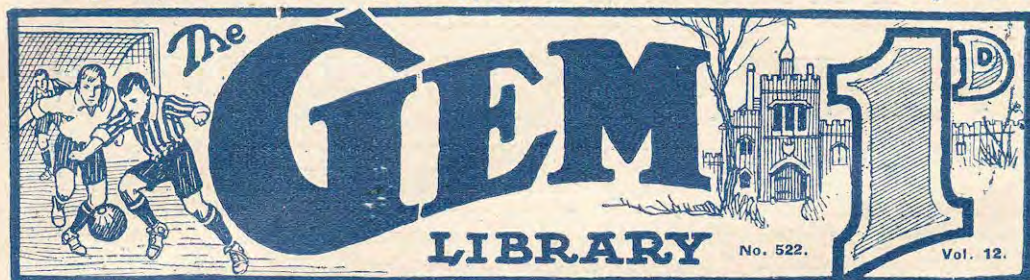


FROM FOE TO FRIEND!

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



ARTHUR AUGUSTUS APPROVES!

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

FROM FOE TO FRIEND!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

The Third-Form Testimonial.

THUD! The door of Tom Merry's study, No. 10 in the Shell, flew open, knocking over a chair and scattering a few books about the floor. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther suspended their conversation to turn three separate and expressive glares upon the two Third-Form fags who marched in.

"You cheeky young asses!" exclaimed Lowther wrathfully.

"Pick up those books, some of you!" said Manners.

"Bother the books!" was the reply of D'Arcy minor of the Third. "You shouldn't leave books on a chair—it's untidy! Hold out the hat, you, Levison."

Levison minor of the Third held out a hat.

It was—or it had been—a silk hat, but it looked very much the worse for wear. Levison minor held it out towards the Terrible Three of the Shell, who stared at it.

"Three farthings, at the most!" said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, don't be mean!" said Frank Levison warmly.

"My dear kid, it wouldn't be worth more than three-halfpence in peace time, and now—"

"You silly ass!" said D'Arcy minor. "Do you think we've come here to sell you a hat? You frabious duffer!"

"It seems to me that you've come here to collect whackings!" remarked Tom Merry.

"We'll collect all you can give us, and chance it!" was Wally D'Arcy's prompt reply.

"Done!" exclaimed Lowther, jumping up.

"Order!" exclaimed Frank Levison. "ChOOSE it! Shut up, Wally! Look here, you fellows, this is rather important."

"What is?" demanded Tom Merry. "That old topper?"

"Fathead! It's a testimonial! We're going to present it to D'Arcy of the Fourth—Wally's major, you know," said Levison minor impressively.

"D'Arcy of the Fourth wouldn't look at that old topper, you young ass! His toppers are things of beauty and joys for ever."

"Not the topper, you ass!" shouted Levison minor. "The testimonial! We're making a collection for a testimonial!"

"Oh, I see!" said Tom.

"Time you did! How much are you standing?"

"I think we've stood as much as we can of you kids," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Don't be funny!" implored Wally. "Keep that for the comic column in the 'Weekly,' Lowther! It will come in useful for a paper-chase then! Now, look here! You chaps know my major saved young Manners' life, don't you?"

"We've heard so," agreed Tom Merry.

"I don't say it was worth while; but he did it!"

"What?" ejaculated Manners.

"Well, perhaps it was, worth while, then," conceded Wally. "Anyway, old Gus did it, and he's so jolly modest about having been a terrific hero that he won't even own up that he did it. Just like old Gussy! He hides his light under a bushel as quickly as he'll hide his top-knot under a silk hat. Well, Reggie is in our Form—not much of a credit to it, but there it is—and the Third Form," concluded Wally, with dignity, "has decided to recognise the action."

"Bravo!" said Tom Merry.

"After a consultation—I mean a pow-wow, you know," explained Wally.

"After a consultation, we've decided to raise a fund for a testimonial, to be presented to Gussy, with a few well-chosen words—I think that's the right expression. Old Gussy objects to being made a fuss of, but that don't count. We're going to buy something for a testimonial—anything the money will run to. Now shove your contributions in."

The Terrible Three, grinning, felt in their pockets.

"Levison minor's treasurer, and I'm keeping an eye on him," explained Wally.

"Oh, are you?" ejaculated Levison minor, looking rather warlike.

"Yes, I am, young Levison!"

"If you want a dot in the eye, Wally—"

"Give it to him in some other study, dear boy," suggested Tom Merry. "Here you are! Will a bob do? War-time, you know."

"Small contributions gratefully received, larger ones in proportion," said Wally. "Shell out! If we raise enough cash, we hope to present Gussy with a gold-mounted walking-stick, or something, with an inscription in Latin or Greek. But if the fellows are mean, it mayn't run to more than a tin of sardines."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther clinked a number of pennies into the hat. The fags had brought a topper, doubtless with the idea of having plenty of room for the contributions. Certainly, if that topper was filled with cash there would be no doubt about the gold-headed walking-stick.

"What price you, Manners?" demanded Wally. "It was your minor's life that was saved. The only one he had, you know. Shell out!"

Manners dropped in a two-shilling-piece. He was not insensible to Wally's special appeal. Undoubtedly Reggie Manners was his minor, and Reggie had been most gallantly rescued from the savage bull in the Moor Field.

"Two bob!" said Wally. "Well, if your minor's worth two bob to you, you put him at a higher figure than we do in the Third. Come on, Frank!"

The two fags marched from the study, the coins clinking in the hat. Three Fourth-Formers came on them in the passage—Levison, Clive, and Cardew, of

Study No. 9. And at a sign from Wally Levison minor held out the topper at once.

"Hold it steady!" said Cardew, drawing back his right foot for a kick.

"Hold on, you ass!" Levison minor jerked the hat back. "It's a collection."

"Testimonial to Gussy, the heroic rescuer!" chimed in Wally.

"Third Form testimonial—to be presented—" went on Frank Levison.

"At the next session of the St. Jim's Parliament," pursued Wally, tucking up the tale again.

"Oh, good!" said Levison major, laughing. "Here's a tanner!"

"And here's a shilling," smiled Sidney Clive.

"Any objection to paper money?" asked Cardew.

Wally's eyes glistened. Cardew was the richest fellow in the Fourth, and his exuberant currency-notes would have been very welcome now.

"None at all!" answered D'Arcy minor at once. "Shove in all you like."

"Good! Here you are, then!"

Cardew extracted a penny stamp from his pocket, dropped it into the hat, and walked on with his companions.

Wally fixed a glaring eye on the penny stamp.

"The—the funny beast!" he gasped at last. It was not that kind or amount of paper money that Wally had expected.

Levison minor chortled.

"Never mind—it's a penny, anyway," he remarked.

"Hallo, here's Talbot! Shell out, Talbot!"

"What for?" inquired Talbot of the Shell, in surprise.

"Testimonial to the heroic Gussy!"

"For saving the life—"

"Of Manners minor—"

"From a mad bull—"

"Oh, I see!" interrupted Talbot, with a smile. "Will half-a-crown do?"

"Bravo! You're a Briton!"

"I hear that Grundy's had a big remittance to-day," said Talbot, laughing. "And Grundy's tips run into quids. Vob sap!"

"Good! Come on, Franky!"

The two fags hurried at once to Grundy's study. They found George Alfred Grundy at tea there, with Wilkins and Gunn. The three Shell fellows stared at sight of the worried-looking silk hat and the two fags.

"Subscriptions wanted—"

"Go and eat cake!" replied Grundy.

"For a testimonial—"

"For the heroic Gussy!" chanted Wally.

"What rot!" said Grundy. "I'd have done the same if I'd been there. So would any fellow! Buzz off!"

"Oh, here's a bob!" said Wilkins.

"And here's another!" said Gunn.

"Thanks!" said Wally. "I say, Grundy, if you don't feel inclined to give any subscription, will you make the speech when the presentation is made, at the next meeting of the St. Jim's Parliament?"

Grundy's expression relaxed. "Well, I don't mind doing that!" he said graciously. "Yes, D'Arcy minor, I'll make the presentation speech, if you like."

"Thanks awfully," said Wally gravely. "You're a good chap, Grundy! You see, you could put it better than anybody else—in your oratorical manner, you know."

"I know!" assented Grundy, who never could see when his leg was being pulled. "And I don't mind standing five bob towards the collection. After all, D'Arcy major did a fine thing."

Five shillings clinked into the topper. In the passage outside Wally closed one eye at Levison minor, and Frank grinned. A soft answer is said to turn away wrath, and in this case it had not only turned away wrath, but extracted five shillings from the wealthy Grundy.

"That young D'Arcy's got some sense," Grundy remarked to his study-mates. "What are you grinning at, Wilkins?"

"Ahem!"

"What are you sniggering about, Gunn?"

"Ahem!"

"I don't see anything to snigger at!" said Grundy, frowning. "I think I'll draw up a few notes for the speech."

And he did.

CHAPTER 2.

Gussy Gives Advice.

TRAMP! Tramp! Bump! There was a good deal of noise in Study No. 7 in the Fourth when the Third-Form collectors arrived at that apartment.

"Sounds like a row," remarked Wally. "Never mind—they can scrap afterwards," answered Levison minor; and he opened the door.

Study No. 7 was tenanted by Contarini, the Italian junior, Smith minor, and Dick Roylance, of New Zealand, the new fellow in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

It was not a scrap, but a boxing-match. Roylance had the gloves on with Giacomo Contarini, and Smith minor was sitting on the table, which had been pushed into a corner, looking on.

"Hold on, you chaps!" called out Wally. "Business before pleasure!"

Roylance looked round, and Contarini laughed rather breathlessly and dropped his hands.

"Ecco! I am glad of a rest," he remarked. "You are too much for me, amico mio. I think perhaps you will beat Tom Merry to-morrow."

"I hope so," said Roylance, with a smile. "What do you fags want?"

"Cash!" answered Wally, with Spartan brevity.

"Quite a common want just now," said Roylance. "But you've come to the wrong shop. Apply next door."

"It's a testimonial!" explained Wally. "Gold-headed walking-stick with Latin inscription, to be presented to the heroic rescuer."

"What!" exclaimed Roylance in astonishment.

"You've heard about my major—"

"Your major?"

"Yes; the one and only Gussy. He risked his life and his fancy waistcoat in saving Manners minor from a Hunnish bull."

"Did he?" exclaimed Roylance in astonishment.

"You've heard about it, I suppose?" said Wally warmly. "It was last half-holiday. You were out with Gussy that afternoon."

"Oh! I-I see."

"We're going to make a handsome presentation," said Wally loftily. "Con-



Contributions Requested!

(See Chapter 1.)

tributions required. If you haven't put all your money in National War Bonds, put the rest in this hat."

"But—"

"Don't 'but,' old scout; this isn't the time for butting. Shell out!"

Roylance did not shell out, however. He stood looking greatly surprised. Smith minor tossed a penny into the hat, and Contarini added a shilling. Wally looked sternly at Roylance.

"You're shelling out, I suppose?" he demanded. "Didn't you bring any pocket-money from Tasmania?"

"I didn't come from Tasmania."

"Well, wherever it was, then—some-where near the South Pole, wasn't it?"

"Not quite," said Roylance, laughing.

"Well, I don't care where it was—shell out! I never thought Colonials were stingy!" said D'Arcy minor sternly.

"But—"

"There you go—butting again, like a billy-goat!" growled Wally in disgust.

"Are you going to shell out or not?"

"Time's valuable," remarked Levison minor.

"Does D'Arcy know you're doing this?" asked Roylance.

"Fathead! Of course not. Gussy is hiding his light under a soup-tureen, as usual. He gets waxy if a chap calls him an heroic rescuer!" chuckled Wally. "So I call him one every time I see him. He even denies that he rescued Manners minor at all, which would shock George Washington, if Georgie were a St. Jim's chap. But the Third Form are out to recognise courage, in the form of a gold-headed walking-stick. Shell out, then!"

Roylance dropped a coin into the hat with some hesitation. It was not the coin he was hesitating about, but quite other considerations, unknown to the fags.

"Good!" said Wally. "Why couldn't you do that at first, without jawing? Come on, Franky! There's a lot more to do yet!"

The fags left the study, leaving Roy-

lance with a very perplexed expression on his handsome face.

"My turn!" said Smith minor, getting off the table and taking the gloves from Contarini. "Not fagged, young Mutton?"

"Not at all," said Roylance.

"Good! You've got to be in form to-morrow, to tackle Tom Merry. It would be no end of a credit to the study if you licked him. May as well have the gloves on with Figgins of the New House this evening, too. If you can stand up to him, you'll have a good chance against Tom Merry."

And the boxing practice in No. 7 was resumed.

Meanwhile, the enthusiastic collectors were going on their way, reaping quite a harvest—chiefly of coppers. They stopped at last outside Study No. 6, which was the quarters of the great Gussy himself.

"Can't ask Gussy to contribute to his own testimonial, I suppose?" observed Wally thoughtfully.

"Ha, ha! No. But the other chaps! And it's all right; Gussy's out!"

"Good!"

They marched in, and found Blake and Herries and Digby finishing tea. The great Arthur Augustus was visiting the New House.

The silk topper was held out, and Wally explained once more.

Blake shook his head.

"Gussy says that he didn't rescue Manners minor at all!" he observed.

"That's only his blessed modesty."

"It's a whopper, if it isn't true," said Herries.

"Gussy never tells whoppers," remarked Digby, with a shake of the head.

"You've made a mistake about the heroic rescuer, Wally."

"Rats!" retorted Wally. "I tell you it's so. It was Gussy—there wasn't any other ass on the spot! Shell out!"

"Oh, all right!"

More coppers clinked into the hat.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 522.

"Mind, not a word to Gussy!" cautioned Wally. "He's to have the presentation at the Parliamentary meeting in Pepper's barn to-morrow afternoon, after Tom Merry's fight with Roylance."

"Right you are!"

"It's to be a pleasant surprise, you know," said Levison minor.

And the fags went on their way. Study No. 6 was last on the list, and the collectors returned to the Third-Form room with the laden toppler. There they were surrounded by a crowd, anxious to know the result.

Under Wally's lead, the Third Form had taken up the testimonial to Arthur Augustus very seriously. Manners minor thought it a good idea—it was his life that had been saved. Coppers had been contributed by nearly all the fags. Wally turned out the contents of the old toppler on a desk, and the fags counted up the cash in little piles.

"My hat! Thirty-five bob!" exclaimed Jameson, quite awed.

"One pound fifteen, by gum!" said Manners minor. "I say, can you get a gold-headed walking-stick for one pound fifteen?"

"Rolled gold, perhaps," suggested Hobbs.

Wally snorted.

"I'd like to see anybody presenting a rolled-gold walking-stick to my major!" he snapped. "It's to be the real article or nothing."

"Ask Gussy himself!" suggested Levison minor.

"Gussy's not to know, ass!"

"Fathead!" answered Levison minor.

"Ask him without telling him what we're going to do, of course."

"Well, that's not a bad idea," assented Wally, after some thought. "He mightn't like a gold-headed walking-stick. It's rather loud, come to think of it. We'll catch Gussy when he comes in and draw him."

And when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth returned from the New House he was met in the doorway by his minor and Frank Levison.

"Hold on, Gus!" said the two fags together.

Arthur Augustus held on.

"What is it, dearh boys?" he inquired.

"We want your advice."

Arthur Augustus beamed.

He prided himself upon his tact and judgment, and he was always prepared to place them at the service of less gifted fellows.

"Wight-ho!" he replied. "You have come to the wight chap, Wally! What is the affair?"

Wally closed one eye at Frank.

"We're getting up a Form testimonial to a fellow we all respect very highly," he explained. "A really good chap, though rather an ass!"

"A good bit of an ass!" said Levison minor thoughtfully. "But a jolly good fellow!"

"Yaas!" said Arthur Augustus unsuspiciously.

"We've raised a handsome sum of money by contributions. Now, what would you recommend by way of a presentation?" inquired Wally.

"It depends a great deal on the sort of chap!" said Arthur Augustus. "What is he like?"

"A bit of an ass, as I said, but all right! Suppose you were the chap, what would you like?" suggested Wally. "A gold-headed walking-stick?"

Arthur Augustus shuddered.

"Bai Jove, no!"

"A diamond pin?" suggested Levison minor.

"Not at all! It is unpatwiotic to spend money on diamonds in war-time!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 522.

"A tuck hamper, then?"

"Imposse, dearh boy! A good tuck hamper could hardly be made up without breakin' the gwub wules. If I were in the chap's place I should certainly pwefer the presentation to take the form of cash, and then I should spend it on things for the wounded soldials."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wally.

"But, of course, it depends on the chap!" added Arthur Augustus. "Tastes difiah!"

"I think we'll take your advice, Gussy! Thanks awfully!"

"You are very welcome!"

The two fags returned to the Form-room, and D'Arcy's decision was communicated to the Third, and received with many chuckles. And it was agreed that the testimonial should take the form of cash, to be presented to Arthur Augustus in a handsome box.

CHAPTER 3.

In the Gym.

THE Terrible Three strolled down to the gym after tea.

Tom Merry was in a thoughtful mood.

On the morrow—Saturday—his fight with Roylance was to come off. The prospect of a fight, with Roylance or anybody else, was not a dismaying one to the captain of the Shell, by any means: it was not that that caused a thoughtful shade to linger on his brow. Tom Merry had been through a good many scraps, and he was always ready for another on good cause being given.

But this particular fight was not pleasing, in some ways. He had liked the New Zealand junior, and become very friendly with him. He was disappointed in him, and it was an unpleasant thought that a fellow he had thought well of had acted meanly. And that was what Tom Merry believed; and Roylance was a good deal too proud to think of offering an explanation that was not asked for.

Manners was very quiet, too. Only Monty Lowther looked as cheerful as usual. He was going to witness the great combat, and write a ripping descriptive account of it for the "Weekly." He had not the slightest doubt that he would record a victory for his chum. Roylance was rather a tough customer, and he had defeated Manners in combat; but Tom Merry was sure to give a good account of himself.

It was natural enough that Tom should take the quarrel up for his chum. He believed that Manners was in the right, and that poor Manners, after a fight to the limit of his strength, had been defeated by the fellow who was in the wrong. That defeat was going to be wiped out, if Tom Merry could wipe it out; and few of the School House fellows doubted that he could.

"Hallo! They're going it!" remarked Lowther, as the chums of the Shell entered the gym.

A boxing-match was in progress between Roylance and George Figgins of the New House, with a crowd of juniors looking on. Figgins was a mighty man of his hands, but it could be seen that he was not a better man than the new junior. It was quite a friendly match with the gloves on, but both the juniors were getting some rather hard knocks, which they did not mind at all.

The Terrible Three looked on, Manners with a gloomy brow. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was there, regarding his New Zealand friend with a beaming face. He came over to the Terrible Three.

"Looks wathah pwomisin'—what?" he remarked.

"Who does?"

"Old Woylance."

"Oh, he looks all right!"

"You will have wathah a big pwoposition in hand to-morrow, Tom Mewwy, if the fight comes off."

"It is coming off," said Tom drier.

"I should be very pleased, dearh boy, to hear that it had been called off!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Well, you won't hear anything of the kind!"

"There is no reason whatever why you should fight with Woylance."

"Bow-wow!"

"I do not regard that as an intelligible or a polite remark, Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

And he joined Blake & Co. in the crowded ring.

"Queer how Gussy sticks to that cad!" growled Manners.

"He isn't exactly a cad!" said Tom Merry uneasily.

Manners grunted.

"I call him a cad," he answered. "I only wish I could lick him. But I've tried twice, and it was no good."

Tom Merry paused before he answered.

"I—I suppose there's no mistake about it, Manners?" he said at last. "You— you haven't made a mistake again, have you?"

"Again?" growled Manners. "What do you mean?"

"Well, you made a mistake about Roylance when he first came here," said Tom, hesitating. "You found him shaking young Reggie, and went for him, thinking he was bullying your minor. That was how you came to have your first fight with him. You owned up you were wrong when Reggie let it out that he'd backed Roylance's shins, and got a shaking for it."

"I owned up, and told him I was sorry!" snapped Manners. "I suppose I couldn't do more than that?"

"What I mean is, that was a mistake. Now, I know Racke and his sneaking set sneered about your apologise to Roylance, though you had to do it, as it was the right thing to do. Those cads tried to make out that it was funk. But I felt sure Roylance took it the right way."

"I thought he did—at first."

"And you're quite sure now he didn't?"

Manners flushed.

"Oh, I know what you mean!" he said bitterly. "I was down on Roylance at first for nothing. I was wrong, and I owned it. You think I can't get over it, and am keeping up a grudge for nothing?"

"I don't think so. If Roylance really said you were a funk he's a cad, and he wants the licking of his life. But are you sure he did? If you made a mistake once you might again."

"I know he did."

"Well, if you know he did, that settles it! But it knocks on the head the opinion I had of the chap!"

"Perhaps it's barely possible that you made a mistake, too," said Manners sourly.

"Likely enough!" said Tom good-humouredly. "Let it go at that, then! If the fellow really said a thing like that I certainly was mistaken in him. He can't say it again after your fight with him, anyhow!"

"I wish I could have licked him!"

"You did your best, and a fellow can't do more than that. No disgrace in getting the worst of a fair fight. And, by Jove, he's tough!" said Tom Merry, with some admiration.

"Look at that! Figg's a down!"

The great Figgins was on his back,

looking rather dazed. Kerr and Fatty Wynn picked him up.

"My hat!" ejaculated Figgins breathlessly.

"That won't do, Figgy!" said Kerr severely. "Buck up, you know!"

"Do you think I tumbled over on purpose, you ass?" growled Figgins.

"Well, don't do it again!"

"The New House expects you to whop him, Figgy!" said Fatty Wynn, with a solemn shake of the head.

Figgins snorted. He faced Roylance again, with a gleam in his eyes. The friendly spar was becoming rather earnest on both sides.

But Figgy's chums were consoled by the result of the next round. It was Roylance who went down.

Arthur Augustus helped the New Zealander up.

"Mustn't let that happen to-morrow, Woylance," he remarked.

Roylance grinned.

"Not if I can help it," he replied. He peeled off the gloves. "That will do for to-night, Figgins, or I sha'n't be able to toe the line to-morrow."

"Right you are," said Figgins. He glanced round at the captain of the Shell. "Come and have a round or two, Tommy, and let's see how you're shaping."

"I'm your man," said Tom.

Roylance left the gym with Arthur Augustus as Tom Merry and Figgins set to with the gloves. They returned to the School House for prep.

"I suppose you're bound to fight Tom Mewwy to-morrow, old scout?" said Arthur Augustus regretfully.

"Looks like it, as he challenged me,"

"He is undah a w'ong impression, Woylance."

"I know that."

"Couldn't you explain?"

Roylance set his lips.

"I'm going to explain—afterwards. But he's no right to believe that I said such a rotten, mean thing to Manners."

"He could scarcely refuse to take Mannah's word, deah boy."

"Manners ought not to think so, either. I suppose he was ready to believe anything, on account of that trouble with his dashed minor the day I came here. Confound the young jackanapes!" growled Roylance.

And Arthur Augustus said no more.

CHAPTER 4.

The Great Fight.

AFTER lessons next day there was excitement in the School House at St. Jim's.

The fight between Tom Merry and Roylance was to come off early in the afternoon, outside the school walls.

It was a scrap of uncommon interest, for Tom was one of the best in the scrapping line, and Roylance had proved that he was of unusual quality.

As for the cause of the quarrel, that was a matter of lesser interest, and the juniors hardly knew what to make of it, either. Manners had had the worst of his first encounter with Roylance, and Manners had fought him again, because Roylance had twitted him with funk. But Roylance denied having done anything of the kind, and neither was a fellow who could be supposed to lie; so the general opinion was that there was some mistake in the matter. Manners' chums, naturally, sided with him; the other fellows cheerfully sided with both parties, and hoped there would be a good mill.

Soon after dinner the Terrible Three sauntered out of the school gates together, Monty Lowther carrying a bag. As the fight was of a more serious kind than a harmless glove contest, it had to

be kept from the knowledge of the prefects, so a certain amount of caution was observed.

Roylance quitted the school five minutes later, with his study-mates, Contarini and Smith minor, Blake and Herries, and Digby and D'Arcy, followed them soon afterwards. Figgins & Co., of the New House, followed, and after them a regular army of juniors, in twos and threes and fours.

The rendezvous in the selected place was numerously attended.

The chosen spot was a strip of meadow by the river, shut in by trees. In that spot interruptions were not likely to take place.

Lowther was Tom Merry's second, and Arthur Augustus acted for Roylance. Kangaroo, of the Shell, was appointed timekeeper.

There was a thick crowd round the ring, and Racke of the Shell was offering the odds on Roylance. Racke and Crooke and Clampe were there, in great spirits. Racke & Co. disliked the new fellow and detested Tom Merry; so that, whatever the result of the fight, it was to be satisfactory from their point of view. They hoped fervently to see Tom Merry licked, but a licking for Roylance would also have afforded them great pleasure.

Tin basins were filled with water from the river, and the sponges floated in them. Lowther and D'Arcy produced towels from under their coats. Kangaroo of the Shell drew out a big silver watch.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tom Merry, and Roylance nodded.

The principals had thrown off their jackets, and their sleeves were rolled back, and they had donned the gloves.

"Two to one on Roylance!" called out Aubrey Racke, apparently understudying a bookmaker.

Grundy looked round at him.

"Racke!" he rapped out.

"Hallo!" said Racke.

"Stop that!" ordered Grundy automatically.

"Eh?"

"Stop it!"

"You cheeky ass—"

Grundy strode towards him.

"You're not going to make dirty bets here," he said. "Stop it, or I'll boot you out of the place fast enough!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Blake.

"I suppose I can do as I like?" roared Racke, exasperated by the intervention of the high-handed George Alfred.

"That's your little mistake; you can't," said Grundy coolly. "Shut up!"

"Two to one on Roylance!" shouted Racke defiantly.

He had reason to regret his defiance the next moment. Grundy seized him by the collar, and rushed him away. They disappeared through the trees, Racke struggling frantically in George Alfred's muscular grip. A yell of laughter followed them.

Grundy came back in a couple of minutes, rather flushed, and alone. The sportive Aubrey did not reappear.

"Where's Racke?" asked Wilkins.

"I left him in the ditch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you doing any betting here, Crooke?" demanded Grundy.

Crooke's answer was hasty and in the negative.

Meanwhile the combatants were getting to business. They shook hands as they met in the ring, and Harry Noble called "Time." The first round began.

All eyes were on them now.

Tom Merry was the bigger of the two, and a little older; but Roylance was evidently a tough customer for even the captain of the Shell. The difference in size was not marked. And, good boxer as Tom Merry was, the first round

showed that Roylance was his equal in that line.

Manners looked on rather glumly as round after round was fought through.

After four rounds it was anybody's fight, as Jack Blake remarked. Fortune inclined as yet to neither side. And Manners, who a few days before had tackled Roylance, saw clearly enough that he had never had the ghost of a chance. Tom Merry had to go all out, and it was not at all certain so far that he would get the upper hand.

And the fellows, watching Roylance, were surprised at the form he showed. He was so quiet and unassuming that few had thought him able to put up such a fight. A fellow who could stand up to the captain of the Shell for round after round might have been excused for putting on a little side; but Roylance had never shown any trace of side. His fistic powers were not revealed at all till the time came when he was called upon to use them.

Arthur Augustus sponged his heated face after the fifth round. In spite of the gloves, a good deal of damage was being done on both sides.

Roylance looked fresh enough still.

"Bai Jove, I never dreamed that you were such a corkah, deah boy!" the swell of St. Jim's remarked. "Weally, I do not feel at all suah that I could knock you out myself, you know!"

Roylance laughed.

"Time!" said Kangaroo.

The New Zealander stepped up with alertness for the sixth round. Junior scraps seldom ran to six rounds, but it was plain that this particular scrap would run to many more than that.

"There goes Roylance!" muttered Crooke.

It was the first fall. The New Zealander was down. Kangaroo began to count. But before five had been counted Roylance was up again and fighting. He stalled off the Shell fellow's attack till time was called, and he was breathing hard as he sank on the knee Arthur Augustus made for him.

The seventh round was slower, but in the eighth the fight woke up again, and Tom Merry went to grass. It was still quite a matter of doubt what the result would be.

"Ninth round!" said Jack Blake, when the Australian junior called time again. "Sticking it out, by Jove! They ought to stop now. Look at Tommy's nose, and Roylance's eye!"

"And his chin!" grinned Herries.

"And his nose, too, for that matter!"

"It's gone far enough," said Dig.

But the ninth round went on, both combatants getting punishment, and both very evidently the worse for wear.

"Time!"

"Feehn! all wight, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus, rather anxiously, as he sponged the crimson face of his principal.

"Good for some more, anyway," answered Roylance quietly.

"Bravo!"

Monty Lowther was slightly anxious as he looked after Tom Merry. His faith in his leader was not shaken, but he could not deny that it was, as Blake had said earlier, anybody's fight so far. Tom Merry smiled faintly as he read Monty Lowther's thoughts in his face.

"All serene!" he said. "I shall pull through, I think. Roylance is the toughest chap I've ever scrapped with—tougher than Grundy, even. There's a bit of difference in size and weight, though, and that's on my side. I shouldn't wonder if that makes all the difference."

"Go in and win!" said Lowther.

Tom nodded, saving his breath for his work.

"Time!"

"Tenth round!" said Levison of the Fourth. "By gum!"

"Tom Merry's goin' to pull it off," remarked Cardew, with the air of a connoisseur. "He's a bit to the good, but it's a close thing. If Grundy weren't here I'd offer one and a half to one on Thomas."

It was the tenth round, and Tom Merry was pressing his opponent now.

Dick Roylance gave ground steadily; he was driven half round the ring, and his defence seemed to fall away feebly. D'Arcy's face was keen with anxiety as he watched. Tom Merry rushed in, and then, all of a sudden, the New Zealander stiffened up, and met him with a sudden irresistible attack. The captain of the Shell reeled back from a drive fairly in the face, followed up by a postman's knock that almost lifted him from his feet. There was a heavy bump as he went down in the grass.

"Bravo!" chirruped Arthur Augustus. Tom Merry lay dazed.

Experienced scrapper as he was, he had been lured on by the astute Fourth-Former, with disastrous results. The affected feebleness of the New Zealander had completely taken him in.

"One, two, three, four—" came from Kangaroo grimly.

Monty Lowther's face was set. Manners looked hard and savage. Was Tom Merry, too, to be defeated by the youth from the land of the Southern Cross? Tom made a big effort to rise, but he sank back again, his senses whirling. He had taken punishment that would have knocked out most fellows on the spot.

"Five, six, seven, eight—" came from Manners.

"Tom!" breathed Manners.

"Nine—" Tom staggered to his feet with a tremendous effort. Roylance could have knocked him spinning the moment he was up, but Roylance was standing back, with his hands down, chivalrously giving his adversary plenty of time to recover. It was only that chivalry of the Colonial junior that saved Tom Merry from grim defeat.

It was Tom who renewed the conflict, but when the call of time came he almost tottered to Lowther's knee.

Lowther did not speak. He did what he could for his chief in the brief interval of rest. But Arthur Augustus was fairly grinning as he clapped Roylance on the back.

"Good man!" he said, half a dozen times. "Good man!"

"Time!"

"Eleventh round!" said Clive. "They ought to stop!"

Tom Merry came up a little slowly to the call of time, but steadily. He was recovering. And now he was very wary, and no feint was likely to take him in again. He contented himself with defence till he felt stronger, and the round was uneventful.

"Twelfth round, by gad!" said Cardew, with a deep breath, when the adversaries faced one another again at the call of time. "Good men both!"

"Last, too, I think," said Levison quietly.

And Levison was right!

Tom Merry was pressing the attack hard and fast, and this time his opponent was outclassed. Twice the New Zealander nearly went down, but recovered, and then a terrific straight drive sent him spinning. He landed in the grass with a crash.

Kangaroo counted.

At nine there was a buzz of deep-drawn breath. All eyes were on Roylance. He made an effort to rise, his face drawn and contorted with the intensity of it; but he sank back again. He was spent. Tom Merry was little better, for he could

scarcely keep his feet. But he was just keeping them.

"Out!"

Kangaroo slipped his watch into his pocket.

Arthur Augustus, with a rather glum face, helped his principal out of the ring. Roylance sat on his knee, and panted and panted. Tom Merry, in little better case, rested on Lowther's ready knee. It was some little time before either of the adversaries in that well-fought fight cared to move. Roylance was the first on his feet, as it happened.

Tom Merry rose, and stepped towards him, throwing his gloves aside. He held out his hand to the New Zealand junior.

Roylance gave him a rather queer look, but shook hands readily enough.

"You've pulled it off," he said coolly.

"You're a good man," said Tom.

"You let me off in the tenth round. It was your fight, if you'd chosen. We'll try it again another time, if you like—"

But I've had quite enough, if you have."

Roylance grinned faintly.

"Enough to go on with, thanks," he said.

He looked round.

"Manners!" he called out.

"Hullo!" said Manners.

"Now it's all over, I've got something to say. I did not call you a funk. I never thought of such a thing. It was a lie of Rucke's. That's all!"

Roylance turned to Arthur Augustus, who helped him on with his jacket, and he left the ground with the swell of St. Jim's. Tom Merry blinked after him, and he blinked at Manners. He found it difficult to look at anything just then without blinking.

"Come on!" said Monty Lowther.

And Tom's chums led him from the field.

CHAPTER 5.

After the Battle.

GRUNDY of the Shell looked in at Tom Merry's study about an hour later.

Tom Merry was reclining in the arm-chair, not much inclined to do anything else after his terrific slogging-match.

He had won on the count, but the fight had been so close that it was hardly a victory. And the punishment given and taken had been very severe. Tom Merry was feeling, as he remarked to his chums, as if he had been under a motor-car that afternoon—and a very heavy motor-car at that. Strong and fit as he was, it was likely to be some time before he fully recovered.

"Coming?" asked Grundy, looking in. "Rats! No," said Tom Merry; "I'm not coming anywhere. I wouldn't leave this arm-chair just now to see the Kaiser hanged!"

"You're a bit soft, ain't you?" remarked Grundy.

Tom gave him a feeble glare.

"Kill him, somebody!" he said.

Monty Lowther picked up the poker.

"Here, hold on! No larks!" said Grundy.

"It's the session of the St. Jim's Parliament, you know. Presentation to Gusy—speech by me—"

"Speech by you!" said Tom. "I couldn't stand that, if I was feeling my very best. Call again after the war!"

"Don't lie up for a bit of a scrap," said Grundy encouragingly. "Be a man, you know! Take it smiling! Keep a stiff upper lip! Be a sport, like me!"

"Monty, if you were a pal you'd brain him!" moaned Tom Merry. "You've got a poker. Why don't you brain him?"

"I'm going to!"

"Here, stop that! No larks!" roared Grundy.

"Why, you mad idiot, wharrer you at? Keep off! Yarooooh!"

Grundy spun into the passage as the poker whirled round his head. Monty Lowther did not quite brain him, but he gave Grundy some taps that made the great George Alfred feel as if he were on an anvil. Grundy staggered across the passage, and glared at Lowther as if he could eat him.

"You potty ass!" he roared. "You—you—you—"

"Oh, don't be soft!" grinned Lowther. "Come and have some more! Don't lie up for a bit of a tap!"

"You—you—you—" gasped Grundy.

"Here, have some more, like that, and that!"

"Yarooooop!"

"That" and "that" were terrific prods in Grundy's ribs, and apparently he did not want any more, for he fled along the passage and vanished. Lowther chuckled as he came back into the study. "That make you feel better, Tommy?" he inquired.

"Yes," said Tom, grinning. "The silly ass! I'll bet he wouldn't have stood up to Roylance for twelve rounds! Soft! The silly chump! I feel as if I'd been through a mangle!"

"I'm glad you licked him," said Manners.

Tom made a grimace.

"Well, I suppose I licked him, as he was counted out," he said. "But I feel remarkably as if he'd licked me."

"He's a good man," said Monty Lowther. "Never mind; you've saved the prestige of the study."

"I'd rather have saved my nose," mumbled Tom Merry. "It feels as if it wasn't there. And I believe it was all about nothing, after all. Roylance says he didn't say anything about Manners."

"He did!" said Manners.

"Well, it beats me hollow!" confessed Tom. "A chap who could put up a fight like that ought to be pretty decent. You saw how he let me off in the tenth round. It was his fight, if he'd knocked me out, as he could have, then, under the rules. He gave me a chance, and got licked at the finish for doing it! Only a really decent chap would play the game to that extent."

"Hullo! Talk of angels!" said Lowther, as Dick Roylance stepped in at the open doorway.

Roylance showed a good many signs of the combat. The gloves had saved the worst, but a great amount of damage had been done.

Tom Merry gave him a faint grin. Tom was backing up Manners in the dispute, but he simply could not feel ill-will towards a fellow who had put up such a fight as Roylance had put up that afternoon.

"Hullo! Feeling chippy?" he asked.

"Not very!" confessed Roylance.

"If you've come for some more, call to-morrow!"

"Hå, hæ! I haven't come for any more. I've come to explain something. I think you ought to hear me," said Roylance. "It's about what Manners quarrelled with me for."

"Well, we don't want to hear you!" said Manners gruffly.

Roylance coloured.

"Does that apply to all three of you?" he asked very quietly.

"No, it doesn't!" said Tom Merry at once. "Give the chap a chance to speak, Manners! I've felt all along that there was some mistake about the matter."

"There was no mistake!" said Manners bitterly. "I can believe my own ears, I suppose?"

"Not without using your brains, if you have any!" said Roylance tartly.

"I don't care twopence what you think, to be candid; but I'd rather Merry did not think that I had acted like a mean rotter. It was like this, Merry. Racks

and Crooke asked me into their study, and I found that they wanted to egg me on into a fight with Manners. I understand that they're up against this study for some reason—

"That's so."

"Well, I refused to be drawn, and was leaving the study when Manners came by. Then Racke said something, as if answering what I had said. It was a clever trick, and it fairly flabbergasted me for the minute. He said something to the effect that he didn't believe that Manners had been dodging me, and that he didn't believe Manners was a funk, just as if I'd been saying so. I give you my word that I hadn't! It was a trick of Racke's, because he saw Manners outside the door, and wanted him to hear."

Manners set his lips.

"It was just like one of Racke's tricks!" said Tom Merry. "So that was how it happened, Manners! You never heard Roylance say anything at all."

"I heard Racke answer him."

"As Roylance has just described it?" demanded Lowther.

"Yes."

"And that was all?"

"It was quite enough."

"I suppose you believe me, Tom Merry?" said Roylance quietly. "Even if I were mean enough to tell a lie, there're no reason why I should. I intended to tell you this after our scrap, whichever of us got the better of it. It was simply a trick of Racke's, because I had refused to be his catspaw. Manners didn't wait to ask a question; he just rushed at me and hit out."

"I'd do the same again!" said Manners.

"Then you don't believe my explanation?"

Manners hesitated.

"Well, yes, I suppose I do, really," he said at last. "It was just like one of Racke's tricks. I admit that."

"Of course, we believe you," exclaimed Tom Merry warmly. "And I must say that Manners was a silly ass to be taken in so easily. If he'd told us how it happened, we should have guessed it was one of Racke's tricks. You had a scrap with Racke in his study that evening, I know. That was the reason?"

"Yes."

"Well, you leave the court without a stain on your character," said Monty Lowther, with a grin. "Manners, old chap, you do seem rather to rush to conclusions like a bull at a gate. I rather think that you owe Roylance another apology."

Manners looked grim.

"I don't want that," said Roylance. "It doesn't matter a bit. But I wanted you fellows to know the facts. If I'd said what Racke pretended I'd said, I should have been a mean cad. That's all!"

Manners flushed uncomfortably.

It was impossible to doubt the explanation so frankly given, and once more Manners had to admit that his "down" on the new junior was due to a misunderstanding caused by his own hastiness. But Manners was true blue; he was ready to admit that he was wrong when he knew that he was wrong.

"I'm sorry, Roylance!" he said, with an effort. "I don't think I was much to blame, if you come to that. I naturally thought Racke was answering something you had said, when I heard him. But I believe you, of course, and I'm sorry."

"All serene," said Roylance. He paused a moment, and then went on, colouring slightly: "Look here, Manners! You've been down on me ever since I've been here, and it was all due to mistakes. You've owned that much. I don't want to be on bad terms with

anybody. I'm not looking for trouble. I'm willing to shake hands and let bygones be bygones, if you are."

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry. "It's up to you, Manners, old scout!"

Manners was silent. There was a struggle in his breast between his better nature and the bitterness of his feeling towards the new junior. But dislike, even though admittedly founded upon misapprehension, was not to be overcome in a moment. Manners put his hands into his pockets.

"Manners!" muttered Monty Lowther.

"Well, if that's how you feel, all serene," said Roylance. "It doesn't worry me."

And he quitted the study.

Manners looked at his chums, his face hardening as he read the condemnation in their looks.

"I don't like him!" he said. "You needn't scowl at me. I've admitted that the wrong was on my side. But I don't like the fellow! I suppose I'm allowed to have my own likes and dislikes, if I choose?"

"No good jawing about it!" said Tom Merry shortly.

Manners, with a clouded face, left the study. He was not satisfied with himself, or with his chums, or with anything at that moment. But he had never felt less inclined to make friends with his enemy.

CHAPTER 6.

For Valour.

"COME on, Gussy, you duffer!"

"Wait till I get my tie straight, dear boy!"

"Both your tie!" growled Herries impatiently.

"I refuse to bothay my tie, Hewies!"

"Look here! It's an important session this afternoon!" exclaimed Blake. "You can't be late, least of all. Come on!"

"Weady now!" said Arthur Augustus graciously.

And the swell of St. Jim's left Study No. 6 with his chums.

Quite a little army of St. Jim's juniors had started for the barn in Pepper's field, where the St. Jim's Parliament held its sessions. That afternoon the presentation to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was to be made for the heroic rescue of Manners minor of the Third Form. It was to be made in spite of D'Arcy's denial that he was the heroic rescuer at all. That denial was generally put down to Gussy's great modesty.

It did not seem possible that anybody but the great Gussy had been the rescuer.

Manners minor had ventured into the field, and the savage bull had run him down, and Reggie had fainted, with the brute fairly upon him. He had come to in Mr. Bunce's cottage, to find that somebody had rescued him—who, he had not the faintest idea. His major had found him there, and brought him back to the school, having learned where he was from Arthur Augustus. Naturally, all parties concluded that it was Arthur Augustus who had rescued Reggie from the bull.

D'Arcy certainly had helped to take the fainting fag into the cottage, and had gone for the doctor. And if he wasn't the rescuer, why couldn't he say who was? There was no answer to that question, excepting that Gussy's modest desire to blush unseen led him to deny his own heroism.

There was no doubt that the fellow who had rescued Reggie had risked his life. The wonder was that he had not lost it. And, but for his aid, Reggie would have been gored to death by the savage animal as he lay helpless—that

was another certainty. And a fellow who had shown unlimited pluck, and saved the life of his schoolfellow, was a fellow whom St. Jim's delighted to honour. So there was great enthusiasm for the presentation of the testimonial in a handsome box to the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus, quite ignorant of the intentions of his schoolfellows, walked down to the barn with Blake and his chums. Manners joined them on the way. Monty Lowther was staying in with Tom Merry. Tom did not feel inclined for parliamentary proceedings that afternoon.

Manners didn't either, for that matter, but he felt bound to turn up, considering the nature of the occasion.

His minor in the Third was a good deal of a worry to him, but Manners was strongly attached to Reggie, all the same; and he felt far more gratitude to the rescuer than the fag himself did. Master Reggie had rather a way of taking everything for granted. But Manners knew that it was not every fellow who would have run under the horns of a savage and maddened bull to save a young rascal whose own wicked recklessness had brought his peril upon him.

"I trust Talbot will let me catch his eye this afternoon," remarked Arthur Augustus. "I regard Talbot as a vewy good Speakah, exceptin' that sometimes he allows othah chaps to catch his eye and begin talkin'. I have some wathah important wemarks to make on the wab."

"That's all right; you won't be allowed to make them!" said Blake.

"I shall insist upon makin' them, Blake! I'm goin to express my views on the air-service."

"Bow-wow!"

"I shall put the resolution to the House that the only way of beatin' Germany is by an air invasion on a large scale," explained Arthur Augustus. "Ten thousand aeroplanes would make the wotten Huns fairly cwing. I shall request Mr. Speakah to forward a copy of the resolution to the War Cabinet in London—"

"Great pip!"

"That will wathah wake them up, you know!" said Arthur Augustus, with an air of satisfaction.

"Ha, ha, ha! Do you think it would be read?" roared Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! They would hardly have the cheek to leave it unread, I presume?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' whatevah to cackle at in that wemerk! I regard it as the duty of ewevy British citizen with brains to come to the wescue of the politicians, who unfortunately have so little. That is the way to win the war and give Pwussian militawism the kybosh. Heah we are, dear boys! Mind you back me up. And, for goodness' sake, cheer in the wight places!"

The House of Commons was growing crowded when the chums of Study No. 6 entered. Most of the St. Jim's Cabinet were on the Front Bench, and Mr. Speaker—otherwise Talbot of the Shell—was in his place. A buzz greeted the entrance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Here he is!" shouted Reggie Manners, who had squeezed in with the crowd.

"Hurrah!"

"Bai Jove! That is wathah flet-terin'!" said Arthur Augustus, surprised and pleased.

"Bravo, Gussy!"

"You see, Blake, the fellows know how to appreciate a weally good speech by a chap who knows somethin'." They

are expectin' somethin' vewy good fvwom me on the subject of the air-service."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Order! Silence!"

Grundy of the Shell rose, looking very important.

"Mr. Speaker and honourable members, I move that this House resolve itself into a Committee—"

"Hear, hear!"

"For the purpose of making a presentation to the honourable member, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs."

"Hear!"

"Bai Jove! What does that mean, Blake?"

"Wait and see!" grinned Blake.

"Good old Gussy!" bawled Wally from the ranks of the fag members. "Why didn't you bring a fan to hide your blushes?"

"Weally, Wally—"

"The Secretary for Foreign Affairs will kindly rise to the occasion," said Mr. Speaker.

"Bai Jove! I weally do not compweh—"

"Gentlemen," said Grundy, for the first time during his career as a St. Jim's Parliamentarian making a speech without being howled down. "Gentlemen, some of you are acquainted with the gallant action of the Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the St. Jim's Cabinet, but some may not be. For the benefit of the latter I will utter a few remarks."

"The fewer the better," murmured Blake.

"Gentlemen, the other day the honourable member spotted a silly young idiot in the Third Form in a field with a mad bull."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"With a personal courage remarkable in a politician—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He rushed to the rescue. He got the silly fag from under the horns of the bull and saved his life. It was an act of great courage. Of course, I should have done the same if I'd been there—"

"Oh, would you?"

"So would any fellow. But, all the same, it was ripping of him. Gentlemen," continued Grundy, with real eloquence, "some persons—some ignorant persons—might try to make out that the St. Jim's Parliament is not equal to the real thing at Westminster. They might allege that schoolboy politicians are not up to the mark of the grown-up article. Gentlemen, these critics are now answered. Who ever heard of a real, grown-up politician risking his own skin?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anybody's else's skin, if you like, but not his own. Gentlemen," continued Grundy, "I claim that this incident puts the St. Jim's House of Commons far and away ahead of the queer institution at Westminster. A member of the St. Jim's Cabinet saw a chap in danger. He did not make a long speech urging somebody else to go to the rescue. He did not spout out epoch-making eloquence by the fathom, and leave the danger to another chap. He rushed in himself and did the trick. After this, gentlemen, I claim that the St. Jim's Parliament is the real goods, and anything in the same line at Westminster is only a spurious imitation."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I may even add," went on the encouraged Grundy, "that the country would do well to put power into the hands of the St. Jim's Parliament, and leave the other show to browse on its salaries and mind its own business!"

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"Hear, hear!"

"And now, gentlemen, the presentation will take place. This box contains the testimonial in the form of cash."

D'Arcy—

"You uttah ass!"

"What!"

"I wegard these pwoceedin's as widio!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "It was not I who wesuced Weggie Mannahs! It was not a membah of the St. Jim's Parliament at all! I wufuse to accept a testimonial. I wegard you as asses!"

And with that wrathful announcement Arthur Augustus stalked out of the House of Commons, and Grundy was left with the presentation-box in his hand. And the session of the St. Jim's Parliament broke up in an excited buzz.

CHAPTER 7. Keeping it Dark.

BLAKE & CO. found Arthur Augustus in Study No. 6 when they came to tea.

D'Arcy was looking disturbed and wrathful. The scene in the St. Jim's Parliament had annoyed him. Moreover, he had not made his great speech on the air-service; and the valuable tip he had been going to give the War Cabinet was lost to those gentlemen for the present.

"Look here, Gussy, you silly ass—"

began Blake.

"I wegard you as an uttah ass, Blake!" exclaimed D'Arcy hotly. "I pwsesome you were a party to those widiculous pwoceedings?"

"Of course, ass! It's one up for this study to have a testimonial presented for valour, fathead!"

"The wight person is not in this study."

"Who is the right person, then?" roared Herries.

"That's a secret, Hewwies."

"Why is it a secret, fathead?"

"I am sowwy I cannot explain."

"Look here!" said Blake. "There's been enough of this mystifying. Was it you who rescued Manners minor or not, you blinking duffer?"

"I wufuse to be called a blinkin' duffah, Blake! And I have already answahed in the negative."

"And it isn't only your modesty—what?"

"Certainly not!"

"That's all right! We'll take that as official," said Blake. "Now we want to know who it was. You were there, and you know. Who was it?"

"Wats!"

"If you won't answer on the voluntary system, compulsion will be applied," said Blake warningly.

"Wubbish!"

"Take hold of him!" said Blake.

"I wufuse to be taken hold of! Hewwies, you ass, leggo my neck! Dig, you wuffian—Yawwooh!"

Arthur Augustus' chums were in deadly earnest. They did not see any reason for a mystification, and they were fed up. They seized the swell of St. Jim's, and his elegant person smote the study carpet with a loud bump.

"Ow, you wottahs! Ow!"

"Now tell us who it was!"

"Wats!"

"Bump!"

"Name!" said Blake, grinning.

"Oh, you feahful wuffians!" wailed Arthur Augustus. "Oh, you wottahs! You are wuinin' my wottahs!"

"Name!" roared Herries.

"Go an' eat coke!"

Bump! Bump!

"Yawwooop! Leggo! I wufuse to give the name!" howled Arthur Augustus.

tus, struggling wildly. "I distinctly wufuse—Yoooop!"

Bump!

"Oh, ewumbs! I cannot give you the name, you silly duffahs, as I have promised Woylance not to do so."

"Roylance!" exclaimed Blake.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"What's Roylance got to do with it?"

"I wufuse to explain! Leggo!"

"Roylance!" repeated Blake, in wonder; and he released the swell of St. Jim's, who sat up and gasped. "So it was Roylance, was it?"

"I wufuse to weply! Ow!"

"Why did Roylance make you promise not to mention his name?"

"Gwooooh!"

"Answer, you ass!"

"I wufuse to answah! Oh, deah!"

"I think that's clear enough," remarked Digby. "It's because Roylance is on fighting terms with Manners major. As Reggie had fainted, he didn't see who pulled him out, and so Roylance left it at that. I see, now."

"But Gussy told us Roylance wasn't with him when Reggie was pulled out of the field," said Herries.

"That was quite true, Hewwies. I had parted with Woylance, and saw him fvwom a distance, you ass!"

"Then you admit it was Roylance?"

"I wufuse to admit anythin'! Havin' made a promise, I am quite unable to give you any information."

Blake chuckled.

"We don't need much more than you've given us already," he said. "Roylance wouldn't have asked you to keep it dark if he'd known your methods of keeping secrets."

"I intend to keep it as secret as the gwave, Blake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' whatever to cackle at, you uttah ass!" Arthur Augustus picked himself up, and proceeded to dust down his beautiful bags. "I wegard you follows as uttah wuffians, and I have a gweat mind to give you a feahful thrashin' all round!"

"Roylance had better have the testimonial!" grinned Dig.

Arthur Augustus looked alarmed.

"Weally, Dig, if you have guessed that it was Woylance, pway do not breathe a word outside this study! He will think I have broken my promise."

"You shouldn't have promised anything of the sort, ass!"

"He asked me, deah boy."

"Because he was on bad terms with Manners?"

"Yaa."

"I don't see that it mattered," grunted Herries.

"You see, Woylance is wathah a fellow of tact and judgment," explained Arthur Augustus. "He felt that it would be wathah bad form to place Mannahs undah a personal obligation to him, at a time when Mannahs was goin' for him as an enemy, you know. I quite approved. It would have made Mannahs feel an awful sillay ass!"

"Well, he is a silly ass, so I don't see why he shouldn't feel it!"

"Howevah—"

"Better not say anything, as Gussy made that idiotic promise," remarked Blake. "I dare say he will let it out himself, soon, too. He's let it out to us, and he will let it out far and wide, before long."

"I have not let it out!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "You fellows seem to have guessed somehow—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as asses, and I see no reason whatever for cacklin'!"

But Arthur Augustus' chums apparently saw some reason, for they persisted in cackling.

CHAPTER 8.

A Chance for Roylance.

THERE was a good deal of curiosity among the School House juniors on the subject of the rescue of Manners minor. Reggie was questioned by some of the fellows, but he could only say that he had become unconscious—he refused to admit that he had fainted—and had come to in Mr. Bunce's cottage, and his rescuer was gone before that. Arthur Augustus' statement that he was not the person was taken at last as "official," but it was a puzzle who the person might be. Study No. 6 knew, now, but they said nothing. Gussy had let the secret escape him incautiously, but they did not want Roylance to get the impression that he had broken faith.

The matter was talked of for a time, but mainly forgotten by the next day. Wally & Co., with the testimonial left on their hands, were rather perplexed what to do with it. Levison minor proposed saving it till the real rescuer turned up; but Wally pointed out that probably it wasn't a St. Jim's chap at all, and they would probably never see or hear of him. Piggett proposed a Form spread with the cash—a suggestion that was sat on at once. Wally, in withering terms, explained to Piggett that the money was not theirs to spend, and added that they were not war-profiteers. And the question remained undecided.

Dick Roylance of the Fourth was glad enough to hear an end of the talk on the subject of Manners minor and the unknown rescuer.

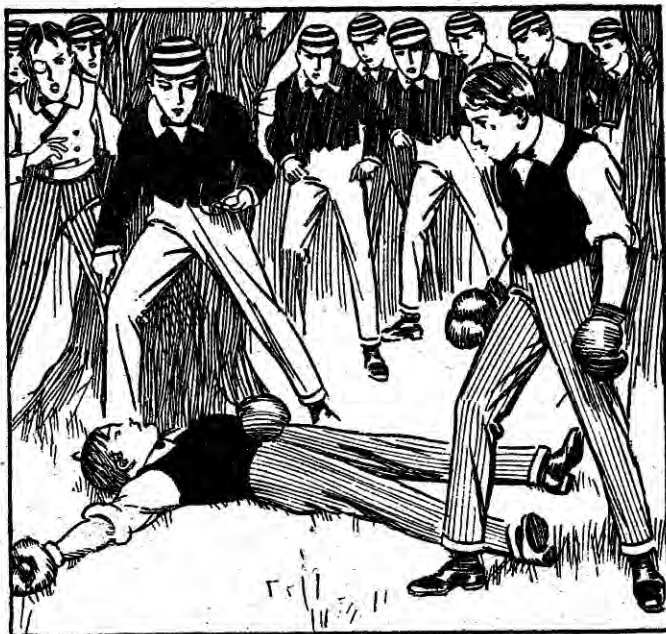
It had been from sheer good-heartedness and chivalry that he had asked D'Arcy, his companion on that eventful afternoon, to keep dark his share in the transaction.

Manners was so bitter against him, though without real reason, that the new junior did not want to put the Shell fellow under an irksome obligation, and he shrank, too, from the limelight. He had done what seemed to him a quite ordinary thing, and he did not want to be praised for it—and, above all, he did not want an awkward and reluctant acknowledgment from Manners. He simply wanted the whole affair to be forgotten, and but for D'Arcy's peculiar way of keeping a secret no one in the School House would have known the facts.

Manners least of all had any suspicion. He was curious on the subject. He knew what a terrible risk Reggie's rescuer had run from Mr. Bunce's description of what he had seen. The thought had crossed Manners' mind that it might have been Roylance, but he had dismissed it angrily. It was not the fellow he regarded as an enemy who had saved the life of his minor—he was sure of that. It would have been a little difficult for Manners to explain exactly how he was sure. But he was sure!

Manners was still keeping up his old attitude towards Roylance. They came little in contact, but when they did Manners was all ice. And his chums, who really liked the New Zealand junior, felt themselves constrained to keep out of his way. Manners was irreconcilable, and they were Manners' chums—but they wished that Manners would have a little more sense!

But, even if they had wanted to avoid the Colonial, it was not possible for Tom Merry quite to do so. Roylance was very keen on footer. Short as was the time he had been at St. Jim's, he had already shown that he would make his mark in junior football. Tom had already marked him as a reserve for the junior House eleven, and about a week after the great fight he resolved to give the New Zealander his first chance in a House match.



Counted Out!
(See Chapter 4.)

By that time both Tom Merry and Roylance had quite recovered from the effects of their slogging match, and, indeed, had almost forgotten it. Tom Merry stopped Roylance to speak to him one day after lessons.

"You're getting on jolly well with your footer," he said.

"You think so?" said Roylance. "Yes. I've had an eye on you. It's my business, you know, as football skipper. I'll give you a place in the House match to-morrow, if you like."

Roylance beamed. "I'd jolly well like!" he answered. "If you think I'm good enough, I'm your man!"

"I'll put your name down, then," said Tom, with a smile.

"Good!" And Dick Roylance's name went down in the list. Tom, thinking only of football and his duties as skipper, had forgotten about Manners' feud with the new junior, not that he would have allowed that to interfere with duty, anyway.

In the study that evening Manners broached the subject.

"Talbot's not in the eleven to-morrow, I understand," he remarked.

"No," said Tom. "His uncle's home on leave, and Talbot's going to see him. He's taking Levison with him, too."

"Two out of the eleven?"

"Yes. I'm calling on the reserves. I was thinking of you, Manners, if you feel up to it."

"I was thinking of it, too," grinned Manners. "I'm up to it right enough. After all, I can play footer. I don't want you to put me in because we're pals, but you needn't leave me out simply because we're in the same study."

Tom Merry laughed. "Right-ho! You go in, then."

Cardew of the Fourth knocked at the door and looked in.

"Made up your list for to-morrow, Merry?" he inquired.

"Yes, thanks!"

"Levison's told me he's off with

Talbot, so I thought you might be in want of a rather good forward," drawled Cardew.

"I've got one, thanks!"

"No room for an enterprising youth about my size?"

"Sorry, no! Are you getting keen on footer, Cardew?" asked Tom, with a smile.

He could not quite imagine the slack dandy of the Fourth keen on anything.

"Well, I was thinkin' of givin' it a turn," said Cardew. "I've been rather stickin' to practice lately, too. But if you don't want my valuable services, I won't press them on you.—Ta-ta!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew strolled out again.

Tom Merry coned over his list thoughtfully.

"No room for Cardew to-morrow," he remarked; "but I might give him a chance, if he sticks to practice. He's got the makings of a jolly good footballer in him, if he chose to play up."

"What's the list as it stands?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Herries in goal; Reilly and Gore; Noble, Lowther, Clive; Blake, D'Arcy, Manners, Roylance, and self."

"Roylance!" exclaimed Manners, with a start.

Tom Merry started, too, as Manners spoke. Immersed in footer and football considerations, he had forgotten other matters.

"Yes, in the front line," he answered. "You're playing that fellow?"

"I'm playing Roylance."

"Why?"

"Because he's a good man, and it's time he had a turn," said Tom. "Why shouldn't I play him?" he added sharply.

"I suppose I'm not to keep a fellow out of the football matches because you don't happen to like him, am I?"

"Play him if you like, of course," said Manners, setting his lips. "You can scratch my name out, though. Tom's eye ginted a little."

"I won't scratch your name out, Manners. You're going to play in the House match."

"Not if Roylance does!"

"Do you think you have a right to drag your silly likes and dislikes into football matters?" demanded Tom Merry hotly.

"I mean what I say. After all, you don't need me. I'm not one of your giddy champions," said Manners bitterly. "Play Cardew; he's keen enough."

"He's not so good as you."

"Thanks! Play him instead of Roylance, then."

"I think you must be off your rocker, Manners! What sort of a football skipper should I be if I dropped a chap out of the team simply because my study-mate don't like him?"

"Drop me, then."

Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"I won't," he said tartly. "I'm keeping your name down; and I hope you'll have a bit more sense to-morrow."

"Are you going to post that list up?"

"Yes, this evening."

"Take my name out first."

"I'm leaving your name where I've put it, Manners. You've jolly well ragged me a dozen times for not giving you a chance in a match."

"I can't play to-morrow."

"You mean you won't."

"Well, I won't, then, if you like that better."

"I hope you'll think better of that by to-morrow," said Tom Merry quietly. "You're putting rather a hard strain on friendship, Manners."

And Tom Merry quitted the study before Manners could reply, feeling that patience would reach breaking-point if he argued the matter further. Ten minutes later the football list was posted up, and the names of both Manners and Roylance appeared in it for all the School House to read.

CHAPTER 9.

Wally & Co. Make a Discovery.

"THIRTY-FIVE bob!" said D'Arcy minor very thoughtfully.

"Lot of money," remarked Hobbs, looking serious.

"The blessed question is, what are we going to do with it?" said Wally peevishly. "I suppose we've got to take Gussy's word that he's not entitled to it."

"Well, he says so," observed Levison minor. "I thought it was his fat-headed modesty at first; but, after all, D'Arcy major wouldn't tell a whopper even for the sake of modesty. And it would be a whopper!"

"But what are we going to do with it?" grunted Wally. "We've raised it as a blessed testimonial for the blessed rescuer, bless him! You young ass, Manners, you're always causing trouble."

"Oh, rats!" was Reggie's reply.

"What did you want to go into the field for at all?" growled Wally.

"You went in it!" snapped Reggie.

"Well, I had sense enough to keep away from the bull. You ought to have known what an ass you are!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Besides, you'd know who the chap was, if you'd seen him; only, of course, you had to faint," said Wally sarcastically.

"I didn't faint!" roared Manners minor.

"Then who was the chap who pulled you out?"

"I didn't see him, idiot!"

"Because you fainted."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 522.

"You cheeky ass, I didn't faint! I just became unconscious, somehow."

"I do! You fainted!"

"I'll punch your nose if you say I fainted!" howled Reggie indignantly.

"Look here—"

"Order!" murmured Frank Levison. "Punching noses won't settle what to do with the tin. Suppose we give it to the cottage hospital at Rylcombe."

"Tain't ours to give."

"Well, the chap we raised it for won't turn up. And I'm getting fed up with it, for one."

"Same here," growled Reggie.

"We've got to find the chap," said Wally obstinately. "And when we find him we'll jolly well rag him for keeping it secret, and giving us all this bother!"

"Perhaps it wasn't a St. Jim's chap at all, at all," suggested Hooley.

"Oh, it was, right enough! Gussy knows who it was, only he won't say."

"We could find out," remarked Levison minor thoughtfully.

"How, ass?"

"Let's go and ask Bunce."

Those Shell bouncers asked him, and he didn't know. He don't know every St. Jim's chap by sight and by name, fathad."

"We could get a description from him."

D'Arcy minor snorted.

"What's the good of a description? One chap's just like another. Suppose he said a pudding-faced chap with a fat head; that would suit either you or Manners minor!"

"You cheeky ass!" howled Manners minor.

Frank Levison laughed.

"But he might be able to give us a clue. Suppose it was Skimpole. Bunce would remember his specs."

"It wasn't Skimpole."

"I know it wasn't; that's only an illustration. Suppose it was a chap with a nose like a hawk; that would suit Crooke—"

"Catch a funk like Crooke facing a bull!"

"I know, ass—I mean, there may have been something about the chap Bunce would remember, and we should know him by it."

Wally reflected.

"Well, perhaps there's something in that," he admitted. "We've got to get rid of that rotten thirty-five bob somehow. We'll go down to Bunce's cottage, after dinner, and ask him."

"Too jolly far," said Hobbs.

"Oh, you can sit down and slack, if you like. I'll go!" snapped Wally. "I'm not afraid of a few miles."

After dinner the three minors—Wally, Reggie, and Frank—started on their rather long walk to Bunce's cottage.

It was rather exasperating to Wally, after he had taken the trouble to raise a subscription amounting to the magnificent sum of thirty-five shillings, not to be able to discover a recipient of that handsome testimonial. Though as Mr. Bunce evidently did not know the rescuer by sight, it was doubtful whether he could afford information.

Mr. Bunce was discovered working in his garden. He rested on his spade as the three St. Jim's fags came in at the gate.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Bunce!" said D'Arcy minor politely. "We're from St. Jim's, you know."

"Arternoon, sir!"

"We've come—"

"Dry up a minute, Reggie, for goodness' sake!"

"We've got to get back for the House match!" grunted Reggie. "They'll have started already."

"Then don't waste time!"

"I don't want to spend a half-holiday listening to you chin-wagging, D'Arcy minor!"

"Dry up!" roared Wally, as Mr. Bunce grinned. And he turned to the cottager again, while Reggie snorted rebelliously. "You remember this kid, Mr. Bunce," went on Wally. "He was brought in here one day last week, after he fainted—"

"I didn't faint!" yelled Reggie furiously.

"When a chap got him away from a bull," said Wally, unheeding.

"Remember," said Mr. Bunce.

"We want to find the chap who did it," resumed Wally. "We can't find him, and we've got a testimonial for him. You don't know his name?"

"No, sir."

"Ever seen him before that day?"

Mr. Bunce shook his head.

"Was it a chap wearing an eyeglass?" asked Levison minor.

"No, sir; that was the other young gentleman."

"Oh, there were two, then!" exclaimed Wally.

"Yes. The young gentleman with the eyeglass was up the lane when the other one went into the field for this lad."

"Who was with your major that afternoon, Wally?"

"I believe Roylance was," said Wally, puzzled. "But I understood that Gussy had parted with him before the affair happened with the bull."

"Well, Mr. Bunce says he was up the lane—so he had parted with him," answered Frank.

"Oh, Gussy was diddling us when he said that, very likely. It may have been Roylance all the time. Was it a sunburnt chap, Mr. Bunce?"

"Yes, now you mention it," answered Mr. Bunce. "Nice-lookin' lad, very sturdy."

"That would be Roylance!"

"You saw it happen?" asked Levison minor.

"I see it from my winder," said Mr. Bunce. "I come out, but the young gent had the lad out of the field by then, and the bull raging against the hedge. He helped me into the cottage with him, while the other went for a doctor. He slipped away quiet when Master Merry came with his friends. He stopped the bull by chucking his cycling cape over his 'orns. That there cape is in my shed now, if you'd like to take it back to the school. Tain't any use—ripped to strips, almost."

"You've got the cape?" exclaimed Wally. "Oh, good luck! His name may be on it."

"In that shed, on the nail inside the door," said Mr. Bunce. "I picked it up in the field the next day, and 'ung it in the shed, in case he should look in for it afterwards."

Wally ran into the shed, and returned with the cape.

It was almost in tatters, and was certainly past repair. The three fags examined it eagerly.

"Look!" shouted Wally.

On a tab inside the cape there were worked initials. And the initials were "R. R."

"Richard Roylance!" exclaimed Levison minor.

"That settles it!" said Reggie. "My hat! So it was that Colonial chap all the time?"

"Why the thump hasn't he said so?" said Wally, mystified. "What was Gussy keeping it secret for?"

Reggie grinned.

"I think I see it now. It's the chap whose shins I hacked the day he came to the school!"

"Yes, you young Hun!"

"Oh, cheese it! I told him I was sorry afterwards," said Reggie gruffly. "But my major's never got over getting licked by him, you know. I suppose Roylance felt it would be rather awkward meeting my major here, under the circus. Ha, ha! Won't poor old Harry feel a silly idiot when he knows this?"

And Reggie laughed uproariously, evidently deriving only amusement from the fact that his major would feel "a silly idiot."

"My only Aunt Jane! It will make old Manners wild!" said Wally. "Still, he's going to know! Come on; we've found out now! Good-afternoon, Mr. Bunce!"

And the three fags started homeward for St. Jim's.

"Of course, those initials on the cape settle it," remarked Levison minor. "But the chap might possibly have had another fellow's cape with him."

"Not likely!"

"No; but as Roylance has been keeping it dark, he mayn't feel inclined to own up. We'll take him by surprise, and tell him we've brought home his cape for him. Then he will have to own up," suggested Frank. "We'll tackle him as he comes off the ground—he's playing footer this afternoon."

"Good—wheeze!" Wally chortled. "We'll spring it on him suddenly, so that he won't have time to think—before all the fellows, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Third arrived at St. Jim's, gleefully anticipating the surprise of Roylance of the Fourth when that dramatic surprise was sprung upon him.

CHAPTER 10.

The House Match.

"FOOTER!" said Tom Merry. "I'm not playing!" said Manners shortly.

"Your name's in the list, old fellow," replied Tom.

"I told you to take it out!"

Tom Merry compressed his lips.

It was nearly time for the House match, and Tom Merry had not yet made any alteration in the list of the eleven. He had hoped that Manners' better sense would come to the rescue. But evidently it hadn't.

Monty Lowther began to whistle. He had given up the idea of arguing with Manners. The unexpected strain of obstinacy his chum had developed surprised and puzzled him.

"I'm not playing in the eleven if Roylance does!" said Manners quietly. "Drop him or me. I'm not dictating to you—I don't ask to play. Leave me out and play Roylance, if you choose."

"Ahem!"

Dick Roylance, with a very red face, looked in at the study doorway.

"Excuse me—I couldn't help hearing," he said. "Blake asked me to come and tell you they were going down."

Tom Merry and Lowther coloured, but Manners only looked grim and uncompromising. He was not sorry that the new junior had heard.

There was an uncomfortable silence for a moment or two. Dick Roylance broke it.

"It seems that there's some bother about my playing," he remarked, looking at Tom Merry. "Of course, I'm ready to stand out, if you like. You're skipper."

"You're not going to stand out!" said Tom.

"But if Manners—"

"As you've just mentioned, I'm skipper," said Tom Merry. "If Manners chooses to play the goat, he can. You get into your things, Roylance."

Roylance hesitated.

"Look here," he said, "I'm pretty keen on playing in the House eleven, but if it's going to cause trouble among the old members I'd rather stand out."

"All serene; but get into your things, all the same. Haven't you just mentioned that I'm skipper?"

Roylance laughed.

"Oh, all right! It's just as you say, of course!"

And he went down the passage.

"So you're playing him?" said Manners slowly.

"Of course I am!" answered Tom Merry sharply. "If you choose to resign your place, resign it, and be blowed! I'm getting fed up!"

"That's enough!"

Manners walked out of the study.

"Gently does it, dear boy!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Don't get ratty with a pal. Manners is simply potty on the subject of Roylance. Better run along and speak to Cardew."

Tom Merry nodded, and went in search of Ralph Cardew. He was feeling angrier with his chum than he had ever felt before. Manners had been trying the patience of No. 10 Study very severely of late.

Eat less Bread

Cardew changed for the match cheerfully enough. He was glad of the chance. Tom Merry, with a somewhat clouded brow, went down to the ground with his men.

Figgins & Co., of the New House, were already there.

Arthur Augustus glanced at Cardew, who was in footer shorts under his coat.

"New weewuit—what?" he asked.

"I'm going to do my best to stagger humanity at the great game," drawled Cardew.

"But who's standin' out?"

"Manners," answered Tom Merry shortly.

"Oh!" said Arthur Augustus comprehensively.

No more was said on that subject. Dick Roylance lined up with the School House footballers.

There was a good crowd of fellows round the field for the House match, and after a time Manners of the Shell joined them.

Manners looked on grimly.

He was not wholly repentant of his inconsiderate action, but he was not satisfied with himself. Nobody knew better than Manners that personal animosities ought not to be carried into the realm of football, and nobody would have condemned such an unsportsmanlike action more than Manners himself—in another fellow.

It was no wonder that he did not feel at ease, as he stood in the crowd and watched the game.

He was not consoled by some remarks from the fellows round him, who found that he had been dropped from the team, and did not know why.

"Hard lines!" Julian remarked. "Not feeling fit?"

"I'm fit enough," growled Manners. Julian looked at him.

"But you're not playing."

"I don't care to."

"Oh!" said Julian, and he smiled.

For a fellow who was a footballer to say he did not care to play in a House match, when he did not often have a chance to do so, was rather absurd. Manners coloured angrily as he saw Julian's smile.

"Dropped out—what?" asked Racke of the Shell, joining him. "Too bad!"

Manners grunted.

"Who's got your place—Roylance or Cardew?" further inquired Racke.

"Find out!"

Racke stared.

"You're jolly civil!" he remarked. "I suppose it does cut a bit to be dropped out of the team for a new fellow. Awfully sorry for you, don't you know?"

Racke walked away after saying that. Manners was looking dangerous.

Manners had some more remarks of the kind to listen to during the game, and they did not improve his temper. He was a little worried as to how Cardew would fill his place. Manners would have felt extremely uncomfortable if a House match had been lost through his perversity of temper.

But there was no need to be alarmed on that score, as he soon saw. Cardew, though generally regarded as a slacker, was playing up remarkably well.

The first goal in the match was taken by Tom Merry, from a first-rate pass from Cardew, who seemed quite in his element.

Manners was relieved to see it.

Figgins equalised towards the close of the first half, and at the interval the score stood goal to goal. The second half commenced with success to the New House, Kerr putting in the ball. The School House rallied and attacked, but Fatty Wynn in goal was a tower of strength, and they could not get home.

With the New House one up the struggle went on keenly. The match was drawing towards the finish when three fags of the Third arrived on the ground. Wally & Co. joined Manners of the Shell.

"How's it going?" asked Reggie.

"New House two to one."

"Why aren't you playing?"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Eh! Your name was in the list. I read it on the board last night," said Reggie. "Don't you feel fit?"

"Oh, yes! Never mind."

"Look here, you're not standing out because that New Zealand chap is in the team, are you Harry?" exclaimed Manners minor.

Manners flushed.

"Oh, dry up!" he exclaimed gruffly. "Sheer off, you fags!"

"Nice manners they have in the Shell, don't they?" grinned Wally; and his chums chuckled at Wally's pun.

Manners grunted, and moved a little further away.

"Suppose we tell him?" whispered Reggie.

D'Arcy minor shook his head.

"Not yet. Wait till Roylance comes off."

"What's that rag you've got there?" asked Julian of the Fourth, looking at the tattered cape hanging on Wally's arm.

But Wally did not answer that question. There was to be no revelation till the dramatic moment arrived.

"Hallo! There goes the School House!" exclaimed Levison minor.

"Bravo!"

"Hurrah! Play up, School House!"

"Buck up, New House!"

There were less than five minutes to go, and Tom Merry & Co. were making a desperate attack on goal. All eyes were on the keen struggle. Fatty Wynn fisted out the ball twice, but a third shot beat him, and the leather lodged in the net. There was a thunderous roar from the School House crowd.

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

"Well kicked, Gussy!"

"Good old Gussy! Hurrah!"

"Fancy my major pulling that off!" said Wally complacently. "Your major couldn't have got that goal, Reggie."

"Only a fluke!" opined Reggie.

"Why, you silly young ass, it was a ripping goal!" exclaimed Wally indignantly.

"Fool's luck, you know," said Reggie.

"My hat, I'll—"

"Hurrah! Goal!"

"It's a draw," said Reggie. "Two to two. I dare say it would have been a win if my major had been in the team."

"A win for the New House, you mean!" scoffed Wally.

"No, I don't, you fathead; I mean—"

"Oh, never mind what you mean! Come along, and catch Roylance as they come off," said Wally. "Roylance gave Gussy that pass. Redfern jolly nearly stopped him. Roylance knows how to pay. Your major don't."

"Look here, Wally—"

"Oh, come on!" said Frank Levison.

And the three fags pushed their way forward.

CHAPTER 11.

Manners Plays Up.

TOM MERRY & CO. came off the field feeling rather glad that the match was a draw. It had very nearly been a New House win. Roylance and D'Arcy between them had provided the equalling goal. Tom Merry patted the New Zealander on the shoulder.

"Good man!" he said approvingly.

Roylance smiled.

"Up to the mark?" he asked.

"Yes, rather! You'll be wanted in House matches again."

"Oh, good!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus. "Some silly asses would have kicked for goal, instead of givin' me that pass. Woylance knows what is what. I regard him as a good man."

"After which, there remains nothing to be said," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Hallo! What do you fags want?"

"Fags yourselves!" retorted Wally.

"We want Roylance."

"Well, here I am," said the New Zealand junior good-humouredly.

"We've got something for you," said D'Arcy minor mysteriously.

"For me?"

"Yes. We've brought home your bike cape for you."

Wally held out the tattered cape, under astonished glances from the juniors round him.

Roylance stared at it.

"My—my cape!" he said.

"Yes. It's not much good, but we thought you might want it, so we brought it home for you," grinned Wally.

"Thanks!" stammered Roylance, mechanically taking the cape.

"How on earth did it get into that state?" asked Tom Merry. "Been passing your cape through a sausage-machine?"

"N-n-no!" stammered Roylance, flushing red.

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 522.

"Bai Jove! It is a wegulah wag!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"We brought it back from Bunce's cottage," explained Wally.

"Bunce's cottage!" repeated Tom.

"Yes. Bunce picked it up after Mr. Lucas' bull had done with it, and kept it in case Roylance called for it."

"My hat!"

"Roylance!" shouted Lowther. "Was it Roylance—"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Roylance who tackled Lucas' Bull last week?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in wonder. "My hat! Was it you, Roylance?"

Dick Roylance stood, crimson and dumb.

As he had the tattered cape in his hand, and had admitted the ownership, there was not much more to be said.

At that moment Roylance could have found pleasure in taking the three grinning fags and knocking their heads together.

Arthur Augustus chuckled.

"It's come out, Woylance, deah boy!"

Roylance muttered something.

"Blessed if I see why it was kept dark!" said Tom Merry, puzzled, staring after Roylance, as the New Zealand junior, red and confused, strode away hurriedly.

"That is because you are somewhat lackin' in tact and judgment. Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus benignly.

"What do you mean, ass?"

"I wufuse to be call an ass!"

"Did you know it was Roylance?" shouted Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "As the whole mattah has come out now, owin' to these young boundahs, there is no harm in sayin' so."

"Then you were with him?"

"Not at all, deah boy! I had parted with him, and was at a distance when I saw him perform that hewic deed. If I had been on the spot I should have wescued Weggie myself!"

"You couldn't have!" remarked Reggie.

"Bai Jove! You cheeky young ass—"

"It was Roylance," grinned Wally.

"Reggie would have known it was that chap, only he had fainted—"

"I didn't faint!" shrieked Reggie.

"And why was it kept dark in this idiotic way?" demanded Monty Lowther, shaking Arthur Augustus by the shoulder.

"Pway, don't shake me, Lowthah! You throw me into quite a futhah!"

"I'll throw you into the fountain if you don't explain, you fathead!"

"I should wufuse to be thown—"

"Explain, ass!" shouted Tom Merry.

"There is vewy little to explain, deah boy. Woylance pferred to say nothin' about it owin' to Mannahs havin' set up to be his enemy. He felt that it would place Mannahs in a vewy uncomfy posish, and, as a fellow of tact and judgment, I agreed with him and approved. These Third-Form young boundahs have no tact—"

"Oh, come off!" said D'Arcy minor.

"Wally, you young ass—"

"I see," said Tom Merry slowly.

He looked round for Manners.

Manners was striding away, with a crimson face. He had heard all without speaking a word. Wally & Co. marched off triumphantly, feeling that they had spent that afternoon well. They were chiefly tickled by the thought that Manners major would feel an awful ass, after he had been so down on Roylance, at finding that it was Roylance who had risked his life to save Reggie's.

There was no doubt that Harry Manners was feeling "an awful ass." But he was feeling more than that.

There was a conflict of feeling in Manners' breast. It seemed as if the scales had fallen from his eyes, and he realised how bitter and how unjust he had been. It was hard enough to realise it, and to admit it to himself; but Manners was sound at heart, and he would not refuse to face what he knew to be the truth.

When Roylance of the Fourth had changed in the dormitory he came down to his study, and he found Manners there.

The New Zealander started a little as he entered and saw the Shell fellow standing in the study.

Manners' cheeks were red.

Roylance coloured, too. This was the moment he had dreaded—the distasteful moment when a fellow who disliked him felt himself driven to make some acknowledgment of a great service rendered.

But in that he scarcely did poor Manners justice.

Roylance had yet to discover the better side of Manners' nature—a side which had been hidden from him hitherto.

"I—I—Manners spoke haltingly—"I—I heard what was said on the footer ground, Roylance—"

"All serene," said Roylance carelessly.

"Nothing to make a fuss about."

"I wish you'd let me know."

"I wish those silly fags had minded their own business!" answered Roylance.

"Why didn't you let me know?"

"Well, you can guess, I suppose!"

"Because I was down on you, and had my back up, and you wouldn't put me under an obligation, I suppose?"

"Well, it was only likely to make you more ratty, and you were ratty enough, goodness knows!" answered Roylance.

"I'm fed up with ragging you, Manners—right up to the chin! I suppose this means that you are going to begin again, but—"

Manners' lips twitched.

"You think I'm likely to be ratty because you saved my brother's life?" he asked.

"Well, no. I suppose you're glad I was there to do it, for that matter; but you'd rather it was any other fellow?"

"I wouldn't?"

"You wouldn't?" said Roylance.

"No. I want to thank you—"

"Oh, all serene! I suppose you've got to go through it," said Roylance.

"Thank me if you like. But you needn't feel under any obligation; any fellow would have done it—or nearly any fellow. So there's nothing whatever for you to get your back up about, you see!"

Manners winced.

"You don't quite understand," he said. "I'm sorry. I—I've treated you like a cad, Roylance."

"Oh!" ejaculated Roylance, in astonishment.

He stared at Manners blankly. That was the last thing he had ever expected to hear Manners of the Shell say.

"I was nursing ill-feeling, and trying to think I was doing right," said Manners.

"I—I can see better now. I'm sorry. That's all. But I don't expect you to forget the things I've said and done. I—"

"My dear chap, it's all right!" said Roylance. "I can see you mean what you're saying now. I'm jolly glad! Let bygones be bygones. Here's my fist in it if you like!"

He held out his hand frankly.

Manners grasped it.

"That's right!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyeglass glimmered in at the

doorway. "Mannahs, I am glad you are tryin' to welfain twom actin' the giddy goat. I have several times been on the point of speakin' to you vewy sewiously—"

"Bow-wow!" said Manners disrespectfully.

"Bai Jove!"

Manners left the study. He glanced back into the doorway.

"Will you come along to No. 10 to tea, Roylance?" he asked. "I'll be jolly glad if you would!"

"Certainly! I'll be pleased!"

"Good!"

Manners went to his study. He found Tom Merry and Monty Lowther there, laying the frugal tea-table.

"Four teacups," said Manners.

"Anybody coming?" asked Tom.

"Yes; Roylance."

"Eh?"

"I've asked Roylance to tea. I suppose you fellows don't mind?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"My dear chap, I'm jolly glad!"

"I—I've been a bit of an ass, I know," mumbled Manners, flushing.

"But—"

"We're all human at times," said Monty Lowther consolingly. "All serene, old scout! We'll open the last tin of sardines in honour of the occasion!"

And, in spite of the very frugal fare, there was a cheery tea in Tom Merry's study that afternoon. After tea there was

an attempt on the part of the heroes of the Third to present the testimonial to the heroic rescuer, and Roylance consented to take it—to the Cottage Hospital!

Manners walked to Rylcombe with him for that purpose; and a good many fellows in the School House, as they saw them, were glad to see that the cloud between them had rolled by at last.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's "THE FOURTH-FORM DETECTIVES!" by Martin Clifford.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"THE FOURTH-FORM DETECTIVES!"

By Martin Clifford.

You will all remember "Racke's Revenge!" the story which appeared a few weeks ago, telling of the wheeze Cardew worked off upon Aubrey Racke, and how Racke schemed to be revenged, and how, owing to the absence of Mr. Ratcliff and the illness of Mr. Selby, whom he had tried to use as the instruments of his vengeance, the whole matter was bungled.

The return of the two cross-grained masters meant, of course, a reopening of the affair, with possible disastrous results to Cardew, who was bound to be involved because of past guilt.

Next week's story tells of how, by an accident in which Wally D'Arcy and Frank Levison are concerned, the chums of Study No. 9 get upon the trail of the schemers, how they receive help from Dick Roylance, the New Zealand junior, how Racke is discovered, and by what an audacious device trouble is averted. You will like it, I am sure!

THE TALBOT YARNS.

I have little doubt that the St. Jim's Gallery artists will arouse renewed interest in the stories dealing with Talbot's early days at the school, and, though I don't want a swarm of notices for the numbers containing the stories—we are getting far more notices now than we have room for—I know that they are practically inevitable, and I am giving you here a list of all the earlier yarns, in order that if you must ask for them you should do so by number instead of by name, and so save space.

Apart from this, I am sure that the list will be of interest. Mr. Clifford never did better work than in these grand stories, and thousands of readers who read them all at the time will be glad to have their memories of them refreshed. Here is the list. It does not, of course, include every story in which Talbot figures prominently; but it is, I hope and believe a full list of the farther back ones which centre around his past, and tell of his struggles to make good in spite of all. No. 334, "The Toff"; 335, "Hero and Rascal"; 336, "The Hidden Hand"; 337, "The Parting of the Ways"; 351, "The King's Pardon"; 352, "Working His Way"; 353, "Saving Talbot"; 358, "Talbot's Triumph"; 359, "Talbot's Christmas"; 361, "The Call of the Past"; 362, "Cast Out From the School"; 363, "The Last of the Spurs"; 370, "The Path of Dishonour"; 377, "For Another's Sake"; 378, "The Hero of the Hour."

These take Talbot's story to the sacrifice he made for Gore. After that, though he appears often—not often enough, say some readers—there is comparatively little of the shadow of the past in the stories concerning him. He has won free of it at length!

Your Editor

NOTICES.

FOOTBALL.

Matches Wanted by:

ELMSDALE JUNIORS—12-1 L. Edwards, 22, Marlwood Avenue, Wallasey.

EVERTON JUNIORS—16-2 mile radius.—H. G. Atkins, 25, Cupid Street, Belmont Road, Anfield, Liverpool.

BACON—14-4 mile radius—players also wanted.—H. Ferner, 2, Depot Cottages, Lymington Road, West Hampstead, N.W. 6.

BRACKNOCK ATHLETIC—15-17-3 mile radius.—A. Leeds, 180, Brecknock Road, Tufnell Park, N.

Good goalkeeper wanted by Ivy F.C.—about 17.—F. B. Wickes, 78, Vestry Road, Peckham, S.E. 5.

Players wanted—14-15½—write or call—L. Peacock, 16, Falcon Terrace, Clapham Junction, S.W. 11.

Players wanted for Tooting club—16-17.—F. C. 42, Dafforne Road, Upper Tooting, S.W. 17.

Amateur Magazines.

T. Russell, 24, Sidney Road, Homerton, E. 9, would be glad to contribute to amateur magazines.

Amateur magazine—specimen copy 11d.—wanted boy about 12 to write story every week.—A. Morton, 26, Cambridge Road, Rathmines, Dublin.

Edwin Hill, 7, Broomhill Gardens, Green Lane, Goodmayes, would be glad to contribute to amateur magazines.

Cyril Maxwell, Vale, Glenwood Avenue, Westcliff-on-Sea, would like to contribute short stories to amateur magazine.

Wallace Bowker, 2, Bickerstaffe Street, off Dale Street, Blackpool, wants readers and contributors for fortnightly amateur magazine—specimen 21d.

Readers wanted for "Dug-Out Magazine," specimen copy 11d.—J. R. Close, 18, Ivanhoe Road, Lichfield.

Readers and contributors wanted for amateur magazine on pass-round system—reading fee 1d.—J. Stevenson, 39, Caledonia Road, Glasgow, S.S.

R. Hetzig, 9, Ferntower Road, Canonbury, N. 5, would like specimen copies and particulars from readers running amateur magazines in his locality.

Readers and contributors wanted for amateur magazine—specimen copy 14d.—W. E. Briggs, Rose Bank House, Fairweather Green, near Bradford.

Contributors wanted for amateur magazine—Editor "Boys' Life," 4, Prospect Road, Hungerford.

Correspondence Wanted.

With boy readers, 15-16, interested in stamp-collecting.—Eugene Kelly, 24, Gordon Avenue, Hamilton, Newcastle, N.S.W., Australia.

With readers anywhere.—Murray Farrow, Gawler Railway P.O., South Australia.

With readers, 15-16, in the United Kingdom.—Jack Stewart, 4, Commercial Road, Footscray, Melbourne, Australia.

With girl readers interested in stamp-collecting.—Miss Ida B. Day, 35, Addison Road, Walthamstow, E. 17.

With girl readers anywhere—13-15.—Miss P. Knight, 4, St. George's Place, Brighton.

With readers in Great Britain or the Channel Isles interested in picture postcard collecting.—Chas. Leech, 29, Mellier Street, Dudley.

Cadet Notes.

The war drags on, and there seems little likelihood of an early conclusion.

Boys who have had no training in a Cadet Corps have to go as ordinary privates into the Infantry with no choice of corps. Boys in the Cadets, however, have got a chance of going into an O.T.C. and being officers, or joining the Air Service.

It is not generally known that there are Sea Cadets, and a number of corps have been formed at the seaside or on the River Thames, of Naval Cadets.

Boys in a Cadet Corps have a very good chance of getting into the Royal Naval Air Service. Boys are required to be 14 to 17 years of age as wireless telegraphists. They must be prepared to carry out flying duties on any type of aircraft, either at home or abroad. Application should be made in writing, stating exact date of birth, to No. 4 Section, Room 493A, Hotel Cecil, W.O. 2, and it would be just as well to state that you have already had training in a Cadet Corps.

Mechanics are also wanted for training, but they must have had some engineering experience. Application should be made to the Commander, Royal Naval Air Service, Crystal Palace, S.E.

A certain number of lads are wanted as signalmen and wireless operators for the duration of the war. Good education and eyesight are essential, and a good record in the Cadets will do much to assist applicants.

Brighton is making good with Cadets. They have an excellent battalion attached to the Royal Field Artillery, with headquarters at Wykeham Terrace, Brighton, where recruits can be enrolled at once. This corps has taken up the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments' Stamp Scheme, and a keen competition is already going on amongst the boys, to be the first to collect the forty-two stamps to qualify for the "Look Ahead" proficiency badge.

There is an excellent corps at Uxbridge, attached to the 8th Battalion Duke of Cambridge's Own Middlesex Regiment—one of the best Cadet units in the kingdom. The Stillwell Cup for rifle-shooting was won by this corps both in 1916 and 1917. This unit gives special facilities for instruction in swimming, and has attached to it a social club, a football club, a miniature rifle-range, and a well-organised association. The headquarters of the corps are at the Drill Hall, Vine Street, where recruits can be received on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, between 7 and 10 p.m.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 522.

THE ST. JIM'S GALLERY.

No. 4.—Reginald Talbot.

WHEN I told you last week that in this series you might find Racke preceding Talbot, I did not mean that you necessarily would do so. In fact, I was tolerably sure you would not, as I had already made up my mind to take Talbot as fourth on the list. It was merely an illustration of the method I meant to adopt.

Talbot is not among the characters who have figured longest in the stories. Well over three hundred of them had been published before he made his appearance in "The Toif."

In my Chat this week I am giving you a list of all the earlier stories centring round Talbot, with their numbers. This will help any of you who are drawn by the present article to make an attempt to get these; and if you ask for them by number instead of by name, your notices will take up less room, and will have a chance of earlier insertion.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the first fellow at St. Jim's to meet Reginald Talbot. Gussy had been attacked by three foot-pads, and Talbot came to his help.

One of the rascals addressed the stranger as "Toif," and it was plain that all three knew him.

Then Dr. Holmes was set upon by the same ruffians, and again Talbot came to the rescue. The Head took Talbot to the school, and Talbot told him a yarn which was very wide of the truth.

He wanted to finish his education, he said, but had been thrown out of the world by the uncle who was his guardian. He had very little money, but he possessed a number of valuable articles which, if sold, would pay his fees for some time. These articles were really the fruits of various burglaries. But neither the Head nor Mr. Railton suspected that. How should they? The boy was handsome and well-bred, looking the right sort in every way, and they could not guess that young as he was, he was the leader of a band of expert cracksmen, and himself the boldest and most able of the band.

For Talbot, as he was then, this is all that can be said in excuse—that if he was a criminal, as he certainly was, he had never had a chance of being anything better. He had been trained to think wrong right, well educated in a sense, badly in another sense.

The Head believed him and took him in. But little Joe Frayne of the Third, a waif from the slums, recognised him.

Joe threatened to expose him; he knew that the "Toif" could be at St. Jim's for no good.

As a matter of fact, Talbot had had no intention of staying; he had merely sought to get inside in order to loot the valuables. He did actually make away with Mr. Selby's very valuable collection of coins.

Joe Frayne taxed him on that, but Talbot managed to convince Joe that he was going straight now.

The Shell took to the new fellow greatly. He was bright and cheerful; he played cricket uncommonly well; there seemed nothing about him that was not likeable. And Talbot took to the Shell.

From the very first the heaven was working in him. He felt keenly that he was playing a treacherous part; he wished often that the fellows "would not be so jolly decent" to him. But he could not help striving to win their liking—or, rather, he won it without striving.

He rifled the safe at Glyn House, and he saved the life of Wally D'Arcy.

And Joe Frayne bolted. He could not believe Talbot any longer; but Talbot had been kind to him in the past, and he could not bear to give him away. So he took his leave of St. Jim's and went back to the rough world of taxed him.

Joe's going worried Talbot. He felt that it was very unfair to the youngster who had got at last a chance to be decent, and had gripped it. But Talbot is not a fellow to be turned from his purpose easily.

Unsuspected by anyone but Ernest Levison, then so shady a character himself that suspicion came naturally to him, he made another haul—this time at the Grammar School.

Then came "the parting of the ways." Outside, Talbot's confederates were waiting for the spoils. Inside, suspicion had fallen upon the absent fag; and Levison was watching Talbot; and Talbot was holding his hand, keeping back the swag, securely hidden, irresolute as he had never been before.

It was Tom Merry who, more than anyone else, had worked the change in the

accumulated during his time at St. Jim's. Not so much as the value of a halfpenny went to him or to the gang.

He confessed manfully, and he went. It seemed that he had passed out of the life of St. Jim's. But he had left friends behind him. Tom Merry missed him greatly, and so did others.

The weeks passed, and they heard no more of Talbot. Then a detective, Mr. Foxe, appeared in the neighbourhood, searching for the fugitive. And it turned out that Talbot had come back. He had been on the Continent, but had returned, and was then working for a farmer near Wayland.

Levison tried to help Mr. Foxe, for he hated Talbot. The Terrible Three did the best to thwart the detective, and took a good deal of risk in doing it.

Then Talbot saved a train from being wrecked, and the King's pardon for all past offences was granted him.

He would not come back as an object of charity; but he did come back—as a boot-boy. That did not last long. He won what he had tried for—a Foundation Scholarship, and took his place as an equal among his chums.

But his troubles were not over.

Let it be said here that from that moment Talbot ran an absolutely straight course. But the shadow of the past was over him, and he had enemies. Again and again the past was raked up to prove him guilty of crimes of which he was totally innocent.

He bowled out a rascal who came to the school with the same purpose that had been his own; but this was a bogus master, not a boy. But the "call of the past" came to him. Marie Rivers, daughter of the Professor, arrived at St. Jim's as nurse.

The Professor was an old associate, the same man who had masqueraded at St. Jim's as "Mr. Packington." He was an old friend, too, in a sense, but Marie was a nearer and dearer friend, and she was on her father's side.

Talbot could not betray them. But he fooled them. And then Marie saw things as he saw them, and stayed on at St. Jim's as he had stayed—but in her case without the need of a confession. In revenge the Professor made it appear that Talbot had gone back to the old ways, and he was expelled. Only Tom Merry in all the school stood by him.

But he came back again. The need for confession on the part of Marie Rivers had come, and she responded nobly to the call made upon her. He was cleared.

"The dark days of the 'Toif' were over, and the future stretched bright and clear before him."

John Rivers, the erstwhile "Professor," became a soldier of the King, and Marie remained at the school.

There is much more that could be told of the links that bound Talbot to his comrades of the old bad days. They were rascals, but they had been his friends, and Talbot is very loyal. He did his best whenever the chance came his way to help them out of the slough of crime, and with success in some cases.

Even more notable has been the generosity with which he has treated St. Jim's fellows who chose to be his enemies.

Gore and Levison owe much to him. In these days they would do much, for they are changed fellows, led by Talbot's example and Talbot's rare goodness of heart—in part, at least, for in Levison's case there were other influences at work—to follow him in putting the past behind him.

It was through Gore—to help a fellow whom few would have considered worth helping—that Talbot left St. Jim's again, and was eventually found earning his bread in a circus.

Even with Crooke Talbot would be friendly if Crooke would be kind to him. But when Talbot was discovered to be Crooke's cousin, and the uncle of both, the wealthy Colonel Lyndon chose between them, and did not choose



"Toif." But the credit was not Tom's alone. Many others had a share in it.

What fellow with decent instincts could live with Arthur Augustus and Blake, Manners and Lowther, Dane and Glyn and Noble, and not wake up to the fact that it was worth while to be straight?

And Talbot's evil training had not killed the good that was in him.

The gang broke in, and Talbot withstood them. And the truth came out; he confessed everything. Before that he had made restitution, secretly, of all the plunder he had

Crooke, all hope or any comradeship was done with once for all. It took Talbot some time to realise that, whatever he did, Crooke would hate him poisonously. But he knows now.

Racke also hates Talbot.

Probably they are the only two at St. Jim's who do.

There are other black sheep—Mellish, Beropie, Chowie, Clampe and Trimble.

But Talbot has more sympathy with a

black sheep—remembering what he himself was once—than most; and he is less down upon them in an ordinary way than almost anyone else, though he can no more stand crooked ways than Tom Merry or Jack Blake.

As for the right sort, they think a heap of Talbot.

He is not quite like them. His early experiences have left him more serious and thoughtful than most of the fellows among

whom his lot is cast. But he is cheerful enough; and he does everything so well—better than anyone else except Tom Merry, and as well as Tom—one suspects sometimes that he might go ahead of Tom if he cared to. And he never swanks.

To Reginald Talbot there is one fellow at St. Jim's who will always come first—Tom Merry. Others are his friends; but none other means to him what Tom means. For Tom he would cheerfully lay down his life.

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

(Nois rest on.)

Hazeldene.

"HALLO, Hazeldene!" said Flip.

"Hallo, Derwent!" replied Hazel.

Hazel, in no very friendly way.

He looked at the cage Flip carried, and he scowled.

"I don't know why you should feel sulky about it if I don't," remarked Flip.

"About what?" demanded Hazel, with a poor attempt at bluff.

"About the bizen, you and Bunter were mixed up in with Gadsby and Vavasour. I've said all I have to say to those two—"

"Punched their heads, I suppose?" broke in Hazel.

"Well, if you start punching mine you'll jolly well get punched back! You may be able to lick me, but I shan't take it lying down."

"I haven't asked you. You're in a bit too much of a hurry, old son," said Flip quietly.

Hazel stared at him. He had no clue to this. He did not guess that his good angel—Marjorie—was at the bottom of it. In the time to come both he and Flip were to realise how much Marjorie's influence had counted for.

"Well, I don't want to quarrel if you don't," said the Greyfriars junior. "It was a pretty rotten trick, and I can tell you I've heard more than enough about it at our show. Some of the chaps wanted to send me to Coventry. They didn't do that, but—well, never mind what they did, it wasn't too pleasant. What are you bringing the bird here again for? He ought to be safe enough at Highcliffe now. I don't think those two would risk it again. I'm jolly sure I wouldn't take a hand in it!"

"I don't want him at Highcliffe," Flip answered. "He's better here."

Then there was a brief silence, broken at length by Hazel.

"Wonder where all the girls are?" he said.

"I particularly want to see my sister."

"And I want to see mine," Flip answered.

"There are generally some of them in the garden at this time, even if they aren't at hockey."

Just then one of the girls appeared. Flip did not know her, but Hazel did.

"Is there any chance of seeing Marjorie, Miss Everett?" he asked, doffing his cap.

Flip also lifted his. The tall, dark senior frowned at them.

"I don't think there is the least chance!" she said austere.

"Oh!"

Hazel was evidently dismayed. Flip's face fell too.

But Miss Everett did not relax her sternness. The Cliff House senior form had taken the trouble to heart. They considered that their juniors had brought it upon them, and they were minded severely to discourage the Greyfriars and Highcliffe juniors alike in the near future. The fellows who were chummy with Marjorie & Co. were not old enough to interest Miss Everett and her set particularly, which no doubt made it easier for them to adopt a stern and unbending attitude.

Here was a chance to snub two of the enemy. Miss Everett took it.

"Marjorie and Philippa Derwent are pated," she said. "Miss Primrose is very much annoyed about the Highcliffe boys coming to

play hockey here, and she is determined that there shall be nothing of the sort after this."

"But I suppose Derwent and I have a right to see our sisters?" said Hazel hotly.

"I do not know that you have any such right. But that is a matter for Miss Primrose, not for me. If you want to see her—"

"I don't want to see Miss Primrose. Why should I? I want to see Marjorie! Will you tell her, Miss Everett?"

"I'm sorry, but I cannot do anything of the kind, Hazeldene. And if I did it would be of no use, for she would not be allowed to come out to see you."

"Then it's no go!" said Hazel dismally.

"I'm not going in. Catch me! I can't stand arguing with Miss Primrose."

"Very well. You are Philippa Derwent's brother, I think? Do you wish to see Miss Primrose?"

"Well—no; I can't say I do," replied Flip.

"It's my sister I want to see."

"You can't, I'm afraid." Miss Everett spoke rather more kindly to Flip than she had done to Peter Hazeldene, which may have been partly because his manner was less

stark. "Why, you have Cocky there! I thought he was here. I know he was at breakfast-time."

"Turned up again like a tad shilling!" cracked Cocky, quite as if he understood. If he did not, some of his speciaes wanted a lot of accounting for.

"Flip sent him back to me. But I'd rather not keep him just now. It isn't easy to explain."

Flip hesitated. He could have explained, in part at least, to someone a trifle more sympathetic than the dark-browed Miss Everett. It would not have been easy, in any case, for he wanted to make Flip understand, and he also wanted to find out what she meant, which it was obvious the girl to whom he spoke could not tell him.

"Oh, go on! I don't mind—yes, I do, though! If you want your sister to have the bird back I will take him. But I cannot stand here talking to you any longer. Shall I take him?"

"Take him?" said Flip, surprised at her sudden change of manner, to which he lacked the clue.

Miss Everett had seen the face of her headmistress at a window, and she had no mind to be called over the coals for standing at the gate in converse with the boys.

Before Flip could get out another word she had seized the cage, which he had been resting on the top of the gate, and was speeding up the garden path.

Flip felt half-inclined to call her back. But there was good reason to doubt whether she would come. And, anyway, he did not really know her, and it would have been rude to shout after her.

"Good-bye, Flip!" shrilled Cocky. "Ain't we gettin' a giddy move on us, by Jupiter?"

Flip turned to Hazel, with a troubled brow.

But he saw a face far more troubled than his own. The aspect of Peter Hazeldene was almost tragic.

"I don't know what I'm going to do if I can't see Marjorie!" the Greyfriars junior groaned.

He spoke more to himself than Flip. But Flip answered him.

"Buck up!" he said. "If you're down on your luck you're not the only one."

Hazel stared at him in a manner that was almost offensive. Flip might have thought it quite so but for his promise to Marjorie. But for her sake he was resolved to think the best he could of her brother. At another time he might have turned his back on Hazel, considering him a sulky brute.

"Other chaps' troubles don't help me," said Hazeldene moodily.

"Perhaps the chap who's got them could, though!"

"He wouldn't if he could!" was the growling answer.

"Try him!" said Flip.

They had agreed away together. Miss Everett had made it fairly clear that they had nothing to hope for by hanging round Cliff House. Their ways had run together for some little distance.

"I can't ask favours from a fellow—"

"Rats! Put all that behind you! We haven't been at all friendly, Hazeldene, but that was more your fault than mine, I reckon."

"Oh, yes! Everything's my fault, of course! When a chap's down he's sure to get kicked!"

It was not easy to go on. Hazel, who could be winning enough at his best, was quite at his worst. And it would not do even to hint to him that he was being offered help for Marjorie's sake. He would have put his back up worse than ever.

"I don't want to kick you, man!" retorted Flip impatiently. "That sort of thing isn't in my line, anyway. Don't stay down. Get up and take it fighting!"

"Can't! It's the limit! I can't stand any more! I don't know what I shall do, but I feel fit for something desperate!" said Hazel.

His weak, good-looking face so like, yet so unlike, Marjorie's, working as if he were on the very verge of tears.

"Ret! Here, get it off your chest! It will do you good to tell someone, I guess, and I give you my word it shan't go any further!"

"You can't help."

"That's more than you can be sure of."

Another brief silence fell. Hazel was turning it over in his mind, and Flip left him to do that.

Then it came out in a burst.

"It's money, of course," said Hazel. "I wish sometimes the beastly stuff had never been invented! It's precious little use to you when you've got it, and all sorts of a nuisance when you haven't. I'm horribly dipped, Derwent! And I'm being pressed hard. I don't know what will come of it. I can't see anything for it but doing a bunk."

"You can't do that, old chap," said Flip gravely.

"It's the only thing to do, as far as I can see. Oh, I wish I was old enough to enlist and get out to France at once! I shouldn't care a hang if I never came back! What's the use of it all? Life ain't worth living, if you ask me."

"Who are your creditors?"

"Oh, there are some of your chaps among them—Pon, and Gaddy, and And there's that sweep Skimmer, of ours. But they're not the worst, though they give me trouble enough. They couldn't get me sacked without showing themselves up, and they won't do that."

"Who is there who can get you sacked?" asked Flip shrewdly. He could guess what the answer would be, and was ready to meet it.

"That rotter Hawke at the Cross Keys. And he says he will, too!"

"Tell him to go and hang himself! He can't do it, and he can't try."

Hazel's lips quivered.

You don't know Jerry Hawke, Derwent! He isn't like a man with a character to lose. Do you suppose he cares what our Head thinks of him? The Bounder's a hard case; but I can tell you the Bounder was fairly finked when Hawke threatened to show him up to the Head. I haven't Smithy's nerve, either. I don't know how to bear it—I can't go on hearing it. I shall go mad, or do something desperate."

The tears were running down Hazel's face now, and they ran faster when Flip's hand pressed his shoulder encouragingly and in friendly fashion.

"Buck up, old son! I'm stony for the moment; but I expect a decent remittance in a day or two. A fiver wouldn't clear you, I suppose?"

"It wouldn't half clear me, but it might make things a bit easier."

"Well, I think I can let you have a fiver in a day or two. And, if you'll let me, I'm stony. I can't be sure in Gaddy's case. I haven't any pull with Gaddy. But I don't mind trying, though it's unlucky that I owe Gaddy a bit myself."

Hazel's tear-dimmed eyes opened very widely.

"You don't mean to say that you—?" he began.

"Yes, it's right—I have," admitted Flip, with something like a blush. "Oh, I know I'm a fool! But perhaps you may be more willing to take help from me if you know that I'm another silly idiot like yourself."

"Derwent, don't do that! Chuck it before it's too late! Chuck that whole rotten gang! They'll drag you down if you don't, and you're too good a chap for that. Chuck it all!"

Peter Hazeldene's better nature was aroused, and he spoke very earnestly. Flip's confession of folly had a curious effect upon him. He had been willing to take sympathy and help before he heard it; but he had not felt really friendly towards Flip. Now there came over him a warm rush of real friendliness; and all at once he understood why other fellows thought so much of Derwent.

"Not sure that I won't," said Flip. "Thanks, Hazel, old man. It's good of you to care. I can't drop Pon's a chum of mine."

"If you can't drop him you're done for!" groaned Hazel. "Pon's a rotter through and through—I ought to know by this time, I should think."

Flip's face hardened.

"I can't tell you that sort of thing against a chum," he said. "You ought to know that, Hazeldene. But you're worried, old chap. I know. I think you'll find within twenty-four hours that Pon isn't as black as you paint him. I don't know when my cash will come along; but it ought not to be more than a day or two now. See here, I'll meet you at this corner the day after to-morrow about this time. If I can I'll bring the fiver with me. Anyway, I'll come—so keep your pecker up!"

"They had come to the place where their ways parted. Hazel held out his hand.

"I don't know what to say, Derwent," he muttered. "I sound cheap to say I'm grateful; but I am. Only—go careful with Ponsonby!"

He did not wait for a reply. Flip stood a moment looking after him as he hurried away.

"Queer that so many people should have such a down on old Pon!" he said to himself. "Can't see any reason for it myself."

But his eyes were to be opened before long.

Flip Makes a Promise!

"YOU'LL never do it, Pon!" said Gadsby. "You think the bounder is gettin' to be one of us; but he isn't, by gad. Oh, yes, I know you've got him as far as doin' a bit of a flutter; but just see what he will say if you tip him the wink to play stiff against anyone!"

"I haven't any dashed notion of doin' anythin' of the sort," replied Cecil Ponsonby, in rather an uneasy way.

"Then he ain't askin' of us really, an' he never will be! Merton an' Tunstall never really were; they barred some things. But they'd do things that this pious image would

hold up his dashed hands in horror at even now."

"Drop it!" snapped Pon. "I don't want to discuss Derwent with you. I like the chap, an' I'm dashed well you don't, for all your pretence."

"I don't know that I've pretended so dashed much, either," growled Gadsby.

"You've been civil enough to him lately, an' you apologised over that cockatoo bizz."

"That suited my purpose—that was all. I suppose the cad told you about the apology, confound him!"

"Derwent didn't tell me. Matter of fact, Vav did."

"Oh! Look here, Pon, you say you like the chap; but isn't it the chap's sister you like really? I don't like Flip, but I care a scrap for him if he hadn't a sister!"

"You're all wrong, Gaddy! I like them both. An' I mean to be friends with Philippa Derwent yet, mark that! She's the prettiest girl I know, by long chalks; an' I hate bein' beaten."

"I'll never get chummy with her if her dashed brother can help it. Can't you see that he don't mean you should? Try to talk to him about the charmin' Flip, an' he buttons up directly."

It was true, and Pon knew it. Flip had been obliged to discourage Cecil Ponsonby's efforts to make friends with Flip. "Ning was more certain than that Flip had the desire to count Pon a friend; and the only way out of an awkward situation seemed to Flip to choke Pon off as gently as possible."

"Rot!" said Pon.

"It's not rot—it's so, an' you know it's so. You'll never be able to work it unless you can get the chap under your thumb!"

"That's easier said than done, by gad!"

"I can show you a way, old sport," said Gadsby insinuatingly.

"I'd be glad to know of one, I don't mind ownin'."

Ponsonby's eyes glittered as he spoke. Flip had angered him more than that of late. The fellow was not so easily influenced as Pon had expected. He gambled in these days; but he was still himself—still his own master, and not Pon's man!

"Take him along with us to this new den at Courtfield, an' get him jolly well plungin'." said Gadsby, with an unpleasant grin. "He's not badly heeled; but he ain't a millionaire. Last night showed that. I've got some of his IOUs—it ain't everyone I'd take IOUs from, but I don't mind in this case. Like to buy 'em, Pon, old top?"

His suggestion was made half idly. But to Gadsby it was a surprise. Pon can't at it.

"I'll buy them of you, Gaddy," he said at once. "How much?"

"Two ten. Vav's got some of the paper, too, you'd better have that. Then you can put the screw on when you want to. I can't promise you that much will come of it—the bookies don't exactly like the bendin' sort. Not like that soft puppy Hazel."

"You can leave all that to me, Gaddy. Here's your oof. Hand over the paper!"

Pon's expression was not pleasant. He was getting a trifle tired of Flip, and he resented Flip's dislike of him. Flip ought to have taken steps to overcome that, he considered. It would have been easy enough if the fellow had not so resolutely refused to bring them together. Even when Pon had gone as a guest to Cliff House he had only managed it by forcing himself upon the party.

But nothing of all this showed in his manner when Flip came in fresh from his talk with Hazel.

"Pon, I want to ask you a favour," said Flip, in his direct way.

"Anythin' you like, dear boy," replied Pon offhandedly.

"No, I'd rather you didn't take it like that. Hear what I want, and leave deciding about it to the user you've heard."

"What suits you suits me, Flippy. Go ahead!"

"I've been having a yarn with that chap Hazeldene. He's most horribly down in the mouth."

"Generally is," yawned Pon. "Don't take the dear Hazel too seriously, old top. He's a bit of a funk."

"I don't think he's so bad as that. And there's his— But never mind that! I've promised to give him a leg-up if I can."

"Dashed good of you, Flippy, though dashed unnecessary. Find it a little difficult, won't you, though? From what I can make out, you're needin' a leg-up yourself. Why don't you ask for that, instead of botherin' your curly old head about such a hopeless waster as Hazel?"

"Oh, I'll pull through all right! I shall

have some chink in a day or two, and I suppose Gadsby and Vav will wait for what I owe them."

"Not so sure, by gad! D'y'e know, my son, that the merry Gaddy don't precisely love you?"

"Never supposed he did. An' I haven't any high opinion of Gadsby. I don't care about the chap, and never shall. But he wouldn't be such a cad as to make a fuss about the quid or two I owe him, I s'pose."

"Wouldn't he! I rather fancy he will, my buck."

"Hang it all! He might wait. But never mind that. Can't you give Hazeldene more time, Pon?"

"Well, time's money, accordin' to some people. An' Hazel owes me quite plenty already. But I'll do it for your sake, Flippy, if you'll promise me somethin' in return."

Flip hesitated. He rather fancied that "somethin'" would turn out to be connected with Cliff House; and Gadsby was so far right in his reading of Flip's feelings that it was true Flip wanted to keep his sister and Pon apart. No good would come of their meeting. He didn't like the fellow, and Flip was not at all sure that he wanted her to like him. At heart he did not like Pon himself as well as he had done at first. Gambling did not show Pon at his best, though Flip had never yet seen him at his worst.

"It's nothin' very momentous," said Pon, reading his thoughts, as it seemed. "I'm not tryin' to work you round to agree to anythin' you have refused to do before. Just a little sportin' expedition I want you to join in, that's all."

"Oh, all serene!" said Flip. "I don't suppose it's much odds whether I say 'Yes' or 'No', so I'll promise."

It was his own recklessness that spoke there, quite as much as his desire to help Peter Hazeldene for Marjorie's sake. He was in one of those moods when nothing seems to matter much. All hope of hearing from Tunstall had passed now, and he believed that Flip had thrown him over, or at least had kept up the quarrel.

"Honour bright!" said Pon.

"Honour bright," repeated Flip gravely. Not a word had reached his ears about the new gambling-den at Courtfield, and he had no notion what Pon's proposed sporting expedition was. If he had known the whole truth he would scarcely have given that promise. But he had not wholly lost faith in Pon.

"Here's Hazel's IOU, then. You can hold it for me. But you needn't tell him you have it. I know Master Hazel a bit better than you do, an' he's not the sort that settles up in a hurry if he's left to take his own time, by gad."

"I don't want it," Flip answered. "Your word's good enough for me, of course. Gadsby's putting the screw on, too. But I'm afraid I can't do anything with him."

"Perhaps I can, though, an' perhaps I will. But I don't promise success. In the meantime, here's somethin' to go on with, dear boy."

And Pon threw on the table another scrap of paper.

Flip opened his eyes widely.

"Why, it's the IOU that I gave Gadsby!" he said.

"Correct, dear boy!"

"But why do you come to have it? Did you win it from him?"

"Nothin' so dramatic. Only paid cash for it. Tear it up, Flippy!"

"Mean to say you've taken over my debt, and now want to cancel it, Pon?"

"That's the size of it, Flippy. Nothin' much in that, is there, between pals, y'know?"

"Hang it all! You're a real good sport, Pon!" cried Flip, his heart warming to the selfish, scheming scoundrel who was seeking to entrap him. "It makes things a heap easier for me. I'd rather owe you the money than owe it to Gadsby, for I know you don't mind waitin'."

"Gaddy did mind. Seemed to be dashed uneasy. Told him it was absurd, by gad, but couldn't make him see reason. Pay me when you feel like it, old sport. I can't say the same to Hazeldene, because he might never feel like it. I rather fancy he wouldn't. But I'll go easy with the screw, as you've taken him under your patronage."

There was something in Pon's cynical tone that jarred on Flip; but he felt no end grateful. He did not realise in the least the net in which he was getting tangled.

(To be continued next week.)