

FRIENDS, THOUGH DIVIDED!

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



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THE FORM BOAT-RACE!

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FRIENDS, THOUGH DIVIDED!

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

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Manners Does Not Agree.

"THERE is twouble in the Third!" D'Arcy of the Fourth made that statement in Tom Merry's study.

He made it very seriously.

Sad to relate, it did not make a very serious impression upon the three Shell fellows in the study.

Tom Merry, who was scanning a list of names on a fragment of impot paper, did not even look up.

Manners, who was cutting films, gave a grunt.

Monty Lowther grinned.

And that was all!

Apparently the Terrible Three, of the Shell, regarded "trouble in the Third" as altogether too normal to worry about.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy extracted his eyeglass from his pocket, polished it, and dabbed it in his eye. Thus equipped, he bestowed a stare upon the three Shell fellows.

"Did you heah my wemark?" he queried.

"Oh, yes!" said Tom Merry, still without looking up. "I wonder whether I'd better put in Thompson? After all, he can row."

Tom Merry was thinking of the boat-race, which was one of the biggest events in the Shell versus Fourth Form contest.

"I remarked that there is twouble in the Third Form!"

"There generally is, isn't there?" asked Manners.

"Yaas, pewwaps so. But it is gwowin' wathah sewious."

"Well, let them rip!" suggested Monty Lowther. "Have you got my name down there, Tom? We want to win the race, you know!"

"Yes, ass!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Are you rowing in the Fourth Form eight, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" answered D'Arcy, with emphasis.

"Then we needn't worry about the result," remarked Lowther. "It's really patriotic of you, Gussy, to go rowing in a time of food-shortage!"

Arthur Augustus looked perplexed.

"Weelly, Lowthah, I fail to see any connection between wovin' in the Form boatrace and the food shortage," he replied.

"I was thinking of the crabs you would catch!" said Lowther blandly.

"You uttah ass!"

"Talbot, of course," said Tom Merry. "And Kangaroo. Likewise my noble self, and you, Monty. And Manners."

"Good!" said Manners. "You can put me down as stroke, if you like."

"Thanks, but I don't like!" answered the captain of the Shell cheerfully. "Who's stroking the Fourth Form boat, Gussy?"

"Blake."

"He's not bad. Lemme see—"

"I was wemarkin'!" said Arthur Augustus, "that there is twouble in the

Third, and I considah somethin' ought to be done."

"Oh, dear!" said Tom, laying down his list at last. "What's the row? Those blessed fags are always at loggerheads over something or other. I suppose your precious minor's in it?"

"Yaas, Wally seems to be mixed up in it."

"I thought so."

"But so far as I can see, the blame weally wests upon Mannahs minah," added Arthur Augustus.

"Hallo, what's that?" came from Manners of the Shell. "He left off cutting films to ask that question."

"Your minah, young Weggie, deah boy, seems to be makin' all the twouble, from what I can discovah," explained Arthur Augustus. "There seems to be a feahful wift in the lute, you know, and we are weally wespensible."

"How on earth are we responsible?" demanded Tom Merry.

"It appeahs to arise wifom the fact that my young bwothah Wally and Levi-on minah are actin' on the sports committee for us, with Lefevre of the Fifth," explained D'Arcy. "It is wathah an honour for two fags to be selected on the judgin' committee, especially with a senior as chairman. Wally and young Fwank have acted vewy well."

"Topping!" agreed Tom.

"So fah as I can see, young Weggie has been bitten by the gween-eyed monstah—I mean, he is wathah jealous of the othah chaps gettin' that distinction—"

"What rot!" said Manners.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Manners.

"What were you pleased to wemark, Mannahs?" he asked coldly.

"What rot!"

"If you are chawactewisin' my wemarks as wot, Mannahs—"

"Well, I am!"

"I did not come heah, Mannahs, to thwash you," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I will pass ovah your wude wemark without wepyin' to it, exceptin' to mention that you are a vewy wude and wibald wottah. I will not take the twouble to point out that I wegard your opinion with uttah contempt, or that you are a sillay, fwabjous ass and a howlin' idiot—"

"Here, draw the line, old scout!" interrupted Tom Merry, laughing. "Let's hear what Reggie has been up to."

"He has quawwelled with Wally and Fwank Levison, and has been fightin' Fwank—"

"Young ass!" said Lowther. "But we know all about that. We stopped them once."

"I dare say young Levison provoked him," said Manners gruffly.

"Well, Frank is an uncommonly decent little chap," said Tom Merry. "I can't really imagine him provoking anybody; and he was vewy pally with Reggie, too. But what do you want us to do, Gussy? Thrash 'em all round?"

"Certainly not, you deffah! I wegard it as bein' up to us to set mattahs wight

somehow, as we are weally the cause of the twouble. I have mentioned it to Blake and Hewwies and Dig, but for some weason they only said 'Wats!'—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' whatevah to cackle at! I have a suggestion to make. Suppose Mannahs takes his minah aside and weasons with him? As young Weggie appeahs to be entirely in the wong, that may do some good."

Manners frowned, and Tom and Lowther grinned. Manners of the Shell was not likely to admit that his minor was entirely in the wong. And, in point of fact, he had already talked to Reggie. Gussy's news was rather of the stale kind.

"Weggie is not a bad little chap," went on Arthur Augustus. "But he is wathah wilful and weckless, and wathah pigheaded. You have observed that, Mannahs?"

"Rats!"

"Ahem! I suggest that you should give him a good talkin' to; or, if you pwefer, I will do it for you. As a fellow of tact and judgment, I have no doubt I could, pewwaps, do it bettah. What do you say, Mannahs?"

"Oh, bosh!"

"If you are simply goin' to be a wude ass, Mannahs—"

"How do I know my minor's in the wong, you fathead?" shouted Manners. "I dare say it's your minor all the time. He's a cheeky little beast!"

"Bai Jove!"

"And you're a silly ass!" added Manners. "And the sooner you leave off talking piffle and give us a rest, the better!"

Arthur Augustus made no reply to that. He took off his eyeglass, and slipped it into his waistcoat pocket with great deliberation. Then, with equal deliberation, he pushed back his spotless cuffs. Then he came towards Manners.

Tom Merry jumped between.

"Hold on, ass!" he said.

"I wufuse to hold on, Tom Mewwy. I am goin' to give Mannahs a feahful thwashin'! Pway step aside!"

"Let the silly ass come on!" snapped Manners.

"Look here—"

"Order!" said Lowther.

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus made a rush, and got at Manners. Manners seemed nothing loth, either. In a moment more they were pommelling one another.

"Collar them, Monty!"

"Ha, ha! Right-ho!"

Tom Merry grasped Gussy by the neck, and Lowther seized Manners by the collar. The excited combatants were dragged apart.

"Welease me, Tom Mewwy—"

"Let me go, you dummy!" growled Manners.

"Hold your silly idiot, Monty!" said Tom Merry, as he spun Arthur Augustus towards the door. "Good-bye, Gussy! So pleased to see you! Mind you drop in again next time you're passin'! Your visits are so delightful—"

Slam!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in a breathless condition, found himself in the passage, with the door closed on him. He made a jump at the door, but Tom Merry's boot was planted against it inside.

Arthur Augustus bent down to the keyhole.

"I regard you with utter contempt, Mannahs!" he roared through the keyhole. "I look upon you as an utterly wuffian and wotten wascal!"

And, having delivered that Parthian shot, the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked away, very much ruffled.

CHAPTER 2.

The Split in the Third.

"THERE you are, Frank!" said Levison of the Fourth, as he laid down his pen.

They were in Study No. 9 in the Fourth Form passage. Levison's study-mates, Cardew and Olive, were on the cricket-ground, and Levison would willingly have been with them. But he had been staying in to lend his minor a hand in a knotty point in the classics, quite willingly and cheerfully. And Frank was ever so grateful.

"Thanks, Ernie!" said the fag, as he gathered up his papers. "I suppose it's jolly easy for you, but it beats me. Old Selby gives us corks sometimes, and I almost believe he does it to catch us out."

"I quite believe it," grinned Levison. "Selby's a Hun! By the way, how are you getting on in the Third, Frank?"

"Same as usual," answered Frank.

"Haven't you been ragging with young Manners?" asked Levison, looking at him rather seriously.

Frank coloured.

"We've had a fight," he admitted.

"Only one?"

"Well, two."

Levison laughed.

"And who was the conquering hero?" he inquired.

"Neither," said Frank. "We got stopped both times. Reggie wants to have it all over again, but I won't."

"What's the matter with young Manners? You used to be chummy."

"It's all over that blessed Form contest!" said Levison minor ruefully.

"You see, Wally and I were rather pleased to be put on the committee, especially with the captain of the Fifth along with us. We never thought any of the fellows in the Third would mind."

"Why should they?"

"Well, I don't see why they should! But—but Reggie does. He says we've been neglecting our friends, and all that, to suck up to Upper Form fellows."

Frank coloured again. "Of course, judging the points and things, and keeping the book of records, does take up time. But it's all rot, you know! I'm afraid Reggie feels left out in the cold, and that's at the bottom of it. He's not a bad sort, but he does get sulky at times. And he's got thick with that young cad Piggott, and he gets round him, and makes him sulkier. So—so—"

"So there's strife in the halls of the Third!" smiled Levison.

"Well, some of the kids back up Manners minor," confessed Frank. "I don't see what there is to grumble about; but you know how chaps get ideas in their heads for next to nothing. I dare say it will all blow over."

"And Manners minor wants to fight you again?"

"Well, yes."

"Let him have his way, and lick him!" said Levison of the Fourth. "That cheery young merchant wants all the

lickings he can get. They will do him no end of good!"

Frank Levison laughed, and shook his head. Cardew and Olive came up to the study just then, and Frank, with a nod to the Fourth-Formers, left. His cheery little face became very thoughtful as he made his way to the Third Form-room.

Frank was a good-natured youngster, and he hated to be on bad terms with anyone. He had to be on bad terms with a fellow like Piggott, who was a shady little rascal. But he had been pals with Reggie Manners, and he felt the split in their friendship keenly. And Reggie was so deliberately wrongheaded about it that there seemed no way out of the difficulty.

Wally D'Arcy, who was a good deal tougher than Frank, only snorted contemptuously at Reggie's attitude, and left him to come round if he chose; that was Wally's way. He certainly wasn't going to give up his distinguished post on the sports committee to please Reggie. But Frank could not help wishing that Manners minor would be a little more amenable to reason.

There was really nothing whatever to quarrel about. Reggie's sulky disposition was at the bottom of it. Perhaps he felt neglected, too—he was rather an exacting friend.

In his discontent with his former pals Reggie had chummed up with Piggott, and that cunning young rascal, only too glad to sow the seeds of trouble among fellows whom he disliked, did his best—or worst—to make matters worse. Reggie, in his lofty self-satisfaction, was far from suspecting that Piggott was simply making use of him to pay off old scores.

He disliked Piggott himself, but he liked flattery, and he got plenty of that. But Piggott was not the only fag who backed up Reggie. Quite a number of the Third seemed to take the view that Wally and Frank were sacrificing the dignity of the Form in "sucking up" to fellows in the Middle School. Wally refused even to argue on the matter, and Frank's arguments mostly met with scoffing.

Frank Levison found a good many of the Third in the Form-room when he arrived there. Reggie Manners was standing in talk with a group of fags; and Wally was looking out of the window, with his hands in his pockets, by himself. As Frank entered, most of the fags glanced at him, and Piggott gave a laugh.

"Here's the merry committeeman!" he remarked. "What's that paper? Something official, young Levison?"

"It's a Latin conjugation," answered Frank quietly. "My major's done it for me."

He slipped the paper into his pocket as he spoke.

"Always hanging round your major!" jeered Piggott. "Fellows who have majors in Upper Forms ought to let 'em alone! I would!"

"I expect your major would let you alone, if you had one!" retorted Frank. "You wouldn't be a credit to him!"

"Hear, hear!" came from Wally.

"Piggott's right," said Reggie Manners. "A chap oughtn't to get help from his major. All the fellows haven't majors to help them."

"Your major would help you, if you asked him."

"Well, I don't ask him!"

"You don't care whether you get on with your Form work or not, that's the reason," said Frank. "I do!"

"You'll be sucking up to Mr. Selby next!" sneered Reggie.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Frank, his temper sorely tried. "If you can't be civil, you needn't jaw at me, I suppose."

"Well, I shouldn't wonder," said Jameson. "This hanging round Upper Form fellows is no class!"

"Rotten, I call it!" remarked Hobbs. "It gives away the Third!" said Hooley. "They think we're nobodies, and glad to be taken notice of."

"I'm not surprised at Wally doing it!" observed Curly Gibson, with a sidelong glance at D'Arcy minor, who snuffed.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Joe Frayne, the peacemaker. "Wally's all right. So's Frank. What is there to grouse at? Let 'em alone!"

"Of course, you back them up in giving away the Third!" sneered Reggie.

"That's rot!" answered Frayne. "You know it's rot, young Manners! If you'd been asked to sit on the sports committee, you'd have done it like a shot; now, wouldn't you?"

Reggie flushed angrily.

It was a true bill; but it was none the more pleasing on that account. Reggie would not admit even to himself that jealousy was at the bottom of his resentment.

"Wouldn't you, Jameson?" continued Frayne victoriously.

"Oh, don't ask me riddles!" said Jameson. "I believe in the Third keeping to itself. Wally always used to say so. I heard him tell Reggie so, when young Manners got friendly with Cutts of the Fifth."

Wally looked round.

"That's different," he said. "You know it. Cutts of the Fifth is a smoking, gambling blackguard, and Reggie was a young cad to have anything to do with him. That's very different from acting on a sports committee for decent chaps like Tom Merry and Blake and Figgins. Rats!"

"So I was a cad, was I?" hooted Reggie.

"Yes, you were! And when you got pally with Racke of the Shell, you were a cad again," said Wally directly. "Racke's a howling blackguard, and you got pally with him, and got landed into trouble. You're a pretty one to preach, I must say!"

Reggie's face flamed with anger. Most of the fags were grinning. They liked Wally and Wally's direct speech, though at variance with their old leader now. Manners minor broke out savagely.

"Well, if I had my way, fellows who go palling with Upper Form chaps would be sent to Coventry in the Third!" he exclaimed.

"You can send me to Coventry, if you like!" said Wally disdainfully. "Go and eat coke, too!"

"What do you say, you chaps?" asked Reggie, looking round. "Send 'em to Coventry till they agree to play the game!"

"Oh, chuck it!" snapped Frayne.

"Well, I don't know about that," said Jameson slowly. "You see—"

"H'm!" murmured Hobbs.

Reggie bit his lips.

Unpopular as Wally and Frank had suddenly become, the Third seemed to show no great disposition towards choosing Manners minor as a leader.

He was, in fact, the last fellow they would have chosen as leader, with his hot head and passionate disposition and unreliable temper.

Reggie did not repeat his suggestion. He gave another glance round, scowled, and drove his hands deep into his pockets, and tramped out of the Form-room. Only Piggott followed him.

As they came out into the passage a cheery voice greeted them:

"Bai Jove! Just lookin' for you, deah boy!"

It was D'Arcy of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 3.

Black Ingratitude!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY smiled benignantly down upon the sulky fag. He took no notice of Piggott. Piggott was not a fellow the swell of the Fourth could condescend to take notice of. But he was smiling and cordial to Manners minor. He had resolved to try his famous gifts of tact and judgment towards hearing the rift in the Third—an excellent intention, though success was somewhat dubious.

"Pway stop a minute, Weggie!"

"What for?" growled Reggie.

"I want to speak to you, deah boy!"

Reggie grunted, but he stopped. Piggott stopped, too, with a glitter in his eyes. He was aware of D'Arcy's repugnance towards him, and he resented it, well deserved as it was. And he did not mean to have his dupe talked over by the amiable swell of St. Jim's if he could help it.

Arthur Augustus sat down gracefully in the window-seat, crossing one elegant leg over the other. Reggie grunted again. This looked like a long jaw, and Manners minor was not disposed to listen to a long jaw.

"Sit down, Weggie."

"I'd rather stand."

"Vewy well, kid. Suit yourself. Now I have learned, Weggie, that there is twouble goin' on in your Form."

"Go hon!" said Reggie sarcastically.

"You appear to be at loggahheads with Fwank Levison and my minah."

"So I am."

"Can't be helped," put in Piggott. "Your minor's a cheeky cub, D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus was deaf to that remark. He was determined to remain oblivious to the existence of the obnoxious Piggott. Perhaps his celebrated tact and judgment were a little at fault there.

"I am vewy sowwy to see it, Weggie, and I should be vewy happay to mend mattahs."

"Better jaw to your minor, then, not to me."

"Yass; but you are in the w'ong, you know," said Arthur Augustus innocently.

"What?" growled Reggie.

"You see, as the person in the w'ong, you are the person to be reasoned with," explained D'Arcy.

"Come on, Piggott!" said Reggie, moving away.

Arthur Augustus jumped up.

"I have not finished speakin' yet, Weggie—"

"I've finished listening," answered Reggie, with a grin.

"I insist upon your hearin' me!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Weggie, pway be a little more reasonable! There is no reason whatever why you should be jealous about Wally bein' on the sports committee—"

Reggie gave him a furious look.

Perhaps there was something lacking in Gussy's tact, in taking it for granted that Reggie would admit that he was jealous.

"You silly chump!" roared Reggie.

"Bai Jove!"

"You burblin' ass! Can't you burble in the Fourth, without coming here and burbling at the Third?"

"Weally, you cheeky young wascal—"

"You're a silly, cheeky ass, and your minor's another!" said Reggie. "Shut up, and get along! You make me tired!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bump him over!" said Piggott. "We could do it!"

"I've a jolly good mind to!" said Manners minor angrily. "Confounded cheek, coming here and jawing me!"

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"I am twyin' to heal the wift in the lute, Weggie—"

"Oh, you're a silly ass! Cut off!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Cut off!" snapped Reggie.

Arthur Augustus stared at the fag in breathless indignation. He—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the glass of fashion and the mould of form in the Fourth—was being ordered to cut off by a fag of the Third! It was incredible, unbelievable, astounding; but there it was! This was the reward of his good intentions! It was really the reward he might have expected; but it was no wonder that his wrath rose to boiling-point, and that he threw tact and judgment to the winds.

"Weggie, you uttably cheeky and disrespectful little beast!" he gasped.

"Oh, shut up!"

That was too much.

Arthur Augustus reached out for Reggie's ear.

Reggie yelled as his ear was pulled, and promptly kicked the Fourth-Former's shins. Arthur Augustus gave utterance to a wail of anguish, and shook Reggie by the collar with unusual anger. Piggott made a rush at him, and a backhander from the indignant Gussy sent Piggott spinning.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "What you want is a licking, Mannahs minah, and I am goin' to give you one!"

"Rescue!" yelled Reggie, struggling furiously.

Piggott scrambled up, and rushed into the Form-room.

"Rescue, Third!" he bawled.

"D'Arcy's going for young Manners! Rescue!"

There was a rush of the fags at once.

They did not stop to ask questions. They did not want to know what the trouble was about. They knew that a Fourth-Former was pommelling a member of the Third outside the Form-room door, and that was enough for them. With one accord they swarmed on Arthur Augustus, and smote him hip and thigh.

D'Arcy was dragged away from the breathless Reggie, and bumped over on the floor in a twinkling.

"Bai Jove! Yawwooh! Gwoogh!"

Wescue!"

"Bump him!" yelled Jameson.

"Rag him!"

"Mop him up! Down with the Fourth!"

Arthur Augustus was bundled along the passage, struggling wildly. Thrice he was bumped on the floor. To his great indignation and surprise he found that Wally was one of the bumpers. There might be rows and disputes in the Third, but against other Forms they stood as one man.

"Yawwooh!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Wescue me! Wescue! You howwid young wottahs! Wally, you young wascal! Yawwooooh!"

Bump, bump!

"Hallo!" roared Jack Blake, coming along the passage with Herries and Digby. "It's Gussy!"

D'Arcy's chums were looking for him. Tea was ready in Study No. 6. They had a suspicion that they would find him near the Third Form quarters. And they had found him.

That Gussy had gone hunting for trouble, and had discovered it, they were pretty certain. But they had their duty as chums to do, and they rushed into the fray, smiting right and left.

There were furious yells among the fags as they scattered before the rush of the Fourth-Formers.

Blake dragged Arthur Augustus to his feet.

"Come on!" he gasped.

"Yawwooh!"

"Cut for it!" said Herries. They'll be swarming over us in a minute."

"I wefuse to cut!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' to thiwash Mannahs minah and Wally and Fwayne and Hobbs and Gibson and Piggott, and—and—"

Arthur Augustus' chums grasped him, and rushed him away before he could proceed further with the list. It was only just in time, for the fags were rallying, and returning to the attack, with further enforcements from the Form-room.

There was hot pursuit till Kildare of the Sixth was sighted in the passage, and then the fags melted away like snow in the sunshine.

Blake & Co. marched Arthur Augustus, rathless, into study No. 6, in the Fourth. They plumped him into the armchair, and gasped. Arthur Augustus was spluttering like a squib.

"Oh, cwumbs!" he gasped. "I am feafhfully wumped, and covahed with dust! The howwid little beasts! Gwooooh!"

"Serve you jolly well right!" growled Herries. "I've had an elbow jammed in my eye! Wow!"

"Look at my clobber!"

"Look at my nose!" grunted Blake.

"What do you want to go around ragging with fags for, you chump?"

"I have not been waggin' with fags, you ass!" panted Arthur Augustus. "I have been twyin' to heal the dispute—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was goin' to make everythin' all wight in the Third—"

Blake & Co. yelled. They really did not need telling that Gussy's good intentions were at the bottom of it all.

Arthur Augustus sat up, and smoothed out his collar, and dabbed at his rumpled hair.

"The uttah young wuffians!" he exclaimed. "I wefuse to take the slightest intewest in their silly vows in the futchah. I was actin' for all their sakes, you know; and Wally and young Levison were both bumpin' me, as well as Mannahs minah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' to cackle at. I weward this mewwiment as ill-timed and unfeelin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake & Co.

"Oh, wats!"

Having restored himself to something like tidiness, Arthur Augustus sat down to tea with his grinning chums; and he announced, during tea, with emphasis, that he was done with the Third. His chums were glad to hear it. If Gussy's good and kind intentions had continued, life would become altogether too strenuous for Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 4.

Manners Thinks it Out!

RUY LOPEZ!" said Manners thoughtfully.

"Eh?"

"Muzio!"

"What?"

"Or four knights," said Manners.

Monty Lowther tapped his forehead significantly. Tom Merry blinked at Manners.

The Terrible Three were strolling in the quadrangle after boat practice. All three of them were in the Shell crew for the coming race; though Tom had just the slightest doubt about Manners. Other fellows were keen enough to get into the eight, and Tom would have left out his twin brother, if he had had one, to improve the crew. But Manners was showing up remarkably well, as it turned out, and the latest practice with the eight had almost finally decided the captain of the Shell in his favour.

Tom Merry, naturally, was thinking boats. Monty Lowther, probably, was thinking about his comic column in the

"Weekly." Manners wasn't thinking of boats, as his remarks showed.

"You're five, Manners," said Tom. "I think I can't do better than Kangaroo at six."

And then Manners had said:

"Ruy Lopez!"

It was no wonder that Tom was surprised. He was quite willing to hear a suggestion from Manners as to No. 6 in the crew; but certainly there was nobody at St. Jim's named Ruy Lopez.

But Manners was speaking more to himself than to his chums. He was going in for some deep thinking.

"Muzio!" he remarked. "Or the four knights! Four knights is slow and sure, but you can't call it a thrilling one. I like a certain amount of the sporting spirit about it."

"What?"

"Poor old Manners!" murmured Lowther. "I think this runs in the family. Young Reggie is a bit potty, too."

"Are you wandering in your mind, Manners?" asked Tom Merry. "Who's Ruy Lopez? There's no Spaniards at this school. I suppose that's a Spanish name?"

"Eh?" said Manners absently. "I think Ruy Lopez is the man. I was trying him in the study the other day."

"Trying him?" yelled Tom.

"Yes."

"In the study?"

"Of course. Too much row in the Common-room."

"I didn't know you had any Spanish acquaintances," said Tom blankly. "But, anyway, only Shell fellows of St. Jim's can row in the race with the Fourth. And how the thump could you try a rowing man in the study?"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Manners. "What are you talking about?"

"The Form boatace."

"Blessed if you're not talking about that from early morn till dewy eve!" said Manners peevishly. "I was talking about the chess contest with the Fourth."

"Oh, the blessed chess!" grunted Tom Merry. "But what's Ruy Lopez got to do with it, and who is the chap, anyway?"

Manners gave him a compassionate look.

"It's an opening," he answered.

"Come to think of it, I've heard of the Ruy Lopez opening," yawned Monty Lowther. "You move a piece, or a pawn, or you don't move a piece, or a thing, or something of the kind, isn't it?"

Manners snorted.

"After the king's pawns are moved, white knight to king's bishop's third, and black knight to queen's bishop's third, then white bishop to knight's fifth," he said. "If you don't know that opening, Lowther, it's time you learned. It's a good one for a contest. But Muzio—An almost ecstatic expression came over Manners' face. "If the other party agrees to play up, I like nothing better than Muzio. White or black, I don't care—white for preference, of course. But think what a corker that game is, either colour—what?"

"Kangy's about the best man—"

"Eh? Noble couldn't play the Muzio opening."

"As number six in the boat—"

"Bother the boat!" roared Manners. Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, do you think anybody but a chess-lunatic can make head or tail of what you've just been burbling?" he demanded.

Manners did not heed.

"Take Muzio," he said.

"Where is he?"

"Take Muzio. Pawns to king's fourth, of course. White pawn to king's



Arthur Augustus in the Wars!
(See Chapter 3.)

bishop's fourth, and then—pawn takes pawn!" said Manners impressively. "Knight to king's bishop's third. Got that?"

"Blessed if I have!"

"Then just think of it! Pawn to king's knight's fourth!" said Manners.

"Then white shoves bishop to bishop's fourth, and black comes along with pawn to knight's fifth. Then white—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Castles!" said Manners impressively. "Does he?" yawned Tom Merry.

"Castles!" repeated Manners. "And look where his knight is all the time!"

"On the board somewhere, I suppose," said Tom vaguely.

"Under the black pawn, you ass!"

"I didn't know two pieces were allowed on the same square."

"They're not!" shrieked Manners.

"Then how can the white knight be under the black pawn?"

"Ass!"

"Is that an explanation?"

"I mean, it's not under the pawn. That means that it's en prise—can be taken!" snapped Manners.

"Oh, I see! The knight can be taken."

"That's it."

"Well, what about it?"

"What about it?" gasped Manners.

"Don't you see? White gives a knight away, and practically begins the game a piece short, for the sake of position. White loses the knight—if black plays up—"

"Not much loss, losing a knight," said Monty Lowther. "Depends on whether it's a moonlight night."

"You funny idiot!" howled Manners.

"Can't you see what the game's like after that? It's a regular corker! It's a battle of the giants. It's a game compared with which footer and cricket and rowing are only kids' games. It's—it's epic!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"What beats me is, that there's never

been a great poem, or a great symphony, or something of the sort, composed about the Muzio opening," said Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly asses—"

"Let me see," said Lowther seriously. "Pawn to king's fortieth—"

"Fourth, you fathead!"

"Right! Pawn to king's fourth, you fathead!" said Lowther. "Then white knight to bishop's twenty-sixth; and I suppose that bishop moves that knight takes the chair—what?"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Then white rook bucking against black bishop, and black bishop rearing on white knight—"

"For goodness' sake dry up!" said Manners crossly. "Thinking it out, I fancy Muzio is a bit too risky for a contest, and I shall stick to Ruy Lopez. The Four Knights' game is safe, of course. I suppose you fellows want to win the points for the Form?"

"Of course, ass!"

"Well, I'd better play a safe game, then," said Manners regretfully. "It's all right. I can walk all over the Fourth at chess, excepting perhaps Kerr. It's agreed that we bag twelve points if I beat six of the Fourth, playing six games at once—and I know I can do it. For every game they win, they take off two points. Kerr might win a game, if they put him in, but I doubt that. You can leave it to me. But Muzio—"

"Oh, give Muzio a rest!" said Tom Merry. "What's the blessed fag up to? Is your minor understudying the merry gorilla, Manners?"

The Terrible Three were sauntering under the elms near the School wall, a rather secluded spot. Tom Merry had caught sight of Reggie Manners sliding down the trunk of a tree.

The fag had his back towards them, and he disappeared among the elms before the Terrible Three could come up.

"Young ass!" said Manners in

surprise. "What on earth is he climbing trees for? He would get licked if a prefect saw him up there. Hallo, Reggie!"

But Reggie had gone.

The Terrible Three walked on to the School House, and outside they caught sight of Reggie again, in talk with Piggott of the Third. Reggie was looking rather flushed, and Piggott was grinning.

"All serene!" he said, as the Shell fellows came by. "They'll never guess that—"

"Shush!" muttered Reggie.

And Piggott "shushed" promptly as the Shell fellows came by. Manners stopped to speak to his minor. He gave Piggott a very dark look.

"Cut off, Piggott!" he said. "I want to speak to Reggie."

"Stay where you are, Piggy!" said Reggie sulkily.

And Piggott stayed.

"Well, he can hear," said Manners. "Look here, Reggie, what are you so friendly with Piggott for lately? He's not a decent chap."

"Thanks!" sneered Piggott.

"The Third consider him no class, and so he is," said Manners. "Friends like that won't do you any good, Reggie. I wish you hadn't quarrelled with D'Arcy minor and young Levison."

"Well, I have!" snapped Reggie.

"And Piggott's helped it on, I dare say!" said Manners, frowning.

"Nothin' of the sort!"

"Look here, Reggie—"

"Sermons while-you wait—what?" jeered Reggie. "Fed up, thanks! Come on, Piggy!"

And Reggie walked away with his grinning friend, without giving Manners major a chance to finish his remarks. Manners frowned darkly, and followed his chums into the house.

Reggie had given his major a good deal of trouble, in one way or another, but Manners had thought that was past. The wilful fag seemed to be kicking over the traces again.

Racke and Crooke and Mellish were standing in the doorway. They had observed the little scene, and they grinned as Manners passed them going into the House. Evidently they were amused.

Manners was frowning, and he was troubled. Even the Muzio opening vanished from his thoughts.

CHAPTER 5.

Levison Minor's Loss.

"BY gad! Have the Huns landed?" Cardew asked that question as Levison minor came into Study No. 9 with a deeply-troubled face.

Sidney Clive looked at the fag curiously, and Levison of the Fourth rose to his feet.

"What's the matter, Frank?" he asked crisply.

Frank looked at his major in great woe.

"I'm sorry, Ernie!" he faltered.

"What's happened?"

"The book of records!" muttered Frank.

"Anythin' happened to it?" drawled Cardew.

"It's gone!"

Clive whistled.

The Fourth-Formers comprehended now the deep woe in Levison minor's face. The book of the records of the Shell-Fourth contest was in Frank's keeping. He made all the entries in his neat, business-like way. That book was a record in itself, as Wally had remarked. Frank was immensely proud of it, and of the fact that the sports committee confided it to his care. He took the greatest

care of it, and it was without spot or blemish.

"Gone!" repeated Levison. "You've lost it?"

"I—I haven't lost it!" mumbled Frank. "You don't think I'd lose it, Ernie? It's been taken out of my locker in the Form-room!"

"Some lark of the fags," jawned Cardew. "It'll turn up again."

Frank gave the dandy of the Fourth a reproachful look. The keeper of the records was not likely to be comforted by the suggestion that the book would turn up again.

"You've looked for it?" asked Clive.

"Everywhere!" said Frank. "So has Wally. A lot of the fellows helped us, too. But—but it's gone!"

Levison knitted his brows.

"Some of the kids you've been ragging with," he said. "Manners minor, perhaps; or Piggott."

"Reggie wouldn't play a dirty trick like that," said Frank quickly. "I've asked Piggott, and he says he knows nothing about it."

"Don't you keep your locker fastened?"

"Sometimes; not always. Of—of course, I couldn't think anybody would be mean enough to go there and take the book away," said Frank, almost with tears in his eyes. "I—I'm afraid it won't turn up again. Some beast has taken it! It—it might be Racke of the Shell, or Chowle, or Crooke. They're bitter about the Form contest. They'd like to muck it up. It wouldn't have been so bad earlier, as I could have remembered how matters stood, and made out a fresh book. But now so many events have taken place—"

"Blessed if I think I could remember how matters stand!" said Levison, with a frown. "I dare say it could be done by all the fellows comparing notes. But—but there'll be a row if they find the book's lost. It was trusted to you."

Frank's lip quivered.

"I—I ought to have kept it locked up," he said. "I did usually. But—but—"

"But it can't have been destroyed," said Cardew. "Even Racke wouldn't go as far as that, I should think."

"I don't know," said Levison slowly. "He would if he thought it was safe. Hasn't anybody been seen nosing about the Form-room, Frank?"

"Not that I can hear of."

"Well, we'd better tell Tom Merry, I suppose," said Levison uneasily. "The book's got to be found."

Frank looked dismayed.

He had hoped vaguely that his major would be able to suggest some way of finding the missing book without making the loss generally known. Levison understood his expression.

"Or, rather, we'll look into it ourselves first," he remarked. "Let's go along to the Form-room."

Levison minor brightened up. He had great faith in his major's sagacity.

"Come on, Ernie!" he said quite briskly.

Major and minor left No. 9 and proceeded to the Third-Form room. They found a crowd of fags there in excited discussion. Wally of the Third was in a red-hot temper. He felt what a slur it was upon the two Third-Form members of the sports committee for the book of records to be lost. Jameson and Frayne and Hobbs and the rest were concerned, too. Piggott had a lurking grin on his face, and Reggie Manners was keeping by himself, looking out of temper.

"Found it?" asked Wally, as Levison minor came in with his brother.

"No."

"Let's see where it was taken from," said Levison of the Fourth.

Frank showed him his locker.

Everything in the locker was neatly disposed. Frank was an orderly youth. And he was really not much to blame for omitting to keep the key turned. He could not be expected to distrust the other fellows.

Levison looked round with a frown.

"Do you know anything about this, Piggott?" he demanded.

"What should I know about it?" retorted Piggott.

"You haven't taken it?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Yes or no!" snapped Levison.

"No!" growled Piggott. "I suppose young Levison's left it about somewhere carelessly."

"I've done nothing of the sort!" exclaimed Frank indignantly. "All the fellows know how careful I was with it."

"Well, you've lost it!" sneered Piggott.

"I haven't lost it! It was taken out of my locker by some cad!"

"Piffle!"

"You should have kept it locked up," said Reggie Manners.

"Do you know anything about it, Manners minor?" asked Levison of the Fourth very quietly.

Reggie flushed.

"Don't ask me rotten questions!" he said. "You can't bully me, Levison, if you can Piggott. Go and eat coke, and be hanged to you!"

And Reggie stalked away in high dudgeon.

Levison threw a very sharp look after him. Manners minor had not answered his question directly.

"Well, it's got to be found!" said Levison. "We shall have to tell the fellows, and if it can't be found the House-master will have to be told."

"A lot Raiton will care about your rotten competition!" sneered Piggott.

"Mr. Raiton will care a great deal about a theft being committed in the House," answered Levison.

"A—a what?"

"A theft," said Levison. "If the fellow who took that book away is here, I advise him to own up, and bring it back, before he's accused of stealing it."

"Oh, rot!" said Piggott.

"Very well. He will have to take the consequences, then," said Levison; and he quitted the Form-room with his minor.

Piggott and Reggie Manners followed them out. Reggie stopped in the window recess, his face pale and troubled.

"You—you heard what he said, Pigg," he muttered. "Do—do you think they'd dare to—to call it stealing?"

"What does it matter if they do?" said Piggott flippantly. "They can't find anything out. Only got to deny knowing anything about it, and we're all O.K."

"I'm not going to tell lies, if you do!" said Reggie savagely.

Piggott shrugged his thin shoulders.

"It's a bit too late for that kind of talk," he muttered. "There'll be a fearful row about it, and the House-master may say it's stealing! We've got to keep clear of the affair; and, if we're questioned, we've got to deny it."

"Hang the book!" muttered Reggie irritably. "And hang you, Piggott! You've landed me in this."

"Look here, Reggie—"

"Oh, let me alone!"

Reggie Manners walked away with a moody brow, leaving Piggott with a very unpleasant expression on his face.

CHAPTER 6.

The Guilty Party.

"**B**AI JOVE! That's wotten!" The Terrible Three were in Study No. 6, with Blake & Co., when Levison and his minor found them. Frank, with a crimson and troubled face, related the loss of the record-book, and all the juniors looked grave.

"It's rotten!" said Tom Merry. "Cheer-ho, young 'un! It wasn't your fault! No need to look as if you were going to execution."

Frank Levison smiled faintly. "I'm awfully sorry!" he faltered. "If—if it turns up again, I'll always keep it locked up. But—but—"

"It may have been destroyed," said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, we can get the wecords wight again, by compawin' notes, you know. One fellow will wemembah one thing, and one anothah, you know."

"I suppose so," said Tom. "There's a list of the latest events on the board downstairs, too—that will help us. It's a lot of trouble, but it can't be helped."

"The list isn't on the board," said Levison. "I looked. It's been taken, too!"

Tom Merry uttered an angry exclamation.

"That must be Racke, then!" he said. "Racke tore it up once before, you remember. Let's go and see Racke."

"And give him a jolly good waggin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly.

"If he did it," remarked Blake drily. Tom Merry looked at Blake.

"Have you any idea who did it, Blake?" he asked.

"Well, let's see. Racke, anyway," answered Jack Blake rather evasively. "It may have been Racke; he's cad enough."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Evening prep was over, and the juniors had till bedtime to themselves. The whole party left No. 6, and proceeded to Racke's study in the Shell. They found the door locked—a sign that Racke & Co. were playing cards. Tom Merry knocked.

"Let us in, Racke!" he called.

"Busy!" answered Racke from within. "Do you want the door smashed open?"

Apparently Racke didn't, for the door was promptly unlocked and thrown open. Scrope and Mellish, Crooke and Clampe, were with him in the study, and there was a scent of tobacco. Cards had hastily been put out of sight.

"Well, what do you want?" snapped Racke angrily.

"We want to know what's become of Levison minor's book of records."

"Yaas, wathah, Wacke, you wottah!"

Aubrey Racke stared.

"What should I know about his rubbish?" he exclaimed. "He hasn't lent it to me."

"It's disappeared."

Racke laughed.

"Well, you won't find it in this study," he said. "You can search, if you like."

"I suppose that means that you have destroyed it, you wottah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly.

"Take that burblin' idiot away!" was Racke's answer.

"Bai Jove! If you want a feahful thwashin', Wacke—"

"It must have been one of this gang," said Manners. "We shall find it in this study most likely."

"You're welcome to look," yawned Racke. "I tell you I don't know anything about it."

"And your word's as good as gold, of course," remarked Monty Lowther sarcastically.

"I could make a suggestion, if you like," grinned Racke.

"You could tell whoppers, you mean," grunted Herries.

"Well, I won't, then."

"If you can tell us where the book is, Racke, we shall be obliged," said Tom Merry. "You can't blame us for suspecting you, seeing what you did before."

"I can guess who's taken it," sneered Racke.

"Who, then?" asked Manners.

"Your minor," answered Racke coolly.

"What?"

"Your minor's simply squirming with jealousy because he was left out in the cold," said Racke, enjoying Manners' expression. "I think it's very likely he's taken the blessed book—not that it matters. Here, keep off, you fool!"

yelled Aubrey, as Manners strode at him with his fists clenched.

Jack Blake interposed, pushing Manners back.

"Hold on!" he said.

"I'm going to smash him!" roared Manners. "Do you think I'm going to hear him telling lies about my minor?"

"We'll make sure that they're lies first."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

Manners gave Blake a fierce look.

"If you repeat what Racke says, Blake—"

he began savagely.

"I don't," answered Blake coolly.

"But I think it's quite possible. I think we had better question Reggie about it."

"Well, I don't!"

"You needn't. I'll do it," said Blake.

"I won't have my minor insulted!" exclaimed Manners. "Anybody who says Reggie would play such a dirty trick is a liar!"

"Weally, Manners—"

"Easy does it, old chap!" said Tom Merry. "No harm in asking Reggie a question or two."

"I've asked him already," said Levison.

"What did he say?"

"He denied it, of course!" said Manners hotly.

"Well, he didn't say 'Yes' or 'No,'" answered Levison. "He told me to go and eat coke."

"That's the answer you might have expected," snapped Manners. "You'd no right to ask him."

"Well, I don't agree with you," said Levison calmly. "Reggie has got his knife into my minor, owing to this sports bizney—"

"That's rot!"

"Thanks! It's the fact, all the same. And I think very likely he's the chap who bagged the record book."

"Bai Jove! Suppose we let the mattah drop?" suggested Arthur Augustus.

"Well, we can easy make up the records again," said Manners.

"The matter's not going to drop!" exclaimed Herries indignantly. "The cad who boned that book is going to be ragged for it, and to give it back."

"Yes, rather!" said Big, with emphasis.

"Weally, you fellows—"

Tom Merry had a troubled look. He sympathised with Manners in his defence of his minor, but he could not help thinking that the wilful fag was quite capable of such an act in a moment of temper, and perhaps under Piggott's malign influence. And Tom could not help remembering what he had seen under the elms a few hours before—Reggie slipping down the tree-trunk, and scudding off in a hurry. Why had the fag climbed the tree, and hurried away in that manner? Had he been hiding something there?

"Would you fellows mind settlin' this little family matter in your own quarters?" inquired Aubrey Racke politely.

The juniors did not heed Racke, but they left the study. Tom Merry went to

his own study for his electric-torch. Manners' eyes glinted as he saw it.

"What's that for?" he asked.

"I'm going into the quad."

"What for?"

The angry question showed that the same suspicion had arisen in Manners' mind, though, in his case, he refused to admit the possibility of its truth. Tom Merry not only thought it was possible, but very probable.

"I'm going to look for the book," said Tom.

"In the tree, I suppose, because you saw Reggie sliding down from it?" Manners exclaimed passionately.

"Bai Jove!"

"May as well look!" said Tom quietly.

"Yes, rather," said Jack Blake. "If you saw Reggie sliding down out of a tree, I can guess what he was doing in the tree."

Manners clenched his hands.

"It's a lie!" he exclaimed, fiercely.

"I tell you—"

"Let's go and look, before we call one another pet names!" said Jack Blake disdainfully. "Come on, you fellows!"

The juniors went downstairs, Manners following them with an angry face. Perhaps there was apprehension, as well as anger, in his looks. It was very dark in the quadrangle. Tom Merry did not turn on the lamp till they reached the trees, and they stopped under the big elm Reggie had climbed.

"Give me a hand up, Monty!" said Tom.

He climbed into the tree, and with the electric-torch to light him, scanned it carefully. There were many hollows in the ancient trunk, and Tom Merry thrust his hand into them, one after another, in careful search. The other fellows stood in a group below, looking upward in the light winking in the dark tree.

The light gleamed downward at last.

"Found anything?" called out Blake.

"Catch!"

Something whizzed downwards, and Blake caught it. Tom Merry slipped down the trunk. Manners uttered no word. For Blake was holding up, in the light of the electric-torch, the book of the sports records. It had been hidden in the tree.

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"Catch!"

CHAPTER 7.

The Finger of Scorn.

MANNERS' face was pale now. Angry and passionate as he was in defence of his minor, he could not doubt the evidence of his own eyes.

The tree had been searched because Reggie Manners had been seen to climb it, and the missing book had been found hidden there. Nothing more in the way of proof was wanted after that.

Levison minor took the book with a deep sigh of relief. It had not been injured. Reggie had stopped short of that. Levison major, with rather a compassionate look at Manners, walked away, and the other Fourth-Formers followed him. But for consideration for Manners, Blake & Co. would have been desirous of visiting drastic punishment upon the young rascal of the Third. But in the circumstances they preferred to let the matter rest where it was.

"I—I—" Manners spoke at last, stammering. "I—I suppose it was Reggie?"

"I'm afraid so," said Tom.

"I—I think that little beast Piggott must have put him up to it."

"Most likely," said Lowther.

"I'm sure of it," said Frank Levison eagerly. "Reggie wouldn't do a thing like that by himself. I don't suppose he

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took the book, either. He put it in the tree, but I'll bet it was Piggott got it out of my locker."

"I—I'll speak to Reggie," muttered Manners miserably.

The juniors went back to the School House, and Frank Levison cut off to the Third Form room, to announce the recovery of the book. Manners followed him there, and Tom Merry and Lowther returned to their study. For Manners' sake, they wanted the unpleasant affair to be dropped as soon as possible.

Manners strode into the Third Form room, where most of the Form were gathered. It was close upon bed-time for the fags.

Frank Levison held up the recovered book in the midst of a crowd.

"Got it!" he announced.

"Where did you find it?" shouted Wally.

"It was hidden in a tree in the quad," Reggie Manners looked on, dumb. Piggott whistled softly. The sight of the book was terrifying to Reggie. How had anyone known that it was hidden in the tree? There was only one answer to that question. He had been seen there, and that meant that his act was discovered.

He wondered why Frank did not accuse him. But Frank did not even look at him. Jameson did, however.

"Did you put it there, young Manners?" he demanded.

"Find out!" snapped Reggie.

"I noticed you dusting the knees of your bags," said Jameson. "I thought you'd been climbing a tree, at the time. Did you do it?"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"He don't say no!" remarked Hooley.

Manners came up to the group. His pale and frowning face drew all eyes at once. Reggie gave him a half-uneasy, half-defiant glance.

"Reggie, you stole Levison minor's book!" said Manners.

Reggie grunted.

"Why did you do it, Reggie?"

"Who says I did it?" demanded Reggie fiercely.

"Well, you did!"

"I haven't been near Levison minor's locker," said Reggie. "I've never taken anything out of another fellow's locker."

"That's straight enough," said Piggott. "Let Reggie alone!"

"I suppose it was Piggott took it out of the locker," said Manners major. "You hid it in the tree, Reggie."

"Oh, rats!"

"You were seen climbing that tree, so the fellows went there to look, and the book was found," said Manners. "Don't tell any lies; it's bad enough without that."

Reggie gritted his teeth.

The fags were all looking at him darkly and contemptuously. Reggie had succeeded, to some extent, in inciting them against the old leader of the Form—he had made Wally unpopular, to some extent. But the purloining of the book of records was an act of meanness and spite that nobody was inclined to excuse.

"I say, Reggie, that was too thick!" said Curly Gibson. "It was mean."

"Sneaking!" said Jameson.

"Caddish!" remarked Hobbs.

"Cowardly!" growled Hooley.

"I'd never 'ave thought it of you, Reggie," said Joe Frayne sadly.

"Just what the jealous little cad would do!" exclaimed Wally. "I thought it was Manners minor, all the time. It's his sulks."

Reggie's eyes blazed.

"Well, I did do it!" he exclaimed angrily. "I didn't take it from Levison minor's locker; but I did stick it in the tree. I wish I'd burnt it now!"

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"You won't have another chance," said Levison minor quietly.

"You've acted like a young cad, Reggie!" said Manners. "I've nearly quarrelled with two or three fellows for suggesting that it was you; and it turns out that it was you. I'm going to take you to the House-master."

Reggie started back.

"What?" he panted.

"You're not!" exclaimed Frank Levison. "Leave Reggie alone, Manners! This is the Third's business."

"Yes, rather!" said Wally. "You buzz off, Manners major! We don't want Shell-fish here running our business."

Manners hesitated. As a matter of fact, he was not unwilling to let the matter drop; but he felt that he ought not to do

because he can't help being a sulky little beast!"

"I—I say, let's drop the whole thing," said Frank Levison. "After all, we've got the book back, and—"

"Shut up, young Levison!" said Wally autocritically. "You hear me, young Manners? You can thank your lucky stars that you get off so cheaply, after disgracing the Form as you've done."

"And when you're out of Coventry, too, you needn't trouble to speak to me again," added D'Arcy minor. "I've done with you!"

Reggie clenched his hands.

"Do you think I want to?" sneered Reggie. "Hang you, and everybody here! I don't care a rap for the lot of you! Go and eat coke!"

And with that defiance Manners minor stalked out of the Form-room. But in spite of his defiant looks, his feelings belied his words. This was the end of his sulky discontent and his envious strivings. He was an outcast in the Form, despised by the fags, and avoided even by Piggott, whose dupe he had been. In his heart of hearts, Reggie repented of his obstinacy and folly, and wished with deep sincerity that he could undo the sullen follies of the past few weeks. But repentance, as is too often the case, came too late.

CHAPTER 8.

Reggie Takes the Plunge.

"WAKE up, Shell!" roared Wally.

"Bravo, the Fourth!"

The towing-path was crowded.

Juniors of the Shell, the Fourth, and the Third were racing along, their eyes on the shining river and the two gliding boats.

It was only practice. The Form race was not coming off for a week yet. But everybody was very keen about it. Even House events did not evoke more enthusiasm than the new contest between the Shell and the Fourth.

Wally & Co. had turned out in force to see the trial. Figgins of the New House captained the Fourth-Form crew, and under his able command Blake and D'Arcy, Kerr and Redfern, Roylance, Clive, and Levison were playing up in great style. The Shell eight was composed of Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, Thompson, Noble, Talbot, Wilkins, and Dane. Cardew was the Fourth cox, and Glyn coxed the Shell boat. Grundy of the Shell, to his immense wrath and indignation, had not been given a look-in. Twenty points in the great Form competition depended on the boattrace, so naturally there was no room for George Alfred Grundy in the Shell eight.

Figgins' crew was drawing ahead, hence D'Arcy minor's adjuration to the Shell to wake up.

Tom Merry & Co. pulled level as the boats went skimming down the golden river. The crowd followed on the towing-path, watching keenly, and shouting encouragement.

Reggie Manners stalked along after them, his hands in his pockets, and a dark frown on his brow.

He had come down to the river with the Third Form crowd; but he was alone in a crowd—no one spoke to him!

It was a couple of days since the affair of the book of records, and, of course, the three days' sentence of Coventry had not expired yet.

That punishment was a mild one for what the wilful fag had done, and Reggie ought to have been glad to escape so cheaply. Perhaps he was; but he was bitterly resentful, all the same.



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In five years' time that certificate will be worth £1.

This is the best way for a patriotic boy to put money by. Won't you try it?

so. Perhaps he was not sorry when half-a-dozen wrathful fags hustled him out of the Form-room and slammed the door after him.

Wally came back towards Manners minor, who was looking uneasy and sullen. The great chief of the Third pointed an accusing finger at the sullen fag.

"That young cad's sent to Coventry!" he said.

"Hear, hear!" chorussed the fags.

Manners minor cast a savage glance round. In a moment, as it were, Wally had regained his old ascendancy in the Form. Reggie's last act had shown too clearly what was really at the bottom of all his grousing and accusing, and those who had followed his lead, to a greater or less extent, had only scorn for him now. Even Piggott moved away from the fellow who had become an object of contempt to his Form-fellows.

"Three days in Coventry!" said Wally. "We won't be too hard on him,

He had joined in the shouting along the river, without thinking, and Jameson had asked him what he was yelling for? Reggie did not yell again.

His exclusion from the Form had been brought more keenly than ever to his consciousness. The pulling boats and the shouting crowd vanished along the river, leaving Reggie stalking by himself in black ill-humour. He was feeling sore and lonely, but he did not look pleased when Piggott of the Third joined him, in his quiet, almost stealthy way. He wanted company that bright half-holiday, but he did not seem to want Piggott's company.

"Feeling down?" murmured Piggott.

"No!" snapped Reggie.

"H'm!"

"Nothin' to feel down about, is there?" demanded Reggie, with a glare at him. "Do you think I care whether those silly young fools speak to me or not?"

"Of course, you don't," agreed Piggott amicably. "I don't, either."

"Yes, you do!" snapped Reggie.

Piggott coughed.

"I don't care a rap!" pursued Manners minor. "I'll never speak to Wally or Frank again! It was only a lark with that silly book, after all. I never meant to damage it. You wanted me to burn it!"

"It would have been safer," muttered Piggott. "It could never have come out, then."

"I don't care whether it was safe. It would have been a cad's trick to damage it, and I told you so. Didn't I?" demanded Reggie aggressively.

"Yes, you did; but, all the same—"

"Oh, rats! I wish we hadn't touched the rotten thing!" said Reggie moodily. "I've a good mind to get hold of it again and burn it now!" he added, rather unreasonably.

"Can't be done! It's kept locked up now!"

"Just as if they can't trust a fellow!" muttered Reggie.

Piggott gave him a queer look. After what had happened Manners minor could scarcely expect to be trusted with access to the book of records. But Reggie was not in a reasonable temper.

"I say, it's pretty rotten hanging about," said Piggott. "They don't want us with them. They'll give you the marble eye if you go near them."

"What do I care?"

"Of course you don't!" said Piggott, who knew very well that Reggie did care a great deal. "But it's rotten moochin' about. How would you like to come and have a little fun?"

"What kind of fun?" growled Reggie. "Don't ask me to come and see a cock-fight. I won't! It's beastly, cruel, and cowardly, and it's against the law!"

"Tain't a cock-fight," said Piggott. "I was thinking of a game of billiards. You've got some tin."

"If you mean the Green Man, I'm not going there. I told Harry I wouldn't, after that row last time!"

"I don't see that you're bound to worry about your major. He was pretty down on you over that affair of the record-book."

"So ho was," grunted Reggie. "He might have stood by his own brother against those cads. I've a good mind to go, just to show him!"

"Well, let's," said Piggott. "I say, that chap Griggs is at the Green Man this afternoon."

That fellow Cutts of the Fifth knows in Wayland, do you mean?"

"That's the man. I saw him in the garden there when I came by," said Piggott. "I know him."

"No credit to you!"

"Well, he's rather a sporting chap,"



The Lost Found!
(See Chapter 6.)

said Piggott, who was determined not to take offence. "He played me fifty up once for a quid, and I won. He can't play billiards for toffee, and he thinks he can."

"Silly ass!" remarked Reggie.

"Well, it's an easy way of picking up a quid or two, and it's amusing," said Piggott. "Look here, Reggie, I'm sorry we got into that scrape over the book. It'll wear off, you know. The chaps will forget. You come along with me now, and I'll let you play with Griggs, and I'll mark for you."

Reggie looked a little better-tempered.

He was deadly dull and bored that afternoon, and Satan, as the proverb tells us, finds work for idle hands. In spite of his defiant attitude on the subject, the coldness of the Third cut him deeply. He was not the kind of fellow to enjoy solitude. And he reflected that Wally and Frank would be shocked and annoyed if they knew he had spent the afternoon playing billiards at a low public-house with a rank outsider like the sporting Mr. Griggs of Wayland. In his present mood Reggie was willing to do anything to shock and annoy his old friends. His major, too, would be cut by it, if he found it out, and Reggie was feeling very sore towards his elder brother.

Piggott could see that he had won. They walked on together down the towing-path, left it as they came in sight of the crowd again, and took another path to the inn.

Reggie Manners hesitated as he reached the gate shaded by big trees, that gave admittance to the inn-garden.

He had told his brother that he would never visit that disreputable resort again, and he did not like breaking a promise. Piggott opened the gate.

"Come on, kid!" he said, with a grin. "Nothing to be afraid of! Not a soul in sight!"

"Who's afraid?" growled Reggie.

"Well, come in! What are you hanging about for?"

"I—I—" Manners minor hesitated. "You think Wally wouldn't like it, if he knew?" asked Piggott cunningly.

That was enough. Manners minor marched in at the gate, and Piggott let it swing shut again.

"This way," he said.

"I know the way!" growled Reggie.

They went up the garden, and the click of the ivory balls from the open French windows of the billiard-room came to their ears. Piggott put his finger on his lips.

"I'll see if the coast is clear," he whispered. "Stay here a minute. If Cutts or St. Leger should happen to be there we—"

"We've as much right here as they have, anyway!" snapped Reggie.

"Better not be seen here by seniors, all the same. They might give a prefect a tip about it."

Reggie nodded, and remained where he was, while Piggott scouted to the open window, and peered in. Instead of returning to his companion he stepped into the billiard-room. Mr. Griggs, of Wayland was there, knocking the balls about with the greasy-looking marker. He gave Piggott a nod and a grin.

"He's come—the chap I mentioned to you!" said Piggott, in a whisper. "He's game for a couple of quids on fifty up. Griggs. Mind, half-a-quid for yours truly, or it's the last customer you get from me!"

Mr. Griggs laughed.

"You're a bright young gentleman, you are!" he remarked. "You'll make your mark in the world when you grow up, Master Piggott. Bring your man in."

"Mum's the word, of course."

"All serene!"

Piggott went back into the garden for Reggie. Manners minor followed him into the billiard-room. Mr. Griggs was playing as he entered, and he was making some remarkably bad shots.

Reggie looked on with a curling lip. If this was the way Mr. Griggs played billiards, it was no wonder that he had lost a quid to Piggott.

"You're off your game this afternoon, sir," observed the marker.

"Well, I do seem to be," assented Mr. Griggs. "Joe, my boy, tell them to bring me in the same of the usual, and it may improve my form."

The same of the usual, as Mr. Griggs expressed it, turned out to be whisky-and-soda. Mr. Griggs made Reggie's acquaintance while he was imbibing that refreshing drink, and he was very friendly with Reggie. Piggott referred in quite glowing terms to Reggie's skill with the cue, and Mr. Griggs laughingly challenged him to a hundred up. Reggie accepted the challenge at once.

"But I won't put much on the game," said Mr. Griggs, shaking his head. "After what Piggy says, I won't do it. I'll lay a couple of quid on this game, Master Manners, and no more."

Reggie started a little.

He had two pounds ten shillings in his pockets, having received a generous remittance from his father that morning.

Two pounds on a game of billiards seemed a large sum, to Reggie; but as Mr. Griggs spoke of it so lightly, as if such a bet were a mere matter of form, the foolish fag did not like to raise any objection.

"I'm your man," he said, after a brief hesitation.

"Another time, when I'm in better form, I'll play you for a fiver or a tenner, if you like," said Mr. Griggs solemnly. "But, if you don't mind, a couple of quid on this game, and no more."

"Right you are," answered Manners minor.

He chalked his cue.

"I'll take a turn round the garden," remarked Piggott. "Ta-ta, Griggsy!"

Mr. Griggs followed him to the door. Piggott called back to Reggie.

"Look for me on the towing-path when you've finished, Reggie."

"Oh, all right! Come on, Mr. Griggs!"

Piggott strolled down the garden with a smile on his face and a ten-shilling note in his pocket. He had received his share of the plunder in advance—which looked as if Mr. Griggs expected to win the hundred up, in spite of the poor form he had shown that afternoon. Piggott of the Third did not remain within the precincts of the Green Man; it was too risky, and he did not believe in running risks for nothing. He sauntered away up the towing-path in high spirits, and he grinned as he passed Wally & Co. by the river. Wally and Frank did not deign to take any notice of him. But possibly, as Piggott reflected, they would have taken some notice if they could have guessed where he had left Manners minor.

CHAPTER 2.

The Call of Friendship.

TOM MERRY & CO. came in ruddy and cheerful, and a little tired, after the boating practice. Figgins & Co. were in great spirits. Study No. 6 were smiling. In the trial the Fourth-Formers had had a little of the advantage, and they were counting on the twenty points. But there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip, as Monty Lowther reminded them. It was nearly a week to the race, and by that time Tom Merry meant to have a winning crew, if hard practice and coaching could do it.

"Coaching's what you Shell fellows want," D'Arcy minor remarked to the THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 537.

Terrible Three. I'll tell you what, Tommy; you turn up early to-morrow morning, before brekker, and I'll put you through it."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Frank Levison.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Bai Jove, you might do worse, Tom Mewwy!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"So might you, Gussy," said Wally.

"The way you pull, old scout, is enough to make a Hun weep! You don't mind my saying so, do you?"

"You cheeky little wottah!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo! What's on?" exclaimed Talbot suddenly. "Looks like trouble."

It was trouble.

"Piggy's catching it," said Wally, with a shrug.

Piggott of the Third was standing in the quadrangle as the crowd came in, his face sullen, under Kildare's stern eyes. The captain of St. Jim's was looking as stern as the juniors had ever seen him.

The rascal of the Third was evidently in hot water.

"I wasn't!" he was saying, as the juniors came on the scene.

"He says he wasn't!" murmured Wally to Frank Levison. "Then you can bet he was, whatever it is!"

And Frank nodded.

"You were!" exclaimed Kildare. "How dare you deny it, when I saw you myself coming away from the place?"

"I—I wasn't!" persisted Piggott. "You were mistaken, Kildare. I give you my word."

"Listen to me," said the Sixth-Former sternly. "I was on the other side of the river, but I saw you quite distinctly coming away from the gate of the Green Man—the garden gate on the towing-path."

Piggott drew a deep breath.

"I stopped to rest there," he said. "I'd been leaning on the gate, that was all."

"I saw you shut it."

"It came open as I was leaning on it, under my weight," explained Piggott, who certainly ought to have been born in Prussia, so easily did falsehoods come to his lips. "I was jolly near pitched over. I shut it, of course."

Piggott spoke in such an assured way that even the keen-eyed skipper of St. Jim's was a little staggered.

From the woods on the opposite side of the Ryll he had certainly seen Piggott shut the gate of the inn garden, and come away along the towing-path. But it was barely possible that the circumstances were as Piggott stated.

The Terrible Three walked on towards the School House. They were not interested in the delinquencies of the shady cad of the Third. Study No. 6 followed them, and Figgins & Co. went on to the New House. But a good many of the Third-Formers remained on the spot. They were interested, as Piggott was in their form. And though nobody was inclined to give him away, the fags knew very well that Kildare was right in his surmise. They knew Piggy's little ways.

They wondered whether Piggy would succeed in lying himself out of the scrape, as he had often done before.

"I assure you that's how it was, Kildare," said Piggott meekly. "Of course, I shouldn't go to a place like that, out of bounds. Nothin' to go there for, that I know of. It's a low hole!"

Kildare compressed his lips.

"I don't want to lick you without being sure, Piggott," he said. "But I can't take your word; you're a known liar!"

"Oh, I say!" murmured Piggott.

"We shall see," resumed Kildare.

"You say you were leaning on the gate, and hadn't been in the place."

"Yes; honest Injun."

"Have you been alone all the afternoon?"

Piggott hesitated a moment.

He was wondering whether he had been seen with Manners minor, and whether he could be detected if he lied. Wally's look was expressive, but he did not speak. He had seen Piggott walking with Reggie.

"I was with the fellows on the towing-path," said Piggott, at last.

"After that?"

"I—I went for a walk with Manners minor."

"Where is Manners minor now?"

"I—I think in the village."

"Where did you part with him?"

"On—the towing-path."

"That was before you started leaning on the Green Man gate, I suppose?" asked the captain of St. Jim's sarcastically.

"Ye-es."

"Very well. We'll see what Manners minor has to say about it," said Kildare grimly. "You can cut, Piggott."

Piggott turned away in the direction of the gates. Kildare called him back at once.

"Where are you going, Piggott?"

"Only—only out," stammered Piggott.

"You'll go into the School House, and stay there," said the prefect sharply.

"You are not going to warn Manners minor to be ready with a yarn, you young rascal!"

"I—I wasn't thinking—"

"Look here, Piggott," said Kildare quietly, "tall me the truth. You've been in the Green Man, and it looks to me as if Manners minor has been there with you. Is he still there?"

"I—I don't know where he is," faltered Piggott, looking scared.

"Suppose I go to the Green Man and look for him?" said Kildare, with a sharp look at the fag.

Piggott changed colour. He knew what would happen in that case. Reggie Manners could hardly have finished his hundred up with Mr. Griggs yet; and after that he would be sure to look round for Piggott. He would be caught. The fear in the young rascal's face did not escape Kildare's penetrating eyes.

"Well?" snapped the prefect.

"I—I don't know where Manners minor is," stammered the fag. "I—I parted with him on the towing-path. I—I don't know where he went."

"We shall see!" said Kildare grimly. "Go into the house, and stay there!"

He watched Piggott go into the School House, and then, with a frowning brow, turned away towards the gates. Wally and Frank exchanged a startled look.

"I—I say, Wally—" began Levison minor.

"Come after Piggy!" muttered Wally. "But—"

"Come on, I say!"

Wally ran to the School House, and Frank Levison followed him. They overtook Piggott in the hall. He was looking scared and white. D'Arcy minor caught him by the arm.

"Where's Reggie Manners—quick?" he muttered.

"I don't know."

Wally shook him by the arm so fiercely that the cad of the Third uttered a yelp of pain.

"Tell me quick, you fool!" breathed Wally. "Whisper. Don't let everybody hear. Have you left him in the lurch for Kildare to catch? Tell me where he is, or I'll smash you!"

"He's at the Green Man," whispered Piggott. "It's no good, D'Arcy minor. You can't get him out of it. He's in the

billiard-room at this minute, playing with Griggs. You can't warn him."

Wally breathed hard.

"Where's the billiard-room in the beastly hole?" he whispered.

"The French window's on the garden, at the end of the veranda. But—"

"Come on, Frank!"

Wally released Piggott, and ran out of the School House. He fairly streaked across the quadrangle, with Frank at his heels. As they came out into the road, Levison minor caught him by the arm.

"Wally—"

"Come on!" exclaimed Wally, jerking his arm away. "Or, rather, you needn't come. One will do as well as two."

"I'm coming! But—"

"Don't you see?" Wally jerked out the words as he ran, Frank keeping pace with him. "That sulky young fool has taken up his old habits again. Piggott's led him into it, of course. He's gone into that pub to gamble with the rotters there—just as he did before. Kildare will catch him at it. He's gone there! Serve him right, too, only—only—"

Frank Levison smiled a little as he ran on with Wally. They had broken with their former friend; but the trouble impending over the reckless fag made all the difference. If Reggie was found at the public-house by the prefect, it meant disgrace and a flogging in Hall, if not actual expulsion from the school. And they knew—that the Head would not know—that Reggie's conduct was due more to foolish wilfulness than to any real viciousness in his character. They knew that he was acting the goat as much to spite his old friends as for any other reason. But the Head would not know that. The Head would only know that a St. Jim's boy had broken the strictest laws of the school, and brought disgrace upon St. Jim's, and he would act accordingly.

Wally plunged through a hedge, and Frank Levison followed him. Frank understood now. In the distance, he had caught sight of Kildare's tall figure, striding away towards Rylcombe. Kildare was going by the road; and by cutting across the fields, Wally hoped to be in time to warn the young rascal at the inn of his danger.

Frank was quite prepared to take the risk. All Reggie's perverseness and peevishness were cast out of his mind now, in the imminence of his danger.

Piggott, thinking only of his own skin, had abandoned the fag to his fate; but Wally and Frank were not of Piggott's kind.

True, they were called upon to run risks for the fellow they had received only suspicion and injury from, since the lordly Reggie had dropped their friendship. But they did not think of that.

They ran their hardest across the fields; and they were good sprinters. They arrived, panting, at the gate of the inn garden, on the towing-path.

How near Kildare might be, they did not know; but they had not lost a second. Wally threw open the gate, and they ran into the garden. From Piggott they had learned where to find Manners minor; and they could only hope that they would find him, and get him clear, before the captain of St. Jim's arrived on the scene. The only alternative was getting caught themselves, along with Reggie, and sharing his guilt and punishment. That was the risk they ran!

CHAPTER 10.

A Close Thing.

"HARD cheese, sir!" smiled Mr. Griggs.

He rested the butt of his cue on the floor, and smiled at Manners minor.

Reggie did not smile.

In spite of the exhibition of poor play that Mr. Griggs had made, he had contrived somehow to run out ahead on the hundred.

Manners minor certainly had run him close. Mr. Griggs had occasionally made very poor shots, and given the play to Reggie. His score had crawled behind Reggie's till when Reggie's stood at eighty-five, Mr. Griggs stood only at seventy, with Mr. Griggs to play. Then Mr. Griggs calmly ran out with a single break, and smiled; and the greasy marker winked at the ceiling.

Manners minor had the pleasure—or otherwise—of handing two pound notes to the sporting Mr. Griggs.

"Hard cheese!" repeated that gentleman. "Uncertain game, I do say. You fairly had me beat, Master Manners. You're the one for billiards, and no mistake! Try it again, and you'll wipe me out!"

Reggie grunted.

"I'll tell you what," said Mr. Griggs kindly. "I'm a sport, I am, and I'll play you double or quits on fifty up, Master Manners."

Manners minor had only ten shillings left, so he could not accept Mr. Griggs' generous offer. Which was just as well for him. He had a vague suspicion, too, that Mr. Griggs had only pretended to be a poor player, to lead him on to bet recklessly on the game. He was not sure; but the suspicion did not make him feel amiable.

"I think I'll get off," he said. "I'll go and look for Piggott."

"'No other time—what?'" smiled Mr. Griggs. "Well, sir, I'll give you your revenge any time. You'll mostly find me 'ere on a Wednesday afternoon. Hallo!" he added, in surprise, as there was a sudden rush of feet outside the open doorway.

Reggie Manners jumped as D'Arcy minor and Frank Levison looked in.

"Here he is!" panted Frank.

Reggie reddened for a moment; but he assumed at once an attitude of reckless bravado.

"Yes, here I am!" he sneered. "If you've come here for a game, the table's not engaged at present."

"You're very welcome, young gentlemen," said Mr. Griggs.

Wally gave Mr. Griggs a glance of contempt.

"We haven't come here for that, and you know it, Reggie!" he snapped.

"We've come here for you!"

"Like your cheek, I think!"

"What?"

"Mind your own business!" said Reggie independently. "Nothin' to do with you, I suppose! Let a chap alone! Besides," he added sarcastically, "you seem to have forgotten that I'm in Coventry."

"I tell you—"

"I'm not goin' just yet, either," said Reggie.

"You fool!" shouted Wally. "Kildare's got out of Piggott where you are, and he's coming here for you!"

Reggie started back.

That unexpected information struck him like a blow in the face. All his bravado vanished in a moment.

"Kildare!" he stuttered. "C-c-coming here?"

"He may be at the door at this minute!"

"Oh!"

"Come on, Reggie," said Frank anxiously. "Out, for goodness' sake!"

Wally grasped Frank by the arm, and dragged him away from the open windows.

"It's too late! There's Kildare!"

The captain of St. Jim's was in the inn-garden. Wally had expected that he would enter at the front of the house and

ask questions of Mr. Joliffe there, which would have given the fags time to escape. But Kildare was apparently up to that; and he was looking round for himself. His tall figure had loomed up over the bushes in the garden, and Wally had dragged his chum out of sight only just in time. Escape was cut off now.

"Your schoolmaster after you?" asked Mr. Griggs sympathetically.

"A prefect!" muttered Frank, in dismay. "My hat! We shall all be caught here together now!"

Reggie looked round wildly.

"We—we must hide somewhere!" he panted. "I—I say, Mr. Griggs, isn't there anywhere—"

Mr. Griggs looked at the marker. Mr. Griggs was feeling very uneasy. He had no desire to meet a prefect of St. Jim's with the fags present. It was only too likely that he might feel the weight of Kildare's sinewy arm, in that case.

"This way, gents," muttered the marker, understanding the situation at once.

He pulled open a door in the wall, disclosing a deep, dark recess. Without stopping to think, the three fags ran into it. The marker closed the door on them, and leaned a billiard-cue carelessly against it. A minute later Kildare looked in at the French windows.

"Oh, my only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally.

It was dark and stuffy in the cupboard. There was a smell of chalk and old clothes, and very little air.

Frank Levison panted.

"Quiet, old chap!"

"Quiet!" said Reggie, in a shrill whisper. "If we're spotted here it's worse than ever! It—it will look as if we're in the habit of coming here and—and hiding!"

Wally gritted his teeth.

He and Frank were taking the risk of being set down as habitués of the place by the step they had taken. If they were discovered—

Their hearts almost ceased to beat as they heard the voice of Eric Kildare in the billiard-room.

Through the door they could not distinguish the words, but they recognised the tones.

They listened in palpitating anxiety.

Kildare could scarcely make a search for them; he had no authority for that. But if he did—

If Mr. Griggs or the marker gave them away—if—if— There were a thousand possibilities.

They stilled their breath as much as they could, fearful that the St. Jim's prefect would hear them through the closed door.

The voices died away at last.

"He—he's gone!" whispered Reggie.

"Quiet!"

A minute or two later the door opened, and Mr. Griggs smiled in on the fags as they blinked in the sudden light.

"All serene, young gents! You can 'op it!" he said.

"He's gone!" breathed Manners minor.

"Yes. Werry suspicious young gent!" said Mr. Griggs, shaking his head. "As good as called a man a liar when I said there wasn't any kids 'ere as I knew of."

"You were a liar if you said that!" snapped Wally.

Mr. Griggs looked at him.

"Let's get out of this!" muttered Levison minor.

They hurried to the French windows. Mr. Griggs chuckled.

"I got an idea that the young gent is watchin' the garden," he remarked. "But suit yourselves!"

The fags stopped dead.

"Great Scott! What are we going to

do?" muttered Reggie, with chattering teeth. "We can't stay here."

"There's some gents coming in to use the table," observed the marker, looking in from the door into the bar.

"Oh, crumbs!" muttered Frank.

Mr. Griggs smiled cheerfully. He was possibly a little concerned for Reggie, from whom he hoped to extract future plunder; but Wally and Frank were nothing to him. Wally's remark had not pleased him, either.

"We've got to get out!" muttered Wally. "Come on!"

He opened the door into the passage.

It led to the front door of the Green Man, which stood wide open. A couple of beery-looking men were talking there. But there was no help for it, and the fags ran along the passage and out of the inn in the broad light of day.

They had to take the chance of being seen.

"Put it on!" muttered Wally.

They cut across the street and dodged into Mrs. Murphy's tuckshop. It was the nearest cover.

Wally peered cautiously out of the doorway as soon as they were safe out of sight. To his immense relief, no one he knew was in sight in the village street.

If Kildare was keeping an eye on the inn, he was at the back, probably never dreaming that a fag would have the nerve to walk out of such a place into the street in the daytime.

Wally drew a breath of relief.

"All serene!" he muttered.

"Thank goodness!" murmured Frank Levison.

Reggie did not speak. He was still scared and twittering. Mrs. Murphy was looking at them over the counter, and Wally ordered three ginger-beers as an excuse for entering the shop.

After the ginger-pop had been disposed of, Wally took another cautious survey of the street. At a distance, in the lane, he caught sight of Kildare. If he had been watching for Manners minor, the prefect had given it up now, and was returning to the school.

His erect figure disappeared down the leafy lane.

"He's gone!" whispered Wally. "He's gone back! Reggie, you thundering idiot, you've got to get in before Kildare! Come on! We'll cut across Pepper's field, and get in at the back of St. Jim's. Get a move on!"

"I—I say—" stammered Reggie shamefacedly.

"Get a move on, dummy!"

The three fags left the shop. Wally led the way, and they wound and dodged through fields and lanes, keeping out of sight of the high-road, and arrived at last behind the school buildings. They clambered in over the tradesman's gate, and scudded into the School House without losing a second. Wally stopped there to look out of the hall window.

Kildare was not to be seen in the quad. He could hardly have reached the school yet. Tom Merry came in from the quad, and glanced at the three breathless fags.

"Hallo! You kids been foot-running?" he asked.

"Yes, a little bit," panted Wally. "I suppose that parcel under your arm means that you're just going to have tea, Tommy?"

"Yes," said Tom, with a smile.

"Manners minor is coming to tea with his major. Look it, Reggie!"

Reggie understood, and he followed Tom Merry up the staircase. Wally and Frank looked at one another.

"We're well out of that!" breathed Frank.

"My hat! I wouldn't like to go through it again!" muttered D'Arcy minor. "Hallo! There's Kildare!"

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Kildare came across the quadrangle towards the School House. His brows were knitted. He had discovered nothing at the Green Man, and he wondered whether Piggott's account had been the truth, after all. He came into the School House, and stopped to speak to the two fags, who were intensely interested in the sports-list on the notice-board, apparently counting up the points in favour of the Fourth and the Shell in the great Form contest.

"D'Arcy minor!"

"Hallo, Kildare!" said Wally, looking round carelessly.

"Have you seen anything of Manners minor this afternoon?"

"Manners minor!" said Wally, in a reflective sort of way. "Yes; he was on the towing-path when the chaps were rowing the trial, I believe. Yes, I saw him there, now I come to think of it!"

"I mean, later than that. Do you know where he is now?"

"Oh, yes!" said Wally carelessly.

"Oh, you do?" exclaimed Kildare.

"Yes; he's having tea with his major," said Wally, with an air of surprise. "He didn't ask us; I suppose the sardines wouldn't run to it. We'll come to tea with you, if you like, Kildare."

Kildare laughed, and walked on. His suspicions were dissipated now; and he little dreamed of the activity Wally and Frank had recently displayed in order that Manners minor might be at tea with his major when the captain of St. Jim's asked after him. Much to the relief of the two fags, the prefect went to his own study.

"All serene!" muttered Frank. "I—I say, Wally, I don't quite like pulling Kildare's leg like that!"

"I don't, either!" answered Wally, with a grunt. "I'll punch Reggie's nose for making me do it!"

Meanwhile, Reggie Manners was having tea with the Terrible Three; and they made him welcome, though little guessing why he had come.

CHAPTER 11.

The Race.

"LOOKS bad for the Shell!" remarked Grundy, with a shake of the head.

It was race-day, and the Fourth Form and the Shell were quite agog. The eights was one of the biggest events in the Form competition, and interest in the race was very keen.

Both Tom Merry and Figgins had worked hard, and made their crews work hard; and both eights were in great form.

Each Form confidently expected victory, only Grundy of the Shell expressing doubts as to the prospects of his Form.

Grundy's remark called forth emphatic rejoinders.

"Looks bad?" demanded Monty Lowther.

"What do you know about rowing?" snorted Kargaroo.

"Fathead!"

"Why does it look bad for the Shell, Grundy?" asked Talbot mildly.

"I'm not rowing!" explained Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy's explanation evoked a roar of laughter. If there was nothing worse than that the matter, the Shell's prospects were good enough—in the opinion of everybody but George Alfred Grundy.

"There's still time, Tom Merry," said Grundy, unheeding the laughter. "I'm willing to stroke the boat—"

Tom Merry laughed.

"My dear man, I couldn't trust you to stroke a cat!" he replied.

"Why, you—you ass—" stammered Grundy indignantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Shell fellows streamed out of the House. Juniors of both Forms gathered by the shining river and the boat-house, and fellows of other Forms came to see the race. The Third turned up almost to a man, led by Wally. Lefevere of the Fifth was there with some more seniors. Kildare had consented to act as starter, and some of the Sixth came down to the river with him.

The Form contest was creating great interest in the school by this time, and all St. Jim's looked on the boathouse as quite a big event.

Indeed, Cutts of the Fifth was making a book on the race, backing the Shell as the elder Form. But some other sportsmen favoured the chances of the Fourth, for there was no doubt that Figgins' crew worked together like clockwork; and it was not only beef that would win a race. Piggott of the Third, a humble follower of the great Cutts, was also seeking to turn a doubtfully honest penny on the race, but he found little encouragement among the fags.

Reggie Manners followed the crowd to the river. His face was not happy. Since his rescue from a serious scrape at the Green Man, he had not spoken to his old friends.

The sentence of Coventry had long since expired, and Reggie was on much the old terms with the Third. But a great distance still separated him from his former chums—Wally and Frank Levison. This time it was not really Reggie's fault.

The fag realised only too clearly what his chums had saved him from, and what they had risked in doing it. He was grateful, and he was sincerely repentant of all the wilful wrong-headedness that had resulted in landing him in such a scrape. The fact that his former chums had risked so much to save him was a pretty clear proof that friendship was not dead on their side.

Reggie would gladly have made it up. But now that he was sorry for his folly he still had to take the consequences. Wally and Frank took it for granted that he was still the same sulky, perverse fellow he had been, and, naturally, they did not make the first advances. And Manners minor, in sensitive apprehension of a snub, hesitated to make them. And so the days passed on, without a word of reconciliation being uttered on either side.

Manners minor looked on glumly at the preparations for the race. There was a buzz of voices on the landing-raft and along the towing-path. Reggie was glum and silent.

"I say, Reggie!"

He looked round irritably, as Piggott nudged him. They were a little apart from the rest.

"Well?" grunted Reggie. Since Piggott had landed him in the fix at the Green Man, and left him in it, Reggie had not been cordial to the cad of the Third.

"Which side do you think is going to pull it off, old chap?"

"I don't know," growled Reggie. "Shell, most likely—they're older."

"Figgins' crew is in great form. I'll tell you what, Reggie; if you like to put two to one on the Shell, I'll take you on!"

"What?"

"Or three to two, if you like," said Piggott. "Anything for a sportin' offer. What do you say, Reggie?"

Reggie glared at him.

"Are you asking me to make bets on the Form race, you cad?" he demanded sulphurously.

"Why not?" sneered Piggott. "You make bets on billiards, don't you?"

Biff!
Reggie Manners drove his right fairly on Piggott's sharp nose, and the sportsman of the Third sat down on the towing-path with a yell.

Reggie, his fists clenched, glared down on him.

"Now, you measly cad, get up and have some more!" he shouted. "Get up, and I'll jolly well knock you down again!"

"Yaroooooh!"

"Bravo! Well hit!" yelled Wally.

"Right on the wicket," grinned Frank Levison, coming up with Wally. "Piggy doesn't want any more, Reggie! Come along and see the race—they're just going to start."

Manners minor looked uncertainly at his old chums. Piggott squirmed to his feet, and walked sulkily away. He certainly did not want any more; and it was only too clear that his evil influence over the reckless fag was gone.

"What did you biff him for, Reggie?" asked Wally, in quite a friendly way. He was feeling friendly now that he had seen Reggie biff the shady young rascal of the Third.

"He wanted me to bet on the race," muttered Reggie.

"Oh!"

"And you wouldn't?" asked Frank.

"Do you think I would?" demanded Reggie.

"Well, I'm glad you wouldn't," said Levison minor.

Reggie was about to make an angry retort, when he checked himself.

"Well, I wouldn't," he said. "I—I say! I—I meant to tell you chaps I—I was obliged to you for what you did the other day. I should have got into an awful row—"

"That's why we did it, kid."

"You might have got landed, too."

"Lucky we weren't."

"I—I oughtn't to have gone there,"

muttered Reggie, his face scarlet. "I—I— Well, it was really only bad temper. I never meant to be a worm like—like— Never mind! I—I'm sorry I did it."

This was a great concession from the lordly Reggie, and his chums understood it.

"All serene!" said Frank. "Let's forget all about it, Reggie!"

"Come on, kid!" said Wally cheerily.

They slipped their arms through Reggie's, one on either side, and walked him off between them. The breach had been healed at last—the rift in the lute was mended.

Crack!

"Hallo, they're off!"

Kildare had given the signal.

There was a rush down the towing-path.

"Pull, you beggars!"

"Go it, Shell!"

"Buck up, Fourth!"

"Bravo!"

"Pull, you bounders, pull!"

And they did pull! The great Form race was fairly going! A roar of voices accompanied them along the shining river. Both crews were fit as fiddles, both trained up to the last point. It was, as Lefevre of the Fifth sagely remarked, anybody's race.

"Shell leads!" came a yell from Gunn, and Grundy looked surprised. He really did not understand how the Shell could lead, with himself out of the boat.

"Buck up, the Fourth!" shrieked Fatty Wynn.

The Shell boat was leading; and it led, and led, till it had a whole length to the good. But Figgins & Co., like Brer Fox, were only lying low, and when the stroke quickened the Fourth Form boat drew on and on, till it drew level, and then ahead, and the Fourth-Formers racing along the bank yelled with glee.

"Bravo, Figgys!"

"Go it, Gussy! Put it on, Blake!"

"Hurrah!"

Tom Merry & Co. were putting all their beef into it now. Again they drew level. Both crews were bending to it, and it was still anybody's race. But inch by inch the Shell boat drew ahead.

"Shell! Shell! Shell!" came in a roar along the towing-path.

"Hurrah!"

Inch by inch—foot by foot! And then came the gallant spurt by the Fourth, which drew them level, and ahead—half a boat's length ahead—and the Fourth-Formers ashore almost raved. But the spurt could not hold on to the finish, and the Shell, rowing grimly, passed once more—and stayed there. And at the finish they had half a length to spare. And then there was a roar that shook the air.

"Shell wins! Bravo, Tom Merry! Hip-hip-hurrah!"

Half an hour later a new entry was made in Levison minor's book of records—twenty points to the Shell for the boat-race!

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—**"THE CHAMPION OF THE SHELL!"** by Martin Clifford.)



CADET NOTES.



IN quite a considerable number of cases we are glad to be able to say that readers of the GEM have responded to the invitation extended in this column that they should get their friends to join with them in making an application to the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments to endeavour to form a Cadet Corps in places where no such organisation at present exists. We have received letters with the signatures of a number of boys from a dozen or more different places, the number of such signatures varying from half a dozen or so up to as many as thirty in one instance. This is a very useful work, and renders considerable aid to the Association in its efforts to promote the formation of Cadet Corps where they do not exist, but are urgently wanted. If any other of our readers residing in such places would take up the matter, and get their friends to join with them in signing a letter to this effect, we shall be glad to receive it. All communications should, as hitherto, be sent to the Central Committee of Volunteer Regiments, Cadet Department, Judges' Quadrangle, Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London, W.C. 2.

How necessary it is that active efforts should be made to establish new corps may be gathered from the following brief statement of facts that have come to our experience so far. Up to the present, in response to the efforts of the Central Association, about a thousand boys from all parts of the country have applied for information and advice about joining the Cadet Movement. It is a curious fact that we find almost exactly a half of these inquiries come from places where there are corps in existence, to which the applicants can be referred. In the other fifty per cent. of the cases there is no corps existing within reasonable distance to which the inquirers could be directed. It will be seen from this how wide is the area still uncovered by organisations of this kind, and any help that can be given towards promoting their formation in those districts is likely to be of the greatest value and importance to the movement.

The movement for establishing Cadet Battalions in the West Riding of Yorkshire is being pressed forward steadily. At a meeting of the committee which has the matter in hand at Leeds, the other day, the lord mayor of that city stated that already over £600 had been raised or promised towards the fund for establishing the corps, and that orders had been placed for 400 uniforms, which would be issued forthwith. Good progress is also being made at Bradford, and it is anticipated that before long these two cities and all the other Yorkshire centres of population will have succeeded in raising their own Cadet Battalions. This is excellent news, and readers of the GEM should support the efforts, and join the corps being formed.

We are glad to be able to say also that similar activity is being displayed in the county of Northumberland, where steps are now being taken to raise Cadet Companies, to be affiliated to the Volunteer Battalions in Newcastle and most of the other centres throughout the county. It is hoped to establish a Cadet Company of from thirty to one hundred lads to each Volunteer Battalion, and a beginning is being made at Newcastle, where it is proposed to raise a number of companies at once. The expense, of course, will be considerable, and a fund has been started with the anticipation of raising some £4,000 to equip the first twelve companies, towards which it is gratifying to see that a sum of £2,500 or more has already been subscribed or promised.

The prompt and generous response received to these appeals for funds for raising and equipping Cadet Corps in the West Riding of Yorkshire and Northumberland fully bears out what we have said before in these pages—that money, even in these difficult times, is not the most serious obstacle in the way of Cadet organisations. Of course, it is true that large sums of money are required, as the boys who join cannot be expected to provide very much by way of their own subscriptions, etc., towards the necessarily heavy expenses of maintaining and equipping Cadet Corps. On the other hand, in spite of the heavy calls

which are being made upon all classes of citizens at the present time, there is a general disposition on the part of those able to do so to recognise a responsibility for the care and improvement of the rising generation. This is well evidenced by the very large sums which have been given, not only in the two cases referred to, but in some others which have come to our notice of late. It ought to be an encouragement to those who are thinking of taking up the organisation of the work to know that financial aid is forthcoming in this prompt and handsome manner.

The twenty-sixth annual church-parade of the Church Lads' Brigade was held at St. Paul's Cathedral in April, when 2,500 Cadets attended. The service was intoned by the brigade chaplain, the Rev. E. D. Merritt, and the lesson read by the colonel-commandant, Cadet-Colonel Everard A. Ford. The sermon was preached by Bishop Goldsmith, Vicar and Rural Dean of Hampstead. The parade was a striking testimony to the excellence of the work of a recognised Cadet organisation with a definitely religious aim.

The first round of the competition for units of the Boys' Brigade for the "Daily Telegraph" Shield took place recently at the headquarters of the London Rifle Brigade. The companies competing were the 8th, 80th, and 83rd London, and the 3rd Enfield. Captain W. Bradshaw, of the Scots Guards, awarded first place to the 83rd Company, and second to the 3rd Enfield Company. General Sir Robert Scallion; Lieutenant-Colonel Buchan, representing the Earl of Scarborough, Director-General Territorial Forces; Major J. C. Brinton, representing Field-Marshal the Commander-in-Chief; and Captain the Hon. R. Norton, Staff Officer for Cadets, were also present, and addressed the Cadets.

A successful concert and dance, arranged by the football club connected with St. Matthias Company of the Essex Territorial Cadets, in aid of their funds, was held in St. Matthias Hall recently, when there was a large attendance.

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THE ST. JIM'S GALLERY.

No. 12.—Bagley Trimble.

BAGLEY is the name given him at his baptism by his godfathers and godmothers—I don't know why, but it is probably a family name. But St. Jim's adopted Baggy—an easy corruption—from the first. It seemed to fit. Bagginess and slackness are much the same thing; and Baggy is a terrible slacker. He is keen on only two things—gorging and prying into other people's affairs.

We all know that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is too soft-hearted. But his wangling Baggy into Study No. 6 implied something more than softness of heart. He had met the fellow! Anybody who could imagine Baggy, after meeting him, as a desirable, or even as a tolerable inmate, must have been soft in the head as well as in the heart!

Blake and Herries and Dig did not like it from the outset, naturally. Four are quite enough for one small study; and even with that number it is necessary that those who compose it should get on well together. From his letter to Gussy, Trimble was judged by Blake & Co. a rank outsider; but they did not guess the extent of his rankness.

On the whole, I think Baggy is rather more utterly despicable than Billy Hunter of Greyfriars, whom he resembles in many ways. There is, by the way, nothing at all in the complaint that Baggy is merely another Hunter, with nothing original in the drawing of his character. They are alike as people we meet are alike, which is to say that, while their more outstanding characteristics may be the same, there are many points of difference. They do very much the same things, but they do them in different ways. Their opinions on things in general are very much the same, but they express them differently. Perhaps it is because we have known Hunter longer, and remember the days when his schoolfellows liked him better, that we have more charity for him. But I do think that he is just a trifle less objectionable all round.

Baggy soon showed himself in his true colours. D'Arcy was playing in a footer match on the afternoon when he arrived. He tried to beg off, in order that Baggy might be met and treated with proper politeness; but in the event he played, and Lowther stood out of the Shell team that he might go and meet Baggy. Lowther and Blake & Co. were in complete agreement as to the folly of trusting Gussy to decide as to whether the newcomer was a fit and proper person to be admitted into No. 6. Lowther was absolutely confident as to his own qualifications for the job. Blake and Herries and Dig were possibly less sure about Lowther than he was about himself. But they let him go.

Lowther reported Baggy as "the limit." It was an unusually terse summing-up for Lowther, who likes to bear his own tongue going; but it was eminently descriptive. Baggy is the limit; and there is not a fellow at St. Jim's—not even among those who allow him to toady to them at times—who does not recognise it.

So Lowther took Baggy over to the New House, and installed him in the study of Figgins & Co. Mr. Rateliff was told that Baggy's father really wanted his hopeful son to be in Mr. Rateliff's House, and that his being booked for the School House was a mere error. Baggy was told—by the humorous Lowther—that Ratty had a heart of gold, and positively spoiled his House in the grub line. So, of course, the New House seemed to Baggy a far more desirable place than the School House; and he was quite ready to tell any lies necessary for admission to such a pig's paradise.

It did not work—Lowther knew it would not work. Trimble got something out of it—a big feed in Figg's den. Fatty Wynn had laid in a supply of grub for tea after the match. There were six tarts—they took Trimble about six minutes. (When he is really in a hurry, however, he can always beat that rate. And these were large tarts, or there

would have been more than two each for Figgins and Kerr and Fatty.) Then Baggy had a "go at the doughnuts." He would have demolished the rabbit-pie—Fatty's beloved dish—if Lowther, perhaps stirred to compassion at the notion of Fatty left bereft, had not insisted upon his coming along to see the Housemaster.

But he went back—without Lowther—and he cleared the decks, rabbit-pie and everything! Then Figgins & Co. found him asleep in the armchair. They cast him downstairs, and told him to tell Lowther that they owed that erratic humorist a thick ear. He went in to tea in Hall after that—still in the New



House—and was horribly disappointed when he found that a single slice of cake was all he got there, besides the bread-and-butter. It was so very different from what Lowther had led him to expect; and he really felt obliged to go to the tuckshop after it. But Dame Taggles refused to give credit, and Trimble would have been utterly forlorn but for D'Arcy's finding him at that juncture and taking him off for tea in No. 6, where a spread had been prepared for him.

Blake and Herries and Dig liked Baggy just about as much as they had expected to like him—that is to say, not at all. But Gussy did his level best with the weird new boy.

For a time Study No. 6 managed to put up with him. But it was not for long. Presently Baggy began to find that he was having the

study all to himself. As they could not get rid of him, the four deserted the familiar apartment. They applied to Kidare to have Baggy moved out, but they got no change out of that. But Baggy went at last of his own free will. He went to share No. 8 with Mellish and Levison and Lumley-Lumley. Ernest Levison was still a black sheep in those days, and Mellish was what he is now—a sneak and a funk. These two let Trimble join them partly because they knew that Lumley-Lumley would not like it, and to score off him suited them, and partly because Trimble was willing to take them into a Flag Day swindle he had thought out.

The swindle proved a fiasco, of course; but there was some fun first. It was to be a French Flag Day, and Trimble, Levison, and Mellish got themselves up as French girls. They were not bowled out at once; but Lowther's suspicions were aroused by "the fat girl's feet." When Baggy was taxed with his identity he gave himself away at once, as he always does.

"I—I assure you I'm not Trimble!" he yelled. "I've never heard the name before! Look here, Lowther, you know—" And when Mr. Rateliff came along Baggy burred: "Oh, no, sir; I—I'm not Trimble, and those chaps ain't Levison and Mellish! We're French girls, sir, and—and we can't speak English!"

That was only one of many swindles attempted by Baggy. He is said to be more fool than knave, like Hunter. But his folly—again like Hunter's—is of the kind that is very apt to land its possessor in prison. A pronounced disposition to confound the rules of meum and tuum—mine and thine—is not readily distinguished from dishonesty. Nowadays Trimble's schemes to collect money for charitable objects, or to act as treasurer for anything going, are treated as mere jokes. If Trimble holds money, someone must hold Trimble. But, at root, they are, as they always have been, dodges to get possession of other people's property. There may be humour in the ways of a thief, but he remains a thief in spite of it. Perhaps Baggy is not quite a thief, but he has sailed dangerously near the wind more than once.

He very nearly came a cropper over the matter of Cutts' banknotes, though Tom Merry came even nearer disaster in that affair. The notes had gone, and Tom's handkerchief was found in the study of their owner. Baggy had dropped it there. He had borrowed it; he had borrowed lots of things in order to attend a party at Glyn House to which he had had no invitation. Cutts' overcoat was among the borrowed articles, and a necktie of Talbot's, and Gussy's dress clothes, and Gore's topper. But it was Lowther's handkerchief Baggy had used at the party, one belonging to a set that Monty valued because they had been a present. Tom's was borrowed later; and it was all D'Arcy's fault, Baggy said, for keeping his locked up. Anyway, the handkerchief and the fact that Cutts' purse was in his possession—he had taken it away from Baggy—convicted Tom, and he was on the point of being expelled when the truth came out. Baggy had denied everything, but Dick Brooke, the day-boy, was able to weigh in with some valuable evidence, and Baggy had to confess, though he did not confess fully. He only admitted wanting to swank around with the twenty pounds. Well, no doubt it was partly such a desire that moved him. But can anyone believe that he would long have kept the sum intact? Mr. Rateliff did not know Baggy then as he knows him now.

Baggy's loose notions as to property—Baggy's nasty habit of poking and prying—Baggy's dislike to soap and water and clothes-brushes—Baggy's swank about Trimble Hall and his rich relatives, and the remittances he gets—and, in particular, Baggy's readiness to do anything for the sake of a feed—all these are familiar to every reader of the stories. There have been times when

Baggy, doing evil, has yet been the means whereby good has been brought about; but there really does not seem any need to give him credit for such things, though he is always ready to take any amount of credit.

Baggy fell in love once—like Billy Bunter. But the results were not quite the same. Bunter under the influence of love really was a better Bunter—quite a tolerable Bunter—not all he might have been, but with promise in him of lots of better things to come. He actually showed real courage, and he tried not to tell lies, or to be greedy.

It cannot be said that Baggy bucked up to that extent. What Baggy wanted was not so much to be a better fellow as for Doris Levison to take him as being all that he should be. From which one might infer that Baggy is even vainer than Bunter, if he did not see that there was room for improvement in him; or that he really was not so deeply in love as Bunter, since he had not the same anxiety to make himself worthy of the beloved object. Now, Doris Levison is really a much nicer girl than Cora Quelch, though the rotund Cora was too good for Bunter. But there was a difference in the attitudes of the two girls. Cora was content to accept Billy Bunter as a friend, at least. Doris did not like Trimble a little bit. His absurdities might amuse her, but his attentions bored her.

And they made her brothers furious. When Ernest Levison caught Baggy with the portrait of Doris, which he had stolen, he went for him savagely. The very mention of Doris'

name on Baggy's lips was enough to rouse fury in him. And one cannot feel that he was far wrong. Little Frank Levison objected quite as strongly, but could not object quite as forcibly.

Do you remember how Trimble was wangled into a party that the brothers took over to their aunt's, where Doris was staying? Do you remember Lowther's scheme to keep Baggy back—the promise of a big feed that afternoon? How Baggy hesitated, turned back, started again, and finally made up his mind that Doris and a long bicycle-ride—which, of course, he hated—were more to be desired than an easy feed? That, at least, was a sign of grace. But he made himself quite intolerable at the party; and, though for once he displayed some pluck in going into the river after Frank, even that was spoiled by his gross clumsiness and his silly bragging. He had done something in flopping into the water, and it was more than could have been expected of him. But he had not saved Frank's life. On the contrary, he had had to have his own saved by someone else. And he was not only ungrateful, but he wanted to annex all the honours of the rescue.

It is simply of no use to attempt recounting here all the scrapes into which Baggy's greed and Baggy's prying have got him. But most of you will recall that letter which meant so much to Ralph Cardew, which "came open in Baggy's hands," and which he kept in his pocket for days, partly from fear of giving it up, and partly out of weak revengefulness towards Cardew. You will remember his little

dodge—soon doomed to failure—for borrowing money from fellows by saying that he had lent his last quid to some chum of theirs. You will remember his asking a number of the Fourth and Shell to go with him to "Trimble Hall" for Christmas, and how terribly afraid he was that he might be taken at his word, and of the extraordinary lies he told to put them off. You will remember his turning up at E. St. Wood House and disgracing himself there. And his forcing his company upon Harry Wharton & Co. at Wharton Lodge; and his giving away the secret of Mr. Railton's Conscientious Objector relative; and getting poor old Grundy into hot water for a supposed breach of confidence; and his "triumph" when he discovered a senior's hoard of food and used it, and ostentatiously went without food in hall, and puzzled everyone by his seeming patriotism and self-denial. And you will remember lots of other things—some of you more than I can, very likely, though many more come back to me as I write.

But enough! This is not a biography. If it were, you would find no Trimble Hall in it. Baggy's home is in a respectable but by no means imposing villa in a dull street of a dull little town. His people may be all right; but if they are, it is extremely difficult to account for Baggy. One does not feel that there acquaintance is the kind of luxury one would yearn for. Fancy a Miss Trimble! Ugh! How do you think a Miss Trimble—a feminine Baggy—would suit Billy Bunter's taste—eh?

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 killed 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 goes with the nuts to a gambling den at Courtfield, quarrels with Pon, and is knocked senseless just as the warning "Police!" is heard. Flip comes to himself in a cellar, bound hand and foot. He is let out, however. He makes up his mind that the only thing for him to do is to run away, as returning to Highcliffe means certain expulsion. Then he meets Peter Hazeldene, who has run away from Greyfriars. He goes to Highcliffe in the night and sees the Caterpillar. He and Hazel sleep under a haystack, and, after buying caps—the school caps being unsafe—get breakfast at an eating-house. Goggs, of Frankingham, comes to Highcliffe. Flip and Hazel go to London. Johnny Goggs meets the pretty post-girl. (Now read on.)

Going to Meet Miss Gittins (continued).

"NOT quite," said Goggs. "Well, it's no good wastin' confessions. If I confessed in advance, somethin' or other might happen to prevent my doin' what I'd meant to do, an' then the confession would be wasted. An' Franky's awfully stern, y'know!"

"I think I see now," Goggs said. Anyone who heard might have thought that both were talking rubbish, with no serious intention at all. But it was not so. Each spoke after his fashion, in a style that a dull-witted fellow might not have understood. But they were anything but dull-witted; and they were coming to understand each other very well indeed.

"Think I'd better stop now?" asked De Courcy. "No use goin' on till the girl shows up, by gad! She might not fancy your bringin' me along, y'know."

"I consider that it might be as well," Goggs answered gravely.

He walked on alone. Within a minute a clear voice hailed him through the gloom:

"Is that you, grandfather?"

"It is I," replied Goggs.

"I didn't think you'd come," said Miss Gittins.

"I always try to keep my promises," answered the Frankingham junior.

"Blessed if I don't believe you! You're a rare solemn owl to look at, but—"

"Have we not already discussed with sufficient detail my undistinguished personal appearance, Miss Gittins? I thought that we—"

"Right-ho, if you're touchy about it!" Goggs sighed.

"I am not in the least touchy about it," he said. "The years have brought resignation. When young—"

"When was your seventieth birthday, grandfather?"

"My seventeenth birthday? I am not yet seventeen, as it happens."

"I said 'seventieth,' you kipper! Are you deaf?"

"No—yes, I mean; at least, I am supposed to be. But we are wasting time. I have much to ask you."

"That's like you old-fogies, wasting time

talking to a girl about anything but business. Never mind; don't apologise. Get on with the business!"

And Goggs got on with the business without apologies. For all her chaff, all her readiness for flirtation, he respected Miss Gittins. She had proven herself a good friend to Flip; and she was proving it still further by her readiness now to tell what she knew and to help Goggs and the Caterpillar to clear him.

A Complicated Row.

THE Caterpillar, with his warm overcoat buttoned up closely and his chin thrust well down into the silk muffler about his neck, put his back against the massive trunk of an old oak, and waited patiently. Rupert de Courcy had quite a talent for waiting, and it was exercised now.

Goggs and Miss Gittins paced up and down the road along a distance of a couple of hundred yards or so. When they were nearest Highcliffe the sound of their voices came at times to the ears of the Caterpillar. He heard nothing of what they said; but he could tell that they were talking earnestly. When at the other end of their beat, nearer Courtfield, they were quite out of his hearing, and they were never in sight.

For fully twenty minutes no one passed along the road at all, except those two. Then De Courcy heard quick but heavy footsteps from the Highcliffe direction.

At almost the same moment other footsteps sounded along the road from Courtfield.

The two wayfarers met almost opposite the Caterpillar's lounging-place.

"Hallo, Bert!" said the one from Courtfield. "Thought I knew the sound of your fairy feet!"

"That you, Bullen?" spoke another voice.

The Caterpillar was paying no special attention, but he could not avoid hearing. He was quite indifferent as to whether the men saw him or not. It was not likely that they could, however, for a broad highway separated him from them.

"Yes, it's me. 'Ow goes it?"

"Oh, middlin' to bad!" said the fellow

addressed as Bert. "I ain't satisfied with the look of things our way, Bullen."

"D'ye think the coppers—"

"That's just what I do think, old pal!"

The Caterpillar began to feel interested; but he did not imagine that two burglars were about to tell their secrets in his hearing. He had recognised now the voice of the fellow Bert. It was the voice of the bashing Courtfield back, whom he had good cause to remember.

"Well, it ain't very safe to talk about it 'ere," said Bullen cautiously.

"Oh, there ain't nobody to 'ear!' growled Mr. Bert Chikker. "I ain't met three people all the way from Friarale!"

"Been over to see 'Awke an' Cobb?"

"Now, ought I to listen to this?" thought the Caterpillar. "Franky would say 'No,' and Franky's always right. But I'm going to, nevertheless. For one of these louts is of the enemy faction, and I may hear something useful."

"Yuss!" growled Chikker. "An' between me an' you an' the gatepost, Sam Bullen, I ain't best pleased with 'Awke an' Cobb. Where would they 'ave been without me—an' you, in course, though for that matter it was me as brought you in? Hay? I asks you that, as man to man!"

"Nowheres much, Bert. The chaps are ready enough to gamble, but I dubno as Cobb an' 'Awke would 'ave 'ad much of their ready if we 'adn't roped them in."

"Fully understandin' as we was to 'andle our fair whacks of it, Sam?"

"Fully understandin' that, matey! What else was we in it for?"

"Well, 'ow much of it 'as come your way?"

"Not five quid, Chikker! An' they must 'ave been rakin' it in by the shovelful! 'Ow much did they get outter them two 'ighcliffe pups that come into the scheme?"

At this the Caterpillar pricked up his ears. He was quite prepared to regard himself in the light of a detective for the time being, and to put aside any prejudice against listening that he would have had in an ordinary way. Rupert de Courcy had his own sense of honour, and in essence it was a high one. But in such matters he was a law unto himself. Not even Frank Courteney could influence him there.

"That's what I've never found out, Bullen," replied Chiker.

"An' I don't even know which two it was! We're kep' in the dark a sight too much, Chiker, you an' me are!"

"I can tell you that, Sam. It was young Gadsby, an' the swell pup that says 'absolutely' to every blessed thing!"

"Oh! Now I thought 'other one was certain sure to be in it—the flash chap that knows 'is way about above a bit."

"The dear Pon!" murmured De Courcy.

"E knows 'is way about a bit too much for that, if you ask me," Chiker replied. "But, talkin' about young Gadsby, I want to see that young 'ound. E's under my thumb, but 'e don't seem to tumble to it. I want a bit on account outer 'im. I've sent my nevvv, Gehazi, to say as 'e's to come along an' see me; twice I've sent 'im. But nothin' doin'."

"An', talking about your nevvv, what about your niece?" said Bullen, in the tones of a man who has something to tell.

"Brrrr! Young minx!" growled Chiker. "You ought to 'ear 'er talk to me for my good, as she says! Like a Dutch, uncle more'n a niece. Not but what she 'as 'er good-p'ints; an' she's to be trusted, even when she 'ates a chap's ways."

"I shouldn't trust 'er no further than I could see 'er, if she was any belongin' of mine," Bullen said meaningly.

"Wodjer mean?"

Chiker's tone was quite fierce. The Caterpillar had a vague glimmering that this brute had his redeeming qualities—his "p'ints," as he would have called them.

And some sort of loyalty to the girl who had, doubtless, done her best to keep him out of trouble was among them.

Bullen gave a hoarse laugh.

"She's just up along the road with a lad," he said. "Tain't a Courtfield lad. There wouldn't be much in that. An' I ain't sayin' as 'e was 'uggin' 'er. Matter of fact, it was too dark for me to see. But—"

"Oh, speak out!" roared Chiker, with a great oath. "She can take care of 'erself all right, Owen can; but, all the same, I ain't goin' to stand them 'Ighcliffe pups 'angin' after 'er!"

"I rather fancy as it was a 'Ighcliffe lad, but not one as I know. This 'un 'ad glasses. I saw that much."

"Goo'-night, Sam Bullen! I'm off!" said Chiker abruptly. And he went at something like a run along the road to Courtfield.

Bullen moved on. The Caterpillar also stirred himself. He had as much confidence in the ability of Goggs to take care of himself as Chiker had in the ability of his niece; but just as Chiker seemed to think that his presence on the scene was desirable, so the Caterpillar had a notion that Goggs might be none the worse for a friend at his back when Chiker came up.

But the Caterpillar did not make the haste that Chiker did. The heavy footsteps of the Courtfield lad were no longer to be heard when a shout broke from the silence.

It was the shout of someone in pain, and it sounded to De Courcy very much like Vavasour.

He began to hurry then. He had not known that Pon & Co. were out.

There was, indeed, no particular reason why they should interfere with Goggs if they saw him, as far as De Courcy knew. But it

was never easy to be sure what Pon & Co. might do.

The light from a passing trap showed quite a tableau as the Caterpillar came up to a group of five people.

Vavasour lay on his back on the grass, groaning. Chiker stood with a heavy hand on the shoulder of Miss Gittens, who did not look at all as if she needed protection, and was trying to shake off the hand. Ponsonby and Gadsby were a yard or two away, and the glimpse of their faces which the Caterpillar caught showed them grinning. But the grins were not good-tempered ones, and they boded no good to Goggs.

That hero, as the Caterpillar noted without any surprise, was quite calm. It was he who had knocked Vavasour down, but no one could have guessed it from his appearance. He really did not look capable of hurting a fly. But both the Caterpillar and Gadsby knew that in his case appearances were deceptive.

"Now then!" roared Chiker. "What's it all about, hay? Which of you young fellers was sparkin' this gal?"

"Stop that, Bert Chiker!" said Miss Gittens sharply. "It's no affair of yours who I choose to talk to, I suppose? You ain't my guardian. You'd be a fine one for a job like that—I don't think!"

"You with the glasses there!" howled Chiker. "What do you mean by it? Hay, you—you blessed glass-eyed curate!"

"May I mention that I am not a curate?" said Goggs mildly. "I have every respect for the cloth, but I really do not consider it at all probable—"

"Oh, stow that gab! What d'ye mean by it? That's what I'm askin' you!"

"If you refer to the unfortunate necessity I was under of depositing this—individual in a recumbent position—"

"Talk English, can't you? I don't mind about you knockin' 'im down. You're very welcome to knock the 'ole bloomin' crowd down if you like!"

"That is very liberal of you," said Goggs. "I take it kindly. But I think it would facilitate the operation indicated—which in any case I should not perform without further provocation—if you would—be good enough to move on."

The Caterpillar grinned. Goggs had his back to him, and could hardly have been aware that he had come up. But Goggs was talking as coolly as though he had half a dozen at his call. He feared Chiker as little as he feared Pon & Co.

It was a complicated sort of row. As the Caterpillar made it out, Pon & Co. must have come up first and seen Goggs, and something done or said had forced Goggs to deal with Vavasour. Then Chiker had butted in, and De Courcy knew that that burly specimen had his own quarrel against at least one of the three nuts.

Robbed!

"DON'T think much of it!" said Flip. They had wandered away from the Elephant and Castle with some vague idea that it was hardly worth while going back without having a look round, and were now in a street which presented no possible feature of interest to either of them. "I never supposed you would!" returned Hazel morosely.

"Well, let's get back. The Embankment is

livelier than this, and Charing Cross is heaps better. We needn't mind about Mobby. He must have cleared out by this time."

Hazel looked round him. "Blessed if I know which is the way back!" he said.

They had got away from the trams. When one stands at the Elephant and Castle the impression one gets is that it would be difficult to get away from the trams. But it is really easy enough; and these two had done it.

"Well, I don't—that's a dead cert!" Flip replied. "You can bush me easily in a town. Streets like this all seem alike."

"I think, if we turn to the right—"

"The left, you mean!"

"Oh, if you think you know better than I do!"

"I don't!" answered Flip patiently. "Only you don't seem to know at all, and—"

"Seusin' me, young gents, but can I be of any assistance?"

It was the cunning-faced man who had sat behind them on the tram who spoke. His burly companion stayed in the background.

The nearest lamp, some yards away, cast only a dim circle of light on the pavement in its immediate neighbourhood, and the crafty, drink-marred face of the speaker could not be seen. It was the kind of face that both fellows would have distrusted at sight. Flip did not like the voice that went with it. But he suspected no danger.

"We want to get back to the Elephant and Castle to get a tram," he said.

"Fust to the left, second to the right, an' then—"

"But I'm goin' that way. I'll show you if you like."

"Thanks!" said Flip, still unsuspicious.

The crafty-faced one rang up alongside them. The burly brute followed. They heard his footsteps in the rear, but thought nothing of it.

Out of the dull street they passed into one still more dull, and thence into another which was no better than a slum.

"I don't believe he's taking us right," whispered Hazel to Flip. But Hazel was not yet thoroughly awake to the danger they were walking into. His suspicions were slight and vague.

"Sure this is the right way?" asked Flip, who could see no reason why his comrade should whisper. "I don't think much of these streets."

"Well, you ain't asked to live in 'em, are you?" snarled their guide. "You young gents are too blessed partikler, that's what you are! This is the nearest way, an' there ain't anything about it as need make you feel nervous. Round to the right 'ere!"

They turned to the right, and there came a scurry of heavy footsteps from behind. The man by their side shot out a long arm and grabbed Hazel, who was nearest, by the neck, almost pulling him down before he realised that anything was happening.

Flip did not see the arm shoot out in the gloom, but some instinct warned him, even before he heard the muffled cry that Hazel gave. He faced round, and the burly brute received a straight left on the jaw as he made in to the attack.

"Ere, wodjer doin' of, confound you?" he roared.

The answer he got was another punch. Gadsby knew how hard Flip could hit.

(To be continued.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"THE CHAMPION OF THE SHELL!"

By Martin Clifford.

Harry Manners is the champion of the Shell in this story; and the contest dealt with is chess. But if any of you who don't know or don't care about the game are inclined to think that the story will be dry reading for you, you will be making a very big mistake. I am not a chess enthusiast; in fact, a knowledge of the moves is more than I can lay claim to now, though, years ago, I did learn them. But I found nothing dry in the yarn; in fact, I consider it one of Mr. Clifford's very best—and that is saying a lot, as you all know. There is not a dry paragraph in it, to my mind; not even when Manners and his opponents are making moves that I don't know the object of in the least. And, of course, the story is not all chess. There is an air-raid in it—real thrills in that! And

a wretched scheme of Racke's plays its part. But I must not tell you too much!

LIST OF TOM MERRY STORIES IN THE "GEM"—continued.

- 141.—A Shadow in the School.
- 142.—The New Boy's Secret.
- 143.—Tom Merry's Birthday.
- 144.—D'Arcy's Disappointment.
- 145.—Lexicon, the Schoolboy Detective.
- 146.—The Terrible Three's Sub.
- 147.—Binks, the Millionaire.
- 148.—The Fatal Telegram.
- 149.—Tom Merry's Fix.
- 150.—The Search for Tom Merry.
- 151.—Tom Merry's Resolve.
- 152.—Tom Merry Against St. Jim's.
- 153.—Mr. Merry.
- 154.—Tom Merry's Return to St. Jim's.
- 155.—No Class!
- 156.—The Turncoat of the Fourth.

- 157.—Fatty Wynn's New Wheeze.
- 158.—Lumley-Lumley's Return.
- 159.—Tom Merry v. Jack Blake.
- 160.—The Faithful Fuzz.
- 161.—My Request of the Head.
- 162.—The Runaway.
- 163.—Skimpole's Puppi.
- 164.—All Fools' Day at St. Jim's.
- 165.—Joe's Champion.
- 166.—The Wait of St. Jim's.
- 167.—The Rival Schools.
- 168.—Saints v. Grammarians.
- 169.—The Schoolmaster's Rescue.
- 170.—For the Head's Sake.

Your Editor