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"SELBY IN THE SOUP!"

This week's long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

HERE'S A THRILLING AND DRAMATIC STORY OF ST. JIM'S—

SELBY in the

There has never been much love lost between Mr. Henry Selby, the Third Form master, and Harry Manners, of the Shell. But this week, when Mr. Selby is faced with ruin and disgrace, it is Manners who forgets all animosity and comes to the rescue!

CHAPTER 1. Camera Wanted!

"HARRY, old man—" Reggie Manners, of the Third Form at St. Jim's, addressed his major in honeyed tones.

Manners major eyed his young brother suspiciously, as did Tom Merry and Lowther of the Shell.

When a Third Form fag addressed a fellow in the Fourth or Shell with respect, humility, and geniality, such a circumstance naturally aroused suspicion in the breast of the fellow addressed.

In the natural order of things, Shell and Fourth fellows were entitled to respect from fags, at least. But they rarely got it. More rarely did majors get it from their minors. Indeed, it was considered "the thing" for a Third "man" who owned a major in a higher Form, to treat the circumstance as a deep misfortune to be borne with resignation and fortitude.

Yet here was Reggie Manners addressing his elder brother with becoming respect, humility, and even geniality. Moreover, young Wally D'Arcy, Curly Gibson, and Levison minor, who were with him, bore similar attitudes of dutiful respectfulness.

No wonder the Terrible Three were suspicious at once.

"Well, kid?" grunted Manners major. "What are you after now? Want to borrow five bob?"

"Nunno! You see—"

"Want some lines done, eh?"

"Not at all, old fellow. It's like this—"

"They've suddenly been ordered to wash their necks," said Lowther. "That's it! I can tell it from the look of dumb misery in their eyes. They want us to give them some soap!"

"You shut up, Lowther, you funny—" began Curly Gibson; but Reggie Manners interrupted him warmly.

"You shut up yourself, Curly!" he said severely. "That's not the way to speak to a Shell fellow! If you'd addressed my major like that, I'd have punched your nose!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The Terrible Three chuckled. Obviously Reggie Manners had an axe to grind.

"Take no notice of young Curly," went on Reggie diplomatically. "He doesn't understand that a fellow in the Shell is entitled to respect. Now, Harry, old fellow—"

"Cough it up!" grinned Manners major. "What are you after, you young scamp?"

"Ahem! Just a little favour," explained Reggie hopefully. "Could you lend me your camera for an hour or so, Harry?"

"What?" Manners major jumped.

"I don't mean your presentation one—the long-distance contraption, of course!" said Reggie hurriedly. "I mean your pocket Kodak, old chap!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,101.



"Just for an hour!" said Wally D'Arcy eagerly.

"We'll take great care of it!" added Levison minor.

"Mine's busted," explained Wally. "That little beast, Piggott, dropped mine and trod on it; he said it was an accident."

"Well, my hat!" gasped Manners major. "Of all the cheek! And d'you think I want an accident to happen to mine?"

"It wouldn't, old chap—"

"It jolly well isn't going to!" snorted Manners. "So that's what you're after—"

"Only for an hour!" said Reggie. "Now, don't be mean, old chap!"

"I jolly well am going to be mean!" grinned Manners major. "What d'you want it for, anyway?"

"Only a lark!" said Wally.

"A lark on that beast Selby?" said Curly Gibson.

"It's like this," said Reggie, still hopeful. "You know what a beast Selby is? Well, he licked us all round yesterday, and gated us. We're going to pay the beast out for it. We're going to shove frogs in his desk."

"We shoved one in once before!" grinned Wally. "He hates frogs. You should have seen him when he lifted the lid of his desk. He yelled and nearly fell backwards over his chair."

"No end of a lark," put in Reggie Manners gleefully. "This time we're shoving a couple of frogs in. Then—"

"But where does the Kodak come in?" asked Tom Merry.

"That's the cream of the joke," grinned Reggie. "I shall take a snap of the old beast just as he does a giddy leap into the air, as he's bound to do—his face full of horror, you know. It'll make a ripping picture. Then we'll want to develop and print some copies."

"And we'll stick 'em up all over the school," explained Wally. "See the wheeze? It's a ripping idea! Now, don't say you won't, Manners, old chap!"

—FEATURING TOM MERRY & CO., & Mr. SELBY, OF THE THIRD!

SOUP!



by Martin Clifford

And the fags looked hopefully at Henry Manners. But their optimism was destined to receive a rude shock.

"Well, of all the cheek!" gasped Manners. "And you think I'm ass enough to help you play a trick like that on Selby?"

"Rats! No harm in it! Does that mean you won't?" sniffed Reggie, a great deal of respect and cordiality vanishing from his tone.

"Yes, it jolly well does, kid! Take my tip and chuck the silly game!"

"Look here——"

"There's nothing doing! Cut off!"

"If you're going to be mean——"

"I am, kid! Now travel!"

"Yah! Mean cad!"

"What?"

"Afraid of getting his silly old camera scratched!" jeered Wally. "Yah! Just like you measly Shell-fish!"

"Just what I might have expected!" snorted Reggie. "Of all the mean, measly frumps, my major takes the bun! You won't lend it, then?"

"Not likely! And if I have any more cheek——"

"Yah! Fat lot you'll do!" jeered Wally. "Think we care for old, doddering frumps like you! Yah!"

With that, the leader of the Third knocked Manners major's cap off. Then all four fags took to their heels, yelling back scornful epithets as they went.

"Well, the—the—the——"

Manners major spluttered wrathfully. Then he snatched up his cap, rammed it on his head, and went in hot pursuit. But long before he was half-way across the quad the scamps of the Third had vanished indoors. And Manners major returned to his grinning chums, breathing hard and vowing future vengeance.

Meantime, having discovered that there was no sign of pursuit, the fags had halted in the hall-way to discuss the situation.

"Well, looks as if we're stumped!" grunted Wally D'Arcy. "This is all your fault, young Manners!"

"Eh? What?"

"Of course it is—disappointing us like this! You should bring your silly major up properly," snorted Wally. "Why, I can get anything out of my silly major."

"His boot—yes," said Manners minor cheerfully. "Still, your major's rather a soft muff, Wally——"

"What's that?" said Wally angrily.

"All serene!" said Reggie hastily. "Only he's more easy-going than mine. Anyway, we'll go and get that Kodak now, chaps."

"Get what?" snorted Wally. "And where the thump are we to get a Kodak now, ass?"

"My major's study," said Reggie calmly. "I'm surprised at my major, I must say; he ought to have more brotherly love and generosity. To teach him to be more brotherly and generous, I'm going to help myself to his Kodak."

"Phew! You know where he keeps it, Reggie?"

Manners minor nodded and chuckled.

"On the top of the cupboard in Study No. 10," he said cheerily. "I spotted him shove it there only yesterday, in fact. Only yesterday, too, he was jawing me about not following his example in things. Well, if I take snapshots with the Kodak he takes snapshots with, I shall be following his example, shan't I?"

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"Come on, then!"

And Wally & Co. roared as they scuttled upstairs to Study No. 10 after Reggie Manners. Reggie's ingenious defence of his intentions struck them as funny.

CHAPTER 2.

Not Such a Success!

MR. SELBY came into the Third Form room quickly—almost with a spring, in fact. Mr. Selby usually came into the Form-room like that; by so doing he hoped to catch his flock "on the hop," so to speak—or his flock claimed that he did. And very often he did catch them doing something they shouldn't do; in which case classes started with a crop of lines, or canings.

Mr. Selby was not popular—far from it. He was ill-tempered, ill-natured, somewhat unjust and very suspicious indeed—qualities not at all likely to make him popular. The Third called him a tyrant, and they certainly had some justification to use that term.

In most ways Mr. Selby was rather an unpleasant gentleman to deal with—and especially after dinner. Like most irritable individuals, Mr. Selby suffered from indigestion—though whether the indigestion was caused by the irritability, or the irritability by the indigestion was a moot point. At all events, he did suffer, and he was obviously suffering when he entered the Form-room that afternoon.

His nose was red, and his features in general sour and acid. He glared round his Form swiftly, fully expecting either a friendly scrap to be taking place, or to see ink-pellets and books flying about, as was usual in his absence.

But on this afternoon he was disappointed. The fags were orderly and quiet; they looked, indeed, quite model pupils. All were in their places, meek-looking and serious, as if eager to begin the afternoon's work.

Yet Mr. Selby was neither pleased nor gratified. Being a very suspicious gentleman, the unusual peace and orderliness of his flock made him feel quite certain that something was "on."

His suspicions were justified—not for the first time by any means. The young gentlemen of the Third very often were "up" to something—frequently against Mr. Selby. Being always on the look-out for something, Mr. Selby was not

deceived by the good behaviour of his Form. He had "been there before," so to speak.

So, with that suspicious glance round the Form, Mr. Selby walked to his desk, prepared for anything—a disrespectful piece of impertinence, or even a lawless practical joke upon himself.

Yet he was scarcely prepared for what did happen.

Seating himself, he grasped the lid of his desk.

The fags of the Third held their breath.

Now for it! Now for the great jape Wally & Co. had planned. The sudden silence ought to have warned Mr. Selby.

In his place Reggie Manners was ready. He had already withdrawn his major's precious Kodak from his desk, and it was already in his hands in readiness for the great moment.

There was no fear of anything going wrong so far as the light was concerned. The brilliant afternoon sunshine streamed in at the Form-room windows, making conditions ideal for an "indoor" snap.

At the critical moment Reggie had only to raise the Kodak above the shelter of his desk, focus instantly, and then—

The moment came. Mr. Selby raised the lid of his desk.

He raised it with an irritable jerk.

As he did so, two fat frogs jumped out of the desk.

Evidently they disliked captivity, and welcoming the sudden chance of escape, they jumped out like jack-in-the-boxes, one after the other.

The first leaped almost into the startled Mr. Selby's face, and the other landed in his lap. Then the electric silence was broken abruptly by a wild, horrified yell from Mr. Selby.

He sprang backwards, sending his chair flying behind him off the raised dais.

Then, tripping over his own feet, as it were, Mr. Selby sat down hard, with a terrific bump.

Bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A howl of uncontrollable laughter rang out from the Form—a howl that quite drowned the faint click of the camera Manners was operating.

In a state of dire terror—for he had a wholesome dread of frogs—Mr. Selby sat for the briefest part of a second and then leaped up and shook himself frantically—though the frogs had jumped away, unharmed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" gurgled Wally D'Arcy. "Did you get him, Reggie?"

"Right as rain—a fair corker!" grinned Reggie. "I—Oh, my hat!"

Reggie had been about to close up the pocket camera and replace it in his desk, but Mr. Selby was on his feet much quicker than the fag had expected. Moreover, it seemed to Reggie that the agitated and raging master had seen him—he was glaring in his direction, at all events.

Had he seen him use the camera?

Reggie Manners trembled inwardly and hastily shoved the pocket Kodak in his lap. Then, fearing it would be seen there, he just as hastily slipped it out of sight on to the form at his side.

It was then that Reuben Piggott took a hand in the proceedings.

Piggott was the bitter enemy of Wally & Co., and he was always on the look-out for an opportunity of getting them into trouble.

He saw a chance now, and took it swiftly.

He was seated just behind Manners minor. On the form before him, beside Reggie Manners, yet perilously close to the rear edge of the form, was the pocket Kodak. A touch would be enough to send it flying off the form!

Piggott supplied that touch. He slid down in his seat a little, stretched out one foot, and kicked gently at the camera.

Crash!

Manners major's precious pocket Kodak crashed to the floor and rolled into the aisle between the desks.

It all took place in a brief moment—the moment when Mr. Selby's ferocious glare had caused the laughter to cease as if by magic.

In the dead silence the crash of the fallen camera filled the room.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Manners.

How it had happened he did not know—nor had any of the fags seen Piggott's swift and treacherous action. But it was all up now. Mr. Selby could scarcely fail to see the camera from where he stood.

Nor did he. He had been about to burst into an explosion of rage, but instead he hurried—almost ran down the aisle towards the spot.

Then he stopped and stared at the opened camera, his bitter rage growing and growing as enlightenment seemed to come to him.

Actually Mr. Selby had not seen Reggie with the camera; THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,101.

had not dreamed of the extent of the plot, until now. Now, however, as he glared at the Kodak, he understood.

But instead of glaring then at Reggie Manners, he glared at—Reuben Piggott. Unfortunately for that scheming youth the camera had bumped against something and rolled at his feet. Moreover, Mr. Selby had seen the cad of the Third stretch forward in his seat, and he naturally concluded the camera belonged to him.

"So—so—so I have caught you!" gasped Mr. Selby, fairly hissing the words. "I have caught you in the act, you young scoundrel!"

"I—I—I say, sir—" stuttered the startled Piggott. "It wasn't—"

"Silence!" shrieked Mr. Selby. "So this is yet a further addition to the extent of your rascally plot! Not only have you caused me grievous shock and injury, but you have dared to photograph me in a humiliating attitude—a disrespectful and ridiculous photograph which you intended, doubtless enough, to circulate round the school in order to bring ridicule upon me."

"I—I—I—" began Piggott. But just then Mr. Selby quite lost control.

He stepped forward, boxed Piggott's ears soundly, and then, apparently by no means satisfied with that, he grabbed the scheming youth by the collar, and fairly lifted him from his seat.

"Hold on, sir!" gasped Reggie Manners.

He jumped up in his seat. Piggott was an enemy but Reggie had no intention of allowing him to suffer for another's fault. As yet Manners minor had no inkling of Piggott's perfidy.

But Mr. Selby did not hold on. He had his cane in his hand, and twisting the hapless Piggott round, he brought it into play with all the strength of his arm.

Lash, lash, lash, lash!

"Yaroooooh! Yooooop!" roared Piggott. "Stop it! It wasn't me—it was Manners, sir! Yooooop! Stop it! Yow-ow!"

Piggott fairly shrieked under the lashing cane.

Manners minor stepped out and grasped Mr. Selby's arm.

"Stop, sir!" he shouted. "Piggott had nothing to do with it. It's my camera! Stop, sir!"

"Manners, how dare you? What—what—"

Reggie's words seemed to impress themselves on Mr. Selby at last, and he lowered the cane, breathing hard. Reuben Piggott dropped into his seat, nearly blubbering, his eyes glittering.

Mr. Selby panted, and glowered now at Manners minor. As a matter of fact, he had been astonished at the thought of Piggott being in the plot—he had suspected Wally & Co. and nobody else.

"You say that camera belongs to you, Manners?" he choked.

"Y-yes, sir—or rather, to my brother! But Piggott had nothing at all to do with it. It must have fallen off my form!" grunted Reggie.

"I—I distinctly saw Piggott lean forward in his seat!" hooted the irate master. "I naturally concluded he had dropped the camera by accident and was attempting to recover it. I might, however, have known who the culprits were. Manners, did you have the astounding audacity to photograph me a moment ago?"

"Y-yes, sir!"

"Hand that camera to me, boy!"

Mr. Selby's voice trembled with rage. Manners minor hesitated. He felt a foreboding of what would happen to the camera if he did hand it over. But Mr. Selby did not wait for him to obey. He stooped swiftly, snatched up the pocket Kodak, and dashed it violently to the floor.

Crash!

"Oh!" panted Reggie.

No camera could have withstood that crash without coming to grief.

There was a deep murmur from the Form. Manners went white as he thought of his brother's feelings when he saw that camera again. Though a pocket camera, it was an expensive one.

"You—you rotter!" gasped the fag involuntarily. "It wasn't mine, and now you've smashed it. Oh, you rotter!"

There was a sudden silence—a pin could have been heard to drop in the Form-room. When a fag was heard to call a master a rotter to his face, it was time for the skies to fall.

The skies did not fall. But Mr. Selby's pent-up rage broke out with a rush.

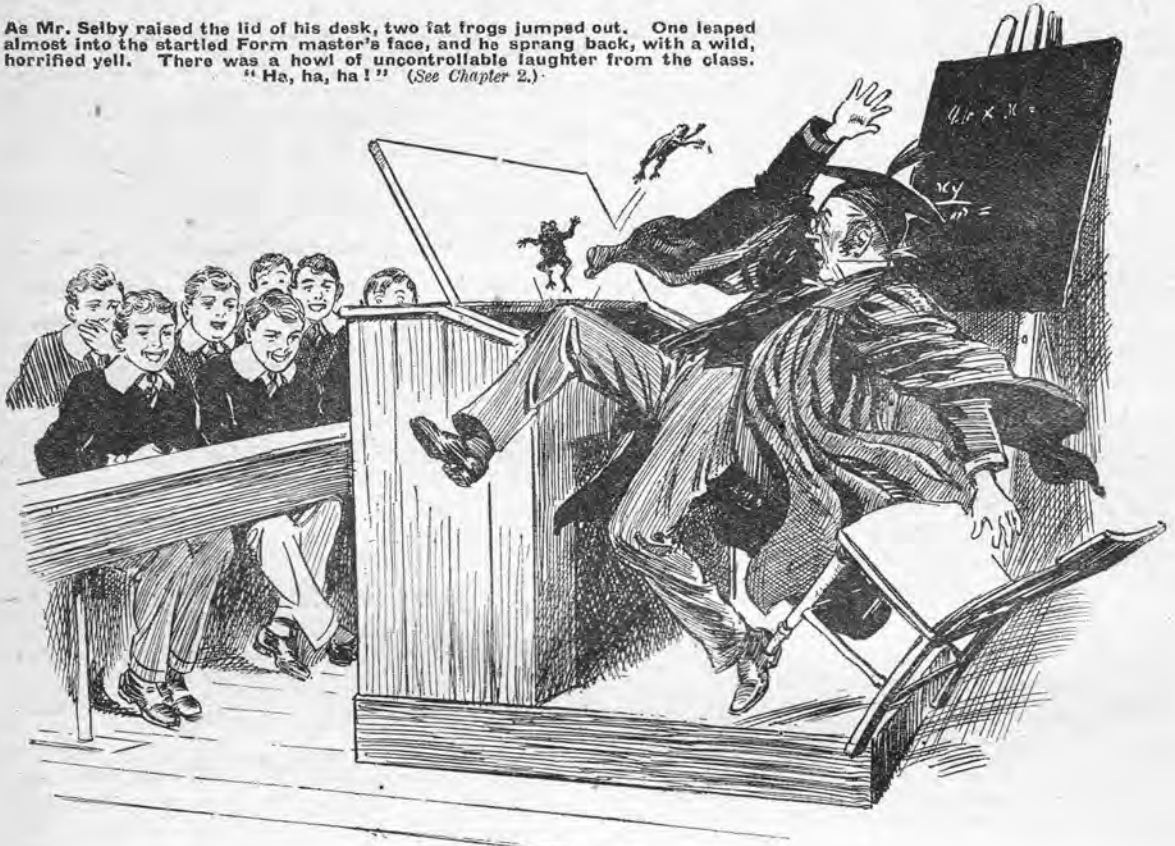
"What?" he articulated. "You—you insolent, rebellious young scoundrel! You—you have dared to add to your—your—"

Words failed the raging master of the Third. His eyes glittered with fury, and his grasp closed viciously on Reggie Manners. With a savage jerk he swung the fag round, and then the cane rose and fell.

Swish, swish, swish!

The blows fell unceasingly, with all the force of

As Mr. Selby raised the lid of his desk, two fat frogs jumped out. One leaped almost into the startled Form master's face, and he sprang back, with a wild, horrified yell. There was a howl of uncontrollable laughter from the class.
"Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 2.)



Mr. Selby's uncontrolled fury behind them. There was a murmur in the Form-room. Reggie Manners set his teeth hard, and his face grew whiter and whiter. But his determination that not a sound should escape him would not withstand that terrific thrashing, and soon his yells were ringing out in the Form-room.

CHAPTER 3.

Manners Chips In!

"HALLO, there's the bell!" said Tom Merry cheerily.

"Come on, chaps!"

"Hold on!" said Harry Manners. "I'm not coming to the Form-room yet."

"Eh? Why not?" said Tom.

"Those cheeky young scamps—"

"Oh! Fathead! You're not thinking of going after them now? Let the kids rip! You can boot young Wally another time for biffing your cap off."

"I'm not thinking of that!" said Manners grimly. "I'm thinking of my pocket Kodak."

"Yes, but—"

"It's just struck me," said Manners, in some alarm, "that cheeky young minor of mine may go after it—he's got nerve enough for anything! If he hasn't, young Wally has. And I remember now that Reggie saw me shove it on top of the cupboard."

"Well, those young imps have got cheek enough for a regiment!" admitted Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "Still, it's too late now, old chap; bell for classes just gone."

"Blow the bell!" snorted Manners. "My hat! Think I put class before my Kodak? Ass!"

"Yes, but—"

"I'm going up to see if the camera's all right!" said Manners. "Linton can wait a bit for me, can't he? Blow him, anyway!"

With that, Harry Manners hurried away—not towards the Shell Form-room, but towards Study No. 10 upstairs.

He took the stairs two at a time, his fears gaining strength as he recollected that Reggie had seen him put his Kodak away, and knew where it was.

The mere fact that he had refused them permission to borrow his camera was a trifle light as air to the young scamps of the Third—Manners major knew that only too well! What an ass he was not to think of that before now!

By this time—

Manners reached the door of Study No. 10, and charged it open. Then he dragged a chair to the cupboard, jumped on it, and peered on the wide top.

The camera was not there—it was conspicuous only by its absence. The precious Kodak had gone—only too probably into the far from safe keeping of Wally & Co. of the Third.

Manners major jumped down, fairly seething with wrath. Undoubtedly Wally & Co. had taken it to carry through their jape on Mr. Selby. And even if it met with no accident, there was the very grave possibility of Mr. Selby confiscating it. And when Mr. Selby confiscated anything, it was seldom seen again.

"The—the little rotters!" gasped Manners. "The cheeky, daring young imps. I'll—I'll—"

There was still a faint chance that he had moved the Kodak himself and forgotten. At the thought, Manners began a swift search round the study. But he soon gave it up as a waste of time. The camera was gone!

Manners rushed from the study, went downstairs by way of the banisters, and made tracks for the Third Form class-room. There was still a chance that Mr. Selby might be late, and that Manners might recover his property before anything happened to it.

It was a forlorn hope—a hope that Manners gave up abruptly as he entered the Third passage. For to his ears came the swishing of a cane, and a series of yells—yells of pain in a voice he knew only too well.

Mr. Selby was not late—he was already in the Form-room, engaged in his favourite occupation. Even as Manners stood there in indecision, the sound of swishing and the yelling grew louder. In the ordinary way, Manners would have grunted—possibly smiled—at hearing the sounds. He would have realised his minor was being licked, and that it was more than possible he had earned the licking. And he would have mentally hoped the castigation would do his minor good.

But some vicious note in the steady swishes, and something in the cries of pain made Manners set his teeth hard, and the next moment he had flung open the door and dashed into the Form-room.

His glance took in the scene at once—even to the smashed Kodak lying on the floor. In a flash he realised that Wally & Co's scheme had gone awry, and that his minor was paying the penalty.

But at the moment Manners major did not think of
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,101.

that—all he thought about was the fact that Mr. Selby had obviously lost his head and temper, and was thrashing Reggie unmercifully.

With a rush, Manners was on the spot, and he grabbed at the master's arm and dragged it down.

"Stop!" he panted. "You brute—let my minor alone! Can't you see he's had enough?"

"Oh, my only hat!" murmured Wally D'Arcy, in great alarm. "Good man Manners! But—now for trouble!"

Reggie Manners had dared to call Mr. Selby a rotter, and now his elder brother was calling him a brute! No wonder the Third looked on breathlessly, thoroughly scared now.

Mr. Selby had staggered back—scarcely able to believe the evidence of his own senses.

"Manners!" he gasped faintly. "How—how dare you! Boy! This—is this too much! Release my arm this instant, Manners!"

Manners did so—ready, however, to grasp it in an instant if Mr. Selby raised it to strike again.

But Mr. Selby did not raise it again. The master of the Third was not consciously cruel. He had lost his temper completely, and he realised well enough now that he had overdone the thrashing—more than overdone it.

None the less, his eyes glittered with rage as they rested on the Shell fellow's angry face.

"Manners!" he gasped. "How—how dare you? Leave this room at once! I shall report your astounding conduct to the Housemaster!"

"You can report to the Head if you like!" said Manners scornfully. "From the way you were laying that cane on I expect the kid's back will show something that'll interest the Head!"

"Manners!"

Manners major turned his back on the enraged master. "What happened, kid?" he asked his minor.

"He smashed your Kodak, and I called him a rotter!" panted Reggie. "And he is a rotter!"

"If he smashed it purposely he certainly is!" snapped Manners, his face showing his own rage as he picked up the smashed camera and examined it. "Well, the—"

"Manners!" shrieked Mr. Selby. "How dare you ignore me in this insolent manner! Give that camera to me at once!"

"I won't!" said Harry Manners doggedly. "You've done quite enough damage, Mr. Selby. You've no right to—"

"Manners!" thundered Mr. Selby. "I order you to hand me that camera! Your brother has taken a snapshot of me in a humiliating situation. His intention is to bring ridicule upon me by publicly exhibiting the photograph."

"In that case, I'll destroy the film, sir," said Manners calmly. "But the camera's already smashed. I'm sticking to it before it's damaged further."

With that, Manners coolly opened the camera, and took out the roll of films. That action alone, by bringing the films into contact with the bright sunlight, was sufficient to render them useless. To make doubly sure, Manners dropped them on the floor, and stamped on the roll, grinding it into a shapeless mass with his heel.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Wally. "The awful ass!"

Mr. Selby, however, gave a deep gasp of relief.

"I—I—very well, Manners!" he gasped. "As you have destroyed the films I will not insist upon taking charge of the camera. But—but you shall be punished for this insolent insubordination. Jameson, go at once to the Sixth Form-room and ask Mr. Railton to be good enough to come here."

Jameson scowled, but he moved slowly from his place and went out. He came back a few minutes later with the Housemaster at his heels. Mr. Railton frowned as he sighted the excited faces of the fags, and other evidence of disorder and trouble.

"What is the matter, Mr. Selby?"

Mr. Selby pointed with a trembling forefinger at Manners major.

"That—that wretched boy," he gasped, "has actually dared to interfere with me while carrying out my duties as a master here, Mr. Railton. More, he has addressed me in an insulting fashion!"

"What? I do not understand, Mr. Selby! What is Manners doing here at all when he should be in his own Form-room?"

Mr. Selby stuttered out the story and, as he listened, Mr. Railton's face became grave. He gave the Third a glance that made them wriggle uncomfortably.

"And Manners interfered when you were caning his brother?" asked Mr. Railton, in astonishment.

"Yes, indeed! He actually had the audacity, the brazen effrontery to grasp my arm—to prevent me chastising his brother as he deserved!" spluttered the master of the Third.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,101.

"Manners, what have you to say for yourself?" demanded Mr. Railton sternly. "From all accounts, your brother richly deserved his punishment. Such an audacious trick is deserving of the severest punishment!"

"I know that, sir," said Manners major quietly. "My brother ought not to have done what he did. But that is no reason why Mr. Selby should thrash him like a brute."

"What?" thundered the Housemaster. "Manners—"

"And that isn't all," said Manners thickly, showing the broken camera. "Has Mr. Selby any right to show his savage temper by smashing my camera? Look at it—ruined!"

Mr. Railton started as he eyed the Kodak Manners held out.

"Mr. Selby," he said coldly, "you did not tell me you had broken the boy's camera. If you did—"

"I—I—I was determined that the snapshot taken should never be circulated round the school, which was obviously the intention of the young reprobates in the plot!" said Mr. Selby. "I may have acted drastically—"

"It is very unfortunate that you took such a method of doing so, Mr. Selby," said Mr. Railton icily. "There was no necessity to go so far, as the films could easily have been destroyed—"

"I have destroyed them, sir," said Manners, pointing to the crushed roll. "I—"

"That is enough, Manners!" snapped Mr. Railton, his glance resting for a moment on Reggie Manners' white face. "In the first place, what are you doing here at all?"

"I came after my camera," said Manners. "I hoped to get it back before it was damaged. I knew if it once got into the hands of Mr. Selby it would be damaged," he added bitterly.

"That is enough, Manners!" cried the Housemaster angrily. "It is perfectly obvious to me that your brother deserved a sound caning for his impudent behaviour, and that your interference is nothing but a monstrous impertinence. You will apologise to Mr. Selby in my presence at once."

"I—I can't, sir!" said Manners doggedly. "He's smashed my camera, and he was thrashing my minor like a brute! Look at the kid's face—"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Railton. "Not another word, Manners! Mr. Selby, allow me the use of your cane."

Mr. Selby handed over his cane quickly enough. "Hold out your hand, Manners!"

Manners major held out his hand. He was willing to be caned, but he was determined not to apologise. Possibly Mr. Railton saw that only too clearly.

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

Manners uttered no sound as the cane cut into his palms. His eyes burned, but he did not cry out once. The Housemaster laid down the cane at last.

"You may go now, Manners!" snapped Mr. Railton.

"Mr. Selby, I will leave you to discover and punish the remaining culprits in this disgraceful affair."

With that the Housemaster went out. Manners major gave Mr. Selby a bitter look and followed. To his surprise, he found that the Housemaster had preceded him to the Shell Form room. Mr. Railton spoke a few words to Mr. Linton and then went out. Mr. Linton eyed Manners curiously, and motioned him to take his place. It was obvious that the Housemaster had taken the trouble to speak to Mr. Linton to prevent his punishing the junior for being late, and Manners appreciated the kindness.

He did not feel the slightest resentment towards Mr. Railton. He knew the Housemaster had done what he deemed to be his duty. And certainly Mr. Selby had some cause for complaint. None the less, Manners seethed with bitterness against the master of the Third.

Lowther and Tom Merry eyed their chum curiously as he took his place. It was plain to them, from his gleaming eyes and white face, that something serious had happened. But it was not until they came out at afternoon break that they got the chance to ask him.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry, as, out in the passage, Manners told him what had taken place in the Third Form room. "I was afraid something like this had happened."

"What a cad Selby is!" said Lowther.

"He's all that," said Tom Merry. "Still, those silly kids ought never to have done it. I don't wonder he was waxy. But—"

"Go on!" said Manners angrily. "Back the brute up! Just like you to make excuses for the rotter!"

"I'm not excusing the rotter for losing his rotten temper like that," said Tom mildly. "He was a rotter to smash the camera, and a bigger rotter to thrash young Reggie as he did. But—"

"If you've anything in his favour, keep it to yourself!" snapped Manners, his eyes glittering. "I tell you Selby

acted like a howling cad and a brute! And I'll get even with him somehow!"

"Oh, indeed, Manners!"

It was the sharp, acid voice of Mr. Selby; he had come up behind the three juniors, in his usual soft-footed way. He glared at Manners with bitter animosity. It was not the first time, by any means, that Mr. Selby had had trouble with Manners major over Manners minor, and the mean-spirited and ungenerous master of the Third harboured a dislike for the junior that amounted almost to hatred.

"Oh, indeed, Manners!" he snapped. "So the House-master's caning has not cured you of your insolent and insubordinate ways. You are now planning revenge, it seems. Moreover, you have again repeated your disrespectful epithets—"

"Listeners never hear any good of themselves!" said Manners recklessly. "I—"

"Manners, old man—" began Tom, in alarm; but Mr. Selby interrupted him, his face flushed with rage.

"How—how dare you, Manners?" he spluttered. "I—"

He grabbed Manners by the collar and fairly rushed him back into the Shell Form-room. Possibly Mr. Selby had his own reasons why he did not wish to take the junior before Mr. Railton again. Mr. Linton was getting his papers together before leaving the room, and he looked in surprise at his excited, angry colleague.

"Mr. Selby, what— Bless my soul! What is the matter now?"

Mr. Selby, quivering with rage, told him.

"Apparently the caning the Housemaster has administered has had no effect whatever, Mr. Linton!" he rasped. "Manners is as insolent and insubordinate as ever. I trust you will deal with him as he deserves Mr. Linton."

Mr. Linton frowned. He disliked Mr. Selby, as did most of the Third Form master's colleagues. None the less, it was hardly possible for him to ignore the matter.

"Manners," he said mildly, "you had no right to refer to a master of this school in such terms, and I trust you are ashamed of yourself for cherishing feelings of revenge. Had you not already been caned once this afternoon I should cane you very severely indeed. As it is, you will do me two hundred lines."

Mr. Selby almost staggered.

"Two hundred lines, Mr. Linton!" he spluttered. "Are you aware that the boy referred to me as a— a brute and a cad? Such a punishment is utterly absurd and inadequate. Absurd!"

Mr. Linton eyed him calmly.

"In the circumstances, Mr. Selby," he said quietly but firmly, "I do not propose to make the punishment more severe. I understand that Mr. Railton has already caned the boy very severely indeed. You may go, Manners."

Manners walked out, his face calm. Mr. Selby glowered at the master of the Shell. But, though his tone had been quiet and sedate, Mr. Linton's voice had a certain steely, determined ring that Mr. Selby did not like. At all events, he felt it useless to press the matter; and, with a scarcely-suppressed growl, he turned on his heel and rustled angrily from the Form-room, gritting his teeth with rage.

CHAPTER 4.

Manners Sees a Chance!

TOM MERRY was rather uneasy concerning Harry Manners during the next day or so. He knew his chum had neither forgotten nor forgiven the terrific thrashing his minor had received, nor the smashing of his precious Kodak. Manners' major was a rather serious youth, given to brooding at times, and he felt things much more deeply than did either Lowther or Tom himself.

Tom feared that Manners meant what he said when he had vowed to "get even with the brute." He felt sure that Manners would not rest until he had paid out the master of the Third for thrashing his minor; for his own caning, and especially for the smashed camera.

Certainly, Mr. Selby had gone too far, and deserved to suffer for smashing the camera. He had been "baited" by the mischievous young scamps in the Third, and he had good reason to be angry for the trick they had played upon him. None the less, he had had no right whatever to lose his temper and smash up the camera—property so highly prized by its owner.

Tom realised that, and he could feel for his chum. But he feared that he might do something reckless that would bring far more trouble upon his head.

To his great relief, however, Manners made no move in the matter, nor did he refer to it after that day. Luckily, the Kodak was not beyond repair, and this fact had obviously made Manners less bitter.

But on the Wednesday following—a half-holiday—Tom and Lowther discovered that Manners had by no means forgotten or forgiven.

There was no junior fixture on that day, but the Sixth had an away match with Abbotsford, and the chums had gone there with Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arey of the Fourth. Actually it was Manners who had persuaded them to go. Manners had exploited practically all the views and scenes worth "snapping" in the locality of St. Jim's, and he wanted to get his new long-focus camera to work in Abbotsford. It was a pretty, old-world town, and Manners hoped to have a regular field-day there.

So, while Manners' chums watched the match, the photographer of the Shell had wandered about, enjoying himself in his own way with his beloved camera. Then he had joined his chums again after the match, and it was while they were strolling along the old High Street, after tea, that Mr. Selby of the Third was sighted in the distance.

And scarcely had they sighted him when Harry Manners decided to take his photograph.

In the ordinary way, such an idea would never have entered the junior's head. To waste a negative on a person like Mr. Selby was something he was quite unlikely to do—unless for a good reason.

Manners had his reason now; and that reason was the amazing fact that attached by a length of string to Mr. Selby's coat-tails was a toy balloon!

It floated gaily behind him in the breeze as he stalked down the High Street with his quick, jerky stride. And, naturally, the sight of a sedate, sour-faced old gentleman in a silk hat and frock-coat, with a toy balloon attached to his rear, caused no little surprise and hilarity.

Obviously, some misguided humorist had hooked it on, and, equally obviously, Mr. Selby was blissfully unaware that it was there.

As the Third Form master stopped by the window of a bookshop in the High Street the juniors had a clear profile view of his features.

"M-mum-my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Did you ever! It's Selby

right enough, and he's got a giddy balloon fastened to him!"

"Those fags, I bet!" gurgled Lowther. "I spotted young Wally and his pals at the station at Rycombe. Ten to one in doughnuts they've done it!"

"We'd better tell—" began Tom, grinning.

"No you jolly well won't!" interrupted Manners, his eyes suddenly gleaming with resolve. "It's my chance at last! Not a blessed laugh, mind, and don't let him spot us!"

"But— Oh!" Tom Merry understood, as he suddenly grasped the fact that Manners had his camera in his hands and was hurriedly focusing. "Oh! Manners, you awful ass—"

"Shut up!" hissed Manners savagely. "Think I'm missing a chance like this! Now I'll have him! Yes— Oh blow! Dash and blow!"

It really was too bad, from Manners' point of view. Just as he was about to manipulate the shutter, with his quarry in the ideal position for his purpose, Mr. Selby moved off and vanished unexpectedly into a jeweller's shop higher up the street.

"Never mind!" grunted Manners, his face set. "I'll catch him when he comes out! Here, hold on, Tom; we're waiting for the old fool!"

Tom Merry frowned.

In the ordinary way he would have jumped at such a chance. But Manners was not smiling; obviously, he was not looking upon the chance as a joke at all. And Tom did not quite like the look on his chum's face. A joke was a joke, but—

"Hold on Manners," he said quietly. "What's your game? If it's just a lark between us, I'm with you. But if you intend to get your own back out of Selby with the snap—"

"I'm going to make him look such a fool," said Manners, through his teeth, "that he'll wish from the bottom of his

heart that he hadn't smashed my Kodak and got me licked as he did! I'm going to have as many prints run off as I can, and I'm going to have them plastered all over St. Jim's. That's the programme!"

"Manners, old man——"

"Rats! You can talk till you're black in the face!" snapped Manners. "I knew a chance would come sooner or later. You fellows run on if you like, and leave this to me."

"But——"

"Rats! Hallo, here's those fags now! Clear 'em out, for goodness' sake, or they'll muck my game up!"

It was the fags, right enough. Wally & Co. came staggering along the High Street; they seemed nearly helpless with laughter. The juniors did not need telling the reason.

"Wally, you young ass!" began Tom Merry. "Was it you——?"

"You fellows seen Selby?" gurgled Wally D'Arcy, as he came up. "I say, such a lark; we've fastened a giddy toy balloon——"

"You young scamps——"

"Bow-wow!" chuckled Wally. "I can see you've spotted the old bird! We were just behind him as he came through the giddy barrier at the station. We'd been watching our chance all the giddy afternoon—see? I say, we've missed him somehow. Which way did the old bird go?"

"Buzz off, you young idiots!" hissed Manners, looking round. "If he spots you kids my game will be mucked up, for a pension! Cut, blow you!"

"And blow you!" said Wally independently. "What the—— Oh!"

Wally suddenly sighted the camera in Manners major's hands. He seemed to grasp the position in a flash, and his eyes fairly danced with unholy glee.

"Oh, my only sainted Aunt Jane!" he gurgled. "You—you're going to snap the old bird, Manners?"

"Clear, for goodness' sake! He's just gone into that jeweller's higher up there. If he spots you when he comes out——"

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Wally. "What a wheeze! I say, you'll let us chaps have a print, Manners?" he gasped eagerly.

"Yes, as many as you like!" snapped Manners, his eyes fixed almost fiercely on the doorway of the jeweller's. "You can plaster them all over St. Jim's, kid! That's my game, in fact!"

"Manners, old man——"

"You ring off, Tommy!" rapped out Manners. "I tell you—— Ah!"

Manners broke off abruptly. The lean, angular form of Mr. Henry Selby had appeared in the doorway of the shop. He stood a brief moment on the steps of the shop, and Manners eyed him anxiously.

Which way would he turn? If he turned towards the juniors the game was up.

Mr. Selby did turn towards them, but Manners' disgust was only momentary, for even as he turned he came to a halt and began to look into the shop window, his sharp nose almost pressed against the pane.

And the balloon was still there; it floated out on the breeze from his coat-tails. Nobody yet had deemed it his duty to acquaint the sour-featured gentleman with the fact that it was there.

His position was ideal for Manners' purpose.

"Got him—— No! Oh blow!" growled Manners.

Just as he had been about to take the photograph another man emerged quickly from the shop and stood beside Mr. Ratcliff, looking in at the window. But it couldn't be helped; another figure in the picture would not matter, and Manners was not risking another chance.

Click!

Manners major's eyes gleamed with triumph.

"You—you've got him?" demanded Wally D'Arcy, almost trembling with excitement.

"Yes, it'll be a fair corker!" said Manners, his face flushed. "I'll teach the old brute better than to——"

"What a gorgeous lark!" said Wally D'Arcy. "Look here, you promised to let us have some prints, Manners! After all, we were the chaps who fastened the giddy balloon on—you can't deny that!"

"You shall have as many as you want!" snapped Manners. "Come to me to-morrow! Now, what about clearing——"

"Look here, Manners!" said Tom Merry uneasily. "Chuck this rot! A joke's a joke, and if you want to take the photo just to keep among ourselves, for a lark, then I'm with you! But it's hardly the thing to spread the prints about the school."

"Oh rats!"

"It'll make old Selby a laughing stock!"

"That's my idea, old chap!"

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"But it won't do, Harry! For one thing, there'll be a terrific row——"

"Hang the row!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Mannahs, old chap——" Arthur Augustus began.

"Rats! Come on! I want to get back now, to develop these giddy films! No good standing—— Hallo! What's the matter now?"

Manners had happened to look back as the party of juniors started off along the High Street. The others had also turned, having heard angry voices raised behind them. One voice was sharp and angry—Mr. Selby's voice.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"That's queer!" said Jack Blake. "What the thump are they rowing about?"

Something evidently was amiss. The man who had been standing by the side of Mr. Selby had vanished, but two other men were standing with the master of the Third now—two men who were obviously shop assistants from the jeweller's.

And they were arguing rather heatedly with Mr. Selby. Then quite suddenly the Form master followed one into the shop, while the other—evidently the manager—stood on the pavement, looking up and down.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, screwing his eyeglass into his eye, to get a better view. "How verry remarkable, deah boys!"

"It isn't remarkable at all!" sniffed Blake, who was a very matter-of-fact youth. "Selby's upset them, like he does everyone else; gone off without paying, perhaps!"

"Or pinched a grandfather's clock, or something!" grinned Lowther. "I say, let's go and see—— Oh, m-mum-my hat!"

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

"Oh, my giddy aunt!"

The juniors gave various expressions of amazement, and well they might. For as they stood on the pavement staring along the street, a constable came hurrying past them, and joined the jeweller's assistant. Then both vanished into the shop.

"M-my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

It was really rather alarming, to say the least of it.

CHAPTER 5.

Awkward for Selby!

"B AI Jove!"

The juniors were more than startled—they were shocked.

What did it mean?

There was no need for the juniors to make guesses, however. They almost felt certain what it all meant. With one accord they dashed across the street, and then ran along to the spot at top speed. A curious crowd was already gathering outside the shop. The sight of a policeman entering it was enough for them. In a moment or so Tom Merry & Co. were staring into the shop.

They soon realised what exactly was the matter.

Mr. Selby stood in the shop, his sour features quite white with anger. Evidently the balloon had been removed from his coat-tails, for there was no sign of it; but the juniors hardly noticed the fact just then. Several other customers were in the shop, looking on in a scared manner. Round Mr. Selby stood the manager and two assistants. The constable had one hand on Mr. Selby's arm. Even as Tom Merry & Co. looked in, breathless with excitement, they saw the constable plunge his free hand into Mr. Selby's overcoat pocket.

He drew blank, and proceeded to search the other pocket. This time he gave a half-audible grunt and withdrew his hand again with something in it this time—something that glinted in the light.

It was a watch—a handsome gold watch, obviously of no little value.

"Ah!" exclaimed the constable triumphantly. "So you knowed nothing about it—eh?"

Mr. Selby almost fainted as he stared in speechless amazement at the watch. His jaw dropped, and his eyes almost started from his head.

"I told you, didn't I?" ejaculated one of the assistants, in great triumph. "I knew it was him! I didn't like the look of him when he came in, and he never bought anything, either! Yes, that's the watch! I didn't even miss it until I'd begun to put the tray away. He must have taken it when I was getting some cheaper ones out for him to look at. Very smart, he was, but not quite smart enough."

Mr. Selby gasped like a stranded fish.

"I—I tell you I know nothing about it!" he shrieked out at last. "I did not even handle the watches. I merely wished to see some cheap ones, and as none shown me were

suitable, I left the shop! Good heavens! Do you know who I am?"

"I don't know, but I fancy I very soon will!" said the constable significantly. "You'll come along with me—"

"But I never took the watch!" shrieked Mr. Selby, almost beside himself with anger and fear. "I am a master at St. Jim's—the big college 'Rycombe! My name is Selby—"

"A likely yarn that!" grinned the constable. "You charges him, then, Mister Finestone?"

"Of course! Arrest the man, constable!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked at each other, with scared faces. They had not dreamed of this in their wildest moments. But Tom Merry acted swiftly—it was a time for swift action.

"Quick!" he panted. "Blake, run and find a taxi or cab—anything! We can't let him be yanked through the streets like that! Oh, my hat!"

the chink of the constable's handcuffs soon made him realise the hopelessness of his position.

Luckily a taxi—hastily fetched by Blake—drew up at the kerb at that moment, and in a few seconds the trembling master of the Third had been rushed across the pavement and bundled into it. Then the door slammed, and the taxi slid away, gained speed, and vanished down the street.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Oh, great pip!"

"Selby looked up! Well, I'm blowed!"

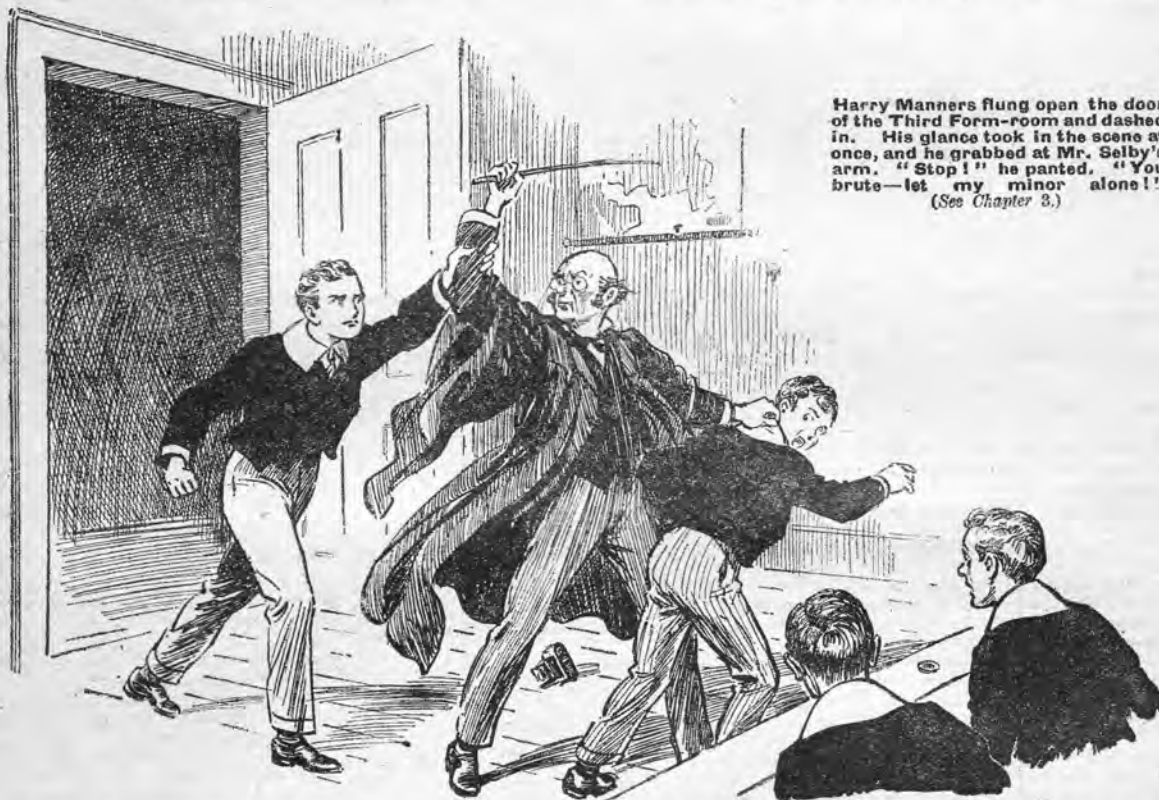
Tom Merry & Co. gazed at each other, quite overcome with the gravity of the situation. Now the excitement of the swift-moving drama was ended, they understood just what it meant—especially to the hapless Mr. Selby.

"The watch was found in his pocket!" gasped Blake.

"Oh, jumping crackers! It means the sack and ruin for him—most likely chokey as well!"

"It's awful!" groaned Tom Merry. "I never liked the

Harry Manners flung open the door of the Third Form-room and dashed in. His glance took in the scene at once, and he grabbed at Mr. Selby's arm. "Stop!" he panted. "You brute—let my minor alone!"
(See Chapter 3.)



Without waiting for Blake's agreement, Tom hurried into the shop. Much as he disliked the irascible and ill-natured master, Tom felt deeply sorry for him in that moment. That a terrible mistake had been made he was certain. Yet the matter was serious indeed. There was not only Mr. Selby's personal position to be thought of, but the good name of St. Jim's.

"What is the matter, Mr. Selby?" gasped Tom. "Can I help you, sir?"

Mr. Selby's eyes lit up at sight of the junior.

"Tell them, Merry!" he almost yelled. "Tell them who I am—tell the blundering fools who I am, boy! Send for the Head—send for Dr. Holmes! I—I—"

"Here, you hold on a bit!" rapped out the constable. "Don't you make no more row, my man, and just you come along wi' me! Here, young 'un, just you clear—"

"Hold on!" snapped Tom. "I know this gentleman! He is a master at our school—St. Jim's! It's impossible for him to have done what you say he has!"

"Oh, is it?" said the constable, with a grunt, though he looked with a trifle more respect at Mr. Selby now. "Well, that don't make no difference, young gent! He's been given in charge for theft, and it's my duty to take him to the station."

"But, listen to me—"

The constable was not in the mood to listen, however. The crowd was growing outside, and he was anxious to get his man to the station. Finding Tom had nothing to tell him in regard to the case, he hustled the loudly protesting and almost hysterical Mr. Selby towards the door. At the door the Form master looked like making a desperate stand, but

old chap, but—but—well, I feel dashed sorry for him now. We'd better get back and tell Railton!"

Even the fags of the Third were looking scared. They followed at the heels of Tom Merry & Co., quite subdued for once. Tom and his chums were only too anxious to get away from the scene.

But the fags soon recovered, and they were rather inclined to grin at the happening.

"I'm no end sorry for the Selby bird, of course!" said Wally, shaking his head. "But, after all, a chap who'd pinch a watch doesn't really deserve sympathy, does he?"

"Bai Jove! I do not for one moment believe Selby knew anythin' about the watch, Wally!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "How can you say such a thing, you young wascal?"

"Because I know the old bird, Gussy!" said Wally. "I always knew he was a queer old stick! And I always knew he'd come to a bad end!"

"You silly young chump—" said Tom Merry.

"Silly old chump!" snorted Wally independently. "We know the Selby bird. I say, we'll have a chance of getting a decent master now, perhaps."

"Bai Jove! You heartless young wascal, Wally—"

"You ring off, Gussy. Blessed if I ever saw such a chap for wagging his chin in my life!" said Wally. "I say, you fellows, what price old Selby in a suit of broad arrows, eh?"

"You young idiot—"

"Oh, rats! I say, Manners, don't forget about that photo! Mind, you promised us, you know. You know you did! No need to let this make any difference!"

"Selby's bound to wriggle out of it somehow," said Curly Gibson sagely. "We know him! He's as slippery as they make 'em, and he'll be back as bad-tempered as ever in time for prep to-night!"

"That's it!" said Reggie Manners, in no little disappointment at the thought. "You'll see—the old beast will be back as large as life to-night. Don't forget those prints, anyway, Harry, old man! My hat! Won't we just make the old boulder squirm with them!"

Manners major said nothing for a moment; his brow was drawn in a frown. It was impossible not to feel sorry for the hapless Mr. Selby. It was also impossible to think him guilty.

Tom Merry looked at his chum. His own face was worried.

"Look here, Harry," he said quietly, "you—you can't go on with that photograph after what's happened. You'll destroy it, of course. Or, if you like, just keep it among ourselves—a joke for us only. No harm in that. But—"

"It all depends!" said Manners, flushing. "If the old rotter wriggles out of this—well, we'll see! If he doesn't wriggle out—well, the photo's no good in that case. Selby will be forced to resign—he can't stay in a school like St. Jim's after that, even if he gets off without chokey! It all depends."

"Then, if Selby gets out of this mess all right you mean to go ahead with that photograph—to spread copies all over St. Jim's, and hold the man up to ridicule?" asked Tom quietly.

"Just that!" said Manners, his eyes gleaming. "I'm sorry for him now, and I hope he gets out of the mess he's in. But if he does, it won't make any difference to my programme. He—he smashed my camera, and he got me licked, and he thrashed my minor like a brute! I'm going to get square!"

"It may lead to serious trouble—for you!"

"Let it!"

"Oh, all right! Only—"

Tom Merry said no more; he knew it was useless to argue with his chum in his present mood. Moreover, the juniors had just reached the station, and, leaving his chums to wait for him, Tom hurried into the nearest telephone-box. In a moment or two he was through to St. Jim's and explaining the astonishing story to Mr. Railton—a story that filled that gentleman with horror and deep distress. Then the juniors took train for St. Jim's. It had been an exciting afternoon—and not a very pleasant one. And Tom Merry wondered rather apprehensively what the outcome of it would be—especially for Mr. Selby, a prisoner in the police station at Abbotsford.

CHAPTER 6.

Manners is Tempted!

THE whole school was soon buzzing with the astounding and startling news that evening. It was scarcely to be expected that Wally and his excited chums should keep the secret of what had happened to their Form master; it was scarcely to be wondered at, in fact, that they spread the news far and wide.

And startling news it undoubtedly was.

Mr. Henry Selby, a master of St. Jim's, had been locked up—was in Abbotsford Police Station even then, charged and arrested for having stolen a watch—a gold watch from a jeweller's in Abbotsford!

The school fairly hummed with it.

Immediately on arrival at St. Jim's, Tom Merry had proceeded to Mr. Railton's study, and the Head was very soon in possession of the facts—or the known facts. Certainly Tom Merry did not tell all. He did not mention the photograph, naturally. But he told enough to send the shocked Dr. Holmes racing off at top speed for Abbotsford, in a desperate attempt to bail out the hapless Mr. Selby.

That was soon known.

It was very late when Dr. Holmes got back, and it was not until the following morning that the school, as a whole, knew that his visit had been successful, and that he had brought Mr. Selby back with him—free for the time being.

The Third heard the news the next morning with mixed feelings. They had been taken at prep by Kildare of the Sixth, and the change was such a pleasant one that they all devoutly hoped that the old order would never return.

But it did. Evidently the Head had insisted upon Mr. Selby resuming his duties for the time being, for that morning Mr. Selby took the Third, as usual.

And what a morning it was for the Third! Mr. Selby was in a truly ferocious mood. His nerves were in shreds, and the curious looks of his class alone were enough to fill him with helpless rage. In his present distracted and hopeless state of mind he was the last man fit to take charge of a Form of unruly Third-Formers!

All the morning he raged about the Form-room, and canings and linings were painful and free. By the time morning lessons ended Mr. Selby was reduced to a state almost of gibbering fury, while his flock were seething with resentment.

"The—the old beast!" gasped Wally D'Arcy, as they came out of the Form-room. "Phew! What a morning! I say,

do they ever hang 'em for pinching, young Manners?"

"Blessed if I know!" grinned Manners minor ruefully. "But let's hope so, anyway."

"Yes, rather!"

"I'm fed-up!" grunted Jameson. "I've been licked twice this morning, and bagged two hundred lines! If the old beast is allowed to stay here after this theft affair, I shall ask my people to take me away!"

"Same here!"

"I'm not standing it much longer, anyway," said Wally.

"I say, let's go and see if your major's done that photograph, young Manners."

"Good egg!"

"That's the idea!"

The thought of the photograph raised the spirits of the fags somewhat. In their present mood the news that Mr. Selby had been sentenced to be hung, drawn, and quartered would hardly have dismayed the Third. Some of them had been rather inclined to feel sorry for Selby—until that morning.

Followed by Manners minor, Levison minor, Jameson, and Curly Gibson, Wally D'Arcy led the way with a rush to Study No. 10 in the Shell passage.

They found only Tom Merry and Lowther at home.

"Hallo! What do you kids want here?" demanded Tom. "Scoot, sharp!"

"We want Manners!" said Wally cheerfully. "I say, d'you happen to know if he's developed those films yet, young Merry?"

"Young—!" Merry glared. "You cheeky asses!" he snapped. "Look here! If it's that photograph of Selby you're after—"

"Just that!" grinned Wally. "Is it done yet? Manners promised us—"

"I don't know if it's done or not!" snapped Tom. "But you kids are not having a

Your Editor Says—

PROGRESS!

You have only to look back on the last twenty years to see how swiftly mechanical Science has progressed—what miracles of engineering have been performed. Wonderful new inventions, hardly conceivable a few years ago, are now to be seen every day. Everything that can be done to help mankind along his way is being done in such a fashion, and at such a pace, that the inventions of the future will make present-day marvels look small by comparison.

MARVELS OF THE FUTURE!

To peep into the future—that's the thing. We want a magic looking-glass, and I can tell you where to get one.

I have been telling you fellows for the last week or two about some wonderful FREE GIFTS that will be given away shortly in the GEM. These gifts take the form of picture cards—and this is where your magic looking-glass comes in.

By collecting our series of FREE coloured picture cards you will have displayed before your eyes many of these mechanical wonders of the future—that's the looking-glass, and a jolly fine one, too!

OUR FREE GIFTS!

For those readers who have missed previous announcements concerning our coming Free Gifts, let me go over the ground again, and give them some idea of what to expect. I know every one of you will expect something good, as it comes from the GEM, and you'll be right. But even then I very much doubt whether you can quite visualise HOW excellent these FREE GIFTS will be.

In collaboration with skilled artists and inventors, we have produced a collection of coloured picture cards depicting all these marvels of the future—miracles that will be every-day sights in the years to come.

You will see the liner that will hurtle through the air from one great country to another, linking up races of people now many thousands of miles apart; amazing coaches that can travel thousands of miles across continents with ease and comfort; ships that speed through the oceans at a breathless pace—but I could write pages describing the magnificent pictures that will confront your eyes when our FREE picture cards start.

Certainly the GEM will make history with this great picture gallery of the future. So rest in patience, chums. In a few weeks' time now you will be rewarded when you handle your copy of the GEM containing the first of our Free Coloured Picture Cards.

YOUR EDITOR.

copy, if I can help it! Dash it all, have a bit of decency, Wally! Isn't old Selby having trouble enough? Leave him alone, and leave Manners and his silly photographs alone!"

"Likely, isn't it!" snorted Wally. "Look here! You haven't got old Selby to put up with! He's a beastly old Hun! He's been like a thumping tiger with the tooth-ache all morning. We were all ready to go easy to-day; but it was no good. He wouldn't let us. He was out for scalps! The beast can't help being a brute! Anyway, where is Manners, young Merry?"

"You cheeky young—"
"Bow-wow! Can't you answer a civil question, young Merry? I say, young Lowther, d'you happen to know where— Oh, my hat!"

Whizz!
The irrepressible Wally leaped through the doorway, a cushion just missing his head as he went. He promptly picked up the missile and sent it whizzing back through the doorway. There followed the sound of crashing glass as the cushion swept the mantelpiece clear, and the smashing was followed by roars of wrath from Tom Merry and Lowther.

The cheeky fags decided to go then, and they went with a rush, yelling with laughter. Arrived downstairs, with no sign of pursuit, Wally called a halt:

"I bet I know where your giddy major is!" he told Reggie, with a chuckle. "I bet he's in the dark-room, developing!"

"Phew! That's it!" grinned Reggie. "He was the first out of the Hall at breakfast this morning, and I've noticed Tom Merry and Lowther have been mooching about alone. You bet he's busy developing the films he took yesterday."

"Come on!" said Wally. "We'll get on his giddy track at once. I bet if that ass Tom Merry gets his hands on the giddy negative he'll burn it, or something! Silly chump!"

The fags hurried along towards the dark-room, which was at the end of a long passage near the domestic regions. As they entered the passage the dark-room door flew open and a junior rushed out.

It was Manners major, and the eyes of the amateur photographer were dancing with excitement.

"I say, Manners, old man, what— Oh, my hat!"

Manners did not reply. He scarcely seemed to notice the eager fags. He sent them sprawling to right and left, and dashed on.

"M-mum-my hat!" stuttered Wally D'Arcy, rubbing the back of his head, which had come into violent contact with the passage wall. "The—the careless, cheeky owl! I've a jolly good mind to run after the rotter and punch his silly boko!"

"Better not!" grinned Jameson. "Wh, not have a squint inside the giddy dark-room instead—while he's away!"

"Phew! That's the wheeze!"

Dismissing thoughts of vengeance from his youthful mind—which was just as well for him, perhaps—Wally led the way into the dark-room. On the long bench were several negatives—likewise several prints.

Wally's eyes gleamed as he eagerly scanned them. He grunted as he saw one of the Abbotsford Castle, another of the Priory, and another of an old house in Church Street. Then his eyes fell on—the very one!

The negative was not there, apparently, but a single print was, and Wally's eyes danced with unholy glee as he glanced at it.

It was an excellent photograph. It showed the front of the jeweller's shop clearly, and it showed Mr. Selby's sharp and bony features clearly, too, with the light full on them. And the balloon—

Wally gave an explosive chuckle as he sighted that, floating gaily from the master's coat-tails.

But he only gave the photo a swift glance. At any moment Manners major might return.

"It's it!" he gurgled. "It's—my pippins! Hurrah! Now we've got our dear old Selby bird just where we want him! Let's get out of this—quick!"

"Here, hold on! Let's have a squint first, you ass!"

"Yes rather! Just a squint, Wally!"

Wally chuckled, and let his chum take a swift look. Then he carefully placed the precious print in his pocket, and hastily led the way out.

"Dear old Manners may have intended to keep his giddy word, and he may not!" he breathed. "I bet, if Tom Merry has anything to do with it, he won't! Therefore, we're making jolly sure of this one, kids!"

"Yes, rather! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What price Selby when he sees this!" gurgled Wally. "Anyway, if Manners won't let us have any more, we'll jolly well have this print photographed. Eh? And now I'm going to shove it in a safe place. I know. I'll slip it in my locker up in the dorm. Come on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And in great glee Wally and his chums raced up to the Third Form dormitory to hide the precious print. They knew quite well that, having seen them near the dark-room, Manners major would come after them the moment he missed it. They did not intend to be caught with the precious print in their possession, so they hastily hid it in Wally's locker. Then they went downstairs again, with cheery, satisfied grins on their faces.

CHAPTER 7.

The Destroyed Evidence!

HARRY MANNERS came into Study No. 10 with a rush, making Tom Merry and Monty Lowther leap almost clear of the floor.

"What the thump—"

"What the dickens—" gasped Tom. "Oh, it's you, Manners! What the thump is this game? Are you potty?"

"Not at all!" gasped Manners, his eyes gleaming with excitement. "The fact is, I've got a bit of a surprise for you chaps—and another for dear old Selby!"

"You silly ass—"

"I've been developing those giddy films I took yesterday," said Manners breathlessly. "I got up early this morning, as you fellows know."

"Blow you and blow your films!" snorted Lowther. "No need to come charging in here startling chaps out of their wits!"

"Blow your films!" agreed Tom. "But—he stared curiously at Manners—"what's the matter?"

"They're good ones—all of them," said Manners. "And that one of dear old Selby is a corker—top-hole! I got him just right!"

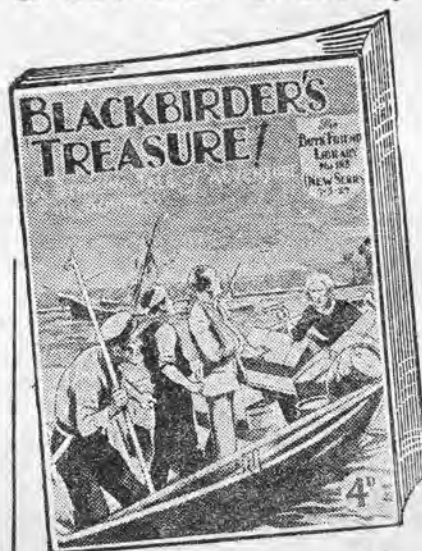
"Burn it, then," said Tom Merry curtly. "The poor old beggar's in trouble enough, Manners! Look here, be decent, and burn the rotten thing! I don't want to see it, anyway."

"But—"

"Those young rotters from the Third have just been here, the cheeky young rascals!" snorted Tom. "They're after that photo of Selby, of course. If you give them one,

(Continued on next page.)

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Manners, you'll be a cad! Dash it all, Selby's a rotter, I know, but there's a limit! If you scatter humiliating photos of him about the school, after what's happened—"

"My dear man, you don't understand," grinned Manners. "You haven't seen the print yet."

"I don't want to!" snapped Tom. "Old Selby's up against it now. He's down, and I don't believe in kicking a man when he's down. If you've developed that negative, Manners, I advise you to burn it, and the print as well."

"I've taken two prints—"

"Burn them both, then!"

"I'll let you see one first, though," grinned Manners. "After you've seen it, I don't fancy you'll want me to burn it, Tommy. There it is. Look at it!"

Tom Merry set his lips. He hesitated, and then picked up the print. Much as he disliked Mr. Selby personally, Tom felt it rather mean to take such an advantage of him—to make him a laughing-stock before the school, and to undermine his authority by so doing. It could only end in trouble, both for Selby and Manners himself. But now Selby was in deep, grave trouble, Tom simply could not understand his chum going on with the photograph at all. He had imagined his chum to be more generous and forgiving.

"I didn't intend to go on with the photo," said Manners, serious now. "I just developed it out of curiosity—just to see how it came out. At least, I didn't intend to make use of it, unless Selby came out of his trouble all serene. I might have done then. I don't know. But—well, look at it now."

Tom Merry was already looking at it. He had given it one impatient glance, and then something about it, and something in his chum's manner, had made him look again, more closely this time. And then he gave a long, low whistle.

"You've spotted it, then?" smiled Manners. "You've always chuckled about my photographic rot, as you called it, Tom. What about it now? A bit useful at times—what?"

"Phew!" breathed Tom, his eyes still riveted on the print. "So—so that's it! So that's how the watch came to be in Selby's pocket!"

"Just that!" grinned Manners, unable to restrain the triumph in his voice. "That chap pinched it. Then, when the alarm was raised, he got the wind up, slipped out, and sidled up by Selby, pretending to be looking in the window. Then he slipped the giddy watch into Selby's overcoat pocket! Easily done—what?"

"Well, my hat!"

"Let's have a look," said Lowther.

He jumped as Tom showed him the print. He saw at once what Wally & Co. had quite missed in their haste. Standing by Selby at the shop window was a slim, crafty-faced young man, in rather shabby clothes. His face was turned towards the window, but one hand was clearly shown in the photo just hovering over Mr. Selby's pocket.

It almost looked as if he was in the act of picking the master's pocket. But the juniors knew better than that. He was in the act of dropping the stolen watch in, evidently in his fear of being caught with it in his possession, now the alarm was raised.

There was no doubting what the picture meant.

Tom Merry and Lowther remembered well how Manners had grunted as the stranger came out of the shop and stood by Selby. But from where they stood they were too far away to see what the man had done.

But the long-focus camera had shown it with ruthless, mechanical exactness.

"A camera never lies!" said Manners coolly. "There is clear, undoubted proof that Selby's innocent. I bet that chap is a professional shop-thief, and I bet his chivvy's well-known to the police. I hold Selby's career and liberty in the hollow of my hand!"

"Manners," breathed Tom Merry, "you—"

"You can guess how I was tempted when I saw that coming out in the negative," said Manners, his brow dark now. "I thought of the brute thrashing my brother. I thought of him smashing my camera and getting me licked. And—and I thought of my vow to get my own back!"

"Manners," said Tom again, "you wouldn't—"

"It was a temptation," said Manners grimly. "I was tempted to destroy it—to destroy the evidence, and let the old cad take his chance. But—"

"You wouldn't do that, Harry," said Tom quietly. "I know you better than that. You'll take that at once—"

"Will I?" said Manners coolly. "I don't think so!"

"Manners—" said Tom.

"Manners, old nut—" began Lowther, in alarm.

"You needn't be afraid," said Manners calmly. "I know I hold the brute's liberty in my hands. But I shall see justice done. I shall show this to the Head, when it suits me. I believe Selby's got to go before the magistrates on Monday. He's free until then; the Head's bailed him

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out. But I haven't forgotten or forgiven. I'm going to keep it quiet, and let the old rotter suffer a bit first!"

"Don't do that, Harry!" pleaded Tom. "He's suffered enough, I fancy. Just think of what he must be going through now! All the school's talking about him—everybody staring at him. Why, it's enough to drive the man potty!"

"Serve him right!"

"You're going to take that straight away to the Head or Railton, Manners!" said Tom Merry sharply. "It's the only right and decent thing to do, whatever Selby is. Play the game, old man!"

"Has Selby played the game with me?"

"Never mind what he's done. I'm asking you to play the game!" snapped Tom. "I think you ought to take that print and negative at once to either Selby himself or the Head."

"I think so, too," said Lowther, quite grave for once. "Go on, Harry, old man. Don't play the goat!"

Manners scowled, and then he gave a grim laugh.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "Matter of fact, I don't think I could have kept it back long. But you know it'll mean trouble for us, Tommy—at least for me! Taking a photograph of a master, with the intention of making him look a fool, won't be looked upon as a joke. It may mean a flogging for me!"

"You can stand that," said Tom, "rather than do something you'd always be ashamed of afterwards, Harry. But we're standing in with you. We'll come with you to the Head, and we'll take the blame equally."

"I'll stand by that," agreed Lowther.

"No need for all to suffer," grunted Manners. "I'll do it on my own. But it's rather hard lines," he added, with a chuckle. "It's a ripping photograph, and it would have caused no end of fun in the school. Just imagine the look on Selby's face when he sees photos of himself, with the balloon trailing from his coat-tails, plastered all over the school! Just look at it—"

Manners paused suddenly—abruptly.

And no wonder! For he became suddenly, startlingly aware that a figure was standing in the open doorway of the study.

Tom Merry and Lowther had already seen it, and it was their sudden scared and warning looks that had made Manners look round.

It was Mr. Selby!

And Mr. Selby had obviously overheard Manners' last few words.

He stood in the doorway, leaning forward, his face flushed with rage, and his eyes glittered as they rested on the print in Manners' hand.

With sudden alarm, Manners hastily shoved the print in the envelope in which he had brought it together with the negative and put it behind him.

Mr. Selby came into the study, breathing hard and fast.

"Manners!" he choked. "I—I overheard what you said just now. You—you have had the audacity, the abominable impudence to photograph me. I remember now that I glimpsed you in the High Street at Abbotsford with your camera. You dared to take a photograph of me with that wretched balloon attached to my coat. You—you have just admitted it, you ruthless young scoundrel!"

"Listening again, Mr. Selby!" exclaimed Manners quite coolly.

"How dare you!" hooted the furious master, his face convulsed with rage and fear. "I am inclined to believe—indeed, I am quite certain that you were responsible for the balloon being attached to my coat! It has already occurred to me that the trick was done when I was in the crush at the station barrier! The crowd was mostly composed of St. Jim's boys. But now I know who is responsible."

"You're quite mistaken, sir—"

"I am not mistaken!" shrieked Mr. Selby, quivering from head to foot with rage. "It was all part of the plot—you placed that abominable balloon there solely in order to photograph me in a ridiculous position—to bring ridicule and contempt upon me! Almost the same plot very nearly succeeded in my Form-room only the other day."

"One moment, Mr. Selby—"

"I refuse to listen to a word of denial!" shouted the master of the Third. "I came here in the hope that one of you would be able to help me in my predicament—to give information that would be of help to me. Now, I see that it will be useless," he added, with bitter rage. "Not only are you contemplating further acts of enmity, but you—"

He broke off suddenly, and pointed to the packet in Manners' hand.

"Give me that packet, Manners!" he cried hoarsely. "I order you to hand me that photograph, also the negative!"

Give it to me at once, or I will take you before the head-master!"

"All in good time, sir!" said Manners, with a peculiar smile on his face. "But first I think you ought to apologise for having made an unfounded charge against us. We did not touch the balloon, nor did we— Here, I say— Stop!"

Manners yelled in alarm, as did Tom Merry and Lowther.

For, without warning, Mr. Selby sprang forward with a snarl of rage, and snatched the packet containing the negative and print from Manners' hand. He opened it hastily, glanced at the print and then jumped to the first place.

"Hold on, sir!" shouted Tom Merry. "Don't—"

But the warning came too late.

With a swift movement, Mr. Selby dashed the negative and print into the heart of the fire, ramming both into the flames with his boot.

Manners jumped forward, obviously with the intention of trying to save them, but with a savage sweep of his arm, Mr. Selby sent him staggering back.

"Mr. Selby!" shouted Tom Merry, in great alarm, "you've done it now! You've burned the only proof that could have saved you from ruin!"

CHAPTER 8. The Missing Print!

"WHA-AT?"

There was a sudden silence in the study.

Mr. Selby looked at Tom Merry in alarm—as if some intuition told him that the boy spoke the truth. Manners, breathing hard, leaned against the table, his face dark with anger and bitter enmity.

Lowther and Tom Merry were looking aghast. Forgetting that Manners had taken another print, they imagined that all was over—that Selby was "done for."

"What—what did you say then, Merry?" demanded Mr. Selby hoarsely. "Proof? What do you mean, boy?"

"I mean just what I've said!" said Tom curtly. "In your temper, sir, you've destroyed the only thing that could have proved you innocent of having taken that watch."

"Merry—how dare you say—" Mr. Selby trailed off.

"You'd no right to snatch that negative and print from Manners like that, sir!" said Tom. "And it is a thousand pities you did. For it showed the actual thief just dropping the watch into your pocket."

"What?" Mr. Selby almost screamed the word.

"Just that!" said Tom grimly. "You remember that thin-faced man who sidled up alongside you as you stood looking in the window of the jewellers' shop? Well, he was the thief. Knowing the alarm was raised, he got rid of the watch by dropping it into your coat-pocket, sir!"

"Good heavens! You—you saw him! Then why—"

"We didn't see him do it!" said Tom. "We were too far away. But Manners' long-focus camera did! Manners snapped you just as the man was in the act. On the photograph it's come out perfectly clear! We've only just discovered it, and Manners was going to take it to the Head."

"Manners—" panted Mr. Selby.

"It's quite true!" snapped Manners. "And now, through your rotten temper, you've finished things for yourself, Mr. Selby. I hope you're satisfied! In your temper the other day you smashed my camera—ruined it! In your temper now you've done yourself—ruined your chances of being

(Continued on next page.)



Shoot your queries at our Office Oracle, and he'll shoot them back at you, complete with answer.

Q. Where are man-cages used in the punishment of criminals?

A. Great cages suspended from poles are used—or were used until recently—to imprison thieves and other criminals in parts of Afghanistan, and especially in the furthestmost places beyond the Hindu Kush Mountains, on the border of Bokhara. Trapped in the suspended cage, the criminal was left in some exposed place until he starved to death. Sometimes the cage was so small that the man was forced to remain seated until the end; sometimes it was made big enough to accommodate two condemned men together.



No, it's not a bird-cage of the East, but a man-cage of Afghanistan.

Q. Why do sailors always salute the quarter-deck?

A. A Weymouth reader has noticed that both officers and ratings of the Royal Navy invariably salute the quarter-deck before setting foot on it. It is a relic of the days of the old "wooden walls," when each quarter-deck of a warship had a crucifix, before which each sailor reverently crossed himself as he passed. The crucifix may not be found on the quarter-deck of the modern war vessel, but its tradition remains and the sailor salutes where his predecessor did reverence before the sacred image.

Q. What is a godown?

A. Timothy Clegg, of Kilburn, found this word occurred several times in a long account of a strike of Bombay and Calcutta natives. A godown, Timothy, is an Anglo-Indian word in common use in the East and especially in India itself, and it means a warehouse. It is pronounced go-down, and is derived—if my old memory serves—from the Malay word *godong*.

Q. Why does the Red Indian wear feathers in his hair?

A. Obviously to keep his wig-wam. (And if you do anything like this again, you old fossil, I'll warm your wig!—EDITOR.)

Q. Is there a street in the heart of London with only one house?

A. Yes, it is quite true, what you have heard, Ruth Suggers, of York, where the hams come from. This is John Street, in Pall Mall, but hundreds of people pass along that thoroughfare daily without noticing the fact.

Q. Is modern dentistry painless?

A. This question is rather beyond my scope, "Nervous Ned." All I can tell you is that, when on my last visit to my dentist, I bit his finger—he danced like a Dervish and howled worse than my next-door neighbour's wireless set!

Q. What is a Marathon?

A. The term nowadays is applied to a running race over a very long distance. It is so called because Pheidippides ran hot-foot to Athens after the Battle of Marathon.

Q. What is a solenodon?

A. A strange creature of about the size of a small rabbit to be found in Hayti and Cuba. It has somewhat similar habits to the pig, burrowing in the ground with its flexible snout in search of grubs, small reptiles, and vegetables, but imitates the ostrich when hunted with dogs by poking its head in a hole and leaving its body exposed. In appearance, it is not unlike one of my aunts. The Haytian species is called *Solenodon paradoxus*, but I am writing to the Royal Zoological Society to suggest that a better name would be the *Nostus Parkerdon*.



This queer-looking fellow with such a long nose is a solenodon.

Q. What is the castle on a ship?

A. T.M., of Guildford, has heard the word castle used in connection with a ship, and wishes to know if there is such a part of a boat. There is, my friend. In medieval warships the high-built fortified poop was called a castle. Then came the forecastle, which takes its name from a similar strong place once constructed in the bow of a vessel. Nowadays the crew's quarters are called the forecastle (fo'c'sle).

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proved innocent—possibly ruined your career. I hope you're satisfied!"

"Manners—"

The master seemed suddenly to go limp. He did not seem even to notice the lack of respect in the junior's words and tone. The staggering revelation had made him limp as a rag, had taken all the fury and bitter enmity out of him. Even Manners felt a spasm of pity for Mr. Selby as he saw the quivering lips and blinking eyes.

"Is—that true, Merry?" faltered the Third Form master. "I—I can see it is true! Good heavens! Manners, is it possible—can it be possible—"

"The negative is gone—nothing can bring it back!" said Manners; despite his pity, Manners still felt furious and bitter. The savage push Mr. Selby had given him was hardly likely to improve his feelings towards the Form master. Mr. Selby deserved to suffer still more yet—he had fairly asked for it, and got it.

He pulled himself together with an effort.

If ever a man looked absolutely floored, Mr. Selby did at that terrible moment.

He pulled himself together with an effort.

"Merry—Lowther—" he gasped appealingly. "Did none of you see the man do it—is it possible that you can bring forward proof against him?"

"I'm sorry, sir!" said Tom, quite gently. "But we only saw the man standing by you; we were too far away to see much else. I only wish we could help, sir!"

Mr. Selby eyed them dully, in dumb misery, for several moments, and then he turned abruptly and stalked out, his shoulders hunched, his head drooping.

"Poor beggar!" breathed Lowther. "It's fairly knocked him out! It serves him right in a way, of course, but—but—"

"It's rotten!" said Tom Merry unhappily. "If only he hadn't turned up just then—"

"He asked for it, and got it!" snapped Manners. "Still, it's nothing to worry about, really. You're forgetting that I said I'd taken two prints, Tommy!"

"What?"

Manners nodded, and smiled grimly.

"Thank goodness I did!" he said. "I've left the other on the bench in the dark-room. Anyway, I know I took another, so it's all serene for that howling rotter! Let him go on thinking he's done for, though. He deserves a lasting lesson if ever anyone did!"

"Manners, old man—go and get it, and take it to him now! I'm dashed sorry for the old chap, rotter or no rotter!"

"I'm going to take my time," said Manners. "He can wait, and he can go through the mill a bit! Hang it all, will he show any gratitude? What about yesterday? Look what you did for him, Tom! You tried to persuade that jeweller's manager not to charge him—you did your level best with the bobby, too. You hired a taxi at your own expense to save the brute the shame and disgrace of being yanked through the streets by the bobby."

"I know, but—"

"And then you hurried back and let Mr. Railton know. By doing that, you saved Selby from a night in the cells, probably. Has he shown any gratitude? Not a scrap! He comes here with his rotten temper and does this!"

"Yes, but—"

"Let him rip for a bit!" snapped Manners.

"Manners, listen to me," said Tom patiently. "It's admitted that Selby's a bit of a rotter, and that he hasn't any gratitude in him. But that doesn't alter the fact that it's your duty as a decent fellow to go and get that other print at once, and take it to him. Two blacks don't make a white, old man. Now, come along and get that other print—at once!"

Tom Merry got to his feet. He felt quite sure of his chum—that he was only "gassing." And he was right.

Manners gave a bitter laugh.

"Oh, all right!" he growled. "Blow the old cad! You always could make a chap do what he doesn't want to do, Tommy!"

"But in this case he does," said Tom quietly. "You're only pretending you don't, Harry. I know you better than that. Now, come along and find that print—or you go, and I'll run and tell Selby."

"That's the idea!" said Lowther cheerily. "Afterwards, you can let your chin wag for hours on the subject of old Selby's rottenness, and we'll listen. But do the right thing first!"

"Oh, all right!" grunted Manners. "You cut off, Tom!" And Manners went with Lowther to the dark-room.

In his own mind Manners knew only too well that it was the right thing to do—whether Selby deserved it or not made no difference. The photographer of the Shell was grinning as he reached the open door, as he thought of Selby's face when Tom told him that he was not done for after all.

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"Here we are!" he chuckled. "I say, I think I ought to bargain with the old boulder over it—offer him the print if he'll buy me a new pocket Kodak! Shall I, Lowther?"

Lowther chuckled.

"You might get his promise beforehand," said Lowther. "But you wouldn't get the Kodak when once you've handed the giddy print over. He's too dashed mean, old chap!"

"I suppose so," said Manners sorrowfully. "I think I'll—"

He broke off suddenly.

"What's the matter, old scout?" demanded Lowther.

Something obviously was the matter. Manners was in the dark-room now, searching the bench with astonished eyes.



Snatching the envelope containing the negative and print from Manners flames with his boot. Manners jumped forward in an effort to stagger

"Someone's been here," he snapped. "I left that print on the bench here with these others. Now it's gone!"

"Gone! Oh, my hat!"

"It's gone right enough!" said Manners.

With a puzzled face, he started to search the floor, thinking the draught from the window might have blown the print there. But it was nowhere on the floor. He even glanced out of the window, but nothing resembling paper showed on the green sward and gravel path below.

"That's dashed funny!" said Manners, frowning. "Great Scott! If that print's gone, too, then Selby's in the soup with a vengeance! I say, hunt round for it, Monty!"

"Right!"

Helped by Monty Lowther, Manners searched the dark-room thoroughly, leaving nothing to chance. But they both realised that further search was useless, at last. Wherever the print was, it certainly was not in the dark-room.

"Well, my only hat!" muttered Manners. "I can't understand this, Monty! Let's go and tell Tom. Oh, crumbs! He'll have told old Selby by this time! What a sell for him!"

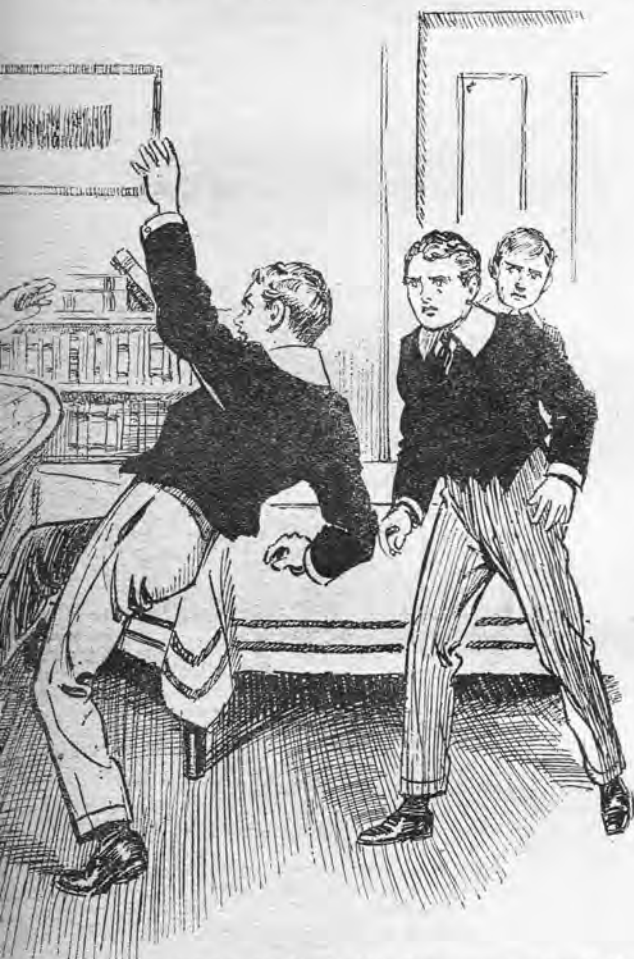
And feeling very disturbed and uneasy, Manners and Lowther hurried back to Study No. 10. There was another disappointing shock in store for Mr. Henry Selby!

CHAPTER 9.

Mr. Selby Knows!

TOM MERRY fairly ran to Mr. Selby's study. He realised what this fresh discovery meant to the hapless master of the Third. He could understand Mr. Selby's feelings well enough—he could feel for him in his dire extremity. He could even make allowances for the master's rage and uncontrolled temper.

Mr Selby was faced with a serious charge that seemed only too likely to bring about his disgrace and ruin. Without that print, with its indisputable evidence of his innocence, the chances were that he would be found guilty



and, Mr. Selby dashed it into the heart of the fire, ramming it into the fire, but with a savage sweep of his arm the Form master sent him (see Chapter 7.)

of the charge of theft. In that case, his career would be ruined. The possibility of his returning to St. Jim's at any time was out of the question. And he was getting on in years. With that stain on his name he could never get another job of a like nature.

No wonder Mr. Selby was in a distracted and uncontrollable state of acute anxiety and "nerves." No wonder he was unable to restrain his feelings and temper. Tom Merry could not help feeling sorry for him, and he was glad to be the bearer of news that he knew would lift the hapless master from the depths of despair.

To Tom's surprise he found Mr Selby's study empty. It occurred to Tom at once, however, that the master had gone to Mr. Railton, to tell him the story of the photograph—possibly he had gone to the Head.

After a moment's thought, Tom decided to go after him. He went at once to the Housemaster's study, and he found Mr. Selby just leaving. Mr. Selby looked absolutely broken up, and he gazed dazedly at Tom.

"I was just looking for you, sir!" gasped Tom breathlessly. "I say, sir, it's all right—Manners has another print!"

"Wha-what?"

"He took two prints of the negative," said Tom quickly.

"He left one in the dark-room. He's gone to fetch it now, sir."

Mr. Selby almost staggered. His eyes lit up, and he fairly gasped in his deep, overwhelming relief.

"Are—are you speaking the truth, Merry?" he said dazedly. "Do—do you mean that there is another photograph—a print showing the villain placing that watch in my pocket? Answer me, boy—answer quickly!"

He clutched Tom with a bony hand and shook him in his great excitement.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Tom. "It's all right! Manners has just gone for the print now—to the dark-room!"

"Oh!" panted Mr. Selby. "Oh! But—but why did not that young scoundrel tell me at the time?" Even in his overwhelming relief Mr. Selby was still himself—still complaining and blaming. "Manners has obviously kept this from me purposely to cause me acute anxiety and despair! He shall be punished for what, doubtless enough, he imagined was a joke on me—to make me suffer still more!"

Tom did not reply to that. To some extent it was true enough. Yet he felt disgusted with the ill-natured master for jumping to that conclusion in such circumstances. Any decent master, Tom reflected, would have been overwhelmed with gratitude towards Manners—the boy who had saved him, or intended to save him! As he stood thus, Mr. Selby grasped the junior's arm again.

"Come!" he snapped almost hysterically. "I must see the young villain without delay—before he is tempted to destroy that print! If he has—if he attempts to do so—he shall suffer dearly! The Head shall know—the Head shall know!"

He rushed Tom along the passage, his grip like a vice on the junior's arm. With a breathless rush they arrived at Study No. 10 in the Shell passage. Mr. Selby glared around the room in a hunted, desperate way.

"They're still in the dark-room I expect!" snapped Tom.

"Shall we go there—"

"Yes, yes—ah! Here he is now!"

Manners came along with Lowther. Both looked troubled, and Manners eyed Mr. Selby a trifle apprehensively. Obviously Tom had told the Third Form-master the news, and that he would be in a terrible state of mind when he learned that the print was now missing was a foregone conclusion.

"Manners!" cried Mr. Selby, his voice trembling. "Merry tells me that you have still another print of that photograph. You will hand—"

"Y-yes, sir!" stammered Manners. "But unfortunately—"

"You will hand it over to me at once!" shouted Mr. Selby, his voice ringing along the passage. "How dare you keep it back, boy? I am well aware that you did so to cause me distress! If you do not hand it to me at once—"

"I'm sorry, sir!" said Manners quietly. "But I cannot find it!"

"What?" booted the master.

"I left it on the bench in the dark-room!" said Manners steadily. "It has disappeared! I have hunted, and Lowther has helped me. But it's gone!"

"Gone?" Mr. Selby almost shrieked the word.

He glared at Manners in speechless fury and bitter, overwhelming disappointment. To his distraught, suspicious mind it seemed only too clear—he did not wait to hear further particulars. Manners had destroyed the other print. It was not lost, but destroyed. In a spirit of bitter revenge, Manners had destroyed the last shred of evidence that would have saved him. Being a mean-spirited, suspicious man, Mr. Selby expected to find the same sort of feelings in others. There was no doubt in his mind. Manners had destroyed the print to ruin him—out of revenge.

At the thought a fit of ungovernable rage took possession of him, and stepping forward he dealt Manners a terrific box on the ear that sent the junior spinning away, to collapse against the passage wall with a wild yell of astonished pain.

Then, after glaring down at him for a moment, Mr. Selby gulped and strode away, trembling visibly with rage and despair.

With the help of his chums Manners staggered to his feet. Quite a number of fellows were about, and they had witnessed the astonishing incident with amazement.

"The—the rotter!" gasped Tom Merry. "The man's mad—this affair has turned his head. But—but is that a fact, Harry—has the print vanished?"

Manners nodded, his face white save for a red patch where Mr. Selby's hand had struck with vicious force.

"It's gone!" he panted. "That—that brute shall never get it either—after this, if I can help it!"

"Manners—"

"I suppose you fellows will think I was spoofing, too—that I have destroyed the other one," said Manners bitterly.

"We'll think nothing of the kind!" said Tom quietly. "We know you better than that, Harry. But how—"

"It's gone!" said Manners. "Someone's taken it. It was on the bench—I know I left it there! I can't help it if it's gone, and I'm hanged if I'm going to trouble my head about it after this!" he added thickly. "That brute burned the negative and the other print and he must take the consequences!"

"Manners, old man—"

"Oh, shut up!"

And as the bell for dinner rang just then, Manners stamped off down the passage, his head singing, black thoughts in his mind. His chums said no more to him then. They followed him downstairs gloomily. What would happen now? Mr Selby would undoubtedly report to the Head, and Manners would have difficulty in proving that he had not destroyed the print. In any case there was trouble enough ahead over the business for all concerned—of that Tom Merry was assured.

CHAPTER 10.

Before the Head!

"MANNERS!"

"Yes, sir?"

"The headmaster wishes to see you, without delay, my boy."

"Very well, sir!"

Harry Manners left his place in the Form-room. The moment Toby, the School House page, had entered the room with the note for Mr. Linton he had known what it portended. The Head had sent for him—Selby had reported the matter.

"Buck up, old man!" whispered Tom Merry. "We're standing by you, mind!"

Manners did not answer; he left the room quickly. Knowing Selby's spiteful, mean nature as he did, he realised that he was "for it." The master would undoubtedly make things awkward for him—would make it seem certain that he had destroyed the print.

Certainly it was his own property. None the less, the circumstances were such that if it was proved he had done so the Head would treat with the utmost severity what he would be bound to consider a spiteful, mean act of revenge.

Manners had fully expected the summons, and he was ready for it. He tapped on the Head's door and entered.

Mr. Selby was with the Head. His face was pale and his eyes held a hunted, desperate light. They glittered as they rested on Manners' cool face.

"Manners," began the Head, in grave tones, "I have sent for you on a very serious matter indeed! You are no doubt very well aware of the very serious position in which Mr. Selby is placed. You were, I understand, present during that unfortunate happening in the High Street at Abbot's-ford yesterday."

"Yes, sir!"

"Very well. I have no need to point out the gravity of the situation, Manners. Mr. Selby, a respected member of the school staff has been charged with a serious offence. He has been placed in a very grave and unhappy situation. His whole career—his honour and position—is at stake."

"Yes, sir."

The Head frowned darkly. The junior's coolness did not at all commend itself to him in the circumstances. It savoured of studied impertinence—of careless indifference.

"In the unhappy circumstances, Manners," he went on tartly, "it is due to Mr. Selby that the full support and sympathy of the school, masters and boys, is given to him—moral support and practical support where possible. The possibility that—Mr. Selby is responsible for the theft of the watch is absurd and monstrous!"

"Yes, sir," said Manners. "Nobody believes it possible, I think!"

"I am glad, at all events, to hear you say so, Manners," said the Head coldly. "But I think you are well aware of my reason for sending for you. Mr. Selby has related to me an astounding story—that you took a photograph of him outside the shop, and that the photograph proves, without shadow of doubt, that Mr. Selby is innocent of the charge against him."

"That's quite so, sir," said Manners, colouring. "It showed clearly enough the thief dropping something into Mr. Selby's pocket! It was evidence enough for the police or anyone else. Unfortunately, Mr. Selby destroyed it in his temper; he destroyed it before I or anyone else could

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warn him. He has himself to thank for this, and nobody else, sir!"

"Manners!" thundered the Head.

"And now he's trying to put the blame on me, sir!" said the junior recklessly. "Instead of being grateful for what we did and intended to do, he knocked me about, and now—"

"Silence!" thundered the Head angrily. "How dare you speak like that, Manners? Mr. Selby has told me the circumstances; he has explained how, angry and indignant at the use to which you were obviously intending to put the photograph, he destroyed the negative and print. But that does not excuse the fact that you have, apparently, destroyed the other print, boy!"

"I didn't destroy it, sir!" said Manners stoutly. "I left it in the dark-room. It was gone when Lowther and I went to get it. I cannot help that, sir."

"The boy is obviously not speaking the truth!" hooted Mr. Selby, almost in tears. "He had not the slightest intention of showing the photograph to anyone in authority—he had no intention whatever of bringing it forward in evidence to support me! Had I not discovered him with it in his hands we should never have heard of it—of that I am convinced!"

"Mr. Selby is mistaken, sir," said Manners quietly. "Had I not intended to bring forward the evidence to save Mr. Selby, I should never have allowed either negative or print to leave the dark-room; I should have destroyed them then and there. But I had every intention of taking them to Mr. Selby, who came to the study just as I was showing them to my chums. Merry and Lowther will tell you what my intention was."

The Head looked hard at Manners, and then he touched the bell on his desk. A moment or two later Toby was hurrying to the Shell Form-room for Tom Merry and Lowther. They came quickly enough, only too anxious to give their testimony. Their story supported Manners in every particular—the Head could not fail to see that. He nodded grimly at last.

"It is most unfortunate—very unfortunate indeed, Mr. Selby," he said coldly, "that you allowed your feelings to get the better of you to the extent that you destroyed the negative and print. But it is quite obvious that Manners did intend to make them public."

"Dr. Holmes—"

"After hearing the evidence of Merry and Lowther, I can believe nothing else," said the Head. "Manners, in any case, could never be so mean-spirited, so revengeful, as to do such a dastardly thing—of that I am quite sure! But the other print must be found! I do not see that it can be far away, or destroyed. For the moment the matter of the photograph—the offence of having taken it in the first place—must be allowed to rest. You do not deny, I presume, that you took the photograph with the intention of bringing ridicule upon Mr. Selby, Manners?"

"No, sir!"

"We're all responsible for that as much as Manners," said Tom Merry.

"It was a piece of unheard-of impudence!" snapped Dr. Holmes. "But I will deal with that matter later. For the present you may go, and I trust you will make every effort to find that print. Have I your promise to do that, boys?"

"Certainly, sir! We wish we could find it, sir!" said Tom sincerely. "It must be somewhere about!"

"And I am convinced it is destroyed!" stormed Mr. Selby. "Dr. Holmes, cannot you see—"

"Pray calm yourself, Mr. Selby! Boys, you are excused lessons for the remainder of this afternoon. You will spend the time instead in a thorough search for the print. I trust for Mr. Selby's sake and the sake of this school that you will be successful. You may go!"

"Dr. Holmes, I protest—I demand—"

The juniors heard no more of Mr. Selby's ravings. They went out obediently, and outside the door they eyed each other.

"Well, this is a go!" said Tom Merry. "Anyway, the Head believes you for the present, Manners. Let's hope to goodness we find that print!"

"It may save us a flogging each if we do!" said Lowther, with a wry grin. "Anyway, come on and let's get busy!"

And the Terrible Three hurried off and got busy. A thorough search of the dark-room, however, revealed nothing. Finally, the juniors searched Study No. 10, in the faint hope that Manners had taken the print there and forgotten it. But the chums of the Shell gave it up at last, and went to report their failure to Mr. Railton, who reported it to the Head.

But they steered clear of Mr. Selby. That hapless master was like a raging lion, they heard, and they gave him a wide berth.

CHAPTER 11. Another Shock!

TEA was a far from cheery meal in Study No. 10 that afternoon.

Tom Merry and Lowther were quiet and uneasy. They did not doubt their chum's word regarding the missing print. Not for one moment did they imagine him guilty of having somehow destroyed it. Yet they knew, from Manners' gloomy and somewhat sulky manner, that he suspected them of doing so.

In the circumstances, perhaps, this was not to be wondered at. Manners knew it was common knowledge about his row with Mr. Selby, and he knew heaps of fellows were aware that he had foolishly vowed to "get his own back." He did not need telling that many fellows would believe he had destroyed the print. As a matter of fact, he already had clear evidence of that, for by this time the news had leaked out—possibly Mr. Selby himself was responsible. And more than one fellow had openly stated his opinion that Manners was a vengeful cad, and that it was a bit too thick!

Certainly it was "too thick"—if Manners had done it; all were agreed upon that.

Manners knew the general feeling—or what it would be—and he eyed his chums watchfully, as if expecting to see in their faces traces of disgust and disapproval.

Before tea was finished, however, Manners himself caused a welcome change in the atmosphere of the study.

He sprang up from the table suddenly, his eyes ablaze with sudden excitement.

"My hat! I've got it!" he exclaimed excitedly. "It was those young scamps in the Third who took that print, for a pension!"

"What the thump——"

"I see it all now!" went on Manners, with a snort at his own blindness. "I ought to have remembered it long ago. What an ass I am! It was those fags—my minor and his pals! They were in the passage outside the dark-room. I sent them flying as I rushed out!"

"Well, my only topper!" gasped Tom Merry. "How the thump did you forget that? All this trouble would have been saved——"

"Those little idiots took it, sure enough!" agreed Lowther, with a chuckle. "They came here after you, asking about it. They must have gone straight away to the dark-room. They were coming to see you when you met them."

"Well, I'm blowed!"

The Terrible Three eyed each other blankly—Manners in a very disgusted sort of way indeed. He wondered at that moment how on earth he could have failed to see it before. Undoubtedly the Third-Formers knew what had happened to that print! Various shady characters in the House, Racke and Crooke among them, had been suggested as having perhaps taken it. Tom Merry & Co. had quite overlooked the very fellows who were most likely to have been responsible for its disappearance—Wally & Co. of the Third!

"Come on! Never mind tea!" snapped Tom. "We'll see those young villains now! And we'll make 'em sit up for putting us into this mess!"

"Yes, rather!"

The three juniors tore off to the fags' quarters without delay, quite confident now that the mystery of the missing print was solved—that all was well.

They dashed into the Third Form quarters pell-mell—nearly falling headlong over a group of struggling figures on the floor. Wally D'Arcy, Reggie Manners, Curly Gibson, Jameson, and Levison minor, appeared to be trying their best to bang the head of the hapless Reuben Piggott through the floorboards.

Piggott was howling for mercy, but howling in vain.

"Chuck that, you young asses!" snapped Tom Merry, dragging Wally off his victim by main force. "Chuck it! We want you!"

"Oh, do you!" snorted Wally. "Clear out of here, you cheeky cads! I say, you fellows, yell for our chaps, and let's chuck these Shell-fish out!"

"You young ass!" rapped Tom. "Listen to me, Wally! It's jolly serious!"

"So's this!" said Wally, glaring. "Here, don't let that little worm get away! We're going to scalp him! He's had the cheek to say old Selby's a thief!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Lowther. It was something quite new to hear Wally sticking up for Selby; it almost took the Terrible Three's breath away.

"You fellows know what we think of Selby," said Wally. "Well, I've been thinking things over, and I don't think Selby pinched that watch, after all. All my pals are with me there, too!"

"Oh, don't you?" said Tom Merry grimly. "Well, if you don't——"

"We don't!" said Wally cheerfully. "Mind you, we still think he's a worm, and a cad, and a rotter. But we don't believe he's a thief, and we're not allowing anyone else to say he is!"

"Oh!"

"I'm beginning to feel sorry for him," said Wally, shaking his youthful head. "He's fairly bowled over—absolutely pipped! I've decided to forgive him for all he's done and for being a tyrant. We're backing him up. After all, he's in the Third, like us, and it's up to us to back him up now. That's the way we look at it."

"That's the idea!" said Jameson. "It's rather thick to kick a man when he's down—even a man like Selby."

"Well, I'm glad you feel like that!" said Tom Merry, with heavy sarcasm. "For now you'll perhaps hand over that print you took from the dark-room, kids!"

"Eh? What?" Wally gave a jump. "Oh, that's what you're after, is it?" he grinned. "Well, you're not getting it—unless Manners promises to let us have some more prints later on."

"You young ass! I thought——"

"We mean to keep it until Selby's got over this trouble," said Wally. "We're not kicking a man when he's down by bringing the photo out now. But after the affair's blown over—the old rotter's bound to wriggle out of it somehow—we're going to make him squirm in another way. No harm in that, is there?"

"So you did take it!" breathed Manners major, clenching

(Continued on next page.)

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his fists. "You young fools! I see you haven't heard what that photo means to Selby!"

"Eh? What d'you mean?"

"We mean this!" snapped Tom Merry. "That photo proves that Selby did not take that watch, Wally! Listen!"

And Tom explained briefly what Manners' photograph had shown.

Wally whistled as he listened.

"So that's it!" he gasped. "I was right, then! The old rotter didn't pinch it! But—phew! I only just glanced at that print, and I never spotted that much. I was afraid you chaps would be after it, and so I took it up to my locker and hid it!"

"Then you've got to come along and hand it over—now!" snapped Tom.

"Here, hold on!" said Wally, shaking his head. "Where do we come in, then, with that photo? If the Head gets his paws on it we shan't see it again!"

"Of course not, you young ass!"

"Well, and old Selby himself has burned the dashed negative, hasn't he?" snorted Wally warmly. "That means we're dished and done over it! And we've looked forward no end to— Here, leggo!"

"You young idiot!" said Tom Merry, shaking the fag in his impatience. "Don't you understand how serious it is? Don't you understand that the man's honour is at stake?"

"He hasn't got any!" said Wally.

"Well, his career, then!" snapped Tom. "But enough of this silly rot, Wally. Can't you see that we've got to do our level best to clear Selby if we can? You're coming now, and you're going to hand that print over!"

"Oh, all right, I'll come!" grunted Wally, in disgust. "You kids stay and look after—why, the little worm's gone!" howled Wally, evidently referring to Reuben Pig-gott. "Oh, blow! Never mind, we'll get him before bed-time! Lead on, Macduff!"

And Wally accompanied the Shell fellows up to the dormitory. Actually, the fag was only too glad to do so. He was not so upset at the thought of losing the photo as he pretended. At least, being a decent youngster, he was only too glad to help in clearing an innocent man.

They tramped upstairs and enter the Third Form dormitory. In a moment Wally was on his knees by his locker, and had thrown back the lid. Then he felt about inside it. As he did so his face wore a puzzled frown, which grew as he felt and fumbled in vain.

"Well, I'm blowed!" he gasped at last. "Looks as if the dashed thing's gone! I put it in here, anyway!"

"Tip the locker up!" snapped Tom grimly.

The locker was tipped up, and its contents strewn over the dormitory floor. Then Wally, helped by the others, searched feverishly, and with growing alarm and amazement.

"You—you're quite sure you hid it in here?" said Tom at last.

"Yes, quite! This beats me!"

"Then it isn't here now!" said Tom, while Manners gave a whistle of dismay. "Look through your clothes again, Wally. Then we'll search the bed!"

This was done—without avail. The print was undoubtedly not among Wally's things. To make quite certain that he had not made a mistake—though the leader of the Third knew he hadn't—Jameson and Levison whose lockers were the nearest on either side of Wally's bed, allowed their lockers to be similarly searched. But it was no good, the print was not to be found.

The searchers gave it up at last.

"No good!" said Tom Merry, giving Wally a keen glance. "If you're absolutely certain you put it there, Wally—"

"Don't I keep telling you I am!" almost shrieked the exasperated and bewildered fag. "I know I did quite well. It's gone and someone must have taken it!"

"Well, you'd better make quite certain it isn't in any of your belongings downstairs!" said Tom grimly. "We shan't report this. No good getting you kids mixed up in it, or giving Selby anything more to grouse about, either. But it's queer—no end queer, and it's dashed disappointing. We can only hope the thing will turn up sooner or later."

"Yes, rather!" said Manners huskily. "If it doesn't—well, I suppose everyone will still think I destroyed it. And they can, for all I care!"

And he led the way downstairs, with a bitter look on his features.

CHAPTER 12.

Grundy Speaks His Mind!

"I T won't do!"

George Alfred Grundy of the Shell said that, and he said it firmly, in tones of finality. When Grundy said anything he usually did mean it—whether it was anything sensible or otherwise.

He was speaking now of the affair of the missing print. By this time—just before prep—the news was all over the House, though the share Wally & Co. had taken in it was not, as yet, known to the general public, as it were. In Tom Merry's view it could do no good, and would only bring more fellows into the general trouble. Certainly it would clear Manners major to some extent, if believed. But Manners himself was the last to want that if it meant—as it undoubtedly would—getting his own minor and the rest of the fags into trouble.

The news of the missing print, naturally enough, had created yet another sensation. Practically all the fellows had believed Selby innocent. They simply could not believe otherwise. It seemed impossible to credit that a master of St. Jim's could so far forget himself and his position as to act the part of a sneak-thief.

Now they knew he was innocent; Manners' photograph proved that. The fellows also knew that Manners had vowed to get his own back on Selby, and they knew how bitter was the feeling between the two.

The natural consequence was that a great many looked upon it as a howling shame. Manners had destroyed the print, or had got rid of it in some other way. It was a thing no decent fellow would have done. Manners found himself looked at with many suspicious and scornful eyes that evening.

Now, in the privacy of his study, Grundy was laying the law down on the subject.

"It won't do," he repeated. "It's too thumping thick for words! I never dreamed Manners was such a cad!"

"Perhaps he isn't," suggested Wilkins mildly. "It must be a mistake. Someone else may have pinched the silly print! In fact, I don't believe Manners capable of such a caddish trick myself."

"Neither do I," said Cuthbert Gunn, shaking his head. "Dash it all, it's too thick! Whether Manners hated Selby or not, he wouldn't keep a thing like that back and leave the man in the soup, Grundy."

"Rot!" said Grundy. Grundy had already thought the matter out. That settled it. Manners knew what had become of the print, of course. Any ass could see that Grundy did, at all events. "Rot!" he repeated. "Manners did it. But it won't do. I'm not going to stand it!"

"Aren't you?"

"No. Mind you, I can't stand that cad Selby at any price," said Grundy, shaking his head. "He's an awful rotter, I know. He smashed Manners' camera. That's admitted; but it doesn't excuse Manners keeping that print back."

"You don't think he's destroyed it, after all, then?" Grundy frowned.

"Now I come to think again," he answered, "I don't! He's got it hidden somewhere. Yes, I fancy that's it. He's got it hidden, and he'll bring it out at the very last moment before the trial on Monday. He'll keep poor old Selby in suspense, and then spring it on him—just to punish him, you know."

"My hat! I never thought of that," said Gunn. "It's not likely you'd think of these things," said Grundy disparagingly. "I did. I've worked it out now, I fancy. But it's not good enough. By Monday poor old Selby will be simply off his chump!"

"There'll be trouble between you and him, then, old chap!"

"Eh?"

"You'll object to his resembling you, I expect," said Wilkins sweetly.

"Eh?" Grundy's brain was not equal to working that out. "You're talking rot, Wilkins! Shut up, if you can't talk sense! Anyway, I'm going to see that cad Manners now. I'll make him produce that print, if I have to put him in the sanny first!"

And, having come to that decision, Grundy left the study

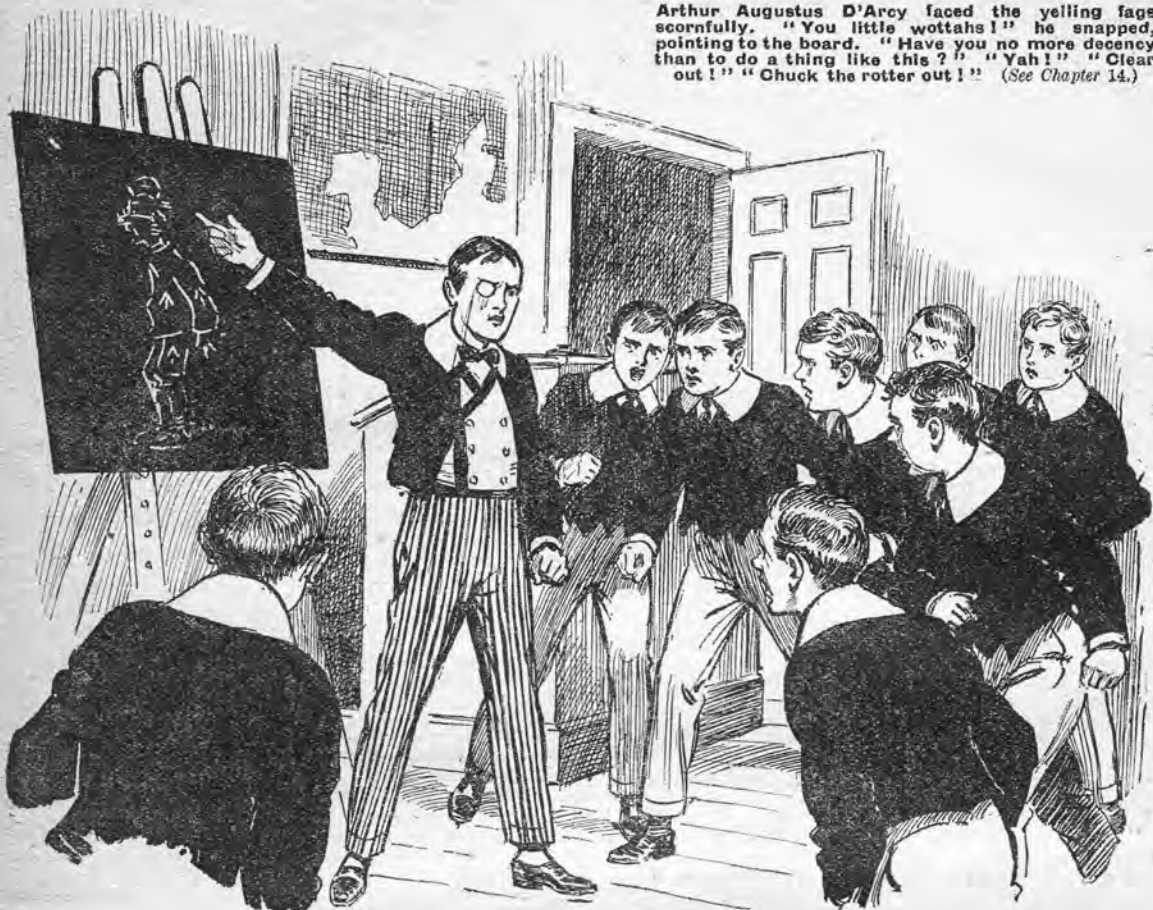
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Arthur Augustus D'Arcy faced the yelling fags scornfully. "You little wottahs!" he snapped, pointing to the board. "Have you no more decency than to do a thing like this?" "Yah!" "Clear out!" "Chuck the rotter out!" (See Chapter 14.)



and went along to Study No. 10. Wilkins and Gunn grinned at each other, and made a start on their prep.

Meanwhile, George Alfred found the Terrible Three at home, just about to start on prep themselves. They stared as the mighty George Alfred strode in, without troubling to announce his coming with a knock. Such things were trifles light as air to Grundy. He came to the point abruptly.

"I've come to see you, Manners!" he snapped. "I want to know where you've hidden that print, you rotter!"

"Oh, do you?"

"Yes, I do. I know thumping well you've got it hidden somewhere!"

"I'll be glad if you can tell me where, then," said Manners, his eyes gleaming a little at Grundy's somewhat scornful look. "You seem to know more about it than I do. Perhaps you know where it is yourself, Grundy."

"Don't talk rot!" snapped Grundy, his lip curling. "You can't pull the wool over my eyes with that talk, Manners. Look here, I don't like Selby—never did like him!"

"And I don't like you, Grundy—never did like you!" said Manners. "Get out! Take your silly face away; it worries me, and I've worries enough just now."

Lowther chuckled, and Grundy frowned.

"Now look here, Manners," he said, clenching his big fists. "I don't want trouble with you. I just want you to do the decent thing and hand over that print. Dash it all, play the game! Most of the fellows think it's a bit low-down of you to play a trick like this on poor old Selby."

"Oh, do they?" said Manners, his face going red.

"Of course. Why, what else can they think?" asked Grundy, with a snort. "They think you've destroyed that print yourself. But I don't."

"Thanks!" said Manners grimly. "Now you've told me that, perhaps you'll get out and let us get on with prep, Grundy."

"I'll go when I've got that print from you!" said Grundy coolly.

"What?"

"That's the programme," said Grundy, nodding. "The fellows think it's destroyed, but I don't. In fact, I know quite well that it isn't—that you've got it hidden somewhere, Manners!"

"Trust Grundy to find these things out!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Let the silly ass run on!"

"You shut up, Lowther!" said Grundy. "I know Manners' game well enough. I've thought it out. He's keeping the print back until Monday, to punish Selby. But it won't do; I'm not standing it. Why, the poor old rotter will be a gibbering maniac by that time. It's not good enough, Manners!"

Manners went red.

"You silly fool!" he snapped angrily. "I haven't got the rotten print at all! Get out, you babbling gas-bag! If you don't, I'll put you out!"

"So that's your tune, is it?" said Grundy. He rolled back his cuffs in a businesslike way. "So you're going to stick to it, after I've bowled you out, you rotter! Well, I'm going to hammer you until you turn up that print, or tell me where I can find it, Manners!"

With that Grundy made a rush, obviously meaning business. But Manners was ready for him—he had been on the point of rushing at the too-candid Grundy himself, in fact.

The next moment a fierce battle was in progress in Study No. 10.

Tom Merry jumped up.

"Well, my hat!" he gasped. "We're not standing this, Monty. Lend a hand, and we'll show that born idiot just where he gets off!"

"What-ho!" said Lowther.

They joined in with a will. Grundy bellowed and roared as he struggled furiously to hold his own. He yelled for Wilkins and he yelled for Gunn, but he yelled in vain. Those youths heard all right, and understood perfectly what was happening. But the sounds of distant strife only caused them to grin and resume their prep. It was quite a relief to get Grundy out of the study for a bit.

Grundy had the Terrible Three all to himself, and, mighty man of war though he was, he found them too big a handful for him. Slowly but surely he was forced back towards the door. Then Lowther sprang out of the melee and opened wide the door.

He then piled in again, and two seconds later Grundy went through the open doorway with a whirling rush, to land in the passage outside with a terrific bump that sounded along the length and breadth of the Shell passage. Then the Terrible Three returned to their prep, locking the door on the inside first.

Grundy scrambled to his feet a wreck. Once again he had

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,101.

suffered in a good cause, or what he deemed was a good cause. But he had had enough for the time being, and he limped away towards his own study, breathing hard, and vowing to tackle Manners at a more favourable opportunity.

In Study No. 10 Manners was biting his lip and giving little thought to prep. He knew only too well that Grundy was not the only one who held the same opinion as he had expressed. It was not a comforting thought for Harry Manners, and his face was dark as he wondered how the affair would end. On one point he felt certain. If Selby was proved guilty—if the print failed to turn up, and the master was ruined and disgraced, he knew that the majority at St. Jim's would blame him for it, and look upon him with scorn and contempt.

CHAPTER 13.

Gussy Chips in!

"IT'S a wotten mess!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy said that, and, like Grundy, he said it as if he meant it. Blake looked up from his prep.

"Well, what's the use of grousing about it?" he said. "You didn't make it, and you can't alter it, unless you wear a mask. Why not wear a mask, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove! I fail to undahstand you, Blake!"

"You said it was a rotten mess!" said Blake, in surprise. "Well, it is. I suppose you were talking about your face, weren't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries; George Herries was a fellow who could see and appreciate such broad humour as Blake's.

Arthur Augustus glared, jamming his famous monocle more firmly into place as if to aid him in the process of glaring.

"You know perfectly well that I was not wewefwin' to my face, Jack Blake!" he said indignantly. "I was wewefwin' to this wretched affiah of Selby's."

"Oh, give that a rest, Gussy!" said Blake. "We've had quite enough of that for one evening, old chap! Gassing about it won't improve matters—or make that rotten print turn up!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"We know old Manners can't have destroyed the thing now," said Blake, shaking his head. "Those young imps in the Third know where it is—you mark my words, Gussy! It'll turn up suddenly just in time to save Selby. Those kids have hidden it, and they're making Selby sit up before coming forward with it."

"That's my idea!" said Herries, nodding. "The fellows are blaming Manners, and I think those kids ought to be shown up."

"Only fair to Manners major!" said Digby.

Arthur Augustus frowned.

Not having been on the spot when Wally & Co. had made the discovery that the print was lost again, they naturally rather doubted those young rascals. Certainly, when acquainting Blake & Co. with what had happened, Tom Merry had been quite sure that Wally & Co.'s amazement and dismay were genuine. Yet, knowing those young rascals as they did, the Fourth-Formers had a suspicion that there was spoof about it somewhere. Wally & Co. were certainly in the habit of telling the truth, and the chums of Study No. 6 did not doubt they would tell the truth if faced. But had they thrown dust in the eyes of Tom Merry? The fags all detested Selby with a whole-hearted detestation, and only that morning they had openly shown their delight in the thought of getting rid of their tyrannical Form master.

That Wally & Co. had changed their opinions, the Fourth-Formers were not aware. It did not strike them that Wally & Co. were decent youngsters at heart, and would alter their views upon reflection.

Arthur Augustus frowned. He himself was very worried indeed, and he could not help feeling there was something in his chums' views. Wally & Co. were true-blue, but they were faced with a big temptation to make Selby's overwhelming anxiety linger on for a bit by keeping back the print.

He rose to his feet, having resolved upon his course of action. The swell of the Fourth did not take long to make his mind up upon anything.

"Hallo, where are you going, Gussy?" asked Blake, staring.

"I am goin' to see young Wally," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "And I am goin' to appeal to those young wascals on poor old Selby's behalf."

"Better not," said Blake. "Better leave those young imps alone. You'll only make a muck of it, Gussy. You always do, you know."

"Bai Jove! I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort, Blake!" said Gussy indignantly. "Nothin' of the kind! I intend to use fact and diplomacy, and I am quite suah that

I shall succeed in gettin' the twuth ffrom my mainah, and ffrom his fwiends. Yaas, wathah!"

And Arthur Augustus left the study gracefully, and made his way towards the fag quarters—unheeding Blake's warning yells.

In the passage outside the Third Form room he came upon Wally & Co.—Wally D'Arcy, Reggie Manners, Frank Levi-son, Curly Gibson, and Jameson. They were standing in a group, gasping and panting, and nursing various swollen noses and damaged eyes, not to mention other visible injuries.

Arthur Augustus gazed upon the disreputable gang, and frowned his deep displeasure.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "You disweputable-lookin' young wuffians!"

"Bow-wow!" snorted Wally disrespectfully. "You shove off, Gussy—we don't want any of your silly chin-wag!"

"Bai Jove! Weally——" Arthur Augustus broke off. "Howevah, I will wefwain ffrom takin' you to task now, Wally, in weward to your diswepctful appeahwance. I have to speak vewy sewiously indeed to you!"

"Go hon!"

"I wish you to listen to me vewy sewiously, Wally," said Gussy, who was very serious indeed himself. "I have heard about that w'etched pwint, of course, and I simplay cannot believe that you are keepin' the thing back as some of the fellows appeal to believe."

"Oh, do they?" ejaculated Wally. "Well, of all the cheek——"

"They certainly do, Wally," said Gussy severely. "But I believe that you are not, and I wish to have your word in that respect. Have I your word that you do not know where that w'etched pwint is?"

"Eh? Of course you have, dummy!" snorted Wally indignantly. "Tom Merry and his pals know quite well we haven't the slightest idea where it is. I swear I haven't, anyway."

"That is good enough for me, then!" said Gussy, in great relief. "I was quite suah you would nevah do anythin' so caddish as to keep the thing back and allow an innocent man to suffah agonies of suspense, Wally."

"Thanks for nothing!" snorted Wally. "Like your cheek, Gus, to come here——"

"Pway do not misundahstand me, Wally," Gussy thought it as well to change the subject. "Howevah, there is anotheh mattah I wish to speak to you youngstahs about. I have heard that you are givin' poor old Selby a wuff time. I have even heard that one of you pinned a notice on his studay door this evenin'—a notice with the word 'Thief' pwinted on it!"

"Then you thumping well heard wrong!" said Wally warmly. "It was Piggott or one of his crowd who did that. We're backing up old Selby in this. Why, we've just been scrapping with Piggott and his crowd over it. We're not the chaps to kick a man when he's down—not even old Selby."

"I am vewy welieved indeed to hear that, Wally," said Gussy. "It is a gweat pleasuah to me to know that you are backin' poor old Selby up. But do I undahstand that that little worm Piggott and his fwiends are not?"

"Yes, you jolly well do!" said Wally. "All the Form, excepting us are down on Selby. We've just been scrapping with the crowd of them now. But they're rather too many for us five to handle, and they chucked us out just before you come along."

"Bai Jove! That is vewy wotten, deah boys!"

"But we'll lick 'em yet!" said Wally, glowering at the closed door of the fags' Form-room. "They've drawn a thumping sketch of a convict on the blackboard for old Selby to see when he comes in to take prep. He may be here any minute. You shove off, Gussy! We're going to wipe off that sketch or die in the attempt."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus frowned deeply, understanding the position of affairs in the Third now. Evidently the Third, as a whole—led by the rascally Reuben Piggott—were making things warm for Mr. Selby, and showing their hatred of him by throwing his misfortune in his face, as it were. And only Wally & Co., usually Mr. Selby's bitterest enemies, were standing by him.

"Bai Jove!" repeated Arthur Augustus, his eyes suddenly taking on the gleam of resolve. "Leave this to me, you youngstahs! I will speak vewy sewiously to those thoughtless and heartless young wascals. Yaas, wathah!"

"Here, hold on!" gasped Wally.

But Arthur Augustus was already opening the door of the Third Form-room. He marched inside—always the fellow to rush in where angels feared to tread. To enter the Third Form-room when anything like this was "on" was something like dashing in among a nest of hornets.

Arthur Augustus, however, was built of stout stuff, and he feared no foe—certainly not a gang of inky fags! He

marched in and he frowned still deeper as he took in what was going on.

Piggott was there—he was standing before the blackboard, a piece of chalk in his grubby fist. On the blackboard was a drawing of a convict—a crude, ghastly affair. There was a cruel grin on Piggott's face, and grins on the faces of the swarm of fags that surrounded him.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Gussy. "You feahful young wascals! Stop that at once!—You uttah young wuffians!"

And Arthur Augustus strode forward and sent the startled Piggott spinning away from the blackboard with a swing of his arm. There was a yell of fury from the fags.

CHAPTER 14.

A Near Thing for Gussy!

"HERE, you clear out, D'Arcy, you rotter!"

"Back up, chaps! It's a measly Fourth bouncer!"

"Chuck him out!" yelled Piggott furiously, scrambling to his feet. "Don't let a measly Fourth rotter come here chucking his weight about. Yah! Out with him!"

There was a roar, and the noble Arthur Augustus faced the yelling fags scornfully.

"You little wottahs!" he snapped, pointing to the blackboard. "Have you no more decency than to do a wotten thing like this?"

"Yah! That's old Selby!" yelled a voice. "You leave that alone!"

Gussy's answer was to pick up a duster, obviously with the intention of wiping out the offensive drawing.

There was a roar of wrath from the fags, and a rush was made for Arthur Augustus. At the same moment the door flew back farther and Wally & Co. dashed in.

In a moment a fierce battle was raging round the swell of the Fourth—that worthy scarcely knowing whether he was on his head or his heels. He went down at last, struggling desperately, while the excited, dishevelled fags fought over him.

Usually, the fags stood together against a fellow from another Form, whoever he was. But the present was an exceptional case—very exceptional indeed. Wally & Co. were rescuing Gussy and, as he realised it, Arthur Augustus let himself go as it were.

Alone, he would have been overwhelmed by the swarm, but with the aid of the five gallant "backers" of Mr.

(Continued on next page.)

FILMING THE BOAT RACE!



A breezy and interesting article of the great Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, written from the point of view of the film camera-man!

CLICK! Click! Click! Click!
The Oxford and Cambridge crews paddle leisurely to the Putney starting post. The handles of cinematograph cameras begin to turn, recording the start of the historic event. Filming the Boat Race has begun!

Stationed at various points over the four-and-a-quarter miles course are about a dozen camera-men, taking their "shots" as the two crews go by. By this means a continuous film record of the whole race is made.

Sometimes the camera-men operate their machines from the bank; sometimes from barges and houseboats lining the stretch of river; sometimes from the windows of buildings overlooking the Thames. The favourite spot to "shoot" the finish is on an old houseboat at Mortlake, from which may be obtained a fine, uninterrupted view of the final stretch.

If any of you fellows are lucky enough to get a good position to watch the two crews battle over the last lap, look out for this houseboat, and you will probably see that it carries not only cinema camera-men, but also a crowd of Press photographers.

A few days before the Boat Race it is usual for the firms filming the event to go over the course either by motorboat or aeroplane, in order to discover the best possible positions for the operators.

Although the actual bank of the river does not alter much year in, year out, warehouses, private residences, barges, and other craft are liable to disappear, he rebuilt, or shift to another part of the river during the intervening twelve months. Thus, a preliminary survey of the course each year is always advisable as sometimes it is possible to obtain an even better position than before.

Very often the camera-men are stationed on private property, and in such cases it is necessary to obtain permission from the owners. Such official bodies as the Port of London Authority and the Thames Conservancy Board also must be consulted.

Even when good positions are obtained it is often not all honey for the poor operators, for their positions are invariably, to say the least of it, precarious, and more than one camera-man has been precipitated into the water, either by the jostling crowd behind him or through over-eagerness and excitement to obtain a good picture.

Last year one operator fell in just as the crews were approaching. But, nothing daunted, he stood in three feet of icy-cold water, his camera raised above his head, turning the handle manfully, even while his teeth were chattering from the intense cold. When he regained dry ground he discovered that his legs were covered in a thick layer of black mud. But he only grinned wryly. He'd got his film, and that was all that mattered. Camera-men are like that.

As soon as the first operator at the Putney starting-post has completed his allotted number of feet of film he whips out the reel, which is enclosed in a circular metal magazine, and conveys it to a specially-made box carrier, on the back of a fast-motor-bike, which is kept in readiness.

Snap goes the catch of the box. In that instant the engine roars to healthy life, and the machine tears away through the teeming London streets, back to headquarters, where the negative is developed and printed at lightning speed.

The same procedure is adopted in the case of the remaining operators, and in this way each successive installment of film arrives, to be treated in

like manner, by deft-fingered experts in the developing department.

What about the sub-titles?

In the editorial room of the firms who are filming the Boat Race the tape machine clicks out the progress of the crews while, at the same time, a running commentary of the race, which has been broadcast from 2LO for the past two years, and will be again transmitted this year, confirms it.

In 1927 the race commenced at one-thirty. By eight minutes past two the first section of film reached the headquarters of one of the premier news film companies "shooting" the event. Some going, what?"

By three o'clock the whole film was being printed, only fifty minutes after receipt of the first section, and by four-thirty copies were going out to be shown in the surrounding cinemas.

Quick work, that!

Other methods of filming the Boat Race have been tried from time to time. A year or two ago an operator was perched in the bow of the umpire's launch following the crews. This was found to be unsatisfactory, as, of course, only the rear of the boats was recorded.

Last year one firm secured an Imperial Airways plane and attempted to photograph the event from the air. This was unsuccessful, partly because it had been pouring with rain prior to the start of the race, and although the weather cleared up, there was still so much moisture in the air that visibility was very bad above two thousand feet.

When you watch the Boat Race this week, chums, don't forget to look out for the cinema operators, and if you go to the pictures the same evening in London, or the following week in the provinces, you will see the pictorial record of the historical event, and will know how it is done.

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Selby, he more than held his own. Gussy was a great fighting man, and though he only used his flat hands in this case, he did great execution in his towering wrath. Piggott was the first to withdraw from the battle, and soon others followed him until Gussy and his helpers were masters of the situation.

But Arthur Augustus was a wreck. His collar and tie were adrift, and his clothes were a sight. His face was dusty and battered, and his hair like a mop.

"My hat! We've licked 'em!" yelled Wally, glaring at the defeated fags, who had withdrawn to the back of the Form-room. "Yah! Good man, Gussy! Now let's rub that rotten drawing off. It's a marvel that Selby hasn't been here before this."

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Oh, bai Jove!" He felt as if he had been through an earthquake and cyclone combined. But his first thought was of the drawing. Gussy was a generous-hearted youth, and he hated the thought of Mr. Selby's eyes meeting that on his arrival in the Form-room.

Grabbing the duster again, Arthur Augustus turned to the blackboard which, luckily, had escaped being overturned in the battle. He raised his hand to rub off the offending drawing. But he dropped it again as a harsh, rasping voice rang out.

"D'Arcy! How dare you! So—so I have caught you! Mr. Railton, you—you see for yourself what I have to experience! Not only from my own boys, but from boys in higher Forms, who should have more respect and decency! Look!"

Mr. Selby strode into the room. After him came Mr. Railton, the Housemaster. There was a sudden silence.

Mr. Selby's face was black as midnight as he sighted the drawing on the blackboard. Mr. Railton's face was grim and stern.

Arthur Augustus almost dropped as he realised his false and unhappy position.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he gasped.

Mr. Selby pointed a quivering finger first at him and then at the blackboard.

"I have already reported to you the insults I have had to put up with to-day, Mr. Railton!" he panted. "I found the word 'Thief' printed on my door, for one thing. Am I to be treated in this scandalous manner, Mr. Railton? I believed that it was the work of a boy from my own Form. But now—that scoundrel—"

"Mr. Selby, calm yourself!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "This is abominable, and I am glad I agreed to come and investigate your complaints. I did not credit that any boy in this school would be so mean-spirited and ungenerous, apart from the studied insolence and impertinence, D'Arcy—"

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Pway listen to me, sir. You are labouwin' undah a misapprehension if you think I drew that wretched thing on the blackboard, sir. I was just about to wub it out!"

"What?" hooted Mr. Selby. "Nonsense! You are caught in the act D'Arcy. I am well aware of your feelings towards me, boy! You are taking a delight in my misfortune, as is your brother! Mr. Railton, I trust you will now understand my position, and put an end to this persecution."

"Oh, gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Pway allow me to explain, Mr. Railton," he added, with dignity.

"That person—"

"That what?" articulated Mr. Railton. "D'Arcy—"

"Mr. Selby, then!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "He is quite off the walls, sir. I came here this evenin' in ordah to vemonstware with these youngstahs wegardin' their conduct towards Mr. Selby. I found this wretched drawin' on the board, and I was about to wub it off when you appeashed."

"I do not believe one word of what you are saying, D'Arcy!" gasped Mr. Selby. "Mr. Railton—"

"One moment," said the Housemaster impatiently. "This had gone far enough! D'Arcy, did you draw that disgraceful effigy on the blackboard?"

"Bai Jove! Wathah not, sir!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, with a shudder. "I weally—"

"It is obviously the work of a younger boy than D'Arcy of the Fourth, Mr. Selby!" said Mr. Railton curtly. "Do you know who did do it, D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus was silent. It was not for him to give the rascally Piggott away. That youth was edging carelessly towards the door, but the almost unconscious glance of Arthur Augustus and the others quite spoiled his intention. Mr. Railton did not fail to notice the significance of the glances.

"Piggott!" he rapped out. "You appear to be eager to leave the room, my boy! Come here!"

"I—I say, sir!" panted Piggott, his face going quite green. "It wasn't me—I swear it wasn't me!"

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The fag's alarm alone was enough to give him away, and the Housemaster's face set. He knew Reuben Piggott's character well enough.

"Show me your hands, Piggott!" he rapped out sharply. Piggott showed his hands—not understanding why he was asked to do so. The fingers were white with chalk! Mr. Railton set his lips.

"Let every boy in the room show me his hands," he said sharply. "Walk before me in single file! Come—at once!"

The scared fags did so—Mr. Railton's steely glance soon bade them hasten, and in single file they passed before him, each boy showing his hands as he did so. Even Arthur Augustus was obliged to show with the rest.

"That will do!" snapped Mr. Railton at last. "Piggott, you are the only boy in the room with chalk on your fingers. Do you still deny that you drew that abominable sketch on the blackboard? If you do, I shall take you before Dr. Holmes, who will doubtless find other means of getting at the truth. Well?"

Reuben Piggott panted. He understood now how he had been caught out. He knew he could never hold out in the awe-inspiring presence of the headmaster of St. Jim's. He shuddered at the thought of that.

"I—I did it, sir!" he gasped. "It—it was only a joke, and I didn't mean it for Mr. Selby, of course!"

"What? Be careful, Piggott!"

"I—I mean, I only meant it for a joke, sir!" gasped Piggott hastily. "I'm sorry now, sir!"

"That is enough! You will come with me, Piggott!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "D'Arcy, you will return to your own quarters. Mr. Selby, I do not think it advisable for you to take preparation this evening. Kindly set the boys an imposition instead. Come with me, Piggott!"

"Oh, dear! Y-yes, sir!"

Reuben Piggott went with Mr. Railton—he went with trailing footsteps, bitterly regretting his artistic work, now it was too late. Arthur Augustus also left the Third Form-room, shaking his noble head very seriously. He was in a parlous state, and he made tracks immediately for the nearest bath-room to carry out necessary repairs and renovations to his person and his attire. But the swell of St. Jim's was not thinking of his person just then. An idea had occurred to Gussy, and it struck him as being a sound one, and he gave his whole mind to it—even to the neglect of such important matters as washing and changing!

CHAPTER 15.

Bowled Out!

"THAT little rotter!"

"That snivelling little worm!"

Wally D'Arcy & Co. were going it strong, and the subject of their wrathful remarks was Reuben Piggott of the Third.

It was nearly bed-time for the fags. But Wally & Co. were yearning to have a settlement with Reuben Piggott before going to bed that night.

It was a very unusual thing indeed for the cad of the Third to dare to set himself up in opposition to Wally & Co., the leaders of the Third Form. But, obviously, Piggott had seen his chance in the split in the Third over Mr. Selby. The great majority were solidly against that unpopular gentleman. In their view there was not the slightest doubt that Mr. Selby had "pinched" the gold watch, and they were unanimously of the opinion that hanging was too good and too humane for that luckless gentleman.

By "backing up" Mr. Selby, Wally & Co. had made themselves very unpopular in the Form. And Piggott had seen his chance to make trouble for them, knowing that for once he had the support of the whole of the Form. In their desperate attempts to remove Piggott's drawing from the blackboard, Wally and his gallant band had suffered severely, and they put their sufferings down to the account of Reuben Piggott.

Since he had disappeared with Mr. Railton, they had not seen that crafty youth. Possibly Piggott had guessed they wanted a reckoning, and was keeping out of the way. Possibly he was nursing his aches and pains in secret after his interview with the Housemaster.

"Never mind," said Wally. "We'll get the little beast when we go up to the dorm at bed-time, chaps! I vote we make him— Why, here he is! Collar him!"

Reuben Piggott had appeared in the doorway. His face showed traces of tears, and he looked very sorry for himself indeed. Evidently, Mr. Railton had not risked spoiling him by sparing the rod.

He drew back hastily as he caught sight of Wally & Co., but before he could run for it they were upon him, and had dragged him into the room. Wally closed the door, while his comrades surrounded the captive.

"Let go, you rotters!" hissed the fag, glaring about him in alarm. "Look here! I'll yell if you touch me, you cads! I've been thrashed enough by Railton—the beast! He lammed me, like a brute! Let me go, you cads!"

"Not much!" grinned Wally. "Railton's had his turn, but we haven't had ours, my pippin! We're going to teach you that it isn't healthy to get your ears up against us, young Piggott! And we're going to teach you not to kick a man when he's down, my lad!"

"Look here! I'll tell Selby!" gasped Piggott desperately. "I'll tell Railton! You touch me, and you'll see!"

"Why, you snivelling, sneaking little—" Wally was beginning, when he halted as the door opened again. In the doorway showed a glimmering eyeglass, and behind the eyeglass was the noble features of Arthur Augustus. "My hat! It's old Gus again! What are you after, Gus—chipping in again?"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am vewy glad you have that little toad heah, Wally," he added, glancing at Reuben Piggott disdainfully. "I have come heah to question you about him, Wally."

"Oh, have you?" said Wally, without enthusiasm. "But we're going to punish him without you wagging your silly chin."

"Weally, Wally— Howevah the—" is no time to wepove your wudeness, you young wascal!" said Arthur Augustus sternly. "I have a vew important question to ask you."

"Cough it up, Gus!" said Wally. "Does the question happen to be whether we washed our necks this morning?"

"No, it does not. Pway do not be wedie, Wally!" said Gussy severely. "The mattah is vewy serious, and con-

they were on the right track now. "I remember how you sneaked away. You had plenty of time to rush up to our dorm and take that print from my locker, if you wanted to. My hat! Selby thrashed him only the other day, and this is the cad's way of getting his own back on Selby and on us!"

"Phew! That's it! Make the cad own up!"

"We'll make him do that—all right!" snapped Wally, his eyes gleaming. "For our own sake, not for old Selby's, we're going to get to the bottom of this giddy mystery now. We'll search his dashed belongings, and we'll— Here, stop the cad!"

Wally broke off with a howl of alarm as Reuben Piggott suddenly wrenched himself free, and dashed through the open doorway.

He fairly flew along the passage outside.

"After him!" yelled Wally. "He'll do us yet! He's gone to shift that print, I bet!"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

There was a rush to follow the fleeing Piggott. Not one of them had any doubts now. Piggott was a very crafty, shifty individual, but it was impossible for him to hide the fear in his eyes.

Arthur Augustus was the last to take up the chase—he was

"FUN ON THE FIRST!"

The first of what? Why, the First of April, of course! All Fools' Day—japes—"spoof"—leg-pulling"

Tom Merry & Co. set out with the idea of making this "First" the greatest on record—a red-letter day that will make the school sit up with a vengeance! Do they succeed! Well, just read:

"FUN ON THE FIRST!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

and see! Make sure of your copy by ordering next Wednesday's "GEM" TO-DAY!

cerns that pwint that is missin'. I wish to know whethah anyone else in the Third was awah of where you had hidden that pwint, Wally?"

Reuben Piggott gave an almost convulsive start—which was not lost upon Wally D'Arcy.

"My only aunt!" muttered the leader of the Third. "I never thought of that, Gus! You do get brain-waves, and no mistake! Yes, there were several of our men in the room when Tom Merry came about it. They must have heard me say I'd hidden the dashed thing in my locker. Phew! Piggott, you rotter! I do believe—"

"My hat!" said Frank Levison, with a scared look at Piggott. "Piggott himself was there—we were ragging him, you remember! And he cleared out before us."

Piggott bit his lip savagely.

"You silly fools!" he hissed. "What are you looking at me like that for? I know nothing about the rotten print!"

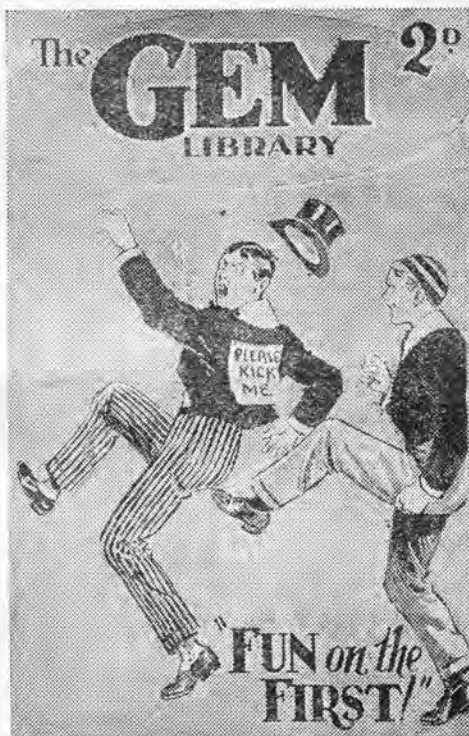
"Bai Jove! I believe that I am wight in my suspish, Piggott, you uttah young wascal!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "It came to me in a flash ahtah I realised how you were tweatin' Mr. Selby! It occurred to me that whoevah had taken the pwint was up against Mr. Selby, and I immediately thought of you."

"I tell you—"

"I do not approve of makin' charges without cleah pwoof," said the noble Gussy. "But it stwuck me that it was pwobable you knew somethin' about the w'etched thing, Piggott. Now, Wally tells me that you were pwesent when he said where the pwint was hidden—"

"I tell you I know nothing about the rotten thing!" howled Piggott, greatly alarmed now. "You've no right to try to throw it on me, D'Arcy, you rotter!"

"It's you who are the rotter!" yelled Wally, quite certain



rather slow on the uptake. Along the passages, and up the stairs went Piggott, his enemies hard on his heels. Wally & Co. knew only too well that if Piggott got the chance he would make away with the print—would destroy it rather than allow it to be found in his belongings. Piggott realised only too well what a serious position he would be in in that case. Despite the trouble the loss of the print had caused; despite the fact that Mr. Selby's honour, his career, rested upon the finding of it, the rascally fag had had it all the time, and obviously did not intend to produce it.

That, undoubtedly, was how the authorities would look at it.

As Wally expected, Piggott made for the Third Form dormitory—thus confirming the suspicions of all. The fags saw him rush inside, and ther the door slammed. But Wally & Co. were on the spot the instant afterwards, and before Piggott could lock the door they sent it flying open again.

With a gasp of alarm, Piggott made a rush for his bed.

There he turned at bay, his eyes glittering with rage and despair.

"You rotters!" he panted. "Let me alone! I tell you I—"

Crash!

Wally D'Arcy grasped him, and the two went down with a thump. Wally was not in the mood to be gentle.

"I've got the little worm!" he panted. "Now, you men, just turn his rotten locker out! I bet you'll find the print there!"

"It isn't there!" yelled Piggott furiously. "Look here! Hold on! I'll own up! It's in my desk in the Form-room! I swear it is! If you'll come down, I'll hand it over!"

"Oh, yes—how nice!" said Wally, with withering sarcasm. "Then you'll give us the slip, and come and shift it from your giddy locker, what?"

"I tell you it isn't in my locker, hang you!" hissed Piggott.

"Empty his locker!" ordered Wally.

"Bai Jove! Hold on!" said Arthur Augustus breathlessly. "We weally cannot do that, Wally! It is not wight—"

"Isn't it?" snorted Wally. "Was it right for the cad to pinch it out of mine, you owl! Empty it, chaps!"

"What-ho!"

Jameson and Reggie Manners grasped Piggott's locker. Piggott yelled in alarm, but they did not heed his yells. The locker was ruthlessly up-ended, and the contents strewn over the floor. Piggott, no doubt, blamed himself bitterly for having failed to lock it in that breathless moment.

On their knees the excited investigators searched through Piggott's belongings, whilst that youth looked on, quivering with rage and fear.

"It isn't there!" he panted. "I told you it wasn't! I know nothing about it, I tell you!"

"Why, you awful fibber!" yelled Wally. "It's only a moment ago you owned up to it! You said it was in your desk downstairs!"

"Well, so it is!" gasped Piggott, a glitter appearing in his eyes as he saw the searchers were about to give it up as hopeless. "I told you it wasn't there, didn't I, you cads! I'll tell Mr. Railton about you treating me like this!"

"Hold on! We're not done yet!" said Wally, who had not failed to catch that triumphant glitter in the cad of the Third's eyes. "What about those books there? Just go through the pages, young Manners!"

Manners went through the pages rather carelessly. He felt quite certain it was useless. But quite suddenly he gave a whoop, and snatched something from between the pages of an old Latin grammar.

"My hat! Got it!" yelled Reggie.

And he had! Piggott's face was livid as the print was passed from hand to hand. Arthur Augustus had never seen it before, and he whistled as he stared at it.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he gasped. "Piggott, you feabful little wascal! You have had this w'etched thing all this time, knowin' the twouble its loss was causin'—knowin' that poor old Selbay's liberty and honour wesc'd on findin' it! You are a wascally little weptle, and I trust you will meet with your just deserts. Yaas, wathah!"

"We—we'll rag him bald-headed!" gasped Wally D'Arcy excitedly. "We'll boil him in oil! We'll—we'll—"

Words failed Wally of the Third.

"You had better leave the w'etched young wascal alone, I think!" said Arthur Augustus grimly. "I fancy he will be punished enough by the authorities, without you youngstahs dealin' with him!"

"Let's rush off to Selby with it now!" said Reggie Manners excitedly.

"Bai Jove! Wathah not!" said Gussy sagely. "I think I will see to it, deah boys. The fellow to take charge of this is your major, Weggie. If anyone else but Mannahs takes this to Selbay the suspicious old duffah will still believe Mannahs nevah intended to save him."

"Phew! That's so! Much better!"

And when the investigators went triumphantly downstairs a few moments later Arthur Augustus had charge of the precious print—he was taking no chances of anything happening to it again. They left the baffled and terrified Piggott alone in the dormitory, to shiver and quake as he thought of what lay before him. His spite, malice, and treachery had come home to roost.

CHAPTER 16.

All Clear!

"BED-TIME!" said Tom Merry, trying to speak cheerily. "At least, it's jolly close on time. Let's be clearing away, chaps. Don't look so down in the mouth, Harry! That rotten print may turn up yet!"

"It's likely, isn't it?" said Manners dully. "I suppose Grundy and those other fools will be wanting to lynch me in the dorm to-night! Well, let them try, that's all! I shan't stand much from any of the cads!"

"Take it smiling," advised Tom. "It's rotten; but we

don't want more trouble, old man. We'll back you up, anyway."

"Why not tell the truth?" said Lowther gruffly. "The beaks ought to know those fags had the thing. It isn't right for Manners to stand it all like this. It's not so bad now. But when Selby has to stand his trial, and if it comes to the worst—well, I can see Manners in for a nasty time. The fellows will all be in sympathy with Selby, and—"

"I'm thinking about that," said Manners quietly. "Do you think I don't know just how I stand, and how the fellows will look at it? But I'm not giving those kids away. Everyone knows I vowed to get my own back on Selby, I suppose. But nobody will dream of finding excuses for those kids. They all know how the kids hate Selby, and the Head especially won't believe them like he has me. Reggie especially will be in a tight corner, and Selby will make things look black against him. I'm sitting tight, and I expect you fellows to do the same."

"Oh, all right! But—"

Tom was interrupted. The door flew back, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in with a whirlwind rush. His aristocratic features were flushed, his eyes dancing.

"I've got it, deah boys!" he panted excitedly. "Mannahs, I've solved the mystewy, and I've got it!"

"Got what, you footling— Oh!"

Tom Merry jumped as Arthur Augustus, with a dramatic flourish, planked the photographic print down on the study table.

There was a wild yell from Lowther as he recognised it, while Manners stared at it unbelievably.

"Piggott had it all the time—that wascally fag, you know!" gasped Gussy. "We've just found it in his lockah between the leaves of a book. He must have heard Wally tell you fellows where he had hidden it, and the little wascal must have washed upstairs and taken it, hidin' it in his own lockah. I expect the young wottah was hidin' undah one of the beds even when you fellows went up to get it."

"Phew!"

"Well, my only hat! Good man, Gussy!"

"I had an ideah, you know," said Gussy modestly. "That ass Blake says I nevah get ideahs. He will have to admit now that I do, won't he? I vewy soon got on the wight twack when it stwuck me that possibly a fag might have taken it aftah Wally had hidden it."

"You're a regular Sexton Blake, Gussy!" grinned Tom Merry, his face showing his heartfelt relief. "We'll get Dame Taggles to strike you a pastry medal for this! And now let's go and see Railton. We shall have to tell about Wally and his lot, of course. But I fancy Selby will be the first to forgive that now."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And together the chums went along to interview the Housemaster. He stared as they entered his study.

"What does this mean, boys?" he demanded. "It is past your bed-time, and—"

"It's rather important, sir," said Tom Merry. "Manners has that print to give you."

"What?" The Housemaster jumped. His face lit up as Manners laid the print on the table. For some moments he studied it with keen eyes, and then he gave a deep sigh of relief.

"I am deeply thankful you have found it, my boys!" he said quietly. "Not only for Mr. Selby's sake, but for the sake of the good name of St. Jim's. But how and where did you find it?"

He looked hard at Manners, but it was Tom Merry who told the story. He saw that a frank explanation was necessary, and he gave it. Mr. Railton listened, and he nodded when Tom had finished.

"Very well, boys; I understand fully!" he said. "It is quite obvious that Piggott had no intention of producing the print. The case of the other Third Form boys is different, however, and I will do my best with Dr. Holmes on their behalf. They have certainly done their utmost since to make amends, and to discover the print, and I am quite sure that Mr. Selby, now he knows this is found, will be the first to forgive them. In regard to your own share in the matter, it was very wrong of you indeed, Manners, to take that photo of Mr. Selby. But as it has had such a fortunate result, I do not think the Head will take a very severe view of your conduct. You may go to bed now, and I will see to this. Good-night, boys!"

And Tom Merry & Co. went to bed, knowing that Mr. Railton was not likely to prove wrong, and that Mr. Selby, at all events, would sleep better that night—whether Reuben Piggott did or not.

Mr. Selby was not seen the next morning by the juniors. It was known that early that morning the Head had rushed him off to Abbotsford in his car, and it was after noon when they both returned. It was noted then that Mr. Selby's face was bright—brighter than they had ever seen it. To the surprise of the Terrible Three, he marched into Study No. 10 just after dinner.

(Continued on page 28.)

TRAPPED IN THE TRACKLESS DESERT!

In that terrible expanse of arid desert in the heart of Australia, their horses gone, without water, and with no hope of escape from the pitiless rays of the sun, our Adventurous Trio struggle on—weaker—weaker! The trail of the Black Ruby is nearing an end!

THE TRAIL of the BLACK RUBY!



By
**PERCY
A. CLARKE.**

Cutting the tethers of the horses, the three chums leapt into the saddles neatly and swiftly. As they did so, a man came rushing from the doorway of the saloon, firing his revolver as he came. The next moment the chums were off and away.

INTRODUCTION.

Trailed across two continents by a gang of cunning crooks, Steve Barrett, in possession of a Black Ruby, eventually reaches England. With the aid of this Black Ruby, Steve has hopes of making his fortune, for the ruby is the key to a claim of land in Queensland rich in precious stones. The crooks, however, succeed in gaining possession of the Black Ruby and make good their escape. Steve enlists the services of Bob Crompton and Syd Dyson, two plucky, athletic fellows, with whom he sets off in a wild dash south on the trail of the Black Ruby. After a series of exciting adventures, the chums retrieve the precious stone and board the Maharajah, bound for Australia. By means of a clever ruse, Sweetman and his gang also get aboard the liner, regain the coveted trophy, and secrete it in a knot at the end of Ah Wong's pigtail. Wise to this move, Bob catches the Chinaman fast asleep in his bunk, cuts off the "queue," and rejoins his chums. The three jump ship when nearing Perth, and under cover of darkness reach the shore. Fate is against the plucky trio, however, for they are waylaid by a gang of toughs in the pay of Sweetman, and imprisoned in a dingy-looking room above a saloon. Cleverly hoodwinking the lecher, Syd releases Steve and Bob and leads the way to the window, beneath which half a dozen horses are tethered.

(Now Read On.)

The Never-Never Land!

SYD clambered over the sill and jumped to the ground. It was a steep drop, but not impossible, especially to fellows in such a plight as the chums were. Bob came next. Steve brought up the rear.

They cut the tethers of the horses and leapt into the saddles neatly and swiftly. For a split second those three horses cavorted in the dusty roadway. A man came rushing from the doorway of the saloon, firing his revolver as he came. But the pals were off and away as a big car, white with dust, came speeding into the mining settlement at the other end of the one and only street!

Steve turned in his saddle and let rip a yell of defiance.

"Dingoes!" he cried. "See that, boys? Sweetman and his gang in that car. Another two minutes and we'd ha' been too late. Keep going, boys!"

That terrible expanse of arid desert was strewn with

rocks and boulders. At intervals the ground was broken up with dry gullies and clefts. The going was dangerous, but it was only that that saved the pals, for the car which contained Karl Sweetman and his gang was powerful and speedy. On a good surface the horses would not have stood an atom of chance.

Steve said he knew his way about that continent, and he proved his words. He deliberately forsook the trail and headed across country, in and out between the rocks, leaping the gullies and forsaking the least semblance to easy-going. And the pursuers had to follow where he led, which was by no means easy for the car.

Even then they could not increase the lead they had. Karl Sweetman himself was at the wheel of the car, and Twisty Baker and Bully Mahon were in the tonneau, with rifles, getting in shots at every conceivable opportunity. Their bullets often whistled past the pals' heads, but otherwise they did no damage at all.

The rocks began now to decrease in number. The going began to get easier, and the car gained on them. Bully Mahon drilled a hole through Steve's hat, which proved what was slowly but surely happening.

"Can't keep on like this much longer," granted Bob grimly.

"Pr'aps not!" growled Steve. "But—look! Scrub ahead! Reach that and we'll ditch 'em yet! Keep moving!"

It was a new hope. Ahead of them stretched that thick wall of stunted, dried-up vegetation. It looked sickly—a brownish green—but in the midst of those cacti stems and gnarled tree-trunks they stood a chance of getting the better of the car. A horse could travel where a car could not.

So they dug their heels into the sides of the horses and coaxed and urged more speed out of them. They gave their best, down the gradual incline that led to the scrub.

No doubt, at the bottom of that incline was water, at certain seasons, which accounted for the belt of alleged

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vegetation. Not that the pals had time to study the geographical peculiarities just then.

They careered down the slope and plunged into the thorny thickets. Their clothes tore like paper. The horses slowed down to a walk. In that prickly maze they were forced to keep to the trail, which was only wide enough for one rider, forcing them to travel in single file.

Steve grinned with eminent satisfaction.

"Guess that car has sorter outgrown its usefulness right now," he said.

"Don't be top sure," warned Syd. "I thought I saw a gap to the south of us."

"So did I," agreed Bob.

Steve frowned.

The boys had never yet let him down. They would not say things like that if they did not know it to be true. And if that car could get through the scrub it was a poor lookout for them, seeing that the horses were badly blown and needed a rest.

But, journeying slowly, they made their way down through the scrub to the bottom of the gully and up the other side. And the scrub came to an end sooner than they had anticipated. The trees and the cactus thickets were not so plentiful. The ground became once more like so much powder beneath their horses' hoofs, and before them stretched another dreary desert, with here and there an occasional rock—nothing but desert as far as the eye could see.

Steve called a halt. He dismounted and went out on to the desert, examining the face of the scrub as he went. He soon returned, grim of mien.

"Boys," he said, "you were sure right. There is a gap to the southward, and even if our pursuers have to go slow they may get that car through, which'll be plumb unfortunate for us. Best stop in the scrub, hide the hosses, and try an ambush or something, even if we have to shoot it out with the skunks."

It was obviously the only thing left to do. They took their horses back into the scrub and tethered them in a little glen. Then they went to the edge of the desert and concealed themselves behind the thickest thicket they could find, and waited.

They had not long to wait. The car came through the gap, and the crooks were obviously puzzled.

Ah Wong, Twisty Baker, and Bully Mahon were standing up, scanning the dreary surface of the desert for the pals. But not seeing them, nor even a cloud of dust in the distance, they came to the conclusion that they must be still in the scrub.

Consequently, the car began to cruise along the edge of the scrub, and came to where the pals had emerged.

Their tracks in the dry, powdery earth were clear to see, and Karl Sweetman brought the car to a standstill.

The crooks alighted and consulted together. Karl Sweetman, Bully Mahon, and Twisty Baker went off in three different directions into the scrub, their guns held ready, while Ah Wong remained by the car.

Syd had another brain-wave. He whispered to Bob.

"Can you crawl along opposite the Chink and attract his attention so he leaves the car?"

"I'll do it!" said Bob.

He crawled through the scrub to a thicket opposite the car, and proceeded to shake the branches of a bush. He kept on shaking them until Ah Wong spotted the strange movement.

The Chink could not see Bob, nor any sign of human life, and he was puzzled. He gazed first this way, then that. He eyed that bush, and raised his gun to shoot, then thought better of it.

At length he walked towards the thicket to investigate. He walked cautiously, slowly. And Syd was crawling on the flat of his stomach out towards the car. If Ah Wong had so much as turned his head he must have seen Syd. But he was so interested in that bush that shook without any wind to shake it, or human agency to move it, apparently, that he kept his eyes focussed on it, and his gun held ready.

Syd slithered over the dry ground like a snake. He got the car between himself and Ah Wong, and out came his clasp knife. He was busy, and Steve, watching, chuckled with delight. Syd was slitting the tyres. He did not even miss the tyre on the spare wheel. He came round and slit the tyres on the wheels on the other side of the car, and Ah Wong spotted him. The Chink's gun rose and reported. But Syd ducked, and the bullet went over his head.

Even as Ah Wong rushed him Syd rushed the Chinaman. Before Bob could come from the thicket Syd and the Chink were locked in deadly embrace, Ah Wong was trying to get a grip on Syd's throat, and Syd was stopping him. There was no doubt about that. Syd had him by the throat, and the two of them swayed and staggered, with precious little

advantage to either, except that Ah Wong was beginning to rasp in his throat.

But the shot had been heard, and the crooks came out of the scrub, helter-skelter. Sweetman saw what was happening, and the first thing he did was to raise his gun.

But he never fired.

Steve came out of his thicket like a mad bull. He fairly leapt the distance that separated him from the boss of the crooks. His powerful fist got Sweetman behind the ear, and the man went down like a log.

Before Steve could recover his balance, however, Bully Mahon fired, and Steve spun round dizzily, a bullet in his shoulder. He yelled hoarsely, but the boys were both busy. Bob had jumped between Twisty Baker and the spot where Syd was struggling with the Chink. Twisty dropped his gun. He was not used to a rifle, anyway, and it wasn't a lot of good at such close quarters. He relied on his wire-like hands, and he came at Bob, his long, thin fingers claving out suggestively.

But Bob was a fighter. He knew what to do. He leapt at his man. Baker grabbed at his throat, but Bob ducked, neatly, and his right came crashing to the solar plexus.

Thud!

It was a pile-driver of a blow. The crook gasped. He turned a livid green. His eyes bulged. His knees gave way beneath him, and he sank to the ground in a heap, like a bundle of rags.

Bully Mahon, thinking he had finished with Steve, was coming up behind Syd to help Ah Wong.

Steve yelled.

"Look out, Syd!"

But Syd was very busy, so Steve grabbed a chunk of rock and hurled it with all his might.

His aim was good. It caught Bully Mahon on the side of the head and dropped him, squealing, like the cur he was.

Syd was making little progress with the Chink. Ah Wong suddenly wriggled and got free from Syd's grip. He drew back for a split second, and withdrew a gleaming knife from somewhere in his clothes. He hurled himself at Syd, but Syd had learned ju-jitsu in his time. He got a grip on that wrist, and he snapped the bone like a pipestem.

The Chink yelped with pain, and Steve was on his feet, calling, urging.

"Come on, boys! Make the getaway! Now's our chance!"

Bob was already in the scrub releasing the horses. He brought them out, and helped Steve, whose wounded shoulder was giving him much pain and discomfort, to mount.

Syd leapt into his saddle, and they were off across the desert, heading for the interior. Bully Mahon tried a snapshot, and missed.

Steve laughed grimly, deliriously.

"Jee-rusalem!" he chuckled. "You boys sure are the best mascots I ever had in me life. Ditched them crooks once and for all, I guess."

He reeled in his saddle, and Bob was immediately beside him.

"Better let us have a look at your shoulder," he urged.

"Not yet, sonny," answered Steve, a trifle huskily. "Must drop them skunks below the skyline afore we pull rein. 'Sides, it's only a scratch."

Some time later, when they did halt and examine the wound, the boys reckoned it wasn't so bad as they had feared. All the same for that, Steve had lost a deal of blood, and the pain was telling on him. They bandaged it as best they could, mostly with strips from their shirts, and put Steve's arm in a sling.

For some days after they trekked into the interior—the grim, remorseless heart of the unknown. Day after day, hot, dry, dust-choked, across the unyielding Never-Never Land. Week after week they travelled on, from water-hole to water-hole, sometimes finding water, and sometimes not finding water.

Sandstorms, electrical tempests, whirlwinds, all helped to blot out their trail. The danger of Karl Sweetman ever following them was simply non-existent. They did not worry about the crooks. The point was, would they ever get to Queensland?

One after the other the horses sickened and died, and their bodies were left for the vultures and the carrion crows. On foot the pals continued, heading, as far as Steve could estimate, due north-east. They grew bronzed. Their skins were literally burnt by the terrible sun. They were thin for want of food, haggard from want of sufficient water. Their clothes were nothing but rags. They were all three barefooted, but they staggered on and on, hardly knowing what they were doing. But Steve was sure of one thing—the Black Ruby was still in the leather belt he wore round his body.

Week after week, day after day, just the same old thing—intense suffering, and keeping on the trek—on and on—until padding along in the arid dust was merely a mechanical motion, and even talking was an effort.

On and on, until in the distance they saw a ridge of blue mountains and hailed the relief with delight. Anything different from that dreadful desert was welcome.

They quickened their pace, but for days those distant blue mountains seemed to mock them and run from them. They began to see mirages in the dust. Steve, whose wounded shoulder had never properly healed, began to get delirious. The mountains still seemed hundreds of miles away.

And then one morning they arose from their hard, painful beds in the arid dust, to see the mountains towering almost above their heads. It was a trick of the imagination, perhaps, but, buoyed up with hope, they struggled on their way.

The desert began to vanish. More rocks appeared. The surface was more uneven. They came to a gully, down which flowed a trickle of blackish water.

Here Steve collapsed. His shoulder was badly inflamed. The wound had been slowly but surely sapping his vitality. He could go no farther. He sank down beside that little stream of doubtful water.

"Leave me here, boys," he said. "Take the Ruby and go on."

Weakly he handed Syd the enormous gem. Syd took it and stuffed it into his belt. Bob went down beside Steve and forced some water into the old-timer's mouth. It revived him, but he kept on urging them to leave him.

"I'm finished, boys!" he said huskily, almost in a whisper. "You leave me here!"

But Syd was studying the mountains. They looked good. He reckoned they were at least twenty miles away yet, but he was sure their lower slopes were clothed with verdure. That meant water—birds and animals for food.

Bob realised what his pal was thinking, and made the suggestion.

"There is a chance," he said crisply. "One of us stay here, and the other must go on, either for help, or else for food and decent water. Six cartridges left."

Syd nodded.

There was no need for detailed discussion. Steve had collapsed first, but it was only a question of time with Syd and Bob.

"Well toss up to decide who goes," said Syd.

Bob fished a penny from his pocket. The coin hummed in the air.

"Heads!" called Syd, and he was right.

So Syd took the six cartridges and Steve's revolver, and set out for the distant mountains.

Pad, pad, pad through the powdery dust of the desert that was already clutching greedily at his life. The sun scorched him. The dust choked him. He staggered on in a dream. His senses reeled. He saw pictures in the quivering air, of the dales of Surrey, with the daffodils swaying in the breeze, of the silvery river, and the gentle English sun weaving patterns through the tree-tops on the placid surface of the water.

But he staggered on. For all he knew he was travelling in wild circles. He hardly cared. He just kept moving—just kept on—until he wasn't even thinking. He was moving subconsciously. All volition had long since fled.

Suddenly he tripped over a rock and fell prone—and remained where he was, barely half conscious. He had not strength even to rise.

He stirred. Someone was picking him up. He fought the stupor that was coming over him. He found himself lying flat on his back, and a strange man was bending over him—a black-bearded man. And in the stranger's hand, sparkling in the rays of the sun, was the Black Ruby!

In a flash Syd roused himself. He sat up, clutching at the enormous gem.

"Dirty thief!" he screamed deliriously. "It's mine! It's ours! Dirty thief! Give it back! It's ours!"

But the effort was his undoing. His senses suddenly went out in a red smother, and he fell back, unconscious—beaten—the Black Ruby taken from him!

Advertisement!

THE first thing Syd saw when he opened his eyes and came to life was a black-bearded man sitting smoking, with his back against the trunk of a gum-tree.

It seemed to the boy as if, for a time, he had just not been alive. He blinked in the strong light. His brain was a blur. His vision was dizzy. He stared at the black-bearded stranger, and it seemed as though the man receded from him, then came back, clear and defined, then spun round and round like a catherine wheel. He stood on his head, he appeared contorted, as if viewed through a cracked

glass, then was steady again, just sitting there smoking, with his back to the gum-tree.

Then slowly Syd remembered. Bit by bit the past came back to him out of the jumble and chaos of his confused brain. He was waking up, and remembering, not in a sudden rush, but gradually, slowly.

Suddenly the black-bearded man rose to his feet and walked away. Syd made no movement. He knew now that this man had the Black Ruby, and he was wondering how he could possibly get it back again. Syd was sure the stranger was a rogue and a thief, and yet he had gone to the trouble of nursing the fellow he had robbed back to life! The more Syd thought about that the more he realised there was a snag in the proceedings somewhere.

The stranger returned with a pannikin of water. He held it to Syd's lips, and Syd drank—drank. Oh, it was good! It was water—not the thick, muddy, brackish, slimy ooze he had lived on out in the desert, but water, clear as crystal, cool, sweet! He grabbed at the pannikin, but the stranger took it away from him.

"Go easy, chum!" he said, in a resonant voice. "Too much just now is worse than none at all. You can have more later on. How d'you feel?"

Syd was sitting up now. He frowned at the stranger.

"I'm all right," he said. "A bit weak, of course. But my two pals need help."

The stranger did not get excited. Calmly he knocked the ashes from his pipe and proceeded to fill up again.

"So you've got pals out in the desert, have you?" he said. Syd got to his feet.

"I have!" he snapped. "And I'm going back to them. They want food and water. I've got to thank you for what you've done for me, and if you'll give me food and water to take to my pals, I'll be grateful. But, mind this! Sooner or later I'll track you down and get that ruby back!"

There was no mistaking the curt threat in Syd's voice. The stranger blew a cloud of smoke into the air.

"What ruby's that?" he asked, with irritating calm.

At that Syd turned furious.

"You thief!" he rasped. "Think I don't know you took it off me when I couldn't help myself? You thief—"

"Hold on!" interrupted the stranger. His eyes were fierce now, and there was that vibrant ring in his voice which impelled obedience. Syd's angry tirade tailed off into silence.

"You're going too fast, youngster!" rasped the stranger. "Thief, am I? You listen to me for a bit. D'you happen to know that ruby is black, and the only one of its kind in the world?"

"I know that!" snapped Syd.

"Then," roared the stranger, "who are you to call me a thief? It doesn't belong to you! I found that sparkler, and I gave it to the best pard any man ever had! Where did you get it from? That's what you've got to tell me before you leave here! See? Where did you get it from?"

Syd's eyes were agog with amazement. The stranger clutched his wrist, but Syd made no attempt to escape. He stared at the black-bearded stranger, hoping, and yet not daring to hope—

When he spoke he was husky with excitement.

"Then—then you must be Gentleman Jack!" he cried.

The stranger released his wrist and eyed him, frowning with doubt.

"And if I am?" he queried.

"Then get that food and water quickly!" urged Syd. "It's my chum out there in the desert, with Steve—Steve Barrett!"

The next moment Syd found his wrist grabbed again. The stranger turned him round and glared into his eyes.

"Are you lying?" he growled.

"I'm not! Where d'you think I got that ruby from?"



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Gentleman Jack released Syd again and paced to and fro.

"I don't believe you!" he said curtly. "And yet, I don't know—it rings true. But Steve isn't the man to part up with that ruby so easily. If I were sure—"

"Well, come and see!" urged Syd. "I'll take you to them."

"Yes," sneered Gentleman Jack; "I've got the ruby, and you'd be three to one out there on the desert. A quick shot, and I get bumped off with no one any the wiser. And you'll get the ruby back!"

Syd scowled at him.

"They're starving and dying of thirst out there," he said.

"That's all very fine!" retorted Gentleman Jack. "But I want to be dead sure."

"If only I could prove it to you!" cried Syd. "I tell you it is Steve Barrett out there."

And then he remembered—remembered Steve telling them a long time ago.

"If ever you get to Brisbane without me, get into touch with Gentleman Jack, by putting this advertisement in the Agony Column of the local papers, and he'll come to you!"

But the advertisement? Syd stood stock-still. It came back to him. He almost whooped with joy. He watched Gentleman Jack closely, then deliberately spoke the mysterious, nonsensical message:

"Your body under river!"

It sounded silly. There was no sense to it. But the effect on Gentleman Jack was electrical.

"Who told you that?" he snapped, tense with excitement. "Just thought of it," grinned Syd. "Steve, he told us, if we got to Brisbane without him—you see, we've had a running fight of it with a gang of crooks all the way from—"

"Never mind that! Beginnings!" rasped Gentleman Jack. "Steve told you? No one else on earth could have told you that! Just how strong are you? Can you take me to him?"

"I'd go another fifty miles for Steve!" said Syd simply. Gentleman Jack half-hesitated.

"Son," he said, "sounds as if I misjudged you. If I have I'm sorry. But even now you may be fooling me. But that's my guess. No one else but Steve knew it. I must risk it! Come on, son—lead on!"

(No more now read the next instalment of this powerful adventure serial which will appear in next week's *GEM* issue of the GEM.)

"SELBY IN THE SOUP!"

(Continued from page 24)

"Manners," he gasped, holding out a shaking hand to that astonished youth. "I—I have come to apologise to you! I now know that my suspicions in regard to that print were unjust and untrue! By your act in taking that photograph, wrong as it was, you have saved me from dishonour—possibly from worse! The police instantly recognised that silly scoundrel who appears with me on the photograph, as a well-known shop-thief. They have already apprehended him, and he has admitted that he took the watch and dropped it into my pocket."

"I—I say, I'm—I'm glad, sir!" stammered Manners.

"I am quite sure you are, my boy," said the master quietly. "And I trust that in future we shall understand one another better—also your younger brother, Manners!"

That was all. Having made that astounding speech, Mr. Henry Selby hurried out.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Did you ever?"

"Who says the age of miracles is past?" breathed Monty Lowther. "Phew! He's not such a bad old bird after all!"

And Manners, especially, agreed with Lowther there. Mr. Selby was human after all—even in the sour-faced and sour-tongued master of the Third, there was a trace of gratitude and good-feeling. Whether that gratitude and good-feeling would last between him and the Manners brothers remained to be seen, however.

Reuben Piggott was not sacked, much as that ill-favoured young rascal deserved such a fate. But it was a long time before the effects of the flogging he received instead wore off, or that he ceased to bemoan having taken a hand in Mr. Selby's affairs. As for Tom Merry & Co. and Wally & Co., although they had been guilty of an offence against the school rules, their transgression had been attended by such fortunate results that the authorities were prepared to look upon it with a very lenient eye. Certainly the mild "jaw" they received from the Head brought those cheery youths no regret whatever for their share in getting Mr. Selby out of the Soup!

THE END.

(No junior at St. Jim's is above pulling another junior's leg, especially on All Foot's Day. So you can look forward to a rattling fine story in: "FUN ON THE FIRST!" which will appear in next Wednesday's issue. Make a point of ordering your GEM early, chums!)



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