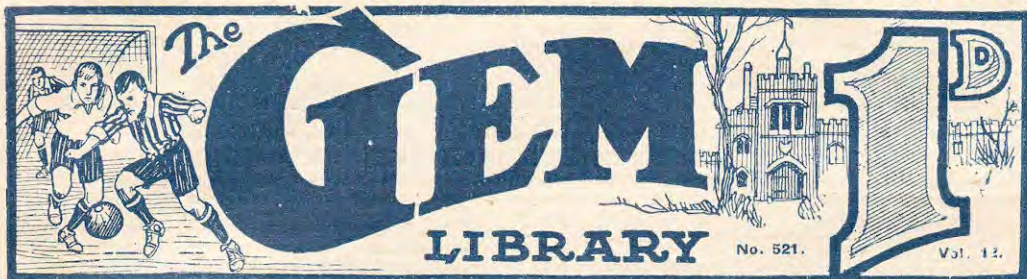


FOES OF THE SCHOOL HOUSE!

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



FRANK LEVISON'S DANGER!

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

FOES OF THE SCHOOL HOUSE!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Manners Says "No!"

"YOU fellows comin' along?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form.

The swell of St. Jim's was in Norfolk—the nobbiest Norfolk within the walls of the old school—and he looked quite a picture as he stood in the doorway of Study No. 10.

His celebrated monocle was turned inquiringly upon the Terrible Three.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were in the study, debating whether to spend that afternoon on "Tom Merry's Weekly" or not. The "Weekly" was overdue—it generally was!

"That depends, Gus-y!" answered Tom Merry. "Coming where?"

"Abbotsford, dear boy!"

"Anything on at Abbotsford?" inquired Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah! We're goin' to see the New Zealand soldahs."

"Oh, good!" said Tom Merry at once. "That's better than sticking indoors, you chaps. The 'Weekly' can wait another week."

"Not a bad idea!" agreed Lowther. "It's cold, but it's ripping weather for a bike ride. We'll come, my infant!"

"Can we go round through Rylcombe?" suggested Manners.

"I suppose we could, Mannahs, but why?"

"I want some new films for my camera," explained Manners. "I'd like to take some pictures of the New Zealanders, and I may get a chance at the camp. I haven't got any New Zealanders in my collection yet."

"Oh, bother your camera!" murmured Lowther.

"Fathead!" was Manners' polite reply.

"All sewene!" said Arthur Augustus. "It won't take much longer to go through Wylecombe, and I'm suah Woylance won't mind."

Manners started.

"Roylance!" he repeated.

"Yaas, we're goin' with Woylance."

"Oh!" said Manners, compressing his lips.

Tom Merry and Lowther looked at their chum rather uneasily. They had hoped that the trouble between Manners and Roylance, the new fellow in the Fourth Form, would blow over. Somehow it hadn't, though.

"Blake and Hewies and Dig are not comin'," continued Arthur Augustus. "They have already awrangwed to go out with Levison and Cardew. I thought you three fellows might like to come along. You see, Woylance's uncle is with the New Zealanders, and we shall meet him, and powwaps—"

"I'd rather not come, thanks!" said Manners.

"Bai Jove!"

"I think I'll get on with the 'Weekly' after all. You fellows go, if you like," added Manners.

"Weally, Manners, I twust you are not keepin' up your wickedous aversion to Woylance!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus

warmly. "I had forgotten about that, but weally, I supposed you had more sense, you know!"

"Berr-r-r!" said Manners.

"I do not wegard that as an intelligible remark, Mannahs!"

Manners turned to the table, and dipped his pen in the ink. His mind was evidently made up.

"Well, is anybody comin'?" asked Arthur Augustus, with a glance of strong disapproval at Manners.

"Yes, two, anyway," said Tom Merry. "I'd like to."

"Same here!" said Lowther, at once.

"Wighto! Start in a quarrah of an hour, bikin' it," said Arthur Augustus; and he sauntered gracefully away.

There was silence in Tom Merry's study after the swell of the Fourth had gone. Manners was scratching away indistinctly with his pen, without looking at his chums.

Tom Merry knitted his brows.

"Look here, Manners," he said at last. "I don't see why you can't come."

"I'd rather not, thanks," said Manners, without looking up.

"Because you don't like Roylance, do you mean?"

"If you want to know—yes!"

"Why don't you like him?"

"Because I don't!"

There was no arguing with that. Tom Merry made a gesture of annoyance, and rose to his feet.

"I think you're an unreasonable ass!" he said.

"Thanks!"

"It's ridiculous!"

"Really?"

"Yes, ridiculous!" exclaimed Tom hotly. "It's nearly a fortnight since Roylance came here, and you had a fight with him. Time enough for you to have got over it, I should think!"

The colour crept into Manners' cheeks, but he did not answer, and he did not look up.

"It's all rot!" continued Tom Merry. "I understand about your being down on him at first, when you thought he had bullied your minor. You found out that Reggie was to blame, and Roylance let him off lightly. Reggie told you so himself, and you apologised to Roylance. I thought that was the end of it."

"Did you?"

"Yes, I did! As for your fight with him, what does that matter? Surely you're not owing a chap a grudge because he got the upper hand in a fair fight?"

"Jolly mean, if you are!" said Lowther bluntly.

"Not at all!" answered Manners.

"You can't say the chap's crowded about it—he's never mentioned it," said Tom.

"Nobody would even have known that you got the worst of it if you hadn't said so yourself. And the fight was due to a misunderstanding, anyhow. Everybody likes Roylance in the House."

"Yes; I've noticed he's rather popular," said Manners, with a sneer.

"Why shouldn't he be, when he's a

thoroughly decent chap in every way? I can't see why you can't get on with him."

"Well, I can't!"

"You owned up that you were in the wrong in your row with him."

"I was in the wrong, so I was bound to own up," said Manners quietly. "It wasn't pleasant, but I had to do it, and I did it. Fellows have been saying ever since that I did it because I was afraid of getting another licking."

"No fellow with any decency would say so. Racke, or Crooke, I suppose—or Trimble!" said Tom scornfully. "It's not like you to take any notice of cadlike that!"

"I don't take any notice. They say it, all the same."

"And you're going to dislike Roylance because a cad like Racke chooses to say cadlike, untrue things!"

Manners laid down his pen, swung round on his chair, and faced his chums.

"It's no good jawing," he said. "I don't like the fellow. I don't say there's anything wrong about him. I dare say he's all right. But I don't like him. That's the long and the short of it. As I don't like him, I don't want his company."

"You can be civil to a fellow you don't like, I suppose?"

"I'd rather not see him at all. And I'm not going to. I'm not going out with him, and I don't want to be introduced to his uncle. Let it drop! I'm not stopping you fellows going."

"It makes it beastly awkward, when we're on good terms with the chap!"

"That's your look-out, if you're in such a hurry to throw over old friends for new ones," said Manners bitterly.

"Oh, don't talk rot!" exclaimed Tom Merry sharply. "Roylance isn't our pal, and you know it. But he's a decent sort, and I like him, too."

"Well, if you like him, get along and go with him! I'll get on with the 'Weekly' while you're gone."

Tom Merry hesitated.

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Lowther impatiently. "If Manners is going to sulk we may as well clear off!"

"Who's sulking?" shouted Manners.

"You are! You've been sulking ever since Roylance came here!" snapped Lowther. "You want us to cut a chap who's never done any harm, and we're jolly well not going to do it. You're admitted you were in the wrong in rowing with him, and that ought to make an end of it. Owing grudges and bearing malice is acting like a Prussian, so you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

And with that Monty Lowther strode out of the study, and Tom Merry, after one uneasy glance at Manners' lowering face, followed him. Manners sat down to his work again, with a clouded brow and set lips.

He was in the wrong, and he knew it. There was no good reason for his disliking Roylance. But the fact remained that he did not like him.

CHAPTER 2.

On the Road.

"HOLD on, kid!"

It was just like Wally of the Third to address Tom Merry, the junior captain of the school, in that cheeky way. Wally D'Arcy, Reggie Manners, and Levison minor were coming upstairs, and they met the two Shell fellows on the landing.

"Hallo!" said Tom, rather gruffly.

"What do you want?"

"Don't bite a chap's head off!" answered D'Arcy minor. "What's ruffled the serenity of your noble highness?"

"You cheeky young ass!"

"You cheeky old ass!" retorted Wally independently.

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"That's better," said D'Arcy minor approvingly. "That's my dear little Tommy again, as Miss Priscilla would say."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Reggie Manners and Levison minor together, and Monty Lowther chuckled.

Tom made a movement to pass on, but D'Arcy minor stopped him.

"We want you!" he said.

"Can't stop. D'Arcy and Roylance will be waiting for us," replied Tom.

"Another time, whatever it is."

"Oh, my major can wait," said Wally, "and Roylance is only a new-kid anyway! We want you to start us."

"Eh?"

"It's the Third Form paper-chase," explained Levison minor. "We're starting in a quarter of an hour, and you're going to start us—see?"

"It's an honour for you, you know," remarked Manners minor. "Kidare started us last time. He's playing footer now, though."

"And I'm second best?" said Tom, with a smile. "Ask Manners. He's in the study. I really must get off now."

"Oh, Manners will do!" assented Wally. "You're not the only pebble on the beach, dear boy. Come on, kids! We'll bag your major, Reggie."

"Right you are!"

The three fags went on up the stairs, and Tom Merry and Lowther descended, and went round for their bicycles. They found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Dick Roylance at the bike-shed.

Roylance greeted them with a cheery nod.

"Manners coming?" he asked. There was certainly no trace of animosity about the New Zealand junior.

Manners had owned up frankly that he was in the wrong in their old quarrel, and Roylance was willing to let bygones be bygones. He had not come much into contact with Manners since then; but as they were in different Forms, that might have been chance.

Tom Merry coloured a little.

"Manners is grinding out stuff for the 'Weekly,'" he explained. He felt very uncomfortable as he said it, for, although it was true enough, it was not the whole truth.

Roylance's eyes gleamed for a moment, and then he nodded carelessly, and turned to his machine.

"Weady, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, wheeling out his handsome jigger.

The four juniors wheeled their machines down to the gates and out into the road. There they mounted and pedalled away.

It was a cold and sharp but sunny afternoon, and a spin through the country lanes was very enjoyable. Tom Merry and Lowther did not enjoy it so much as might have been the case, however. Manners ought to have been a member of the party. The Terrible Three were generally inseparable.



Scent Wanted!
(See Chapter 3.)

Manners' reproach, unfounded as it was, remained in Tom Merry's mind. It was absurd to suggest that he was throwing over an old friend for a new one, and it was rather exasperating that the matter should present itself to Manners' mind in that light.

Tom liked the New Zealand junior, who was a cheery, good-natured fellow, as he liked a dozen other fellows, that was all. Roylance, in fact, was the very fellow Manners himself would have liked, but for that unfortunate trouble on Roylance's first day at St. Jim's, a trouble that was due to Reggie of the Third.

Manners' reproach was unjust; but it worried Tom a little while he was riding through the lanes with Roylance, and Manners was left on his own in the study, with only his own company, for the afternoon. It was Manners' fault, the fault of his unreasonable temper; but it troubled Tom somehow, all the same.

The captain of the Shell was almost glad when there came a sudden "Pop!" from his tyre, and his machine dragged. He jumped off, and the other fellows slowed down and dismounted.

"Bai Jove! You've got a punctuah, deah boy!" remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Go hon!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Did you work that out in your head, Gussy?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"It's a beastly burst," said Tom Merry ruefully. "I ought to have seen to that tyre before, really. By Jove, it's serious!"

He turned the machine up, and examined the tyre. It was a bad burst, and the mending was likely to be a slow and laborious operation. The juniors looked at one another.

"Woylance has to see his uncle at three," remarked Arthur Augustus.

"You'll have to get on without me," said Tom. "Can't be helped. I shall have to wheel this brute back."

"It's rotten!" said Roylance. "I can't stop very well, as my uncle's expecting me."

"All serene!" said Tom.

"I'll stay with you, Tommy," said Monty Lowther at once. "Sorry, Roylance! You don't mind?"

"Not a bit!"

"You should weally be more careful with your tiah, Tom Mewwy," admonished Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, we had bettah be off, or we shall be late. Ta-ta, deah boys! It's weally too bad!"

"Ta-ta, old scout!"

Roylance and D'Arcy remounted and rode on, leaving the two Shell fellows together.

"It's rather a corker," remarked Lowther, looking at the damage. "We can wheel it into Woodford from here. There's a cycle-shop there."

"Best thing to do," agreed Tom.

Lowther gave him a rather curious look.

"You're not very sorry it happened," he remarked.

"Well, no; not very," agreed Tom frankly. "It's rot, of course, but after what Manners said, I'd just as soon not go to Abbotsford this afternoon."

"Manner was talking out of his hat."

"I know; but—"

"I never thought old Manners was such an ass!" said Lowther. "I thought he'd have come round before this. Well, let's get along."

The two Shell fellows tramped away to Woodford. Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Dick Roylance were making good speed. Roylance had a rather thoughtful expression on his sunburnt face, and he rode for a long time in silence. He broke the silence at last.

"I'm a new chap at St. Jim's, D'Arcy, but you know those three fellows pretty well," he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Do you know whether Manners is still keeping up a grudge against me?"

Arthur Augustus coloured uncomfortably. He had good reason to know it.

"Weally, Woylance—"

"I don't see why we should," said

Roylance. "We had a row, but that was a misunderstanding. Those three fellows are pretty close chums, I understand?"

"Xaaa."
"It's rather awkward, you see. If I'd known that Manners was still keeping rusty, I wouldn't have thought of asking them for this afternoon. I didn't know it; in fact, I'd jolly near forgotten that I'd had a row with Manners at all," said Roylance, smiling. "But if he is keeping it up, I shall have to be a bit more careful with his friends."

"Mannahs is wathah an ass, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "It is weally vewy unlike him to keep up a thing like this; it is weally a vewy good chap. But—but to be quite frank, I feah that he has not forgotten that little trouble."

Roylance nodded.
"All serene, now I know," he answered.

And he rode on in silence again. But the fact that Manners of the Shell still regarded him with dislike had no effect upon the New Zealand junior's sunny spirits, and the two Fourth-Formers had a very cheery time at Abbotsford Camp that afternoon.

CHAPTER 3.

The Third Form Paper-Chase.

MANNERS of the Shell did not look specially pleased when three fags presented themselves in the study.

He was doing his photographic article for "Tom Merry's Weekly," but not getting on with it very well. It was quite a short article, for the terrific cost of paper caused the "Weekly" to be cut down almost to vanishing dimensions. But, short as it was, Manners did not get through it.

He was feeling down that afternoon.

Manners was a conscientious fellow, and he was not satisfied with himself for keeping up a dislike of the new junior, Roylance. When he had believed Roylance guilty of bullying Reggie, it had been different. But that had been explained away by Reggie himself. But that very explanation increased poor Manners' discomfort in connection with the matter. For he had chipped in quite unjustly, as it turned out, had picked a quarrel with the new fellow, who was only shaking the fag for having cruelly hooked his shin; and he had been most ingloriously defeated in a stand-up fight—by a fellow, too, in a lower Form.

The whole affair was unpleasant to Manners; and, though he knew that it was unjust to visit the unpleasantness upon Roylance's unoffending head, he could not help the feeling. In spite of his better nature, the bitterness remained in his breast, and found expression in words and actions.

And the fact that the New Zealander was a cheery, good-natured fellow, and very popular in the House, somehow added to his bitterness, because it deprived him of any excuse for it.

In that frame of mind, Manners was not feeling happy or comfortable, and the glance he gave the fags was not a welcoming one. Reggie was the cause of all the trouble—Reggie, whose perverse temper had led him into a row with the new junior, into which Manners had plunged without knowing the facts, thereby making an ass of himself, as even Reggie had pointed out to him with brotherly candour.

But Reggie had almost forgotten the incident. His manner was quite cheery, and he did not even notice the cloud on his major's brow.

"Hallo! Sticking at swotting?" demanded Reggie. "We want you."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 521.

"The other two duffers have gone out," remarked Wally. "We want you to come and start our paper-chase, Manners."

Levison minor, who was rather more observant than his comrades, gave Manners a rather curious look, and added:

"Not if you're busy, Manners."
"Rot!" said Reggie at once. "How can he be busy on a half-holiday? Lines can wait."

Manners rose to his feet.

"I'll come," he said briefly.

"Good!" said Wally. "Got any scent you can give us? Old exercise-books, Latin grammars, patriotic pamphlets, or articles for the 'Weekly'? All's grist that comes to the mill."

"We're a bit hard up for scent," remarked Manners minor, in an aggrieved tone. "Everybody seems to be saving up his wastepaper to sell. I think the Head might let us have some of the books from the library. No good asking him, though."

"You young ass!" said Wally witheringly. "Lots of those books are worth pounds and pounds."

"Rot! I've looked at 'em—lots of 'em in Greek. I wouldn't give a tanner for the lot!"

"Well, I wouldn't," agreed Wally, with a nod. "But I'd like to see the Head's shivvy if you asked him for his set of *Æschylus* to tear up for a paper-chase. Can we have this, Manners?"

"This" was Manners' half-finished article for the "Weekly."

"No, you young ruffian!"

"All right. Keep your wool on! What's this!" Wally picked up another paper from the table. "Lowther's merry comic column. I suppose we can have that? It will be a joke to use that for scent. And, as Lowther's a great joker, he's bound to see the point."

Before Manners could interfere, Wally, with the ruthlessness of a Prussian Hun, ripped up Lowther's humorous paper, and jammed it into the bag he was wearing on a strap over his shoulder. His comrades chuckled.

"Here, out you get!" exclaimed Manners.

And he hustled the three Third-Formers out of the study before they could lay hands on any further scent.

The Shell fellow went down to the quadrangle with the three cheery fags. In the quad quite a little army of fags had gathered. School House and New House were well represented, and a few Fourth-Formers had joined the crowd, though, as Wally expressly stated, it was a Third-Form run.

"Oh, here you are!" called out Jameson. "I thought you'd mistaken it for bedtime, and gone to sleep somewhere."
"Rats!" retorted Wally. "Don't we want a starter, you New House ass?"

"Old Taggles could have started us."
"Old Taggles be bothered! Now, then, line up!"

"Not much good having young Manners for a hare," remarked Hobbs. "Young Manners can't run."

Reggie gave Hobbs a ferocious glare.
"Oh, I shall buck him up," answered Wally.

"You'll get a dot on the nose if you begin bucking me up!" retorted Reggie.

"If you're going to be cheeky, Manner minor—"

"Poof!"

"Hadh't you better get started?" inquired Manners of the Shell mildly. "Is this a paper-chase or a jawing-match?"

"It's between young Manners and Levison minor for the other hare," said Wally. There was no doubt about Wally for the post of distinction. He had settled that for himself, as monarch of

all he surveyed in the Third Form. "I don't care which it is; but if young Manners is going to be cheeky—"
"Oh, I don't mind!" said Frank Levison at once.

"Young Manners won't be much good," said Jameson, with a solemn shake of the head. "Anyhow, toss up for it."

"Look here, I'm going to be hare!" roared Reggie. "Levison minor can't run for toffee."

"Oh, can't I?" exclaimed Frank warmly.

"No, you can't. You run like a tom-cat!"

"You cheeky ass—"

"Toss up for it," said Wally decidedly. "I think young Levison would be better myself. Anybody got a penny?"

A penny was produced.

"Heads, Levison; tails, Reggie," announced Wally. "Chuck it up, Jameson, and let it drop."

The coin spun in the air, and clinked to the ground. There was a general craning of necks to look at it.

"Head!" announced half a dozen voices. "It's Levison!"

Wally held out the second bag of scent.

"Here you are, Frank."

Frank hesitated.

"If Reggie wants—" he began.

"Never mind what Reggie wants," interposed Wally autocritically. "He isn't Tear Reginald of St. Jim's, I suppose? Shove this bag on, fathead!"

Wally slung the bag over Frank Levison's shoulder. Reggie was looking sulky, as he generally did when his lofty will and pleasure were crossed.

"Line up!" snapped Wally.

"It won't be much of a run," granted Manners minor. "I shall catch you two duffers in the third field."

D'Arcy minor sniffed.

"If you catch me I'll give you my new pocket-knife," he said scornfully. "Don't swank, Reggie; it don't suit your style of beauty. Line up, and don't scowl like a Hun!"

The fags lined up at last. Manners of the Shell took out his watch.

"Five minutes' start," said Wally.

"Right-ho!"

Wally and Levison minor trotted out of the gates, and the array waited for the interval to elapse.

"Time, isn't it?" exclaimed Manners minor impatiently, at length.

"Another minute," answered his brother.

"Of course, you're bound to stick it out to the very last second!" said Reggie sarcastically.

Manners looked at him.

"I'm bound to start you fair," he replied. "Don't be a young cad, Reggie."

"Oh, rats!"

"Manners minor wants to win Wally's pocket-knife, bodad!" grinned Hooley of the Third. "Sure, and you won't win it in a month of Sundays, Reggie! You'll be pumped before the finish and dead bade!"

"I'll keep on longer than you do," growled Reggie. "If I don't keep in to the finish, you can punch my nose as hard as you like!"

"Done!" grinned Hooley.

"Time!" called out Manners.

"Come on!" shouted Jameson.

The crowd of fags swept out of gates. Manners put his watch back in his pocket, and walked away to the School House. He returned to his photographic article. But he threw that up after a time, and went down to footer practice, where he found Kangaroo, and Clive, and Figgins & Co. of the New House. It was rather livelier than amateur

journalism in the study. But even footer practice could not quite banish the clouds from his brow, and he wished that he had, after all, gone with his chums, even with the obnoxious Roylance thrown in. It was with a moody brow that he strolled away from the school in the late afternoon.

CHAPTER 4.

Danger!

"EASY does it!" grinned D'Arcy minor.
Frank Levison slacked down, smiling.

The two hares had had it all their own way so far. Leaving the track of torn paper behind them, they had crossed the fields, and wound by paths through the wood, and gone over the hill, and now they were crossing a section of the wide moor, within sight of the smoke of Wayland.

The pack, so far, had had little chance.

Once or twice they had sighted the hares, and Jameson's bugle had rung out, but Wally and Frank were easily the best runners in the Third, and they had soon outdistanced the pursuers again.

Wally halted on a high knoll, and looked back.

In the distance he could see some straggling members of the pack. The wind had scattered the trail, and the hounds were trying right and left for it.

But as Wally grinned at them from the distance, Jameson's bugle rang out again, showing that he had been seen.

"Come on!" said Frank.

Wally ran down the slope.

"Half of 'em have tailed off," he said. "Reggie's sticking it out, but he can't run. Fancy the cheeky young ass saying he'd catch me—me, you know!"

And Wally snorted with contemptuous indignation.

"Which way now?" asked Frank.

"Keep on."

"That's through the Moor Fields," said Levison minor.

"All right; that's easy running."

"Lots of cattle there."

"If you're funky of cattle, young Levison—"

"Fathead!" answered Levison minor.

"I heard that Mr. Griggs, of Wayland, was chased by the black bull the other day in those fields. That bull is a regular Hun. There's a board up."

"We're going through the Moor Fields!" answered Wally stubbornly.

"Griggs, of Wayland, is a boozey bounder, and I dare say his nose frightened the bull. Besides, the bull isn't there now."

"How do you know?"

"I've got eyes!" explained Wally.

The two hares had reached the fence that bounded the fields. There were cattle grazing in the fields beyond, but the black bull was not to be seen. A board in a very prominent position by the stile announced that trespassers would be prosecuted, by order; and Wally, having time on his hands, paused a minute to pencil the word "Rats!" under that announcement.

"I don't believe in land-hogs!" he told Levison minor.

"But—"

"That's the worst of you, young Levison; you're always butting!"

And Wally led on through the field to stop further argument, dropping the trail of torn paper with a careless hand. Levison minor followed him. He had his doubts about crossing land that was barred to the public, but Wally was leader, and that strong-minded youth had apparently settled to his own satisfaction that he was free to cross any land in the county.

But by the time the fags were half-way

across the field Wally discovered that he was in error on the subject of the dreaded black bull.

From a hollow in the corner of the field, screened by willow-trees, a bulky form emerged, and a bellow floated on the wind. Levison minor jumped.

"Wally," he shouted, "the bull!"

"Oh, don't bull me!" said D'Arcy minor.

"He won't hurt us. I tell you it was Griggs' nose that did it."

"Look here! I'm jolly well going to run!"

"No hurry! The pack's half a mile off."

"I'm thinking of the bull, ass!"

"Blow the bull!"

Wally persisted in progressing at an easy trot to show Levison minor and the universe generally that he wasn't afraid of bulls. As a matter of fact, however, he quickened his trot a little as he heard a deeper and louder bellow from the corner of the field.

The black bull evidently resented the invasion of his special domain, or perhaps he was a bovine land-hog, and did not approve of rights of way across his field.

A loud thudding sounded as he started in the direction of the two fags. Frank Levison was running, with one eye on the bull, and his heart beat faster as he saw the bulky animal in motion.

"Wally," he panted, "put it on!"

"Rats!"

"He's coming for us!" shouted Frank.

Wally looked round then.

"Oh, my hat!" he ejaculated. "Cat for it!"

Wally broke into a terrific burst, and Levison minor was hard put to it to keep pace with him now. The fags ran fast, but the bull, excited and angry now, ran faster, and a snorting bellow sounded terrifically close behind.

Wally reached the fence, and bounded over. Levison minor reached it, but he was too breathless to jump, and he clambered over wildly. His comrade turned back on the safe side of the fence, and his face paled as he saw the bull only three yards behind Frank.

Quick as a flash Wally tore off his half-filled bag of scent, and hurled it at the bull's steaming jaws.

The animal swerved, and then caught the falling bag with his horns, and gored it savagely. Levison minor clambered into safety, Wally dragging at him. He stood panting on the safe side.

The bull, bellowing, was tearing the bag to tatters, and scattering what remained of the scent far and wide.

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally.

"You idiot!" gasped Frank Levison.

"Look here—"

"You silly chump!"

"Why, I—I'll—"

"You dangerous ass!" shouted Frank.

"We might both have been gored to death. I've a jolly good mind to punch your nose!"

D'Arcy minor looked warlike, but he controlled his wrath. He realised only too clearly that he had been obstinate and foolhardy, and that it might have cost both him and his companion dear.

"Perhaps I was a bit of an ass!" he admitted.

"A silly, thumping ass!" answered Frank.

"Well, now you've told me, and you can cheese it. No bones broken, anyway; and"—Wally chuckled—"we've beaten the pack. They won't come across the field now. We can take it easy home."

"I'm not going to take it easy till we're out of these fields!" growled Frank.

"There may be some more bulls."

"Oh, rats!"

"Well, I'm going."

And Levison minor went, and Wally,

on second thoughts, ran, too. From a hedge that bordered the dangerous field on another side at a distance, where a lane ran beyond the willows, two juniors in Norfolk waded their hands from their bicycles, but the fags did not see them. The two hares kept on a rapid run till they were well out of the Moor Fields, and then dropped into an easy walk through the wood for home.

CHAPTER 5.

"Fools Rush In—"

"HOLD ON!" yelled Jameson.

The pack had reached the stile giving access to the Moor Fields. Reggie Manners was ahead, and he had one leg over the stile when Jameson shouted to him.

Reggie looked round.

"This way!" he called back.

The pack struggled up. There were not more than seven or eight fellows still in the running. It was rather a long run across country, and the fags had tailed off.

Reggie was not one of the best runners by any means, but he was sticking it out. His pride was aroused, and he was determined that by hook or by crook he would be in at the death. His customary energy would have petered out long before, but obstinacy and annoyance spurred him on.

"That's right, Jameson!" panted Hooley. "The paper goes on through that field. Look at it!"

"I know it does, fathead!" replied Jameson.

"But there's a bull in that field—"

"Blow the bull!" said Reggie disdainfully.

"We're going round," said Jameson.

"I'm not going round!" declared Manners minor.

"Wally and Levison have gone through."

"More fools they!" said Jameson, with a sniff. "I'm going round. I'm not a silly ass, if they are!"

"We shall be left right out if we go round."

"I'd rather be than that be gored by a bull," was Jameson's reply. "Look at him! You can see him from here."

"He let the others pass."

"Well, I'm going round. Suit yourself, and if you get gored don't blame me!" And with that, Jameson turned away. "Come on, you chaps; it's a good way round by the lane, but it can't be helped. Put it on!"

The fags followed Jameson, with the exception of Reggie Manners. Reggie remained on the stile, hesitating.

He was savagely anxious to overtake the hares, and make good his boasts; and Wally and Frank had evidently crossed the field in safety, in spite of the bull, for the trail of torn paper lay directly before him.

"Funks!" yelled Manners minor after his comrades, as they plunged away through the frosty grass.

Jameson & Co. did not even look round. They disappeared beyond a slope in the ground, and Reggie was left alone.

Reggie hesitated a few moments longer. But after calling his comrades funks, he did not care to follow their example. And though the bull in the distance looked a rather ugly customer, Reggie had often passed bulls in safety before. This bull certainly had a bad reputation; but then Wally and Frank had gone that way, and there was no trace of any remains in the field.

"They'll cackle at me for being frightened by a bull when they know that was the reason I didn't catch them!" growled Reggie savagely.

That consideration was enough to decide the wilful fag.

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He jumped down from the stile on the inner side, and started following the trail of paper fragments towards the opposite fence, a quarter of a mile on.

The bull was moving about restlessly in the field, which the fog might have guessed indicated that he had been recently disturbed and irritated. But he had his tail to Reggie, and did not see him at first.

As he got further and further from the stile, Manners minor was drawing nearer and nearer to the bull, who was only about a dozen yards from the foot-path in the middle of the field.

And as he drew nearer and nearer Reggie felt less and less comfortable.

He remembered what he had heard of the reputation of the black bull, and that he was said to have gored a farmhand, and to have attacked several people who had ventured into the field without knowing that he was there. Reggie's pace slackened, and his heart beat faster, but he kept on.

He was close on the middle of the field, the bull still ahead of him and a dozen yards to the left, when the animal looked round.

The bull made a sudden movement as he saw the fog, and his tail lashed. Reggie felt his heart leap into his throat.

"Oh, the horrid beast!" he muttered. His feet dragged to a halt. With all his reckless bravado, his legs refused to carry him any nearer to the terrible animal.

A deep, echoing bellow came from the bull, and it made the fog's hair almost stand on end.

Reggie stood frozen for a moment as he saw that the bull was actually advancing upon him. And that he meant mischief was only too evident from the lashing tail and the red-gleaming eyes.

Reggie cast a wild glance round.

He could not keep on without rushing upon the danger he recognised too late. And behind him the stile lay four hundred yards away. He knew he could not run that distance, or half of it, before the bull reached him.

Away to his right, nearer than the stile, was the hedge bordering a lane that ran along the side of the field, a narrow lane, with high hedges, much used by the St. Jim's fellow as a short cycling cut on the way to Abbotsford.

The hedge was nearer than the stile he had left behind, about half the distance.

Reggie did not think it out. He acted instinctively. As the bull careered towards him he turned sharply from the path to the right, and bolted for the hedge.

He ran as he had never run on the cinder-path.

The fog did not need to look round. Behind him he could hear the heavy thudding of hoofs.

The snorting of the savage animal came to his ears, and fast as he ran it grew ever louder and louder.

Yet his feet seemed scarcely to touch the grass as he flew. He was already tired with a long run; but his fatigue vanished. He ran untiringly, frantically, his breath coming in great throbs.

The hedge seemed terribly distant.

He was suddenly aware of a voice calling from the lane through the high hedge. Someone there had seen his danger. He hardly heard it, he did not heed, and all his thought and energy was concentrated upon the task of escaping the horns of the bull by a superhuman effort.

The hedge at last!

It rose before him. Only a few more yards—two or three. Then, feeling rather than knowing that the savage head was lowered behind, charging him, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 521.

he bounded desperately to one side, and the bull went thundering by and crashed on the hedge.

The hapless fog sank in the grass, overcame.

There was a bellow of wrath from the bull, crashing on the hedge in his mad charge; but he swerved back, looking with bloodshot eyes for his victim.

Reggie staggered up dazedly.

He bolted wildly along the hedge, the bull after him. Closer and closer, and then his strength failed him, and he pitched forward in the grass.

Helpless, scarce able to move a limb in his terrible exhaustion, he lay at the mercy of the bull.

It was too much, and it was no wonder that the fog's senses failed him, and that he lay in the grass in a dead faint, with the black bull thundering down upon him.

CHAPTER 6.

In Direst Peril.

"THE weckless young asses!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark in mingled wrath and relief.

Roylance and D'Arcy were cycling home from Abbotsford, when from the lane they caught sight of Wally and Frank Levison running from the bull in the field adjoining the lane.

They halted at once, in great anxiety, and ran up into the hedge, to see what would happen.

To their great relief the two hares escaped into the next field—too far off all the time for aid to be lent, if it had been needed.

Roylance waved his hand to the distant fags, but they went on their way without seeing him. Arthur Augustus gasped with relief, but he was as angry as he was relieved.

"The weckless young asses! They might have been goaded!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "I shall box Wally's ears for this! Bai Jove! It has thawn me into quite a futtah!"

"Young duffers!" agreed Roylance.

Arthur Augustus went back to the road and picked up his bike.

"Come on, deah boy!"

"Hold on a minute," said Roylance thoughtfully. "Those kids are hares in a paper-chase."

"Yaas. It's the Third-Form papachase to-day."

"Then the pack will be after them soon."

"I psume so."

"It won't be safe for them to cross the field."

"They won't be asses enough, I should think!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Your young brother was ass enough, and that kid Levison."

"Bai Jove, you're wight, Roylance!" Arthur Augustus nodded. "We could get wound and stop them. I know the way. It's wound by those twees, and past the pond, and then by the dip."

Roylance smiled.

"You know this part," he said, "I don't. You cut round and tell the young duffers to keep clear, and I'll watch here, in case you miss them, or don't see them in time. If a young duffer gets into this field, he will want help."

"Yaas, that is so. Pewwaps I had better wemain, and you go—"

"But I don't know the way."

"Bai Jove! I forgot that! All wight, I'll wejoin you heah, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus jumped on his bike and rode back the way the juniors had come, to get round to the stile, and warn the pack off when they arrived there. Roylance squeezed himself into the hedge, and watched the field.

His brow was very anxious.

If any reckless fog ventured into the field as the hares had done, he would be in fearful danger. Roylance knew that, and the New Zealand junior was not the fellow to leave anyone in danger unaided.

Not that he relished the idea of braving the black bull in his own domain, far from that. But he would have done it if duty called.

And, aware of the possibility, he unfastened the waterproof cape from his saddle, and threw it over his arm, and posted himself in the hedge again to watch.

He had not long to wait.

Long before Arthur Augustus could get round by the devious way to the stile the pack arrived there.

The halt they made caused Roylance to hope that they saw the danger, and had decided to keep clear of it.

He set his lips as he saw a single fag enter the field and follow the paper-trail.

"The young fool!" he muttered angrily.

Even at this distance he recognised Manners minor, the fag whose peevish temper had caused his trouble with Manners of the Shell on the day he came to St. Jim's.

From the fact that Reggie came on alone, and that the rest had gone a different way, he could guess that the fag's wilful temper was at work again. But all thought of that was swallowed up in his anxiety.

He shouted a warning; but the distance was great, and the wind was against him. Reggie did not hear.

With deep anxiety Roylance watched the fag's progress across the field.

He began to hope that Reggie would get past without attracting the attention of the bull.

But that hope was soon dashed to the ground. With starting eyes Roylance watched the chase as Reggie started running for the hedge, with the bull after him.

Closer and closer came the fag, closer and closer the thundering bull behind, and Roylance shouted to Reggie, hardly knowing what he shouted in his wild excitement and anxiety.

He squeezed himself further through the hedge, but it was thick and strong, and it was a struggle to get through. He heard the fag's gasp of terror as the bull passed him, he heard the crash on the hedge, only a few yards from where he was forcing his way through. With a final effort he burst free, and jumped down into the field.

Reggie, in a dead faint, and quite insensible, lay a few yards from him on the left; on the right the bull came charging down on the fallen fag.

Roylance was between.

In less than a minute it would have been all over with the fag; and it needed more than common courage for the New Zealand junior to throw himself in the path of the raging animal.

But he did not hesitate.

Braveless from his struggle through the tenacious hedge, Roylance sprang between the bull and his victim.

The heavy waterproof cape was in his hand. He had reason to be thankful that he had had the forethought to provide himself with it. The bull came thundering on with lowered head, not even seeing the new figure in his path, and Roylance hurled the cape and leaped aside just in time.

His hand had been swift but sure. The cape caught on the lowered horns, and clung there, and dangled over the savage, bloodshot eyes.

There was a muffled roar from the bull as he passed, thundering, within three feet of the panting junior.

But he did not reach Manners minor.

Blinded by the clinging cape, the animal tossed up his head, careering round furiously, bellowing and snorting.

Roylance did not lose a second.

Two bounds carried him to the side of the insensible fag. He bent, and lifted Reggie Manners in his strong arms, and hurried back to the hedge.

Reggie's weight was little to the strong-limbed junior. He reached the hedge, and plunged into the opening he had made in squeezing through.

It was not easy to pass, for the tangled hedge had set closely, and he had to struggle and fight his way.

Behind him the bull was roaring.

"Woylance, deah boy—"

It was D'Arcy's panning voice. He grasped Roylance from the lane, and dragged at him and at Reggie.

With a final effort they came through into the lane, and tumbled down in the dust.

A maddened bellow sounded from the field.

The bull had got rid at last of the encumbrance upon his head, and was glaring round in search of his victim.

"Bai Jove, he's comin'!" panted D'Arcy.

Crash!

Only a few seconds after Roylance was clear the bull's head crashed into the hedge.

For a moment the hearts of the juniors almost ceased to beat at the thought that the savage animal might force his way through.

But where Roylance's slim form had squeezed a passage there was no room for the mighty bulk of the bull. He recoiled, roaring with pain, and did not charge the hedge again. He returned, bellowing, to the torn cape, and tossed it about in his fury till it was almost in ribbons.

"Thank goodness we're out of that!" panted Roylance, reeling against a tree by the roadside.

"Woylance, old chap—" Arthur Augustus was almost blubbing with excitement. "Old fellow, it was wippin'—wippin'! I saw it from up yondah, and came back instead of goin' on. I—I was afraid you—"

He stopped, his voice trembling.

"All's well that ends well!" gasped Roylance, trying to smile. "But that kid—he looks in a bad way!"

Arthur Augustus bent over the fag, who lay motionless in the grass by the side of the lane in the shadow of the hedge.

"He's fainted!" he said. "It's Mannahs minah. We must try to bring him wound somehow."

"There's a cottage yonder. Let's get him to it," suggested Roylance.

"Good idea!"

On the other side of the lane was a gate, with a path running to a cottage a dozen yards from the road. A labourer was coming down the path to the lane, having evidently seen the whole affair.

Arthur Augustus called to him.

"Bring him in, measter," replied the cottager. "I'll help you."

He opened the gate, and came out into the road to lend a hand.

"Better get a doctor to him, D'Arcy!" muttered Roylance.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Will you cut off? I don't know the roads—"

"Yaas, deah boy. There's a short cut to Wylcombe from heah—"

"Buck up, then!"

Arthur Augustus jumped on his machine, and pedalled away like the wind. The cottager carried Manners minor indoors, and Roylance wheeled his bicycle into the garden, and then followed him in.

A few minutes later half a dozen juniors came trooping along the lane,

and they passed on, little dreaming of the tragedy that had nearly taken place there. Jameson stopped and looked through the top of the hedge into the field, a little way past the cottage.

"Can't see Manners minor there!" he remarked.

"He must have got through all right, then," said Hobbs. "He'll cackle at us over this, the cheeky bouncer!"

"More likely he turned back," said Hooley.

"Two to one he did," agreed Jameson.

"Anyhow, let's get on. The hares have done us in the eye, there's no getting out of that."

And the tired and dusty pack went on their way, picking up the paper trail once more on the edge of the wood, and following it home—to arrive at St. Jim's half an hour after Wally and Levison minor.

CHAPTER 7.

A Shock for Manners.

"HALLO, Manners!"

"Hallo!"

Manners of the Shell stopped in surprise.

He was strolling along a shady lane, with his camera slung over his shoulder. Manners was still moody and down, but the footer practice had done him good, and he was feeling all the better for a walk in the keen, clear afternoon.

His face brightened at the sight of Monty Lowther and Tom Merry, on their bikes in the lane. They jumped down at once.

"Fancy meeting you!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Did you get fed-up with photo articles for the 'Weekly'?"

"Yes; I've been playing footer," said Manners. "Then I came out for a trot."

"Don't say you missed us?" smiled Lowther.

"Well, perhaps I did," said Manners, colouring. "What are you fellows doing here, anyway? Where are the other two?"

"Puncture on the road," explained Tom Merry.

"Then you haven't been to Abbotsford at all?" exclaimed Manners.

"No. Roylance had to get there to see his uncle, and he couldn't wait, and D'Arcy went on with him," said Tom. "We've been getting a puncture mended in Woodford."

"Oh, good!" said Manners.

The Terrible Three were glad to be together again. Manners turned back with his chums, and the three walked on together towards the distant school, Tom and Lowther wheeling their machines.

"Rather a disappointment for you chaps, not getting to Abbotsford," Manners remarked.

"Well, I'd have liked to meet Roylance's uncle," said Tom, "but it doesn't matter. I wasn't wholly sorry to get the puncture."

"Did you start the merry fag paper-chase?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yes. I dare say they'll be pretty nearly home by now," remarked Manners.

"If I'd come with you I should have turned back when you did, so it comes to the same thing."

"I suppose it does," agreed Tom Merry.

Manners hesitated.

"Look here!" he said at last. "I dare say I was a bit ratty when you fellows went. You needn't mind that."

"We don't."

"I—I'm sorry. But—but I don't like that chap Roylance, and that's flat. If you fellows want to be friendly with him, you needn't mind me. But I can't be, and that's settled. I don't want to interfere with you."

"My dear ass, we shouldn't have much to do with a Fourth-Form chap, any-

way!" said Tom. "And Roylance wouldn't have asked us for this afternoon, only I'm sure he'd forgotten all about your row with him. I wish you'd forget it, too."

"Well, I can't."

"Hallo!" ejaculated Monty Lowther, as a bicycle-bell rang on the road. "Here's the one and only. Roylance isn't with him."

"Gussy!" exclaimed Tom.

Arthur Augustus, riding like the wind, his eyeglass flying at the end of its cord, came whizzing round a turning into the road from a narrow lane.

The chums of the Shell looked past him, expecting to see Roylance; but there was no sign of the New Zealand junior.

"Gussy!" shouted Lowther.

Arthur Augustus jammed on his brakes as he sighted the Terrible Three, and slowed down.

"Bai Jove! You fellows heah!" he exclaimed. "Mannahs, deah boy, I'm very glad to see you. Your minah—"

Manners started.

"What about my minor?"

"He's in Bunce's cottage up the lane. I'm goin' for a doctah. Can't stop!"

And Arthur Augustus drove at his pedals again, and dashed on, vanishing down the road like a flash.

Manners stood very still.

"Reggie in Bunce's cottage—a—a doctor!" he muttered blankly. "What has happened then?"

"Some accident," said Tom uneasily. "Here, take my bike. You know the cottage—up that lane, and bear to the left. Sharp's the word!"

Manners threw himself upon Tom's bike and dashed away, his face white. He knew that D'Arcy had thrown him that hasty information in passing; so that he could go to his minor.

His heart was heavy with fear for his brother. What could have happened to Reggie that D'Arcy was riding like the wind for a doctor?

Manners rode madly up the lane.

Tom and Monty Lowther looked at one another in dismay.

"What on earth's happened?" muttered Lowther.

"An accident of some sort. Reggie was in the paper-chase," said Tom. "Poor old Manners! If—it's serious, it will cut him up! Let's get after him."

They hurried after Manners, Tom standing on the foot-rest of Lowther's bike.

Manners had vanished in a cloud of dust.

The Shell fellow was by no means an athlete of Tom Merry's calibre, but he was riding now at a speed that Tom had seldom equalled. What had happened to Reggie? His father! What would his father feel if it was serious? Manners rode frantically, the pedals spinning round like lightning.

He came up to Bunce's cottage gate in a whirl of dust.

Hardly noting where the bicycle ran as he jumped off, he threw open the gate, and tramped up the garden path. His hand trembled as he knocked at the cottage door. Roylance, from the little window above, looked down on Manners in amazement. The New Zealand junior was astonished to see him there.

"My hat!" he muttered.

Reggie Manners lay on the little bed, still unconscious. The cottager's wife was beside him, doing what she could for the fag, but he had not come to.

Roylance stepped quickly to the bedroom door.

He did not want to meet Manners there. The meeting would be awkward for Manners in the circumstances.

Roylance left the bedroom quickly as

he heard Manners knock at the door below.

He hurried down the little stairs as Mr. Bunce came slowly out of his dusky little kitchen to answer the door.

Roylance went into the kitchen. He heard the door open, and Manners' husky voice speaking:

"My brother is here, I think?"

"Come in, sir."

Manners came in unsteadily. Mr. Bunce gave a curious glance at his white, strained face.

"Tain't very serious, sir," he said comfortingly. "Only fainted. The bull never touched him."

"The bull!" muttered Manners. "Mr. Lucas' bull was after him, but the young gent got him away in time. He's upstairs. This way, sir."

Mr. Bunce showed Manners up the narrow, rickety stairs.

Roylance sat down in the kitchen. He was undecided what to do.

He was needed there no longer, now that Reggie's brother was there, and he did not want to meet Manners. He could guess what the Shell fellow's chagrin would be like, meeting his special enemy in the role of his brother's rescuer. It would be uncomfortable on both sides.

A few minutes later there came another knock at the door, and he heard Mr. Bunce admit Tom Merry and Lowther, and caught their voices, in low tones, as they were taken upstairs.

Roylance made up his mind.

He quitted the cottage, returned to his bicycle in the garden, and wheeled it out quietly into the lane. There was nothing to stay for longer, and he was better off the scene.

He mounted in the lane, and rode away swiftly in the direction D'Arcy had taken some time before.

A quarter of an hour later he passed the Rylombe doctor's trap, driving at a great rate. He did not know Dr. Short by sight, but he could guess that this was the doctor D'Arcy had fetched.

He rode on.

"Hallo, Woylance!"

Five minutes after passing the doctor's trap he met Arthur Augustus on the road, riding at a much more leisurely pace now. Roylance jumped down.

"That was the doctor?" he asked.

"Man in a trap?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, good!"

"Comin' back?" asked D'Arcy, stopping.

"May as well get on," suggested Roylance. "Manners is there now, with Tom Merry and Lowther. We should only be in the way."

"Pewwaps you are right, deah boy; but Weggie—"

"He's all right. He's not hurt, you know."

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"Wight you are! I am wathah fatigued, as a mattach of fact."

And the two Fourth-Formers rode on to St. Jim's.

Meanwhile, Dr. Short had arrived at the cottage.

He ordered the Terrible Three to stand away, and proceeded to attend to Reggie. The fog was coming to now, and his eyes were open, with a wild light in them.

"The bull!" he muttered.

The doctor answered him soothingly. Reggie sat up as he recognised the school medical man.

"Look here, I'm not ill!" he exclaimed.

Evidently it was the old Reggie again already.

Dr. Short smiled.

"No, you're not ill," he agreed. "You fainted, you."

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"I've never fainted in my life!"

"Quiet, my lad!" answered Dr. Short.

He turned to Manners.

"There's nothing the matter with your brother, Manners—nothing at all. He had better be kept quiet for an hour, and then he can be taken back to the school. Better get a trap."

"I can walk," grunted Reggie.

"Dry up, kid!" muttered Manners.

"Take him in a trap," said the doctor.

"He's had a bad shock, and fainted, and he had better not exert himself. I really don't see why Master D'Arcy was so alarmed."

And the medical gentleman, evidently not very pleased at being called up in a hurry to attend to such a slight matter, gave Manners a few professional directions, and returned to his trap.

"I'll go and see about getting a trap to take him home," said Tom Merry.

"May get one at Lucas' farm."

"Look out for the bull!" called out Reggie.

Tom laughed.

"I sha'n't go near the bull," he answered.

He went down and Lowther followed him, leaving Manners with his minor. The Shell fellow sat on the foot of the bed, breathing hard. He had had a painful shock, and his relief at finding Reggie

Eat less Bread

almost unhurt was great. He was curious to know what had happened; but, as the doctor had said that the fog was to be kept quiet for a time, he did not question him.

Reggie lay silent, with his eyes closed. He was feeling sick and weak. But his eyes opened after a time, and he sat up, scowling.

"How on earth did you get here?" he asked.

"D'Arcy called to me as he passed, and told me where you were."

"Did he? How the thump did D'Arcy know, and what on earth was he doing here, too?" grunted Reggie.

"I don't know."

"Who fetched me out of the field?"

"I don't know, Reggie."

"That cottager chap, I suppose," said Reggie.

"I say, sir, I'm much obliged to you."

Mr. Bunce shook his head as Reggie called across the room.

"Twasn't me, sir," he said.

"What was it happened, Mr. Bunce?" asked Manners.

"I saw it from the winder, sir. This young gent was in the field, and the bull was very nearly on him, when the other young gent got him out jest in time. Very brave of him it was," said Mr. Bunce.

"I wouldn't 'ave cared to face Mr. Lucas' bull, not if I could have helped it."

"D'Arcy, I suppose, as he was there," remarked Reggie. "Blessed if I thought he had it in him!"

"I don't know the young gent's name,"

said Mr. Bunce.

Tom Merry looked in.

"We've got the farmer's trap when you're ready," he said.

"I'll carry Reggie down," said Manners.

"You won't!" growled Reggie. "I'm not a baby."

But Reggie found himself so weak that he had to hang heavily on his brother's arm as he descended the stairs. Tom Merry and Lowther had made a hasty collection between them, and raised the sum of seven-and-sixpence, which was pressed into Mr. Bunce's hand. Then the Terrible Three and Reggie drove away in the farmer's trap for St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 8.

Shoulder-High.

"**B**AI Jove, I'm wathah tired!" confessed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I've had enough," remarked

Roylance.

The two juniors dismounted at the gate of St. Jim's, and wheeled in their machines in the falling dusk.

The bikes were put up in the shed, and they walked round to the School House. There was a deep line of thought in Roylance's brow. He paused as they came towards the house.

"Hold on a minute, D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, deah boy. Anythin' up?"

"I've been thinking."

"Any result?" inquired Arthur

Augustus, with a smile.

Roylance laughed.

"Yes, I think so. I cleared out of the cottage when Manners came, and he didn't see me, or know that I was there."

"Pewwaps that was wathah tactful, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, with a nod. "Poor old Mannahs! He will feel an awful ass when he knows what you did."

"That's what I was thinking of. I don't see why he should know."

"Eh?"

"No need to tell him, is there?" asked

Roylance, flushing.

"But—but—" stammered Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "He's bound to know. He will ask Weggie—"

"His minor can't tell him anything. He hadn't recovered his senses before I left."

"But he will know that somebody must have got him out of the bull's way, deah boy."

"It might have been anybody," said Roylance. "Anybody passing would have done it, the same as I did."

"Yaas, I suppose so."

"Well, then, leave it at that. Manners is keeping up a fat-headed grudge against me, and it will make him feel as awful fool if he knows—"

D'Arcy chuckled.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, he needn't know. It will be jolly uncomfortable for me, too, placing a fellow under an obligation when I'm on bad terms with him. As it happens, he doesn't even know I was there, and he needn't know."

Arthur Augustus reflected.

"Weally, Woylance, I am very pleased to see that you are not lackin' in tact and judgment," he said graciously. "Pewwaps, as you say, it would be more tactful not to mention that you were on the spot at all. It will avoid an extremely uncomfy posish for both parties."

"That's what I think."

"But you are entitled to the credit, you know—"

"Oh, hang the credit!"

"You wisked your life, Woylance!"

"Never mind that. I suppose I'm not

going parading up and down the school asking the fellows to admire me?"

"Ha, ha! No. Pewwaps it would be better taste to hide your light undah a bushel, old fellow, undah the circs."

"I'm glad you see it," said Roylance, relieved. "No need to say a word about it, you see. Let's get in to tea, and keep it dark."

"Wighto!"

They went into the School House, and Roylance went to his own study, where Smith minor and Contarini were finishing tea. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy proceeded to look for his minor.

He found Wally & Co. in the Form-room discussing the absence of Manners of the Third.

"Wally, you young vascal—" began Arthur Augustus severely.

"Hallo, cocky!"

"You cheeky young boundah! I have looked in to speak to you vevy severely. What do you mean by cwoassin' a field with a mad bull in it?"

"The bull wasn't mad, ass!"

"Well, he was vevy savage."

"So he was," agreed Wally. "He reminded me of Herr Schneider."

"Worse, if anything," remarked Levison minor.

"You wisked your life, Wally—"

"Well, I didn't lose it," said Wally cheerfully; "and if I had it would have saved me from being jawed by my major. There's a silver lining to every cloud, you see."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway be sewious on a sewious subject, Wally. Mannahs minah was vevy neahly goahed by the bull in followin' you."

"By gum! Was he?" exclaimed Jameson. "Then he didn't turn back, after all?"

"No, Jameson. He was chased by the bull."

"Great pip! I hope he won the race."

"You don't mean to say that young Reggie was gored?" exclaimed Levison minor.

"He was vevy neahly goahed."

"Oh, a miss is as good as a mile," said Wally. "Young Levison was vevy neahly gored, if you come to that."

Arthur Augustus frowned sternly. It really did not seem possible to impress Wally's youthful mind with a proper understanding of the seriousness of the matter.

"Is that why Reggie hasn't come in?" asked Hobbs.

"Yaas."

"Well, I said he was an ass at the time," said Jameson. "You fellows heard me."

"Where is he, then?" demanded Wally.

"Lym' at Bunce's cottage, in a faint, when I saw him last," answered D'Arcy major. "The bull vevy neahly had him."

"A faint!" said Wally scornfully. "Oh, the silly baby!"

"He fell down wight undah the bull's horns, Wally."

"How did he get away, then?"

"A chap jumped in and stopped the bull by fingin' somethin' oval his horns, and got Weggie away just in time. They came neah bein' killed, both of them."

"Good chap, whoever he was," said Levison minor. "Was it you, Gussy?"

"I?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Yes. You were on the spot it seems."

"Good old Gussy!" exclaimed Wally heartily. "You're not the silly idiot you always make yourself out to be, old chap."

"Bai Jove! But it was not I, you young asses!"

"Who was it, then?"

"A—a chap! He-pwefers not to men-



A Hero In Spite of Himself!

(See Chapter 2.)

tion who he was, you know, bein' a waihah modest chap."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wally. "I know who's the only modest chap at St. Jim's. His name's Gussy, and he's a howling ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Three cheers for Gussy!" shouted Wally.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"But it was not I!" yelled Arthur Augustus, in consternation. "It was quite anothah chap—"

"Rats! Gentlemen," said Wally, looking round, with a grin. "Gussy has distinguished himself, and he wants to hide his light under a hat. He's saved the life of a member of the Third Form, according to his own account—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I haven't! I didn't! I wasn't—"

howled Arthur Augustus, quite at a loss.

"Shoulder high!" shouted Wally.

"You young asses!" shouted Arthur Augustus, as the grinning fags surrounded him. "I wepeat— Leggo! Let go at once! I tell you— Oh, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Up went Arthur Augustus D'Arcy on the shoulders of the fags. They carried him round the Third-Form-room in great triumph.

D'Arcy shouted and expostulated in vain.

"See if the coast's clear, Levison," shouted Wally, when Arthur Augustus had made the circuit of the Form-room on the shoulders of the fags.

"Right-ho!" grinned Frank.

He ran out, and came back in a minute or less.

"All serene. The light's not on yet, either."

"Good! Come on, you chaps. Carry him home!"

"Hurrah!"

Arthur Augustus, wondering whether

he was on his head or his heels, was borne shoulder-high out of the Form-room. The coast was clear, and he was rushed up the big staircase, fortunately without any masters or prefects coming upon the strange procession.

The crowd of fags rushed along the Fourth-Form passage, with the swell of St. Jim's sailing along on their shoulders, yelling.

"What the merry dickens!" shouted Cardew of the Fourth, who was coming in with Clive and Levison major.

"What's the game, Frank?" yelled Levison.

"It's the conquering hero!" grinned Frank. "We're taking him home in state."

"Hurrah!"

"He's saved the life of Manners minor," shouted Wally. "At least, he says so, and he ought to know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I didn't. I wasn't— Oh! Yawwooh! Don't swash my nappah on the dooh!" wailed Arthur Augustus.

Hobbs hurried open the door of Study No. 6. Blake and Herries and Digby were there, late in to tea. The three juniors fairly jumped as the mob of fags poured into the study, with Arthur Augustus shoulder-high.

"Hallo!" roared Blake. "What the thump—"

"Wescue!"

"Here he is!" shouted Wally. "He's the Conquering Hero! He's been killing mad bulls and saving lives all the afternoon! Hurrah!"

Plump!

Arthur Augustus was landed bodily on the tea-table, and the fags swarmed out of the study, leaving Blake & Co. blinking at their study-mate. Wally chuckled gleefully as he returned with his comrades to the Third-Form-room.

"But, I say, young D'Arcy, did your major really save Reggie's life?" asked Jameson.

"Blessed if I know! He says he did, or he didn't! Blessed if I quite know which he meant!" answered D'Arcy minor cheerfully. "It's stopped him jawing, anyway. He came to jaw, and we stopped him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no doubt about that. But as to what had really happened to Manners minor the fags had to wait for Reggie's return to learn.

CHAPTER 9.

Mysterious!

"HERE they are!"

Blake, and Herries and Digby, of the Fourth, were waiting at the school gates when a trap drove up with the Terrible Three and Manners minor in it. Taggles had come out to lock the gates, and the juniors were only just in time.

"You kids there!" called Tom Merry, blinking through the wintry dusk. "Lend a hand with these bikes, as you're there."

Blake & Co. took the two bicycles that were handed down the back of the trap. Tom Merry jumped down, followed by Lowther, and Manners helped his minor to alight.

"What on earth's happened?" demanded Blake. "Gussy's mystifying everybody."

"We have," answered Lowther. "Anybody here got any money? Chap's got to be paid."

"Lend us some tin, Blake," said Tom, laughing, as Manners went in at the gates with Reggie.

"Right you are!"

Money was forthcoming, and the driver of the trap drove off satisfied. Then Tom Merry and Monty Lowther took their machines and wheeled them in. Blake & Co. accompanied them in great curiosity and surprise.

"Look here, what's been going on?" demanded Blake. "Wally says that Gussy saved young Manners' life, and Gussy says he didn't. Has anything happened to that young waster?"

"Somebody seems to have saved Reggie from being badly hurt, at least," answered Tom Merry. "I conclude that it was Gussy. Hasn't he told you?"

"He won't say a word about it."

"Why not?" demanded Lowther.

"Goodness knows! Tell us what you know about it."

"Easily done," said Tom. "We didn't go to Abbotsford owing to a puncture. Gussy and Roylance went on alone. We crawled in to Woodford, and got the tyre mended, and walked home, and met Manners on the Rylcombe road. Then Gussy suddenly burst on us, riding like thunder for a doctor, and he called out in passing that Reggie was at Bunce's cottage."

"Had he been to Abbotsford?"

"I don't know. I suppose so. It was late in the afternoon."

"Roylance wasn't with him?" asked Dig.

"No. I never saw Roylance after we parted with him on the way to Abbotsford."

"And what did you find at Bunce's cottage?"

"Reggie. The young ass had gone into the Moor Fields, and got chased by the bull. Mr. Bunce saw it all from his window. The bull was right on him when somebody jumped in the way and fished Reggie out. It must have been D'Arcy, I suppose, as we found D'Arcy riding for the doctor. But he didn't come back to the cottage; and that's all I know."

"Why don't he tell us what's happened, then?" said Blake, mystified.

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"I give that up. When we've put the bikes up, we'll come along, and help you bump him till he does tell."

"Ha, ha! Good wheeze!"

The bikes were put up, and the juniors hurried into the School House barely in time for late call-over. They found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in hall, looking very thoughtful and serious. Manners joined them, and Tom noted that Reggie was in the ranks of the Third, who were whispering questions to him. Reggie appeared to be answering rather grumpily. The events of the afternoon had not had a pleasant or soothing effect upon Reggie.

After call-over the Terrible Three joined Blake & Co. in Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus looked rather uneasy.

He could see that questioning was coming, and his promise to Roylance held him silent on the subject of the rescue of Reggie. Roylance, of course, had known nothing of D'Arcy's having passed the Terrible Three on his way to the doctor's, and having sent Manners to the cottage. Arthur Augustus had, in fact, forgotten it himself when Roylance asked him to keep silent concerning the rescue.

So far as Roylance saw, there was nothing to connect either him or D'Arcy with the rescue of the fag, as Mr. Bunce at the cottage did not know their names.

Had he been aware that D'Arcy's connection with the matter was known, at least, he would have taken a different view.

But Arthur Augustus had not happened to mention it. Both the juniors had been tired on their home ride, and had not talked much en route, and Arthur Augustus had not thought of it.

But the swell of St. Jim's realised now that the position was awkward.

Wally, half in fun, had jumped to the conclusion that Gussy was the noble rescuer, hiding his light under a bushel. And Gussy had, at least, to give some explanation.

Six juniors looked inquiringly at Arthur Augustus, who coughed and coloured, and did not speak.

"Well," said Tom Merry.

"Well," repeated Blake.

"Well, dear boys?" said Arthur Augustus feebly.

"Tell us what happened this afternoon, Gussy," said Manners quietly. "Reggie has told me that he fell down in front of the bull; and, though he won't own that he fainted, it's pretty clear that he did. Somebody got him away from the bull by chucking something on the beast's head and turning him aside. It was you, I suppose?"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"You saw it, anyway?" asked Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Were you alone when you saw it?" demanded Blake.

"Natuwally, deah boy."

"Then it was you did it."

"Wats!"

"Did you or did you not?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Not, deah boy!"

"Then who did?"

"I am wathah fatigued now, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

"Pewpaws we might postpone this intewestint' conversation for the pwesent."

The juniors stared at him.

"Why don't you want to tell us?" demanded Manners.

"Bai Jove! That is a wathah wotten way of puttin' it!"

"Was it Bunce?" asked Digby.

"No, Dig, it was not Bunce."

"Then who was it?" roared all the juniors together.

"I am sowwy I cannot satisfy your cuwiosity, deah boys!" answered Arthur

Augustus calmly. "I wegret to say it vewy much, but there you are. Pwavy let the mattah dwop!"

"You howling ass—"

"Weally, Blake!"

"You burbling jabberwock!"

"I wefuse to be called a burblin' jab-bahwock, Blake!"

"Perhaps it was Roylance," said Herries, after some thought.

Manners started.

"What rot!" he exclaimed.

"Well, Gussy went out with Roylance, you know. Was Roylance with you, Gussy, when you saw Reggie just going to be gored?"

Arthur Augustus smiled. He was able to answer that question in the negative with perfect veracity, for he had been a good two hundred yards away from Roylance at that time.

"No, Hewwies, Woylance was not with me, then."

"You had parted with him earlier?" asked Blake.

"Yaas," smiled Arthur Augustus.

"After going to Abbotsford, I suppose?"

"Yaas; on the way home."

"When did you join him again? I believe you came in together."

"I met him again latah, deah boy, atfah going to Wylcombe for the doctah."

"I knew it wasn't Roylance," said Manners, with a curl of the lip. "That settles that, anyway."

"Roylance might have done it, if he'd been there," said Blake, rather sharply.

"No reason to say he wouldn't have."

Manners shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't think so," he said.

"You have no right to say that, Mannahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, you cheeky ass—"

"Look here, Gussy, did you get Reggie away from the bull?" exclaimed Manners.

"I want to know!"

"I wefuse to ansawah any furthah questions on the mattah, Mannahs. I have my weasons."

"What are your reasons, then?"

"I am sowwy I cannot tell you, Mannahs."

"You utter ass—"

"Bai Jove, you wotah—"

"I think I've seen this coming on for some time," remarked Blake. "I fear it runs in the D'Arcy family. Poor old Gussy! Rely on us to stand you a strait waistcoat when it grows worse!"

"You silly ass!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"If you mean to imply that I am off my wockah—"

"Well, aren't you?" asked Blake, in surprise.

"Certainly not, you fwabjous ass!"

"Then why can't you give a plain answer to a plain question?"

"There are weasons—"

"Give the reasons, then, ass!"

"Impos."

"Oh, he's potty!" said Herries decidedly.

"I see it all clear enough. He yanked that young idiot away from the bull, but he's got some potty idea of hiding his light under a bushel. It's his modesty on the rampage. Let's bump him! Modesty is out of place in the Fourth Form."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Hands off, you duffahs! Oh, cwumbahs!"

Arthur Augustus dodged out of the study, and fled for his life. And the mystery of the rescue of Reggie Manners remained a mystery.

Neither Roylance nor D'Arcy had guessed at the complications likely to ensue from keeping the truth dark, of course. But Arthur Augustus was beginning to guess at them now!

CHAPTER 10.
Tricked!

"STEP into my study, Roylance, old chap!"

Roylance glanced at Racke of the Shell in surprise.

As a new fellow, Roylance naturally did not know very much of Aubrey Racke, especially as the heir of Messrs. Racke and Hacke was in a different form. But he had heard remarks on the subject of the festive Aubrey, and he did not much like Aubrey's looks, either.

Racke's sudden cordiality surprised him, and did not particularly please him. "Yes; come in," said Crooke of the Shell, from the doorway of the study. "I've been looking for a chance of a chat with you, Roylance!"

"Oh, all right!" said the New Zealand junior.

Somewhat puzzled, he entered the study.

Racke pulled out a luxurious arm-chair, which had cost fifteen guineas out of the war-profits of Messrs. Racke and Hacke.

"Squat down, old fellow!"

Roylance squatted down.

Crooke produced a cigarette-case.

"Smoke?" he queried.

"No, thanks," said Roylance drily.

"You don't mind if we do?"

"I don't mind what you do in your own study, of course," answered Roylance. "It's no business of mine. But I understood that that was against the House rules."

"Oh, bother the House rules!" said Crooke, lighting a cigarette.

"I'll think I'll get along!" said Roylance, rising. "You'll excuse me, but I don't like smoke!"

"My dear man, stay where you are!" said Racke, pushing him back into the chair. "Chuck that fog away, Crooke, if Roylance doesn't like it!"

Crooke looked rather unpleasant, but he threw the cigarette into the fire. The New Zealand junior sat down again, rather restively. He did not like Racke or Crooke, and did not want to be in the study, but he felt that there was such a thing as civility.

"Getting on all right in the Fourth, kid?" asked Racke.

"Oh, quite!"

"Had any more rows with Manners, of my form?"

"No."

"He's keeping rusty."

"Is he?" said Roylance, rather impatiently. He did not want to discuss Manners and his rustiness.

"I suppose you know he's opposed your election to the junior debating club."

"I didn't know it."

"Well, he has!" said Racke.

"Like his cheek, I think!" remarked Crooke.

"I shall put in a word for Roylance. Every fellow's entitled to be a member, if you come to that; it's pure cheek of Manners to want to interfere. His own pals think so."

Roylance flushed uncomfortably.

"Look here, I'd rather not talk about Manners, if you don't mind!" he blurted out.

Racke nodded, with a smile. The New Zealand junior would not discuss a fellow unfavourably behind his back, but all the same the cad of the Shell could see that his shot had gone home. Roylance had heard some rumour before of Manners wanting to keep him out of the debating club, of which Manners was a shining light, and it was irritating enough. This continual dislike, which he had done nothing to deserve, was rather getting on Roylance's nerves.

"But look here," said Racke, "you licked the fellow the day you came to St. Jim's, I hear!"

"We had a fight," said Roylance.

"You got the upper hand, I understand?"

"I'd rather not talk about it."

"Look here, then! Why not lick him again? He'll never let you alone till you do. And there's a good many fellows in the House who would be glad to see those three cads taken down a peg or two—and a licking for one of them would do it."

The cad of the Shell had shown his hand at last, and Roylance understood. He had heard something already of the feud between the two black sheep and the Terrible Three.

He rose to his feet, with a contemptuous expression on his handsome face. Dick Roylance was about the last fellow to be made use of as a catspaw by a fellow like Aubrey Racke.

"I've no quarrel with Manners, and I don't intend to quarrel with him to please you, Racke!" said the New Zealand junior. "I'll get out! Tat-ta!"

He went to the door and opened it, Racke and Crooke staring at him in undisguised rage and chagrin at his cool, plain speaking.

But as he opened the door, Racke's eyes fell on Manners, who was passing on his way to his study. Roylance saw him, and paused a moment before going out. Racke's eyes gleamed with malice, and he called out:

"I don't believe you, Roylance! I don't believe Manners is dodging you because he's afraid of you, and as for giving him the white feather, you can do it yourself, if you want to! I sha'n't!"

Roylance spun round, in utter amazement at this speech, which had no connection at all with what had been said in the study. For a moment he wondered whether Racke was wandering in his mind.

But Aubrey Racke knew what he was about.

For every word had reached the ears of Manners in the passage, and Manners had come to a dead stop, as if rooted to the floor by what he heard.

Crooke's look was amazed, as it turned on his chum. But as he caught sight of Manners' furious face outside the doorway he understood. Racke's quick and cunning brain had seen the chance and seized it.

Manners spun towards the door, after a moment of stupefaction.

Not for an instant did he doubt. He did not even know that Racke had spotted him in the passage, and he could not guess that the malicious cad of the Shell had acted with quick cunning to take advantage of the chance.

The Shell fellow's face was scarlet with wrath.

"Roylance, you cad, you hound; you've dared to say—" Manners almost choked. "You lying cad, you rotter, take that!"

"I—" began Roylance, amazed and nonplussed.

He was interrupted. Manners' angry fist crashed into his face, and he went spinning across the study, to fall heavily on the floor.

CHAPTER 11.
Blow For Blow.

"MANNERS!"

Tom Merry and Lowther came quickly along the passage. They had seen what was happening from their study doorway further up; but they supposed that Manners was engaged in fisticuffs with Racke or Crooke.

They looked dismayed as they saw Roylance sitting up dazedly on the floor, blinking and panting for breath.

Racke and Crooke grinned quietly.

Roylance had declined to be their catspaw, but Racke's unscrupulous cunning had brought about the same result. And

after that hasty and furious blow it was pretty certain that Roylance would not trouble to explain to Manners. Even if he did, Manners was in no mood to believe him.

Tom Merry caught his chum by the arm.

"Manners! You—did you—"

"I knocked him down!" shouted Manners. "I'm going to knock him down again as soon as he gets up! Let go my arm, confound you!"

Tom did not let go. He tightened his grip.

"What are you rowing with Roylance for?" he demanded.

"He's called me a funk!" Manners stammered with rage. "He says I'm dodging him because I'm afraid of him, the cad, the liar!"

Tom's face hardened.

"Oh!" he said. "Is that it?"

He let go Manners' arm.

Roylance staggered to his feet. His eyes blazed at Manners.

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

"I'm waiting for you!"

Roylance rushed at him.

Manners backed into the passage, Roylance following him, and there they stood up to the combat, which was fast and furious.

There came a buzz of voices and a rush of feet along the passage. The Shell fellows poured out of their studies at the din of the fight.

"What on earth's it about?" exclaimed Talbot. "Separate them!"

"Let them alone," said Tom Merry.

"But—"

"Manners is right. Let him go ahead," said the captain of the Shell, frowning. "The fellow's a cad!"

"You've changed your opinion of him rather suddenly then," said Talbot, in astonishment.

Tom set his teeth.

"He's taunted Manners with being a funk. I hope Manners will smash him. If he doesn't, I will!"

"And if you don't, I will, Tommy!" snapped Lowther, whose usually good-natured face was like thunder now.

"Oh!" said Talbot, taken aback.

"Got it, ye cripples!" sang out Grundy of the Shell. "By gad, this is rather good for a swot like Manners! That was a good one on his nose, by gum!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hurried up with his chums from Study No. 6. "Stop them, deah boys! Stop them at once!"

"Keep off the grass!" growled Tom.

Tom pushed the swell of the Fourth back. Jack Blake caught him by the arm.

"Cheese it, Gussy! 'Taint your bisney," said Blake.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

The fight was going hot and strong, and the juniors looked on breathlessly.

"Pway stop, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Weally, Mannahs, you are actin' in a wotten way—"

"Shut up!" growled Lowther.

"Lowthah, you wude ass—"

"Is it all about anything, or only Manners' back up, as usual?" asked Blake.

"The rotter's called Manners a funk!" snapped Tom.

"Well, that's rotten," agreed Blake. "Manners don't look much like a funk now, though he's getting the worst of it."

Tramp, tramp! Crash!

Manners was down; but he was up again like a shot, and coming on fiercely.

Roylance met him with terrific vim.

The Shell passage had seen many a dust-up in its time, but seldom a fight

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like this. Even Tom Merry's celebrated encounter with George Alfred Grundy had been hardly more terrific.

"I refuse to believe that Woylance said anything of the kind, Tom Mewwy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus angrily.

"Manners said so, ass!"

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus was nonplussed.

"Howevah, I do not believe it, all the same," he said, at last. "Woylance would not say such a caddish thing."

"Don't you take Manners' word?" shouted Lowther.

"Pwaw do not woor at me, Lowthah!" answered Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"I have a strong objection to bein' woorat at."

"Shut up, then, ass!"

"I refuse to shut up! Mannahs is mistaken on the point, I think. Anyway, I refuse to believe that Woylance said anythin' of the sort. Mannahs is always goin' for him without weason, and I wegard Mannahs as bein' uttally in the wong."

"Oh, rats!" growled Lowther.

Crash!

Manners was down again.

Tom Merry ran to him and helped him up. Roylance stood back, a grim look on his face. Even his sunny temper had failed him now. That angry blow from Manners had been the finishing touch. He was fed up, and he was prepared to give the Shell fellow the licking of his life, if he wanted it. And plucky and determined as Manners was, there was little doubt that the new fellow could do it.

Manners panted as he leaned on Tom's arm.

"Have the gloves on now," said Talbot anxiously; "and rounds, too. Dash it all, fight like sportsmen, if you're going to fight!"

"Let 'em alone," said Grundy.

"Dry up, Grundy, old chap," said Wilkins. "I've got some gloves in my study. Wait a minute."

Manners had to wait a minute, for he was too spent to go on. Wilkins came out with the boxing-gloves, and Manners waved him back.

"Put them on, old chap," said Tom Merry. "This isn't a prize-fight."

"I don't want them," muttered Manners.

"Rats! Put them on."

Roylance quietly donned the other pair of gloves. He had no desire to make a prize-fight of it. Manners had to follow his example then.

"Now, I'll time you," said Talbot. "If you must go on, let's have it in order."

"Oh, I don't care!" growled Manners.

"Time!"

They were fighting again at once.

The crowd thickened in the passage till it was swarming with the Fourth and the Shell. There was a good deal of admiration for Manners, who was standing grimly up to his opponent, though it was clear by this time that he was outclassed. He received words and murmurs of encouragement, but so did Roylance, few of the fellows bothering their heads as to what the fight might be about.

Arthur Augustus constituted himself Roylance's second, now that rounds were observed. When Talbot called time, he made a knee for the New Zealand junior. Some of the fellows kept an uneasy eye on the staircase. There was a good deal of noise going on; but a perfect was not wanted on the scene just then.

Roylance gave the swell of the Fourth a faint smile as Gussy fanned him with a cap.

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"Feel all wight, deah boy?" murmured D'Arcy.

"Not quite; but I can go on."

"I am suah you did not weally call Mannahs a funk, Woylance!"

"No."

"I was suah of it, deah boy. Mannahs is a howlin' ass, I feah. Howevah, you will lick the duffah."

"I mean to try!" muttered Roylance grimly.

"Time!"

Roylance stepped up cheerfully at the call.

His opponent came up to time much less quickly, though he was as keen as ever. The spirit was more than willing, but the flesh was weak. Poor Manners was not physically a match for the hardy, iron-limbed Colonial junior, and he was realising it. But that knowledge only made him the more determined to go on, in a bitter hope of snatching victory from the jaws of defeat.

At all events, if he failed, the victor would not fare much better than the vanquished, and it would be impossible to whisper "funk" afterwards. That cruel taunt, which he believed Roylance had uttered, stung Manners to the very soul, and not to save life itself would he have stopped while he could raise his hand to strike another blow.

But the finish was coming.

TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT.

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PARIS.

Four rounds had been fought out after the gloves were put on, and then in the fifth Manners fell, and lay where he fell.

Talbot counted quietly.

Manners made a desperate effort to rise, and got on his knees. Roylance standing well back to give him time to rise. But he fell again. He had overtaxed his strength, and he was done.

"Out!" said Talbot.

He put back his watch.

Tom Merry and Lowther ran to their fallen chum. They helped him into their study.

Roylance rather dazedly peeled off the gloves, and handed them to Wilkins. He was victorious, but he was hard hit.

"Come along, deah boy," murmured Arthur Augustus.

And he led Roylance away to his study, and the crowd broke up, excitedly discussing the scrap.

CHAPTER 12.

A Challenge Accepted.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY looked into Roylance's study later that evening, after Smith minor and Contarini had gone down. He found the new junior looking pale and tired, and working away at his prep in a rather slow and heavy manner.

"Feelin' the dwaught now—what?" inquired Arthur Augustus sympathetically.

"Yes," said Roylance, with a faint smile. "Manners is a stickler."

"About what happened this afternoon, Woylance—"

D'Arcy hesitated.

"Yes?"

"I promised you not to mention that you wescued that young ass Weggie from the bull. Of course, I am goin' to keep

that promise. But if you didn't mind, I was goin' to ask you to speak out—"

Roylance bit his lip.

"Why?" he asked.

"You see, those fellows know I was on the scene. I passed Mannahs as I was goin' for the doctah—"

"I didn't know that!" exclaimed Roylance.

"No; and besides, I wathah jawed Wally for gettin' into dangah, you know. So he and the othahs knew I must have been there, and they have jumped to the ewwoneous conclusion that I wescued Weggie."

"Oh!" said Roylance.

"It is wathah an awkward posish for me, you see."

"It is rather awkward for me if it comes out now, just after I've been hammering Manners, and he's been hammering me," said Roylance, with a grin.

"Bai Joye, I nevah thought of that! Pwewraps it would be as well to say nothin' considerin'," said Arthur Augustus doubtfully.

"If you wouldn't mind—"

"Don't mench, deah boy! You are quite wight, and you show a lot of tact and judgment for a youngstah," said Arthur Augustus, in his most fatherly way. "Anyway, it doesn't mattah. I dare say the fellows will forget all about it in a day or two. Buck up with your pwee and come down, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus left the study.

Roylance did not buck up with his prep. In his present tired and aching state it was too much for him. He resolved to risk it with Mr. Latham in the morning, and put his work aside. But he did not go down at once. He left his study, and went along to Racke's.

Racke and Crooke were there, smoking cigarettes and chatting very cheerfully.

The licking of a member of the Terrible Three was a great delight to the cads of the Shell.

But Racke looked uneasy as Roylance came in.

"Have a smoke, kid?" grinned Crooke. "You deserve it after your terrific efforts."

Roylance did not heed.

"Racke, you plantad that scrap on me!" he said. "You said what you did for Manners to hear, to make him think I'd been running him down."

"Go hon!" said Racke.

"Being a silly, hot-headed fool, he fell into the trap!" said Roylance quietly.

"I see your game quite plainly. I shan't take the trouble to explain to Manners. But I'm going to lick you for playing such a dirty trick on me. I suppose you must have expected that?"

"You don't look as if you could lick anybody just now!" sneered Racke.

"I don't think I shall have much difficulty with a weedy rotter like you!" answered Roylance coolly. "I'm going to try, anyway. I didn't want to fight Manners, and I'm sorry I had to do it. It was your dirty trickery that caused it. Take that to begin with!"

"That" was a smack that sent Racke rolling off his chair.

The cad of the Shell jumped up with a howl of fury, and fairly hurled himself on the New Zealander.

After such a fight as he had had an hour before, Roylance was in no state for another, and Racke had a strong hope of thrashing him. But the weedy, unlit "gay dog" of the Shell was no good against Roylance, tired as he was.

The Colonial knocked him right and left, and when Crooke, at a savage call from Racke, chipped in, a fierce back-hander sent Crooke collapsing into the fender, and he did not join again.

In five minutes Aubrey Racke was lying on the floor, completely knocked

out. Crooke was skulking behind the armchair in a state of alarm.

"Any more, Racke?" asked Roylance contemptuously.

"Yew-wow-ow!" was Racke's reply. Roylance strode out of the study without a glance at Crooke, much to that heroic youth's relief.

A little later he turned up in the junior Common-room, where a good many lances fell upon him. Contarini and D'Arcy joined him at once. The Terrible Three were not visible. Poor Manners was in no state to come down, and his chums were staying up with him.

But Tom Merry came into the Common-room alone at last. He glanced round, and came quietly towards Roylance.

There was none of the accustomed friendliness in his face. His look was hard as steel, and his eyes gleamed.

"A word with you, Roylance!" he said.

Roylance was quick to catch the hostile tone, and his own face hardened grimly.

"Two if you like!" he said coolly. "You've licked my pal Manners. I'm not grumbling at that; it was a fair fight. But you insulted him, too, and he wasn't able to make you answer for it. I'm going to, if I can!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—" began Arthur Augustus.

"Shut up a minute, Gussy!" "Wats! Woylance did not call Manners a funk at all—"

"I have Manners' word for that, and that's enough for me," said Tom Merry. "I'm going to make Roylance swallow it, or else he's going to lick me. That's as it may be. Will Wednesday suit you, Roylance?"

"To-morrow if you like," answered Roylance, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"You won't be fit to-morrow, after what you've had this evening—"

"Isn't that my bizney?"

"Mine, too. It's going to be a fair fight," said Tom Merry. "Make it next Wednesday, outside the school walls. Is it a go?"

"Oh, yee!"

"All serene, then."

Tom Merry left the Common-room with that.

"I'm goin' to be your second, Woylance," said Arthur Augustus.

"Thanks! What about a game of chess, now?" said Roylance.

The prospect of a fight with Tom Merry, the champion athlete of the Lower School, evidently did not trouble the new junior's nerves at all, but deep down in his heart he was troubled, for he liked Tom Merry and respected him, and he knew that Tom would not willingly have done him this injustice.

But there was no help for it, and Roylance took it as he took most things, with quiet coolness and cheerfulness.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"FROM Foe TO FRIEND!" by Martin Clifford.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"FROM Foe TO FRIEND!"

By Martin Clifford.

I think the title of this story will tell you all a good deal—perhaps more than you should be told in advance.

But when two such fine fellows as Harry Manners and Dick Roylance are at feud the end is almost inevitable, for there must come a day when they learn to know one another better, and then the feud is put behind them, and they make a fresh start as friends.

Before that comes about in this particular case many other things happen, however. You will read how pluckily Roylance stands up to Tom Merry, the fighting champion of the lower school, and by what means it comes about that Manners admits himself in the wrong, for in the wrong he certainly was; the quarrel was no fault of Roylance's.

New Zealand readers who have been clamouring for representation at St. Jim's ought to be perfectly satisfied with Dick Roylance, I think. He is a thoroughly good fellow—not perfect, but very sound and generous. Much such a fellow as Sidney Clive, yet with points of difference. You will hear more about them in the near future.

"THE FEUD AT ROOKWOOD!"

I should pick this out as the best of a particularly good batch of six books appearing this month in the "BOYS' FRIEND" 4d. LIBRARY and the "SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY." The price has gone up with the New Year; but the price of all books and papers has gone up in one way or another, and it is quite on the cards that it will rise further yet. But any one of these half-dozen books is worth at least sixpence, and you can get the six for less than you would pay for a single book containing no more than any one of them, which you might not care about when you had it.

"The Feud at Rookwood" is a story of Jimmy Silver & Co., known to all readers of the "Boys' Friend," and to readers of the Gem also, and then appeared in our stories. It is quite new. The other three volumes in the same series are: "The World's Champion," which is a boxing yarn of the best; "Over the Sticks," an exciting steeplespringing story; and "The Seven Stars," a detective story, by the famous creator of Nelson Lee, Mr. Maxwell Scott.

The two Sexton Blake yarns are: "The Case of the Two Brothers; or, The Shadow of a Crime," and "Whose Was the Hand? or, The Case of the Stolen Pillar-Box."

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NOTICES.

FOOTBALL.

Matches Wanted by:

WILLIAMS JUNIORS—1½-1 mile radius.—S. Ling, 11, Station Road, Shepherd's Bush, W. 12.

A Shepherd's Bush Team—1½—in West London.—T. Rose, 21, Warbeck Road, Shepherd's Bush, W. 12.

BLUE ROVERS—3 mile radius.—S. G. Chinnock, 44, Harris Street, Markhouse Road, E. 17.

WALWORTH ROVERS—15-16 Clapham Common.—E. Beck, 21, Morecambe Street, Walworth, S.E. 17.

HARROW MISSION (Second Team)—15-3 mile radius.—W. E. Latt, 61, Walmer Road, North Kensington, W. 10.

Other Footer Notices:

P. Green and T. Clark want to play for local team—late of Sayer Athletic.—F. Green, 38, Ladysmith Dwellings, Lion Street, New Kent Road, S.E. 17.

Leagues, etc.

Members wanted for league.—Wallace Bowker, 2, Bickerstaffe Street, Blackpool. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

Members wanted for stamp exchange club anywhere.—Wm. McNally, Glenview, Glencue, Wigtownshire.

More members wanted for correspondence and exchange club—small monthly magazine. H. Williams, Dolcoed, Abernant Road, Aberdare.

Members, 13-16, wanted for correspondence club.—J. Ashton, 163, Duckworth Street, Darwen, or R. Mortimer, 12, Balmoral Crescent, Queen's Park, Glasgow.

Britannia Hobby Club wants members—magazine and many unusual features—stamped and addressed envelope, please.—J. Scrutton, 63, Norway Street, Seadley, Manchester.

Members wanted for Tommies' Joy League—to help soldiers—4d. per month—boys of 14 asked to help as representatives.—J. Ratcliff, 51, Alexandra Street, Southend-on-Sea.

Chas. Carriek, 18, Queen's Place, Otley, Yorks, wants members for correspondence club and amateur magazine.

Members wanted for correspondence club. R. C. Pound, 65, Great Chart Street, East Road, Shoreditch, E.

Jim Adams, c/o Mr. J. T. Metcalf, 54, Ainsworth Street, Blackburn, wants to join a league in his district.

Amateur Magazines.

Readers wanted for amateur magazine—1½d. by post—stories also required.—A. L. Horsey, 60, Salcombe Road, Leyton, E. 17.

L. Warburton, 25, Circular Road, New Moston, Fallowfield, Birmingham, would be

glad to contribute sketches to amateur magazines.

N. A. Ball, 14, Mill Road, Pontnewynydd, Mon., wants stories and readers for amateur magazine—stamped and addressed envelope, please.

Alfred Horsey, address as above, wants to contribute to amateur magazines.

W. M. Hatchard, 2, Carlton Road, Leytonstone, wants to start amateur magazine—invites contributions.

Readers wanted for monthly magazine—specimen copy free.—R. Kirkpatrick, 68, Church Street East, Belfast.

Readers and contributors wanted for "Boys' Own Journal"—specimen copy, 2d.—T. Buchanan, 11, Leches Road, Newlands, Glasgow.

Miss N. Hall, 37A, Grenfell Road, Gorrings Park, Mitcham, wants readers and contributors for amateur magazine.

Cadet Notes.

Scotland is making great progress with the Cadets. We mentioned last week Dundee. Aberdeen is following suit, and is making arrangements to show the Central Association Volunteer Regiments' Cadet Film. But it is in Edinburgh—the capital city—that most headway is being made. They have taken up the Central Association stamp scheme, and the Edinburgh Cadets are busy collecting stamps in order to collect the forty-two stamps necessary to earn the efficiency badge.

A rumour has it that the railway employees are to have their own Cadet Corps. What could be smarter than a Van Boy Battalion? When it came to charging the enemy they would have "push and go," if nothing else.

Every one of the great public schools has its Cadet Corps, and the larger ones such as Eton, Exeter, and Rugby have the privilege of being an Officers' Training Corps. Why boys who have not the opportunity of joining one of these old institutions should not have a chance of being in a Cadet Corps is hard to fathom. After all, it is mainly in the hands of the boys themselves. Nearly everywhere there is a Cadet Corps open to all boys, wherever they are, and if there is not one, most Volunteer Battalions will be pleased to assist in forming a unit.

Your Editor

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 521.

THE ST. JIM'S GALLERY.

No. 3.—David Llewellyn Wynn.

SOME of my over-critical readers may object to dealing with Fatty Wynn before the great Figgins, war-chief of the New House Juniors, has had his turn. But any such objections as these will leave me quite unmoved. This is a series of articles, not a table of precedence. If I choose to give you Racke before Talbot, does not at all follow that I prefer Racke to Talbot; and if you get Gumm before Grundy, it need not surprise you whatever George Alfred the Great might think of it.

David Llewellyn Wynn is his name, but they always call him "Fatty." And it is as Fatty that one thinks of the dear fellow—"the best-hearted fellow, the kindest and truest chum," as he was described in one of Mr. Clifford's fine stories.

Fatty is Welsh, of course. He can talk the language, and sing in Welsh, too. Did he not sing in ancient Welsh costume, doubtfully correct, at the Wayland Palace, to get money for the son of his father's coachman? Evan Jones was down on his luck, and Fatty considered that it was up to him to help Evan. And thereof came mysterious absences from the playing-fields and the company of his chums, and much trouble and a wiggling, for the Wayland Palace is not one of the places upon which authority smiles; and though there is no harm in singing "Men of Harlech" in Welsh—if you can, I can't; but then I cannot even sing in English—it behoves a St. Jim's boy to be careful where and in what circumstances he lets himself be tuneful.

Yes, David Llewellyn is Welsh. How should he come by those names otherwise? Fatness is no special characteristic of the Welsh race, though that race doubtless has its share of fat people; but, from an experience of a year or two in South Wales, I should say that a good appetite is. And this does not apply only to natives; and was never better than when there, alike in the damp town of Swansea or the wilds of Gower, in quaint old Cardigan, or in that "Little England beyond Wales" down in Pembrokeshire. But I don't think there are many such appetites as Fatty's, even in Wales. If there are, Wales must be a mournful land in these days of restricted rations.

For Fatty—"the Falstaff of St. Jim's," as Mr. Clifford sometimes calls him—is a rare knight of the trencher. He can polish off as much as would suffice half a dozen ordinary boys without trouble. "I'm sure I'm not a greedy chap! I like a lot, that's all." So Fatty himself says. One can see the distinction. Greed is wanting more than one needs; but Fatty needs such a lot that it is hard for him to be greedy—he cannot often get so far, even if he would.

Can he eat more than Bunter of Greyfriars? That query has been put more than once by youthful readers, awed and envious as to one who fancies them. Let it be answered once for all—he cannot! He admits it himself. In these days, knowing Bunter, he has no very high opinion of that podgy youth. But when they first met he was inclined to admire William George's powers in his own special line. "What a lovely appetite that chap's got!" he said. "I'd give anything to get one like that!" He must have a splendid digestion—spendid!

Bunter has not as good a digestion as Fatty, one fancies. But he can put away more because he is greedier. He will go on until his stomach rebels. And then he is a slacker, whereas Fatty is an athlete of no mean powers. Bunter can do nothing well but ventriloquise, and that is an accidental gift with him. Fatty is no great runner—too much to carry for that. But he is a splendid bowler. Many a match has he won for his side, many a hat-trick done. And he is the best junior goalkeeper that the records of St. Jim's know. Those fat fists of his can



punch well and truly; and out of his plump face look eyes that are keen and ready. And his brain moves quickly; that is not overloaded with fat, as the brains—if any—of Bunter and Baggy Trimble are.

As for comparing Fatty with Baggy, the notion is absurd. They are as different as light and darkness. Wynn's fatness is an accident; but if you took from Baggy his superfluous flesh, what would you have left? Baggy is fatness itself; Wynn is merely fat—there is lots in him with which that fact has no connection.

Baggy and Bunter will steal and cheat and lie for gorging's sake. You don't catch Fatty Wynn at that sort of thing, though his ears may prick up when anyone says "Hamper!"—and, though, at a bountiful board, he may on occasion anticipate his chums in starting, and also keep on after they have finished. He can subdue his craving for the sake of others. Most of you will remember how he was accused of hoarding sugar, and how it turned out after all he was giving it to Mrs. Chirpey and her kiddies.

Naturally many of the stories which concern him turn upon his love of good feeding. Do you remember him escorting Miss Fawcett—Tom Merry's old guardian angel—over St. Jim's, and advising her what to get at the tuckshop in order that her dearest Tommy may have a really fine spread to which to entertain his friends? And his being mesmerised by Clifton Dane, and made to give his sausages to 'Towers'? His going for a hot bath before the big spread in No. 6 on the Fourth Form passage of the School House, and going to sleep in the bath, and, in consequence, going without his share of

the feed through being late? His being died by Figgins and Kerr in order that he might attain to a figure as slim as D'Arcy's, and perspiring with Indian clubs and the trapeze and all that sort of thing for the same impossible end; and how the dieting got more than he could bear—poor old Fatty!—and he was caught taking in additional provender in the box-room? How he clung on to the basket of grub which the Grammar School fellows were drawing up over the wall, and was drawn up with it and made a captive, and how Gordon Gay & Co. scored that time?

The New House Junior Amateur Dramatic Society were going to play "Julius Caesar" once. Fatty was to be Caesar. He wanted a feeding scene introduced into the play—of course before the Mark Antony oration. Caesar is dead then, and the grub could have been wasted. He did not get his feeding scene; but there were unexpected developments. The New House Co. were rehearsing in costume out of doors, and Tom Merry & Co. collared their everyday cloister, and they had to go through astonished Rylcomite clad as ancient Romans!

But there are other things about Fatty beside his appetite—lots of other things. His cooking ability needs only to be mentioned in passing; that runs with his appetite, so to speak. And even his value in a tug-of-war team owes something to his weight. We are not quite getting away from it in writing of that.

Fatty, the pacific and good-natured, turned into a terror of a fighting-man by loyalty to his chum Figgins—that is another picture! Figg's father had fallen under a false accusation, and Figg was smarting under the sneers of the cads. Fatty knocked down French and Dibbs for their sneers. Then he began to make a list, and he invited into the gym those upon it, and tackled them one by one, and showed himself a rare scrapper when once his blood is up. And there have been other occasions when he has been roused—when Arthur Augustus took the beautiful Welsh language for German; when Koumi Rao let himself be led astray by a scoundrelly sedition-monger; when his own chums half believed him a food-hogger. Yet on the whole Fatty is really peaceful. He does not care about fighting, but he does not funk it. He will not fight for fighting's sake, but he is ready if a chum is slandered, or his country is traduced, or when he hears the cry of "Rescue, St. Jim's!"

Other pictures rise before one's mental vision—Fatty, for once not desirous of grub, very ill with mal de mer on the Channel steamer—Fatty, trying to make the "garçon" comprehend that about five or six times as much eggs and bacon would do him—Fatty rescued by Tom Merry from peril at the horns of a charging bull—Fatty refusing to be done down by Baggy Trimble—Fatty keeping goal for a professional footer club, playing truant to do it, and all for the sake of grub—Fatty put under the pump by his chums to make him withdraw from eleven which D'Arcy had audaciously presumed to get together against Highlife, and had recruited in part by methods of bribery in the shape of a promised big feed after the game—best of all, perhaps, Fatty telling Kerr, and meaning every word of it, that if the beloved Figg, falsely accused of theft, has to leave St. Jim's, he will not stay there!

A heart of gold, this—a simple, candid nature—pluck and resolution and loyalty in plenty—a chum worth having! And George Figgins and George Francis Kerr know it; and if no one else at St. Jim's values Fatty properly, doubt not that those two do. They treat him much as the chums of No. 6 treat D'Arcy, but with the same real fondness underlying all the chaff and all the japes.

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 Ponsonby. 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 accidentally lets out something. Gadsby gets Vavasour to go and meet the new post-boy, in order to intercept an expected letter from Tunstall to Flip.

(Now read on.)

Playing the Fool.

"WELL, what are you goin' to do about it?" asked Gadsby.

Flip looked hard at him.

The whole story of the abduction of Cocky was known now. Bunter's spiteful outburst after his licking at the hands of Vavasour had given it away pretty completely, and since that Flip had heard what Hazeldene's share in the matter had been.

That had been fresh in his mind when he had promised Marjorie to stand by her brother if ever he had the chance.

He could do nothing against Hazeldene after that. It was not worth while to do anything in Bunter's case. And he hardly felt inclined to trouble about bringing Gadsby and Vavasour to account, as they deserved.

"I don't know that I'm going to do anything about it," Flip replied.

Gadsby stared at him. He spoke in a curiously dispassionate manner, as if the whole affair were the business of someone else, and his own concern in it were of the smallest.

It was not at all that he had ceased to care about Cocky. It was not that he had come to like Gadsby and Vavasour better. He thought that what they were—blackguardly rotters. Yet he had no zest for rowing with them.

He had little zest for anything in those days, except for things he had never cared about before.

Even footer had lost its charm. No. 6, with Merton and Tunstall and Cocky all gone, seemed a howling desert to him. But he put in very little time there. He would even take his books to Pon's study for prep, though he knew well that prep in Pon's study was no better than a hollow pretence.

The one thing that interested him, that made him forget from time to time, while he was gambling, was that they were—blackguardly rotters. There was no need now to persuade him to join a game. He was as ready as anyone, even for banker, which at first he had refused to play at all, on the ground that it was mere chance, without any element of skill.

"Look here, Derwent. I don't mind saying I'm sorry," said Gadsby. "It was a rotten joke. I see that now."

"It wasn't a joke at all," Flip returned. "But have it that way if you like. And let's say no more about it now that we've once had it out, and you've owned up and apologised."

Gadsby didn't apologise, too," said Gadsby sulkily.

"I don't want Vav's apology!" retorted Flip. "When you and Vav are up to mischief together I know which is at the bottom of it. Vav hasn't the brains of an epileptic rabbit! You needn't tell him I said so, though I don't really mind if you do."

Gadsby did, of course. He would have done in any case. His feeling towards Derwent had not altered. He still remembered that thrashing on the day of Derwent's coming, and Flip's readiness to let the Cocky affair slide seemed to him due to a kind of lordly indifference, which he resented hotly.

He hunted up Vavasour at once.

"Not goin' to say anything more about it? Oh, good, by gad—absolutely!" said Vavasour, rubbing his white hands together.

Gadsby scowled.

"Of course, you ought to apologise to him!" he said.

"Why, dear boy, when the chap himself thinks there's no need?"

"Well, you owe it to your own self-respect, y'know."

"Dashed if I can see that! I don't respect myself all that, Gaddy. But I'm sorry now that I had anything to do with the trick. After all, Derwent's gettin' quite decent these days—becomin' quite one of us, by gad!"

Others might have had a different opinion as to whether Flip's becoming quite one of the nuts was likely to make him more

decent. But Adolphus Theodore Vavasour had no doubt about it. Left to himself just then, he would probably have been ready to bestow the boon of his friendship upon the fellow he had formerly hated, which boon would have been a more than doubtful one for Philip Derwent.

"You don't mean to say anything, then? You'll just let it slide, and make up to the cad!" snorted Gadsby.

"Well, dear boy, don't you think that's the best way, absolutely?"

"I don't! But then I'm not your dashed soft sort!"

"Really, Gaddy, dear boy, I think you're pushin' things a little too far, y'know. It was a bit rough of you keepin' back that letter. I've felt that all along. If I'd got it still, I'm dashed if I wouldn't try to think out some way of lettin' him have it, without lettin' on that we'd anything to do with keepin' it back, of course. The thing might be done, y'know."

A look of alarm overspread Gadsby's face.

"You rotter!" he said viciously. "I don't believe you burned that dashed letter! I believe you've still got it!"

"I haven't, dear boy; 'pon honour. I haven't," answered Vavasour in great haste.

Gadsby knew, as well as Vav himself did, just how much Vav's word of honour was worth. He might be lying, or he might not. The chances were that he was, being what he was. "Pon honour" made no difference one way or the other. But his having kept the letter seemed to Gadsby an unlikely thing. It was dangerous, and Vav disliked danger.

"I suppose I must take your word for it," he said.

"If you refuse to accept my word of honour, dear boy—"

"Oh, stow all that! I know better than to think anything of it. You couldn't get that letter to Derwent without comin' a mucker over it, and you'd be dashed well afraid to try! You haven't the brains to think out a dodge. Why, the cad himself says that you haven't the brains of an epileptic rabbit!"

"When did he say that, confound him?"

The explosion of weak wrath was just what Gadsby had counted upon.

"Not ten minutes ago. When he said that he didn't need any words of apology from you. Easy enough to see that he holds you to cheaply to think it matters! He expected me to apologise."

Vavasour gritted his teeth. He was very easily wounded in his vanity and self-love.

"Dash the chap! Just when I was comin' round nicely!" he said. "I shall owe him one for that, Gaddy!"

"If you can stick him again for as much as you did last night it will be a bit of revenge," said Gadsby.

"All on the square, too!" chuckled Vavasour. "The cards ran my way—absolutely!"

"When they don't we won't bother about keepin' on the square," was Gadsby's meaning reply.

"There's Pon, y'know, Gaddy; an' Monson. They wouldn't stand in with us. They think a lot of the cad still."

"Let 'em! I haven't any dashed objection to rookin' Pon an' Monson, too, if it comes to that."

"Oh, honour among—er—gentlemen, y'know, Gaddy—absolutely!"

That had been going to say "among thieves," which would have been far nearer the truth. But Vav was not keen on getting near the truth, as a rule.

"That's all rot! The chief objection to flectin' Pon is that it wants a dashed sharp chap to do it. I don't feel sure, by gad, that I'm sharp enough, an' there ain't a doubt that you are a dashed sight short of bein'. So I think we had better stick to the cad, an' only if it's necessary. It may not be. He hasn't any luck at banker, an' he isn't playin' as carefully at nap or bridge as

he did at first. It's gettin' hold of him, an' he's inclined to plunge."

"I say, Gaddy, has Pon worked him up to goin' to that show at Courtfield?"

"Not yet. He hasn't tackled him about it. Time enough. They've only just started."

"I suppose our chink's all right, Gaddy?"

Vavasour spoke as if he did not feel too sure.

He and Gadsby had both helped to furnish funds for the financing of a newly-established gambling den at Courtfield. It was an extraordinary investment for two Four-Formers. But Gadsby and Vavasour and their set were no ordinary schoolboys. They were precocious young blackguards, with the desire and the means to ape the diversions of the man about town.

And while Vavasour—who was close-fisted by nature—had been none too easy to persuade to the "investment," and had only gone into it with the hope of gain, Gadsby had

and they more.

The affair brought him into closer touch with Chicker, footballer, munition-worker, gambler, and all-round ruffian. And by means of Chicker, Gadsby had hopes of revenge himself upon Flip. His scheme had been very vague at first. Now it was assuming a definite shape, though it was not as yet complete in all its details.

Much depended upon whether Flip Derwent could be lured to the establishment so generously provided by Messrs. Cobb, Hawke, Chicker & Co. to ensure that the well-paid munition-workers of Courtfield should have a chance of getting rid of their superfluous cash without too much trouble.

Only Pon could get him there. An invitation from Gadsby or Vavasour would be turned down without thanks. And, as Gadsby well knew, it was necessary to work with Pon. He still had a real liking for the new fellow, and while that liking lasted he could not be entrapped into any plot against him.

But Gadsby had a notion that it would not last much longer. Just now Flip's reckless mood made him ready to join in the amusements of the nuts—though he still barred smoking, and could not be persuaded to drink. Even champagne did not tempt him.

Pon might think Flip was going their way. Gadsby thought otherwise. He believed that any revelation of the darker side of Pon's nature—the side of which Flip as yet knew so little—would cause a breach between the two; and he was puzzling himself as to how best to bring about a split without destroying completely Ponsonby's influence over Flip.

It was not easy; but Gadsby did not think it impossible.

Flip brought his books into No. 1 again that evening.

"Got room here for a little 'un?" he asked, trying to make his voice as cheerful as possible. He hated having these fellows think that he was worrying about Merton and Tunstall; but his estrangement from them and his quarrel with Flip were combining to make him reckless and desperate.

Vavasour scowled. But Gadsby was very affable.

"Right-ho, old scout!" he said. "I'll move up an' make room. Don't mind Vav. He always looks like that when he's got Euclid to mug up. We're several books ahead of where Vav ever got to. He stuck last after persuadin' himself that he'd mastered Prop. 4 of Book 1."

Flip grinned.

It was an old, old joke; but it was quite easy to believe that Proposition 5—the famous "Ases Bridge," which is the first real theorem which the student of the great mathematician meets—had proved too much for Vav's brains.

"Euclid's a beastly bore," he said. "But the part where we are now isn't as hard as it looks. I'll give you a hand if you like, Vav."

Gadsby kicked Vav under the table, as a warning that he was not to take this carelessly good-natured offer as meaning anything. But there was not much danger of that. All Vav's friendly feeling had evaporated since he had heard the foolish, slangy words Flip had spoken about him; and he was quite mean enough to accept the help and yet go on hating the helper.

"By gad, you ought to be a schoolmaster, Flippy!" said Pon, in lazy admiration, as he listened to the new fellow's simple explanation of a problem that would have puzzled him had he tackled it—which, as he was able to depend upon Mr. Mobb, he had not done.

"My word, no! I should hate it. Just fancy having to teach wild asses like you chaps, who have made up your minds not to learn anything!" replied Flip frankly. "But I never did mind Euclid so much as some chaps do. He's dead dull, but not really hard."

"Well, if Vav understands all about that spider's web picture you've so learnedly explained to him, by gad, let's chuck the whole bag of tricks an' have a little game," suggested Pon, lighting a cigarette.

"I don't mind," Flip answered. "Got it, Vav?"

"Oh, absolutely—I mean, no, an' never shall get it—not in a dashed hundred years," said Vav. "But I'm on for a little game, all the same."

They all were.

Monson, who came in just then, was also on.

Flip was playing the fool, and he knew it. He was beginning to see that Pon & Co. were bigger outsiders than he had thought them. He knew that they were not really his sort: he knew that if only Merton and Tun would come back, and Study No. 6 could be as before, he would be one too glad to chuck Pon & Co., and all their ways and works.

But Merton and Tun seemed lost to him, and he thought that things had gone too far for his throwing in his lot with the Courtenay brigade. He had stuck to Pon when his own chums had wanted him to break away; he did not feel inclined to break with him in order to join fellows who might not be keen on having him.

Merton and Tun were lost to him—and it almost seemed as though Flip were lost, too—and old Cocky, who might have been some comfort, was at Cliff House—and in his foolish, reckless misery Flip was ready for almost anything.

He woke up next morning with a very nasty taste in his mouth, and no money in his pockets.

"Hang it all, what an utter ass I was to smoke!" he muttered to himself, pacing the room alone before breakfast. "It took my mind off the game, and now I'm stony, and I've given two or three of those chaps 10 U's, too! If anybody had told me twenty-four hours ago that I'd have been such a fool, I'd have punched his head! But what's the odds? What does anything really matter now?"

Even then, knowing how grossly he had played the fool, he could tell himself that it did not matter—that nothing mattered.

In such a mood as that many a stronger fellow than Flip Derwent has done things to be regretted all his life long!

Cocky on the Move.

"THERE'S an old chap in the quad wants to see you, Derwent," said Wilson, of the Third, meeting Flip in the passage near the entrance hall soon after morning classes. "He's got something for you, and it looks like that merry old bird of yours."

Flip hurried out at once.

"Want me?" he asked of the old man, whom he recognised at once as gardener's assistant Cliff House.

"Yes, zur, I'd be Master Derwent—an' I can see as you be, for you're as like to one of our young ladies as two peas in a pod. I've bringed the bird along, and, my sants, if he ain't a rum 'un! Talked to me on the way like a blessed Christian, he did—callin' of me a silly old donkey and such like so plain as plain."

"Philip, Cocky wants a peanut!" spoke a voice from under the cloth with which the case was covered.

"Any message?" asked Flip, with a grin that really had some cheerfulness behind it. To hear the voice of old Cocky again did him good.

"This here little note," said the old man, and he handed over the letter he bore.

Flip felt in his pockets. He had forgotten that he was stony.

A dismayed look overspread his face as he realised afresh that galling fact. It was particularly galling at that moment, for, of course, he felt it incumbent upon him to tip Flip's messenger.

"It no odds, zur, so he as ye be hard-up like," said the old fellow. "I'd do a heap more'n that for your sister—bless her for the kind-hearted young lady she is! Rare and good her and Miss Hazeldene have been to my old gal, what's scripped with the room-matticks."

"Lend me a bob, Pon," he said. "I haven't a copper in my pockets."

Pon produced the required coin at once.

"As many of them as you like, dear boy," he said graciously.

"One will do me," Flip replied. "Here you are, my chap, and thank you for bringing him along."

"No need to thank him and pay him too, by gad!" said Pon, as the old fellow stumped away.

"Might as well be civil," Flip said. "And he's a decent old stick."

The banner in which old Joe Barling had spoken of Flip had warned the heart of Flip's brother towards him.

And it was very warm towards Flip, too.

Flip saw in the return of Cocky just what it was meant he should see—a message of reconciliation.

"Got your bit back, then?" said Pon.

He was interested. Anything connected with Philippa Derwent interested Cecil Ponsonby. He still cherished the belief that he could yet make her like him. Had he not won upon her favour when he had had the chance—the only chance he had had?—not had?

But Flip was less than ever inclined to talk about Flip with Pon.

"Yes, I'm going to take him up to my study now. No, don't bother to come, Pon—I've got a note to answer."

"Might have sent it by the ancient Mercury," remarked Pon, grinning. "But if you don't touch me to the extent of a penny stamp for it—or a fiver for any other purpose—I'm your man! It won't suit your book to stay long in debt to Gaddy an' Vav, I fancy."

As he tramped up to No. 6 with Cocky, Flip was thinking of that.

No, it didn't do him not suit him to be owing Gadsby and Vav's anything. And it had been to those two he had lost the night before. The management of an unaccustomed cigarette had made him an easier prey. Gaddy and Vav had taken their chance, and Pon and Monson had failed to twig—or, if they had twigged, had said nothing.

But he would be getting a good remittance in a day or two, and he could pay them off then.

"Philip, Cocky wants a peanut!" spoke a plaintive voice from inside the case.

"Right so, old top! Cocky shall have one in a moment," answered Flip.

But there were no peanuts in No. 6. Flip found a few almonds, however. They were Merton's almonds, really; Merton had had a weakness for almonds.

Merton would not have grudged them to Cocky, that was certain. Cocky had one or two, and then Flip's note was opened.

It was very short. Flip sat, and stared at it. He did not know what to make of it.

"I think it is your turn to have Cocky now,—FLAP."

That was all. One had to guess what it meant.

And Flip guessed wrongly.

Flip had meant to make it up. She would have said so quite plainly, only she knew that Flip hated what he called a fuss. She thought he would be sure to understand this message.

But he didn't.

It seemed cold to him. Pride had forced Flip to send the bird back, he fancied.

And, when he came to think of it, he did not really want Cocky there. The old chap would be lonely and miserable, and he would only remind his master of Merton and Tun-stall. Flip would have preferred to forgo those two, though there seemed little chance that he would ever be able to.

"Better go back to Cliff House, hadn't you, Cocky?" asked Flip.

Cocky put his head on one side, and replied gravely:

"What do you think, Flip?"

"I think you had," said Flip gravely.

"Kiss me, and call me Albert!" said the bird.

Which would seem to show that his first reply was not so direct as it appeared. But you could never tell with Cocky. Being kissed and called Albert might seem to him a logical part of the proceedings.

"I'll take you back," Flip said.

His heart grew a little lighter. Taking Cocky back would give him a chance of talking to Flap, and making friends again. And he wanted that. He was not going to let any foolish pride stand in the way of it.

But the increase of cheerfulness did not last long. Hardly was he outside the gates than he felt more than half minded to turn back.

There was so much that he must keep from Flap—and they had never had secrets before! He could not tell her that he had been gambling heavily, and owed money to Gadsby and Vav, whom he disliked, who hated him. Smoking to it had been only a couple of cigarettes; but he knew what Flap would think of that. And he had got no pleasure out of it, either.

He trudged on heavily. He wanted sympathy, and only Flap and Marjorie could give him that. He passed Miss Gwendolen Gittins, with her mother, and gave her his shoulder, with scarcely a glance. He might have stopped her, and asked whether she had a letter for him; but he had given up hope now.

As he drew near Cliff House he sighted someone ahead.

It was a Greyfriars fellow; the colours of his cap told that. He was slouching along in a moody manner, his shoulders hunched; and as Flip saw that he instinctively pulled himself together and squared his shoulders. No matter what the weight of trouble he had to bear, he did not want to look like that chap!

Then he saw that it was Peter Hazeldene. He felt no inclination to quicken his steps and catch up Hazel.

Hazel glanced round, though, and immediately started to walk faster. "Silly ass!" said Flip to himself. "He thinks I'm going to get at him about that back number business. Well, I may as well settle that up, if it's only for Marjorie's sake. Chap's in a hole, of course—generally is, I should fancy. Don't suppose he'll want to let me about it; but it's up to me to get him out of it if I can. And a nice sort of idiot I am to be thinking of helping another idiot!"

He began to gain on Hazel, in spite of the burden he carried.

But it was not until they were within a few yards of the Cliff House gates that he caught him.

(To be continued next week.)

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