

The GEM 2^d

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EVERY
WEDNESDAY.

LIBRARY

BRITAIN'S
MONSTER
ENGINE -
"ROYAL SCOT"

REAL
METAL
MODEL

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inside!

NEXT WEEK -
GIANT AIRSHIP
"R. 100"



A ROUSING LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY OF ST. JIM'S!—

A Rank—

Victor Cleave, a new boy of the Shell, may be a Housemaster's nephew, but that doesn't alter the fact that he's an out-and-out rotter, and no one is more reluctant to make that unpleasant discovery than Tom Merry & Co.!



CHAPTER 1 Toe the Line!

"CRICKET!" said Tom Merry firmly.

Monty Lowther made a slight grimace.

Manners looked a little dubious.

On that sunny afternoon, Tom Merry had no doubt whatever that cricket was to be the order of the day.

For once, the summer game did not seem to appeal to his chums.

Had it been a match, they would have been keen enough. But slogging at the nets was not always superlatively attractive to fellows who had so many ways of spending a half-holiday.

"You see—" remarked Monty Lowther casually.

"You see—" said Manners, almost at the same moment.

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Tom Merry frowned.

"You're down for the Greyfriars match, Lowther," he said.

"Yes; but—"

"There are no buts in the case of a member of the eleven."

Tom Merry was not, perhaps, always quite so firm as a cricket captain should be. Easy-going, good-nature was his long suit, so to speak. But he was as firm as adamant now. Monty Lowther sighed.

"They've got a new picture on at Wayland Picture Palace!" he remarked, almost pathetically.

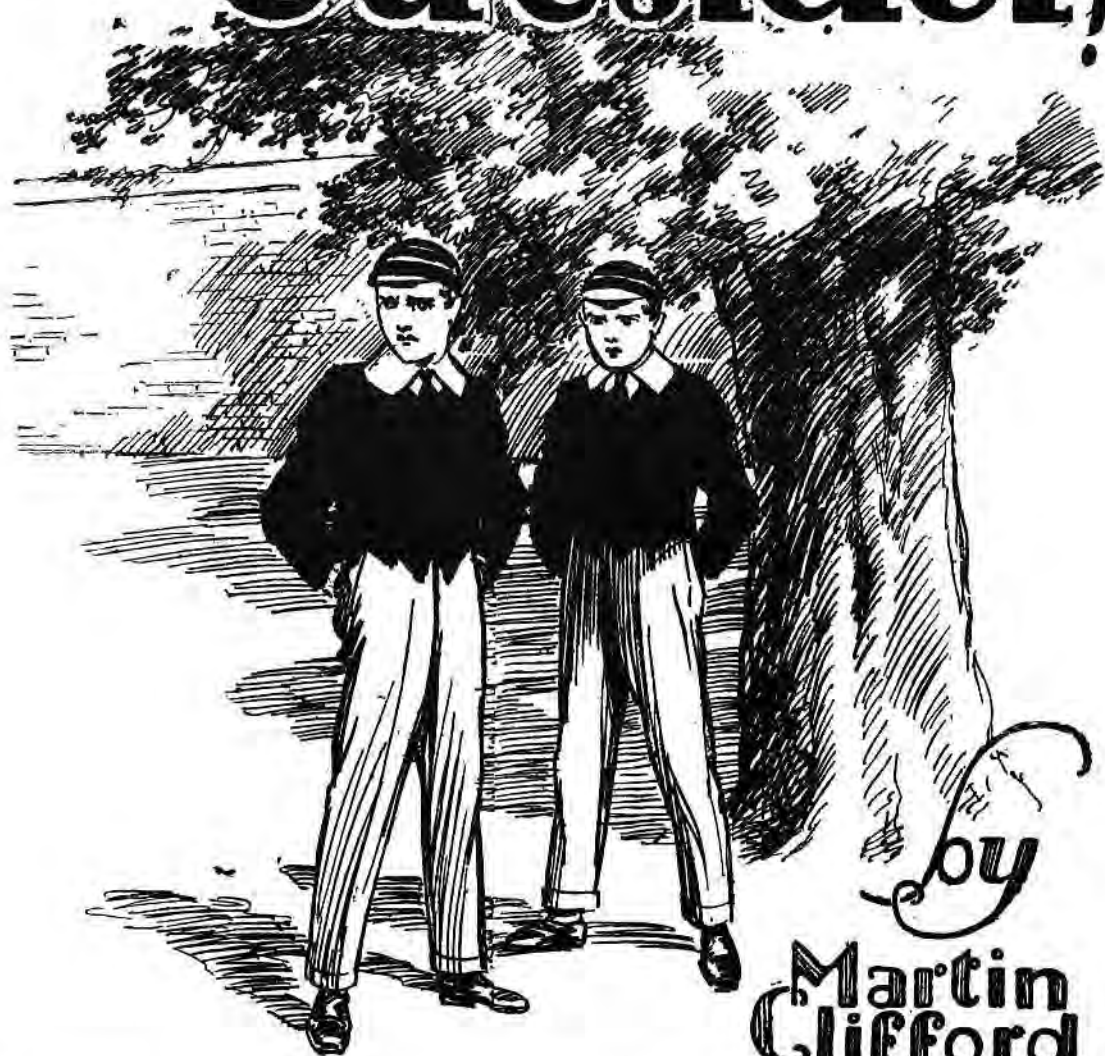
"Rot!"

"You see—"

"Bosh!"

—INTRODUCING VICTOR CLEEVE, A STRANGE NEW BOY!

~ Outsider!



by
**Martin
Clifford**

Monty Lowther was silenced, if not convinced. Tom Merry turned to Manners.

"Do you want to stick indoors watching a film on an afternoon like this?" he demanded sarcastically.

"No fear!" answered Manners promptly. "Some rotten American film—"

"British film!" interjected Lowther.

"Well, that's better; but it's not a day to stick indoors," said Manners. "I was thinking of taking a walk with my camera."

"I might have guessed that!" grunted Tom Merry. "You'd get out of bed in the middle of the night to take a walk with your camera if you could take photographs by moonlight!"

"I've thought of that," said Manners. "In fact, I was thinking—"

"For goodness' sake, no camera jaw now!" said Tom crossly. "You can get up in the middle of the night if you like, but this afternoon you're turning up to games practice!"

"I'm not in the eleven," Manners pointed out.

"You're a reserve."

"But—"

"Bother your buts!" interrupted Tom. "Suppose we want a man when the Greyfriars fellows come over?"

"Oh, blow!" said Manners. "It's a ripping day for the camera!"

"That camera of yours will be missing one of these days!" said the captain of the Shell dorkly. "Look here, you slackers, you're coming down to games practice, and you may as well make up your minds to it! Come along with me and round up the other slackers!"

Tom Merry linked arms with his chums and walked them off. They exchanged a dolorous grin, and resigned themselves to their fate. Outside the School House they came on Blake & Co. of the Fourth. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy called out cheerily:

"You men comin' on the wivah?"

"No!" grunted Tom.

"It's a whippin' day for the wivah, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "We're goin'."

Tom Merry looked grim.

"Sorry for that!" he remarked.

"Bai Jove! Why?"

"Because I was thinking of playing you in the Greyfriars match next week."

"That's all wight, deah boy. I'm playin'."

"Not unless you turn up at games practice to-day."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

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"We're going up to the island," remarked Blake.
 "Herries and Dig can go to the island, or go to Jericho, if they like," answered Tom Merry politely. "But you and D'Arcy are coming down to Little Side."

"After all, it's not a compulsory day!" Blake remarked in a casual sort of way.

"Not at all," agreed Tom. "You can stand out of the match if you like when it comes off—that's not compulsory either. There are several New House men rather keen to shove in."

Blake grinned.
 "Keep its 'ickle temper!" he suggested. "We'll come if you want us."

"Yaas, watah! But I weally think——"
 "Gammon!" interrupted Tom Merry. "Get into your flannels, Gussy, but don't start thinking; it's not in your line."

"Weally, you ass——"
 "Come on!" grunted Tom Merry. "I can see that I've got a full-sized job to round up the slackers to-day. There's Cardew sneaking off—— Come on!"

Tom Merry cut across to intercept Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth Form, who was lounging down to the gates. Levison and Clive were with him, and they seemed to be arguing with him. They ceased as Tom Merry came sprinting up, looking rather uncomfortable.

"Games practice!" said Tom curtly.

"We're ready!" said Levison.

"Quite!" said Clive.

"Not quite!" said Cardew. "You won't miss little me, Thomas, with so many strenuous youths arguin' the flyin' ball——what?"

"I've put you down for the Greyfriars match."

"Is that to-day?" ejaculated Cardew. "My hat! Have I really allowed an important matter like that to slip my poor old memory?"

"It's not to-day, and you know it!" answered Tom gruffly. "But all members of the eleven, and all possible members, have got to turn up to games practice."

"So sorry!" murmured Cardew. "I really couldn't this afternoon. These fellows have been arguin' with me on the subject. You're not goin' to begin, are you, old bean? Dare I venture to whisper that I'm fed up on it?"

"I'm not going to argue, certainly," answered Tom. "As it's not a compulsory day, you can slack around if you like. But if you don't turn up to games practice, you drop out of the eleven."

"Dear me!"

"Don't be a silly ass, Cardew," said Levison. "You're not going to let the study down. Come along!"

Cardew shook his head.

"I'm goin' out," he drawled.
 "I mean what I say," said Tom Merry. "You can't dilly-dally with cricket as you do with everything else. You'll toe the line, Cardew."

"Never could stand toein' the line," said Cardew.

"Then you'll be left out."

"Frightful blow, an' all that!" said Cardew. "I feel it deeply, I assure you! I needn't expatiate on my grief an' sorrow. I'm sure you'd prefer to take that as read. Good-bye!"

Cardew strolled away towards the gates. Tom Merry clenched his hands hard. Ralph Reckness Cardew had a narrow escape just then of having his cool nonchalance considerably jarred. But Tom controlled his temper.

"That's that!" he said quietly. "I'll look over the men to-day for a man to take Cardew's place."

And Tom, his temper somewhat ruffled, walked away towards the cricket ground.

"Merry!"

It was the voice of Kildare of the Sixth.

Tom Merry turned.

"Yes, Kildare?" he answered, as patiently as he could. He liked old Kildare, but he did not want to be bothered just then, even by the captain of St. Jim's.

"Railton's study!" said Kildare.

"Oh!"

Tom Merry breathed hard and deep.

On that sunny summer's afternoon, his task of gathering the junior cricketers to practice seemed rather like that of a hen gathering reluctant chicks. Really he did not want an interview with his Housemaster just then.

But a message from a Housemaster, conveyed by a Sixth-Form prefect, was not a matter that could be disregarded, even by a junior cricket captain with all the worries and responsibilities of that position upon his youthful shoulders.

Tom Merry, controlling his feelings, walked to the House, and went in; and fortunately succeeded in suppressing his annoyance, and composing his frowning brow, by the time he tapped at Mr. Railton's door.

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CHAPTER 2.

Not Nice for Tom Merry I

MR. RAILTON greeted Tom Merry with a kind nod and a smile as he entered the study. The Housemaster's manner was a little preoccupied, as Tom noticed at once. Tom Merry wondered rather apprehensively what was coming. As junior captain of his House, he had a good many duties on his hands, and his time was by no means always his own. But, just at the present, the approaching match with Greyfriars occupied his thoughts, and he really did not want to be bothered with other matters—if he could help it. That, however, was for his Housemaster to decide.

"Come in, Merry," said Mr. Railton. "I wish you to do something for me this afternoon."

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"You have no match on to-day, I understand?"

"Not a match, sir, certainly," agreed Tom.

"Then no doubt you will be able to oblige me," said Mr. Railton.

"Oh, certainly, sir," said Tom, manfully suppressing a groan. He realised that he was for it; and wondered dimly what it was.

"My nephew is coming to St. Jim's," the Housemaster went on, a little abruptly.

"Is he, sir?" said Tom, looking as interested as he could.

"You have heard of him, I think," said Mr. Railton. "My nephew's name is Victor Cleeve. D'Arcy of the Fourth met him near Abbotsford one day last week; and helped him out of a pond into which he had fallen. No doubt you have heard of it."

Tom Merry smiled faintly.

Owing to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy having opened, by mistake, a telegram for Mr. Railton, all the House had heard about Victor Cleeve. That youth, so far unknown at St. Jim's, had indeed been the talk of the House for some days.

"I've heard about it, sir," said Tom, wondering whether the Housemaster knew that all St. Jim's had heard about his nephew, and knew that he had been in trouble of some kind—that circumstance having been stated in the telegram which D'Arcy had so unfortunately opened by mistake.

"My nephew has been at another school," went on Mr. Railton. "For certain reasons it has been decided to send him to St. Jim's, and place him in my House."

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

Why Mr. Railton's nephew was leaving his old school, and coming to St. Jim's, was no business of Tom's, and he was the last fellow in the world to concern himself about the affairs of others. Still, he could not help wondering a little. All St. Jim's knew that Victor Cleeve had been in "trouble" of some sort; though they had no idea what that trouble was. Tom could not help thinking that probably this mysterious "trouble" had something to do with his leaving his old school, and he noted that Mr. Railton did not mention the name of that school.

"He is now staying at Abbotsford with my brother, his other uncle," said Mr. Railton. "He comes to the school to-day, by the half-past three train from Abbotsford. I should like you to meet him at the station, Merry."

Tom Merry's heart sank almost into his shoes.

Cricket, for that afternoon, was knocked on the head, there was no doubt about that.

It was impossible to refuse—even if he had felt disposed to disoblige his Housemaster. But it was distinctly disconcerting. Really, Mr. Railton might have found some other fellow to meet his precious nephew at the station, without picking on the junior captain. Cricket practice, certainly, could go on without Tom Merry's presence—but in the circumstances, it was not likely to be a full house!

"I have my reasons for this, Merry," said Mr. Railton. "Victor, my nephew, will be placed in the Shell here—your Form. He will share your study, No. 10 in the Shell. I hope, most sincerely, that you will be good friends."

Tom Merry looked at his Housemaster.

No doubt Mr. Railton hoped that the captain of the Shell would be good friends with his nephew, a new boy at St. Jim's. But he was hardly displaying his usual tact in the matter.

He was taking the junior captain away from games practice; filling up his half-holiday with a task that was not, to say the least, a specially inspiring one; and he was "bunting" a new kid into No. 10 in the Shell, which was the special cosy den of the Terrible Three, and where they most assuredly did not want any new kids butting in, Housemaster's nephews or not. Tom felt that some credit was due to him for not taking a dislike to the Housemaster's nephew on the spot.

"Very well, sir!" Tom managed to say.

"You will, I think, find my nephew quite an agreeable lad," Mr. Railton added. "He is keen on cricket, and con-

sighed good at games. I believe he was very popular in his former school.

Again Tom noted that Mr. Railton did not mention the name of that school. Neither was he disposed to take the uncle's word for it that the nephew was an agreeable fellow. Uncles sometimes have prejudices in such matters. D'Arcy of the Fourth had described Victor Cleeve as the most unpleasant and disagreeable fellow he had ever met—and D'Arcy had met Racke of the Shell, and Trimble of the Fourth. If Victor Cleeve was more unpleasant than Racke or Trimble, he was, Tom thought, rather a corker. However, it was not for him to tell the Housemaster so, and he was silent—only wishing from the bottom of his heart that Victor Cleeve had stayed at his old school—whatever and wherever that was.

Mr. Railton was glancing at his watch now. "You have ample time to walk to the station, Merry," he remarked. "You may like to take a couple of your friends with you."

"I'd like to, sir," admitted Tom; without adding that,

A dark, handsome youth, who carried a bag, came along the platform. "Cleeve?" asked Tom Merry. "Railton told us you were coming by the half-past three train. We thought we'd better wait!" "Must have wanted something to do, I should think," said Cleeve. "Mean to say you've been footlin' about here for two hours?" (See Chapter 5.)

Tom walked out of the House, and came on Lowther and Manners in the quad. They had not yet changed for games practice—apparently being in no hurry to get down to Little Side.

"Just going in!" said Manners, rather hastily. "Don't rag, old chap!"

"Simply yearning for cricket!" asserted Lowther.

"Like a walk out of gates instead?" asked Tom, dismally.

"Oh, my hat! You slacking now?" ejaculated Manners.

"No, ass! But—"

"Call it off, Tommy," grinned Lowther. "You've just sacked Cardew from the team for strolling out instead of toeing the line. You really can't go and do likewise. I'm surprised at you, Tommy."

"Fathead!" growled Tom. "I can't help myself. There's a beastly new kid coming butting in this afternoon, and I'm wanted to dry-nurse him, bother the fellow."

And Tom Merry explained.

"All serene," said Lowther. "We'll come. After all, I'm not longing for cricket this afternoon."



though he liked the company of his friends, he would have preferred that afternoon to leave them at cricket practice. "Manners and Lowther would be pleased to accompany you, I am sure!" Mr. Railton suggested.

"I'm sure of that, sir," said Tom, rather grimly. He did not anticipate any difficulty whatever in getting Manners and Lowther away from games practice that afternoon. The difficulty was in getting them there.

"It will be an excellent opportunity for them to make the acquaintance of their new studymate," observed Mr. Railton.

"Oh quite, sir!" gasped Tom. Evidently Mr. Railton thought a great deal more of his nephew than the House was likely to think of him.

"I am much obliged to you, Merry," added Mr. Railton, so kindly that Tom felt ashamed of his inward irritation and annoyance, and coloured a little, as he answered sincerely enough:

"Not at all, sir! I'll go with pleasure."

"Thank you, Merry."

Tom Merry left the study, trying as hard as he could to feel that he was glad to oblige his Housemaster. Certainly Mr. Railton was a popular master, and many acts of kindness endeared him to the fellows of his House. There were few School House men who would not have been willing to oblige old Railton, and few New House men, for that matter. Still, it was not to be denied that Tom Merry's task came very inopportunately at the present time.

"I'll bring my camera," said Manners brightly. "We shall have to go straight to the station, if the train's at half-past three; but no need to hurry back. What?"

"Oh, bring your camera, and any other rubbish you like," said Tom. "The day's mucked up, anyhow; your camera won't make it much worse."

"Look here, you ass—"

"Oh, rats! I'll speak to Talbot, and ask him to keep an eye on the cricket. Talbot's not a slacker, at any rate."

Five minutes later the Terrible Three of the Shell walked out of the school gates en route for the station, to meet Mr. Railton's nephew there—Manners and Lowther smiling a little, and Tom Merry frowning, and thinking, not of Victor Railton's nephew, but of games practice on Little Side, and the prospects for the Greyfriars match. With all respect to his Housemaster, Tom regarded those matters as of infinitely greater importance than a Housemaster's nephew, or a whole tribe of nephews.

CHAPTER 3.

He Cometh Not!

"LOTS of time!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Lots!" yawned Manners.

It wanted five minutes to the half-hour when the Terrible Three walked into Rycombe Station. The walk through the leafy lane from the school had

cleared Tom Merry's knitted brow. It was but seldom that a cloud lingered there for long.

The three Shell fellows nodded to the old Rylcombe porter, and strolled on to the platform to wait for the incoming train from Abbotsford.

All three of the juniors had been thinking, though their thoughts had followed different lines.

"Railton will expect us to look after his nephew for a bit this afternoon," Monty Lowther remarked, as he propped himself gracefully against an automatic machine on the platform.

"That's so," said Manners. "And I remember that Gussy told us that the chap was horribly unpleasant, but keen on cameras. That's a good point about any fellow, what?"

Tom Merry smiled.

"Railton mentioned that he was keen on cricket," he remarked. "We're bound to take the kid up for the afternoon—that's what old Railton wants. Look here! We can get back to St. Jim's by four—lots of time for games practice, after all. If the kid's keen on cricket, he will like that, what?"

"My dear chap, you're not going to bung a new kid into games practice his first day at school?" ejaculated Lowther.

"Well, if he's keen on cricket—" argued Tom.

"He may be keen, without being so keen as all that," grinned Lowther. "You're potty on that subject, Tommy. Cut it out!"

"The chap may prefer it."

"Rats, old bean! I was thinking that, as we're practically bound to take him in hand for the afternoon, we might as well run him over to Wayland—"

"What?" exclaimed Tom and Manners together.

"And take him to the pictures," explained Monty. "As I've told you, they've got a ripping new picture at Wayland—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Tom.

"Yes, let's hear the end of that picture," urged Manners. "My idea is this. We're bound to take up the kid a bit, and Gussy told us he was keen on photography—Gussy said he had a camera with him, and was frightfully ratty about Gussy biffing into it. Well, I've got my camera, and the kid will very likely enjoy a walk round with it. See?"

Evidently the thoughts of the three juniors had been running in very different grooves.

"Oh, rot!" said Tom. "We've got to take him straight to the school, at any rate, whether we rope him into the cricket or not. Here comes the train!"

The local from Abbotsford came into the station at the leisurely pace at which local trains are wont to travel.

It stopped, and four passengers alighted.

The Terrible Three scanned the new arrivals for Mr. Railton's nephew. They did not know Victor Cleeve by sight, but they had no doubt about picking him out, if he was there to be picked.

But he did not seem to be there.

Two of the passengers who alighted belonged to the gentler sex, and of the other two, one was a farmer and the other an airman from Wayland Camp.

"Nobody else alighted."

The farmer or the airman, obviously, could not be Victor Cleeve; still less could one of the ladies be he. If Mr. Railton's nephew was on the train, he had not left it.

"Well, where is he?" grunted Manners. "Doesn't the ass know that he's got to his station?"

"Better look for him," said Tom.

"The silly chump!" said Lowther.

Looking into the carriages for a fellow who had overlooked the station at which he had to alight, seemed to the Terrible Three a quite unnecessary trouble. However, they were there to meet Victor Cleeve, and certainly they did not want him to be carried on past Rylcombe, and landed at Greenwood, or Grayhayes, or somewhere else along the line.

So they separated, and went along the train, looking into all the carriages.

Cleeve was not there.

That he was not there was quite clear, beyond the possibility of doubt, because there was no boy on the train at all.

The local steamed on its leisurely way, and disappeared out of Rylcombe Station.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another.

Their looks were exasperated.

Each member of the Co., feeling that he had Mr. Railton's nephew landed on him for the afternoon, had laid plans for bearing that infliction with the least possible discomfort and inconvenience. Lowther had thought of taking him to the pictures; Manners of taking him on a camera crawl; Tom of inveigling him into cricket practice.

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There was no need to argue about the respective merits of those various plans now. Cleeve had not turned up.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry, with a deep breath. "Railton bags fellows on a half-holiday to meet his blessed nephew, and his blessed nephew doesn't turn up to be met. Has the silly owl lost the train?"

"How could he lose the train?" grunted Manners. "He's at Abbotsford with his other uncle, and his uncle would see that he got the train all right. Stands to reason."

"Can't have fallen out of a window en route," said Lowther. "It wouldn't matter much if he did; but the guard would have made a fuss about it."

"Can't understand it," said Tom, "unless the howling chump has got out at the wrong station before he got here."

"Can't he read?" demanded Manners. "Stations have names! You said he'd been to school before."

"May be a silly idiot."

"He's a silly idiot right enough, and so are we, to be waiting here for him on a half-holiday."

"Let's cut!" said Lowther. "If the blighter has lost himself, goodness knows when he will find himself. We can't hang on here."

Tom Merry sighed deeply.

"Old Railton wants us to meet the beast," he said. "He wants us to be friends. This is a good beginning, I must say. I feel more inclined to punch his silly head than to make friends with him."

"Same here," said Manners heartily.

"What-ho!" agreed Lowther. "Still, we can't wait here all the afternoon, even for the pleasure of punching his head."

Tom Merry laughed.

"We're for it," he said. "If the ass has lost the train, or got out at the wrong station, he will come by the next."

"That's an hour!" groaned Lowther.

"I know it's rotten; but it's up to us."

"Blow him!"

The prospect of kicking their heels about the platform of a deserted station for an hour was positively dismaying. Half-holidays were not so numerous that any fellow could afford to waste one like this. Walking up and down the platform, or walking about Rylcombe High Street, was not the way the Terrible Three wanted to fill up their time. Whether the afternoon's occupation was to be the pictures, or photography, or cricket, might be a debatable matter; but a sheer waste of time was not a debatable matter, it was just intolerable.

"Look here! The kid may not be coming, after all!" said Lowther hopefully. "May have changed their plans, or something."

Tom shook his head.

"No such luck," he answered.

"Is Railton's brother on the phone at Abbotsford?" asked Manners. "We might ring him up from the station and ask."

Tom Merry brightened up for a moment. But he shook his head again.

"Nothing in it! Railton's brother doesn't live at Abbotsford. That telegram the other day came from London. He seems to have come down to Abbotsford to stay. I dare say to be near old Railton, as our Housemaster can't get away from the school. Young Hopeful is in some trouble, and his two giddy uncles are pow-wow about it, you know. Railton has been scooting over to Abbotsford on his motor-bike no end of times lately. Maurice Railton is only staying there at some place. If it's on the phone, his name won't be in the phone book."

Manners groaned.

"Then we can't ask him."

"We can't!"

"Have we got to stay here an hour, then, waiting for that young idiot to turn up?" demanded Manners. "Suppose he doesn't come by the next train?"

"Well, he's sure to!" said Tom.

"Nothing's sure when you're dealing with a born fool!" said Manners crossly. "I vote for chucking it. We can tell Railton we came and the kid didn't turn up. That will be all right."

Tom Merry thought of Little Side at St. Jim's, and was sorely tempted. But once more he shook his head.

"Old Railton's a brick to us in lots of ways," he said. "It's up to us, you men. We've got to take the rough with the smooth."

"Blow the silly ass, then!" said Manners.

"Bother him!" said Lowther.

"Bless him!" said Tom.

And the Terrible Three settled down to wait, with feelings growing more and more intense—but certainly not in the direction of friendship towards their Housemaster's nephew.

CHAPTER 4.**A Patience Game!**

AN hour is not really a very long time. A fellow keeping his wicket up for that space of time, with an enthusiastic crowd cheering every hit, may find sixty minutes pass like sixty seconds. On the other hand, a fellow waiting in his headmaster's study for the Beak to come in and deal with him may find sixty minutes as long as sixty hours. It depends on the circumstances.

Had Manners been walking round with his camera, looking for choice beauty spots to place on permanent record, had Monty Lowther been watching the new film at Wayland Picture Palace, had Tom Merry been superintending cricket practice on Little Side, that hour would have flown on the wings of the wind. As it was, it crawled by on leaden feet.

Never in all their youthful experience had an hour seemed so long to the chums of the Shell.

They exhausted every possible occupation long before that endless hour was exhausted.

They inserted pennies in the automatic machines, extracted chocolates, and ate the same. They walked up and down the platform, they mooched into the dusty waiting-room; they stared at the beds of glowing geraniums that sloped up from the platform, they talked to the old porter—who was rather deaf, and not at all brilliant in the conversational line.

They left the station and walked down the High Street. They walked down River Lane, and walked up River Lane. They dropped into Mrs. Murphy's shop and ate jam-tarts, washing them down with ginger-pop. They dropped into the grocer's, and chatted with Mr. Sands for a few minutes.

They fortunately met Grimes, the grocer's boy, and talked to him about the next match with the village; but Grimes had to proceed with his basket, and that resource was cut off. They watched the ducks on the pond on the village green, and threw crumbs and bits of buns to them. And, after all these resources had been strained to the utmost they found that barely half an hour had elapsed.

And the minutes that were running to waste so drearily were precious minutes. On any other day they could have found comfort in the reflection that they were, at all events, missing classes. Now they were missing a half-holiday, which was very different—very different indeed!

"That blessed clock must have stopped!" groaned Monty Lowther, staring up at the clock of the village church.

Tom looked at his watch.

"It's just right," he said.

"Sure your watch hasn't stopped?" moaned Lowther.

Tom smiled faintly.

"It's going," he answered.

"Let's follow its example," suggested Lowther.

"Oh, stick it out!"

"I'll slaughter that cad Cleeve if they plant him in our study," said Manners ferociously.

"I'll smash him!" said Lowther.

The three trailed wearily back to the station at a quarter past four. Only fifteen minutes more, but that quarter of an hour seemed to crawl by like a wounded snake.

The juniors could hardly believe that that endless hour really had elapsed when the station clock told them that it was half-past four.

The next train was due now; and it was only two minutes late. The Terrible Three could have blessed it when it rolled in at last.

"At last!" said Monty Lowther dramatically.

"The rotter!" muttered Manners.

"Let's be civil," said Tom hastily. "I dare say the kid couldn't help it. Anyhow, he's old Railton's nephew, and old Railton is a brick!"

"Well, I've always thought him a brick; but, then, I never knew that he had a nephew!" growled Manners.

Half a dozen passengers alighted from the train. This time there were two boys among the passengers, and the Shell fellows scanned them eagerly. One was Pilcher, the

butcher's boy of Rylcombe, the other was a fellow from the Rylcombe Grammar School.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Monty Lowther, as the passengers drifted past to the exit. "Hasn't he come by this train?"

"He must have!" said Tom, in dismay. "Let's look into the carriages again."

"Oh, rot! He's not there!"

"Let's look!"

They looked. Victor Cleeve was not there. The train rolled on to its further destination, leaving a deserted country station behind it—deserted save for the schoolboys in a frightfully exasperated state of mind.

"He's not come!" said Tom blankly.

"The ass!"

"There's another train at half-past five!" said Tom.

His chums looked at him, almost as they might have looked at Victor Cleeve had he been present.

"You burbling bandersnatch!" said Lowther. "Do you think we're going to put in another hour waiting for that cad?"

"If you think so, Tommy, your thinker wants oiling!" said Manners. "I'm off!"

"Old Railton, you know——"

"Old Railton," said Manners deliberately, "can go and eat coke! He can eat as much as he likes! I'm going!"

And Manners went.

Manners and his camera disappeared from Rylcombe Station. Monty Lowther shifted uneasily from one leg to the other, and from the other to the one.

"It's no good waiting, Tom! He can't be coming!"

"He must be coming!" said Tom. "Railton expects him at the school; he simply must be coming!"

"Then why hasn't he come?"

"Goodness knows!"

"I'm fed up!" said Lowther savagely.

"Same here!"

"Let's cut, then!"

"I'm sticking it out!" said Tom. "Not much good getting back to the cricket now, at any rate. I'm staying on; but you cut if you like, old chap. No good two of us standing it."

"I can get a train from here to Wayland at a quarter to five," said Lowther.

"Take it, old fellow; I'll stay on."

Monty Lowther nodded, and looked very determined. But when the train went to Wayland at a quarter to five Monty Lowther was not a passenger on it. He had not the heart to desert his chum.

"There's your train, old chap," said Tom mildly.

"Blow the train!" was Lowther's answer.

And he stayed.

If the previous hour had seemed long, the second hour of waiting seemed absolutely endless.

In the lowest of spirits the two Shell fellows loafed about the station, with their hands in their pockets. The attractions of Rylcombe village, such as they were, had palled on them. They stayed in the station and counted the seconds.

"Suppose he doesn't come by this train?" suggested Lowther, as the hour drew to a close.

"He's bound to!"

"But if he doesn't?"

"If he doesn't we'll chuck it!" said Tom. "Something will have happened, I suppose. Half-past five is the limit."

"Thank goodness for that!" growled Lowther. "I was beginning to think you meant to make a night of it."

"Only ten minutes more," said Tom comfortingly.

"That ten minutes will never end!" said Lowther. "I shall die of old age here before that ten minutes is up."

They waited wearily. Lowther had exaggerated a little; he was still alive and quite youthful when the train came in. It did come in at last; and among the passengers who alighted was a dark, handsome youth, very well-dressed, who carried a bag, and glanced up and down the platform as if in search of someone, like a fellow expecting to be met.

"That's the cad!" said Lowther.

Evidently it was Victor Cleeve. He was unlike his uncle,



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the Housemaster at St. Jim's, who was fair in complexion and rather rugged. Cleeve was gracefully formed, dark and handsome. But there was a resemblance to Mr. Railton, all the same; anyone could have seen that this fellow was a relative of the St. Jim's Housemaster, unlike as he was in his general aspect.

"Thank goodness he's come at last!" said Tom. "Let's be as civil as we can. It may not be his fault."

Lowther grunted.

"Remember he's old Railton's nephew, and old Railton seems to be fond of him," said Tom.

"No accounting for tastes!" snapped Lowther. "He won't expect us to share his fondness, I hope. He will be disappointed if he does."

"Still, let's be civil."

"Oh, I'll be civil to the beast!" grunted Lowther.

"Come on!"

Cleeve, after that inquiring look up and down the platform, had gone along after the other passengers. He stopped to speak to the porter about his box, and as he passed on after that, the two Shell fellows joined him.

CHAPTER 5.

The New Fellow!

"CLEEVE?" asked Tom Merry. The schoolboy stared at him. "That's my name," he answered. "You seem to know it. I don't know yours."

His manner was anything but gracious.

"My name is Merry," said Tom, as civilly as he could. It was not to be wondered at if his feelings towards Cleeve, just then, were not very amicable. The fellow's manner did not make them more so, either.

"Is it?" said Cleeve indifferently.

"Railton asked me to meet you here," said Tom sharply.

"Oh!" said Cleeve.

"We're in the Shell at St. Jim's—the Form you're going into. We've waited since half-past three!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Cleeve.

"Railton told us you were coming by the half-past three train," said Tom. "We thought we'd better wait."

"Must have wanted someh'n to do, I should think," said Cleeve. "Mean to say you've been footlin' about here for two hours?"

The two juniors looked at him. This, apparently, was Victor Cleeve's method of expressing his gratitude to two fellows who had wasted a half-holiday on his account. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had certainly not been wrong in describing Railton's nephew as an exceedingly unpleasant fellow.

"Railton asked us to meet you here, and we thought we'd better wait," said Tom, with a deep breath. "I thought something must have happened."

"Nothin' ever happens, I believe, on this line," said Cleeve. "Even trains don't happen very often, an' don't seem to move much when they do happen."

"Then why weren't you here at three-thirty?" asked Lowther. "Did you lose your train at Abbotsford, and another after it?"

"Not at all. My Uncle Maurice put me in the train, with no end of kind messages for my Uncle Victor," said Cleeve, with a slight sneer.

"If he put you in the three-thirty, you must have got out at the wrong station as you never got here by that train."

Cleeve looked at Monty Lowther.

"You're rather bright at St. Jim's, I see," he remarked. "You've worked that one out quite correctly."

Lowther breathed hard.

"Couldn't you see the name of the station?" he asked. "Couldn't you even manage to catch the next train?"

"I could have if I'd liked, certainly," assented Cleeve. "Only I didn't like! I wasn't in a hurry to get to the school, and I got out at Wayland to see some cricket there."

"My only hat!"

"Then it's not accidental, your being late like this?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Not at all!"

"You didn't know you were being met here, I suppose?" said Tom, thinking it out. "In that case, it's rather unfortunate, but it can't be helped. Unluckily, your uncle sent us to meet you."

"This fellow did expect to be met at the station," said Monty Lowther, very quietly. "I know that from the way he looked up and down the platform when he got out of the train."

"I've said that I see you're rather bright at St. Jim's," remarked Cleeve. "You've got that one right, too. You must be a credit to your Form, the way you work these things out in your head."

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Tom Merry compressed his lips.

"You knew you were to be met at this station, and you got out at Wayland and lost two trains," he said.

"I thought most likely I should be met," answered Cleeve coolly. "I did not want to be met, and it was not at all necessary. My uncles think I need lookin' after. I don't agree with them. I'm rather accustomed to havin' my own way."

The Shell fellows stood silent, looking at him.

"I thought most likely my uncle would come to the station," added Cleeve. "I never knew you fellows would be waitin' here, of course, as I've never even heard of you before."

"You'd have kept Railton waiting here?"

"Probably he would have had too much sense to wait, as I didn't turn up," answered Cleeve. "He's rather a bore, but he's no fool."

"Does that mean that we are fools for having waited?"

Cleeve shrugged his shoulders.

"Take it as you like," he answered. "I never asked you to wait, and never wanted you to wait, and never wanted to see you at all, if it comes to that. I shouldn't have waited in a similar case."

"Well, I think—" began Lowther hotly.

Victor Cleeve interrupted him without ceremony.

"Awfully good of you, and all that, to tell me what you think; but I'd rather get along to the school and get some tea," he said.

And without even a nod to the Shell fellows, Victor Cleeve walked on to the station exit, bag in hand.

The Shell fellows gazed after him, as if fascinated. They had wondered whether Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had exaggerated a little in his description of the Housemaster's nephew. Their opinion now was that Gussy had understated the case—considerably understated it.

"So that's old Railton's nephew!" said Monty Lowther, with a deep breath. "He can thank his stars that he is Railton's nephew—if he wasn't, I'd go after him now and thump that sneer off his face."

"And he's going to be planted in our study!" said Tom dismally.

"We'll kick him out!"

"Come on, old fellow, we've got to land the brute at St. Jim's," said Tom Merry. "Then we can wash our hands of him."

The chums of the Shell followed Cleeve. He was walking quickly, and they did not overtake him till he was outside the station. There they found him staring about discontentedly. There was one vehicle available for passengers at the village station; an ancient hack with an ancient horse, and an ancient driver. The driver, chewing a straw, gazed sleepily at the juniors; ready to bestir himself if wanted, and not disposed to stir till he was quite sure he was wanted. Unnecessary exertion on a warm afternoon did not appeal to old George.

Cleeve took no notice whatever of Tom and Lowther. His uncle had made it clear that he desired Tom and his chums to become friends with Cleeve. That desire did not seem to be shared by the nephew.

Tom Merry, however, was in official charge of the new fellow until he was landed safely at the school; so, taking no notice of Cleeve's manner, he joined him.

"We're walking it, Cleeve," he said.

"Can't get a taxi here?"

Tom smiled.

"No; only by telephoning to Wayland, and that would take longer than walking to the school. It's rather a nice walk."

"I've done all the walking I want to do this afternoon," said Cleeve impatiently. "But if there's no help for it, it can't be helped. You might tell me the way."

"We're going back to the school now; we'll show you the way," said Tom.

"You needn't trouble."

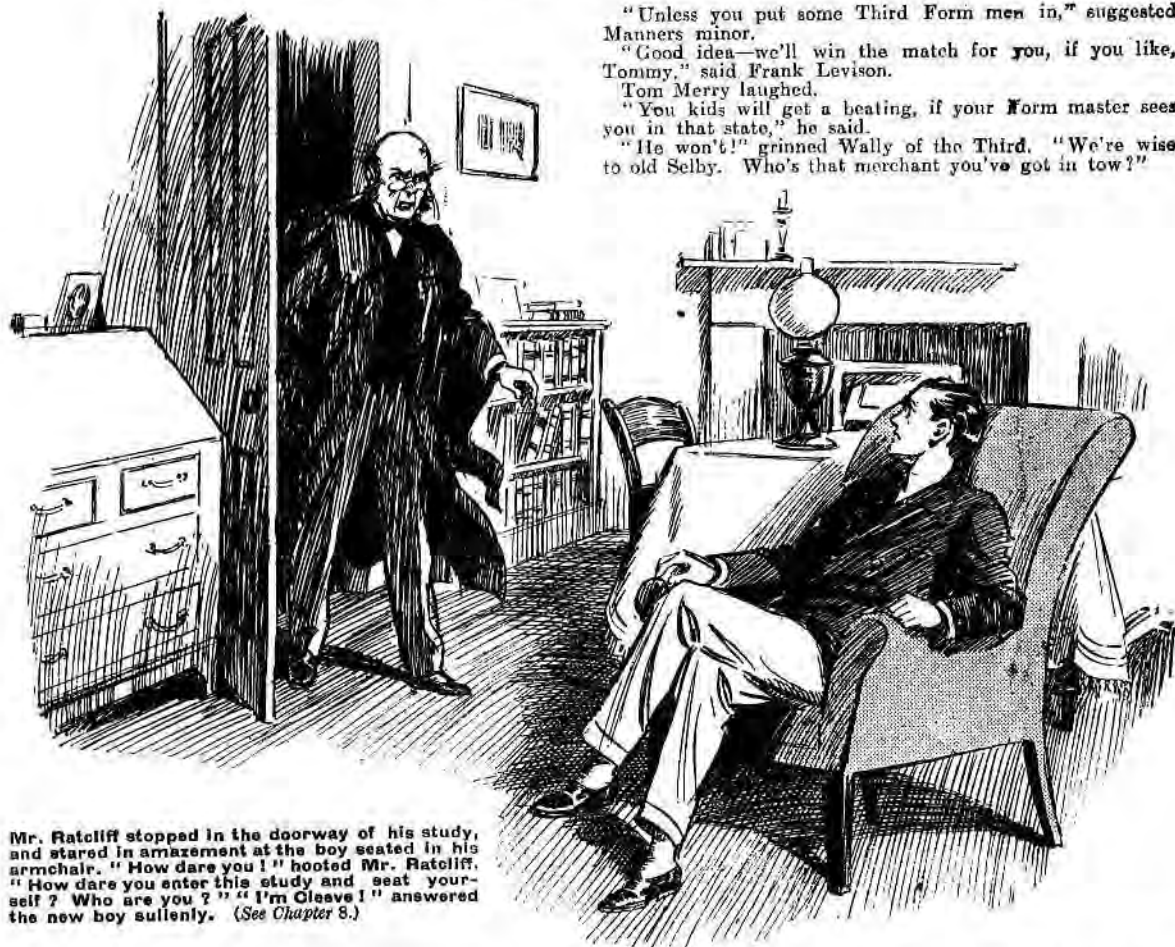
"Railton asked us to meet you, and see you to the school," said Tom quietly. "We're doing that—because Railton asked us."

"Not on your account personally, so you needn't trouble to put out the grateful thanks you've got all ready," said Monty Lowther sarcastically.

Cleeve looked at him, and smiled faintly.

"If you want to walk with me, I've no objection," he said. "I don't care a straw either way. Let's start, anyhow."

He started, and the Shell fellows went with him. Cleeve did not speak a word while they walked down the High Street and out into Rylcombe Lane. Tom and Monty certainly did not feel inclined for conversation with him, and they, too, walked in silence. Cleeve looked straight ahead of him, without a single glance at the village street, or shops, or church, evidently utterly uninterested in his surroundings. He seemed to have forgotten that he was not alone; and Tom, glancing at his face once or twice, noted



Mr. Ratcliff stopped in the doorway of his study, and stared in amazement at the boy seated in his armchair. "How dare you!" hooted Mr. Ratcliff. "How dare you enter this study and seat yourself? Who are you?" "I'm Cleeve!" answered the new boy sullenly. (See Chapter 8.)

the expression of sneering discontent that seemed habitual to it.

According to the telegram that had been the talk of the Lower School a week ago, Railton's nephew had been in some kind of trouble—and Tom, scanning his face, did not wonder at it. It seemed to him that Railton's nephew was the kind of fellow to pick up any trouble that might be lying about within his reach. On the other hand, Tom reflected, it might be that unknown and rather mysterious "trouble" that was the cause of his moody discontent and ill-nature. In either case, Tom's chief feeling was a desire to have done with the fellow.

CHAPTER 6.

Monty Lowther Touches a Weak Spot!

"WHAT a crew!"

Victor Cleeve made that remark, breaking his silence for the first time, when the three were halfway to St. Jim's.

The remark was called forth by the sight of three fags who emerged from a field path into the lane.

They were Wally of the Third, Reggie Manners, and Levison minor. The three heroes of the Third Form had been spending a happy afternoon "mucking about," as Wally expressed it, with old Pepper's boat on old Pepper's pond. Mucking about with a boat on a pond was a cheery occupation, but not a specially clean one. Wally of the Third looked decidedly muddy—Reggie looked muddy and wet—even Frank Levison, usually very clean and neat, looked as if a wash would do him a lot of good. Muddy or not, the three minors were evidently enjoying life. They came out into the lane arm in arm, singing in unison.

"Third Form kids," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "Mean to say that that muddy crew belong to St. Jim's?" asked Cleeve.

"Certainly."

"What a crew!" repeated Cleeve. "What a school!" he added, as an afterthought.

"Hallo, you old Shell-fish!" called out Wally of the Third, waving a cap that scattered spots of mud as he waved it. "Slacking about, what? You'll lose the Greyfriars match if you don't stick to cricket, Tom Merry."

"Unless you put some Third Form men in," suggested Manners minor.

"Good idea—we'll win the match for you, if you like, Tommy," said Frank Levison.

Tom Merry laughed.

"You kids will get a beating, if your Form master sees you in that state," he said.

"He won't!" grinned Wally of the Third. "We're wise to old Selby. Who's that merchant you've got in tow?"

The sneering contempt in Cleeve's face had not escaped the sharp eyes of D'Arcy minor. He was resentful at once.

"New chap in the Shell," answered Tom.

"You're welcome to him in the Shell," said Wally disdainfully. "We wouldn't have him in the Third."

"It's Railton's nephew!"

"My only Aunt Jane! Poor old Railton!"

Cleeve stalked on with a flushed face and angry eyes. Tom Merry and Lowther exchanged a smile, and walked after him. Mr. Railton had stated that Cleeve had been popular at his former school. He did not look like becoming popular at his new school.

"Are those dirty little sweeps specimens of St. Jim's men?" asked Cleeve, with a sneer, as the Shell fellows rejoined him.

"Oh, they'll wash," said Tom cheerily. "They'll be newly swept and garnished for call-over."

"They want a jolly good lickin'. They'd get it at—"

Cleeve broke off abruptly.

The Shell fellows knew that he had been about to mention his old school. But, like his uncle, he had evidently decided not to mention the old school at the new school.

"You've been to school before?" said Lowther.

"Of course. Do I look as if I was fresh from a prep?" snapped Cleeve.

"Anywhere near?"

"No."

"What school?" asked Lowther.

It was quite a natural question; no fellow was supposed to make a secret of such a thing. In fact, a fellow who made a secret of where he had come from could scarcely avoid raising the suspicion that his antecedents would not bear examination. Lowther saw no reason for not asking that very natural question, though he sensed, rather than knew, that Cleeve did not want to answer it, and he would not have asked it had not the new fellow irritated him deeply.

Cleeve did not answer, and did not seem to hear. He walked on a little more quickly.

"We know a lot of fellows at Greyfriars," went on Lowther. "Was your last school Greyfriars?"

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"No."

"Highcliffe, perhaps?"

"No."

"Rookwood?" asked Lowther. "We play matches with Rookwood."

"No."

All Cleeve's answers were in the negative; but he did not volunteer any information. Tom Merry gave him a glance; but Lowther did not choose to heed it. There was no reason, so far as Monty could see, why a fellow who came to St. Jim's from another school, should not mention from what school he came. If the fellow had something to hide, he should be a little more civil, and not provoke fellows who had been quite willing to be friendly to him.

"You seem to think that your old school was a cut above St. Jim's," said Lowther. "From what you said, at least."

"I don't think so—I know it," answered Cleeve. "I'm not goin' to St. Jim's of my own accord; my uncles have settled that for me."

"Well, what's the name of that tip-top school that's so much better than ours?" asked Lowther. "Let's know it, so that we can bow down and worship."

Cleeve did not answer.

"Chuck it, Monty!" whispered Tom.

"I'm not going to chuck it," answered Monty, deliberately and aloud. "This chap turns up his nose at our school, and tells us that his own show was better. He's bound to tell us what a lofty establishment it was, where the fellows are so superior, and have such beautiful manners."

"I'm bound to tell you nothin'," answered Cleeve. "It's like your cheek to ask questions about my personal affairs."

"This isn't your personal affair," retorted Lowther coolly. "A fellow who comes to St. Jim's has to give an account of himself—whatever may be the case at superior schools, like the one you seem to have benefited by leaving it. A fellow who keeps his old school a secret won't get men to believe that it was a superior article, I can tell you. They'll think the reverse of that."

"They can think what they like. I'm not likely to care what St. Jim's men think about anythin'."

"Very superior!" assented Monty Lowther. "Very superior indeed! Is that Harrow lift or Eton swank?"

"I've not been to Harrow or Eton, if that's what you mean."

"Winchester?" asked Monty. "I wouldn't ask the question, of course, if there were a Winchester man present to feel insulted at the suggestion."

Cleeve's angry flush deepened, but he did not speak. He accelerated his pace a little; and Monty Lowther accelerated, too. Tom Merry, rather dismayed at the prospect of a row, kept pace with them. The fellow had tried his own temper, but Tom wanted to keep the peace with his Housemaster's nephew. Monty Lowther, apparently, had come to the end of his patience—which was perhaps a little less extensive than Tom's. He was deliberately and intentionally giving Cleeve what he had asked for by his insolence. A fellow who put on disdainful airs ought at least to have a record he was not ashamed to show. That was Monty Lowther's opinion, and he proceeded to make it clear.

"Rugby?" asked Monty, with smiling ruthlessness. "Not Rugby! In fact, I fear Tom Brown's ghost would rise in wrath at the idea!"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Cleeve, driven to speech at last.

"Repton?" persisted Monty.

Cleeve halted in the road, and turned upon his tormentor.

"I don't choose to answer your questions," he said, between his teeth. "Now let me alone, you meddlin' cad!"

Lowther's eyes glinted.

"You don't choose to answer my questions, because you dare not!" he said distinctly. "If you ever went to a decent school, you were turned out of it. That's the only reason you can have for keeping it a secret."

Lowther had intended his words to hit hard; and he was more than ready to follow them up with his fists. But certainly he had not expected to hit so hard as proved to be the case.

Cleeve's face went as white as chalk.

He stared almost wildly at Monty Lowther, and stood so unsteadily that Tom Merry made a movement to catch him.

Lowther, as he saw that look on Cleeve's face, repented at once. He had been intensely angered and annoyed, and he wanted to punish the fellow who had wantonly roused his anger. But assuredly he had not wanted to punish him to this extent. Cleeve's white face, from which every vestige of colour seemed to have been driven, accused him like a ghost.

"Sorry!" said Lowther impulsively. "I never thought—I never meant—"

Cleeve did not answer.

He pulled himself together, and without speaking, hurried

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on to the school gates, which were now in sight. Tom Merry and Lowther looked after him, and then looked at one another.

"My only hat!" said Lowther, in a low voice.

Tom Merry whistled.

"Sacked!" said Monty. "That's the trouble they spoke about in that jolly old telegram—that's why he won't mention what school he comes from. Tom, that fellow has been expelled from his last school."

"Looks like it!" said Tom.

"I'm sorry I spoke—now! All the same, it's pretty thick for a fellow who's been expelled to be put in at St. Jim's. We don't want shady characters from other schools landed on us."

"We can't be sure, old chap. And Railton's nephew can't be a shady character—though he may be rather a swanking ass."

"Fellow isn't expelled for being a swanking ass, or lots of schools would be half-empty all the time."

"Fathead!" said Tom smiling.

"If he's been sacked, he's done something," said Lowther. "Railton must have got round the Head to give him another chance at St. Jim's. And I jolly well don't like it."

Tom Merry did not answer. He did not like it, either, if it came to that. They walked on to the school in silence. Cleeve had already gone in, and was out of sight.

"Not a word about it, Monty," said Tom, as they went in at the gates. "If it's true—"

"No if about it! It's true! That fellow was bunked from his last school!"

"Well, not a word about it anyhow. We don't want to queer the pitch here for Railton's nephew."

"Oh, all right! I'm not the chap to talk about a fellow, I suppose," grunted Lowther. "Like his confounded cheek to butt in at St. Jim's, all the same."

And the subject was dropped—and Cleeve was dropped at the same time. Now he was at the school, Tom Merry was done with him—and he was devoutly thankful to be done with him.

CHAPTER 7.

An Old Acquaintance!

"BAI JOVE! You!"

"You!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth, and Victor Cleeve, the new fellow at St. Jim's, ejaculated simultaneously.

Cleeve had entered the ancient precincts of St. Jim's, and was looking about him, half-inquiringly, half disdainfully.

That he did not think much of his new school, or rather was resolved not to think much of it, was clear. Several fellows in the quad glanced at him, and wondered who he was, and opined that if he looked so cheeky, he was likely to get thumped before he had been long within the walls of St. Jim's.

Cleeve had recovered from the shock Monty Lowther's words had given him. The effect of that shock had been to add to his querulous discontent and moody irritation. He did not like St. Jim's; he did not want to come there, and he loathed all the St. Jim's men he had seen so far. These thoughts and feelings he did not take the slightest trouble to conceal. His locks, therefore, were not likely to make him friends.

He came on D'Arcy of the Fourth suddenly, and the recognition was mutual. It gave pleasure to neither.

But Arthur Augustus stopped good-naturedly; remembering that this dissatisfied-looking fellow was his Housemaster's nephew; and moreover, being impelled by the polished politeness that was a part of Gussy's noble character.

"Visitin' your uncle, Cleeve?" he asked.

"I've come to this school," answered Cleeve sourly.

"Bai Jove!"

Cleeve grinned sarcastically.

"You seem overjoyed!" he remarked.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus recovered himself. "I am vewy glad to see you heah, Cleeve. All the fellows will give old Wailton's nephew a wousin' welcome."

"Will they?" sneered Cleeve. "Well, if I'm welcomed I want it to be on my own merits, not on my uncle's."

Arthur Augustus jammed his celebrated eyeglass a little more securely in his noble eye, and regarded Cleeve curiously.

"The fellows can hardly know anythin' about your mewits, deah boy, as they don't know you at all," he remarked. "I trust you have wecovahed ffrom that duckyin' last week."

"I'm not the fellow to lie up in hospital over a ducking in a pond."

"Pwobably not!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "It was

wathah lucky for me that you told Waitton about my pullin' you out. It got me off a Head's floggin'."

"I told him because it happened—but I don't see any reason for you to make a song about it here."

Arthur Augustus crimsoned.

"I twust you do not think me capable of makin' a song about such a twivial mattah!" he exclaimed.

"Well, it wasn't trivial to me," said Cleeve, with a touch of good-humour. "I should be at the bottom of that pool in Abbotsford woods now, if you hadn't hooked me out. All the same, it was your fault, so I consider we're quits."

"Wight as wain," said Arthur Augustus. "And did you get your camewah mended—the one I twod on?"

"Yes; it cost two pounds!"

"I am payin' the bill, deah boy, as I told you. I am in funds now," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"I don't want you to pay it!"

"I am a fellow of my word, deah boy; and I shall insist."

"Oh, all right—I don't care a rap either way," said Cleeve peevishly. "But if you want to square, here I am. Shell out!"

"Pway come to my studay. I have the tin in my desk."

Cleeve laughed shortly.

"I've no time to come to your study. This is the second time you've offered to pay for that camera, and backed out. Let it drop. I'm not dunnin' you for the money; why humbug about it?"

"If you mean that you do not believe I am speakin' seriously, Cleeve—" began Arthur Augustus, breathless with anger. "If you mean that you doubt my word—"

"I mean exactly what I say; you've offered twice to pay for the damage you did, and you haven't paid. Now chuck it!"

Cleeve walked on, leaving the swell of St. Jim's rooted to the ground, staring after him blankly.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus at last. "The uttah cad! The wotten weptle! I'll go aftah him and give him a feahful thwashin'!"

Gussy made a stride after Cleeve. Then he stopped. Thrashing his Housemaster's nephew the day that hopeful youth arrived at St. Jim's, was really not the best of form, and Gussy realised it. He unclenched his hands, and unknit his noble brow.

"Hallo! What's the one and only scowling about?" asked Tom Merry's cheery voice.

Lowther and Tom Merry came up, and D'Arcy turned to them, breathing hard.

"I've just been speakin' to a wank outsiders, you men," he said. "Did you know that that unpleasant beasr, Waitton's nephew, was comin' to St. Jim's?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, just a few, as I've been to meet him at the station," he answered.

"Seen the cad already?" asked Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah! If he comes into the Fourth, there will be some swappin' in our passage soon," said Arthur Augustus darkly. "I weally cannot stand the fellow. A wank outsiders!"

"He's going into the Shell," said Tom.

"Thank goodness for that! I weally do not think we could stand him in the Fourth."

"You can thank goodness if you like," said Lowther. "I can see more badness than goodness in the arrangement. Any other Form is welcome to him, and I think they ought to put him in the New House."

"Yaas, wathah! He weally is not up to School House style," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally wish he was Watcliff's nephew instead of Waitton's. I suppose his uncle is bound to have him in his own House?"

"Of course! Just our luck," said Tom. "He's going to be in our study, too, Railton told me."

"Bai Jove! You have my vewy deepest sympathy, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, with genuine commiseration. "I nevah saw a fellow whose head I would have liked more to punch. You fellows teain' with him, or will you come along to No. 6 in the Fourth?"

"Dear man, we'd come and hear you sing tenor solos rather than tea with Cleeve," said Lowther.

"Weally, you ass—"

"It's a go," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "We were going to look after Cleeve a little, his first day here, but he's made it clear that he doesn't want us to. And I must say I'm glad to be shut of him."

"Come along to the tuckshop, deah boys, and help me do the shoppin'," said Arthur Augustus. "My patah has weighed in with a fivah at last, and the feahful pewoid of stoniness is over."

"Hear, hear!" said Lowther. "Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by a fiver sent, as Shakespeare says."

"Gweat Scott! I weally don't think Shakespeare puts it quite like that, Lowthah!"

"Probably not," agreed Lowther. "Shakespeare was a great man, but he had his little faults. Come on, Gussy! I'm ready for tea."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

The juniors walked across cheerily to the school shop, where Blake and Herries and Dig joined them. It was past tea-time now, and all the juniors were ready for it, or more than ready. Manners had probably forgotten tea. When Manners was on the camera crawl he forgot time and space and most other things. Had Mr. Railton's nephew been any other sort of a fellow, Tom Merry & Co. would have made much of his arrival in the school; they would have killed the fatted calf in welcome to a relative of the popular and admired Housemaster. As matters stood, however, the less they had to do with Victor Cleeve the better they liked it.

When a cheery party proceeded to Study No. 6, in the Fourth, for tea, not a single member of that party thought of asking Cleeve there, or of looking for him, or of remembering his existence at all. If Tom and Monty remembered him, it was only with a feeling of annoyance that he was going to share No. 10, in the Shell, with them.

Tea in Study No. 6 was a very cheery meal—which certainly it would not have been had Cleeve been present.

Where he was, and how he was getting on, nobody knew. And nobody cared.

CHAPTER 8.

Ratoliff is Ratty!

"JOLLY-LOOKING merchant!" remarked Figgins of the Fourth.

"Nico!" agreed Kerr.

"Plesant!" said Fatty Wynn.

Figgins & Co., of the New House, made those remarks in a sarcastic vein.

The heroes of the New House did not really think that

(Continued on next page.)

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Victor Cleeve was jolly-looking, nice, or pleasant. Certainly he looked none of those things.

Cleeve had left his bag at Taggels' lodge, and he was heading for his uncle's House. There were two Houses at St. Jim's, as Cleeve probably knew; but he did not know which was which, and, moreover, the two Houses were connected by a range of other buildings. An arrogant disinclination to ask for information left Cleeve rather at a loss. In striding away from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, he had turned towards the New House, and now he had arrived near that building, and Figgins & Co. eyed him as he came up.

That he was a new fellow, and did not know his way about, these old hands could see at a glance.

That he was not in the usual run of new fellows they could also see. He had a very assured manner, and his looks were not sheepish or awed in the least. The unconcealed moodiness and discontent in his dark, handsome face made Figgins & Co. smile. Fellows were not supposed to display their feelings all over the shop, as Figgins would have expressed it. That was not St. Jim's style. If a fellow did not like things, he was expected at least to grin and bear them, without making a long face.

Cleeve glanced at the chums of the New House, and his dark look grew darker as he noted their smiles.

But he was tired, and anxious to find harbour, and he decided to ask them his way.

"I suppose you fellows know which is the School House here?" he asked, stopping, and speaking ungraciously.

"Your supposition is well founded," said Kerr, with deep gravity. "Your supposing gear is in quite good order."

Cleeve stared at him, while Figgins and David Llewellyn Wynn grinned.

"Well, where is the place?" he snapped.

"New kid here?" asked Figgins.

"I've come to-day, if that's what you mean. I'm not a new kid. I've been to school before," grunted Cleeve.

"I'm in the School House—my uncle's House."

"Railton your uncle?"

"Yes."

"Oh! You're the jolly old nephew we've heard about—the giddy merchant that D'Arcy hooked out of the duck-pond, what?"

Figgins & Co. regarded Cleeve with new interest. Mr. Railton was not their Housemaster, though they had often wished that he was—strictly among themselves, of course. To the School House men they kept up a solemn pretence that they would not have exchanged Mr. Ratcliff for a dozen Railtons. In point of actual fact, they would have been glad to give Mr. Ratcliff away with a pound of tea any day. But though Mr. Railton was not their Housemaster, they liked him almost as much as his own House did, and they would have been glad to show friendly cordiality to his nephew. But Cleeve's look and manner froze any idea of that kind.

There was an angry sneer on Cleeve's face now.

"I fancied that D'Arcy had made a song and a dance about that," he said. "All over the school, I've no doubt."

"D'Arcy did nothing of the kind," said Figgins curtly. "Your uncle said it out before all the Fourth. That's how we know."

"Well, I want my uncle's House. I didn't stop for the pleasure of your conversation," said Cleeve.

Figgins looked at him.

"You mentioned that you'd been to school before?" he said.

"What about it?"

"Did they teach you that sort of manners? If they did, you've got a lot to unlearn, if you don't want to have a high old time at St. Jim's!"

Cleeve bit his lip.

"Oh, let him rip, Figgy!" said Kerr. "Go straight on, Cleeve, and tap at the first big door in the passage on the right. That's the Housemaster's study."

Figgins and Fatty Wynn opened their mouths simultaneously, and closed them again at once. If this self-sufficient fellow chose to walk into the wrong House and wake up the wrong Housemaster, he could do so. Cleeve, without a word of thanks, tramped on, and went into the New House.

"I suppose that merchant thinks he's gone into the School House!" Kerr remarked, in a reflective sort of way. "Think he supposed so from what I said, Figgy?"

George Figgins chuckled.

"I rather fancy so," he answered.

"But I never told him it was the School House! I simply told him to walk on and tap at the door in the passage on the right, and that was the Housemaster's study. So it is."

"Not his Housemaster!" chuckled Fatty Wynn.

"Yes; he might have done better to ask a civil question or two," agreed Kerr. "Civility costs nothing, and often

pays. Did you fellows ever see such an ill-tempered, ill-mannered waster in your lives?"

"Never!" said Figgins.

"Hardly ever!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

And Figgins & Co. sauntered away, taking no further interest in the proceedings of Victor Cleeve.

Cleeve, in the meantime, found his way to the passage referred to by Kerr, and tapped at the Housemaster's door. There was no answer from within, and Cleeve opened the door and entered.

The study was vacant.

Cleeve uttered an impatient exclamation. Mr. Railton had told him to come to his study immediately he arrived at St. Jim's; and here was Cleeve, and his uncle was not there. He was not yet aware that he was in the wrong House; but he might have reflected that he had arrived two hours or more later than he had been expected, and that a busy Housemaster could scarcely have waited in a study for him all that time. But he stared angrily round the study, and sat down at last in a deep armchair—the comfortable armchair in which Horace Ratcliff's bony person was wont to repose.

He was tired and irritable and moody. A black, thoughtful look came over his face as he sat in Mr. Ratcliff's chair and stared out gloomily over the green quad and crowds of cheerful-looking fellows. Perhaps he was thinking of his old school and the circumstances in which he had left it. Darker and darker grew his face.

It was a far from prepossessing countenance that met the gaze of a bony, angular gentleman who opened the study door suddenly.

Mr. Ratcliff whisked into the study with rustling gown. Mr. Ratcliff's movements were always hurried and jerky; he continually whisked.

But he stopped whisking quite suddenly as he saw the scowling fellow seated in his armchair.

Mr. Ratcliff gazed at Cleeve. Cleeve rose to his feet, realising that this bony gentleman was a master of some sort.

"How dare you!" hooted Mr. Ratcliff. "How dare you enter this study and seat yourself? Who are you?"

"I'm Cleeve," answered the new junior sullenly.

"Cleeve! I do not know the name! You do not belong to this House!"

"I'm new here."

"Absurd! Scandalous! It is impossible that a new boy can have been placed in this House without my being consulted in the matter! How dare you make such a statement, Cleeve, if your name is Cleeve?"

Mr. Ratcliff blinked wrathfully over his spectacles at Cleeve, and then blinked round at his table, apparently in search of a cane.

"I'm waiting here for my uncle," said Cleeve resentfully.

"Your uncle! What do you mean? Do you mean that your uncle has brought you to school? I have not seen him."

"My uncle is here."

"Here—at the school? A master, do you mean?" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "Explain yourself at once!"

"My uncle is Housemaster of this House," explained Cleeve. "I was told that this was his study, and I waited here for him."

"What? What? Who are you? How dare you pretend to be my nephew?" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff. "Are you in your right senses? I am Housemaster of this House, and you certainly are no connection of mine!"

Cleeve started. It dawned upon his mind that his leg had been pulled.

"Isn't this the School House?" he asked.

"You utterly stupid boy! What is your uncle's name?"

"Railton."

"Oh! You are Mr. Railton's nephew!" The New Housemaster peered more closely at Cleeve. "I have heard of you—I have heard of you! Are you really so stupid as to have entered this House by mistake for Mr. Railton's House? Upon my word!"

"A fellow told me—" began Cleeve, his face red with anger and mortification.

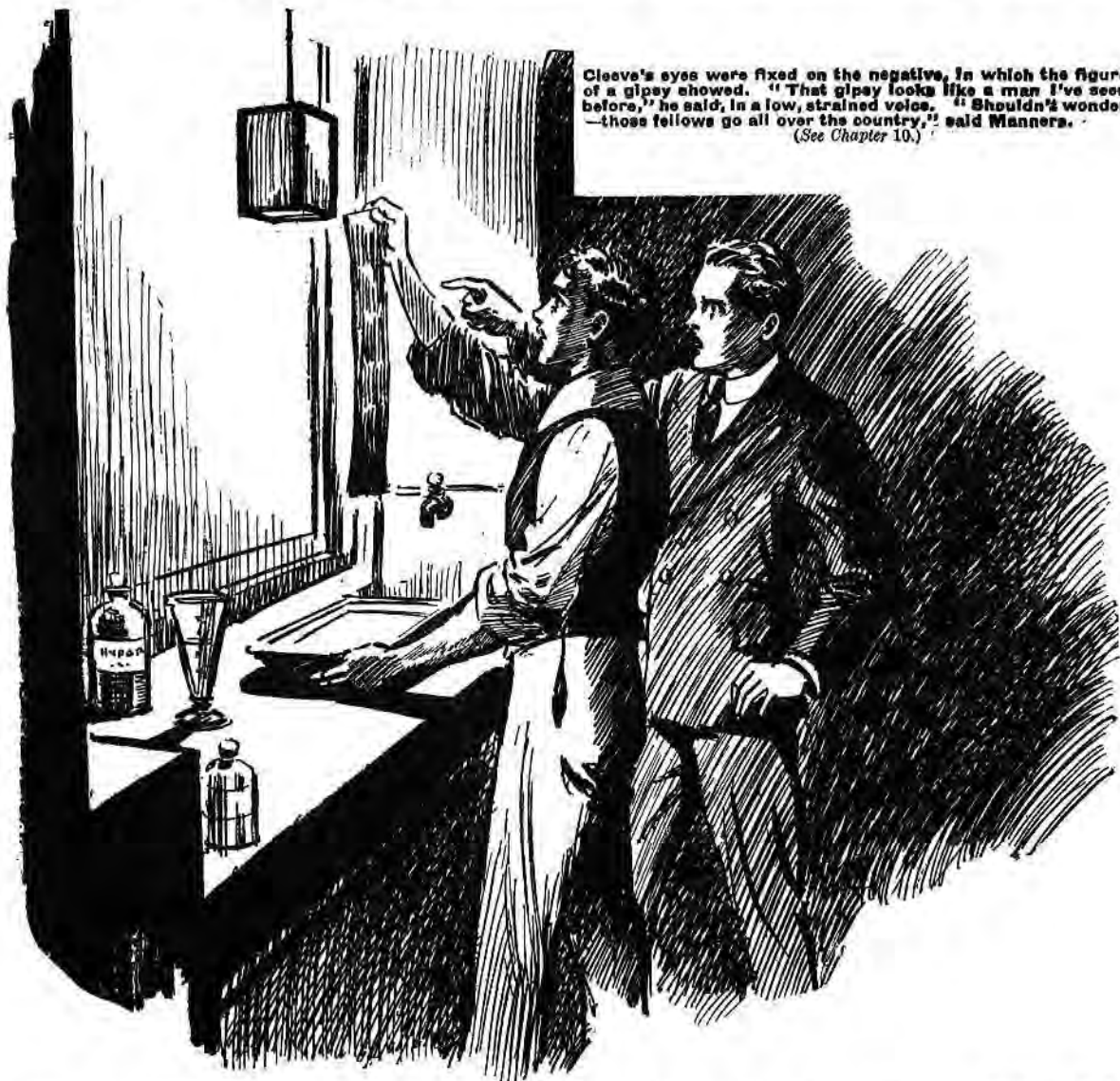
"Absurd! Have you no common sense? Are you an infant? You seem to me utterly obtuse and dense. If you are my colleague's nephew, I shall not care you for your insolence in seating yourself in my chair in my study. If you belonged to my House, I should punish you severely. Leave my study at once!"

Victor Cleeve, with a face of fury, stepped out of the study as Mr. Ratcliff opened the door. Monteith of the Sixth, a New House prefect, was in the corridor, and Mr. Ratcliff called to him.

"Monteith!"

"Yes, sir?" Monteith came up, glancing rather curiously from the new junior to the Housemaster's angry face.

"This boy states that he is Mr. Railton's nephew, and seems not to have sense enough to find his way to his own



Cleeve's eyes were fixed on the negative, in which the figure of a gipsy showed. "That gipsy looks like a man I've seen before," he said, in a low, strained voice. "Shouldn't wonder—those fellows go all over the country," said Manners. (See Chapter 10.)

House. Will you send a junior across with him, Monteith?"

"Certainly, sir!"

Mr. Rateliff whisked into his study again.

"Railton's nephew?" asked Monteith, looking at Victor Cleeve with interest.

"Yes," grunted Cleeve. "You needn't trouble to send a fellow with me. I can find my way all right."

"You don't seem to have had much luck in finding your way so far," answered the captain of the New House.

"Here, Redfern!"

Redfern of the Fourth came up.

"Take this new kid over to the School House and drop him in Railton's study," said Monteith. "He's wandered in here like a stray dog."

Redfern grinned.

"All right, Monteith! Come on, kid!"

Redfern led the new fellow out of the House. Redfern was a good-natured fellow, and ready to oblige a new "kid" who did not know his way about. But Victor Cleeve was not ready to be obliged.

"I can find my way!" he snapped. "You needn't come!"

"Perfect's orders," answered Redfern cheerily. "I've got to go, whether you can find your way or not. This way."

Cleeve tramped on with him sullenly. Redfern led him across the quad and in at the big doorway of the School House. In that House he tapped at the door of Mr. Railton's study.

The School House master, fortunately, was there. His deep, pleasant voice was heard in response to Redfern's tap.

"Come in!"

Redfern opened the door and pushed Cleeve in.

"I was told to bring this chap here, sir," he said. "He got into our House by mistake."

And having thus performed his duty, Redfern of the Fourth departed, dismissing the matter from his mind. Uncle and nephew were left together.

CHAPTER 9.

Uncle and Nephew I.

MR. RAILTON turned to his nephew. He had been in the act of locking his desk when Redfern knocked at the door, preparatory to leaving his study. He slipped the key into his pocket and fixed his eyes on the clouded face of Victor Cleeve. That the Housemaster was deeply attached to his nephew Cleeve could hardly have doubted; but there was a stern expression on Victor Railton's face now.

"You are late, Victor," he said.

"Yes," answered Cleeve indifferently.

"Did not Merry and his friends meet you at the station?"

"I saw two fellows there."

Mr. Railton glanced at his watch.

"It is now half-past six," he said. "I have been somewhat concerned about you, Victor. I expected you early in the afternoon."

Cleeve did not reply to that.

"I am dining with the Head this evening," went on Mr. Railton. "I have to go and dress for dinner immediately. I can therefore spare you but a few moments, owing to your late arrival. I cannot understand why you did not reach the school earlier. I did not tell Merry so in so many words, but he must have been aware that I desired you to come straight to St. Jim's." He frowned. "I shall speak to Merry about this."

"It wasn't his fault," said Cleeve. "I came by the half-past five train to Rylcombe."

"I do not understand you, Victor. Your Uncle Maurice telephoned me that you were taking the three o'clock train at Abbotsford—three-thirty at Rylcombe."

"I got out at Wayland."

"For what reason?"

"There was a match on at the Ramblers' ground. I wanted to see it."

"Victor!"

The nephew's eyes dropped before the uncle's severe glance.

"You deliberately delayed two hours on your way to the school for no reason whatever of a serious nature, Victor?"

"I wasn't in a hurry to get here," muttered Cleeve. "I never wanted to come, and I don't see why I should hurry."

"You knew I expected you."

No answer.

"You say you saw Merry at the station. Does that mean that he waited there till half-past five?"

"I suppose so."

"You have wasted a schoolboy's half-holiday, then, by your wilfulness, as well as made your uncle uneasy and anxious."

Cleeve looked stubborn, and did not speak. Concern for Tom Merry and his wasted half-holiday obviously did not trouble him very much.

There was a short silence in the study. Mr. Railton's eyes scanned his nephew's face; Cleeve's were fixed on the floor.

"Merry came to the school with you?" asked Mr. Railton at last.

"Yes, most of the way."

"How came you to enter the New House by mistake?"

"A fellow misdirected me," said Cleeve, his eyes gleaming.

"A joke on a newcomer, I suppose."

"I cannot understand why Merry did not bring you to the House and to my study. Did he leave you?"

"I left him."

"And why?" asked Mr. Railton, his voice growing deeper.

"Am I to understand that you have quarrelled with Merry—the best-tempered junior in the whole school, Victor?"

"Not with him. A fellow with him—I didn't catch his name—a friend of his," muttered Cleeve, his cheeks reddening.

"He asked me about my old school, and taunted me—"

"It must have been either Manners or Lowther—and neither Manners nor Lowther would have taunted you unprovoked, I am assured of that. Can you tell me that you gave no provocation?"

"I dare say I did."

Again the School House master regarded his nephew in silence. Cleeve did not meet his glance.

"This will not do, Victor," said the Housemaster at last.

"That you were unwilling to leave Barcroft I am very well aware—but that matter is past and done with. You must know perfectly well that, in the circumstances, you are fortunate to get another chance in a public school of the standing of St. Jim's. Only Dr. Holmes' personal friendship for myself induced him to allow you to enter—but for the fact that I am Housemaster here, and guaranteed to answer for you in spite of all appearances, every school of any standing would have been closed to you after you left Barcroft."

"That's not my fault."

"My brother and I hope and believe that it is not your fault, Victor," said the Housemaster, in a kinder tone.

"But the fact remains unaltered. Barcroft is closed to you; and it is judicious not even to mention the name of your old school here. Fortunately it is at a great distance from St. Jim's—and no one here is likely to know Barcroft boys. Can you not see, Victor, that your coming here is a great chance for you—a chance that is a great stroke of good fortune?"

"I suppose so," muttered Cleeve. "But I'm a Barcroft chap, and I don't want to be here."

"Would you be willing to return to Barcroft, if it were possible, in the circumstances?"

Cleeve shifted uneasily.

"No! I couldn't face them, of course."

"You do not wish to leave school, and to be placed in the world without having completed your education?"

"No!" muttered Cleeve.

"Then what do you want?"

No answer.

"You can see, Victor, that your present attitude is utterly unreasonable," said Mr. Railton quietly. "Barcroft is closed to you for ever—you would not return there even if your old headmaster allowed it, which is impossible in the circumstances. You do not wish to leave school at your present age. Yet you complain and repine at coming here. You are acting like a child."

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"Well, I'm here," muttered Cleeve. "I suppose I can stand it. I've had a lot to stand already."

"That is true," said the Housemaster, his tone softening again. "But you will do yourself no good by repining, Victor. You have every chance of making your way here, and making new friends—good friends."

"I don't want new friends—I've got my own friends."

"Whom you can never see."

"I know that."

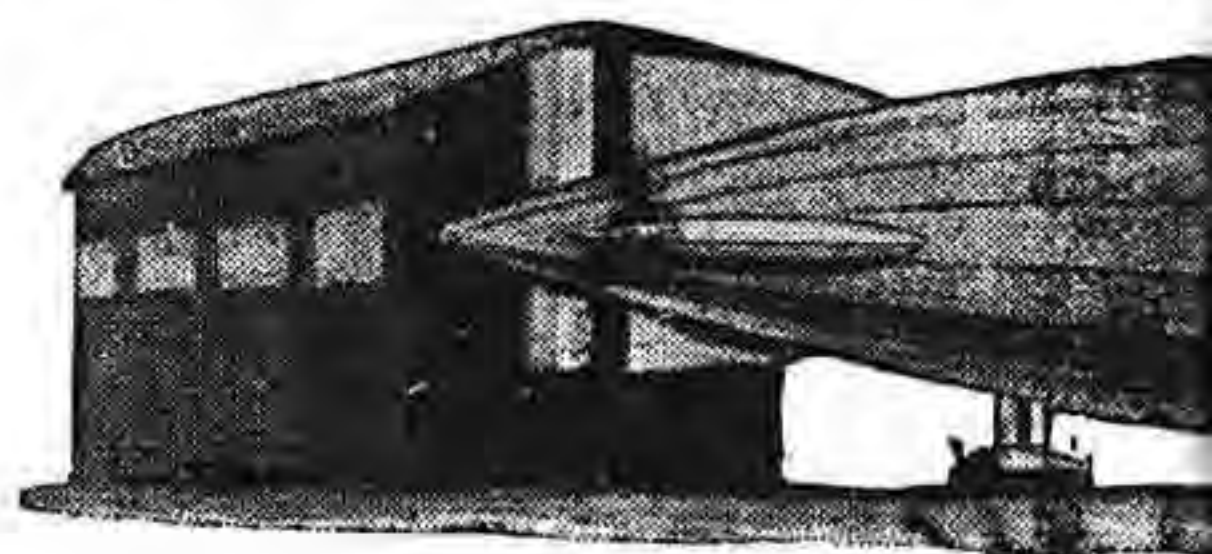
"And who," added the Housemaster sternly, "would probably not speak to you if you could see them."

Cleeve winced.

"I know!" he muttered.

"You will be placed in the Shell here—the Form you were in at Barcroft. There are many boys of sterling character in the Shell—and the best of all is Tom Merry, whom I sent

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to meet you at the station, in the hope that you would make friends with him."

"I don't care for him."

"Merry is junior captain of the House," went on Mr. Railton, "the junior cricket is in his hands. He will be glad to give you every chance in games when he knows your quality."

"I don't want him to."

"And why not?" rapped out the Housemaster.

"I was captain of my House at Barcroft—junior captain," muttered Cleeve. "I don't see knucklin' under to another fellow."

"That is mere folly, Victor. After the disaster that has fallen upon you, do you expect to retain everything you have lost?"

"It wasn't my fault."

"If not your fault, it was at least in part due to your folly," said Mr. Railton. "At all events, you may be happy and successful here if you go to work in the right spirit, and you will receive every kindness and encouragement from me. But you must understand, Victor, that I am your

Housemaster as well as your uncle, and you will not be permitted to disregard authority. Your conduct this afternoon I shall overlook, as you had not yet joined the school at the time. Nothing of the kind must recur, however. There is no such thing as favouritism here—my nephew takes his place with the rest of his Form in exactly the same way."

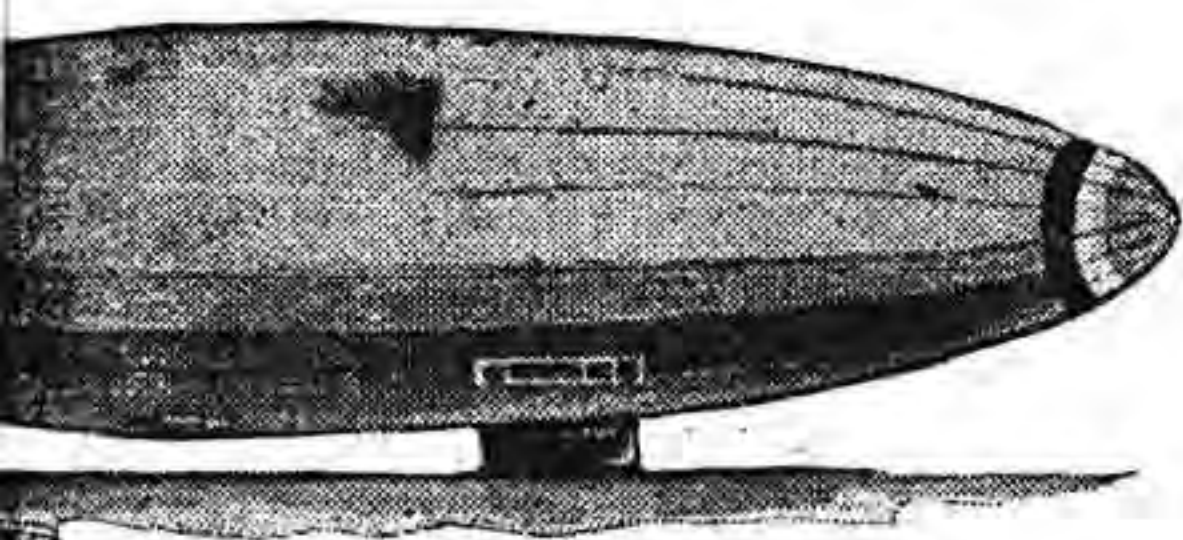
"I'm not askin' to be favoured."

Mr. Railton breathed rather hard.

"I am pressed for time now, Victor," he said. "I had hoped to be able to give you the afternoon—you chose to be late. Come with me, however, and I will take you to see the House-dame, and introduce you to your future Form master, Mr. Linton, and then take you to your study. Then I must leave you to your own devices. I will see you again in the evening."

Cleeve followed the Housemaster from the study.

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CHAPTER 10.

The New Fellow Finds a Friend!

MANNERS of the Shell came cheerily in at the school gates, with his precious camera slung in its case over his shoulder. Manners had not enjoyed the first part of that half-holiday; but he had quite enjoyed the second part. His "camera crawl" had been an eminent success. Manners had a roll of six new films in his camera, and every one of those films had now been expended—with the meticulous care that Harry Manners gave to every photograph; so every one was going to be a success. Various beauty spots of beautiful Sussex were now on record, as well as a picture of a gipsy camp, upon which Manners had fortunately happened along the Wayland road. Manners was highly satisfied with his afternoon; and did not even remember that he had missed tea and was hungry.

He walked brightly into the School House and went up to Study No. 10 in the Shell. He rather expected to find Tom Merry and Monty Lowther there—having remembered their existence now that he had finished taking photographs. But the study was vacant.

As a matter of fact, Tom Merry had been along once, and Lowther had been along once, from Study No. 6 in the Fourth to see whether Manners had come in. But they had not found him, and now they had given him up.

Manners laid the leather case containing his precious camera on the table, and realised that he wanted his tea. It was getting near time for call-over now, and tea in Hall was long past. Had Manners been aware of the cheery tea-party in Study No. 6 he would have presented himself at that hospitable study to take his whack in what was left. But he was not aware of it, and only concluded that his chums had tea'd somewhere, and gone out of the House again. So he rooted through the study cupboard for supplies, and sat down to a solitary tea.

He did not linger over his tea. He was anxious to get to the dark-room and develop his films. It was too late for printing-out that day; but that would come in the morning, before classes. Manners was quite a sociable fellow, and liked the company of his chums; but just at present he certainly did not miss them. The dark-room, and the turning out of some excellently-finished negatives occupied his busy thoughts.

Having finished tea and cleared the table—Manners was a tidy youth—he opened the leather case and took out the camera. Just then a tap came at the study door.

"Come in, fathead!" called out Manners cheerily, supposing that it was some fellow in the Shell who had knocked.

He had no objection to spending a few minutes telling a fellow about his success with the camera that afternoon—some intelligent fellow like Talbot, for instance. If it was some unintelligent fellow—that is to say, some fellow uninterested in cameras—Manners had no intention of wasting precious minutes on him.

It was, however, Mr. Railton who opened the study door, and Manners' cheeks crimsoned with confusion.

"Oh, sir!" he ejaculated.

Mr. Railton, however, did not seem to have heard Manners' polite invitation to enter. He was a tactful Housemaster, and knew when not to hear.

"Ah! You are here, Manners," he said. "Your friends are not here, I see."

"I think they're out of the House somewhere, sir," said Manners.

"Come in, Victor."

The Housemaster's nephew entered.

Manners glanced at him rather curiously. He guessed that this was the fellow for whom he had waited an hour at the station—and for whom his chums had waited two hours. Whether they had met him, after all, or not, Manners did not know, and wasn't interested to know. In point of fact, he had forgotten Victor Cleeve's existence until this moment.

"My nephew, Victor Cleeve," said Mr. Railton. "I think you have already met him, however, Manners."

"Nunno, sir," stammered Manners, rather confused again. "I left my friends at the station, as—as—as—"

"Quite so," said Mr. Railton. "I understand; my nephew was late. Victor, this is Manners of the Shell. This is the study you will share with Manners, Lowther, and Merry."

Manners felt called upon to shake hands with the new fellow, in the circumstances. His previous intention of punching the fellow's head had been forgotten; and, anyhow, was obviously impracticable now. So he stepped forward and held out his hand.

"Glad to see you at St. Jim's, Cleeve," he said.

Cleeve shook hands with him in a very perfunctory way, and dropped his hand at once.

"I will leave you here, Victor," said Mr. Railton.

"Very well, sir." In Manners' presence, the new fellow did not address the Housemaster as "uncle."

"You will do no preparation your first evening, Victor. When preparation begins, you will come to my study—I shall expect you there."

"Very well."

Mr. Railton stepped to the door. There was a slight cloud on his face, which Manners thought that he understood. The Housemaster was very keen for his nephew to make friends with Tom Merry & Co.; and the nephew was not in the least enthusiastic on that subject.

"I hope you will all be good friends in this study," said the Housemaster at last.

"Certainly, sir," said Manners, as Cleeve did not speak.

"We're jolly glad to have your nephew here, sir."

That speech was sincere enough, but only on Mr. Railton's account. Manners would have put up with an even more unpleasant fellow than Victor Cleeve, to oblige "old Railton."

"Thank you, Manners."

The Housemaster left the study. Manners looked at Cleeve.

He wanted, of course, to get away to the dark-room. There was time to develop his photographs before call-over if he wasted no time. But he wanted to be civil to Mr. Railton's nephew. Fortunately, he remembered that D'Arcy had mentioned that Cleeve was given to photography. On that subject, Manners could have talked for hours to his worst enemy. It was a chance of breaking the ice—and Cleeve's manner was ice itself.

"Well, here you are!" said Manners cheerily.

Cleeve only glanced at him, apparently not thinking that remark worthy of wasting any breath in replying.

"I heard from D'Arcy that you go in for photographs."

Cleeve showed a slight interest.

"Yes. Do you?"

"Do I?" grinned Manners. "Well, just a little. I've had a photograph printed in a newspaper, and been paid for it." Manners made that statement with justifiable pride. "Tain't every fellow at school who's butted into the back page of the 'Daily Mail,' what?"

"No fear!" agreed Cleeve quite cordially. "That your camera?"

"Yes, that's it."

"It's a jolly good one!"

"A present," explained Manners. "I couldn't afford to buy a camera like that, of course. It's a corker, I can tell you. You can open it if you like—the films are all right."

Cleeve examined the camera with evident interest. Manners was beginning to think that the new kid was not such a rank outsider as the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy believed. After all, D'Arcy was a rather footling ass, and knew nothing about cameras. This fellow did. The interested expression on Cleeve's face, replacing the sullen cloud, as he examined that handsome camera, made Manners forgive him quite easily for that long wait at Rylcombe Station. It might not have been his fault—why, he might even have delayed en route to take photographs—in which case, what reasonable fellow could have blamed him?

"I hear that Gussy mucked up your camera the day he met you at Abbotsford," went on Manners.

"D'Arcy, do you mean? Yes, the ass!"

"Got it going again, I hope?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Brought it to St. Jim's with you?"

"It's in my box that's coming on."

"Film or plate?"

"Plate."

"Well, I prefer film myself," said Manners. "But every man to his taste. There's a lot to be said for plates, in some circumstances. Look here, I'm just going to develop these films—like to mooch along to the dark-room with me? You'll want to use the dark-room if you take pictures, and you may as well learn your way about. Fellow has to put his name down, you know; but you can get it sometimes when it's not wanted, anyhow. Like to come along?"

"I'd like to no end."

"Had your tea, though?" added Manners, as an afterthought.

"I had some at Wayland."

"Wayland!" repeated Manners, wondering what a fellow had been doing at Wayland, when he was taking a train from Abbotsford to Rylcombe. But there was no time to inquire, as time was precious. "Well, all right; come along then."

The two juniors left the study together.

Manners led the way cheerily downstairs to the dark-room. Fellows were coming into the House now, and one or two called to Manners of the Shell, but he hardly answered. The development of photographs was a serious business, and had the crack of doom been impending that summer's day no doubt Manners would have hurried up a little, to get his negatives in order before the universe dissolved.

There was no doubt that Cleeve was interested in the dark-room, with the red lamp going.

The cloud had passed from his face, his sullen manner had left him. A hobby is a healthy thing for any boy to have; and the trouble that had fallen upon Victor Cleeve had not destroyed his interest in his hobby, though

it seemed to have soured and embittered his temper in every other way.

He listened to Manners' talk with interest and answered cheerily, and anyone looking into the dark-room just then would have supposed that the two juniors were old friends, and certainly not that Manners, only a short time since, had been yearning to punch Cleeve's nose.

Manners handled his developing-tank in his usual masterly style. Every picture on the roll was a success—which was generally a foregone conclusion with Manners' pictures. It was but seldom that Manners of the Shell wasted a section of film.

Cleeve watched him over his shoulder, scanning the pictures as they showed up.

"What's that?" he ejaculated suddenly.

"Which one? That's the spinnery over by Wayland."

"The next one?"

"That's a gipsy camp I spotted by the Wayland road—jolly romantic looking, like a camp of brigands!" said Manners. "I think it's coming out all right; mustn't develop too long, though."

Cleeve's eyes were fixed on the picture, in which the figure of a slouching gipsy showed with a caravan in the background. In the negative, of course, the darks were light and the lights dark, so recognition was difficult; yet there seemed a look of recognition on Cleeve's face, though Manners did not think of noticing it.

"That gipsy looks like a man I've seen before," said Cleeve in a low, strained voice.

"Shouldn't wonder. Those fellows go all over the country, I believe," said Manners. "You'll see him better when I've got this printed. I must fix it now; don't want to over-develop."

Cleeve stepped aside as Manners proceeded to work with his solution.

There was a strange expression on his face, though it was not noticeable in the glimmer of the red lamp.

He remained silent till the Shell fellow had finished.

"After all," he said, speaking to himself rather than to Manners, "gipsies are much alike. I don't suppose that's the man I've seen before."

"You'll see, anyhow, when I get a print in the morning," said Manners. "I'm finished here, and I fancy it's call-over by this time. Let's cut."

They left the dark-room, Cleeve with a darkly thoughtful expression on his face. The glimmering figure of the

gipsy on the negative seemed to have given him some strange shock. But he shrugged his shoulders impatiently, as if dismissing unpleasant reflections from his mind.

Manners and Cleeve came along to Big Hall together for call-over, Manners chatting cheerily on the way—on the subject of photographs, of course—and Cleeve answering him with equal cordiality. At the door of Big Hall they came on Tom Merry and Lowther.

"Hallo, you men! Here you are!" said Manners cheerily. "I say, I've got some jolly good pictures!"

"Spare us!" implored Lowther.

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know!" said Manners. "You've met Cleeve, I think—Why, where is he?"

Cleeve had gone into Hall with a throng of fellows. Manners looked round, with a perplexed expression.

"He was with me a second ago," he said.

"May not be yearning for our society?" suggested Lowther.

"I hope you haven't been rowing with him!" said Manners. "You're rather given to japing a new man in the school, Monty!"

"I haven't japed that worm!" said Lowther, rather gruffy.

"That what?"

"Worm!"

"I don't see any reason for calling him names," said Manners. "What's the matter with the chap?"

"What isn't the matter with the sulky brute, do you mean?"

"No, I don't mean anything of the kind!" said Manners tartly. "I dare say he couldn't help keeping us waiting at the station—and he never knew we were there, anyhow. Give a chap a chance!"

"You've got on all right with him, old chap?" asked Tom Merry, rather curiously.

"Yes, rather! Splendid fellow!" said Manners.

"My only hat!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's cheery voice chimed in, as Study No. 6 came along to Hall. "Heah you are, Mannahs! I saw you with that new boundah, Cleeve!"

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Twilightfully sowwy that the beast has been planted in your studdy, old bean!"

"What rot!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Blessed if I see why you're down on the chap!" said Manners crossly. "He seems all right to me!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"I fancy you're the only fellow at St. Jim's who will think him all right, from what I hear!" remarked Blake.

"Rubbish!"

And Manners went into Hall, his friends following him in some perplexity. They would not have been surprised to learn that Manners of the Shell had been scrapping with the new fellow in Study No. 10. That would not have surprised them at all. But to hear Manners state that he was a splendid fellow was very surprising. They could only hope that Manners was right, though on that point their doubts were very considerable indeed.

CHAPTER 11.

Just Like Gussy!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY walked into the games-room in the School House after prep that evening, and looked round him, scanning the juniors there with the aid of his celebrated monocle. He did not seem to perceive the person he sought.

"Anybody seen that wottah?" he inquired.

"Trimble wanted?" asked Monty Lowther. "Here, Trimble, D'Arcy's asking for you!"

"Yah!" was the reply of Baggy Trimble of the Fourth.

"Bai Jove! Twimble is not the wottah I was askin' for, Lowthah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I mean quite anothah wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Racke!" called out the humorous Lowther.

"Hallo!"

Aubrey Racke of the Shell looked round.

"D'Arcy wants you!"

Racke stared inquiringly at Arthur Augustus, who shook his head.

"Not at all, Wacke, deah boy! I do not want you!"

"What the thump do you mean, then, Lowther?" snapped Racke.

"My mistake!" said Monty. "D'Arcy was inquiring for a rotter, and he doesn't want Trimble, so I naturally thought—"

"You cheeky idiot!"

"Crooke!" called out Lowther, persisting in his little joke.

"Oh, don't be a funny idiot!" snapped Crooke of the Shell.

"I do not want Cwooke!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Then you must try elsewhere, old bean!" said Lowther. "No other rotters present!"

"Whom do you want, Gussy?" asked Talbot of the Shell, with a smile.

"That wank outsiders Cleeve!"

"Nice name for your Housemaster's nephew!" said Cardew of the Fourth.

"I have found Cleeve an outsiders, Cardew, and I shall call him what I have found him!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard him as a wottah, and I shall not hesitate to tell him so!"

"Hear, hear!" said Lowther.

"What's the matter with the chap, Tom Merry?" asked Levison of the Fourth. "You've met him?"

"Oh, I dare say he's all right!" answered Tom tolerantly. "Manners seems rather to like him, so he can't be quite a rotter. But I can't say I like him much."

"Not the least little bit in the world," said Monty Lowther. "I agree with Gussy all along the line!"

"What's the man done?" asked Cardew.

"Nothing in particular," said Tom. "I dare say he's all right. Let's hope for the best, anyhow. We don't want to be down on Railton's nephew, Gussy."

"Wathah not," agreed Arthur Augustus. "I have the vevy gweatest wespect for old Waiton; but, all the same, his nephew is a wank outsiders! He has tweated me with gwoss diswespect!"

"Let him die the death, then!" said Cardew gravely. "If he has done that, of course nothin' remains to be said! His death sentence may be taken as read, and the only thing to decide is whether lynchin' will meet the case, or whether it should be somethin' lingerin', with boilin' oil in it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Cardew, you ass—"

"Perhaps there's a misunderstanding somewhere, Gussy," suggested Talbot of the Shell mildly.

"Nothin' of the sort, deah boy. I will tell you what has happened, if you like, and let you fellows judge," said

D'Arcy. "I wan into the fellow last week ovah at Abbotsford—"

"On your bike," grinned Kangaroo of the Shell.

"Yaas. Well, I damaged his camewah, quite by accident, of course. I would not damage a fellow's camewah intentionally; though a fellow can be a feahful bore with his camewah like Manners, you know."

"Ass!" said Tom Merry.

"Fathead!" said Monty Lowther.

Whatever Tom and Monty might think about Manners' camera themselves, they did not allow such thoughts to other fellows. Manners and his camera were not to be derided by anyone but his loyal chums.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Get on with the washing, D'Arcy," said Grundy of the Shell. "Let's hear what the chap's done."

"Yaas, wathah! I offahed to pay for the damage to his beastly camewah, and took his word that it would cost two pounds. I offahed him the money, and then wemembahed that I hadn't any."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar in the games-room. Arthur Augustus' narrative was undoubtedly characteristic of the great Gussy.

"Bai Jove! I do not see anythin' to chortle at in that,

(Continued on next page.)

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you know. It was a doocid awkward posish for any fellow," said Arthur Augustus. "You see, the whole studay was stonay at that time, and I forgot it for the moment. That wottah, Cleeve, just sneered, and made out that I was gammonin', you know—talkin' out of my hat, and never meanin' to pay for his wotten camewah at all."

"Like him!" agreed Lowther.

"But that's ancient history now, Gussy," said Levison. "Yaas, but he has wepeated the offence to-day," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I met him in the quad and mentioned the mattah, and offahed the money. Of course, I hadn't it about me at the moment——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle, deah boys. I asked him to step up to my studay, as the tin was in my desk. He wefused to take the twouble, and declared that I was humbuggin' again."

Arthur Augustus breathed hard with wrath at the recollection.

"Makin' out, you know, that I was a gassin' ass like Twimble, f'winstance——"

"Yah!" from Baggy Trimble.

"I considah him a wottah," resumed Arthur Augustus. "A fellow who can't take a fellow's word is a wank wottah. Now I have fetched the money f'rom my desk, and am goin' to pay the beast as soon as I can find him. I have been lookin' all ovah the shop for him, but he seems to be lost somewhah."

"I think he's with Railton," said Talbot. "He went to Railton's study at prop."

"Here he comes," said Cardew.

Arthur Augustus turned round to the door. All eyes in the room were fixed on Victor Cleeve as he stood in the wide doorway, looking in.

There was little of the "new kid" in Cleeve's look and manner.

He was obviously quite self-possessed, and sure of himself; and the expression on his face, so far as it had any expression, was disdainful.

St. Jim's men had a great pride in their school, and regarded St. Jim's as the very best thing going; and themselves, perhaps, as the salt of the earth. They admitted that there were other schools, some of them quite good; but St. Jim's, after all, was St. Jim's.

Eton was Eton, doubtless, and Harrow was Harrow; Winchester was Winchester, and Rugbeians might think any amount of Rugby; all that did not alter the fact that St. Jim's was St. Jim's! That opinion was unanimously held in the school. It was an opinion with which the new fellow from Barcroft did not agree. St. Jim's, to him, was a place of exile, and he did not like it, he did not think much of it, and he took no trouble whatever to conceal his thoughts on the subject.

Even good-natured fellows in the games-room felt a sense of irritation as they read the look on Victor Cleeve's face. Grundy of the Shell gave him a glare. Housemaster's nephew or not, Grundy was not taking any side from this new blighter, as he told Wilkins and Gunn—Wilkins and Gunn heartily concurring.

Cleeve looked into the room, but did not seem to intend to enter. But D'Arcy called out to him.

"Come in, Cleeve! I've been looking for you."

"I'm here, if you want me," answered Cleeve curtly. "What is it?"

"About that camewah of yours——"

"Oh, let it drop," exclaimed Cleeve, irritably. "I'm fed up with the subject."

"It is quite imposs for me to let it dwop till the mattah is settled," answered Arthur Augustus calmly. "And I am quite indiffent as to whethah you are fed up or not. I owe you two pounds for the damage to your camewah, and as you declined to step up to my studay, I have fetched the money, and heah it is."

D'Arcy slid his hand into his pocket.

Cleeve flushed.

"I don't want you to pay," he snapped.

"That is quite immatwial; I insist upon payin'. I told you I should pay, and you had the wotten impudence to doubt my word."

"Oh, rats!" said Cleeve. "You told me twice you insisted on payin', and you never paid. I'm sick of the subject. The matter is of no consequence."

"The mattah is of great consequence, as you have had the unspeakable caddishness to doubt my word. Heah is the money."

"Oh, hand it over, and chuck it, then; let's get done with it," said Cleeve irritably.

And he stepped into the room.

Arthur Augustus withdrew his hand from his pocket—empty! He groped in another pocket, and again his hand came out empty. A really remarkable expression over-spread his aristocratic countenance.

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"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

The juniors began to grin. It looked as if the noble Gussy had left himself unprovided with cash for the third time. Cleeve stared at him, and his lips curved in a sneer.

"Gammonin' again?" he asked. "For goodness' sake, chuck it! What's the good of humbuggin' like this?"

D'Arcy's face was crimson now.

"I went specially to my studay and got the money out of my desk," he stammered. "I wemembah now, that Blakn spoke to me, and I laid it on the studay table while I was answerin' him. I—I—I must have forgotten to pick it up again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter.

Cleeve laughed too—an unpleasant, sneering laugh.

"Good old Gussy!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Ain't he a prize-packet?"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle, you fellows. There is nothin' whatevah to cackle at. A fellow might forget a twivial thing like that, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats! Cleeve, will you kindly wait heah a few minutes while I cut up to my studay and fetch the two pound notes I left on my table?"

"No," answered Cleeve deliberately. "I won't! This is the third time you've humbugged about paying that money, and I'm sick of it. Let the matter drop, and don't mention it again."

"You uttah wottah!" roared Arthur Augustus. "Do you mean that you do not believe that I have left the money lyin' on my studay table?"

"I mean exactly that!" said Cleeve coolly. "And I haven't the faintest belief that you'd come back with it if I waited for you. I'm fed up with your humbuggin', so chuck it!"

And Cleeve walked to the door again, leaving Arthur Augustus fairly gasping.

CHAPTER 12.

Shell Out!

"STOP!"

Tom Merry's voice rang out sharply.

Cleeve did not heed it; perhaps he did not realise that the command was addressed to him. He walked on towards the door.

Five or six fellows promptly interposed. The doorway was blocked, and Cleeve had to halt. He stared angrily at them.

"Hold on, Cleeve," said Talbot of the Shell quietly. "Tom Merry called to you."

"Tom Merry can go and eat coke!"

"Tom Merry is junior captain of the House," Talbot explained.

"I don't care a hang whether he is or not."

"Perhaps you'll be made to care!" roared Grundy. "Perhaps you'll get some of your swank knocked out of you here."

Cleeve paid no heed to that. Tom Merry crossed the room quickly, and stood before Cleeve.

The new fellow eyed him, coolly and insolently.

"Well?" he snapped.

"Just a word with you, Cleeve," said Tom quietly and scornfully. "D'Arcy owes you two pounds, which he has forgotten to bring with him."

"D'Arcy owes me nothin', and I don't believe he has forgotten anythin'. I never asked him to pay for the camera, and I don't believe he ever meant to pay for it," answered Cleeve deliberately.

"Other fellows here know D'Arcy better than that," said Tom. "You'll take your two pounds before you leave this room. Every man here will lend D'Arcy anything he's got in his pockets."

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bai Jove! That's awf'ly decent of you fellows," said Arthur Augustus. "I trust that nobody heah, exceptin' that wank wottah, doubts my word?"

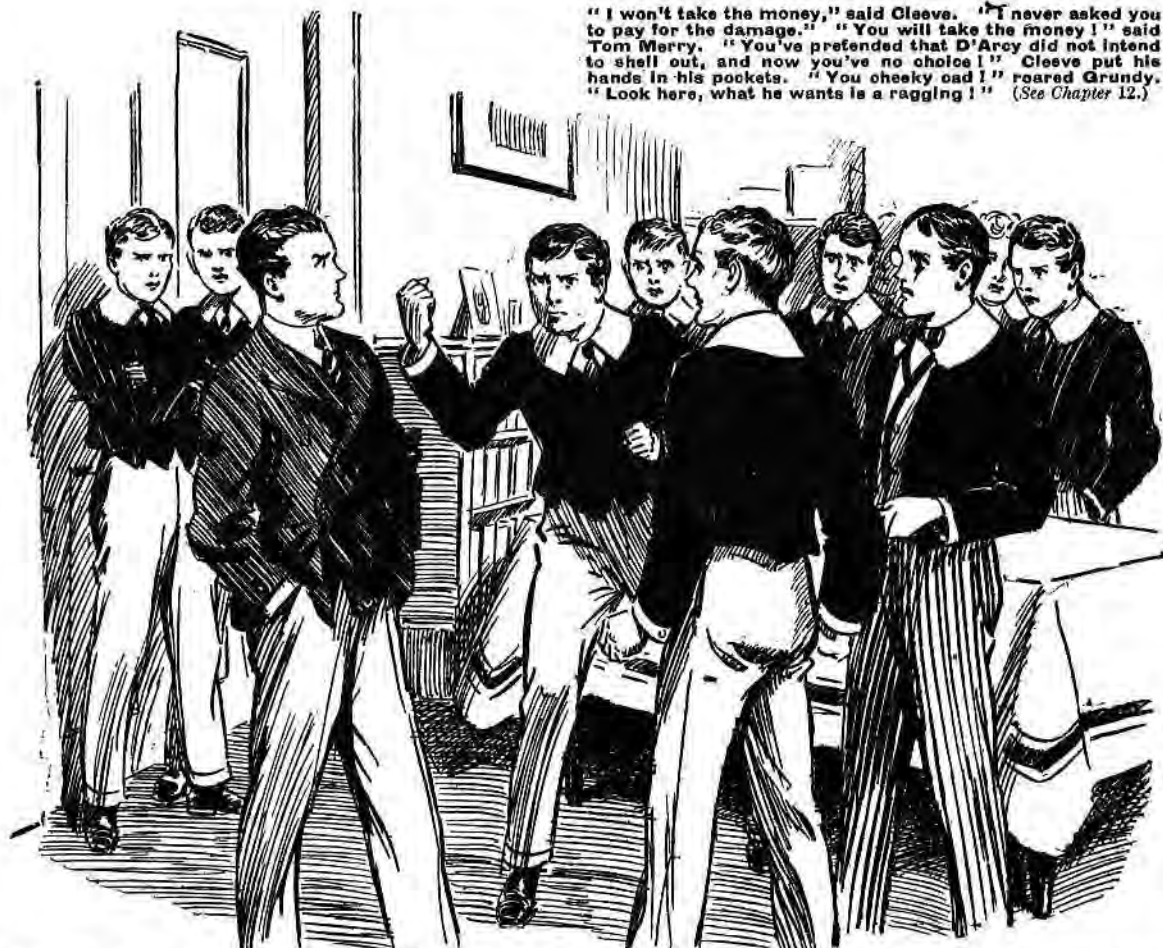
"Of course not, old chap," said Talbot. "Settle the matter at once, and make an end of it."

"Shell out, you men," said Tom.

That the integrity of Arthur Augustus was well known in his House was very clear. Every fellow in the room was anxious to help. Even Baggy Trimble groped in his sticky pocket for a coin that he hoped might be there, but which, unfortunately, was not there. However, Baggy's contribution was not needed.

A pound note from Talbot, and a ten-shilling note each from Levison and Tom Merry, settled the matter.

"Thanks vewy much, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "It is



"I won't take the money," said Cleve. "I never asked you to pay for the damage." "You will take the money!" said Tom Merry. "You've pretended that D'Arcy did not intend to shell out, and now you've no choice!" Cleve put his hands in his pockets. "You cheeky cad!" roared Grundy. "Look here, what he wants is a ragging!" (See Chapter 12.)

wippin' of you fellows to wally wound like this. Heah is your money, Cleve."

Cleve did not extend his hand to take it.

He stood, with a red face, covered in confusion.

From sheer ill-temper and sullenness, he had insulted Arthur Augustus, not in the least believing, at the bottom of his heart, that his sneering scepticism had any real foundation.

"I won't take the money," said Cleve at last. "I never asked you to pay for the damage, and I never wanted you to. Let it drop."

"You will take the money," said Tom Merry. "After what you've said, you've no choice about that." "I shall please myself."

"You won't," said Tom goolly. "You've pretended to think that D'Arcy did not intend to shell out, and now you'll take the money."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus emphatically.

Cleve put his hands in his pockets.

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

"Bai Jove!"

"You cheeky cad!" roared Grundy, shaking his fist. "Look here, you men, what he wants is a ragging. Rag the cad!"

Arthur Augustus breathed deep.

"You wefuse to take this money, Cleve?"

"I refuse!"

"Vowv well. I will hand it ovah to the Housemastah, and inform him that it is due to you, and Waiton can do as he likes about it."

"Good egg!" assented Tom Merry.

D'Arcy went to the door.

"Stop!" panted Cleve.

D'Arcy stopped, his glance contemptuously on Cleve.

"Well?" he said curtly.

"I'll take the money, if you like, and confound you!"

"There it is."

Cleve slipped the currency notes angrily into his pocket, his face red and savage. Arthur Augustus promptly turned his back on him. He had done with the fellow now, and he desired to make that clear.

Victor Cleve stood with burning cheeks and angry eyes. He had made himself look foolish and cheap in the eyes of

all the fellows present, and he was painfully aware of the fact. There was dislike and contempt in almost every face, and fellows turned away from him. Grundy of the Shell threw the door wide open.

"That's the way out, Cleve," he said.

Cleve gave him a fierce look.

"Who the dooce are you to give me orders?" he snapped.

"I'm Grundy of the Shell, the Form you disgrace by belonging to it," said Grundy. "Get out!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"You're not wanted here!" roared Grundy.

"Oh, let him alone, Grundy," said Tom Merry. "He's not worth bothering about. He has a right to be here, if he likes."

"Yaas, wathah! Fair play's a jewel," said D'Arcy. "Let the uttah wottah remain if he chooses; but I do not care to stay if he does. I shall wetire."

And the swell of St. Jim's retired, with lofty dignity.

Cleve gave a dark look round him, and stalked out of the room. Two or three fellows hissed as he went.

"Hallo! Here you are, old bean!" Manners of the Shell, coming along to the games-room, met Cleve in the passage. "Looking for you."

Cleve did not answer or look at him. He tramped on with a black brow, and Manners was left staring after him in astonishment.

CHAPTER 13.

"Bend Over!"

KILDARE of the Sixth saw lights out for the Shell that night. The captain of the school glanced very curiously at Cleve. Like most other School House men, Kildare was rather interested in the nephew of the popular Housemaster. Railton's nephew, if he was anything like old Railton, should have jumped into popularity at once. One glance was enough to tell Kildare that Cleve had done nothing of the sort.

Not a man in the Shell was speaking to Cleve.

Certainly, he did not look as if he wanted anyone to speak to him.

The sulky expression was strong upon his otherwise handsome face, and he had the air of a fellow who was sufficient unto himself, and preferred to be let alone.

Even Manners was letting him alone.

That little talk about photography, and the pleasant minutes in the dark-room with the negatives, had prepossessed Manners in the new fellow's favour. He was prepared to think well of Cleeve, and to conclude that the other fellows had rather misjudged him. But sulky rudeness was rather hard to bear, and Manners was reconsidering his opinion now.

He was quite willing to speak to Cleeve, especially upon his favourite topic, but he did not want another rebuff.

Kildare looked at Cleeve, and looked at the other fellows, and drew his own conclusions. In some way the Housemaster's nephew had got on the wrong side of his Form at the start. The good-natured senior stopped near the bed where Cleeve was sitting to take his boots off, and spoke to him with cheery geniality.

"How do you like St. Jim's, Cleeve?"

Really, it was very gracious and kind for so great a man as the captain of the school, the head of the Sixth, to ask a new junior how he liked St. Jim's. Lower boys were very small beer in the estimation of the great men of the Sixth Form.

Victor Cleeve, however, was not amenable to gracious kindness. He looked up, with no change in his proud, sullen face.

"I don't like St. Jim's at all."

Kildare stared at him.

"Well, you're new here," he said. "You'll shake down in time. New kids often miss home rather severely at first. It passes off."

"I don't miss home."

"Oh, you don't?" said Kildare.

"No."

Some of the Shell fellows were grinning. This was the St. Jim's captain's first experience of the sullen perversity of the Housemaster's nephew. They wondered how he liked it.

Kildare seemed puzzled. He had come across all sorts and conditions of new boys in his time, but never one quite like this before. Cleeve's manner gave him the impression that the fellow was a spoiled boy at home, who found school rather hard and cold without the accustomed petting and coddling. But if the fellow did not, as he said, miss home, that could not be the explanation of his sullen and discontented looks.

"You'll find St. Jim's a jolly sort of place when you get used to it," said Kildare, after quite a pause.

"I don't think so."

"Oh! You don't think so, although I tell you so?" exclaimed Kildare.

"No, I don't."

Kildare had his official ashplant under his arm. His hand slid along to it for a moment. Some of the juniors expected a licking to be the next item on the programme, and certainly very little sympathy would have been wasted on Cleeve had he been ordered to bend over. But the captain of St. Jim's left the ashplant where it was.

"I'll give you a word of advice, young 'un," said Kildare. Cleeve interrupted him.

"I'm not askin' for advice, thanks!"

"I'll give it, all the same," said Kildare, "and when you've been at St. Jim's a little longer, kid, you'll learn that you mustn't interrupt a prefect when he's speaking to you. Take my tip and pull yourself together, and don't brood and grouse. Make the best of things. You'll find yourself all right here after a few days, if it seems a bit uncomfortable at first. No good ever comes of grouching and pulling a long face."

Cleeve's lip curled.

"I'm not a new kid fresh from home, or from a prep school, as you seem to think," he answered. "I've been to school before, and I was junior captain of my House."

"Oh?" said Kildare, in surprise. "If that's the case, you know the ropes at a public school!"

"Certainly I do!"

"Then you know that you've been cheeking a prefect, and that a prefect generally thrashes a junior who cheeks him."

Cleeve made no answer to that.

"I don't know at what school you've been," went on Kildare, "but you don't seem to have learned to behave yourself there. You'll learn here, Cleeve, and the sooner you learn the better it will be for you. Are you fool enough to think that you can say and do what you like because you're a relation of the Housemaster? Mr. Railton would be the last man in the world to show any unfair favour to a relation. If you've got that idea in your head, chuck it before it gets you into trouble."

"I haven't!"

"All the better for you if you haven't; but you look like it, and speak like it. If you weren't a new kid, I'd make

you bend over this minute, and give you six. What school do you come from?"

Cleeve did not answer.

"Do you hear me, Cleeve?" exclaimed Kildare, his voice rising in anger.

"Yes."

"Well, answer me!"

"I don't care to answer questions."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry; and the rest of the Shell stared at Cleeve. A fellow, new or not, who answered the captain of the school in that style, did not want for nerve, at least.

Kildare seemed hardly able to believe his ears. He stared at Victor Cleeve, and the ashplant was in his hand now.

"You don't care to answer questions when they are put to you by the head prefect of your House?" he said, almost dazedly.

"No."

Kildare's eyes glistened. It was Cleeve himself who had brought up the subject of his previous school, and Kildare's question had followed naturally. It seemed as if the new fellow, from sheer perversity of temper, was willing to raise the subject upon which he was unable to give explanations.

"Well, I order you to answer me!" said Kildare grimly.

"I don't care two straws what school you came from, or whether you came from any school at all; but I've asked you a question, and I order you to answer it. Now, then!"

No reply.

"Will you answer me, Cleeve?"

"No."

"Very well! Bend over that bed!"

Cleeve rose to his feet, his eyes gleaming. Every fellow in the dormitory could see that he was thinking of resistance. That, in itself, was amazing in a fellow who, according to his own statement, had been junior captain of his House at a public school. There was much for a new kid to learn, in the way of manners and customs, at any school; but Cleeve, according to his own account, had nothing to learn.

The Shell fellows looked on breathlessly.

If the fellow resisted a caning from the head prefect of the House, either he would be caned by force, or he would be taken to the Housemaster for judgment. It was quite on the cards that he might be sent away from the school.

"I'm waiting!" said Kildare.

Slowly the new junior made up his mind to it. He had asked for it, and it had come to him; and he seemed to realise the hopelessness and folly of a defiance of authority. With a black and bitter face, he bent over the bed to take his licking.

Most of the fellows expected to see the severest "six" administered to Cleeve that they had ever witnessed. Certainly the sulky fellow had given provocation enough.

But Kildare, as a matter of fact, only flicked him. He was bound to give him six, having said that he would do so; but the six fell very lightly. The St. Jim's captain was as much perplexed as angered by Cleeve—and his judgment—rather more experienced than that of the juniors—discerned that there was something wrong with the fellow, though he could not guess what it was.

Having somewhat disappointed the Shell by lightly flicking the bending junior half a dozen times, Kildare tucked the ashplant under his arm again.

"Turn in!" he said curtly.

He took no further notice of Cleeve. He had desired to show kindness to his Housemaster's nephew; but Cleeve obviously was not amenable to kindness. Kildare certainly did not want to have to give him another beating. It was a rather uncomfortable reflection to him what Mr. Railton would think if he learned that his nephew had been caned on his first night at St. Jim's. It was a matter of wonder to Kildare that such a Housemaster should possess such a nephew; and very disconcerting to think that old Railton might fancy that he had been unduly severe. Kildare mentally resolved to take as little cognizance as possible of the existence of Cleeve of the Shell after that.

When he put out the lights, and left the dormitory, the captain of the school was one more on the list of St. Jim's men who had taken a dislike to Railton's nephew. If Victor Cleeve had been, as Mr. Railton told Tom Merry, popular in his former school, that happy state of affairs evidently was not going to be repeated at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 14.

Mysterious!

THE clang of the rising-bell roused St. Jim's to a new day. Bright sunlight streamed in at the high windows of the Shell dormitory, announcing a fine summer's morning. Most faces in the Shell were cheery as the Form turned out. There was, of course, one exception. Already the juniors were growing accustomed

to Victor Cleeve's sulky looks; and nobody who noticed him expected him to look cheerful, even on that ripping morning. And they were right; he did not look cheerful.

Tom Merry—whose annoyance was seldom of long duration, and who had seldom been known to let the sun go down in his wrath—called out a word to Cleeve. Tom hated to see a fellow looking like that, as if he had not a friend in the world, and did not want one. Even if the fellow did not want to be at school, it was up to him to take it smiling when it could not be helped. If a cheery word from Tom could help anybody to take things smilingly, that cheery word was never lacking.

"Topping morning, Cleeve, what?" said Tom.

Cleeve looked at him.

"Yes!" he answered curtly.

"Cheery sort of funeral mute, ain't you, Cleeve?" demanded Grundy.

Grundy of the Shell had no superfluous good-nature to waste on a sulky fellow who turned up his nose at St. Jim's. "Cheer up, old bean!" said Crooke. "Must be horrid bein' at school with your jolly old uncle as Beak; but worse things have happened."

"Still feeling that six?" grinned Wilkins.

Cleeve made no answer.

By his dark and sulky looks, he called for the chipping from the Shell fellows; it seemed to be his fate to ask for trouble. But his sulky face grew darker.

As a matter of fact, there was more excuse for Cleeve's sulky gloom than the fellows guessed—than even Tom Merry surmised, though Tom was kind and sympathetic by nature. Turning out at St. Jim's in the sunny morning reminded Cleeve very forcibly of rising-bell at Barcroft—of turning out with a cheery crew of fellows who had been his friends, and who now, perhaps, had forgotten him, or, if they remembered him, thought of him only as the fellow who had had to leave school under a cloud. All his feelings, his hopes, his interests, were bound up in Barcroft, and between him and his old school a black shadow lay.

He thought of old associations with bitter repining; and new associations made no appeal to him. Only Manners, for a time, had interested him a little, as a sharer of the same hobby.

Cleeve lost no time in getting down from the dormitory. Derisive glances followed him as he went.

"Cheery sort of merchant, and no mistake!" remarked Kangaroo. "Looks as if he has committed a murder and doesn't know what to do with the body."

"You fellows noticed that he wouldn't tell Kildare the name of his old school?" grinned Racke maliciously. "He's been in some trouble there—the telegram said he had been in trouble. I wonder if he was sacked?"

Lowther gave Tom Merry a quick look.

That surmise, evidently, was not going to be confined to Lowther. It was a natural suspicion, in view of Cleeve's secretiveness on the subject.

"Rubbish!" said Manners. Manners was still rather under the influence of Cleeve's keen interest in cameras.

"Oh, rubbish, is it?" snapped Racke. "And if he wasn't sacked, then why was he so jolly secret about where he comes from?"

"Fellow is supposed to say where he comes from," remarked Gore.

"Of course he is!" said Grundy.

"Well, I don't know why he doesn't give it a name," said Manners. "But he can't have been sacked, for a jolly good reason. No man sacked from another school would be allowed to come to St. Jim's."

"That's a cert!" said Bernard Glyn.

"Well, that's so, as a rule, I suppose," admitted Aubrey Racke. "But it may make a difference his being Railton's nephew."

"Bosh! Railton wouldn't want him here if he had been sacked from another school."

"Fellow ain't sacked for nothing!" remarked Kangaroo. "If he's a bad hat Railton wouldn't plant him on us, even if the Head would let him."

"And he wouldn't!" said Manners.

That seemed rather convincing, as even Monty Lowther had to admit to himself. But that white, scared look on Cleeve's face recurred to Monty; and with it his original opinion was confirmed. Cleeve had been "bunked" from school. Lowther was assured of that, though he did not contribute his opinion to the discussion in the dormitory.

Manners went down, and went to his study in the Shell passage for his negatives. The sun was already bright, and Manners was thinking of printing out his pictures at an early hour that morning. A little to his surprise, he found Cleeve in the study, and found him examining the roll of films, which he had taken out of Manners' special box of photographic gadgets.

Manners stared at him, not wholly pleased to see his property being handled so freely without permission, even by a fellow who shared his hobby.

Cleeve glanced at him and reddened. Apparently he had not expected Manners to come to the study before breakfast. "You don't mind my looking at your film?" he asked, with a civility of manner that was rather new to him. "I was rather keen to see your pictures by the daylight."

Manners was placated at once.

"My dear chap, look at them as much as you like," he answered cordially. "I can see you know how to handle a film without damaging it. I've seen a fellow grab a film and crumple it up in his paw. Look here, like to come along while I take some prints? We've got time before chapel."

"I'd like to no end," said Cleeve.

"Good man! We shall get on in this study," said Manners. "Jolly glad to see a chap who's got some sense on this subject. You know, I wanted to fix up the study as a dark-room, but the other fellows objected. They're jolly good sorts, you know, but they ain't keen on photography."

Cleeve grinned—for the first time since he had arrived at St. Jim's. The idea of fixing up the study as a dark-room seemed to strike him as funny.

"It could be done, you know," said Manners. "I could wangle a sink in the corner, and blinds for the window. Of course, I should have to shut the other chaps out at times; but they don't seem to catch on, somehow. They make out that shutting the study up and burning a red lamp, and all that, would make the room stuffy."

"It might!" grinned Cleeve.

"Well, if it did, who cares for trifles like that?" said Manners, busy with his scissors, cutting the roll of films into sections, while he talked. "Fellow can't always bag the dark-room downstairs, and when a fellow wants to develop, he wants to develop, doesn't he?"

"Quite!" agreed Cleeve.

"Well, come on!" said Manners.

Cleeve's eyes lingered on the little stack of separate films in the Shell fellow's hand. One of them, at least, had a keen interest for the fellow who came from a school he did not care to name.

He accompanied Manners, and when they came out into the quad a little later others of the Shell were out in the early morning, and they glanced at the two of them, puzzled to see Cleeve looking cheerful and on friendly terms with a St. Jim's man.

"He's got Manners on photography," Tom Merry remarked to Lowther, with a laugh. "That's why old Manners thinks he isn't such a rank rotter. I remember now Gussy said the fellow had a camera."

Lowther chuckled.

"His coming into our study may be a blessing in disguise," he remarked. "Manners may talk photography to him instead of to us!"

"For which relief we shall be duly thankful!" said Tom, laughing. "Let's see what Manners is up to; he will expect us to be deeply intrigued by the pictures he took yesterday, and, for goodness' sake, don't mention that we had forgotten all about them!"

The two Shell fellows joined Manners and Cleeve. Manners gave them a cheery grin. He was selecting a sunny spot for printing out his pictures—on an old oaken bench in the elm walk.

"I thought you fellows would want to see what I bagged yesterday," remarked Manners. "Some jolly good ones, though I say it. You can't see very well in the printing-frames, but wait till I get the pictures."

Manners set his little frames out in a row. The sun shone down on them clearly and brightly. Tom Merry and Lowther looked at them with as much interest as they could call up for the occasion. Manners' hobby did not appeal to them very much; but they did their best.

"What's this one?" asked Tom. "Looks like a giddy brigand."

"That's a gipsy camp I found along the Wayland road," said Manners. "That's a gipsy chap standing near his caravan. Looks a bit of a bandit, doesn't he? I could take that picture into an Italian brigand scene if I liked. Cleeve thinks he's seen that man before somewhere."

Cleeve opened his lips, and closed them again without speaking.

His eyes were fixed on the gipsy in the photograph, scarcely recognisable in the negative perhaps, but more so in the printing-frame than in the developing tank.

So far as could be judged from the negative the gipsy looked a shifty man, with a hard and reckless face that had a lurking expression of slyness. Certainly it was not a pleasing face.

"Not the man to meet alone on a dark night," commented Tom Merry.

"Regular ruffian," agreed Manners cheerfully. "If I'd met him in a lonely place, I dare say he would have had my camera off me and gone through my pockets. He couldn't try that game on the Wayland road, though. I gave him a bob to pose for a picture."

"Nice company for a St. Jim's man to get into!" said Lowther.

Snort from Manners.

"I wanted the picture," he said. "I dare say the man isn't a bad chap, either, only he looks rather rough and sly. I had a jaw to him, too. He's come along from Norfolk in his van."

"From Norfolk?" repeated Cleeve, as if involuntarily.

"Yes. If you've been in Norfolk, that's where you've seen him, very likely."

Cleeve did not state whether he had been in Norfolk. His eyes fixed again, as if fascinated, on the negative.

"You didn't learn his name?" he asked, after a long pause, during which Manners was watching the effect of the sun on his negatives and forgetting time and space, as usual.

"Eh, whose name?" asked Manners, with a start, coming out of a dream, as it were.

"The gipsy's name."

"Oh! Yes; he told me his name was Isaac Ives."

Manners, still watching his precious printing outfit, did not think of looking at Cleeve. But Tom Merry and Lowther saw—they could not help seeing—the colour drain from the new fellow's face. The look they had seen on his face the day before came back to their memory—it was on Cleeve's face now. Tom made a movement forward.

"Cleeve! What's the matter? What—"

"Nothing."

"My hat! I thought you were going to be ill—"

"What utter rot!"

Tom stepped back again, setting his lips. Cleeve had pulled himself together, but there was a strange gleam in his eyes.

Tom and Lowther exchanged a glance. That Cleeve knew the name of Isaac Ives, that he was acquainted with that sly-featured gipsy was obvious, and that discovery was strange enough.

Manners gathered up his printing-frames. It was time to take them in for fixing the pictures.

"I'll help you," said Cleeve suddenly.

He picked up the printing frame containing the negative of the gipsy. Manners gathered the rest.

"Come on, old bean!" he said, starting for the House. Cleeve followed him.

Crash!

The printing-frame that Cleeve was carrying fell to the ground. Manners spun round.

"Well, you clumsy ass!" he exclaimed. "Mind—don't tread on it—look what you're doing. Cleeve!" shrieked Manners, in an agony of apprehension.

But the warning was in vain.

Cleeve, with utter clumsiness—if the action was not intentional—had planted his boot fairly on the printing-frame, and there was a horrid crunch as his weight was thrown upon it.

Manners gave a howl.

"You fathead! You chump! My photograph! Oh, my hat! You clumsy idiot! You footling fathead!" Manners of the Shell was not polite—indeed, some fellows said that he was scarcely civilised—when anything happened to his precious photographs.

"Sorry!" gasped Cleeve.

"You idiot! You're grinding it under your boot!" yelled Manners. "Can't you get your hoof off it? Are you potty?"

Manners, rushing back, shoved Cleeve roughly away. It was no time to stand on ceremony.

Then he knelt and examined the wrecked printing-frame. It was smashed to pieces. The negative was beyond all

recognition now—nothing but a blotch remained where Cleeve's boot had ground it to the earth. Manners, with the feeling of a lioness robbed of her cubs, gazed at the wreck.

"Awfully sorry!" stammered Cleeve.

"Idiot!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Manners gathered up the wreckage, and carried it off, though it was obvious that no picture ever would be taken from that negative now. The most skilful hand could not have restored it to a condition for printing a picture. Cleeve looked after the exasperated photographer of the Shell, and then glanced at Tom Merry and Lowther.

He knew that they were looking at him. His face crimsoned under their accusing eyes.

"What did you mean by that, Cleeve?" asked Tom Merry, very quietly.

"It was an accident—"

"It was no accident! You deliberately destroyed Manners' photograph. I never saw anything more deliberate!" said Tom hotly. "Are you potty, or what? What has Manners done to you?"

"I never meant—"

"Lie number two!" said Monty Lowther. "We shan't tell Manners so, as luckily he doesn't seem to have noticed it—but we both know that you destroyed that picture on purpose."

Cleeve shrugged his shoulders.

"Think so, if you like," he said, with a sneer. "I don't value your opinion very much."

"You're an utter rascal," said Tom. "You know that Manners is potty about his photographs, and you destroy one of them—for nothing!"

"Not for nothing," said Monty Lowther, with bitter clearness. "Cleeve knows that gipsy, knows his name, and wanted to get rid of that photograph. That's why he destroyed it."

Cleeve gave him a look, and turned and walked away.

"Monty!" muttered Tom.

"Isn't it plain?" snapped Lowther.

"But why—"

"I don't know—unless his old school's in Norfolk, where Manners says that gipsy comes from, and the man knows something about him—and he's afraid it may get out here. He doesn't want any St. Jim's man to know Isaac Ives by sight, I suppose." Lowther set his teeth. "I've a jolly good mind to run my bike out after class, and hunt up that gipsy, and hear what he can tell us about Cleeve and where he comes from."

"You won't, old chap," said Tom. "That's not good enough for you. Blessed if I know what to make of it—but he's Ralston's nephew, and the less said about it—the better."

And as the chapel bell began to ring, the subject was dropped, and the chums of the Shell said no more of the strange happening—but they could not help thinking of it.

CHAPTER 15.

Left on His Own!

VICTOR CLEEVE took his place in Form with the Shell that morning.

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was very kind to him, doubtless on account of the fact that Cleeve was his colleague's nephew.

Cleeve showed little appreciation of it.

He sat in Form with a sulky face, and more than once the Shell fellows noticed their Form master glance at him keenly and dubiously.

He had, however, no fault to find with Cleeve so far as the Form work went. Whatever and wherever his old school was, Cleeve had not wasted his time there, and he was as good a man in class as any fellow in the Shell. Indeed, he was better than most, and on that account, at least, his Form master was pleased with him.

Nobody in the Shell took any notice of Cleeve. The School House fellows did not like him, and wanted nothing to do with him. The New House members of the Form, who had seen little or nothing of him so far, looked at him, interested in the fact that he was a Housemaster's nephew; but they did not like his looks, and they saw at once that he was unpopular in his own House.

Even Manners was fed up with him.

Manners, fortunately, was not aware that the destruction of his precious photograph had been intentional. His chums—not desiring to see Manners go off at the deep end and commit assault and battery upon the Housemaster's nephew—had not told him what they thought. But though Manners did not know the worst, he knew that his negative had been

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A VIVID STORY of the "ROYAL SCOT"



If any one of the British railways can "take a rise" out of the others it certainly does not hesitate to do so. For rivalry, though friendly, is amazingly keen. And as little indeed can be done to improve the safety of travelling by rail in this country—and there we are far and away ahead of all other foreign railways—the rivalry mostly takes the form of knocking off minutes in the running-time.

It occurred to the London, Midland and Scottish Railway—the L.M.S. for short—the other day, that something might be done to take the wind out of the sails of their rivals the L.N.E.R., otherwise the London and North-Eastern Railway.

The "Royal Scot" belongs to the L.M.S., of course. It is their chief pride and glory indeed. The "crack" train of the rival L.N.E.R. is the "Flying Scotsman." One of those trains was to be top-dog—definitely and without any shadow of doubt. No splitting of honours would do for them!

The first bombshell in the battle was flung by the "Flying Scotsman." Said the L.N.E.R., "we will make the Flying Scotsman's run the longest non-stop performance in the whole wide world. And in so doing we will put the Royal Scot's nose out of joint!"

That run was to be carried out on a certain Tuesday—from London to Edinburgh, without a halt. That's a run of 392½ miles: a tremendous performance when you think of the enormous strain imposed on the crew of the flying engine!

Before the Tuesday dawned, however, something happened to dash the bright hopes of the L.N.E.R. to the ground. The "something" was a carefully laid plan, kept very secret, by the L.M.S. They meant the "Royal Scot" to continue to hold the world's non-stop run record, in spite of what anyone or anything should do or say to the contrary!

So the "Royal Scot," which already held the record—a non-stop run from Euston to Carlisle, 299 miles—was stoked up and flagged out of the London terminus, in the usual way. Only officials who were in the secret knew that anything unusual was afoot, until the "Royal Scot" was under way, and word went forth to all concerned that the "Royal Scot" would *not* stop at Carlisle, as she always did!

As a matter of fact, two "Royal Scots" left London at the same time. Both starting from Euston, one went straight through to Edinburgh, which is 392½ miles, and the other went

direct and without a halt to Glasgow, which is 401½ miles! Both expresses got into their destinations seven minutes before the scheduled time!

And thus it came about that the "Flying Scotsman" was robbed of its chance to make the world's record non-stop run. She cannot make an attempt to break the "Royal Scot's" record, either, for the simple and sufficient reason that the L.N.E.R. lines are not long enough!

The explanation of that is that the "Royal Scot" route to Edinburgh is 7½ miles longer than the L.N.E.R. route. So the "Royal Scot" will continue to hold its proud record of the champion long distance non-stop runner.

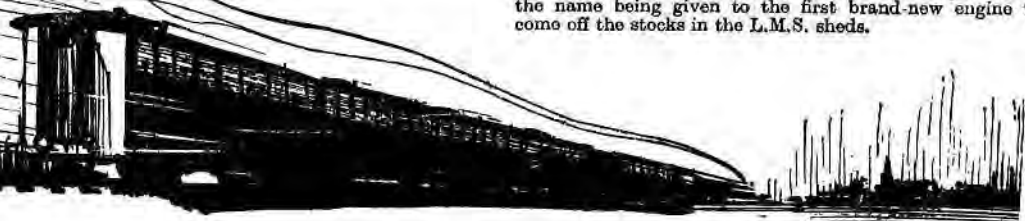
Of course, there are trains that travel much greater distances than are possible in this country, such as the fastest long-distance train in the U.S.A., which runs between New York and Chicago—960 miles. But then the American has to make several stops. The driver of that train must take off his hat to the driver of our wonderful "Royal Scot," in acknowledgment of British engineering achievement and railwaymen's skill!

The "Royal Scot" expresses—these trains have to run in duplicate sometimes, as at holiday times when traffic is tremendously swollen—carried two drivers and one fireman each on those record-smashing runs, which involved two very big climbs.

When the "Royal Scot" goes over Shap Summit, in Westmoreland, she is 914 feet above sea-level, and when she mounts Beattock Summit, in Lanarkshire, she goes still higher—1,014 feet above the sea. That is a great test of both fireman's and driver's skill, for when those climbs are tackled it is so very easy to lose precious minutes too precious to be spared from the time allowed them on the trip.

The load the "Royal Scot" has to carry ranges round about 450 tons. On top of that is the weight of the engine itself. That's another 137 tons! Three hundred or more passengers are carried at a time, at express speed. Knowing that, you will better appreciate the "Royal Scot's" magnificent daily performance over the two big Summits previously named.

For a very long time the "Royal Scot" has pulled out of the London terminus at ten o'clock sharp—without a name! Up to last year she was simply the Scottish express. But she simply demanded a title—as distinctive as that granted to other expresses without a tithe of her great capabilities. So the powers-that-be christened the ten o'clock Scottish express from Euston the "Royal Scot," the name being given to the first brand-new engine to come off the stocks in the L.M.S. sheds.



WIN OR BU'ST! You can't give young Jack Kennedy too much speed; you can't put the wind up him, either. Round perilous corners he sends his powerful Saxon car roaring—all out to win!



'SKID' KENNEDY-SPEED KING!

HERE'S A TOPICAL STORY DEALING WITH THE GREAT INTERNATIONAL TOURIST TROPHY MOTOR RACE TO BE RUN IN IRELAND, SATURDAY, AUGUST 18th.

WRITTEN SPECIALLY FOR THE
"GEM" BY

ALFRED EDGAR.

(The Motor-Racing Author.)

With a shattering roar young "Skid" Kennedy sent the powerful Saxon car hurtling round Ballyoran Corner, in a wild endeavour to avoid the Falcon Six, driven by his old enemy, Philip Slade, which was skidding into him. The Saxon missed the Falcon's tail by inches; then Skid found the steering wheel wrenched out of his hands as the car heeled over. Followed a shattering roar as the mighty Saxon crashed on the bank, sending Skid and his big brother, Ben, hurtling into the air. Beyond a few minor bruises, Skid was none the worse, but Ben had fractured his forearm. This meant that he would not be able to drive the Saxon in the great International Tourist Trophy Race which was to take place on the morrow. No one seemed more delighted at Ben's misfortune than his implacable enemy, Slade, but Slade was reckoning without young Skid, for on the spot the youngster announced himself willing to take his brother's place, choosing as his mechanic, Fred Bishop. All Slade's efforts with the race officials to stop Skid from driving the Saxon proved abortive, and taunted by Fred Bishop's words that Skid would beat the Falcon Six hollow, Slade lashed out a bunched fist at the mechanic's grinning face. But Fred slipped that savage punch like an eel, and Slade, looking a ridiculous figure, lost his balance!

"Skid" Kennedy Makes Good.

ONE of Slade's canvas racing shoes found the edge of a pool of oil spilled in front of the pit. The next moment he pitched flat on his back, full in the middle of the pool.

"Wallop!" exclaimed Fred cheerfully. "History jolly well repeats itself! Don't get up and say I put that there purposely, because I didn't! It's your own fault!"

Slade came out of the pool with his eyes blazing, and his teeth gritted behind his parted lips. He was smothered with slimy black oil from the neck down to the knees, and he made a mad rush at the boy—only to find his path barred by three men who had jumped from a near-by pit when they saw what was happening.

He tried to break through them and get at Fred, while Ben yelled:

"Shove that car down to the start, you two—move yourselves!" but he was laughing, while he spoke. The grinning boys jumped towards the machine, and pushed it forward, leaving the fuming Slade monthing threats as they went.

The racing machines were parked at one side of the road, and the drivers were lined up opposite them. When the starting semaphores arm went down, they had to run to their machines, put up the hoods, get the engines running—and the race was on!

The idea of this was because the cars were not actual racing machines, but were super sports models. They had to race with the hoods up for two laps, to prove that the hoods were really efficient; after this, the hoods were lowered and the cars were free to race with them down.

Tensely the two boys crouched opposite their Saxon, Slade and everything else forgotten. The crowds in the grand-stands were craning to watch, and a queer silence had settled over the scene.

The red and white arm slashed down—a maroon spanged high in the air, and the line of overalled drivers leaped towards their machines.

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One on either side of their car, Jack and Fred tackled the hood. It came up and open, its spring clips slashed down, then Jack was in his seat behind the wheel and ramming at the starter.

The engine fired instantly, and the car shot away, others moving out with it all along the line. They saw a great, green Bentley streaking off to their left; a roaring Alfa-Romeo spurted level with them—then they were in the midst of a whole bunch of cars rocking past the grand-stands with the crowd cheering them off.

Jack jockeyed his car between two others, racing with their spinning wheel-hubs all but kissing. He left them behind, and then was shooting at Ballyoran Corner, where the car had crashed only the day before.

Round it they went, the Saxon roaring at full throttle, picking up speed with every turn of her wheels and dropping cars behind as they stormed up Glen Hill. The road was a thin haze of dust and smoke, half hiding the faces of spectators crowded at the side.

The Saxon drew in on a car ahead, and shot in front as they came to a winding, down-sloping stretch of road which led to the scattered buildings of Newtownards.

The car began fairly to leap in its speed as it hurtled down the slope. Fred was crouched in his seat, glancing backwards every few seconds to see that no one was overtaking them. The machines in front of the Saxon slung grit and stones from their spinning tyres and, in no time at all, houses were sliding back at them.

The shattering roar of the Saxon's exhaust crashed from the buildings as the car hurtled between them, and Jack reached for hand and foot-brake as an abrupt corner showed ahead.

He eased the brakes on—and felt the Saxon's tail sliding outwards. He hauled her straight, and she skidded again, while spectators gasped as they saw the machine slithering wildly. Once more Jack flung her straight, and now he was dead on the corner, taking it at terrific speed—taking it too fast!

Brick walls flashed before them, inviting disaster; then Jack crashed on the brakes with all his strength, slung the wheel over and took the machine around the turn in a magnificently-judged skid.

A moment later they were clear, with Fred gasping:

"Gosh! That was close! What happened, Jack?"

"Don't know!" Jack answered. The car had never skidded like that in practice, but he forgot it as he opened up for the long straight stretch which formed the second leg of the triangular circuit.

Now the Saxon fairly got into her stride, eating up the bare, empty road, with a pack of cars storming along in her dust fifty yards behind, as they went rocking down to the next town.

There came a little fringe of houses, with flags hanging from the windows and spectators craning amongst the flags, and then another wicked corner.

Once more the Saxon skidded fiendishly, and as Jack flung her straight, he realised, at the back of his mind, what had happened; some hidden damage had been done to the car in the smash, that was why she skidded where before she had held the road as though she was glued to it.

She slithered sideways again, flinging almost broadside—and full in the path of three cars crashing down from behind. With all his strength, Jack pulled her straight, dragged half out of his seat, as he tried to fight the leaping car around the turn.

She went sliding straight for a safety fence which had been built to protect spectators on the outside of the turn. The scramble of the skidding tyres sounded wildly on the air, clear through the beat of the engine and the roar of the machines close behind.

Jack got her half under control, and then her tail struck the fencing! There was a mad crash of metal hitting woodwork, planks and splinters slashed high into the air as the car bounced off the fence and, heaving over on two wheels, hurtled full under the radiators of the three cars storming into the bend from behind.

"You're Doing Fine!"

FOR the fraction of a second Jack thought the Saxon was going to overturn. The gasping crowd expected to see the bunched cars pile up in a terrific crash; then the Saxon's wheels dropped back to the road.

Jack wrenched on the steering wheel and stamped the throttle wide. She skidded again, scrabbling tyres whining on the road as he flung the machine straight. The spinning hubs all but grazed the palings on the inside of the corner—then they were clear of it and storming on.

Dust slashed back from the Saxon's threshing wheels as the machine rocked out of the town. House walls slammed back the tearing bellow of her exhaust and the droning roar of her engine, while Fred leaned sideways in his mechanic's seat and yelled:

"That was a near one! Keep her going, Jack!"

On they went, drawing away from the three pursuing cars, thundering between the buildings of Comber, and leaping at yet another turn. Once again the Saxon began to skid, and she went into the curve almost broadside. It took all Jack's strength to get her straight, and the leaping machine fought against him round the turn, while the watching crowd held its breath and then applauded madly at the skill with which he held the skidding machine.

Something was wrong with the car, Jack knew that. Some part must have been damaged when Slade had forced the Saxon to crash during practice; but it was no good stopping to try and remedy it. He must race on, wrestling with the machine every inch of the way.

He saw a car ahead. It was a Lea-Francis, and Fred picked out its number.

"That's Kaye Don driving, Jack. Put it across him! Let her go!"

Once again the Saxon took full throttle and began to draw in on the other machine. Jack had a glimpse of the famous Brooklands driver's bronzed features and shining goggles as he glanced at them, then pulled to the side of the road to give them room to pass.

The great car rocked on, with Fred watching the speedometer as the broad black needle slid round the dial.

"Eighty-five—eighty-eight—ninety! Keep her at it, Jack! She'll do a hundred, easy! Ninety-seven—ninety-eight!" The car was leaping on the curving road, testing Jack's muscle as he flung it on. He remembered that Ben had touched a hundred and five along this bit of the circuit, which was the absolute limit of the car's speed.

"Ninety-nine!" yelled Fred. "She's doing it! A hundred! A hundred miles an— He broke off with a gasp, then roared: "Look at that bonnet strap!"

One of the two broad straps which secured the bonnet had come undone. Unless it were buckled again, the terrific wind created by the car's stupendous speed might tear the engine cover from its fastenings, smashing it back at their heads.

"I'll fix it! Keep driving!" Fred eased himself out of his narrow seat as he shouted. Then he added: "Hang on to my feet!" And a moment later he was squirming round the side of the windscreen, clawing himself out so that he lay almost full length along the top of the engine.

Driving with one hand, Jack reached for Fred's ankles to steady him. The car swayed and weaved on the road, but slowed hardly a fraction. A bump might have hurled them both to disaster, or might have flung Fred off to instant death.

Grim, hanging on with all his strength, he reached for the strap and began to tighten it. It was a mad, desperate thing to do; but if they had stopped the car they would have lost precious seconds, and both knew it.

"Right!" Jack heard the shout as the strap was secured, then Fred came slithering back and was half into the cockpit again when the front wheels hit a big pot-hole, and sent the car leaping high into the air.

Fred was all but thrown out. Jack yanked his ankles in the moment that he dragged in the steering-wheel with his other hand, correcting the skid into which the machine had jumped. A second later and Fred was back in his seat, with the car straight again and bellowing on.

"Thought I was a goner!" Fred panted. "My hat, isn't the old bus shifting! Wonder if Slade's in front of us?"

There was no telling the position of their rival on the Falcon Six, but Jack believed he was somewhere ahead. They ripped under the roaring blackness of the railway bridge which preceded the Dundonald hairpin, and as they cleared it they sighted another car in front.

"That's Malcolm Campbell!" Jack shouted.

"Then catch him an' pass him!" Fred bawled; and he grinned as he spoke.

They were a hundred yards behind Britain's famous speed king as the Saxon ripped at the hairpin bend. Jack trod on the brake pedal, and the piercing scream of the shoes biting in the drums on the kicking axles sounded above all else.

Round they went—round in another terrific skid that tore grit and stones from the road surface and slashed them at the banked faces of the wide-eyed spectators. Out of the dangerous turn and on, chasing the owner of the wonderful Blue-Bird.

"We're potty to think we can pass him!" Jack gasped to himself, as he sent the Saxon on. "But we've got to do it to win—got to pass him and keep in front of him!"

The long line of grand-stands slashed out of the dust-haze ahead, sliding back to meet them. Flags, bunting, craning crowds; a thin, apparently distant, cheer as the packed spectators recognised Malcolm Campbell—then it was all left behind. Jack had the merest glimpse of the replenishment pits, and of Ben, with his arm in splints and sling, waving to them as they went by, and after that he was easing the car to take Ballyoran Corner.

In characteristic fashion, Malcolm Campbell took his Alvis car wide, and desperately Jack chased him up the curve and the hill beyond. Foot by foot the mighty Saxon caught him up, both Jack and Fred intent as they pitted their speed and skill against England's best driver.

By bend and curve, hill and sweeping slope, they rocketed on to Newtownards, and as the red roofs of the houses slid back the Saxon leaped almost to the tail of the car ahead. Jack tightened his grip on the wheel as the deadly corner in the heart of the town swooped at them.

Brakes screamed, and again the Saxon skidded madly. Right across the road she went, barely missing the fence she had already broken; tail wagging, tyres whistling, juddering along her whole length, she strove to hurl herself to destruction, but again Jack mastered her, and when they cleared the town he swooped level with Malcolm Campbell.

The famous speed king saw them come on. He glanced at them, and Ken saw him smile through the dust which masked his face. He eased a hand from the wheel to beckon them on as he pulled to the very limit of the road-edge to give them plenty of room to pass—then he was left behind.

"Passed him!" Fred yelled ecstatically. "See the way he gave us the road—sport, isn't he? Don't forget to pull in at the pits to lower the hood when we come to the stands again!"

The miles slid beneath them until the wind-whipped flags on the grand-stands showed once more. Then Jack braked, the Saxon came to a halt before its pit, and both boys tumbled out to lower the hood.

As it came down Ben leaned across the tool-cluttered plank in front of the replenishment pit and shouted:

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FRED—the plucky mechanic who sits beside his chum, Jack Kennedy, and doesn't turn a hair as the great racing car hurtles round the course at break-neck speed.

"You're doing fine, boys! Keep at it!"

"Where's Slade?" Jack gasped.

"He's just got away in front of you—about one minute ahead. You'll catch him!"

Then the hood was furled and the chums were back in the driving-seat. All along the pits other cars were coming in to take down their hoods, in accordance with the regulations of the race. With the hoods down, speeds would still further increase, and there seemed to be a deeper, more purposeful note to the Saxon's exhaust as she thundered off again.

"Skid-mad!"

THE great Tourist Trophy race settled down now. As it went on, spectators began to watch for the appearance of Jack's Saxon. Somehow, news of the nickname Jack had already gained began to fly round.

"Here comes 'Skid' Kennedy!" The phrase passed from lip to lip whenever the hurtling bulk of the roaring machine ripped at a corner, and the crowd held its breath as they saw the car go skidding round the turn.

Skidding a bend makes a machine lose time, because skids slow it up. Jack knew that, but he could not stop the car skidding. A dozen times on every lap he barely plucked the Saxon from disaster, and wherever the road was straight he gave it full throttle in order to make up the time he had lost.

It was just as they thundered along the straightaway beneath the frowning bulk of Scrabo Hill, that they passed a car pulled to the side of the road, the driver and the mechanic sitting disconsolately on the grass at one side. Their engine had failed them.

"It's one o' the other Saxons!" Fred shouted the words in Jack's ear as the machine was left behind. "Conked out!"

It was one of the three cars forming the official Saxon team, and it was as they took the Dundonald hairpin three laps later that they saw another Saxon with its nose in a wire fence at the side of the road, and one wheel buckled untidily beneath it.

"Another one out of the race!" Jack gasped. "Gosh!"

With two of the team out of it, anything that their own Saxon might do would be certain to attract the attention of the Saxon firm, and the thought inspired Jack to drive still faster. Fred was watching the pit for signals from Ben, and as they went by he gasped:

"Slade's only ten seconds in front of us! There he goes—round Ballyoran!"

Through a thin haze of dust and smoke they could just make out the ugly, vicious shape of the Falcon Six which Slade was driving, and the Saxon positively leaped after it.

Round the curves and bends, skidding all the while, held only by Jack's strong hands and instinctive skill, went the Saxon, pulling in inch by inch, foot by foot, until they cleared the Newtownards bend, with the sliding Saxon bare yards behind the Falcon.

"You can catch him on the straight!" Fred roared, and he hunched forward in his seat.

After the wagging tail of the Falcon they went, speed lifting past a hundred miles an hour. The wind whipped and lashed their faces, droning in their ears. When they got to Comber, Jack held the car to its speed until the last possible moment, and he was almost level as they took the corner.

Yet again the Saxon went round in a wild speed-dance, wrenching her tyres on the road, leaving rubber on the surface as she skidded. Jack got her round, then pulled out to pass Slade. The man's mechanic was shouting at him, telling him that the boys were just behind, and the pallid-faced, thin-lipped speedman pressed his Falcon to its uttermost limit in order not to let them get by.

On the two cars thundered, with the willing Saxon stealing level an inch at a time. Their blaring exhausts filled the air with raucous sound, the screeching drone of their supercharges came with a wild and wailing note; both bucked and jumped on the highway—and still the Saxon drew on.

Almost level! Jack could see the angle of Slade's jaw, grim-set and taut. He could see the man's hands knotted on the shifting steering-wheel, the glimmer of the sun on his instrument-board. The smashing roar of the Falcon came to his ears like something solid as, wheel to wheel, they went on, and—

The Saxon gave a jump that was worse than anything before. It felt to Jack as though a giant hand had snatched at the car, yanking it sideways. He heard a thudding

'smash almost at his right elbow, and had a glimpse of something black shooting from the off-side rear wheel.

"Burst tyre!" broke from his lips; then the car became a mad, bouncing, slithering shape which dropped behind as the Falcon shot away in front. Broadside on the road slid the car, the bared rim of the lamed wheel scoring the surface until Jack could force her straight and pull to the side of the circuit.

Fred was out of the machine almost before it stopped. Jack squirmed from behind the wheel and raced round to inspect the damage. The tyre, weakened by incessant skidding, had burst, and now it clung around the brake-drum and the axle in torn, hot shreds of rubber and canvas.

Its flying tatters had crashed against the wing above, crumpling it until it looked as though someone had smashed at it with a great hammer. Only for a moment did the two stare at it, then both leaped to change it for the spare wheel.

Fred worked like a young fiend. Without exchanging a word they crashed the spare wheel home, and the sweat was running down their faces as they replaced the tools, leaped into the machine, and Jack sent it off once more.

Cars had passed them during the seconds-long check, but they overhauled two of them before the replenishment pits showed up once more.

"Stop to get another wheel!" Fred bawled, and the Saxon slithered to a halt. Both jumped out, flinging the damaged wheel over the plank and grabbing another spare, while Ben leaned across to them, his face set.

"Jack, all the other Saxons are out of the race—you're the only one left in it! For heaven's sake, drive more steadily! They're calling you 'Skid-mad Kennedy' from the way you're taking the corners!"

Jack grinned a little, then he gasped:

"Where's Slade now?"

"In front of you—and he's leading!"

"Leading!" Jack glanced at Fred as they tumbled back into the car. "If we can catch and pass him we'll be winning!"

In the Lead!

SIGNALS from the Falcon pit told Slade how hard the lone Saxon was pressing him, and he drove all out after that. Spectators round the course knew how desperately 'Skid' Kennedy was driving, and they cheered him every time that he passed.

Rumours of the crash that had put Ben out of the race, and that it was Jack who had taken his place, flew round. The crowd admired Jack for his pluck and his nerve, and they could tell by the way he drove now that he was all out after Slade, fighting to snatch the lead.

For lap after lap the Saxon scorched round, the crowds wild with excitement on every corner. He and Fred were duelling with famous drivers all the time. For two clear laps they had a dog-fight with one of the fine, low-built Alvis machines, with Harvey at the wheel.

They got past him in the end, only to find a flaming red Alfa-Romeo ready to give battle anew. At last even the tearing Italian car gave them best, and they went ahead.

Jack was feeling the terrific strain now. Heat was flung back by the engine, searing his feet; oily fumes slewed to his face, and his features were blackened by a mixture of smoke and dust.

His hand was sore from constant use of the gear-lever, and his legs felt numbed up to the knees; but he gritted his teeth and stuck it. He knew that great races are won by physical endurance as much as by speed, and he wasn't going to cave in now.

This growing weakness was the thing which Ben had feared. After all, Jack was only a boy, with a boy's strength, even if he had the courage of a race-wise speedman.

Every time that he felt himself growing tired he remembered the things for which he was racing. He wasn't going to let Ben down; and as they passed the pits again Fred leaned over to shout:

"All the Saxon people are with Ben in our pit now, shouting like mad! We're the only hope they've got left. Stick it, old son! Have a thirst quencher!" And between Jack's lips he crammed a little sweet which would allay the dryness of his mouth.

On, on—with never a sight of the speeding Slade ahead. Jack knew that the man must be pressing his Falcon hard, driving it all out.

Then, as they passed the stands and the pits once more, it seemed to him that everyone stood up to wave him on. He had a fleeting glimpse of the Saxon mechanics, the combined shout rolling through the thunder of the car.

"We must be nearly on top of Slade!" Fred yelled to him. "They've all gone mad!"

Ballyoran Corner slashed past. They rocked up the hill beyond; then, as they topped the crest for the down grade, they sighted the scuttling figure of the Falcon.

No need for Fred to say anything. Jack fairly flung the Saxon in pursuit, and there followed the fiercest, maddest lap of the whole race.

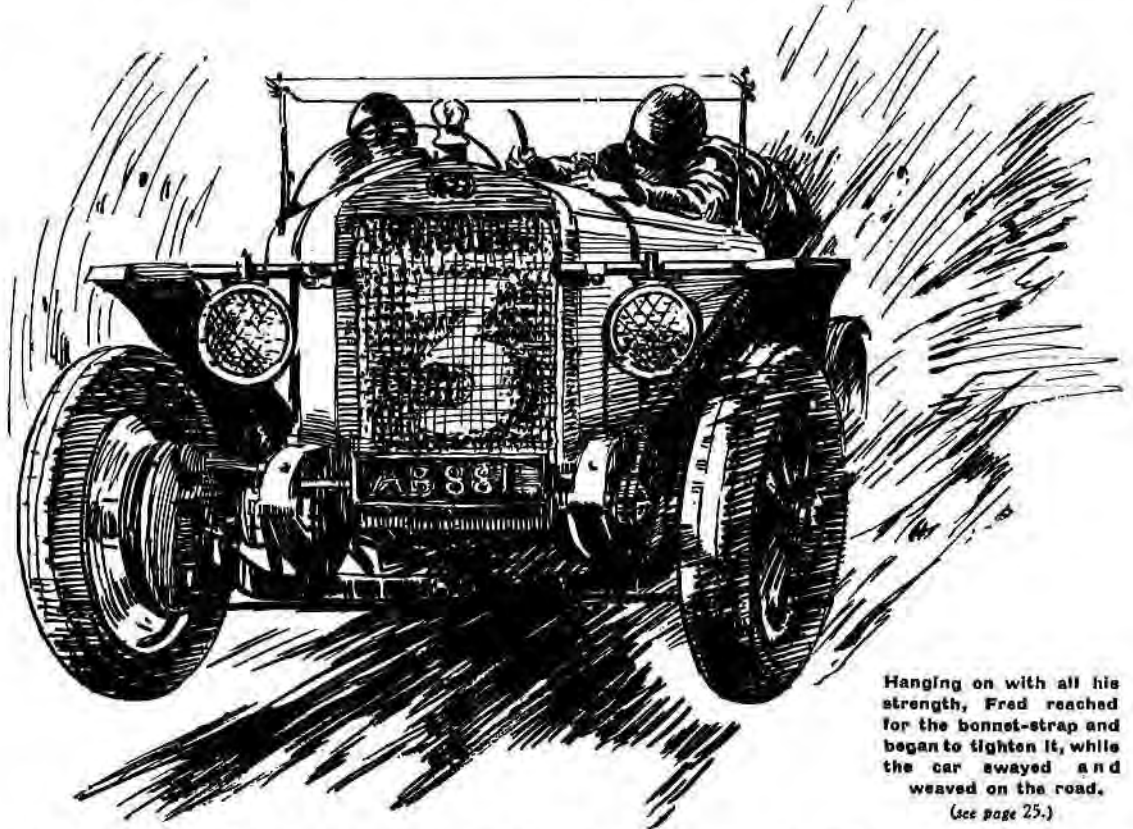
They caught Slade up just beyond the town. His mechanic was looking back at them, telling Slade that they were coming up; and now the speedman gave his car its last fraction of power. All down the road to Comber he

look towards the spot where the Falcon had stopped. The car had gone.

"He's got away!" Fred gasped. "He— What's that in front now, just making for the bridge? It's the Falcon! He's only just got off again. We'll catch him before the hairpin, and then we'll be a full lap the lead."

They could see the low shape of the rival car clearly now, and they were coming up at it hand-over-hand. Slade had repaired whatever damage his engine had sustained, and was gradually working up to top speed.

He disappeared through the black cavity of the railway bridge, and the Saxon rocked after him a moment or so



Hanging on with all his strength, Fred reached for the bonnet-strap and began to tighten it, while the car awayed and weaved on the road.

(See page 25.)

held them, but they were only bare yards behind when they took the corner outside the town.

The frantic crowd swept past in a blurred slash as both cars rocked on the road. Slade did everything possible to keep in front, but the relentless Saxon bored on.

Her wheels seemed barely to touch the road. She was travelling in what felt like gigantic leaps, bouncing and quivering in her speed as she slashed level.

For a mile the two held together—a mile on a road full of swift curves, with certain death hanging on an instant's miscalculation—then abruptly the Falcon dropped behind.

Clearly Jack heard a different sound in the thunderous note of the bellowing car as it fell away, and Fred yelled: "He's conked out! Somethin's given way! He's whipped, Jack! We pressed him so hard he couldn't stick the pace! We're leading!"

Leading! Jack felt his heart thump at the word. They were winning the great race! The spectators at Dundonald hairpin craned up to watch them round; and when they came to the main grand-stands the voice of the cheering thousands sounded like the furious beat of surf on a rocky shore.

Ben and the Saxon mechanics seemed to have gone off their heads with delight, and the pit was a forest of waving arms.

Every corner brought plaudits from the cheering crowd. "Slade couldn't stick the speed!" Fred shouted. "He's finished!"

"He might get going again!" Jack answered. "That wouldn't matter! We're faster than he is, and we've got a lead of him."

The Saxon did not slow. The car seemed to understand that it was winning now; and, because Jack had come to know the corners, the Saxon was not skidding so badly.

They cleared Comber once again, and both strained to

later. They were overhauling him as both machines stormed at Dundonald hairpin, and the Saxon was level and ready to pass as they reached it.

Jack saw Slade glance across at them, and the man's face was venomous. His eyes blazed behind his goggles.

Both machines were travelling fast, and Jack felt the Saxon begin to slide out in a skid as they took the corner together.

Round they went, the Saxon skidding madly, Jack straining behind the wheel. Dust whipped like smoke from the sliding tyres, and he shouted when he saw that Slade was not giving them enough room to get round.

He saw Slade's hands wrench on the Falcon's wheel. Deliberately the man slashed his car across their path, so that Jack would have to brake to miss him and then slide to disaster in the fence.

Jack tried to pull the Saxon out. He felt her skidding round. She bounced madly on the road; he tried to keep her out of the fence; but she spun like a whipped top, tail flinging, to crash full against the side of the fouling Falcon.

There was a fierce, clattering screech of breaking metal as the two cars hit, then both whirled full across the turn. Jack saw a fence before him—saw the Falcon hit it!

There was a mad smother of flying woodwork and dust and stones as the Saxon struck the fence with a thunderous crash!

Jack felt the car leap and tilt over, then everything was blotted out in a wild smother of flying debris and cataclysmic sound as the two machines slithered to destruction!

(Does this mean that the Saxon car is out of the race? Does it mean that all Big Ben's time and labour have been wasted? that Skid's breathless, hair-raising driving has come to naught? Read next week's full-of-thrills instalment and tell all your pals about young Skid—and our superb Free Gifts.)

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A RANK OUTSIDER!

(Continued from page 22.)

destroyed—so at best Cleeve was a clumsy idiot, not to be trusted with a negative in his hands.

To add to Manners' exasperation, the delay caused by the "accident" had prevented the other pictures being taken out of the frames in time, and they had all suffered from over-exposure; the whole set, being spoiled. In the case of the five pictures, that only meant a waste of time and trouble—fresh prints could be taken from the negatives. Still, it was intensely irritating to a fellow who prided himself upon never spoiling a print. But the head and front of Cleeve's offending was the destruction of the gipsy negative—and Manners could not forgive that.

It was a disappointment to him, too. He had fancied that he had found a kindred spirit; that it was a case of two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one, so to speak. That was over now. A fellow who could carelessly drop a photograph and plant a clumsy hoof on it, was not a fellow whom Manners could regard as a kindred spirit.

He was fed up with the fellow, and he left him alone.

In morning break, when the Forms came out, Cleeve left the Shell room by himself, and walked alone in the quad. He did not seem to mind.

Perhaps he was thinking of another school, of other scenes, as he idled under the elms with his hands in his pockets. Certainly he showed no interest whatever in his present surroundings.

If he wanted to be left alone, he had his wish. Not a fellow spoke a word to him before third lesson.

After dinner, however, Tom Merry sought out the new junior.

That he disliked the fellow, as all the House did, was not to be denied. But Tom, always good-natured, wanted to give him a chance. He knew that it would be painful to "old Railton" to see his nephew in such a state of isolation—the troublesome happenings of the previous day had been chiefly due to Mr. Railton's desire to see his relative on friendly terms with Study No. 10.

So Tom joined the new junior as he walked in the quad, his hands in his pockets, his handsome face openly moody and discontented.

Cleeve looked at him icily.

He had not forgotten Tom Merry's words that morning, and, deserved or not, they rankled in his memory.

"Games practice this afternoon," said Tom, determined to take no notice of Cleeve's unpleasant manner.

"No classes?" asked Cleeve.

Tom smiled.

"We have a maths set with old Railton—your uncle—but after that it's games practice. We've a big fixture coming along next week—the Greyfriars match."

"Never heard of Greyfriars."

"We play Rookwood later."

"Fraid I've never heard of Rookwood, either."

Tom drew in his breath hard.

"Well, you've heard of them now I've mentioned them," he said as pleasantly as he could. "They're rather big fixtures here."

"I don't want to play in the matches."

Tom stared at him.

"You're not likely to, whether you want to or not," he said dryly. "New kids are not shoved into the eleven like that."

"Oh!" said Cleeve, biting his lip.

"But if you're good at cricket I can give you a chance in a House match," said Tom. "We play a House match with Figgins & Co. on Saturday, and the best men on both sides will be picked out for the Greyfriars match next week. I'd like to see how you shape at the game. Railton says you're a good man at it."

"I don't intend to play cricket at St. Jim's."

"You can please yourself about playing in matches," Tom said. "That is if you're picked out, of course. But you can't please yourself about games practice; that's compulsory on some days every week."

"I don't care two straws."

"Then you ought to," said Tom sharply.

"Thanks for your opinion!"

"Anyhow, it's a mug's game to cut cricket," said Tom. "If you've played, you must want to go on playing, that stands to reason. You're standing in your own light, with this sulking."

Cleeve flushed.

"It's my own bizney, I suppose?" he said.

"What will Railton think if you stand out of games?"

"I don't care what he thinks!"

"Well, you're a queer fish," said Tom, after a pause. "I hate to see any fellow going on in this way. It's not good for a chap to be mooching about by himself and sulking."

"Mind your own business, can't you?"

Tom's hands clenched.

Cleeve's hands came out of his pockets, and he gave Tom Merry a look of mocking defiance. It was evident that he did not care whether he came to blows with the captain of the Shell or not.

"Well?" he said, with a sneer.

"You've asked for it a lot of times," said Tom, breathing hard. "If you weren't old Railton's nephew I'd give you the hiding of your life! I'm done with you! Go and eat cake!"

And Tom turned his back on Victor Cleeve and walked away. Cleeve looked after him, an uncertain expression on his face, and he opened his lips as if to call to Tom Merry. Then, as if he had thought better—or worse—of it, he turned away, and, with a dogged look, tramped along under the elms.

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the next magnificent yarn in this grand series, entitled: "A Schoolboy's Secret!" which will appear in next week's BUMPER FREE GIFT NUMBER of the GEM.)



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