Study No. 6 is bound to do the polite thing. I suggested to Mannahs goin' along to the station to meet the new chap, but I feah that Mannahs is wathah selfish. Considerin' what the Anzacs have done in the war, we are bound to give the New Zealand chap a cheewy gwestin'."

"Oh, blow!" said Herries. "What on earth does he care whether we give him a cheery greeting or not? The Anzacs have never heard of Study No. 6, I suppose. Let's see if we can dig up something for tea. There isn't any sugar or butter."

"Pewwaps you may as well look aftah somethin' for tea," admitted Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "If I can find Woylance, I will bring him in to tea."

"Not unless he's brought his own sugar and tea and butter from New Zealand!" said Blake warningly.

"Wats!"

And Arthur Augustus marched off to look for the new junior. "Noblesse oblige!" was Gussy's noble maxim.

After all that the gallant Anzacs had done for the British Empire, the Honourable Arthur Augustus felt that it was up to him to give the New Zealand junior a cheery greeting, at least. A new fellow, especially one from a distant Dominion, was likely to feel rather lost on his first day at a big school; and Arthur Augustus was generously prepared to devote what remained of the afternoon to making Dick Roylance feel at home.

He bore down upon Taggles in his lodge to ask whether Roylance had arrived. But Taggles had seen nothing of him.

"Bai Jove! He is wathah late!"

remarked Arthur Augustus. "His twain must have been in a long time ago. Are you suah, you have not seen him, Taggles? You know what a vewy careless old chap you are, you know!"

Taggles grunted and retired to his lodge, apparently not pleased by that remark.

"Bai Jove! Taggles gwows cwustiah ewery day!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "However, I suppose the chap hasn't awwived yet. Pewwaps he has lost his way. It was weally vewy selfish of Manners not to go and meet him. If he has taken the w'ong turnin', it is no use goin' out to look for him. Pewwaps I had better wait heah."

Having come to that decision, Arthur Augustus leaned his noble back against one of the old stone pillars of the gateway, and watched the road through his eyeglass.

He had not very long to wait, as it happened.

In five minutes or so a lad in an overcoat came up the road, with a bag in his hand. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed at him curiously. The stranger had a swollen nose, a black eye, and several bruises on his face; also his collar was rumpled. His appearance, in this condition, was not exactly prepossessing.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "I wonder who that wuff and wuffianly-lookin' person is? He is dressed quite decently, but he looks— Bai Jove, he is comin' heah!"

The stranger stopped at the gates. "Is this St. Jim's?" he asked civilly.

"Oh, yaas!"

"Thank you!"

The stranger came in.

"G'wat Scott!" murmured the swell of St. Jim's. "This must be Woylance!"

For a moment the swell of the Fourth hesitated to make the acquaintance of a new boy who presented himself at the school with a black eye and a swollen nose. But hospitality came before everything, and, besides, D'Arcy realised that Woylance would not have turned up in that state from choice. He must have had some misadventure on the road.

"Excuse me!" said Arthur Augustus politely. "You are Woylance, I presume?"

"My name is Roylance."

"Yaas, I said Woylance," answered Arthur Augustus innocently. "You are the new kid comin' into the Fourth Form heah—what?"

"Yes."

"I am vewy glad to make your acquaintance, deah boy! Pway allow me to introwduce myself—D'Arcy of the Fourth."

Arthur Augustus held out a gracious hand, and Roylance, though he looked a little surprised, shook it.

"I trust you have not had an accident comin' heah, Woylance?"

Roylance grinned faintly.

"Not an accident—a fight," he answered.

"Ahem!"

"Not exactly my fault," added Roylance. "I didn't look for a scrap, walking here from the station, you may be sure. I wasn't anxious to turn up at the school in this state."

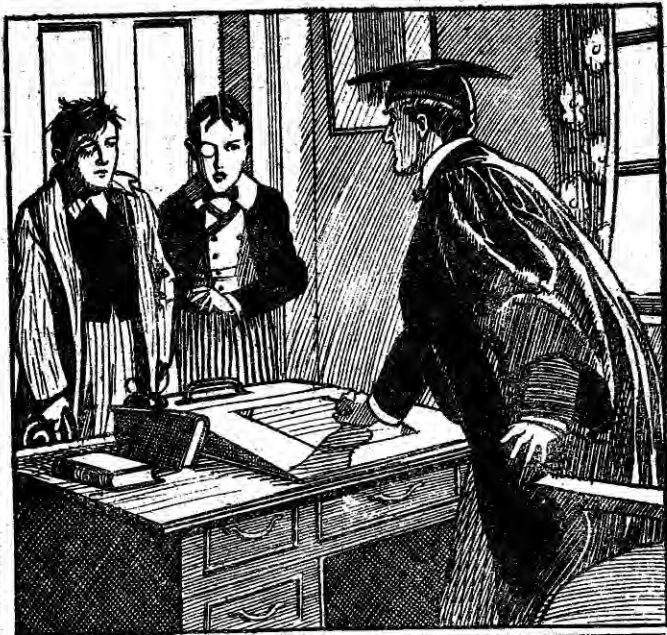
"Bai Jove! I imagine not."

"Does my face look very bad?" asked Roylance anxiously.

"Ahem! Wathah knocked about!" said Arthur Augustus. "Waitton was he wathah surprised, I feah. I undahstand that you are comin' into the School House?"

"Yes, I've been told to report myself to Mr. Railton."

"That's our Housemaster, deah boy—a jolly good sort!" he said his fin damaged fightin' the Huns, said D'Arcy. "He



Roylance's Introduction to Mr. Railton!

(See Chapter 5.)

has nevah been able to use that fin propably since he came home from the war. Lucky, you are not goin' into the New House. Old Waitcliff would fairly scalp you for turnin' up with a face like that! You had better explain to Mr. Waitton. Ahem! I suppose you weally could not help gettin' that black eye?"

"I didn't ask for it."

"Bai Jove! I suppose not!"

"Is it really very black?"

"A—a wathah wich shade in dark blue," replied Arthur Augustus diplomatically. "However, you couldn't help it, if some wuffian attacked you—"

"Not exactly a ruffian," said Roylance, smiling. "A schoolboy, I think."

"One of the Gwammah School chaps, I expect. Did you lick him?"

"I think so."

"Bravo! No good tellin' Waitton that, though—he wouldn't care whethah you licked the Gwammah cad or not. There are some things that a House-

master does not compwehend the importance of," explained Arthur Augustus.

"Pewwaps you would like me to take you to Mr. Waitton's study?"

And Arthur Augustus marched his protege across the quad towards the School House, apparently oblivious of the curious glances which Roylance's remarkable eye drew from all sides.

CHAPTER 5.

Looking After the New Boy.

TOM MERRY and Monty Lowther were on the School House steps. They were waiting for Manners to come in, rather impatiently. A pound of butter had arrived for Tom Merry from his old guardian, Miss Priscilla Fawcett; and it was a treat in Study No. 10, where war restrictions generally reigned supreme. Manners was wanted for tea; but he was staying out. But Tom and Monty forgot Manners as soon as they saw D'Arcy's striking-looking companion.

"Woylance of the Fourth, deah

boys!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Tom Mewwy and Monty Lowthah, Woylance. Woylance has had a swap with a wuffianly Gwammawian on the way heah."

"My hat! I was wondering if he'd met a motor-car, and tried to stop it with his nose!" remarked Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Too bad!" said Tom Merry. "You'll have to explain that eye to Railton, Roylance. You must tell him that you didn't come from New Zealand like that."

"I am goin' to explain to Waitton," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "A posish like this weequahs a few words from a fellow of tact and judgment! Come on, Woylance!"

The swell of St. Jim's marched his protege into the house.

"Hallo. Where did you dig up that eye, new kid?" bawled Wally, from the passage.

"Wally, you wude young wascal—"

"Gussy, you rude old rascal, what do you mean by blacking a new chap's eye—his first day here?" demanded Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I did not black his eye, you young ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus heatedly.

"Well, look at it! It looks black enough."

"It was somebody else, you young duffah! Woylance was attacked on the way heah by a fewocious wuffian. Come on, Woylance!"

Arthur Augustus tapped at the School House master's door.

"Come in!" sounded the deep voice of Mr. Railton.

"C'wouage, deah boy!" whispered Arthur Augustus. "That eye weally needs some explainin'; but wely on me!"

He marched the Colonial junior in.

Mr. Railton rose to his feet, a surprised expression coming over his face at the sight of Roylance's remarkable aspect.

"Who is this?" he exclaimed.

"This is Woylance, the new chap, sir."

"Roylance! What do you mean, Roylance, by presenting yourself at school in this condition?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"It was not Woylance's fault, sir," said Arthur Augustus, before the new junior could reply. "Woylance was attacked by a beastly wuffian, sir, on his way haw from the station. It was very much against his will, sir, that he we-cieved a black eye and a cwocked nose."

"You may leave the study, D'Arcy!" "Weally, sir! I was goin' to explain—"

"Roylance can explain for himself! You may go!"

"Oh, vewy well, sir!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

He gave Roylance an encouraging look, and quitted the study, closing the door after him.

"Haven't you explained to Railton?" inquired Monty Lowther.

"Wailton was wathah short and sharp, Lowthah—his mannahs seem wathah to fail sometimes. I weally hope he is not goin' to wag Woylance! The poor fellow could not help bein' attacked by a wascally wuffian, could he?"

"But was he?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Oh, yaas! I think it must have been one of the Gwammah cads. Woylance could not have wanted a sowap on his way to school, you know."

"No, I suppose not," agreed Tom Merry, laughing. "Rather rotten of the chap who went for him, if he knew he was a new kid turning up here for the first time!"

"Yaas, wathah! I am goin' to ask Woylance to tea in Study No. 6," continued Arthur Augustus. "If you fellows would care to come, and make a weally impressive occasion of it, we should be delighted."

"Charmed!" grinned Lowther. "It's an honour and a distinction to have tea in the company of a fellow with an eye like that!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Not to mention his nose, which is unequalled in its way!"

"You uttah ass!"

"And Tommy shall bring his butter," added Lowther. "But we shall have to wait for Manners. The silly chump is still taking photographs somewhere. But even Manners will have to give it up at dark, I suppose."

The Shell fellows returned to the steps, to wait there for their absent chum. Arthur Augustus waited in the corridor for Roylance.

The new junior came out of the House-master's study at last.

"Wagged, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy anxiously.

Roylance shook his head.

"Oh, no! Mr. Railton was very decent. I suppose he understood that I didn't get like this on purpose."

"Yaas; he is a wathah intelligent chap for a House-master," agreed Arthur Augustus. "Pewwape you would like to come up to the dorm, and let me attend to your injahwies!"

"You're vewy good!"

"Not at all, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus graciously.

He piloted the new junior to the Fourth-Form dormitory, and expended quite a lot of trouble in attending to the injahwies. Roylance looked a little better when he had finished, but there was no getting rid of a black eye and a swollen nose. Such adornments must be left to time.

"I have to see my Form-master and the House-dame," said Roylance, as they left the dormitory.

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"Follow me, deah boy!"

The swell of St. Jim's was indefatigable as a cicerone. Roylance was grateful enough for his guidance. As the astute Gussy foresaw, kindly attention from an old hand was very useful to a new fellow plunged suddenly into strange surroundings. Arthur Augustus waited while Roylance interviewed Mr. Lathom—to whom another explanation of the black eye had to be made—and then led him away to the House-dame's room.

"Don't let Mrs. Mimms give you your tea," he warned. "We want you to come to tea in our study, Woylance. We are goin' to kill the fatted calf in your honah, you know, as an Anzac!"

Roylance smiled.

"Right you are!" he said.

And after he had seen the House-dame, Arthur Augustus marched him off to the Fourth-Form passage. In that quarter, his eye and nose drew a good deal of attention, and some remarks. Fourth-Formers did not stand on ceremony with a new fellow. Cardew of the Fourth, who was chatting in the passage with Clive and Levison, came towards the New Zealander.

"Excuse me," he said, with elaborate politeness. "May I inquire if you have a sister named Susan?"

Roylance stared.

"No!" he answered.

"Sure?" asked Cardew.

"Of course I'm sure!" said Roylance, puzzled. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, all serene! I thought you might be a relation of Black-Eyed Susan, that's all!"

And Cardew walked away and rejoined his chums before Roylance could reply.

Roylance coloured a little.

"Pray don't mind a little chippin', old scout!" said Arthur Augustus hastily.

"The fellows don't stand on cewemony, you know!"

"I don't mind!" said Roylance, smiling.

"Heah is my study."

Roylance entered Study No. 6 with his new friend, and received three separate stares from Blake and Herries and Digby, who were getting tea. They had never seen a new junior with a face quite like that before. Arthur Augustus, with considerable dignity, introduced the new fellow. Blake & Co. grinned, and bade him welcome. Dig, indeed, carried hospitality so far as to offer him the window-curtain to make a sling for his nose—an offer that was not accepted.

CHAPTER 6.

After the Battle.

"WHERE the dickens has Manners got to?"

Tom Merry and Lowther asked that question of one another, but, naturally, neither could answer it.

The winter dusk was falling, and it was not possible that even an enthusiastic photographer like Manners could be taking photographs in the dusk.

"Seen Manners?" the chums asked every fellow who came in.

But nobody had, till at last Baggy Trimble of the Fourth was able to give information.

"He, he! I saw him bathing his nose!" was Trimble's answer.

"Bathing his nose!" repeated Tom Merry.

"He, he—yes!" giggled Trimble. "I asked him who'd been punching his nose, and he called me names. He's been licked, you bet!"

And the fat and podgy Baggy rolled in, apparently quite pleased that Manners had been licked. Tom and Lowther looked at one another.

"I suppose he's got into a row with the Grammarians," said Tom, at last. "Shouldn't wonder! We shall be too late for tea in No. 6 if he doesn't come in!"

"Hallo, here he is!"

A tired figure, with a camera came through the gathering dusk, and the Shell fellows recognised their chum. He was looking different from usual, however. His face was in a considerably worse state than Roylance's had been.

"Hallo! Been in the wars?" asked Tom.

Manners grunted.

"Yes; can't you see?"

"H'm!" murmured Tom. "Come on, old chap! Tea's ready!"

Manners was ill-humoured, and it was very seldom that he was ill-humoured, though his temper was quick at times. It was a chum's duty to bear with a chum, so Manners was given his head, so to speak. Manners followed the two into the house and up to the study. There he sank down in the arm-chair, evidently fatigued.

Tom and Monty regarded him doubtfully.

"You said tea was ready!" mumbled Manners.

"We're asked into No. 6. If you don't care to come—"

"Why shouldn't I come?"

"No reason why you shouldn't, old chap!" said Tom, more and more surprised at this unaccustomed rattiness. "Let's get along, then!"

"I suppose you mean my face looks disgraceful?"

"Well, it's a—bit disfigured. That won't matter, of course."

"I don't know that I want to show it off, though!"

"All serene! We'll have tea here," said Tom pacifically. "We're got plenty of butter, as it happens—a regular feast of butter, though other things are a bit short. You got into a row out of doors, I suppose?"

"I should think you could guess that, looking at me!"

"Well, I did guess it, looking at you," said Tom, determined to be good-tempered. "One of the Grammar cads?"

"No; a rotter—waster—I'd never seen before! A low, bullying cad!" growled Manners savagely. "I got the worst of it, though!"

"Can't always get goals!" remarked Monty Lowther. "The fighting record of this study is good enough to allow for a defeat now and then."

"It wasn't exactly a defeat. I was tired. I'd been a couple of hours on the tramp. Otherwise, I might have smashed the brute, as I wanted to. I'd like to meet him again somewhere!" said Manners, between his teeth.

"A stranger to you?" asked Tom.

"Yes—hang him!"

"Well, he must have been a rotten brute to pick a row with you for nothing!" said Tom. "We'll trot out and look for him on Saturday, if you like. I suppose he belongs to this neighbourhood? One of us will give him another turn!"

"Well, you'd have licked him, I suppose; but I don't want anybody to fight my battles. I could tackle him if I was at my best."

"Of course you could," agreed Tom. "But did the brute start a row for nothing at all?"

"Well, I pitched him over."

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom Merry and Lowther together.

"He was bullying my minor," said Manners, with a defiant look. "I came up, and caught him doing it, and went for him. Now you know!"

His chums did not answer; but

Manners read, or thought he read, their thoughts in their faces.

"You think Reggie asked for it, I suppose?" he growled.

"No," said Tom. "But I suppose you asked what the trouble was before you pitched into a stranger?"

"Well, I didn't! He was shaking Reggie, like a cowardly brute, and then I came up. You'd naturally think Reggie was to blame, of course!"

"Not at all. But I suppose he might be."

"What about tea?" asked Lowther, thinking it wise to change the subject.

"I suppose you're hungry, old fellow?" Manners rose, and looked in the glass. He scowled at his reflection, which certainly was not pleasing to the eye just then.

"I shall get chipped about this!" he growled. "Linton will jaw me in class to-morrow. Hang the fellow—hang him!"

"Well, you can tell Linton you couldn't help it," said Tom. "It's no worse than I was after my fight with Grundy."

"But you licked Grundy!"

Evidently it was the defeat that rankled in Manners' breast, not the damage. And that surprised his chums, too, for Manners was usually a sportsman, and could take the downs with the ups.

"Well, you'll lick this hooligan chap next time," said Monty Lowther. "We'll beat the neighbourhood for him on Saturday afternoon, and see fair play while you wallop him."

Manners grunted. Perhaps he had an inward doubt about the walloping.

"Might be the same chap Roylance met," said Tom thoughtfully. "He had a fight with some ruffianly fellow as he came here."

"Who's Roylance?" growled Manners.

"The new chap. You've heard him spoken of. A kid from Australia or New Zealand, I hear. He had a scrap on the road here with some ruffian, Gussy says. He came in looking nearly as bad as you. Seems a decent sort of chap, though."

"That hooligan chap must be a regular hog for scrapping, if he tackled Manners and Roylance both in the same afternoon," said Lowther, with a whistle. "I should say young New Zealand Mutton was rather hefty, from his looks."

Manners was dabbling savagely at his nose. It had begun to ooze red again. He was evidently not at all interested in the new junior.

There was a step in the passage, and Arthur Augustus' monocle gleamed in.

"You heah, you fellows! You are keepin' tea waitin', if you don't mind my mentionin' it. Bai Jove! Anythin' happened, Mannahs?"

"No!" said Manners, with savage sarcasm. "I've been to a beauty doctor to have my face made like this, of course!"

"Weally, Mannahs, you need not snap a fellow's head off! Did you meet that same ruffian who attacked Woylance?"

"How should I know, ass, when I don't know anything about Roylance and his silly ruffian?"

"Is that what you call a polite weply, Mannahs?" asked Arthur Augustus, with chilly dignity. "If you regard that as civil or polite, I can only remark that you are labahin' undah a vewy sewious misapprehension."

"Oh, rats!"

The noble eye of Arthur Augustus gleamed behind his monocle. But he remembered that he had come there to take the Terrible Three to tea, and he forbore to utter the crushing words that rose to his lips.

"Pway come along, deah boys," he said, with elaborate courtesy. "Tea is waitin' in Study No. 6. I shall be vewy

pleased to intwoduce you to the new fellow, Mannahs."

"I don't care a twopenny rap about the new fellow!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Manners, old chap—" murmured Tom Merry.

"I'm not coming!" said Manners.

"You fellows can go!"

"But you want your tea!"

"Hang tea!"

"Pewwaps I had bettah wetiah," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner, and he promptly retired.

Tom Merry and Lowther eyed Manners dubiously. They had accepted the invitation to tea in No. 6, and it was understood that Miss Priscilla's butter was to grace the festive board. But they did not like leaving Manners like this. Manners had thrown himself savagely into the armchair again.

"Oh, go!" he said, meeting his chums' glances. "I couldn't eat now, anyway. I'm fairly pipped! Don't mind my temper—I'm feeling rotten! Get off to Tom. 6, and I'll go and give my nose another bathe."

"All serene, then!"

Tom and Monty followed the swell of the Fourth to No. 6.

Tea in Study No. 6 was a cheery meal, especially with Miss Priscilla's lovely butter to spread on the war-bread. Roylance was very cheery, in spite of his damages, and Tom and Monty rather liked him.

But Tom and Lowther could not help thinking about Manners, and the unlucky result of his afternoon's outing. He would certainly have done better to watch the First Eleven match with Tom, or to accompany Monty Lowther to the cinema. And, knowing Reggie as they did, the chums were not at all certain that that lively young gentleman had not asked for all that he had received from the ruffianly stranger. They felt, too, that Manners probably had a secret misgiving on that point, upon reflection.

After tea, they returned to their own study sooner than they would otherwise have done, hoping to find Manners in a better humour. But Manners was not there. Possibly he was attending to his injured nose elsewhere. The chums of the Shell began their prep in a less cheery mood than usual.

CHAPTER 7.

Manners Meets His Enemy.

"JACKKEYMO, this is jolly good!"

Smith minor of the Fourth made that remark, and Giacomo Contarini, the Italian junior, grinned and nodded.

The two were at tea in No. 7, which they shared. Sidney Clive had been a member of that study before he had gone to dig with Cardew and Levison in No. 9. Smith minor and Contarini had it to themselves now.

Tea in the study was not the merry spread of old, anywhere in St. Jim's. But No. 7 was rather well off, for Jackkeymo had a skilled hand at turning out Italian dishes. Contarini was the son of a great Italian statesman, but he had the skill of a first-class Italian chef. And the macaroni of Study No. 7 was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. Macaroni, made up with cheese and flavoured with tomato, is a dish for the gods; and it has the special war-time merit of being cheap. Frank Smith grinned with glee over his plate, and Jackkeymo smiled the smile of the great artist who has found appreciation.

Smith minor had just filled his mouth, so Contarini called out "Entrate!" as the knock came at the study door. The Italian junior often dropped into his own

language without thinking, though his English was quite good.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy threw open the door.

"Heah you are, Woylance!"

"Hallo, new kid!" said Smith minor, having negotiated his macaroni.

"Woylance is goin' to share this study," Smith.

"Oh," said Smith minor. "I thought we were going to have a little room when Clive shifted."

Contarini, considerably more polished than the candid Smith, rose to his feet, and bowed gravely to the New Zealand junior.

"Buona sera, signorino!" he said.

"He doesn't know what Bony Sarah means, you ass!" said Smith minor; and, indeed, Dick Roylance stared a little at the greeting.

"It means 'good-evenin'," said Arthur Augustus loftily. Gussy prided himself on knowing Italian. As that language was not in the school curriculum, there was some pleasure in giving it a little study.

"You are very welcome, signorino," added Contarino. "It shall be with pleasure that we receive you into our study."

"Oh, you can come in!" said Smith minor. "If Railton's shoved you in here, we've got to have you, anyway."

"Weally, Frank Smith, you might put it a little more gracefully!"

"Bov-wow!"

Roylance smiled. He did not expect the manners of Sir Charles Grandison in the Fourth Form of St. Jim's. If he had, he would certainly have been disappointed. Gussy was the only Grandison that St. Jim's could boast.

"If you haven't had your tea, wire in, and try our macaroni," continued Smith minor, who was hospitable as well as candid.

"It's ripping! In fact, gorgeous! Jackkeymo makes it over the study fire; he learned it in Italy. Jackkeymo's an Italian, as you can guess by his weird lingo. There's a chair, Gussy, sit down, too. This is a regular feast!"

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy, I have had my tea," said Arthur Augustus.

"I came to intwoduce your new study mate. You will not be expected to do any pwep this evenin', Woylance, as you are a new chap. If you wequah any information about anythin', wemembah I am next dooh."

"Thank you very much!" said Roylance.

"Not at all, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus gracefully retired, and left Roylance with his study mates. The New Zealand junior, having had his tea in No. 6, declined to share in the macaroni. He unpacked his books, while Smith minor and Jackkeymo finished their tea.

Tea being finished, Smith minor left the study, it not occurring to him to make any remark to his new study mate. Contarini lingered. His study mate was the one junior at St. Jim's whose courteous manners approached those of the great Gussy, though still at a distance.

"You are from Zealandia, isn't it?" asked Contarini.

"New Zealand," said Roylance, with a smile.

"Si, si!" nodded Contarini. "I am from Italia—la bella Italia. We shall be amici—"

"Eh?"

"Friends, in this study—amici," said Contarini, smiling.

"I'm sure I hope so."

"You have received some damages?" Roylance laughed.

"Yes; I got into a fight on my way here. By the way, I suppose my box

ought to have got here from the station by this time."

"Forse che si, forse che no—"

"What?"

"I mean, perhaps yes, perhaps no. It is tempo di guerra—war-time," said Contarini. "But you have your bag with your things?"

"Oh, yes. I left it in the dormitory."

"Buono! We will, if you wish, go and inquire after your box."

"If it's not bothering you."

"Non fa niente. Not at all."

Andiamo!" said Contarini.

Roylance left the study with him. In spite of the damage to his face and the aches and pains consequent upon it, Dick Roylance was feeling very cheerful and happy. He had wondered a good deal what the fellows would be like at his new school, and the kindness he had received at St. Jim's had made a very pleasant impression on him.

True, he had only met some of the best fellows so far. He had other acquaintances to make. When he met Racke and Crooke of the Shell, and Mellish and Trimble of the Fourth, he would discover that all St. Jim's was not on the same level.

But so far his lines had been cast in pleasant places. He was pleased, too, with his study mates, though he would have been very glad to have found himself an inmate of Study No. 6. Tom Merry and Lowther, too, had been very cordial, and he liked them. Excepting for his encounter with the two unknown schoolboys on the road to Rylcombe, he was having a very agreeable day.

But his unknown adversary of Rylcombe Lane was not destined to remain unknown much longer. As he left No. 7 Study with Jackeymo, Manners of the Shell came from the direction of the dormitory stairs.

Manners stopped dead as his eyes fell on Roylance.

"You here!" he exclaimed, in amazement.

Roylance recognised him at once.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "You!" Contarini glanced from one to the other.

"You know Manners?" he asked.

"I've met him," said Roylance grimly. "I didn't know his name."

Manners came towards the new junior, his fists clenching and a gleam coming into his eyes.

"So you belong to this school?" he asked.

"Yes, as you see."

"You—you're the new fellow they were speaking of—Roylance?" exclaimed Manners, understanding at last.

"Quite so."

"My hat! I might have guessed it, too!" exclaimed Manners. "You were coming here, you cad, when you stopped to bully my young brother!"

Roylance compressed his lips.

"We've had one fight to-day, Manners—if that's your name," he said quietly. "I don't want another, if you don't. But I don't allow anybody to call me a cad and a bully!"

"Cad!" said Manners. "Bully!"

Roylance drew a deep breath. He made a stride forward, and then stopped. Manners was so evidently unfit to stand up to him then that he paused. Manners regarded him mockingly.

"Well?" he sneered.

It was so unlike Manners to sneer that Contarini stared at him almost open-mouthed.

But Roylance, who did not know Manners, and had no idea of what a good fellow Manners really was, only looked contemptuous. Truly, Manners had not shown himself in a favourable light, and Roylance could not be expected to guess

that he was in an angry, perverse mood, and quite unlike his usual self.

"I won't touch you," said Roylance quietly and scornfully. "I think you've had about as much as you can stand today."

Manners' face flamed.

"I'm ready for you, you cad!" he exclaimed. "I've called you a cad and a bully; and so you are a cad and a bully! Now; then!"

"You can say what you like, but I shan't stay here to listen to it," answered Roylance. "Say it again when you're fit to stand up and answer for it, and I'll stop you soon enough!"

He walked on with Contarini, without giving Manners time to reply. The Shell fellow made one step after him, and then stopped. The hopelessness of tackling his enemy in his present state, after the severe licking he had already received, was evident even to Manners.

He swung away, and went to his own study.

CHAPTER 8.

Trouble in the Family.

"O H, here you are, old scout!"

"Time to get on with your prep."

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther greeted their chum with determined good humour as he came into the study with a black brow.

They could not quite understand Man-

ners just now, but they meant to bear with him patiently. The Terrible Three were too good chums to quarrel over an angry look or a snappish word; and Tom and Monty realised that something must be up with old Manners to make him look and act as he was doing now. It was utterly unlike him.

"Prep!" said Manners. "Hang prep! I suppose I've got to do it. Hang it!"

He sat down.

Manners was the one member of the Co. who never seemed to find prep a bore. Now it made him angry and discontented. He sat down, but he did not begin work.

"Hang it!" he repeated.

"Tired?" asked Tom.

"Yes, I am tired, and aching all over. I stuck it out too long in scrapping with that brute this afternoon. I've never felt so dashed seedy in my life," growled Manners savagely. "A fag in the Third could knock me out now!"

"You'll feel better later."

"I know that."

"Ahem!"

Manners glared across the table at his patient chums. It really looked as if he would have been glad to quarrel with them, and they were more, and more amazed. But they were determined not to quarrel, and they resumed their work quietly. Manners opened a book, and closed it again with a snap. There was a tap at the door, and Dick Julian of

the Fourth looked in, with a cheery smile.

"You fellows finished?" he asked. "Grundy's holding a meeting in the Common-room—about the St. Jim's Parliament, you know. He's trying to get up a party to get rid of the old gang. We're going to pelt him with cushions. You fellows coming?"

Tom Merry and Lowther glanced at their unfinished work, and glanced at Manners.

"I'm not coming!" growled Manners. "Hang Grundy! Let the silly fool alone!"

"Hallo! You picked up a sweet temper along with that eye, didn't you, Manners?" asked Julian, with a stare.

"Oh, dry up!"

Tom Merry coloured with sheer shame for his chum.

"Don't mind him, Julian," he said hastily. "Manners is out of sorts this evening."

"Oh, I don't mind," said Julian, though he looked surprised. "Sorry I've bothered you."

He left the study quietly.

Manners gave a snort of discontent.

"No need to apologise for me, Tom Merry!" he said.

"Rather necessary to explain, though, I think," said Tom tartly at last. "What did you want to insult Julian for—one of the dearest fellows in the House?"

"Oh, bother Julian!"

Manners rose and moved discontentedly about the study. His chums worked quietly at the table.

"Awfully busy, I suppose?" said Manners sarcastically, after some moments.

"Not if you want to talk," said Tom, looking up.

"I don't want to talk."

"Then we may as well get on."

"Oh, for goodness' sake, chuck up that rot for a few minutes!" exclaimed Manners unreasonably. "You're not usually so jolly keen on prep. You missed it last night to have a boxing-match with Figins!"

"That's right enough. We'll chuck it if you like."

"There's a cad I'm going to have a fight with on Saturday," said Manners. "I shall be fit by Saturday, I expect."

"That hoogan you tackled you this afternoon?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yes."

"You know where to find him, then?"

"Yes, I know where to find him!" said Manners grimly.

"Good! We'll come along with you and see fair play," said Tom Merry.

"You'll lick the rotter next time."

"I did my best this afternoon," said Manners moodily. "He walked over me, though. But I blacked his eye, same as he did mine. I don't know whether I can lick the beast, but I'm going to try. You could."

"I don't suppose I could if you couldn't," said Tom mildly.

"Oh, rot! You're a better man at scrapping than I am!"

"Bosh!"

"Well, you know you are! I could construct your head off, and give you fifty in a hundred at maths, and beat you!"

"Granted!" said Tom, laughing. "Not to mention geography, French, German, drawing, music, and some other things, including stinks."

"But you could beat me in a scrap!" said Manners, glaring at his chum as if daring him to deny it.

Tom Merry's sunny face grew very grave.

"I don't understand you, Manners," he replied. "You're talking jolly queerly this evening. Whether one of us could lick the other doesn't matter a twopenny rap, and it certainly won't be put to the test. You seem to be



saying all the most unpleasant things you can think of."

"You know it's true!" growled Manners. "You're a fool in some things."

"Oh, am I?" exclaimed Tom.

"Yes, you are!"

Tom Merry seemed to gulp something down with difficulty.

"Very well," he said. "If you think so, let it go at that. I may as well get on with my prep."

His face was a little set as he turned to his work. Monty Lowther rose to his feet, with a gleam in his eyes.

"Look here, Manners," he said, "there's been enough of this! If Tom's a fool, it's because he's letting you talk to him like that, instead of rubbing your cheeky nose in the carpet."

"It's all right, Monty," said Tom in a low voice. "Do your prep, old chap."

Manners gave a grunt. Lowther sat down again, his brows knitted. There was an uncomfortable silence for a time, while Manners moved about restlessly.

It was true enough that Tom was a more athletic fellow than his chum, though Manners had many advantages in his own way. It had never seemed to trouble Manners before. Probably he was thinking how he could have handled Roylance if he had possessed Tom's fistful powers.

"I'm going to try, anyway!" said Manners at last, speaking in answer to his own train of thought. "Hang him! I'll lick him, or else get smashed up!"

"Oh, you'll lick him all right!" said Tom, almost as if he were soothing a child. Manners did indeed seem rather childish to his chums just then. "We'll go on the war-path on Saturday afternoon and hunt him out."

"No need to do that. The cad's here!"

"Here!" exclaimed Tom and Monty together.

"Yes. Here at St. Jim's."

Tom Merry stared.

"But you said he wasn't a St. Jim's fellow, Manners!"

"I said I didn't know who the brute was. It turns out that he's a new fellow, on his way here when I came across him."

"There's only one new fellow come here to-day," observed Lowther, with a rather strange look at Manners. "That's Roylance, the Colonial chap."

"That's the bound!"

Tom Merry rose. He was angry now. "That fellow is the chap you have been calling a brute and a bully and a hooligan!" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Well, he's nothing of the sort!" exclaimed Tom, his eyes flashing. "I saw him at tea in Blake's study, and talked to him. He's a thorough decent chap, so far as a fellow could sell at one meeting."

"Everybody he's met likes him."

"I must say that he struck me as being decent enough," remarked Monty Lowther. "He seems to think that he was in the right in that scrap this afternoon, too."

"Oh, rot!"

"He didn't know he'd been scrapping with a friend of ours, or a St. Jim's fellow at all, Manners. Gussy thought it must be a Grammar School chap he fought with, and Roylance thought the same. I understand."

"He knows better now. I've just met him in the passage."

"You're going to fight Roylance on Saturday, then?" asked Tom.

"Yes, I am."

Tom Merry looked troubled.

"Look here, Manners, this isn't good enough! You've been describing a hulking bully to us, and it turns out that you were talking about a chap as decent-looking



Manners Apologises.
(See Chapter 12.)

ing as anybody here. It's utter rot! Roylance doesn't look like a bully."

"He was bullying my young brother when I came up."

"Well, if you actually saw him—" said Tom, perplexed.

"He was grabbing him and shaking him like a rat!"

"Well, that might be bullying, and it might not. Do you mean to say that he started on Reggie for nothing at all?"

"I don't know what happened before I came up, naturally," said Manners sullenly. "If you're going to suggest that Reggie was to blame, you can dry up. Reggie has his faults, but I suppose he didn't start trouble with a fellow twice as big as himself."

"I don't know about that," said Tom. "Reggie's got a very uncertain temper. He kicked my shins once, and I'd have wrung his cheeky neck if he hadn't been your brother. I suppose I'm not a bully, either. I think you might have asked what the trouble was before you pitched into a perfect stranger."

"Well, I didn't choose to!"

"And you're going to fight Roylance again, without choosing to inquire whether he had any reason for shaking Reggie?" demanded Tom angrily.

"Yes, I am!"

"Then I think—" Tom Merry paused.

"Oh, go on!" said Manners bitterly. "Tell me what you think. It will be quite interesting!"

"I hope you'll think over it, and change your mind," said Tom—which was not what he had been going to say when he paused.

"Well, I shan't!"

"Look here, Manners, don't be a fool!" exclaimed Lowther, whose patience was not quite so Job-like as Tom Merry's. "You're playing the goat, and you know it! Your minor's given trouble enough in lots of ways already. My opinion of the new chap is that he wouldn't have touched him unless Reggie

had asked for it. Reggie's always in hot water one way or another. Anyway, you can find out the facts before you make a vendetta of it."

"I shan't do anything of the kind!" said Manners doggedly.

"Then you're a pig-headed ass!" said Lowther hotly. "You've got a down on this new kid, because he licked you, I suppose! If it was a fair fight you've got nothing to grumble at."

"It is a bit unreasonable, old chap," said Tom.

"Well, why shouldn't I be unreasonable if I choose?" said Manners deliberately. "Suppose I'm down on that new cad, the same as Lowther was down on Julian when he came here because the chap was a Jew?"

"It wasn't because he was a Jew, and you know it!" shouted Lowther angrily. "I was mistaken about him, and I owned up afterwards, too! You're more than mistaken about Roylance. You're down on him from sheer obstinacy, and you know it as well as I do!"

"So my own pals are going to back up that new cad against me!" said Manners, with a sneer. "Well, you can suit yourselves about it. I'm going to fight him on Saturday all the same!"

And with that Manners flung out of the study, and slammed the door after him.

Tom and Monty looked at one another grimly.

"Nice kettle of fish!" growled Lowther. "It's too bad to drag up my old row with Julian. It's rotten!"

"Manners is a bit queer to-night," said Tom. "He must have got a thundering looking, and it's upset him." He wrinkled his brows. "If that new chap were crowing over him I'd go for him like a shot! But he isn't. There's no swank about the fellow; nothing of the kind. He seems decent every way, and good-natured, too. Why can't Manners let him alone?"

"Bother the fellow!" said Lowther, rather unreasonably. "He's made trouble enough in this study! Why couldn't he stay in Tasmania, or Timbuctoo, or wherever it is he comes from?"

Tom laughed.

"It would be rather thick if a new chap couldn't come to the school because Reggie can't behave himself, and Manners is bound to take up his minor's quarrels," he remarked. "It's utter rot to say the chap's a bully! He's nothing of the kind!"

"Manners may forget all about it by to-morrow," said Lowther hopefully. "Better keep off the subject till he calms down, or we shall have trouble in the family circle, and we don't want that!" And Tom Merry nodded assent.

CHAPTER 9.

Bitter Blood.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY ambled gracefully along with Roylance when the Fourth Form marched off to their dormitory at half-past nine. Roylance had made the acquaintance of most of the School House members of the Fourth Form by that time, and, in spite of his black eye and swollen nose, he had made a favourable impression on most of them. He was the object of some curiosity now, as it had come out that his fight in Rylcombe Lane had been with Manners of the Shell.

Manners was such a peaceable fellow, as a rule, that the juniors would have been disposed to lay the blame on Roylance; but, on the other hand, Roylance was evidently a good-natured fellow, and not at all aggressive. It was rather a puzzle how two such fellows had come to loggerheads, especially as they were strangers to one another; and Roylance, since discovering that his adversary was a St. Jim's fellow, had said nothing about Reggie. He concluded, of course, that the fag was a St. Jim's fellow, too, though he had seen nothing of him since the meeting in the lane.

Baggy Trimble gave Roylance a fat grin in the dormitory.

"Did you lick Manners this afternoon, Roylance, or did he lick you?" Baggy wanted to know.

"Don't ask questions!" was Roylance's curt retort.

"That means that he licked you, I suppose?" sneered Baggy.

"Just as you like!"

"You are watah a tactless ass, Twimble!" remarked Arthur Augustus severely.

"Oh, rats!" said the cheerful Baggy.

"Any of you fellows got any Eli-man's?" asked Roylance, as he was taking his boots off.

"Want some for your nose?" grinned Blake.

"Or your eye?" asked Cardew.

There was a laugh, and Roylance joined in it.

"No; for my shin," he said. "I've had a knock."

"I've got a bottle here," said Levison. "Wait a tick."

Levison brought the embrocation, and Roylance bared his shin and began to apply it. A good many startled glances were turned upon the black, ugly brute.

"Bai Jove! You've had a bad hack there, dear boy!" said D'Arcy.

Roylance nodded.

"Doesn't it hurt?"

"Well, a bit."

"You haven't been making faces about it, though," remarked Blake, rather admiringly. "It's bad enough to make you limp. How on earth did you get it?"

Roylance did not answer.

"It's a hack," said Mellish maliciously.

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"That's the way Manners fights, I suppose—kicking a chap's shins!"

"You are a wotah to suggest such a thing, Mellish!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Mannahs is quite incapable of such a cowardly thing!"

"It wasn't Manners, was it, Roylance?" asked Blake.

"No."

"Well, who was it, then?" demanded Mellish. "You've had a bad kick, right enough, and that's a dirty trick! Did you have two fights on your way here?"

"No."

"Then it must have been Manners!" said Mellish.

Roylance looked up.

"I've already said it wasn't Manners," he said quietly.

"He, he, he!" came from Trimble. "He's afraid of Manners licking him again, if he gives him away!"

"Dry up, Twimble!"

Roylance coloured, but he did not speak. Levison chipped in.

"I don't want to butt in, Roylance," he said seriously. "But you'll make a lot of fellows think that Manners did that cowardly thing unless you say who did it. I know jolly well Manners wouldn't, but—"

"It was a kid I met on the road," said Roylance at last.

"A kid came up to you and hacked your shin for nothing?" giggled Trimble. "Give us an easier one! Were you bullying the kid, though?"

"No, confound you!" broke out Roylance angrily.

"Oh, keep your wool on! Manners has been saying that the fellow he fought with was a rotten bully—I've heard him."

"You heah too much, you eavesdrop-pin' Hun!"

"Well, Manners was shouting it out loud enough for anybody to hear," persisted Trimble. "Contarini heard him, too."

"Taci, taci," said the Italian junior hastily.

"What the dickens do you mean by tarchy?"

"I mean, dry up, my good Trimble!"

"Oh, rats! You heard him—he was fairly yelling. He said Roylance was a bully and a cad!"

Roylance's face was crimson now.

"If you fellows care to hear what happened, I'll tell you," he said. "A kid snowballed me on the road, and bowled me over. I snowballed him back, and bowled him over. Then I helped him up, and the young rotter backed my shin. That's all. I shook him, as he wasn't big enough for me to whack. Manners came up just then, and pitched into me. That's the whole yarn."

"Then I can jolly well guess who the kid was," chortled Trimble. "Manners minor, of course."

"Just like the little cad!" said Mellish. "Was it Manners minor?"

"I didn't know the kid," said Roylance evasively.

"Don't you know him now, though?"

"Oh, rats! Let the matter drop! I'm fed up!"

"Yaas, watah! You talk too much, Twimble!"

Kildare of the Sixth came in to put out the lights, and the Fourth Form turned in. Trimble and Mellish did not let the matter drop, but they received no answer to their observations from Roylance. The New Zealand junior was apparently asleep.

Roylance's explanation was received in good faith by all—it was evidently the truth. It accounted, too, for Manners having quarrelled with the new fellow, which had been a puzzle before. Some of the fellows wondered whether there

would be a renewal of hostilities on the morrow. That was in Roylance's mind, too, and it made him uncomfortable. It was an unpleasant incident to mark his coming to St. Jim's—all the more because he had found that his late adversary was a chum of the fellows he had already made friends with.

It struck him as curious that they should be chummy with a hot-headed, unreasonable fellow such as he naturally took Manners to be. He did not know Manners yet, and he could only form his estimate from what he had seen.

Silent as he was, it was some time before Roylance slept. But he slept at last, and did not waken till the rising-bell was clanging out in the winter morning.

His eye was a beautiful black when he turned out, and it drew some grinning glances from the other fellows. It was painful, too, but Roylance bore that with quiet cheerfulness. When he went down, Arthur Augustus and Contarini went down with him. They found the Terrible Three down early, punting a footer about in the quad, with less cheerfulness than was their wont.

At the sight of the new junior a black look came over Manners' face. He left his chums, and came towards the Fourth-Formers.

"Come on, Manners!" called Tom Merry.

Manners did not heed.

"A word with you, Roylance!" he snapped out.

Roylance stopped.

"As many as you like!" he answered.

"You'll be free on Saturday afternoon, I suppose?"

"I suppose so!"

"What time would suit you, then?"

"For what?"

"To try over again what we tried yesterday!" said Manners grimly.

"I don't specially want to try it over again."

"You won't have any choice about that!"

"Weally, Mannahs—" began Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Don't you chip in, Gussy! The fellow can speak for himself, I suppose?"

"You have no right to allude to Woylance as a fellow, Mannahs!"

"Cad, then, if he likes that better!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I will fight you again on Saturday afternoon, if you want me to," said Roylance quietly. "You've called me some pretty names, and I'll do my best to make you sorry for it!"

"I am surprised at you, Mannahs," said D'Arcy, in a stately way. "You are actin' in vewy bad taste in keepin' up this row. Weggie was to blame in the first place!"

"What do you know about it, ass?"

"I refuse to be called an ass, Mannahs! And I know that Weggie was to blame, because Woylance says so!"

"It hasn't occurred to you that he may be lying about it?" said Manners sarcastically.

"Certainly not, Mannahs! I wogard the suggestion as sneakin' and mean!"

"Well, I don't know what he's said, but I know it's most likely lies," said Manners coolly.

"You know nothing of the sort," said Roylance calmly. "If you had asked me why I was shaking that little rascal, I would have told you."

"He hacked Woylance's shin like a cowardly little wotah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Because Roylance was bullying him, if he did it at all," said Manners.

"Wubbish! He was helpin' Weggie up—"

"Quite an artist in lying, and no mistake!" sneered Manners.

Roylance clenched his hands.

"You want to fight me on Saturday," he said. "I'm willing to leave it till then. But I warn you that if you call me names again, I'll knock you down without waiting for Saturday!"

"Liar!" said Manners at once. Roylance strode straight at him, and Manners put his hands up. D'Arcy and Tom Merry and Lowther interfered at once, and the two were dragged back. "Let me go!" shouted Manners angrily.

But his chums marched him away, willy-nilly.

"Now, look here, Manners!" said Tom Merry. "You're not fit for a scrap to-day. If you must scrap with the new fellow, leave him alone till Saturday, when you can put up something like a fight. If you had any sense, you'd leave him alone altogether."

"Why not ask Reggie what the trouble was about?" suggested Lowther.

"I don't care to."

"Then you're a pig-headed duffer!" said Lowther gruffly.

Manners' eyes gleamed.

"You'd better go and pal up with the new cad, and leave me alone!" he said. "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to call him a liar every time I see him, whether you like it or not!"

"He won't stand it," said Tom. "You can't quite expect him to. You'll have your scrap before Saturday, at that rate."

"Oh, he doesn't seem very keen on it!" sneered Manners.

"That's all rot! He's not keen on it, because he can see that you're not fit," asserted Tom. "I think it's jolly decent of him to hold off, considering the way you're treating him!"

"More likely he's a funk!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Lowther irritably. "On your own showing he whipped you yesterday!"

"It's like you to throw that in my face!" said Manners savagely.

"I don't mean—"

"Oh, that's enough!"

Manners left his chums, and tramped away savagely by himself, with a black brow. They looked after him blankly.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry. "It was all he could say."

CHAPTER 10.

An Unblessed Peace-Maker.

DICK ROYLANCE took his place in the Fourth Form that morning.

Mr. Latham glanced at his damaged face; but that had already been explained to the Fourth Form-master, Figgins & Co., of the New House, grinning at the sight of him. It was their first view of the junior from New Zealand, and his looks struck them as funny. They had never seen a new boy turn up before in class with a black eye and an ornamental nose.

After morning lessons, Roylance had some unpacking to do, and Contarini and Smith minor went to help him. He was not seen again till dinner, when Manners gave him a dark look in the dining-room.

Manners had had to explain his eye to Mr. Linton; and the Shell fellows had looked rather grim when Manners told the Form-master that he had been fighting with a hooligan.

Mr. Linton excused him; but he would not probably have done so had he known that the hooligan referred to was really a St. Jim's fellow.

Manners was in a perverse temper that puzzled his chums, and even shocked them a little. Well they knew the perversity of temper that distinguished Manners minor of the Third Form. But the elder brother had never displayed it before, and it was a shock to them to

realise that Manners major was not so unlike Reggie as they deemed.

That his chums regarded him as self-willed and perverse Manners knew, and he seemed to take a delight in shocking them still further by his utterly unreasonable attitude towards Roylance.

That cheerful junior avoided him carefully, not knowing what to make of the enmity with which he was regarded by the Shell fellows. He was quite willing to fight Manners as often as the latter liked, but this bitter vendetta was a puzzle to his frank nature.

Manners, however, was looking for trouble, and trouble was not long to be avoided.

It was understood in the School House that Manners owed the new fellow a grudge, and that there would be trouble when they met.

Some good-natured fellows would have kept them apart if possible, for that reason; while others, especially Racke & Co., were eager to see them meet and come to blows.

As one was in the Fourth and the other in the Shell, there was no reason why they should come into contact unless they chose.

Tom Merry and Lowther were careful to keep with their troublesome chum, and once or twice when they sighted Roylance in the passages they linked arms with Manners, and walked him away. But they looked forward uneasily to a row when the two juniors met in the Common-room in the evening, as they were pretty certain to do.

Roylance was not likely to spend the evening in his study to keep out of Manners' way.

Besides Tom Merry and Lowther, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was distressed by the turn matters had taken. The swell of St. Jim's had always liked Manners, and would have been disposed to take his side in a dispute with a stranger; but Manners was so palpably in the wrong this time, that it was not to be thought of. There was, as Arthur Augustus told St. Joe. 6 at tea-time, such a thing as justice.

"I weally cannot compwehend Mannahs at all," Arthur Augustus confided to his chums. "I have always wegardred him as a decent sort; but beawin' malice for a lickin' is not manly."

"Well, he's in the Shell, and young Frozen Mutton is in the Fourth," remarked Dig. "It upsets his lofty dignity, I suppose."

"Yaas; but Mannahs is—or was—wathah a sportsman. It is howwid to beah malice. Mannahs is weally like a Hun just now. He has answahed me wudely several times when I have adressed remarks to him."

"Awful!" said Blake solemnly. "Perhaps your remarks were spun out rather long, old chap."

"Wats! I feel that mattahs cannot go on like this; but the question is—what had I better do?" said D'Arcy thoughtfully.

Blake, Herries, and Dig stared at him. "Blessed if I see that it's got anything to do with you!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"I could give you a tip what to do," remarked Digby.

"I shall be vewy glad to heah it, Dig."

"Why not mind your own business?" suggested Dig blandly.

"I wegard this as my business," explained Arthur Augustus.

"Oh!"

"You see, I have wathah taken Woylance undah my wing. And Mannahs is wathah a fiend of mine, though he does bore a chap howwibly with his camewah. I was speakin' to him the othah day about the shortage of silk ties, an' he

began talkin' about films an' things, you know. But he is a good sort, in the main. Pewwaps if it were explained to him that he is actin' in a wathah wotten way, it might open his eyes. What do you think, Blake?"

"I think you may get an eye to match Roylance's, if you try it!"

"Wubbish!"

"We don't know that Roylance did lick Manners, either," remarked Dig. "He didn't say so. Manners hasn't, either."

"No, he can't be accused of cwowin' ovah him, and that makes it all the wottenah of Mannahs to cawwy on like this. I shall certainly speak to him vewy firmly, and point out that he is makin' a vewy bad impression upon a fellow from a distant Colony. That may have some effect on him."

"You're going to see Manners now?" asked Blake, as the swell of the Fourth moved to the door.

"Yaas; I feel bound to wemonstwatw with him."

"Shall we come and pick up what's left of you after you've remonstrated?"

"Oh, wats!"

Arthur Augustus stalked away to Study No. 10 in the Shell. He found the Terrible Three finishing a rather dismal tea. Supplies were short, and tempers were shorter. Manners had grown vewy surly, and it was having its natural effect upon his chums.

"Hallo! Trot in, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, glad of the interruption. "What a lovely necktie! They'll sent for you, for a cert, if they want any expert advice in the Necktie Control Department!"

"Wats, deah boy! I have looked in to speak to Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately way.

"Look out again, then!" said Manners.

"About Woylance, Mannahs—"

"Don't talk to me about that cad."

"I wufuse to heah a fiend of mine chawwactwised as a cad, Mannahs!" said Arthur Augustus hotly. "How dare you speak of Woylance like that?"

"Oh, go and eat cake!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"I wegard you as a Prussian Hun, Mannahs!" he said, at last.

"Dry up!"

"I wufuse to dwy up! I am goin' to explain that you are actin' in a weally wotten and caddish way—all in a perfectly fiendly spiwit, of course!"

"You silly ass!" roared Manners, while his chums grinned.

"The woot of the mattah is this," said Arthur Augustus, unheeding. "Weggie hacked the new fellow's shin, and Woylance shook him. Most fellows would have thwashed him; but Woylance appears to be a vewy forgivin' chap. Weggie snowballed him, and got snowballed back, and lost his tempah—"

"Can't you go and babble somewhere else?" interrupted Manners.

"Are you alludin' to my remarks as babble, Mannahs?"

"Yes, ass!"

"I did not come here to thwash you, Mannahs; but if you persist in makin' such remarks—"

Manners jumped up.

"Shut up, or I'll shut you up!" he said savagely. "I've had enough jaw from these two idiots, without you barging in!"

"You could not possibly shut me up, Mannahs, as I should wufuse to be shut up! I wepeat that you are actin' in a caddish way by owin' a chap a gwudge for lickin' you, when you were in the w'ong all the time!"

Tom Merry caught hold of Manners, and dragged him back just in time. Arthur Augustus surveyed them calmly.

"Pway let him come on, Tom Mewwy. It appears to me that he is in want of anothah thwashin', and I am quite pweared to give it to him!"

Monty Lowther took Gussy by the arm, and led him into the passage, and closed the door on him.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, in astonishment.

He opened the door, and looked in wrathfully.

"I wepeat—" he began.

Monty Lowther picked up the inkpot, and made a motion as if to hurl it. The swell of St. Jim's dodged back. The door slammed again. In great wrath Arthur Augustus walked away.

"Are you going to fight every chap who looks into the study, Manners?" asked Tom Merry quietly, when the swell of the Fourth was gone.

"Yes, if they jaw me!" growled Manners.

"You'll have your hands full, then," said Lowther tartly. "You're making yourself a regular idiot with this rot!"

"Oh, cheese it!" snapped Manners.

Lowther's eyes gleamed, but he forbore to reply. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther left the study after tea. The atmosphere there was rather oppressive. They left Manners scampering over his prep, in order to get down early to the Common-room. They know the reason. He wanted to make sure of meeting Roylance there. And the prospect of that evening's events was not a happy one.

CHAPTER 11.

Tact and Judgment.

"WALLY, deah boy!"

"Hallo, old top!" said D'Arcy minor cheerily.

"What's biting you?"

"Is Weggie about?"

Arthur Augustus had run down his minor in the passage near the Third Form-room. He was talking to Levison minor and Joe Frayne; but Reggie was not with them, as he usually was.

"Manners minor?" yawned Wally. "He's in the Form-room, I think. His noble lordship is rather on his precious dig, I believe. It seems that there's no end of dignity in the Manners' family, and it gets upset quite easily, and the world goes round just the same, regardless."

And Wally chuckled, and Frank Levison and Frayne chorched in chorus. Reggie's tantums, probably intended to be awe-inspiring, only evoked hearty merriment in the rough-and-ready Third. "I trust you haven't been quawwelling with Weggie, kid?"

"My dear ass, I haven't time to quarrel with a sulky fag!" answered Wally. "His nibs wanted us to join in snowballing some new kid yesterday, and he was offended because we wouldn't. I think the new kid handled him for his cheek, too. Hence those lofty frowns he's been treating us to. But he'll come round presently. We've got toasted cheese and biscuits for supper."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's went into the Form-room. It was not yet time for evening prep in the Third, and the room was nearly empty; but among the three or four fags there he found Manners minor. Reggie Manners was looking rather surly, debating in his mind whether to make it up with Wally & Co. He had heard rumours of the toasted cheese and biscuits.

"Weggie, deah boy?"

Reggie looked round, far from graciously.

"I am goin' to speak to you vevy seriously, Weggie!"

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"Great pip!" said Reggie. "What's the row now?"

"It appears that you acted wathah wottenly towards a new chap who came heah yestehday, Weggie."

The fag coloured.

"Well, I'm sorry I backed him," he said. "I'd have said so if I'd seen him again. I didn't know he was a St. Jim's chap then, and all the way from goodness knows where. Has he asked you to preach to me?"

"Pway do not chawactewise my wemarks as pweachin', Weggie! Your majah had a fight with Woylance—"

"Poor old Harry!" said Reggie, his face breaking into a grin. "He was no end plucky. I never thought he had it in him. But the other chap was too much for him. Poor old Harry!"

"He is goin' to fight Woylance again to-night, Weggie."

Reggie stared.

"My hat! What for? I'd have thought he'd had enough of the chap. Why, the fellow was hitting like a blessed skern-hammer! Harry will get licked again, safe as houses. Tell him to let him alone."

"It is on your account, Weggie."

"What rot!"

"Your bwothah thinks that chap was bullin' you, and he can't forgive him for it. I am suah it was nothin' of the sort!"

Reggie reflected.

"That's all rot," he said at last.

TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT.

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

Messagefiles **HAOETTE** et Cie.,
111, Rue Reaumur,
PARIS.

"Harry hasn't spoken to me about it. If he was owing the new chap a grudge on my account, he would ask me about what happened, at least."

"Pewpaws his self-wespect was a little wounded, too."

"Oh, I know the game! He's got a grudge against Roylance for licking him, and he puts it down to my account," grinned Reggie. "Just like Harry. Always a highly moral reason for everything he does. Poor old Harry's simply tremendous in the moral line! He can't be satisfied with doing a thing because he wants to, like another chap!"

"I am afraid, Weggie, that you are wathah a young vascal!"

"Go hon!"

Arthur Augustus' unfavourable opinion seemed to leave the fag quite unmoved. Indeed, it apparently amused him.

The swell of St. Jim's restrained his wrath.

"Weggie, as your majah is goin' to fight Woylance again on your account, you ought to explain to him. That is why I came heah."

"I tell you it's not on my account. That's only Harry's high-faluting gas," granted Reggie.

"Wally, Weggie—"

"Well, where is he, then?" asked Reggie. "Old Selby will be coming in to take us in prep soon, and I can't be late."

"He is in his study, I think, Weggie." Reggie hesitated.

"Can't you tell him it's all right, from me, and tell him not to play the giddy ox?" he demanded.

"You had bettah go, Weggie!"

Manners minor gave a deep groan.

"He will jaw me. I know that."

Never mind. I'll cut off when he begins to jaw. All serene. I'll go. I don't want the silly old clump to get knocked about again. He had it bad enough yesterday, goodness knows!"

Having come to that brotherly decision, Manners minor left the Form-room, and the peacemaker of the School House followed him. But the fag was in no hurry to get to his major's study. Wally hailed him in the passage, and he stopped.

"You butting in for supper, young Manners?" inquired Walter Adolphus, whose manners were simply not a patch on those of his great major.

"Well, I don't mind!" said Reggie. "I've got a tin of sardines. Kildare gave them to me."

"Oh, good!" said Levison minor. "I've got a whole pound of biscuits, and Wally's got a chunk of cheese—he got it from a farmer!"

"After prep, then," said Wally. "Lucky there'll be a fire. We'll have the sardines first, as a fish course."

"Toppin'!" said Joe Frayne.

"Better let me toast the cheese," remarked Reggie. "You know how you cook, Wally."

"If you're going to be a cheeky young prig, like you were yesterday, young Manners—"

"Look here—"

"Weggie, deah boy, come along!" interjected Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, give a chap a rest!" said Reggie. "We don't want that cheese spoiled. I know how to toast cheese!"

"Don't, I?" demanded Wally.

"Look at the last lot you did!"

"Jameson jogged my arm, and that's how it got burnt! You know he did!"

"That's all very well! But—"

"Pway come along, Weggie!" Arthur Augustus fairly dragged Manners minor away, and did not let go his arm till they stopped outside Study No. 10 in the Shell.

Reggie rather peevishly kicked open the door and went in, and the kind-hearted swell of the School House retreated, hoping for the best.

CHAPTER 12.

Good Old Manners.

MANNERS of the Shell fixed a rather grim look on his minor. Possibly, if he had only realised it, it was the fact that he had been licked under his young brother's eyes that had made the Shell fellow so bitter.

"Look here, don't jaw me, Harry!" was Reggie's beginning.

"Why should I jaw you?" said Manners. "What do you mean?"

"About that fellow yesterday?"

"That rotter who was bullying you, do you mean? Has he been going for you again?" exclaimed Manners, starting to his feet, with a blaze in his eyes.

"For goodness' sake, don't be so jolly stagey!" said Manners minor ungratefully. "That's always been your fault, Harry. You're so jolly stagey!"

"Wha-a-a!"

"All very well to chip in and help me, as far as that goes. That's right enough—right and proper!" said Reggie. "An elder brother ought to do that. But you make such a thundering song about a trifle! You know you do!"

Manners looked fixedly at the fag. "Is that what you've come here to say to me, Reggie?" he asked, in a low voice.

"Well, no. I hear you're going to fight that chap again. What's the good of asking for another thrashing?"

Manners winced.

"I'm not rubbing it in, you know," said Reggie, with a touch of remorse.

"It was jolly fine the way you stood up to him, when you weren't a patch on him

for scrapping! But—but let it drop! What is there to make a fuss about?"

"Isn't there anything?" asked Manners. "He was bullying you—my young brother—and when I stopped him he fought me, and licked me! Do you think I can let it rest at that? I'm going to smash him. I'm not the fellow to bear malice, I hope; but this isn't an ordinary case. That brute—"

"That's where you always play the goat!" said Reggie irritably. "There's nothing to make a fuss about, I tell you. He shook me, and I yelled. Great pip! Do you think I'm made of glass, and can't be shaken? I jolly well hacked his shins! Some fellows would have knocked me right and left for it. What's the good of calling him a brute? He let me off easily, really!"

Manners stood very still.

"You hacked his shins, Reggie?"

"Yes, I did!"

"Before—before he did anything to you?"

"Well, I was waxy!" confessed Reggie. "I was sorry afterwards. You see, I laid for him to snowball him, thinking he was a silly new kid I could chase about and make a guy of. No harm in that—only fun! Well, he snowballed me back, and fairly flabbergasted me; and I sat down. I was wild. He came and helped me up, and—and—and—" He faltered.

"You didn't hack his shins then, Reggie?"

"Yes, I did!" said Reggie peevishly. "I tell you, I was ratty, and I never stopped to think. I wonder he didn't smash me! It was a rotten trick! I was sorry afterwards, but not while he was shaking me, of course."

Manners breathed hard.

"You let me pitch into a fellow who'd done nothing, and make a thundering fool of myself?" he exclaimed hotly.

"I couldn't help you being a thundering fool! You always are a thundering fool, if you ask me!" retorted Reggie.

"I was waxy, and I'd have been glad to see you lick him. Well, he licked you! I hadn't any idea that you were saving up grudges about it. I call that silly rot!"

"Oh, you young rotter!" said poor Manners. "So that was all! I've called the fellow a liar for saying that you hacked his shins!"

"Well, you must be an ass! Why couldn't you ask me?"

"I wouldn't insult my brother by asking him if he'd done a dirty, cowardly action, that's why!"

"Oh, you're so jolly high-falutin'!" growled Reggie. "Seems to me you've acted like a silly fool all along. I don't see why you wanted to pitch into him as you did, either. You might have stopped to ask what the row was about!"

"Oh!" gasped Manners.

He sank into his chair again, and sat staring at the flag. He was feeling utterly humiliated and overcome.

So far as Roylance was concerned, he had been in the wrong. There was no questioning that now. And he wondered, with a feeling of shame, whether his detestation of the new boy had been wholly dictated by his resentment of the supposed bullying, or whether, unconsciously, he had allowed wounded self-love to sway him. He had obstinately put out of his mind the thought that Reggie might be in the wrong, and yet he had often known Reggie to be wilfully in the wrong. In that painful moment the scales were falling from Manners' eyes, and he realised, with a hot flush of humiliation, that it was less for the new boy's supposed sin that he had pursued him with hostility than for having defeated him in fair combat. Reggie, who was only feeling irritable, stared at his brother's flushed face without comprehending.

"You young rascal!" said Manners at last. "Oh, you young rascal!"

"Oh, I knew you'd jaw me!" said Reggie resignedly. "You take everything so jolly seriously. You'd better get a job as a judge when you grow up, and condemn people to death! That'll be quite in your line! But I'm not going to have any jaw—I said I wouldn't, and I won't!"

And Reggie promptly quitted the study and scuttled away, thus making the dreaded jaw quite impossible.

Manners remained for a long time seated, thinking. His face was still crimson. He rose at last, and left the study. Tom Merry and Lowther met him at the bottom of the staircase.

"Come along to the gym," said Tom, as Manners moved in the direction of the Common-room.

"I want to see Roylance."

"No need to see him now!"

"Is he in the Common-room?"

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, I'm not going to fight him, you ass!"

"Oh!" said Tom.

The chums of the Shell followed Manners, in wonder. The Terrible Three entered the Common-room together, and found a dozen or more fellows there. Roylance was there, talking to Sidney Clive, the South African.

Manners came directly up to him, and Roylance set his lips a little. He was getting tired of the vendetta.

The juniors gathered round, Racke and Crooke grinning in anticipation of a row. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in rather hurriedly, and looked on, with an anxious eye.

"Sorry to interrupt, Roylance!" said Manners, in a low but very distinct voice. "I've come here to apologise!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Roylance, in great astonishment.

All eyes were turned curiously on Manners. Tom Merry and Lowther, amazed as they were, were greatly relieved.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, in great delight. Never had the swell of St. Jim's felt so satisfied with his well-known gifts of tact and judgment.

"I've just heard from my minor what happened yesterday," continued Manners, speaking very calmly, though his face was crimson. "He treated you like a little cad, and you didn't give him half what he deserved. I'm sorry I pitched into you! I didn't understand! I—I take back what I said to you." Manners gulped over this, but he got it out. "I can't say any more than that, I suppose?"

"That's quite enough," said Roylance, cheerily. "It was only a misunderstanding, and I'm sorry we had any trouble. I'd have explained, if you'd asked me, any time."

Manners nodded, and turned away. He had been through an ordeal which was a hard one for a fellow of a proud nature; but he had been bound to go through it, and he was glad it was over. There was a snigger from Racke of the Shell, and Manners turned back again. He knew what that snigger meant.

"Of course, if you'd care to meet me on Saturday afternoon all the same, I'm quite ready, Roylance!" he said.

The New Zealand junior laughed.

"But I wouldn't," he said. "There's nothing for us to fight about, that I know of; and I don't want another eye to match this one, if it's all the same to you!"

Manners laughed, too.

"All serene, then!" he said. Then he looked at Racke. "If you'd like to step into the gym, Racke, I'm your man!"

Racke lounged away without replying.

Tom Merry and Lowther marched Manners off to the study in great relief. That evening was a pleasanter one than the chums of the Shell had anticipated.

Manners was his old self again, save for the black eye, which really didn't matter. There were no grudges in Study No. 10, and all was calm and bright. And in Study No. 6 Arthur Augustus confided to his chums that some fellows did not think a fellow had any tact or judgment, but that a fellow had, and that some fellows were asses; and Study No. 6 was left to guess at the meaning of that cryptic remark.

THE END.

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

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"RACKE'S REVENGE!"

By Martin Clifford.

Most of you will remember a story which appeared a short time ago, entitled "A Quaker Bargain." It told of how Cardew edited an extra-special number of "Tom Merry's Weekly," and did it in such fashion that the whole issue had to be suppressed at short notice lest a copy should come under the eyes of those in authority—the result of which would almost certainly have been expulsion for Cardew.

Next week's story turns partly on this number of "Tom Merry's Weekly," and partly on a wheeze played by Cardew upon Racke and Crooke. To most of the fellows the wheeze seems rather a childish one; but it "gets Racke's goat"—to use an expres-

sive Americanism—to such an extent that they come to see more in it. For, after all, the criterion by which a wheeze intended to annoy must be judged is the amount of success it achieves; and, though Crooke takes the affair comparatively calmly, Racke is very much put out. A notion for revenging himself upon Cardew occurs to him. But what that notion was, and what came of it, you must wait till next week to hear.

CADET CORPS.

On the last page of this number you will find some "Cadet Notes." It is hard to find space for a new feature in these days. But the Cadet movement is a thing that really matters, and I hope to be able to do something to help it. So do not grumble if, once in a way, my Chat goes by the board to make room for Cadet news and notes!

Football—Matches Wanted by:

YORK ROAD UNITED—14-15-6 mile radius—away matches.—E. Starling, 10, Delhi Street, Copenhagen Street, King's Cross.

SEYMOUR CADERS—13-1 mile radius.—R. Sennett, 101, Seymour Road, Clayton, Manchester.

VICTORIA JUNIORS—13-1 mile radius.—A. Hindley, 12, Tavistock Street, Harpurhey, Manchester.

Yours Editor

THE ST. JIM'S GALLERY.

No. 1.—Tom Merry.

I think I could make out a good case for Tom Merry as the most famous schoolboy in fiction—that is, in school story fiction.

Many great novels of the semi-biographical sort begin with the hero at school, or take him to school in their early chapters. "David Copperfield," "Lorna Doone," "The Adventures of Harry Richmond," all do this; and these are three of the greatest. But they are rather outside our scope.

There is Tom Brown, of course. I don't mean the Greyfriars New Zealand junior, but Tom Brown of Rugby, known to several generations of schoolboys through the book that Thomas Hughes gave the world—a fine book, too. "Tom Brown's School-days" is a classic. The works of Talbot Baines Reed are schoolboy classics, too—"The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's," "The Willoughby Captains," "The Cock House at Fellsgarth," "The Master of the Shell," and the rest of them. But each of these is complete in itself; and though we may remember Bloomfield and Riddell and the Greenfields and the rest of them, we were not in their company long enough to know them as we know Tom Merry.

We have read of Tom week by week for nearly eleven years, and he is as real to most of us as the people we meet every day.

And he is an ideal hero for school stories. Some of you are not keen on Harry Wharton, the central figure of the Greyfriars yarn. Harry is as fine a character as Tom, but in a different way. It must be confessed that Tom has the advantage from the point of view of the average boy, because he is the average boy of decent instincts and real pluck raised to the nth. power, as the mathematicians say. That is, with all his qualities from a boy's point of view, more strongly marked than they are in any of the fellows you know who possess them. He is a plainer and more straightforward example to follow than Wharton—by which I do not at all mean to infer that he is a more straightforward fellow. In that respect they are equal. Neither is capable of a dirty trick. But Tom is easier to copy, because he is less sensitive, less thin-skinned. There are plenty of sensitive boys, of course; but the average boy does not greatly admire sensitiveness, or the pride Wharton shows at times.

Tom Merry is a good model. If you never do anything that Tom would not do, you need not worry about not being able to do all the things that he does, you know!

St. Jim's was already known to the boys of that day—they are men now, of course—when Tom Merry came on the scene. Blake & Co. and Figgins & Co. were in honest, healthy rivalry before Tom was heard of. And when he did first appear, it was not at St. Jim's. It was at Clavering, a smaller school, with a very young headmaster—very young as headmasters go, that is—whose name was Ralston.

Tom was a figure of fun when he turned up at Clavering, in his velvet suit and lace collar. He could dress that Miss Priscilla Fawcett liked to see a boy wearing; and the kind of dress which any human boy is bound to loathe with a loathing beyond words, whether upon his own back or upon another's. Miss Fawcett is "an old dear," no doubt; quite one of the best. But her notions about what a boy ought to have and wear and do are not merely wrong; they are the outside edge in absurdity.

Through her misjudged methods, Tom came to Clavering looking as soft a proposition as any new boy ever looked at any school—at least, for those who had not the insight to perceive that his face was not merely wearing with his weird garments.

But Tom soon proved that there was nothing really soft about him. I am not going to attempt here to tell of all the things he has done and suffered—however



condensed the narrative might be, it would take a number, rather than a page. It is more with what a boy is than what he has done that one is concerned in these sketches; though, of course, incidents do help to show character, and thus many of them fall to be dealt with.

Manners and Lowther and Gore were all Clavering fellows before that school was closed and Mr. Ralston and a good many of the boys migrated to St. Jim's. And Manners and Lowther were Tom's chums, of course, though their joint nickname of "The Terrible Three" was still in the future when they said good-bye to Clavering. But I am not going to say much about Manners and Lowther here. They will come in later.

And Gore was Tom's enemy, and the enemy of all three. A rotter then, he has changed since, though he may not be all one could desire now.

Mr. Ralston took charge of the School House in his new quarters, with only slightly less authority than he had had at Clavering. The fellows who had come with him knew what a fine master he was; and the rest soon found out.

There were feuds at first. Jack Blake & Co., while recognising that the Terrible Three were the right sort, naturally had no intention of knocking under to them, though they were in a higher Form. And Figgins & Co. had also to be reckoned with.

But feuds between fellows like these don't mean spite and nasty tricks. It may be war, but it is war on decent and chivalric lines. Tuck hampers may be bagged; that is all in the game. Faces may be sooted and tarred and treacled and gummed and glued and whitewashed; no lasting resentment is left

in anyone's breast. And it was not long before the three Co.'s were at heart the best of friends, and always ready to join forces against a common enemy. Of course, the old House rivalry goes on; life would be without that! Of course, the Shell fellows refer to the Fourth Formers as mere kids, and are in their turn irreverently styled "Shellfish"; these are but passing compliments.

Monty Lowther and Harry Manners have continued to be Tom's nearest and dearest chums, for Tom has a staunch heart. But it is a big heart, too, and there are places in it for Blake and D'Arcy and Herries and Digby, for Figgins and Kerr and Wynn, for Talbot, for many another. Two special chums, sharers of good and ill, sticking to him through everything; then perhaps Talbot, who is on a very close footing of intimacy, but not far behind him the four of Study No. 6 and the New House trio; and after them the decent fellows of both Houses—so might Tom Merry rank his friends. For every decent fellow likes Tom, and he likes them all.

And he is not rough even on a wrong 'un, if that wrong 'un shows signs of better things. He can always forgive and forget; he is always ready to stretch out a friendly hand to a fellow who needs help.

It was not long before Tom became junior captain. We are asked sometimes who is the Fourth skipper? Our readers don't seem able to realise—some of them, that is—that different schools have different customs. There is a skipper for each Form at Greyfriars, but that is not the case at St. Jim's. Though Blake may be reckoned the leader of the Fourth in the School House, though Figgins is the great war-chief of Fourth and Shell alike in the smaller New House, Tom stands above them both, with an indisputable claim to full leadership.

He has used his authority, such as it is, wisely and well. Of course, he has made mistakes; everyone makes them. But he has never been too ready to assert himself as a fault of which the smaller New House and these have been guilty at the rival school—and he has certainly never played the tyrant.

And, of course, he has had his troubles. Gore and Levison and Lumley-Lumley were all up against him. But they are his friends now; and I think that all three, even at their worst, recognised in Tom a far better fellow than themselves. He has had quarrels with his chums; there was a time when he fought and thrashed Blake, and the sympathies of almost everyone were with Blake. Lumley-Lumley and Mellish were at the bottom of that trouble. It came right in the end, and all through Tom had the loyal support of the far-continuing heart of Blake & D'Arcy; but it was hard for him to have so dead a set made at him for what was none of his fault. Then there was the time when financial trouble caused Tom to leave St. Jim's for a while. Do you remember—but most of you don't, of course—how he played for Wayland for a while, to help St. Jim's find money? He kicked the winning goal for his side? Do you remember how, through Mr. Ralston's good offices, he came back to St. Jim's—not as a boy, but as a master? He took charge of the Third in the absence of Mr. Selby. The Third gave him lots of trouble, of course. But Tom's uncle was right. In the Rockies or in Africa, he was just the same old Tom Merry. St. Jim's knows—plucky, resolute, generous, kind-hearted.

Many will recall the adventure and travel stories in which Tom and some of his chums visited foreign lands. They call for no more than mere mention here, however, for they do not throw much fresh light on Tom's character. In the Rockies or in Africa, he was just the same old Tom Merry. St. Jim's knows—plucky, resolute, generous, kind-hearted.

But we get to something deeper when we reach the Talbot yarns.

Nowhere are the depths of Tom Merry's character better shown than in these. We learn how strong friendship for "the Toit" grew in him; how he helped Talbot on the upward road; and, most significant of all, how he stood by Talbot when all others had deserted him.

It is only one friend in a thousand who will believe in one against a crushing weight of evidence. The Head ought to know Tom Merry by this time. He does know him, and has—it may seem a queer thing to say about the feeling of a master towards a boy, but it is true—a very high respect for him. Yet the Head has more than once believed Tom guilty of things that it was impossible he should have done, because the evidence seemed to prove that he must have done them. One such instance in a quite recent story may be mentioned—the affair when Cardew threw suspicion upon Tom by the use of his handkerchief as proving that he had been guilty of what Cardew himself had really done.

Mr. Railton thinks even more of Tom than Dr. Holmes does. But Mr. Railton has wavered in his faith once or twice.

One does not impute blame to them. As one grows older one learns that human nature has queer kinks. No one is perfect,

and now and then it happens that a deed is done to which the whole past life of the doer seems to give the lie. There it is: he could not do such a thing; but he has done it! Then he was not what we thought him—that is all!

Perhaps Tom's youth helped him to stand by Talbot with unflinching loyalty, unquestioning belief, when everyone else fell away. Even Gussy, very loyal and very soft of heart, even Tom's own chums, Manners and Lowther, even Blake, as generous as any of them and as resolute—all fell away! In that dark hour Talbot would have stood utterly alone if it had not been for Tom Merry.

Is it any wonder that Tom is dearer to Reggie Talbot than anyone else at St. Jim's? Talbot is not first with Tom—loyalty to the older ties forbids that. But Tom is first with Talbot.

Loyalty—I think that is Tom Merry's most outstanding quality. It is of the highest—unquestionable—kindness—firmness—all these he has in ample measure; but loyalty—faith as fixed as any star—is the strongest of them all. What other boy with Tom's high spirits and detestation of molly-coddling could bear so patiently with Miss Priscilla? Loyalty again!

But cheerfulness is also a very marked trait in him. It fails at times, but very seldom. Throw Tom Merry & Co.—that is to say, the Terrible Three, the chums of Study 6, Talbot, and Figg & Co., taking a wide view of the confraternity—into an awkward and unpleasant situation, and who will bear up longest? Well, it will take some time to get to the end of Talbot's stoicism, and of Kerr's quiet fortitude; but I rather fancy you will find both Talbot and Kerr grumbling before Tom begins to do so in earnest.

Tom is, in certain respects, a good deal like Bob Cherry of Greyfriars. But his manner is deeper in some ways than Bob's, and, though Bob does not lack brains, Tom has the pull there.

Looking back over the old stories, one finds hundreds of things one would like to dwell upon. But it cannot be done; and with just bare mention of the many activities of the playing-felds, where Tom holds first place among the St. Jim's juniors as an all-round man—of his prowess as a fighting-man, and of that great enterprise "Tom Merry's Weekly," one must finish. But Tom Merry will come into many another of the articles in this series, you know. He simply cannot be kept out!

THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA.

FOR NEW READERS.

The twins are Philip Derwent, of Highcliffe, and his sister Philippa, of Cliff House. They have a cockatoo named Cocky, which has been until recently with Flip (Philip) at Highcliffe, but is now at Cliff House. Flip has made an enemy of Gadsby, who is plotting against him with Vavasour. His best chums, Merton and Tunstall, are away from the school for a time, owing to a serious accident to one of Merton's eyes in a fight with Ponsenby. In their absence Flip gets too friendly with Pon. and the rest of the nuts, and, without any real taste for it at the outset, takes to gambling. He has been to the Cliff House hockey field to see his sister. Flip, but has not seen her. On the way he has fallen in with Billy Bunter, of Greyfriars, and they walk back together. Bunter characteristically lets out something. For instance, he can't about the other characters in this story, see "The Bazaar Night's Night," included in the Christmas Number of the "Maguet." Recent numbers of the GEM have given a list, but there is no longer room for that.)

(Now read on.)

Investigation Promised!

"I DOWN, thanks!" said Flip. "So Hazelene was in it, Bunter? I didn't begin to suspect that. So you've told me something."

"Yah! I've only told you a lie!" That seemed so probable, all things considered, that Flip was half inclined for a moment to believe it.

"I said it to put you off the scent," said Bunter.

"Don't you believe him, Derwent!" said Peter. "I shouldn't have thought Hazelene would have got mixed up in an affair like that. But when Tubby says he's been lying it is safest to assume that he's had an accidental lapse into the truth. To do him justice, I must say that it probably was quite accidental."

"You haven't had a row with Hazel, have you, Derwent?" asked Tom Brown.

"Hardly a row. But we did have some words the day he came over with Field. You remember, Field? He was put out with me. I don't really know why."

The Greyfriars fellows looked at one another. They knew Hazel. He was quite capable of being spiteful, and he was easily led.

The Highcliffe junior was evidently very determined to get to the bottom of the affair. But he was not likely to get so far through Bunter. The Owl, having started his rage, would keep it up.

Tom Dutton pulled his watch out of his pocket.

"I don't know what all this talk's about," he said; "but I do know that if we don't scot we shall be late for dinner. So I should say that if there's anything coming to Bunter he'd better have it at once, and then we can all clear. I don't mind this chap clouting Bunter, I'm sure. The rotter's sure to have deserved it!"

"He's deaf, isn't he?" said Flip to Tom Brown.

"Not really deaf—only a little bit hard of hearing—about as hard of hearing as a pair of pistols!" replied Tom, grinning.

"See here, Derwent, will you leave it to us to look into this bizney for you?" asked Peter Todd.

Flip looked doubtful. But Squiff said:

"You can depend upon us, old scout! And it's really not much use trying to get any more out of Bunter. Just now, we'll put him to a little gentle torture, and draw it

out that way. A red-hot poker has been known to make fellows speak out before now."

"Today's a rare one at cross-examination. And I'm quite hefty with a hot poker," added Delacey.

"You! If you touch me with a poker, Rebel, you beat!" said Flip.

"But I shall be looking into things my end, too. I'll come over one day before long and see if you chaps have worked the oracle."

"Right-ho! Ta-ta, old fellow!" said Squiff. "—Heard anything about Merton, by the way?"

"No," said Flip, a shadow falling upon his face. And he hurried off without a word of farewell to the Greyfriars fellows.

The Fascinating Vavasour.

MEANWHILE Vavasour had been lying in wait for Miss Gittins.

He waited some little distance from the gates of Highcliffe. It was not likely that the Head or Mr. Mobbs or any of the other masters would approve of his attempt to strike up a flirtation with the post-girl.

Miss Gittins was comparatively new to her job, and had only been doing the local round for a week or two. But already her beauty had affected the tender heart of William George Adolphus Vavasour, though a fellow of a very different kind from the unwieldy Owl of the Remove, was quite ready to be fascinated—and, of course, to fascinate—merely on the strength of his dear friend Gadsby's report.

But Gadsby, though he had had an axe of his own to grind, had not made a false report.

Miss Gittins really was a particularly pretty girl—golden-haired and blue-eyed. And she had a free-and-easy way with her. She was not at all standoffish. Many people might have said that she was not sufficiently so. But she had learned pretty well how to take care of herself; and there was no harm in her, though it is hardly likely that Vavasour's aristocratic mother would have considered Miss Gittins quite the most suitable playmate for her lamb.

"By gad, she's a sparker—absolutely!" murmured Vav, as the fair post-girl drew near.

He swept off his cap and bowed politely. "Hallo!" said Miss Gittins, with a charm-

ing, if rather cheeky, smile. "What's your game?"

"Er—good-mornin'!" said Vav. "Nice mornin', isn't it—absolutely?"

"You wouldn't think so blessed much of it if you'd had all the way I have to tramp, with a heavy mail-bag," replied Miss Gittins. "I call it a rotten morning! The wind's fit to blow through you!"

"Just what I was meanin'—absolutely!" said Vav.

"Well, you've got a rummy way of sayin' it, that's all!"

The girl had stopped. She was evidently very well inclined to stay and talk. Vav was not at all surprised. He did not undervalue his own fascinations by any means.

"It isn't quite the sort of game for a dashed pretty girl like you," he said, with a leer.

"Being dashed pretty don't keep you in grub or clobber," replied the girl. "Lugging a mail-bag round does!"

"You ought not to have to work so dashed hard, by gad! You ought to have your needs supplied without all that, y'know."

"So I could have if I got into the stone jug," said Miss Gittins. "Or if I married a swell, I s'pose. Which do you think would be the worst?"

There was a shrewd twinkle in the blue eyes of Miss Gittins when she saw the momentary flash of alarm in Vav's face at that speech. Vavasour did not want a breach of promise action brought against him by a post-girl. He must be wary.

Then he remembered that, as he was still a good deal short of twenty-one, such an action would not lie, and he plucked up spirit.

She really was a good-looking girl! The twinkle in those blue eyes quite captivated Vav. And when she laughed the dimple in the middle of her chin got deeper in a very taking way.

"I should think a beauty like you could marry anyone she liked, by gad!" he said.

"Well, I'm not sure whether I like you yet," replied Miss Gittins. "But I'll think it over. I'm not in danger of being left on the shelf yet. And I don't suppose you're more than seventeen or so, are you?"

"Good guess, by gad—absolutely!" said Vav, quite pleased.

"I say, do you know my young brother?" asked the girl.

"I couldn't say, really, dear girl! What's his name?"

"Same as mine, of course!"

"Oh, absolutely not! He can't be a Nellie or a Florrie, or anything like that, y'know."

"Well, I'm not a Nellie or a Florrie. My name's Gwendolen."

"An' a dashed nice name, too! May I call you Gwendie?"

"It would be like your uncommon chesk! But there, I don't really mind. It don't matter there's a fat lot of harm in you. You're only funny, and I like funny boys. Gwendolen Gittins—that's my name. What's yours?"

"Vavasour."

"My stars! Just like out of a novelle! I reckon you belong to a pretty high family, don't you?"

"Yass, rather!"

"But I can't very well call you Vavasour; and Mr. Vavasour would be very thin if we're going to be friendly. What's your Christian name?"

"I've two, y'know."

"Well, get them off your chest, and I'll see which one I like best."

"Adolphus," answered Vav.

"Jolly good, both of 'em! I'm not sure that I don't like Augustus Marmaduke better. Marmaduke reminds me of marmalade. But there; not so much of that about these days. Well, I think I'll call you Dolly mostly, and keep 'Tudor for Sundays."

Vav was rather surprised. He had not anticipated getting on so fast as that. And, of course, he had meant to make the pace, whereas Gwendolen was unmistakably doing that.

"Er—about your brother?" he said, willing to turn the conversation into a different channel.

"Oh, him! He's a nasty young imp—"

regular monkey for tricks! We don't get on top well at times. But I think Gehazi knows you."

"Oh, ah, yes—absolutely! I remember him now."

"There's a pal of yours—Gadsby his name is."

"But Gehazi don't know yours, y'know. Sometimes he called you Vaseline, and sometimes Old Absolutely. Ha, ha, ha! It made him laugh. But I know you now."

Vav thought that there was something of the imp about Gwendolen also. She evidently liked poking fun at a fellow.

"You were mixed up in that parrot affair, weren't you?" asked the girl.

"Parrot? Eh? No. I don't know any parrot."

"Well, it may have been an ostrich or a humming-bird or a pelican for all I know. But it could talk. Gehazi called it a parrot."

"I shouldn't get playing games like that if I were you, Dolly. They ain't quite the correct card. Bit of spite, 'star as I make out. What's the use of being spiteful? I never am."

"Your brother seems fond of talkin', dash it!" said Vav sulkily.

"Very fond of each in a broad smile. But he don't tell everybody, mind you."

"He told someone, everywhere, 'chap named Chiker; rather an awful barge. Oh, beg pardon! He's your uncle, or grandfather, or something'. Must be, of course. Sorry, I'm sure, Gwendie!"

"Never mind, Dolly, old top! Bert Chiker's what you called him. But he ain't my grandfather. You don't find grandfathers playing football."

"Absolutely not!" murmured Vav, relieved that she had not taken offence.

"He's my uncle—my mother's brother. Took after her, too—she was a bit of a"

bashier. She used to yell me and Gehazi something cruel. But she's gone, where I shouldn't think they'd let her yell anybody. I never feel very sure that she'd be very happy without, though."

"Does your uncle—er—Chiker live with you? I mean, do you live with him? Is he your guardian, an' all that?"

"The girl laughed merrily."

"I'm my own guardian, thanks!" she said.

"I don't remember much about my dad—Gehazi never saw him—and mother died three years ago. But your first guess was nearer right. Bert Chiker lives in the same house as we do—so do twenty other folks. But me and my brother have a couple of rooms at the top, where it's respectable."

Bert Chiker lives on the ground floor. There's an awful job lot there!"

"Oh, er—yes, absolutely!" said Vavasour.

"Well, I shall have to be trotting. Haven't got anything more to deliver this way, except your or five letters for your show. And, as you've been wasting my time spooning, Dolly, you might as well take them along."

"Oh, with pleasure—absolutely!" replied Vavasour.

"But do you really think—er—making love's a waste of time, Gwendie?"

"You talk about making love when you've learned how, old top!" said the girl, fishing out the Highcliffe letters from her bag.

"But don't teach me, Gwendie?"

"I don't mind. I like chockies with it, I may tell you."

"Oh, by gad! I'll meet you again to-morrow, an' you shall have a whackin' box. I say, though, Gwendie—there's no one on the road to see a kiss, you know—eh?"

"We'll talk about that to-morrow, when you've brought the chocolates, Dolly. Don't you be in too big a hurry."

(To be continued next week.)

CADET NOTES.

A PROBLEM that every boy has to face is what to do with his evenings. After long hours in the office or factory one does not always feel inclined to sit at home and stew over a book. It is for this reason that Cadet Corps have caught on like wild-fire during the war. New units are springing up every day, and the old corps are getting new members by the hundred.

Recognition of the growing importance of the Cadet Unit is to be found in the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments having decided to take it up by the Army Council, and to do for the Cadets some of the good work it did for the Volunteers. This association was the organisation asked by Lord Kitchener at the outbreak of war to take up the administration of all the countless Volunteer Units which sprang into existence after war was declared. So successfully did they do their work that there is not a town or a village that has not its unit. The Volunteer Corps are for men over military age, or who are disqualified from entering the Army by reason of their business or physical disability. And a very fine force it is!

The Central Association of Volunteer Regiments has its headquarters in the Quadrangle of the Law Courts in the Strand, London, in a temporary building erected originally for Courts of Law. Its president—Lord Desborough—is perhaps the greatest sportsman in the world. He is the only living man that has swum Niagara, while he rowed in the Varsity Boat Race for Oxford, and represented Great Britain in fencing at the Olympic Games at Stockholm. Mr. C. J. Stewart, the treasurer, is the Public Trustee, and he administers more money than any one man in the country. Any man who has a claim wants taken care of can put it in the hands of this official, who is responsible for its safe custody. The honorary secretary, Mr. Percy A. Harris, is the well-known Member of Parliament for South Leicestershire, and is popularly known in the country as the Volunteer M.P. These three men are all old Harrovians. The assistant secretary is Mr. W. Graham Everett, however, is an Etonian who won reputation as a rowing man, having been a member of the Leander Club. Nearly every well-known man in the country is either a vice-president or a member of the association. It includes such names as those

of Lord Landsdowne, Lord Crewe, Lord Lincolnshire, and last, but not least, Sir A. Conan Doyle, the friend of every boy and the creator of Sherlock Holmes.

One of the most common mistakes to make about Cadet Corps is to suppose they do nothing but drill. Nothing is further from the truth. A film prepared by the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments shows the Middlesex Cadet Brigade in camp near Reading, Berkshire. It shows the lads having the time of their lives—cooking their own dinners, camping out, scouting, shooting at the range, and bayonet fighting. But amongst the other pictures shown are the Cadets bathing in the lake and playing a new kind of football invented by the Swedes. In fact, the Cadet Corps really form excellent social clubs and centres for the organisation of cricket and football clubs, social evenings and concerts, and any other sport.

The Cadet Unit, to be recognised, must be accepted by the County Territorial Association in the county where it is located; but the conditions of recognition are quite reasonable. Cadets are entitled to wear the regular khaki uniform, and equipment is provided by the military authorities. However, uniform is not compulsory if a boy cannot afford to subscribe for it or the unit has not funds; he can still parade in cap and belt and his ordinary clothes. Most of the Cadet Corps are either attached to a Volunteer Battalion or a Territorial Unit, and thus get the benefit of their headquarters.

In order to raise funds for the corps and encourage attendance the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments has struck out the ingenious device of providing stamps, which the corps order given to each boy to prove that he has attended a drill. The corps can sell these stamps at either a penny or halfpenny, or even less, according to local conditions. When a lad has collected forty-two of such stamps he is entitled to an attractive metal badge, which he can wear with his ordinary clothes, and which shows not only that he is a cadet, but that he has done his forty-two drills.

The design both of the attendance stamp and the badge is from Hassell's famous drawing for the Cadet poster issued by the Central Association, which bears the motto

of the Cadets, "Look Ahead!" Every boy who looks ahead will join the Cadets. If a boy has been in the Cadets, and has to go into the Army when he reaches the age of 18, he has a good chance of rapid promotion, or even a commission. Cadet Corps are now being drawn on to provide pilots for the Royal Flying Corps; but a lad who has never been in a Cadet Unit has no such chance.

Some boys want to join a Cadet Corps, but do not know where to find one. There should be a unit in every district; but if a boy can't find the headquarters, all he has to do is to send a postcard to the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments, Royal Courts of Justice, W.C.2, and they will let him know where the nearest corps is; or, if there is not one, see that a unit is established without delay in his neighbourhood.

The best centre for the formation of a new Cadet Corps is the elementary school, so that when a boy leaves school he can keep up his connection with his school. Besides, many Education Authorities allow Cadet officers to have the use of the school building and the school yard free of charge, which is a great catch.

There is an idea that Cadet Corps interfere with church and chapel going. Nothing is further from the truth. One of the most popular features of the Cadet Corps is church-parade, and every good corps has its chaplain. One of the prettiest ceremonies is a service held in the open on a summer day round the regimental drums. This reminds us that if a boy has no taste for a rifle, there is always the drum and life band. Nothing is greater sport than marching or playing the streets rattling the kettle-drum or playing a life, or, if that is not your taste, playing a bugle call. One of the greatest triumphs for the Cadets and, of course, for the Scout too, has been for the air-raids, boy buglers having been trusted with the duty of sounding the "All Clear" when the danger of the air-raid is over.

It is quite wrong to suppose that Cadets compete in any way with the Boy Scouts. Lieutenant-General Sir R. Baden-Powell, at a conference of the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments in October last, pointed out that there is room for both movements. If you are not a Scout be a Cadet. If you are not a Cadet be a Scout. But be one or the other!