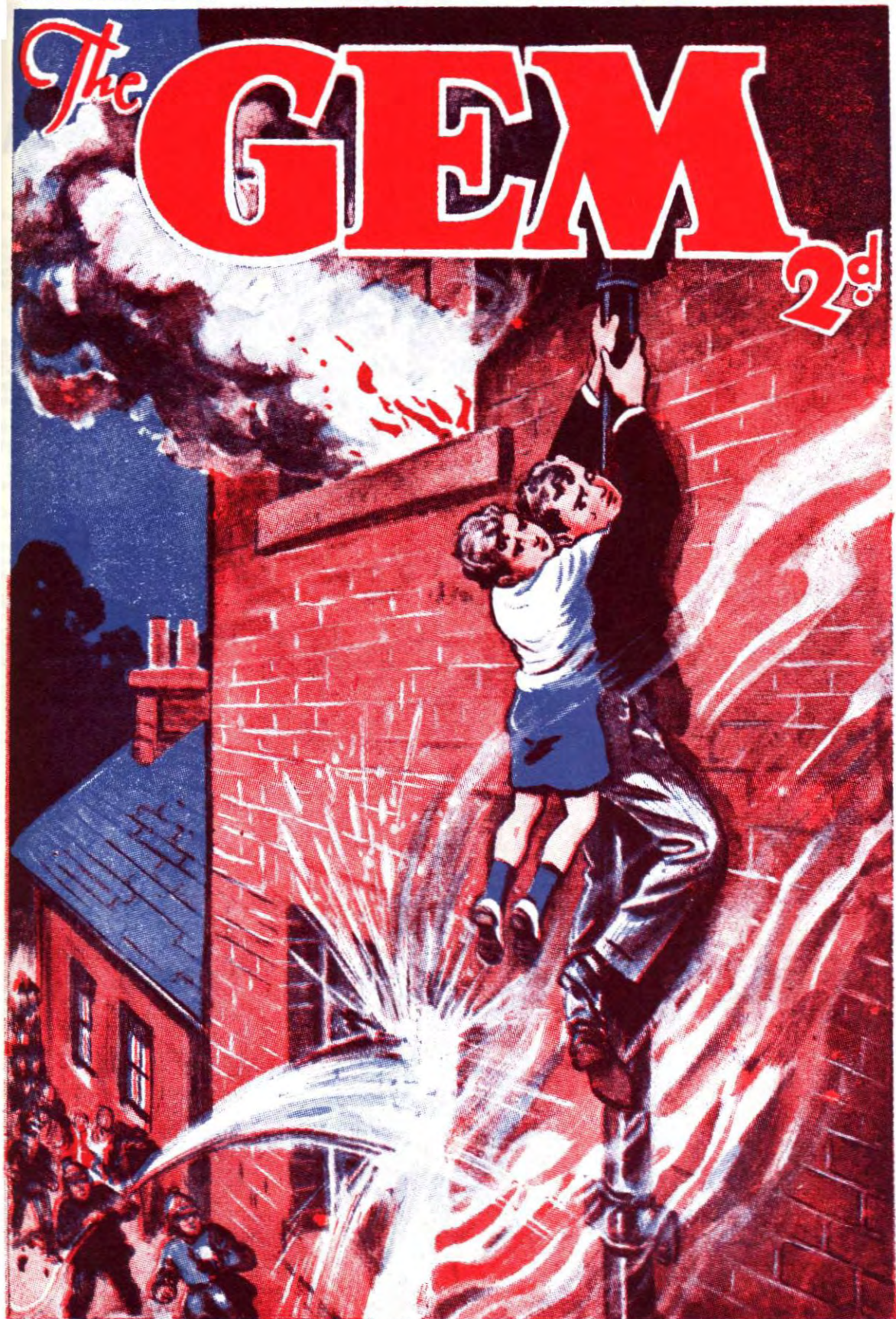


THE STORY EVERY BOY'S TALKING ABOUT—**"THE MAKING OF HARRY WHARTON!"** INSIDE



A Thrilling Moment in **"THEY CALLED HIM A COWARD!"** The Great St. Jim's Yarn Within.
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HE WAS ONE OF THE PLUCKIEST CHAPS AT ST. JIM'S, BUT AN UNKIND FATE MADE HIM APPEAR THE BIGGEST FUNK IN THE SCHOOL!

THEY CALLED HIM



Manners was seized with hands that were by no means gentle, and Blake scrawled the word "Funk" across his face. Then the unhappy junior was bumped again and again on the hard ground.

CHAPTER 1.

Cousin Ethel's Visit!

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's strolled across the old quadrangle in the bright morning sunlight.

It was nearly dinner-time, and groups of juniors were gathered in all parts of the quad. Lumley-Lumley's steps were directed towards the old elms, where Blake and his chums of Study No. 6 were engaged in an animated conversation.

"I say, you chaps, I want a word in private," said Lumley-Lumley, rather anxiously.

Blake & Co. turned to the newcomer. "Right!" exclaimed Jack Blake promptly. "Fire away, my son! One word won't take you long to say!"

Lumley-Lumley grinned. "I wasn't speaking literally," he said. "I'm just wondering if one of you chaps can lend me ten shillings till Saturday?"

"Well," said Herries thoughtfully, "there's no harm in wondering that I can see. Is there, you chaps?"

"No harm at all."

"We shan't interfere with you in the least, old chap," said Blake generously. "You can wonder all day, if you like!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled D'Arcy.

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"Pway don't wowwy, Lumley, deah boy. You are at perfect liberty to wondah to your heart's content!" Lumley-Lumley grinned again.

"Oh, come off it!" he exclaimed. "I guess it's a serious matter. Can one of you lend me half-a-quid—now?"

"Well, I won't say anything," said Blake; "but perhaps this'll give you an inkling of the state of my giddy exchequer."

And Blake proceeded to turn his pockets inside out. His chums did likewise, and Lumley-Lumley regarded them with a rueful face.

"You're all stony, then?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Broke to the wide!"

"On the giddy rocks!"

"Well, you're a nice set of chaps to rely on!" said Lumley-Lumley. "I'm surprised at you, Gussy, at least, for allowing your funds to run out! You shouldn't spend so much tin on your clobber!"

"You uttah ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I considah that I am vewy careful indeed with my money! I have only spent a fivah on clobber duwin' a whole month!"

"My hat, a fiver would buy me enough clothes for a year!" said Lumley-Lumley. "Still, I don't profess

to be a tailor's dummy like you are, Gussy!"

"Weally, Lumley—"

"I want to know why you're hard-up," put in Blake. "What's happened to the family millions, Lumley? I thought you were rolling in wealth!"

"Well, I'm stony now, anyhow," said Lumley-Lumley. "I'm expecting a remittance by post, as a matter of fact; but I wanted a few bob to be going on with."

"Sorry, old man; but we can't do anything to alleviate the embarrassment."

"My hat! That's a good expression, anyhow!" said Lumley-Lumley admiringly.

"He boned it out of a giddy book!" said Herries, with a sniff. "I read the story myself, so I know."

Blake turned red.

"We're waiting for the postman," he said hastily. "He'll be coming along presently."

"Bai Jove, here he is, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hurried across to the gates, and the other juniors quickly followed. Blagg, the village postman, had just appeared, and he was soon surrounded by the eager juniors.

"Letter for me, Blagg?"

"Anything for me?"

HARRY MANNERS FILLS THE TITLE ROLE IN THIS THRILLING LONG YARN OF REAL HUMAN INTEREST.

A COWARD!

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD

"Surely there is one for me, Blaggy, deah boy?"

"Steady on, young gentlemen!" ejaculated Blaggy, backing away. "Yes: there's one for you, Master D'Arcy, and one for Master Blake, and one for Master Lumley-Lumley—"

"Oh, good!" said Lumley-Lumley. "Hand it over, Blaggy!"

The letters were handed over, and then Blaggy trudged away to the School House to deliver the other missives. The Fourth Form juniors, meanwhile, opened their letters with a considerable amount of eagerness.

"My hat, this is all right, you chaps!" exclaimed Blake. "There's a postal order here for a pound."

"Good!" said Herries and Digby. Lumley-Lumley was reading his letter.

"I can lend you a few bob now, Lumley," said Blake.

"Thanks," he said; "but I'm in funds now. I've got a giddy fiver here. The pater's turned up trumps in the nick of time!"

"A fiver—oh?" said Blake. "My hat, that's taken the shine out of my postal order! We mustn't let Study No. 6 be put in the shade! Gussy, if you haven't got a fiver in that letter of yours, we'll boil you in oil!"

Arthur Augustus looked up abstractedly.

"Did you address me, deah boy?" he asked.

"I did," said Blake. "Hand over the fiver for us to look at."

"I haven't got a fiver!" said D'Arcy. "I'm on the wocks!"

"But you've just got a letter," went on Blake. "Do you mean to tell us that your pater hasn't sent—"

D'Arcy adjusted his famous monocle. "This lettah isn't fwom my govannah, Blake," he explained. "It's fwom Cousin Ethel. Pway be quiet, and let me finish weadin' it!"

"From Cousin Ethel?" said Blake. "Is she coming to St. Jim's?"

The question of the fiver was forgotten, and the juniors crowded round D'Arcy for information. His cousin, Ethel Cleveland, was very popular at St. Jim's, and the juniors of both Houses were always glad to see her when she visited the old school.

"Is she coming here?" asked Blake again.

"Yaas. Cousin Ethel is comin' to St. Jim's this aftahnnoon on a short visit, deah boys. She will awvive by the twain which weaches Wylcombe at three-thirty."

"It's a half-holiday this afternoon, so it will be all serene," said Blake, with satisfaction. "I vote we make up a little party and meet her at the station."

"That's the idea!"

"Yaas, watah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I was goin' to suggest the same thing myself."

"The question is, who shall we take with us?" said Jack Blake. "I expect those Shell bounders—"

Three cheerful juniors strolled up arm-in-arm.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, interrupting Blake's sentence. "You Fourth

Form kids are looking jolly happy. Somebody left you a fortune?"

"No," said Blake. "We were just talking about you chaps."

The Terrible Three—Tom Merry, Manners, and Monty Lowther of the Shell—grinned.

"Is that why you are looking happy?" asked Lowther.

"No, it jolly well isn't!" exclaimed Blake. "Cousin Ethel is coming to St. Jim's this afternoon on a visit to Mrs. Holmes, and we were wondering if you chaps would like to go with us to the station."

"Rather!" ejaculated the Terrible Three in unison.

"Wight-ho, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "Be weady at about three o'clock. I pwesume you can be weady by that time? It will be necessary, you know, to dress for the occasion."

"We know that, Gussy," said Manners, "and we shall try to rival you in splendour. It's not often Cousin Ethel comes to St. Jim's, but when she

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*There was no getting away from the fact that Harry Manners deserted D'Arcy's cousin, Ethel Cleveland, in a moment of danger. His school-fellows did not stop to ask if there was a reason for it—they branded him as a rotter and a coward!*

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does it's time to put all other matters aside. We'll be ready to start for Rylcombe on the stroke of three."

CHAPTER 2.

Good News for Figgins!

"GOOD!" said Blake. "If you're late we shall start without you. I expect we shall have all our work cut out to get Gussy

ready by three o'clock. He's bound to waste hours trying on new neckties and toppers."

"Weally, Blake—"

"If Gussy isn't ready we shall go without him, that's all," said Tom Merry.

"You uttah asses!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "It would be impos. for you to meet Cousin Ethel without me. She is my cousin, and—"

"And there goes the giddy dinner-bell!" interrupted Manners.

The discussion came to an end at the sound of the bell, and the juniors went in to dinner.

After dinner Blake & Co. were among the first out in the quad. The sun was still shining brilliantly, and there was every prospect of a glorious afternoon.

"Lucky there's no cricket on this afternoon," said Blake.

"It would have made no difference whatevah, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "In

the cires, we should have had to postpone the match."

"Well, I suggest you go and tog yourself up, Gussy," said Herries. "If you don't hurry up you'll keep us all waiting when it's time to start."

"Pway don't be absurd, Hewwies!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "It isn't two yet, and there is no necessity to start until three."

"Well, you take an hour adjusting your giddy necktie," said Blake. "Buzz off!"

"Pewwaps you are wight, Blake. This occasion is a special one, and I must take particulah care ovah dressin'."

And D'Arcy left his chums and entered the School House. When, twenty minutes later, they joined him in the dormitory, they discovered that he was still undecided as to which tie he would wear.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, pway advise me what tie to weah!"

"Oh, any old thing!" said Blake. "Weally—"

"Why, the dummy hasn't started dressing yet!" said Digby. "I've got an idea: Let's collar all Gussy's ties except one, then he'll be forced to wear it."

"You uttah ass, Digby!" exclaimed D'Arcy frigidly. "I decline to ask your opinion on the mattah. I will decide for myself."

"Well, look sharp about it!" Blake & Co. commenced dressing.

Meanwhile, Lumley-Lumley was lounging under the old elms in the quad. Figgins, the chief of the New House juniors, strolled up to him and requested the use of Lumley-Lumley's pocket-knife.

"Know who's coming this afternoon?" remarked Lumley-Lumley casually.

"No. Who?" asked Figgins, looking up as he was about to sharpen his pencil.

"D'Arcy's cousin—Ethel Cleveland."

"Oh, ripping!" exclaimed Figgins heartily. "She hasn't been to St. Jim's for a bit, has she? What train is she coming by?" he added.

"Three-thirty," replied Lumley-Lumley. "Blake & Co. and one or two other chaps are going to meet her at the station."

"Oh!" said Figgins. "Here's your knife, Lumley; thanks for the use of it." Lumley-Lumley started.

"But you haven't sharpened your giddy pencil yet!" he said, as Figgins hurried away.

"That's all right!" exclaimed Figgins.

He hastened across the quad as fast as his long legs would carry him, leaving Lumley-Lumley looking after him in some surprise. Figgins dashed up the stairs of the New House and burst into the study he shared with Kerr and Fatty Wynn.

"I say, you chaps!" he ejaculated. "I've just heard some good news. Cousin Ethel's coming this afternoon."

"Cousin Ethel!"

"Oh, good!"

Fatty Wynn and Kerr were interested at once. Nearly all the juniors at St. Jim's liked D'Arcy's cousin, and were

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always pleased when she paid a visit to the old school.

"She's coming by the three-thirty train," went on Figgins quickly. "I've just heard it from Lumley-Lumley. It's like the cheek of those Study No. 6 rotters not to tell us!"

"Unheard of!" exclaimed Kerr.

"Blake & Co. are going to meet her," said Figgins. "I vote we buzz up to the dormitory and get changed. We can go down to the village, and arrive at the station the same time as Blake & Co."

"Good egg!" said Fatty Wynn. "I'm in funds just now, and if we go a little early we can stop at the tuckshop."

"Oh, blow the tuckshop!" exclaimed Kerr.

"Come on!" said Figgins briskly.

Kerr and Fatty Wynn followed him out of the study, and presently they were hurrying into their best clothes. At last they had finished.

"Ready?" asked Kerr.

"Yes."

"All serene, then!"

They descended to the Hall, and Figgins glanced at his watch. The time was just three o'clock, so they would be able to walk to the station comfortably.

"I wonder if those bounders have gone yet?" remarked Kerr.

"It's hardly time—By Jove, here they are!" said Figgins, glancing across at the School House steps. "Let's meet them at the gates and walk down to the station with 'em."

"They might object," suggested Fatty Wynn doubtfully. "I don't want my best clothes mucked up."

"Don't be an ass!" said Figgins calmly. "Do you think they are going to have a scrap with us in those togs? We're as safe as houses!"

And Figgins & Co. sauntered across the quad to the gates. Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three met them just as they were passing out into Rylcombe Lane. The School House juniors were as neatly dressed as Figgins & Co.—Arthur Augustus indeed, was a model of sartorial elegance. From the crown of his glittering topper to the toes of his patent-leather shoes, he was resplendent.

"Hallo! What are you chaps doing?" asked Blake suspiciously.

"Oh, just going for a stroll!" said Figgins carelessly.

"You're togged up like new pins!" said Monty Lowther. "Do you usually go for strolls disguised as tailors' dummies? What's the game?"

"If you particularly want to know," said Figgins, "we're going to meet somebody at the station."

"Bai Jove! How vewy wemarkable!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "We're going to meet somebody at the station, too!"

"Wonderful!" said Kerr.

Tom Merry eyed the New House juniors suspiciously.

"Who are you going to meet?" he inquired.

"Oh, a friend of ours?" said Figgins carelessly.

"Look here, you New House bounders," said Manners. "I know what you're up to! You've heard that Cousin Ethel is coming, and you are going to the station to meet her!"

severely. "Are you weally goin' to the station to meet Cousin Ethel?"

Figgins & Co. grinned.

"You've guessed first go!" said the New House leader.

"You bounder!" exclaimed Blake. "We didn't invite any New House wasters to go with us!"

"Well, we're going uninvited, my son!"

"Weally, Figgay, I fail to see why you should intwude," said Arthur Augustus stiffly. "Aftah all, you would have seen Cousin Ethel when she awvived here!"

"That wasn't good enough, Gussy," said Figgins blandly. "We're going to meet her and escort her to St. Jim's."

"And how about us?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Oh, you can come with us if you like!" said Kerr, with an air of condescension.

The School House juniors gasped.

"Go with you!" ejaculated Blake.

"My hat! Who the dickens do you think you are?"

"We're too modest to say!" grinned Kerr.

Figgins looked at his watch.

"It's ten past three," he said calmly. "If we waste much more time, Cousin Ethel won't have anybody to meet her at all!"

"My hat!"

"So I vote that we all go down together," went on Figgins. "If you tried to prevent us going with you, it would only mean delay—and rumpled clothes!"

The School House juniors looked at one another.

"Well, Gussy," said Blake, "are they coming?"

"Weally, deah boy, there is nothin' else for it," said Arthur Augustus. "Figgins & Co. are quite welcome to accompany us, but I would have pweferred them to ask my permish."

"We hadn't time to ask your permish!" grinned Figgins.

"Come on, then, you boundahs!"

And the juniors marched down the lane to Rylcombe without further delay. School House and New House were invariably waging war against one another; but on an occasion such as this hostilities were allowed to cease.

They arrived at the station and made inquiries.

"It's all wight, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "The twain will not come in for anothah three minutes. In the cires, we needn't have huvwied quite so much."

The juniors waited impatiently for the train to arrive, collected in a group on the sunlit platform. At last a whistle in the distance told of the train's approach, and in a few moments later it steamed into the station.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy surveyed the carriages eagerly.

"Can you see her, deah boys?" he asked. "Bai Jove, there she is!"

The juniors hurried up the platform towards a pretty girl who had alighted from a carriage. In a moment Ethel was surrounded, and her rosy cheeks flushed with pleasure at the warmth of the juniors' welcome.

"Jolly glad to meet you again, deah boy—I mean, gal!" exclaimed D'Arcy, removing his hat gracefully. "It's weally wippin to have you down here for a visit."

"Rathah!" agreed Figgins heartily.

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"It's nice of you to say so," she

said, "and I certainly didn't expect to have such an escort."

"It's a pleasuah, deah gal! Pway follow me!"

Arthur Augustus gracefully led the way out of the station.

Out in the road he turned, and was somewhat taken aback to find Cousin Ethel and her escort some distance behind. Apparently D'Arcy's existence had been overlooked.

The swell of the School House became indignant. After all, Ethel was his cousin and he had the most right to be at her side. At the present moment Figgins was on her right, and Manners on her left, both of them engaged in conversation with her.

He waited until his chums came up, and they could not help noticing the severe glance which he directed towards Figgins.

"What's the matter, Gussy?" inquired Kerr.

"I considah that it is uttalyh wepwehensible the way Figgins pushes himself forward when Cousin Ethel visits us!" replied D'Arcy severely. "It is my place to be by Cousin Ethel's side."

"But you can't be both sides at once!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowthah! Mannahs is perfectly welcome to wetaim his posish, but I weally must insist upon Figgins wetiwin' in my favah!"

And Arthur Augustus pushed his way through his chums and tugged at Figgins' sleeve, anxious that Cousin Ethel should not observe the action. Figgins looked round and grinned.

"Hallo, Gussy!" he said genially. "I thought you were lost!"

"Pway come here a moment, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "I twust you will excuse him, Ethel?" he added, as the girl looked round.

"Certainly," said Cousin Ethel readily.

Figgins frowned, but he left Cousin Ethel's side and dropped behind with D'Arcy.

"Now, you frabjous chump, what's the matter?" demanded Figgins.

"A gweat deal is the mattah," replied D'Arcy. "I considah, you New House boundah, but you are takin' a liberty! As Cousin Ethel's wrelative, it is my duty to escort—"

"Your duty be jiggered, Gussy!" said Figgins warmly. "Surely you don't mind my escorting Cousin Ethel to St. Jim's! You're as bad as an old grandmother!"

"Did you wefer to me as a gwandmothah?" said D'Arcy excitedly.

"I did!"

"Then, unless you withdraw that wemark—"

"For goodness' sake, Gussy, don't start a row now! Cousin Ethel's looked round twice already, and she can see you're making a fuss over nothing."

"A fuss ovah nothin'!" repeated Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I considah it is above a joke when I am weferred to as an old gwandmothah! I do not mean to imply any diswrespect to gwandmothahs in genewal, but it is hardly a cowwect expression to use in connection with myself!"

"Blowed if you're not worse than a gramophone!" groaned Figgins.

"If you do not immediately apologise for your wotten wemarks, Figgins," Arthur Augustus declared, "I shall have no alternative but to administah a feahful thwashin'!"

"How about your beautiful clobber, Gussy?"

"Wats to the clobber!"

CHAPTER 3.

Manners' Unaccountable Act!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY jammed his monocle into his eye and surveyed Figgins & Co. with considerable wrath.

"Is that true, Figgay?" he asked



With a cry Manners turned from Cousin Ethel and dived through the hedge. The bull, bellowing furiously as it charged along the road, was less than twenty-five yards distant—and Manners had deserted the girl to save his own skin!

"You'll get fearfully dirty," went on Figgins.

"I don't care a jot!" replied D'Arcy excitedly. "If you do not apologise, I shall proceed to wipe up the woad with you!"

And D'Arcy, without waiting for any explanation, proceeded to remove his coat.

The other juniors had observed the state of affairs with amused grins, while Manners walked on ahead with Cousin Ethel. But now it was time to interfere, and the juniors immediately surrounded D'Arcy and Figgins.

"You ass, Gussy!" exclaimed Blake. "Put your coat on!"

"I uttally wefuse!"

"You can't act like that in the presence of a lady," said Monty Lowther severely. "I'm surprised at you!"

Arthur Augustus looked distressed. "Weally, Lowthah—"

Manners, some distance ahead, glanced round.

"Gussy seems to be getting excited," he remarked.

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"What is it all about?" she asked demurely. "Surely there isn't a wrangle about me? I hope Arthur isn't upsetting your friends."

"Oh, he'll be all right in a minute!" said Manners easily. "It's only Gussy's little way, you know. He breaks out like this now and again."

"I'm sorry there's a disagreement," said Cousin Ethel.

Manners looked round again. The rest of the juniors were now over fifty yards behind, and by D'Arcy's warlike movements it was obvious that the disagreement was by no means at an end. But Manners didn't mind. Cousin Ethel's company was very pleasant to him.

They strolled down the road quietly, walking slowly, in order not to get too far ahead. This part of the village was very quiet, the road on one side being bordered by little cottages, with neat front gardens.

"Everything looks beautifully fresh,"

Cousin Ethel remarked. "Oh, see those flowers over there! Aren't they lovely? I—"

She paused and looked about her in some surprise. Suddenly a series of shouts were heard, and apparently they proceeded from a small lane which joined the road a few yards farther on.

"What the dickens is that?" said Manners, in a puzzled voice.

"I—I don't know," replied Cousin Ethel wonderingly.

They hurried on a few steps, and the shouts became more frantic. Manners took a glance behind, but saw that his chums were still standing in a group in their original position. The next moment he and Cousin Ethel were opposite the lane, and they looked down it with curiosity.

"My—my hat!" gasped Manners.

"Oh!" exclaimed Cousin Ethel simply.

Not one hundred yards from them, and approaching at a furious gallop, was a bull, its jaws foaming, and its tail swishing with mad rage.

The infuriated animal's hoofs beat on the hard road, and its eyes glittered evilly as it saw the two forms ahead.

For a second it appeared to pause; then, with a mad bellow, it lowered its head and charged for Cousin Ethel and Manners.

"Oh," gasped the girl pantingly, "it's coming for us!"

There was not a moment to lose—the bull would be upon them in less than thirty seconds. Cousin Ethel stood staring before her irresolutely. Then she turned quickly to Manners.

But Manners was staring at the hedge, apparently taking no notice of his fair companion whatever. The next moment, with a cry, he turned from Cousin Ethel and dived through the hedge.

The bull, bellowing angrily, was less than twenty-five yards distant.

Cousin Ethel gasped with surprise. Even in that moment of deadly peril she realised that Manners' nerve had given way, and that he had deserted her in order to save his own skin.

But the girl had plenty of pluck, and she did not lose her head. She had seen a low shed near by, at the bottom of a strip of grassland, which was divided from the road by a low fence. Cousin Ethel ran swiftly to the fence, the bull snorting and puffing not fifteen yards behind. The girl vaulted the fence with easy agility, and rushed to the shed.

The next moment she had wrenched open the door and was safe.

The bull, meanwhile, had paused, bellowing, at the fence. Then the animal wheeled round and thundered down the village street, accompanied by a chorus of shouts from a crowd of farm-labourers who appeared at the opening of the little lane. They all carried pitchforks and lumbered breathlessly after their dangerous charge.

Tom Merry & Co. and the three New House juniors had witnessed the whole of the little episode, and now that the danger was passed they rushed down the road, and hastened to the shed in which Cousin Ethel had taken refuge.

CHAPTER 4.

Branded a Coward!

Cousin Ethel opened the door of the shed just as the juniors raced up. She was looking a little pale, and uttered a sigh of relief as she saw that the bull was now almost out of sight.

"Are you all right, Miss Cleveland?" asked Figgins anxiously.

"Where's that boulder Manners?"

"Yes, where's Manners?"

"Why did he hook it?"

Cousin Ethel hesitated.

"I'm all right," she said quietly. "I was a little frightened, for the bull looked so dreadfully fierce."

"Bai Jove, you're wight, deah gal!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "If I had been in your uncomfortable posish, I

should have been thrown into a fearful fluttah. You behaved wonderfully, Ethel."

"Rather!" agreed Tom Merry.

"My hat, Miss Cleveland, the way you hopped over that fence was a treat," said Figgins. "I'm blessed if I could have done it better myself!"

"There was nothing else to do," replied Ethel simply.

"But where the dickens is Manners?" asked Monty Lowther, looking round with a puzzled expression. "And why on earth did he scoot?"

Cousin Ethel looked grave.

"I—I really don't know," she answered.

"I do!" said Figgins hotly. "Manners lost his nerve, and left you in the lurch! Fancy leaving Cousin Ethel to face the bull alone!"

"Shame!"

"Cowardly!"

"Fancy old Manners funking it!"

"The rotter ought to be scalped!" snorted Figgins.

"You're in a hurry, Figgins," said Tom Merry. "Why can't you wait until Manners explains? He may be able to—"

"Here he comes, deah boys," interrupted D'Arcy suddenly. "In all pwobability he will be able to offah a perfectly satisfactory explanation. It is uttaly unlike Mannahs to show the white feathah!"

"I'm blessed if I can understand it," said Monty Lowther.

"Pray wait a moment," said Cousin Ethel. "I am sure Manners will be able to explain."

Manners came up to the group of juniors surrounding Cousin Ethel with a doubtful expression on his face. His

chums misinterpreted that look; in reality, Manners was only wondering how he would be received, but the juniors imagined him to be thoroughly ashamed of himself.

"That was a jolly near thing for Cousin Ethel," he remarked. "As it happened, I shouldn't have done any good if I had stayed by her side—"

"That's no excuse!" exclaimed Figgins hotly. "Look here, Manners, we want to know why you left Cousin Ethel and dived into the hedge?"

"Well, I—I—I can explain in a few words," said Manners, a little hesitantly. "If things had turned out as I expected, you'd have known the reason before now. But—"

Blake stepped forward, assuming Manners' hesitancy as a sign of guilt.

"Why the dickens can't you speak out plain?" he demanded. "Why can't you own to the truth?"

"The truth?" Manners repeated.

"What do you mean?"

"You funk'd it!" exclaimed Figgins.

"You lost your nerve and scooted, leaving Cousin Ethel to look after herself."

"To leave a girl in a position like that was the act of a beastly coward!" exclaimed Blake.

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry and Lowther were silent, finding it hard to believe that their chum was guilty of cowardice.

Manners stepped back, and all the colour fled from his face as he surveyed the scornful and accusing countenances round him.

"You—you don't think I funk'd it?"

he gasped. "You don't think I deliberately left Cousin Ethel because I was afraid?"

"There's no other explanation," said Figgins.

"Do you think I left you because I turned coward?" asked Manners eagerly, turning to Cousin Ethel.

"I—I hardly know what to say," replied the girl. "Your action was very unaccountable."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Manners looked round him excitedly.

"Surely you don't condemn me before I've had a chance to explain?" he asked. "I've never acted cowardly since I've been at St. Jim's, and you all know it. Nobody's ever had reason to call me a funk!"

Tom Merry looked uncomfortable.

"If you've been misjudged, Manners, we'll apologise, of course," he said quietly. "But the reason for your action in diving through the hedge when you saw the bull rushing at you, and deserting Cousin Ethel, seemed so obvious."

"There's no explanation to that!" declared Figgins. "It explains itself."

"I suppose it does, on the face of it," said Manners angrily. "But can't you wait a minute? Great Scott, I never imagined that I should get a reception like this! I'll tell you the whole truth, and if you don't believe it you can jolly well do the other thing!"

"Oh, don't quarrel, please!" pleaded Cousin Ethel.

"I don't want to quarrel," replied Manners. "But when a chap's called a funk, he doesn't feel inclined to take it meekly. I left Cousin Ethel's side because I saw that a little child was in great danger of being seriously injured. I knew that Cousin Ethel could, at least, run for it, but the child was absolutely helpless. There wasn't any time to explain."

"And did you save the child?" asked Tom Merry.

"No," replied Manners. "When I got to the spot I found that the child wasn't there. It had been saved by somebody else."

For a moment there was silence. The juniors looked at one another uncomfortably. They didn't know whether to believe Manners' explanation or not.

"You say you went to save a child," repeated Monty Lowther. "Where was it—in the hedge? Did you think the bull would suddenly charge at the hedge?"

"No, I didn't," replied Manners. "The child was just rushing towards the open garden gate of a cottage, and I thought that if I scrambled through the hedge I could reach it more quickly. If the child hadn't been stopped, it would have ran right under the feet of the bull."

"So instead of running to the garden gate you dived into the hedge?" asked Figgins sarcastically. "Look here, Manners, that yarn's a bit fishy. You've got nothing to support it."

"There's my word!" flashed back Manners.

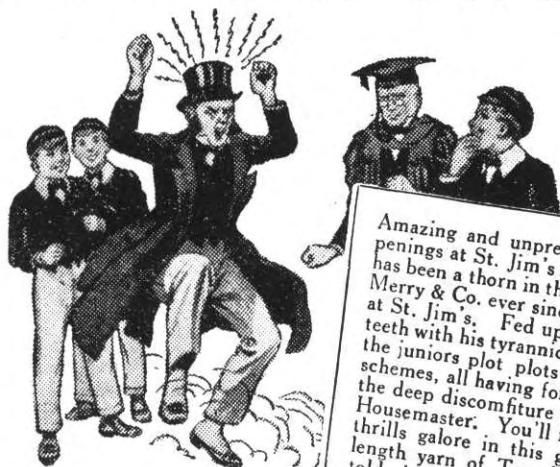
"We didn't see any child," said Blake, ignoring Manners' remark. "We saw the whole incident, but there was no child there."

"I tell you it was just in a garden," repeated Manners.

"Well, Cousin Ethel was with you," said Tom Merry. "If you saw it, she must have seen it, being in the same place. Did you notice a child, Miss Cleveland?"

"I—I really can't say," replied Cousin Ethel, looking at Manners uncomfortably. "I was too frightened to notice anything, I think. But there's a

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way to settle the matter once and for all."

"What's that, deah gal?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"By going to the cottage Manners speaks of, and asking if a child was about to cross the road when the bull passed, and if anybody snatched it away in the nick of time."

"Bai Jove, that's a wippin' suggestion!" exclaimed D'Arcy enthusiastically. "It will clear up evewythin' straight away. Have you anythin' to say about the ideah, Mannahs?"

"It seems a good idea," said Manners, looking round. "But I'm blessed if I know exactly which cottage it was. They are all very much alike, you know, and in the excitement of the moment I didn't pay any attention at all to the houses. I simply saw the child, and made up my mind to save it."

Manners paused as he saw the black looks on the faces around him. Then he realised how his chums would regard this explanation. To them it would seem absurd that he could not know the cottage.

"Don't talk piffle!" exclaimed Figgins roughly. "Do you mean to say that you can't point out the garden the child was in? Why, there are only eight cottages altogether on that side of the road. It's pretty plain, chaps, that Manners has been fibbing 'all along!"

"It's nothing of the sort!" retorted Manners angrily. "If you'd got any sense you'd realise that what I say is true. How could I take notice of a cottage at such a time? All I know is that it's one of those two with the white-washed fronts, though which one it was I couldn't say."

Manners pointed across to two cottages, semi-detached, which were quite distinct from the others, inasmuch as their front walls had been lately white-washed.

"Why the dickens couldn't you say so before?" said Tom Merry. "If it's one of those two, we can jolly soon find out the truth. I vote Cousin Ethel, myself, and Manners go over there and make inquiries; we can't all troop into the garden."

"Good egg!" said Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yes, it will be the best way," said Ethel quietly. "I hate having to take part in this affair at all; but, in fairness to Manners, we must see if the facts were as he has stated."

Cousin Ethel, with a very worried frown upon her pretty face, stepped forward, and Tom Merry and Manners accompanied her. The rest of the juniors gathered in a little group, eagerly discussing the matter.

In their eyes Manners had committed a serious crime, and if he could not prove himself innocent they would be down upon him with a vengeance. As Figgins said, to leave Cousin Ethel at the mercy of an infuriated bull for no other reason than to save his own skin was the act of an arrant coward.

Ethel and the two juniors arrived in the roadway, and looked at the two cottages.

"One of the cottages is empty!" exclaimed Cousin Ethel, pointing to a large "To Let" placard which hung in the window of the front lower room.

"By Jove, that's good!" said Tom Merry. "As this cottage is empty, we shall only have to inquire next door. You are quite sure the child was in one of these gardens, Manners?"

"I'm positive now," said Manners, looking into the garden. "And it



In an attempt to sell a vacuum-cleaner to a somewhat deaf lady, the salesman offered to give a demonstration in the lady's house. He sprinkled soot and ashes from the fireplace over the carpet, and then said:

"Now, madam, where is the power plug for the electricity?"

"But we haven't electricity," said the lady. "It's gas here!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Fell, Horbury, Wakefield, Yorks.

seems to me that it was the empty one. But, of course, I may be mistaken.

"You may not be," said Ethel. "The child could have wandered into it from next door, as the only division is a low hedge. But come, we will go and inquire."

"I'll stop here," said Manners.

"Right-ho!" replied Tom Merry.

"It's a beastly business altogether, and I hate to have to verify your word. The other chaps won't be satisfied until we've inquired."

Manners watched eagerly as Cousin Ethel and Tom Merry knocked at the cottage door. In his heart he was feeling bitter and miserable. Everything seemed to point to cowardice and deliberate falsehood on his part. Yet he had spoken the truth from beginning to end. He had acted like a hero rather than a coward, and it had all been for nothing. His effort had been wasted, and his chums thought that he had left Ethel at the bull's mercy in order to save himself.

It was a predicament such as he had never found himself in before. Had he arrived in the cottage garden in time to save the child it would have been all right; his chums would have realised instantly that he had been perfectly justified in leaving Cousin Ethel to take care of herself. For she was a capable, level-headed girl, and well able to look after herself. The child, on the other hand, was a helpless mite.

"It'll be all serene," thought Manners. "Cousin Ethel'll soon find out the truth, and then the chaps will be sorry they suspected me of funk and lying!"

Manners paused and watched keenly as an old man answered Tom Merry's knock. The old man impatiently shook his head to Tom's inquiry, and he eyed his visitors with obvious displeasure.

Manners caught his breath, and a cold hand seemed to clutch at his heart.

Why was the old fellow shaking his head?

Cousin Ethel and Tom Merry turned away from the door, and the latter slammed to. Involuntarily Manners stepped forward, and met the pair as they approached him.

"Well," he asked eagerly, "I spoke the truth, didn't I?"

Tom Merry looked at his chum curiously, and a hard glitter shone in his eyes. Cousin Ethel, too, seemed grave and cold, and refrained from looking at Manners at all.

"What's the matter?" asked Manners quickly. "What's up, Tom?"

"We've proved you to be a liar, that's all!" said Tom Merry quietly. "The only person who lives in this cottage is a bad-tempered old man, and there hasn't been a child in it for years. You're a liar and a coward, Manners!"

CHAPTER 5.

Condemned By All!

MANNERS staggered back. "Great Scott!" he muttered hoarsely. "You—you don't mean it, Tom? It can't be true! I saw the child myself—I tried to save it from the bull!"

Tom Merry uttered an impatient exclamation.

"What's the good of keeping up that yarn?" he said angrily. "I'm hanged if I can understand you, Manners! You must have known all along that you'd be found out!"

Manners seemed dazed. He gazed at Tom Merry as though he could not believe his ears. Then, as though in despair, he turned to Cousin Ethel.

"You don't believe I'm a coward. Miss Cleveland?" he asked huskily. "You don't really think I'm such a cad as all that?"

"Please don't speak to me about the matter at all," said Cousin Ethel quietly. "I wish you would let the whole matter drop. After all, it concerns me more than anybody, and I simply hate to think of a fuss being made!"

"It's a matter for all of us, Miss Cleveland!" said Tom Merry firmly. "Manners has acted like a cad, as I never thought he could act, and he'll have to answer for it!"

And the captain of the Shell walked across the road with Cousin Ethel.

Manners, pale-faced, walked behind. His mind was in a turmoil, and he found it impossible to think clearly.

Blake & Co. and the New House trio were standing in a grim-looking group, and Tom Merry explained in a few words. Faces became frowning and hostile, and Manners found himself surrounded by his angry companions.

"You rotter!" said Figgins hotly. "I knew all along that that yarn was a fairy tale. I always thought Mellish and Levison were about the limit in caddishness, but I'm hanged if you don't beat 'em hollow!"

"Bai Jove, that's wathah stiff, Figgins!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pway do not imagine that I'm twyin' to uphold Mannahs in the least, but his offence is hardly as sewious as all that. He has acted wottenly, and I shall certainly wufuse to weward him as a fwend in future. It was bad enough to show the white feathah, but to tell howwible whoppahs in addition was extwemely wotten."

The juniors murmured in agreement. "Nevahtheless," went on D'Arcy, "I hardly think Mannahs is as bad as

Levison. Mannahs has always been a decent chap up till now."

"You're all mistaken," Manners declared passionately. "I didn't funk it—I haven't lied! You're all mistaken, I tell you! Don't you know me well enough to know that I wouldn't try to shield myself by inventing a string of palpable lies? Everything happened as I have said—everything!"

"Oh, weally, Mannahs, that's wathah stiff!" protested Arthur Augustus.

"I told the truth!"

"You rotter!" shouted Blake, losing all patience. "We've got absolute proof that you lied."

"You haven't!" said Manners between his teeth. "I saw the child and I tried to save it."

"There wasn't any child!"

"There was!"

"Look here," said Tom Merry impatiently. "Are you sure of the cottage?"

"It was either the one you went to or the empty one," replied Manners.

"Are you sure?"

"Positively certain!"

"Then you condemn yourself," said Tom Merry coldly.

"How?"

"Because there are only two cottages where the child could have come from, and one of them is empty. The other is tenanted by a crusty old man, who says there are no children there and never have been."

"Which proves absolutely that Manners' tale is a big lie, invented to excuse his cowardice," said Herries warmly. "Great Scott, I never thought Manners was such a bounder!"

"I've told the truth!" said Manners desperately. "I've—"

"Coward!"

"Funk!"

"Liar!"

"Rotter!"

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther were silent. The affair seemed to have stunned them. After all, Manners was their bosom chum, and they hadn't it in their hearts to find voice to their indignation. The affair seemed to prove that their chum was a liar and a funk of the first water—a state of affairs they had never dreamed of. They could not have been harder hit had they suddenly discovered Manners to be a thief.

Cousin Ethel stood by, waiting quietly, her pretty face wearing a look of worry and concern that had no place there. She could not help realising that all this bother was directly due to her visit to St. Jim's, and she wished heartily that she had never come. It pained her exceedingly to know that she was the cause, innocently enough, of this serious quarrel.

"Let's be getting on," said Tom Merry quietly.

"Yes; please have done with this horrid disagreement," said Cousin Ethel eagerly.

"Disagreement!" repeated Figgins. "My only hat! I wish it were nothing worse!"

"If you'll let me explain—" began Manners.

"We won't!"

"Shut up!"

"Dry up, you cad!"

"We've heard enough lies!" snapped Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You'd better not come with us, Manners," said Figgins darkly.

"I won't!" exclaimed Manners, suddenly becoming furious. "I'll walk to St. Jim's alone. Perhaps by the time you get there you'll realise that you're all a set of prize rotters to condemn me

on evidence that carries absolutely no weight!"

And Manners turned on his heel and walked away, his eyes gleaming.

The juniors looked after him angrily.

They were hardly to blame for the quarrel; the evidence, in their eyes, was such that they could not place any reliance on Manners' statement. Everything pointed to its being a falsehood.

The harmony of the party, which had started out so light-heartedly, was entirely destroyed, and as soon as St. Jim's was reached Cousin Ethel bade her escort good-bye.

"I'm awfully sorry this has happened, Miss Cleveland," said Tom Merry quietly.

"So am I," said the girl simply.

"And I do hope you'll forgive Manners."

The juniors were silent, but their looks were such that Ethel realised that the affair was by no means over and done with. She really believed that Manners had left her side in fright, and her opinion of him had fallen considerably; but she was kind-hearted, and had no wish to make matters worse by displaying her contempt.

"It is wathah a tall ordah, deah gal, to ask us to forgive the boundah," said

EVERYONE LIKES A GOOD LAUGH—

So send along that joke you heard the other day. It may bring you half-a-crown. Post it to The GEM Jester, 1, Tallis House, John Carpenter Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

D'Arcy thoughtfully. "Howevah, there is no need to entah into a discush at present, especially as there is a more important mattah to attend to."

"What is that, Arthur?"

"We are goin' to have a gweat feast in Study No. 6, deah gal," replied Arthur Augustus, "and it has been awwanged that you are to be the guest of honah. I pwesume that you will be able to attend?"

"You must come, Miss Cleveland!" said Figgins eagerly.

Cousin Ethel hesitated.

"Very well," she said, smiling. "I'll be delighted to come; only you must promise that there will be no renewal of this unpleasantness about Manners."

"We won't even mention the affair," said Monty Lowther.

"Wathah not!"

"Then I'll come with pleasure!" said Cousin Ethel.

The girl took her departure, and walked to the Head's house, with a look of worried concern upon her pretty face.

As soon as she had left them, the juniors gathered together in a corner of the quad to discuss the situation. House rivalry was completely forgotten, and other juniors looked on in surprise, for it was not often that Figgins & Co. were so intimate with their old rivals.

To the juniors the matter was very serious. Talk as they would, however, they could come to no other conclusion than that at which they had at first arrived. At last Tom Merry looked up from his watch with a start of surprise.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "It's nearly tea-time, and we haven't started to prepare. And Cousin Ethel's going to be the guest of honour. We'd better postpone this discussion until this evening."

"Right-ho!" agreed the others.

"Half a jiff!" said Figgins. "I suppose it's generally agreed that Manners isn't to be included in the party?"

"Of course," replied Blake, without hesitation. "Manners can have tea by himself! I'm blessed if I want to sit in the same room with the coward! The tea's going to be in Study No. 6, anyhow, and if he shows himself there, he'll be chucked out on his neck!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Here, hold on—" began Lowther. "We haven't thoroughly gone into the matter!"

"But we know Manners to be a cad and a liar," said Fatty Wynn, "and I say he isn't fit company for Cousin Ethel!"

"Hear, hear!"

Tom Merry nodded. He and Monty Lowther were not so emphatic in their denunciations as the other juniors, but they, nevertheless, agreed with Fatty Wynn's statement. For the present Manners was in disgrace, and his late chums were the more bitter against him because they had never before suspected him of such dishonourable conduct.

Just before tea Tom Merry met Manners on the School House steps. The latter was still looking pale, and his jaw was set obstinately.

"I say, Manners!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Well?" growled Manners.

"I suppose you know it won't be any good your coming to Study No. 6 for tea?" went on the hero of the Shell. "The fellows are rather set against you just now, and—"

"Oh, dry up!" interrupted Manners bitterly. "You're all against me—you and Monty as well as the rest! I wouldn't have tea with you if you asked me, so you can go and eat coke!"

And Manners passed into the School House, leaving Tom Merry biting his lip.

The grand tea was not exactly a success. Manners' absence was very noticeable, and the party seemed incomplete. Monty Lowther endeavoured to liven matters with several witty jokes, but they all fell somewhat flat. Cousin Ethel, too, was in a thoughtful mood and disinclined to talk. So the juniors were really relieved when the party broke up. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther walked into the Shell passage, with gloomy faces.

"Rotten!" growled Lowther. "That ass Manners has messed up the day!"

"I expect he's in the study," said Tom Merry. "I vote we have a talk to him. Perhaps he'll tell us, as all the other chaps aren't crowding in, exactly what happened."

"It's possible," replied Lowther. "Anyhow, we'll try it on."

They entered the study, and, as Tom Merry had expected, Manners was sitting there, gazing absently out of the window into the pleasant evening sunlight. He looked round as his chums entered, then turned his head away again.

"Look here, Manners, we want to talk to you quietly," said Tom Merry, getting to business without any preamble.

"We're alone now, and we want you to speak out frankly. We want to know why the dickens you ran away from the bull and left Cousin Ethel to face it alone?"

"It was rotten of you!" said Lowther severely.

Manners rose to his feet and closed the window. Then he walked slowly into the middle of the study and faced his chums. His face was serious, and he was now deadly calm.

"Tell me this," he said quietly. "Do you chaps really think I left Cousin Ethel's side because I funk'd facing the bull? We've known each other a pretty long time—quite long enough to know the stuff we're made of. Do you honestly think I funk'd it, and then lied to you all afterwards?"

Tom Merry and Lowther were somewhat taken aback. They had expected a fiery outburst, and were not quite prepared for this attitude.

"I—I— What else can we think?" stammered Tom Merry.

"That's not an answer!" said Manners grimly. "I want to know your opinion! Do you think I funk'd it?"

"If you want a direct answer, I'll give it to you," said Tom Merry uneasily.

"I do want a direct answer," said Manners.

"Very well," replied Tom. "I believe you lost your head for a moment, and dived into the hedge without thinking of the consequences."

"And you think the same?" asked Manners, turning to Monty Lowther.

"Yes," replied Lowther, after a moment's hesitation.

"Right!" said Manners. "It's just as well to know. But, as I tell you, I'm more disappointed than I can say. I never thought that my own chums could seriously suspect me of such rotten conduct! Perhaps I'm unreasonable, but that's how I feel about it."

Tom Merry and Lowther were extremely uneasy, but before they could speak Manners went on again.

"It amounts to this," he remarked quietly. "You've admitted that you believe me to be a coward—a cad capable of deserting a girl for no other purpose than to protect myself. You believe me to be a liar; you think I invented a tale to explain my conduct. In other words, I'm a cad too contemptible to look at—which I should be if I'd really done as you suspect! It's a wonder you're not too disgusted to speak to me at all!"

"Hang it all, Manners," exclaimed Tom Merry, "that's not the way to talk!"

"Haven't you admitted it?" asked Manners. "Haven't you just said that you believe all this suspicion against me? I've only stated the plain facts. If I'd really done as you think, I'd be too disgusted with myself to think of inventing an excuse!"

Manners' face was flushed now, and his eyes were blazing. His chums glanced at one another uncertainly.

"Oh, hang!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You make us feel like a couple of cads, Manners! Look here, you've never really described what happened—fully, I mean. Why not tell us exactly what did occur?"

"What's the good?" asked Manners. "You've said that you believe it to be an invented tale!"

"Well, it does seem like it," said Tom Merry. "Perhaps we've been too hasty. Tell us the whole incident fully."

"That's it!" said Lowther.

"All right, I will," answered Manners. "I don't mind admitting you've got some cause to suspect me, seeing that everything seems to condemn me; but I seriously think that you oughtn't to have been so jolly ready to

take matters for granted. That inquiry at the cottage seems to label me a liar!"

"We couldn't think anything else," said Tom Merry. "Can you explain what happened to the child afterwards?"

"I'm blessed if I can!" replied Manners. "I thought the inquiry would prove my innocence, but it only made me look guilty. This is what happened, and you can believe it or disbelieve it. All I know is that it's the honest truth. Cousin Ethel and I saw the bull at the same moment, and it was about a hundred yards from us. I didn't feel startled even, but thought instantly that I should have to look after Ethel. Then, just before I could move, I saw something which caused me to alter my plan completely."

"Quite close to us was a garden, and over the top of the hedge I caught a glimpse of a little girl running towards the open gate. I don't suppose Ethel saw it, as she wasn't tall enough."



Mother: "Billy, what's all that noise in the study?"

Billy: "Oh, dad's having an argument with grandpa about a sum in my homework!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. MacArthur, 1,167, Pollokshaws Road, Glasgow, S.1.

Anyhow, in a second it flashed through my head that the child would run out into the road and be trampled to death by the bull, and, without hesitating for a moment, I dived straight into the hedge.

"You think that it would have been quicker to rush along the road; but I'd seen the gap in the hedge, and knew that I could just reach the child before it got to the gate. Besides, the bull might have got me as I rushed for the gate, so it was better all round to dive through the hedge. Everything left my mind except the thought of that helpless little child. My coat caught in a bramble just after I passed through the hedge, and it delayed me for a second, and I only got loose by tearing the cloth. Here's the tear."

"Well, when I dashed to the gate I looked round in surprise. The child wasn't to be seen anywhere, and the bull thundered past, attracting my attention. I thought of rushing out and saving Ethel, but by that time she'd skipped over the fence, and I knew she was safe. I looked round again, but couldn't even see anybody looking out of

the cottage windows. The whole incident had happened in about ten seconds. I walked back to the gap, and then passed out into the road, realising that you chaps must have thought I'd turned a coward. It was a jolly rotten situation, and I can forgive the Fourth Form chaps for being so down on me; but I thought you two, my own chums, knew me better. I thought you'd believe in me, whatever the circumstances!"

For a moment there was silence in the study. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther felt a little ashamed, and realised how Manners must feel if his story were really true.

"I'm blessed if I don't believe in you, Manners, old man!" said Tom Merry at last. "Why the dickens didn't you explain the affair as fully as this before?"

"How could I?" asked Manners. "You wouldn't let me speak, and I could tell by the looks on your faces that you thought I was fibbing!"

"It sounded so jolly weak at the time, you know," said Monty Lowther. "You didn't go into details at all, but just stated bald facts. Besides, there was that inquiry at the cottage. If there really was a child—"

"You still doubt me, then?" said Manners bitterly.

"No, I'm hanged if I do!" ejaculated Lowther, grasping Manners' hand. "We've been a couple of silly asses, Manners, and we ought to be ashamed of ourselves. We both believe you acted exactly as you say—don't we, Tommy?"

"Yes," replied Tom Merry quietly. "I hope you'll forgive us, old man?"

"I'll forgive you, right enough, you asses," said Manners. "I've said pretty harsh things, but—"

"We deserved 'em all," said Tom Merry light-heartedly. "But to return to the giddy subject. How do you account for that old joss saying there were no children in the house?"

Manners looked thoughtful.

"I'm blessed if I can account for it," he replied. "It's a fair puzzler. Still, I'm certain the kid was in one of those two gardens—and one cottage is empty. We shall have to make more inquiries, you—"

"I'm not going to," interrupted Lowther. "I'll take Manners' word for it. We've known him for years, and so I reckon we ought to know his character. We must have been potty to suspect him of being a liar and a coward. Only five minutes ago I said I believed it of him; and if he likes to punch my nose, he's at perfect liberty to do so."

Manners smiled.

"I'm not going to do that," he said. "I've been awfully wretched since we parted in the village, but now I don't care what the other chaps think. You believe in me, so it's all right."

"But I care what the other chaps think," said Tom Merry thoughtfully, "and I'm afraid they'll continue to stick to their decision. You know, Manners, the thing looked jolly conclusive, and they won't be ready to take your bare word in the face of it."

CHAPTER 6.

Sent to Coventry!

THE Terrible Three regarded one another for a moment in silence.

Tom Merry's words were probably right, for the Fourth Formers had it firmly fixed in their minds that Manners had been lying.

"If they don't believe me, they can

do the other thing," said Manners calmly. "Perhaps they'll realise after a day or two that they have been too jolly hard. And I shan't make any effort to find proof!"

"I shall, then," said Tom Merry. "I'm quite ready to take your word, old man, but I'm not going to have the other chaps pointing to you and shunning you as if you were a cad like Levison. I shall make inquiries, and find the woman who picked the child up. Until I find her, though, I'm afraid the others will be rather down on you."

And Tom Merry was right.

While the Terrible Three had been discussing the situation, a meeting had been taking place in the Common-room. Most of the School House juniors were there, and Figgins & Co. had brought over Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen of the New House. House rivalry was forgotten, and the one topic of conversation was Manners' cowardly conduct.

It was surprising how great a hold the incident had taken on the juniors. Cowardice was a crime which was absolutely inexcusable. And this was no ordinary case. Cousin Ethel had been exposed to grave danger, and the juniors were indignant. Those who had heard the story for the first time condemned Manners without hesitation.

Blake was mounted on a form, with a red face and waving arms.

"The whole thing amounts to this," he shouted above the hum of conversation in the Common-room, "Manners has shown the white feather in an unmistakable way; he ran away and left Cousin Ethel in a position of danger. He's a coward—"

"Rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And he'll have to be punished," went on Blake. "It wouldn't have been so bad if he'd owned up—"

"But he didn't own up," interrupted Figgins warmly. "He made up a rotten tale that he tried to save a little girl from running into the road! On the face of it, the yarn was all false, and I wonder he had the nerve to say it!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And Manners, too!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn seriously. "I always thought that Manners was decent right through."

"So did I," said Lumley-Lumley. "It's a big surprise."

"We never thought it of him."

"I suppose there's no doubt that it's true?" asked Kangaroo.

"Doubt?" repeated Blake. "How can there be doubt? Hasn't it been proved to the hilt that Manners was fibbing? Didn't Tom Merry and Cousin Ethel make inquiries at the cottage?"

"Yes, but—"

"But rats!" snapped Figgins. "The facts are absolutely clear. We knew before any inquiry was made that the yarn was a lie."

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, regarding the assembly through his monocle. "As a wule, I'm the first chap to stick up for a fellow who's down, but in this case I weally considah that Mannahs is not deservin' of any sympathy."

"Agreed!" said Blake. "I never suspected Manner of being a liar; but now that we know what he is, we've got to show him that we won't have any more of it."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bump him!"

"Frogmarch him!"

"Hold on!" shouted Blake excitedly. "Bumping him isn't enough by a long way! At heart Manners is a good

enough chap. In a day or two, perhaps, he'll come to his senses and own up. If he does, we'll overlook the matter completely and give him a fresh start."

"How about his punishment?" asked Clifton Dane.

"Well, I vote we send him to Coventry until he owns up," said Blake. "Being sent to Coventry is about the most severe sentence we could hit upon, and if we all agree to it he'll find himself shunned by the whole of the Lower School."

"It's a bit thick—" began Kerr.

"Thick be blowed!" ejaculated Figgins hotly. "He deserves all he gets! I consider Blake's suggestion is a good one. If Manners is sent to Coventry until he owns up, he'll soon be sick of it, and make a clean breast of everything. It's the only thing he can do!"

The plan seemed to meet with general approval.

"Good wheeze!" said Herries. "Send him to Coventry till he owns up!"

"That's it!"

"We've all got to agree, though," went on Blake. "Are we all here? Hallo! Who's that at the door?"

The Terrible Three entered.

There was a sudden hush, and the juniors regarded Manners curiously. Manners was looking quite cheerful, and affected not to notice the hostile looks cast in his direction.

"What's the excitement?" asked Tom Merry, looking round.

"You know well enough," said Blake.

"I believe I do," answered Tom Merry. "You've been discussing Manners. Well, Monty Lowther and I have been questioning Manners, and we've come to a decision."

"What's that?"

"We believe that Manners has told the truth," answered the captain of the Shell quietly. "He's never acted cowardly or been a liar before, and we're jolly certain that he wouldn't become both within the space of two minutes!"

The meeting gasped.

"Do—do you mean to say that you believe in his fatheaded yarn?" asked Figgins.

"Yes!" replied Monty Lowther warmly. "And it's not half so fatheaded as you are, let me tell you! He acted honourably; and, although there's no vestige of proof, Tom Merry and I are both willing to take his word."

"Fat lot that's worth!" sneered Mellich of the Fourth.

"Shut up you rotter!" said Tom Merry sharply. "The others can believe what they like but I'm not going to stand any nonsense from you!"

"Oh, let him talk!" said Manners. "I don't mind what anybody says. My conscience is quite clear, so I'm not worrying. Still, it's a bit rotten to know that all my chums can think so bad of me. I've never given any of you cause to suspect me of cowardice—"

"What's the go of going over it again?" shouted Figgins angrily. "I'm not surprised at Lowther and Tom Merry believing in you, because they're your bosom chums, but you won't find us so ready."

"We've always been friends, Manners," said Blake seriously. "Why not act sensibly and make a clean breast of it? If you'll own your fault here and now, we'll overlook it and give you another chance."

"That's fair enough," said Kangaroo. "Be sensible, Manners."

"Yaas, wathah! Don't throw the chance away"

Manners looked round with a firm glint in his eye.

"What you want me to do is to own up," he said. "Well, if I owned up you would accuse me of telling a lie—for the simple reason that I've already told you nothing but the honest truth. My statement about the little child was true, and I claim that I acted in the only way possible in the circumstances."

"Hear, hear!" said Lowther.

There was an angry buzz.

"You still stick to that yarn, then?" asked Figgins hotly. "You still expect us to believe that?"

"I expect you to believe the truth."

"You're an idiot, Manners!" said Blake. "If you'd owned up everything would have been all right; as it is, I'm going to tell you the punishment you've been sentenced to. From now on you're in Coventry! Not a single chap in the Fourth or Shell is going to speak to you, or take any notice of you, until you own up. When you do that everything will go on as usual."

"Hold on!" said Monty Lowther. "You said just now that no chap in the Shell is going to speak to Manners. Well, you're wrong, because I'm going to, and so is Tom Merry! We believe Manners' story, and think you all a set of prize idiots!"

An angry retort was on Blake's lips, but he checked it and smiled.

"As you're both his special chums, we'll exclude you," he replied. "But everybody else has agreed that Manners is to be sent to Coventry until he makes a clean breast of it. It'll be rotten for him, but that's his own look-out!"

"If you think I care tuppence, you're mistaken!" exclaimed Manners angrily. "You're a lot of fatheads, and even if you hadn't sent me to Coventry I should have cut you all! You can do what you like, and say what you like, but you'll have to wait until Doomsday for me to own up to something I never did!"

And Manners strode out, leaving the Common-room in an uproar.

CHAPTER 7.

Cousin Ethel Intervenes!

THE excitement lasted for some little time, and the juniors were only finally made quiet by the sudden appearance of a prefect, who proceeded to lay about them with a cane. After that the noise subsided and the juniors calmed down.

No doubt in sending Manners to Coventry the juniors thought they were acting in a perfectly just manner. They really believed that Manners was a coward, and treated him as such. But Manners was as innocent of cowardice and falsehood as Tom Merry himself.

Yet he could do nothing to prove his innocence.

It was not a matter for the prefects or masters; it was a purely junior affair. But, nevertheless, the boys were more bitter against Manners than if he had been found out in theft. A coward was not to be tolerated at any price, especially one who endeavoured to excuse his cowardice with palpable falsehoods. It was in this way that the juniors looked upon the matter, and they were hardly to be blamed for their attitude.

Shortly after the meeting had broken up Manners was strolling in the quad with Tom Merry and Monty Lowther.

"After all," said Manners, "the chaps can't be blamed for being down on me. I've always given them reason to trust me, I know, but this thing looks jolly black, and there's some excuse. Even you two have only my word to rely on."

"That's good enough for us, old man," said Tom Merry quietly.

"Of course," said Monty Lowther.

"Thanks! It's good to have chums who have confidence in me!" replied Manners, with feeling. "By the way, do you know what became of the bull? I completely forgot to ask."

"The farm-hands who were chasing it cornered it in a yard just before it got to the village," said Tom Merry. "When they'd collared it, it walked back with them as docile as you like. I heard this from Thompson, and he says the village is as quiet as usual again."

Manners nodded. But he was not looking at Tom Merry; his attention was attracted by the peculiar behaviour of Gore and Crooke of the Shell. These two youths had been strolling across the quad, arm-in-arm, until they were quite close to the Terrible Three. Then, when they were just about to pass, they looked up, stared at Manners with contempt, and made a wide detour, as though very anxious not to venture too close.

Manners coloured a little, but made no comment.

Lowther, however, had also noticed the juniors' manoeuvre.

"The rotten cads!" he exclaimed contemptuously.

"They're not worth noticing," said Manners quietly.

Nevertheless, he could not fail to see that Gore and Crooke repeated the performance, and gave the cue to Mellish and Levison of the Fourth. Several New House juniors joined in the "fun," and presently quite a number of boys were parading past the Terrible Three, averting their eyes and with their noses high in the air. They all gave Manners a wide berth, but conveyed by their actions a very pronounced air of contempt.

Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy strolled down the School House steps, and saw what was going on. They were both very much incensed against Manners, but they did not believe in this caddish "rag."

"The wottahs!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly. "I quite agree with Mannahs bein' sent to Coventry, but there is no weason why he should be insulted like this!"

"Yes, it's a bit too thick," agreed Blake. "But they are getting tired of it. We'll put our spoke in if Levison & Co. get up to any more tricks!"

"Yaas, wathah!" Blake and Arthur Augustus strolled across the quad.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy suddenly.

"What's the matter with you, image?" asked Blake.

"I wefuse to be called an image—"

"All right, I'll call you something worse. Fathead seems to be the most appropriate," said Blake cheerfully.

"What's the matter with you, fathead?"

"You uttah ass!"

"That's not an answer."

"I uttahed the exclamation because I caught sight of Cousin Ethel in the Head's garden," replied Arthur Augustus. "But before we go ova there, I wish to wemonstuate with you for—"

But Blake had gone, hurrying to the little gate which led into the Head's garden.

D'Arcy hastened after Blake, and when he arrived at the gate he found him already in conversation with Cousin Ethel. Figgins, too, had seen her at the same moment, and he and D'Arcy arrived together.

Cousin Ethel smiled at the newcomers. But the three juniors noticed that the

girl was looking troubled, and that her glance wandered every now and again across to the spot where the Terrible Three were standing under the elms. The juniors could guess the reason for her worried look, and Figgins hastened to say something.

"Don't you worry about Manners, Miss Cleveland!" he said. "He hasn't owned up, and he deserves all he's got!"

"And what have you done?" asked Ethel quickly.

The juniors hesitated a moment.

"He's been sent to Coventry by the Fourth and Shell," said Blake, at length. "He refused to admit his guilt, so we sent him to Coventry until he owns up."

"Oh, that explains why so many of the boys were walking past Manners in such a peculiar way," said Cousin Ethel quietly. "It was rather caddish of them, wasn't it?"

"Yaas, wathah, deah gal," replied D'Arcy. "Mannahs has been sent to Coventry, and they ought to have let it west at that."

"But Tom Merry and Lowther are with Manners," said Ethel. "Are they in Coventry, too?"

"Oh, no," replied Figgins. "The silly chumps believe in Manners' yarn, and they say they're going to be as chummy as ever. Of course, they're his special chums, but I reckon they're a couple of asses, all the same!"

Cousin Ethel gave Figgins a severe look.

"You shouldn't say that, Figgins," said the girl quietly. "I think it's splendid of Tom Merry and Lowther to stick up for their chum."

"Oh, rather!" agreed Figgins hastily. "They're bricks, of course."

Arthur Augustus gazed at Figgins through his monocle in surprise.

"Why, you uttah ass, you just said they were a couple of asses—"

Figgins glared.

"I think they're acting splendidly," he said firmly. "Cousin Ethel has just said so, and I agree with her."

Blake chuckled; but Cousin Ethel was looking serious.

"Mustn't anybody speak to Manners, then?" she asked.

"Of course not, deah gal. He's in Coventry."

"I don't like it at all," went on the girl. "It was all my fault, to begin with—at least, it was owing to my presence. Couldn't you let Manners off? I can't bear to think of Manners being in such disgrace because of me!"

The juniors looked at their girl chum in surprise.

"Oh, weally, deah gal," protested D'Arcy. "Mannahs is only gettin' what he deserves!"

"Of course!" said Blake.

"He's only got to own up, and he's out of Coventry at once," added Figgins.

"Yes; but suppose he is innocent of cowardice?" suggested Cousin Ethel.

"But it's proved—"

"It seems to be, I know," admitted the girl. "But suppose, for a moment, that he acted exactly as he said? Wouldn't it be hard and unjust to send him to Coventry—to shun him, and make him feel utterly wretched? The proof seems positive, but there is a bare chance that he was speaking the truth. Manners has always been a truthful and honourable boy, and, on thinking it over, I can't believe him guilty of such despicable behaviour."

"Neither could we, at first," replied Blake, "but we were forced to at last. The evidence was all against him; his story was a hollow invention, with nothing whatever to back it up."



"What's the matter, Tom?" asked Manners quickly, as Cousin Ethel and Tom Merry came towards him. "We've proved you a liar, that's all," said Tom Merry quietly. "You're a liar as well as a coward, Manners!"

Cousin Ethel nodded gravely. "Yes, it does seem like it," she agreed, "but, nevertheless, we may have misjudged him, and I should like you to do me a favour."

"Of course we will!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I don't want Manners sent to Coventry," said Cousin Ethel quietly. "Just for my sake, will you let him off? I think it's awfully hard to send him to Coventry."

The juniors shuffled their feet uncomfortably.

"Of course, Miss Cleveland," said Blake, "if you really wish it—"

"I do wish it," said Ethel earnestly.

"When you put it like that, deah gal, we can't vewy well wefuse," said Arthur Augustus. "But although we agwee, I am wathah uncertain about the othah chaps."

"That's what I was thinking," said Figgins slowly. "As you really want Manners let off, we shall let him off. As you say, you're more concerned than anybody, and so have the biggest say in the matter. I suggest we collect the fellows together and put it to them—they're nearly all in the quad."

"That is a splendid idea," said Ethel eagerly.

"Wight-ho, deah gal! We will go and awvange mattahs."

And the juniors hurried off, talking seriously. They did not exactly agree with Cousin Ethel; in fact, they considered that Manners thoroughly deserved to be sent to Coventry. But Ethel's wish carried a lot of weight, and the juniors were always keen to do anything for her.

The girl watched the meeting under the elms. A big crowd had collected to listen to Blake's speech, and, after some amount of dissension, an agreement was arrived at. Then Blake & Co. and Figgins & Co. hurried across to the little gate and crowded round it.

"It's all sewene, deah gal!" said D'Arcy cheerfully. "The chaps have decided to agwee to your suggestion. Mannahs has been weseled fwom Coventry, and ewevythin' will go on as usual."

Cousin Ethel looked relieved.

"I'm so glad!" she said simply. "It's very good of you all!"

She bade them good-night and walked quietly away. The juniors were rather disappointed, as they wanted to have a talk with her. But it was as well that Cousin Ethel had left, for the juniors were neglecting their prep, as they now realised.

In Tom Merry's study in the Shell passage, the Terrible Three were hard at work, but Monty Lowther and Tom Merry cast curious glances now and again in Manners' direction.

And when prep was over and the Terrible Three descended to the Common-room, Manners could not fail to notice a certain restraint in his chums' manner; almost imperceptible, but, nevertheless, apparent.

And Manners knew perfectly well that that restraint would be present until he had proved his innocence.

CHAPTER 8.

Kerr's Idea.

"I'M blessed if I like it!"

Thus Francis Kerr of the New House.

Figgins & Co. were lounging about their study, waiting for the dinner-bell to ring. There was at least a quarter of an hour before its welcome clang would ring out, and Fatty Wynn, finding it utterly impossible to wait such an interminable space of time, was busy with a bag of tarts he had just purchased from Dame Taggles' little shop.

Much to Fatty's satisfaction, his chums had refused to share them, as they wanted to enjoy their dinners.

"I'm blessed if I like it, you chaps!" repeated Kerr absently.

"Like what?" asked Wynn, his mouth full.

"This affair about Manners," replied Kerr thoughtfully.

"I thought we'd done with all that," said Figgins. "I'm blessed if I want to talk about the beggar! For Cousin Ethel's sake we've released him from Coventry; but she can't make us alter our opinion."

"My opinion's been the same, right from the very first," replied Kerr. "I think Manners, in all probability, turned funky, but I've got a sneaking suspicion in my mind that the facts might be as he has stated. We've condemned him unanimously, but I think we ought to have had some conclusive and positive proof—"

"But, your frabjous ass," interrupted Figgins, "we have got proof! Didn't Tom Merry inquire at the cottage?"

"Of course," agreed Kerr calmly. "He found out that there had been no children there, and was sent away by a crusty old man. Well, it strikes me that this old chap could have given some information if he chose. Don't forget that Manners said the child was in one of the two gardens, and Tom Merry only inquired at one cottage."

"The other was empty, you fathead!" roared Figgins.

"How do you know?" asked Kerr. "Well, the blessed 'To Let' label was up, and there were no curtains, and—"

"That doesn't prove anything," said Kerr shrewdly. "For all we know, the woman might have come from some other part of the village to look over the cottage, and brought the child with her. If this really was the case, then it's quite on the cards that Manners told the truth. It's improbable, I'll admit; but there's nothing to prove it wasn't so. The old chap next door might have known nothing about what was going on outside. Possibly he was asleep, and when Tom Merry knocked at the door he was naturally crusty at being awakened."

Figgins stared at Kerr thoughtfully, and Fatty Wynn actually ceased eating.

"My only topper!" ejaculated Figgins. "I never thought of that before!"

"I think we've taken things a little too much for granted," said Kerr.

"Of course," went on Figgins, "it's just possible that you're right; but I think it's improbable!"

"We shall see," said Kerr. "Now, an idea struck me a minute ago which will practically settle things. If we can prove Manners to be plucky in circumstances that are

just as dangerous as the bull affair, it'll prove conclusively that he told the truth, won't it? He wouldn't funk one thing, and then act like a hero the following day."

"No," said Figgins thoughtfully. "But how are we going to prove—"

"That's too long to talk about now!" interrupted Kerr. "It's just on dinner-time, and, besides, Tom Merry and Lowther will have to be in the plot. So I vote we get hold of them, and arrange to meet in the woodshed immediately after dinner. We shall be quiet there."

"Good egg!" said Figgins.

And the New House trio hurried from the study, and emerged into the sunlit quad. They espied the Terrible Three on the School House steps. Five minutes later, to their satisfaction, Manners went indoors, and Figgins & Co. hurried across. The arrangement was made quickly, for the dinner-bell rang at that moment.

When the meal was over, Figgins & Co. took themselves into the quadrangle, and waited for Lowther and Tom Merry.

It was a few minutes before they appeared, for they had experienced a little difficulty in dodging Manners, who, of course, had to have no suspicion of what was going on.

"Couldn't get here before," said Tom Merry. "Manners kept us talking for a bit. He's tinkering about with his camera now, so he's safe until the bell goes for lessons."

"Safe as eggs," added Monty Lowther. "Now, what's this wonderful wheeze of yours? Some dud idea, I'll bet—like most New House wheezes!"

"Look here, you ass—" began Figgins.

"Peace, children!" interrupted Tom Merry severely. "Monty, if you start again, we'll bump you, and exclude you from the meeting."

"To be excluded wouldn't be much of a loss!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "I expect I shall be bored to death, anyhow."

The five juniors, without further delay, hurried off in the direction of the woodshed. They did not notice that Percy Mellish of the Fourth had been eyeing them somewhat curiously from the shadow of one of the elms. The sneak of the Fourth was possessed of an insatiable desire to know everybody's business in addition to his own, and this meeting of the House rivals, with the subsequent adjournment to the woodshed, aroused his curiosity to a high pitch.

"What are the beggars up to?" he murmured. "Some giddy jape, I expect. I'd give anything to know what they've gone to the woodshed for."

Mellish moved away from the elm, but at that moment Taggles, the school porter, emerged from the trees close to the woodshed, wheeling a barrow. To Mellish's disgust, Taggles set the barrow down, and sat on the edge of it for a rest. Mellish uttered an exclamation beneath his breath, for he knew that Taggles' rests were very often of lengthy periods.

Meanwhile, the juniors in the woodshed had got to business. Kerr explained fully why he was not absolutely convinced of Manners' guilt, and Tom Merry and Lowther—who already believed in their chum—were quite enthusiastic.

"My hat, Kerr, you've hit upon the truth!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It explains everything. It explains why the old chap wouldn't tell us anything,

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and it explains where the child disappeared to. What a fatheaded chump I was not to knock at the door of the empty cottage!"

"You were," agreed Monty Lowther heartily. "A burbling idiot, in fact!"

"But this idea of mine," said Kerr, "will settle matters, I think. When you've heard it, I'm pretty sure you'll agree that it's not a bad wheeze," he added modestly.

"Cough it up, old man!" said Lowther briskly.

"Right!" said Kerr. "This is my plan. If Manners is afraid of a bull, he'll be just as terrified at being sprung upon and threatened by a hooligan at night. If he stands up to the hooligan, and attempts to fight him—in spite of the fact that the fellow's got a bludgeon—it'll prove that he's not a coward."

The juniors looked bewildered.

"What the dickens are you jawing about?" demanded Tom Merry. "Do you suppose we're going to wait until a hooligan comes along, and happens to find Manners in a lane?"

"Not a bit of it," said Kerr easily. "Figgins is the hooligan."

"Look here, Kerr!" exclaimed Figgins wrathfully. "If you call me a hooligan—"

"Oh, rats!" exclaimed Kerr. "Why can't you wait until I've done? Somebody's got to act the hooligan, and you're the most suited to the part!"

"Oh, am I?" exclaimed Figgins. "I should like to know why I'm more like a hooligan than Tom Merry. If you're trying to be funny, Kerr, you've only got to say so, and I'll give you a thick ear!"

Kerr sighed patiently.

"We came here to talk over a wheeze," he said, "not to wrangle. Aren't you the tallest chap here, you ask? When you're dressed up, won't you look more like a man?"

Figgins calmed down.

"You're quite right," he agreed. "Get on with the washing!"

"Well, to-night, after locking-up, Tom Merry and Lowther have got to get Manners to go down to Rylcombe. He'll go right enough, because he's doing everything to make up for yesterday. It'll be nearly dark, and as he's going down Rylcombe Lane, Figgins, dressed up as a hooligan, will suddenly spring out and threaten him with a bludgeon. In the twilight, Manners won't be able to see through the disguise, and we shall be able to tell by his actions whether he's really a coward."

"How can you tell if you're not there?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Figgins can tell, anyway," replied Kerr. "Besides, we can take Blake & Co. into it, and five or six of us can be crouching behind a hedge. We shall have a free view of everything. Manners will be taken absolutely by surprise, and his actions will prove to us what he's made of."

"By Jove, it's a ripping idea!" said Figgins enthusiastically. "I'm a good actor, as you all know, and I'll bet Manners won't see through my disguise. We shall have to keep it jolly dark, though. If Manners gets wind of it, he'll be prepared, and the whole thing'll fizzle out."

The meeting continued to discuss the great wheeze. There was a notable absence of chuckles and grins, however. This was no ordinary House jape; it was a plan whereby to test the pluck of one of their best chums. And the juniors, having thoroughly understood the scheme, settled down to discuss the details in serious earnest.

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther
Calling!



Hallo, everybody! Here's a hint: If you have a voice, train it. If you haven't, restrain it!

Chap I know says he doesn't mind how dull business is. He's a knife grinder.

News: "Wayland magistrate swindled at auction." Justice was "done" that time!

"How can I turn an old suit?" asks a reader. Give the hanger a sharp twist!

Yes, it is quite true that lightning never strikes the same thing twice. It doesn't have to.

"I want to become a man of letters," says young Gibson. So you're going to be a postman?

I hear old Pepper, the Wayland miser, keeps his money in his belt. A waist of money.

Story: "Dozens of people have been moved by the sound of my uncle's voice," said Grimes, the Rylcombe grocer's boy. "A great singer, perhaps?" asked D'Arcy. "No, a policeman," replied Grimes.

Crooke tells me he has honesty written all over his face. It must be in invisible ink!

"What would you say if I told you I once scored 200 net out?" asks Gore. I'm too polite to tell you.

Then there was the farmer who complained that his crop of corn was so bad the sparrows had to kneel down to eat it!

Presently Figgins started and looked towards the door.

"What's that?" he asked quickly.

"Didn't you hear a noise?"

"I heard something," agreed Tom Merry.

He stepped over to the door quickly, unlatched it, and peeped out. Then he closed the door again and smiled.

"It's all serene," he said. "Only old Taggles wheeling a barrow."

So the meeting settled down again. But, unknown to them, the exit of Taggles from the scene was the signal for Mellish to hurry across the quad to the woodshed. The sneak of the Fourth had been consuming himself with impatience, and heaping all manner of maledictions upon the unconscious head of Taggles.

"The old idiot!" muttered Mellish crossly, as he approached the woodshed. "I don't suppose I shall be able to hear anything now."

A minute later he was round the back of the shed with his ear pressed against a chink in the woodwork. Evidently, to Mellish's chagrin, the meeting was almost over, for the words he overheard gave him no satisfaction whatever, but only tended to increase his already excited curiosity.

"All right, then," he heard Tom Merry say, "it's all arranged. We'll do our part of the bisney, and you'll do the rest!"

I hear a retired music-hall artiste has started in business as a tailor. He has his name at the top of the bill at last!

It is suggested that classes should be held on the seashore. There is already a "wave" of enthusiasm for the idea!

Think what a horrid fate is the sculptor's. He just makes faces and busts!

News: They say Fatty Wynn is wearing a plaid waistcoat. The idea is to keep a "check" on his corporation.

It's a precious stone that you often find at the entrance to a field. A-gate. Catch you?

Of course, we know the dentist likes a patient with a nice, open face, don't we?

As young Gibson wrote: "A long hop is what a batsman gives when struck by a fast ball."

"Is under-arm bowling quite fair?" inquires Wally D'Arcy. Well, it's underhand, Wally.

Story: "So you're looking for a new cashier, sir?" "No—the old one!"

"I have had my nose broken in two places," writes a pupilist. "What should I do?" Keep out of those two places!

Never forget that a budding genius can be a blooming nuisance!

Quick story: "What was your last job?" demanded the prospective employer. "I was a costumer in a pork butcher's, sir." "How was that?" "I fitted the skins on the sausages, sir!"

As the tramp put it: "You see, lady, I'm a sort of middle-weight. I'm too light for heavy work, and too heavy for light work."

Lights out, chaps.

"That's it," said Kerr. "We'll be at the old stile at half-past eight. It will be dusk then, and the overhanging trees will make it darker still. I don't see how the plan can miscarry."

"No, it's a top-holer," said Monty Lowther. "Now, as I'm rather flush, I suggest we pop over to the tuckshop and drink to the success of the enterprise in ginger-beer."

"Hear, hear!" agreed Fatty Wynn heartily.

And the meeting broke up. The juniors trooped out and crossed the quad, with never a suspicion that Mellish was behind the woodshed. That gentle youth did not make his appearance until he had seen the chums enter the little tuckshop. Then he crossed to the old elms, and lounged under one of them as though he had been there since dinner.

But Mellish was thinking deeply, and as the plotters emerged from the tuckshop he came to a decision.

"It'll be rather risky breaking bounds after locking-up, but I'll do it," he murmured. "Come to 'hat, I can be out when Taggles locks the gates, and wait about until half-past eight. I'll creep down to the old stile and see what's on."

Had Mellish heard more of the plot, he would probably have sniffed at it and taken no further notice. But, owing to Taggles' little rest, he had

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heard nothing definite, and Mellish's curiosity was to cause Kerr's brilliant scheme to end in a very different manner from that intended.

CHAPTER 9.

Not According to Plan!

TOM MERRY glanced at his watch.

"It's all serene!" he exclaimed, with satisfaction. "Manners has started off just at the right moment. It's a quarter-past eight, so by the time he arrives at the old stile it'll be just upon half-past."

"Couldn't have worked better," said Monty Lowther.

The plot had worked splendidly. Ten minutes previously Tom Merry had asked Manners to run down to Rylcombe. The amateur photographer of St. Jim's had agreed without hesitation, partly because he was anxious to please his chums as much as possible. For the old cheery relations were not the same; there was still that restraint in his chums' manner.

Manners wondered why Tom Merry had waited until after locking-up to ask him to go to Rylcombe, but he made no comment. He simply slipped on his cap and departed.

When Manners arrived in the quad he found it apparently deserted. The sky was overcast, thick with heavy clouds, which made the twilight much deeper than usual. A chill wind blew across the quad, and caused a rustling of the leaves in the old elms.

Manners slipped across to the tree which was usually used to gain the top of the wall. But as he was about to clamber up he received a shock.

A dark form came from the back of the gymnasium, and Manners stood stock-still. The form was that of Mr. Ratcliff, the ill-tempered Housemaster of the New House. By a stroke of luck Mr. Ratcliff had not seen the junior, and Manners had an opportunity to slip behind the tree-trunk.

"My hat!" he murmured. "If he'd spotted me it would have meant a giddy row!"

He waited there impatiently, but Mr. Ratcliff seemed in no hurry to depart. To have clambered over the wall with Mr. Ratcliff within sight—even though it was dusk—would have been courting disaster. The Housemaster's eyes were exceptionally sharp, and Manners had sense enough to remain hidden. Until Mr. Ratcliff disappeared into the New House the junior could not move. And Mr. Ratcliff was apparently enjoying his walk, and would not go indoors for some minutes.

Meanwhile, out in Rylcombe Lane, a form was cautiously proceeding down the long slope. It was Percy Mellish, all agog with curiosity and excitement. The sneak of the Fourth was a little puzzled, however, for, so far, he had seen nobody, and had not an inkling of the truth.

But his curiosity had taken hold of him and he went on. Luckily, he had managed to scramble out of the quad before Mr. Ratcliff emerged from the New House. Not a soul knew that Mellish was out of the school gates, for he had not even told Levison of his project.

"I wonder what the dickens the game is?" he murmured to himself. "I'm blessed if I can see a soul! And yet Tom Merry said something about half-past eight at the stile. It's just

struck half-past eight, but I can't see a sign of anybody."

At first Mellish had walked cautiously, close to the hedge; but now, as he had seen nothing suspicious, he walked in the centre of the road. Mellish liked the centre of the road, as it was clear and open.

As he walked, he cast furtive glances into the woods. They were thick and dense, and the trees overhung the road, practically converting it into an avenue. Being cloudy already, the leafy trees made the road extremely dusky. By peering forward, Mellish could just distinguish the stile a little distance ahead.

The woods echoed strangely as the wind passed through the leaves, and Mellish felt himself grow more nervous than ever. The total absence of Tom Merry & Co. was rather disconcerting, for he had expected to find a whole crowd of juniors there.

The lane was deserted, however.

Mellish walked on mechanically, for he had decided in his own mind that for some reason the juniors' plan had been abandoned. For this reason Mellish paused, intending to make his way back with all possible haste. His nervousness had got the better of his curiosity.

Then, at the same second as he paused, a form suddenly broke from the hedge with a crashing of brambles.

Mellish stared at the figure blankly, too startled even to cry out. The newcomer had a bludgeon upraised, and a black mask concealed the upper portion of the hooligan's face.

A gasp of terror escaped Mellish's lips.

For a second he stood rooted to the spot. Then, before Figgins could approach an inch farther, Mellish turned on his heels and fled—fled as though a thousand fiends were after him. He flew up the road, and as he disappeared into the gloom, a chorus of startled ejaculations arose, and the road became filled with forms.

"My only Aunt Mary Ann!" gasped Figgins, tearing off his mask.

"My hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"He's bunked!" exclaimed Jack Blake breathlessly.

"He's hooked it—hooked it like a little Second Form kid!" ejaculated Figgins. "There's no doubt now about the matter. Manners hasn't got any more pluck than Mellish's little finger!"

"Bai Jove, you're quite wight, Figg!" said D'Arcy regretfully. "It's a big surprise, you know. This is absolutely wotten. Mannahs has uttably shown himself up!"

The juniors were all standing in the road staring towards St. Jim's as though they could not believe their own eyes.

In their hearts they had expected Manners to stand up to the supposed hooligan, and they had not looked upon it as possible that he would run away. To have taken to his heels in such

obvious and abject terror had filled the juniors with amazement.

Never for a second did it enter their heads that the junior had not been Manners. They had no reason for supposing that it was anyone else. Mellish was the same height as Manners, was attired in Etons, and wore the school cap. In the thick gloom it had been impossible to distinguish Mellish's face, and as he had not uttered an intelligible remark there was nothing to prove his identity.

Nobody else but Manners was expected to come down Rylcombe Lane at that moment; the juniors had not the faintest suspicion that Mellish had previously got on the track of the plot. In addition, Manners himself was not there.

So the juniors were not to be blamed



A number of juniors paraded past the Terrible Thru all gave Manners a wide berth, showing their co

in the least for coming to the conclusion that Manners had acted the part of an abject coward.

To their minds his cowardice was proved beyond dispute.

He had been seen by seven pairs of eyes to run for his life without even offering a moment's resistance. Seven eye-witnesses were ready to swear that it was he who had come down the lane; and unless Manners could prove conclusively that he was at St. Jim's the whole time his position was infinitely worse than it had been formerly.

The test which had been prepared to prove his pluck had ended in further disgrace. Had Manners been able to really face the disguised Figgins, the New House chief would probably have been the recipient of several nasty bruises. Owing, however, to Mellish's curiosity and to Mr. Ratcliff's unfortunate possession of the quad, the whole plan had failed.

But the trouble was that the plan had

failed unknown to its perpetrators. To them it seemed eminently successful.

Figgins was the first to recover himself—which he did as Mellish's form disappeared in the dusk.

"After him!" shouted Figgins hotly. "We'll collar the boulder and show him up in the quad!"

"Come on!" said Blake tensely. And the seven juniors raced to St. Jim's at top speed.

CHAPTER 10.

Just Like Mellish!

"THERE he is!"
"After him!"
"Collar the rotter!"
"Yaas, wathoh, deah boys!"
exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in a pant-

stood close to the high wall. This tree was not at the spot where Mellish had clambered over, and consequently Manners, who was standing there, had not seen Mellish enter.

Mr. Ratcliff's presence had prevented Manners climbing the wall. It was, indeed, barely two minutes since Mr. Ratcliff had disappeared, and Manners had waited a moment longer, because, to increase his impatience, Taggles had just emerged from his lodge.

It was the finishing touch to the string of ill-luck which was to end in the disgrace of Manners in the eyes of his school fellows. The waiting junior's attention was attracted to the gates, and he did not notice Mellish's form drop behind a tree barely thirty feet distant.

The next moment the plotters dashed into the quad, and instantly commenced searching for their quarry.

Thus Manners hadn't a ghost of a chance.

Nobody had known of his presence—he himself was unaware of Mellish's proximity; and Mellish crouched down against the wall, breathless, and too frightened to move.

Manners was considerably surprised to see the juniors streaming in at the gates, and he could tell immediately that they were all in a very excited frame of mind. He walked forward curiously.

"What on earth's the matter?" he exclaimed.

"Here he is!"

"Pile on him!"

"Bowl him over!"

And Manners was indeed bowled over. The wrathful juniors simply crowded on to him, and he fell in the dusty quad with a pile of gasping forms on top of him. Every one of the juniors believed that they had captured the boy who had run from them. As Mellish remained silent, they could believe nothing else.

They had been looking for Manners, and Manners was here.

Therefore, the proof was conclusive!

The final link in the chain of misfortune was complete!

"What's up?" gasped Manners, struggling to rise. "Ow! Stop it, you boulders! Gerroff my chest!"

"Yes, we'll get off it when we've collared you!" panted Blake wrathfully. "There's no excuse for you this time! There's no need to make inquiries for proof—and if you tell whoppers till you're blue in the face it won't make any difference."

"Wathah not!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly. "We've caught you fair and square, deah boy—I mean, you wotah!"

"Fair and square!" gasped Manners breathlessly. "What the dickens do you mean—fair and square? Why have you piled on me?"

"Shut up!" shouted Figgins angrily. "My only hat, I believe he's going to act the innocent again!"

Two forms broke through the excited juniors. They were Tom Merry and Monty Lowther, and their faces were grave.

"What's up?" asked the captain of the Shell eagerly. "Who's that you've collared?"

"Manners, of course," answered Jack Blake.

"Manners, the coward!"

"What! Do you mean that—?"

Tom Merry broke off.

"I mean that Manners has acted as bad as he did down in the village," replied Blake grimly. "He's shown himself to be an absolute coward—an arrant funk—and I can tell you I don't want to have any more to do with him!"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Tom Merry, aghast.

Manners struggled violently. He was on his feet, and he gazed wildly into the circle of angry faces round him.

"I don't know what you mean," he shouted. "I've been in the quad ever since tea-time! I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Don't know what we're talking about!" roared Figgins furiously. "You weren't in Rylcombe Lane five minutes ago, were you? You didn't climb over the wall and drop into the quad just before we came in at the gates, did you?"

"No!" roared Manners. "I didn't!"

"You—you didn't?"

Figgins fell back into the arms of Fatty Wynn and Kerr.

"Do you mean to say that you deny it?" he gasped. "We saw you with our own eyes, and when I jumped out of the hedge you ran like a frightened kid."

"I haven't been out of the quad since tea-time!" exclaimed Manners, gazing round him with wild excitement. "What do you mean? What's all this rubbish about somebody jumping out of the hedge? You're all dotty!"

The juniors simply gasped.

"He—he denies it!" ejaculated Herries.

"Great Scott! I wonder he has the cheek!"

To the juniors Manners' denial sounded simply astounding. They were positive in their own minds about the matter. Yet Manners denied having been in Rylcombe Lane at all!

It was amazing.

"What happened?" asked Monty Lowther impatiently. "Tell me what happened, Blake!"

"Why, we all waited behind the hedge for him, as arranged," replied Blake, wrathfully. "We saw him coming along the lane, and I must say he seemed jolly nervous. Then Figgy jumped out of the hedge and faced him. My only hat, you should have seen him!"

"What happened?" asked Tom Merry eagerly.

"He let out a strangled yell and ran for his life!" said Blake. "We chased him up and collared him just as he got into the quad. And now he says he wasn't there! He has the awful nerve to tell us that he's been within bounds since tea-time."

"It's the truth!" said Manners wildly. "I was going down to the village, but I couldn't get out of the quad because old Ratty was here. I was just going when you all dashed up. I tell you I don't understand; I tell you on my honour that it wasn't me you saw in the lane—"

"The awful fibber!"

"The howling fraud!"

"The lying coward!"

The juniors were indignant at Manners' denial. They had never believed him capable of such falsehoods.

"Are you sure of this, Figgy?" Tem



their eyes, and with their noses high in the air. [They
the fellow who had been condemned as a coward!

ing gasp. "Gwab hold of the uttah wottah! I have made up my mind to give Mannaahs a severe talkin' to. Pewwaps a few home twuths will make him wealise— Bai Jove, come here, you boundahs!"

But D'Arcy was talking to thin air. His companions had dashed up to the gates. Mellish's form had been seen scrambling up the wall, and for a moment Figgins, who was leading, had attempted to follow. But at that moment Blake had espied Taggles at the gate, and, reckless of lines, the whole seven juniors burst through into the quad. Taggles had been standing at the gates for a moment, and had heard the juniors shout.

"My heye!" he ejaculated, as they streamed past. "Come 'ere, you young rips! I want all yer names—my heye, if they hain't slipped past!"

Taggles closed the gates disgustedly. Blake & Co. and the New House trio had hurried straight to the tree which

Merry asked anxiously. "Are you sure it was him?"

"Sure!" repeated Figgins. "You ass, of course I'm sure! Didn't we all see him? And who else would go down the lane at half-past eight? If it really was somebody else, where is he? I tell you it was Manners!"

"Of course! We all saw him!"

"Saw him as plainly as we see you!"

"There's no doubt at all."

"Wathah not, Tom Merry!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I am vewy reluctant to have to say it, but Mannahs has uttably disgusted me. I shall nevah wegard him as a friend again!"

"He's an arrant coward!" said Blake. "And a liar, too!" said Figgins warmly.

Manners stood in the middle of the group, flushed and enraged. His mind was in a whirl of uncertainty. He could not grasp the fact that he was suspected of being guilty of such cowardice; he did not realise that every word he uttered sounded like a lie in the ears of his listeners.

And almost within touch of the crowd Percy Mellish crouched. The contemptible sneak of the Fourth had recovered himself by now, and a slow grin was overspreading his face. He had heard practically everything and realised how completely he had placed Manners in a false position.

If he said nothing it would be impossible to say that it had been he whom the juniors had seen. He had told no one of his project, and events had taken place so peculiarly that Manners was definitely involved.

Mellish knew that if he spoke the truth he would be severely bumped and looked upon with open contempt by the whole Lower School. And Mellish had no desire to be bumped, and his position in the scale of popularity was low enough already. By keeping silent he could escape all punishment.

And Mellish had no qualms whatever about letting the blame rest on Manners. He was quite cad enough to let matters rest as they were.

So, telling himself that he had got out of the scrape neatly, he emerged from behind the tree and joined the crowd. He imagined that he had left his place of concealment unobserved in the darkness. But it so happened that Manners' glance was cast in that direction at the moment.

Mechanically he saw Mellish emerge, and followed him with his eyes until the light from the School House fell upon his features. Manners recognised him instantly, but, in his confused state of mind, the matter passed from his memory—at least, for the time being.

At the present he was too deeply involved in this affair to think of anything else. He could not imagine who it was that the juniors had seen. It seemed like some awful nightmare to him, and he gazed into the angry faces with despair at his heart. Only two days ago those faces had all been friendly and cheerful. Now everybody at St. Jim's looked upon him as a coward and a liar.

It was a hard blow for him to bear, and he again endeavoured to protest his innocence. By now his anger had given way to coolness.

"I can't imagine what has happened," he said quietly. "But you're all mistaken. I swear to you that I have not been outside the gates of St. Jim's since tea-time! I don't know who you saw in the lane, but it was not me!"

"Liar!" exclaimed Blake promptly.

"Dry up, you cad!"

"He's getting worse and worse—he can't speak without fibbing."

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Manners' words, quiet though they were, had roused the juniors to anger again. To relieve their feelings, they seized Manners with hands that were by no means gentle, and bumped him again and again on the hard ground. Then Blake, as if to crown Manners' punishment, took a piece of chalk from his pocket and scrawled the word "Funk" on Manners' face, after which the bumping continued.

Then, feeling somewhat relieved, they trooped into the Common-room, leaving their unfortunate victim to pick himself up and follow at his leisure.

Half an hour later, after an exciting meeting in the Common-room—during which Manners had been universally condemned to Coventry for an indefinite period—Tom Merry and Monty Lowther entered their study.

At first they were both sceptical, but, after hearing the whole story, all their doubts were dispelled. And they were so disappointed that they entered their study with gloomy faces and silent tongues.

Manners was there, and he looked up eagerly.

"I say, Tommy, you don't believe that yarn, do you?" he asked. "You don't think that—"

Tom Merry gazed at Manners scornfully, and then, without a word, he motioned to Lowther, and the pair left the room again. For a moment Manners gazed at the closed door in consternation. Then he realised the full extent of the calamity which had befallen him.

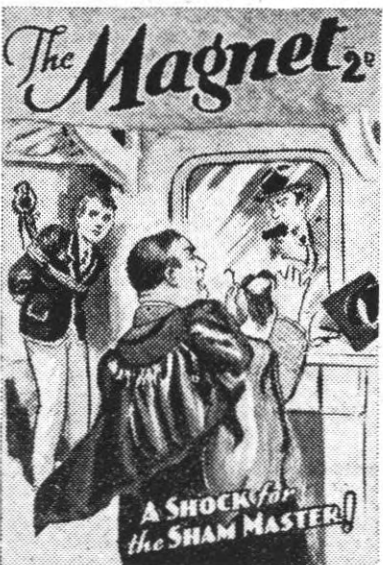
He sank into his chair and buried his face in his hands.

CHAPTER 11.

Shunned!

MANNERS did not sleep much that night. For hours he lay tossing in bed, racking his brain for an explanation of the events which had taken place on that

One of the many thrilling incidents in—



—the grand, new, long complete story of HARRY WHARTON & CO., in this week's Bumper Issue of the

MAGNET

evening. But try as he would, he could not arrive at any satisfactory conclusion. He could not name a single boy who could have been out in the lane.

Of course, it was obvious that the boy, whoever he was, was keeping back because he did not wish to be thought a coward himself. This Manners realised at once, and he swore to himself that when he found out the culprit he would treat him to a hiding such as he would not forget in a hurry.

At last he fell off to sleep, and when rising-bell rang he was looking haggard and pale. Nobody took any notice of him. His very existence was ignored. While dressing, Crooke made a few remarks concerning Manners, but Bernard Glyn and Kangaroo soon put a stop to it. It had been universally agreed that the whole subject should be tabooed, and that Manners was to be treated as though he had no existence.

To the innocent boy this was an awful sentence. He went through the morning lessons dull with misery, and when dismissal came he strolled out into the quad and propped himself against the gate.

The hardest blow for him to bear had been the fact that Cousin Ethel had departed, and had, like the rest, ignored him. She had made no display whatever, but had left without even giving him a nod.

As Manners leaned against the gate, his glance wandered idly over the boys who were dotted about the quad. Presently it rested upon Mellish, and abstractedly Manners commenced thinking about the sneak of St. Jim's. And back to his memory came the incident when Mellish had crept from behind the tree the previous night. Suddenly Manners started, and his eyes shone with excitement.

"By jingo!" he murmured. "I've got it! Mellish was the chap who ran from Blake & Co., of course! He's the very chap who would do a mean, contemptible thing like that. It is just like Mellish! And why was he on the spot at that time?"

Manners walked into the quad, and paced up and down restlessly.

"It must have been Mellish," he told himself. "What an ass I was not to think of it before! The rotter must have gone out of the quad before old Ratty came out, and in the gloom the Fourth Formers mistook him for me. He's about my size, and— By jingo, I'll tell the chaps about it!"

He looked round him, and then he walked briskly towards the chums of Study No. 6. But Blake & Co. had seen him coming, and they turned and walked away.

Manners paused and uttered a sigh. In a second all his excitement vanished.

He realised how useless it was to ask the juniors to believe him.

"What's the good?" he asked himself miserably. "They all think I'm an awful liar, and they will tell me to my face that I'm simply fishing for an excuse. There's nothing to prove that Mellish was out; nobody saw him except me when he crawled out from against the wall."

And so, although he was practically certain in his own mind as to the culprit, he knew it would be useless to broach the subject to his former chums. They all looked upon him with contempt, and refused to believe a word he uttered—refused, in fact, to listen to him at all.

But Manners did not altogether condemn his chums for the attitude they

(Continued on page 18.)



Let the Editor be your pal. Write to him to-day, addressing your letters:
The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! Here we are again with all the details of another great issue of the old paper. A reader wrote to me recently to say that if there's one type of story in which Martin Clifford always excels himself more than in any other, it is the lively yarn of fun and japing. Well, it's my opinion that our author is a pastmaster at dealing with any type of theme, but I will say that his humorous stories certainly are masterpieces.

Next week's yarn, for instance, is just such a story. You will find plenty to amuse you in it—in fact,

"THE LAUGH'S ON THE FIRST ELEVEN!"

is one long laugh! The St. Jim's First Eleven are due to play an Indian team which is touring this country. But at the last moment Kildare receives a telegram to say that the Rajah of Jal is unable to bring his eleven to St. Jim's. Naturally, this is a big disappointment for the seniors, who were looking forward to an all-day match with the Indians. But their disappointment is soon turned to joy again, for a second wire arrives to tell Kildare that the tourists would be coming, after all.

There is more in that second telegram than meets the eye, however, but the first eleven has never a suspicion of what is happening. They little know that they are being made the victims of the greatest joke ever at St. Jim's! The mysterious movements of Tom Merry & Co. on the day of the all-important match would have been a real eye-opener to the seniors could they have seen them!

You mustn't miss the feast of fun and sport which is the result of the visit to

St. Jim's of the Rajah of Jal's team. It's the laugh of a life-time!

"HARRY WHARTON'S CHALLENGE!"

Frank Richards is at the top of his form again in this next grand yarn of the Greyfriars chums. Harry Wharton, whose hasty temper and sullen pride have made him such an unpopular figure among his Form-fellows, is now settling down in the Remove. His strength of character is beginning to assert itself. And so, in next Wednesday's gripping instalment of Harry's early adventures, in which the chums of the Remove come up against kid-nappers, we find it's Harry Wharton who Bob Cherry and Nugent look to when they are faced with a vital situation.

Watch out for these gripping chapters, chums, of our best-ever serial-story. And don't forget—be on the safe side and order your GEM early.

FREE TRAVEL!

An author who has recently returned from a visit to the States came in to see me the other day. He had an interesting story to tell of a new "racket" which is being worked out there. It is a dodge for getting from place to place without paying any fare. What happens is this: As a motorist is driving along a country road he is stopped by a respectably dressed individual with a petrol-can in his hand. The latter requests a lift to the next filling-station as he has run out of petrol. The unsuspecting motorist naturally obliges, and takes the man

perhaps three or four miles to the next filling-station, where he drops his passenger and drives on.

But the man doesn't enter the filling-station. He walks down the road for a mile or so, and then, as soon as another car comes along, he stops it. Thus he gets another lift to the next petrol-station, after which, he repeats his artifice. In this way he travels for miles for nothing.

The petrol-can he carries, which is large enough to hold four gallons, is merely a sham. It is his travelling-case, containing the joy-rider's requisites for travelling. Of course, the petrol-stations being a good distance apart makes the dodge worth while. But it couldn't be worked in this country, where garages are so close to each other—and a good job, too!

THE THRILL OF THE RACE!

For a racing-car to turn over twice, land on its wheels, and then go on racing must be one of the most amazing incidents ever to occur in a motor-race. It happened when Mervyn White, who was driving a Bugatti in the 201 miles car race in Cork a little while ago, got into a skid on a sharp bend. The car ran into a ditch at the side of the course, and in a moment it turned a double somersault. The spectators gasped, expecting to see a nasty accident. But by a stroke of good luck the car finished up on its wheels again and plunged back on to the course. The driver, unhurt and still in his seat, quickly got it under control and coolly continued in the race—with the cheers of the crowd urging him on.

THE SCHOOLBOY JOURNALIST!

Meet Billy Callow, owner, editor, and publisher of the "Toronto Sunday Post"! Billy is only eleven years of age, but he's an enterprising youngster who certainly seems to have a flare for journalism. His paper has twenty-four pages, which contain news items, health and gardening hints, film and book reviews, and short stories and a serial. Billy, under the pen name of "Madame Dora," also gives advice to lovers! He does all the work on the paper himself, including the typesetting! Good luck to the "Sunday Post," Billy!

TAILPIECE.

White: "According to Brown's wireless set we are likely to have some rain to-morrow."

Black: "Oh, you don't want to believe what his radio says—it's only a cheap set!"

PEN PALS COUPON
13-6-36

THE EDITOR.



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal, post your notice, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

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adopted. He knew perfectly well that the evidence was all against him, and he could not see how they could have any other opinion of him. Therefore, although he was utterly wretched, the only fellow he was angry with was Mellish, the sneak of the school, who, he felt certain, was the cause of his plight.

It was a half-holiday that day, and after dinner most of the juniors attired themselves in cricketing flannels and sallied out into the playing fields.

At first Manners contented himself with standing by the ropes watching a senior match. On the junior pitch a game was in progress between the Fourth and the Shell, and when Manners looked in their direction, he remembered, with a pang of regret, that he himself should have been taking part in it.

Once when Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, scored a magnificent boundary, he turned to Lumley-Lumley, who stood by his side.

"By jingo!" he said. "That was a ripping hit!"

Lumley-Lumley looked the other way, and slowly walked off.

Manners was shunned by everybody.

Miserable at heart, having lost all interest in the game, he moved away from the field. For five minutes he remained in the deserted and sunlit quad, undecided as to how to spend the afternoon.

Then an idea struck him.

Why not go to the picture palace at Wayland?

Manners did not hesitate long.

Left to himself, scorned by all, the idea seemed to him a splendid one. The spin on his bike would do him good, and he always enjoyed the "talkies."

Five minutes later he had wheeled his bicycle from the shed and was off. He rode leisurely, and although he tried to dismiss unpleasant thoughts from his mind he was by no means successful.

Even when he entered the busy streets of Wayland, he still thought of the disgrace which rested on his shoulders.

At the picture palace he stored his machine, then went into the confectioner's shop to drink a glass of ginger-beer. Refreshed, he left the place, and walked across to the pay-box of the picture theatre.

He was feeling in his pocket for some money, when a commotion down the street caused him to turn. The sight he witnessed caused him to slip his money back into his pocket and rush to the edge of the pavement.

For down the street, coming at full pelt, was a fire-engine. On it tore past the picture palace with a rush. Behind, excited and breathless, a crowd of people were rushing along, bent upon following the engine to the scene of the fire.

Instantly Manners' miserable thoughts were banished. His object in coming to Wayland was forgotten, and dashing to the place where he had left his machine, he hauled it out, mounted it, and pedalled off at top speed after the fire-engine.

CHAPTER 12.

Manners—Hero!

"BY gum, that's a big blaze, an' no mistake!"

"My hat, yes!" panted Manners. "It's awful!"

"I'm afear'd there won't be much of

the 'ouse left, in spite of the efforts of the firemen!"

The yokel who was standing next to Manners shook his head grimly.

The pair were almost at the front of the crowd, and Manners' bicycle was lying somewhere against the hedge farther down the road. The crowd was of considerable proportions, but it was kept in check by the firemen and police. The engine was already pumping water on to the burning building steadily; but the water supply was bad, and the pressure was not sufficient to meet the requirements.

For the house, a large one on the outskirts of the town, was fairly ablaze. It was a three storied house, and it was the second story which seemed to be suffering most. Nearly every window belched forth smoke and flame.

"Is there anybody in the house?" Manners asked eagerly, turning to the rustic.

"I couldn't tell ye that, sir," replied the other. "I'd pity anyone as was in that 'ouse—at the top, at all events! They say that the escape's met with a collision coming along, and won't be 'ere for some little time!"

"Well, if the house is empty it doesn't matter so much about the escape," said Manners.

"That's quite right!" agreed the yokel sagely.

Manners watched with eager eyes, scanning the building from roof to ground. Suddenly his gaze became fixed, and he lifted a quivering finger and pointed.

"Look!" he shouted hoarsely.

His shout was heard by many, and following the direction of his pointing finger the crowd was able to distinguish, through the haze of smoke, a small face at the topmost window of all.

"Good heavens!" shouted somebody.

"It's a child!"

"He'll be killed!"

"Where's the escape?"

"Why don't they bring it?"

Numberless shouts rang out, and as they watched the people saw the window raised, and then the small head of a little boy appeared.

"Help!" he screamed. "Save me! All the stairs is blazing up, and I can't get down! Help!"

The crowd became restless, and dozens of people shouted encouragement to the little fellow at the top of the building. But this was of no material help. The firemen, with set faces, plied their hoses round about the window, but more than that it was impossible to do. The escape had not yet arrived, and there was no prospect of it coming for many minutes.

For a moment Manners turned his eyes from the upper window, and looked at the clear space below. A gentleman of about forty was standing there, wringing his hands with grief.

"Can't you do anything?" Manners heard him say to the fireman. "Can't you save him? Good heavens! To think that I should stand here and see my own child burnt to death!"

"The escape will be here presently, sir," replied the fireman.

"Presently!" shouted the father distractedly. "What is the good of that? The fire will reach that room in less than five minutes!"

"It's not so bad as that, sir!" protested the fireman. "I should say the little one's safe for ten minutes at least!"

A form dashed through the crowd, and stopped, pausing, before the head fireman.

"They can't get the escape here in

less than fifteen minutes!" he shouted breathlessly. "It's had a smash-up with another car, and—"

"Good heavens!" echoed the father miserably. "Then there is no hope! Have you no ladders of any description?" he added fiercely. "Have you nothing—nothing?"

The fireman's answer was unheard by Manners, but the father's agitated behaviour told its own story. Meanwhile, far above, the child was leaning out of the window, crying piteously. The crowd was in an uproar, but nothing could be done until the escape arrived.

There were no ladders long enough, and it was utterly impossible to reach the top window from the interior of the building. And all the time the flames were creeping nearer and nearer, in spite of all the efforts of the furiously working firemen.

Manners stood looking on, with his heart in his mouth. He shifted impatiently.

"Great Scott! To think of all these people standing here, unable to do anything, while that little boy is burnt to death!"

Eagerly he scanned the building again, and a gleam of hope entered his eyes as he saw, running quite close to the topmost window, a large, firmly fixed gutter-pipe. The flames had not reached it yet, but it could easily be seen that the fire would soon make headway in its direction.

A wild thought had entered Manners' head.

"They call me a coward, do they?" murmured the junior. "By jingo, I'll prove to them that they're wrong! There's a chance that I can reach the window by that pipe, and I'll have a jolly good shot at it!"

Everything left his mind except the fact that the little boy was in imminent danger of being burnt to death. There was a chance open to save him—and Manners meant to take that chance! The risk to himself never entered his head.

He pushed through the people in front of him, and dashed across the open space towards the building.

A shout went up—a cry of warning. But Manners never heard it. Two policemen rushed after him, but he was not even aware of their presence. Straight for the gutter-pipe he ran, and, reaching it, leaped at it actively.

Desperation lent him extra agility, and he swarmed up the pipe with amazing speed, being out of reach by the time the two policemen arrived at the spot.

"You young idiot!" shouted one of the constables. "Come down!"

"You'll be killed if you go on!" exclaimed the other.

Manners had recovered his composure by this time, and he realised then the grave peril of his position. But, without looking down, without pausing a second, he continued his upward ascent.

By this time the crowd had realised his intention, and a roar burst from them. Then, as though by magic, their voices were silenced, and they stood watching breathlessly.

Still Manners continued his dangerous climb. A hot gust of smoke was flung into his face by the breeze, and for a second he was forced to cling to the pipe with knees, toes, and fingers, and gasp for breath. Then the gust had passed.

He was now nearing the top. Inch by inch he went up, until at last he arrived opposite the window. The pipe ran quite close, and he was able to step on to the sill.

"Hurrah!"

"He's in! Hurrah!"

"Bravo, laddie!"

"He's real grit!"

The crowd yelled with joy and enthusiasm. Manners was indeed within the room. For a moment he leaned against the wall breathlessly. But he knew that it would be fatal to waste time, for the fire below was steadily creeping towards the piping. In a very short time it would be too hot to grasp. When he had ascended it was warm beneath his hands.

The little boy was crying pitifully. But he instantly did as Manners told him.

Clambering on to his rescuer's back, he wound his arms round his neck and clung there for dear life.

"Now keep your eyes closed," said Manners, "and don't move. Hang on tight, and trust to me!"

The youngster nodded, but was too choked with sobs and fright to reply.

For a second, as Manners stood looking from the window, his heart almost failed him. How could he descend to the ground with safety?

It seemed an impossible task.

But Manners set his teeth and climbed out upon the sill, telling himself that it had to be done.

The most difficult part of all was gaining a hold upon the pipe again; but at last he succeeded—after being within an ace of disaster.

Slowly, ever so slowly he descended. Then, as he gained confidence, he allowed himself to slither down more quickly. Opposite the second floor the pipe was almost unbearably hot in his hands, and only a moment after he had slid past the danger zone a long flame roared up from a lower window, and licked the pipe hungrily.

A gasp of relief swept over the watching crowd. Had that flame come a minute earlier, both Manners and his charge would have been burnt and perhaps fallen to the ground, many feet beneath.

"He'll do it! By Heaven he'll do it!" shouted the father joyously.

Somebody started a cheer, but it was instantly silenced.

Manners was not yet down. But it was easy to see that he had accomplished his object. His indomitable pluck had won through—and he was none the worse for his adventure. He was hot, dishevelled, and dirty, but he had performed his act without being burned by the ever-increasing fire.

But he had only been in the very nick of time.

At last he set foot on the ground, and again the crowd roared with excitement and enthusiasm. The child's father was at the foot of the pipe, and he dragged his child joyously from Manners' back.

The hero of the hour stood wiping the perspiration from his brow. He was pulling a little from his exertions, but his feeling was one of thankfulness that he had been able to save the little boy.

He looked round him a little shyly as he stood there.

The last thing he wished for was an ovation. But he knew quite well that unless he made his escape at once he would be seized and congratulated. And Manners was extremely modest. Personally, he could not see anything great in what he had done, and his one wish was to get away.

By a stroke of luck he saw his opportunity.

The father was holding his child in joy, and had sent off a messenger to his wife to say that everything was all right. And just then the belated fire-escape arrived, and everybody's attention was drawn to it.

Manners slipped away towards the back of the burning building. Then,

making a detour over the garden, he came out in the roadway farther down. Near by, as he had calculated, his bicycle was leaning against the hedge.

In a moment he had grasped it, swung himself into the saddle, and was pedalling away for St. Jim's.

As he left Wayland behind he gasped with relief, and stopped presently to straighten his clothing.

At St. Jim's he tidied himself up, and he felt none the worse for his adventure. He could have boasted of his achievement, and so regained his chums' esteem, but that was not Manners' way. He had performed a noble action, and he did not wish to profit by it.

For Manners was made of the right stuff!

parts of St. Jim's were discussing the affair.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther hurried up to Blake & Co., and the former was carrying in his hand a folded newspaper.

"I say," exclaimed Tom Merry, "have you seen the latest news? There's been a whacking great fire at Wayland, and—"

Blake sniffed.

"You call that the latest news?" he asked. "It's absolutely stale!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The fire itself may be," replied Tom Merry. "But there's a full report in this paper, and it says that a St. Jim's boy—a junior, too—risked his life to



Mellish stared at the masked figure blankly as, with a bludgeon upraised, it burst from the hedge. A gasp of terror escaped the sneak of the Fourth's lips, and for a second he stood rooted to the spot. Then he turned on his heels and fled!

CHAPTER 13.

The Newspaper Report!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY screwed his famous monocle into his eye, and surveyed his chums through it.

"I have weally no stwict information to go upon, deah boys," he said; "but, fwm what I gathah, the blaze at Wayland was of tewwific pwopotions. At any wate, the house was one of the biggest in the town, and it was pwactically wuined."

"Rotten!" said Blake. "I say, I wonder if any of our chaps saw it?"

"I've not heard of anybody," said Digby thoughtfully.

The chums of Study No. 6 were collected in a little group in a corner of the quad. It was the day following Manners' adventure in Wayland—another fine and sunny day. Morning lessons were over, and rumours of the fire at Wayland had reached the school through various sources. Juniors in all

save a little child which was imprisoned at the top of the house."

Blake & Co. were all attention at once.

"My aunt!" exclaimed Blake.

"That's news, anyhow!"

"Who was it?" demanded Herries.

"I don't know."

"Don't know who it was?" said Digby curiously.

"No. Nobody recognised him, and he was off the very instant he'd performed that rescue. They say in this report that it was one of the pluckiest things that has ever been done, and, by the look of it, I should judge it was."

"Let's look at the report," said Blake.

They crowded round and read the rather full report which was given. The newspaper, however, was unable to furnish the identity of the boy who had performed such an act of heroism. It merely stated that he belonged to St. Jim's, and was a junior.

"I wondah who on earth it was?" said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "It is wathah wemarkable, you know, that the chap should say nothin' whatevah about the mattah."

"It's jolly queer," said Monty Lowther. "Anyhow, it shows that the chap was very modest, or he'd have said something. He must have gone to Wayland and come back without saying a word to anybody."

"Of course, the newspaper may be mistaken," said Tom Merry. "Anyhow, I'm blessed if I can name anybody. Nearly all the chaps were on the playing fields. I believe the Shell were there to a man, and the Fourth—"

"Wait a moment, deah boy," interrupted D'Arcy. "Mannahs was not there. But, of course, it could not have been Mannahs, as he is a wank coward."

The juniors laughed; but it was rather a mirthless laugh.

"Manners, eh?" said Tom Merry. "He's about the last chap who'd do a thing like that. After what's been proved about Manners, I should say he'd be too much of a coward to even stand and look on."

"Well, who could it have been?" asked Lowther. "They say it was a junior, and as all the Shell fellows were at St. Jim's, it seems to prove that he was a Fourth Former."

"Of course," said Blake. "You don't think a Shell chap would do a thing like that, do you?"

"I think a Shell chap is more likely to have done it than a Fourth Form kid!" replied Tom Merry.

"If you call me a kid—" interrupted Lowther. "I vote we hold an inquiry to find out who the giddy hero is. We can't let him walk about unidentified, can we?"

"Wathah not, deah boy," agreed D'Arcy. "Aftah what I wead in that papah I feel like goin' up to the chap and—"

But Arthur Augustus got no farther, for his chums' attention was distracted by a distinct yell of fright from the back of the gym.

The first yell, however, was merely a preliminary, for it was succeeded by a perfect series of howls.

Blake & Co. and the two Shell fellows gazed at one another in astonishment.

"What on earth is that, deah boys?" "Sounds like somebody in pain," grinned Lowther. "It's Mellish's voice, too, I'll bet a fiver! By Jove, he's evidently receiving a hiding from somebody! Suppose we go and investigate!"

They hurried round the gym, and paused in a group as they came within sight of the little scene which was being enacted there.

Manners had a firm grasp of Mellish, and was treating him to a hiding. The sneak of the Fourth was too frightened to defend himself, and lay squirming when Manners at last flung him down.

"Now, you confounded cad," panted Manners, "perhaps that'll teach you a lesson!"

"Ow!" roared Mellish. "Yaroo! Ow!"

Suddenly he struggled to his feet, and, in a fit of bitter rage, he flung himself at Manners, clawing and kicking for all he was worth.

"My hat!" ejaculated Manners. "Do you want some more?"

He lunged out with his fist. It landed full upon Mellish's nose, and the Fourth Former went to the earth with a thud and a howl.

Blake & Co. pressed forward, forgetting for the moment that Manners was in Coventry.

"What the dickens are you knocking Mellish about for?" demanded Blake angrily.

"I've given him what he deserves," replied Manners quietly.

"If you touch him again we'll chuck you out of the quad," declared Blake. "We're not going to have cads like you—"

Manners smiled grimly.

"Don't get excited!" he said. "Mellish has got something to explain which will cause you a bit of surprise, perhaps. And when you've heard him, you'll very likely be sorry you sent me

to Coventry for telling nothing but the truth."

CHAPTER 14.

The Turn of the Tide!

"WHAT do you mean?" demanded Blake roughly. "You know perfectly well that you lied like a trooper. If you think we're going to believe you—"

"I'm not asking you to believe me," interrupted Manners quietly. "You can believe what you like, but I'm going to make Mellish confess something that'll be a surprise to you."

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther pressed forward eagerly.

"What is it?" they asked.

"Simply that Mellish is the coward who ran away from you in Rylcombe Lane the night before last," replied Manners. "It was he whom you saw—he who climbed over the wall. As I told you at the time, I'd been in the quad ever since tea, because Ratty was there!"

"It's a lie!" shouted Mellish shrilly. "Don't believe him!"

"I don't," said Blake grimly. "If you think you're going to spoof us, Manners, that—"

"I'm going to make Mellish tell the truth," replied Manners angrily. "He confessed it to me just now, and I'll make him confess it again. If you don't tell the truth within two minutes, Mellish, I'll give you a hiding worse than the one you've already had."

"You'd better not!" said Blake darkly.

"I'll do what I like!" declared Manners. "This is my affair, Blake, and I'm not going to stand any interference from you! You can think what you like about me, but I'm going to make Mellish tell the truth."

"Yes, give Manners a chance," said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!" agreed Monty Lowther.

Manners bent down, jerked Mellish to his feet, and held him cowering before the juniors.

Mellish was in a state of miserable terror, and one glance at Manners' grim face told him that the Shell fellow was in deadly earnest.

"Now, tell the truth!" said Manners, between his teeth. "Tell the chaps what you did. I'm not a fellow to threaten, as a rule, but if you don't speak out I'll—"

"All right!" gasped Mellish. "I'll tell 'em."

"Go on, then," said Manners, contentuously.

"It was I who was in Rylcombe Lane," said Mellish quickly. "It wasn't Manners at all. You were all mistaken, and I was afraid to say anything, because I knew you'd bump me. I climbed over the wall, dropped down into the quad, and lay still. Then I saw you collar Manners, and accuse him, so I knew I was safe."

Tom Merry stepped forward excitedly. "Do you mean to say that Manners was telling the truth all the time?" he asked. "Were you hiding close by, listening to everything, and letting us call him every rotten name under the sun?"

"Yes," admitted Mellish sullenly. "You rotter!" gasped Tom Merry angrily. "You—you worm!"

"But why were you in the lane?" asked Blake, who now began to realise the truth.

"I went there because I wanted to know what you were up to," admitted Mellish, thinking that he had better

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make a clean breast of it. "I saw you all go into the woodshed, and listened to what you were saying. But I only heard that there was going to be something on at the old stile at half-past eight. So I went down to find out. Manners wasn't there at all; I didn't see a sign of him until I got back to the quad. And then I let you collar him, knowing that you'd never find out the truth."

"Then—then Manners didn't tell a lie at all!" ejaculated Blake.

"No," muttered Mellish.

Manners released Mellish and pushed him away.

"Now you can buzz off," he said quietly. "I've given you your hiding, and you can think yourself lucky that you haven't had it worse."

"Pway wait a minute, deah boy!" exclaimed D'Arcy excitedly. "If you will wait while I wemove my jacket I will myself give Mellish a feathful twashin'! I have nevah heard of such wotten conduct!"

"Let him go, Gussy," said Manners. "I've given him a good hiding!"

Mellish slunk off, followed by the gaze of the amazed juniors.

"I suspected it was Mellish since yesterday," said Manners. "It struck me that I'd seen him come from behind the tree that night in the quad. Then I got thinking, and realised that Mellish was about the only chap who'd be capable of such a caddish trick. If I hadn't happened to have seen him the truth might never have come out."

"And you were telling the truth the whole time," said Tom Merry quietly, "and we thought that every word was a lie! My hat, it seems too good to be true!"

"If it hadn't been for Mellish's confession I should never have been convinced," said Blake. "Everything happened so precisely that it seemed positive that you were the chap in the lane, Manners. I'm more glad than I can say to know the truth—thundering glad!"

"Can you ever forgive us, old man?" asked Tom Merry gently.

Manners smiled gladly.

"Don't be an ass!" he said. "Of course I can forgive you, Tommy. In the first place, there's nothing to forgive, because the proof was so conclusive that you couldn't think anything else. And in the second place—"

"Oh, blow the second place!" said Lowther light-heartedly. "It's good enough to know that all the beastly unpleasantness is over. I've been utterly miserable for the last day or two, and if anybody tries to call Manners a liar again I'll punch his nose!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy surveyed his chums with a very serious look.

"There's one thing I should like to say!" he declared. "Mannahs has made Mellish confess and pprove his innocence. But we all ought to be thoroughly ashamed of ourselves for evah havin' doubted him at all!"

"We are!" agreed Blake. "Thoroughly ashamed of ourselves."

"If we had only thought of the mattah," went on D'Arcy, "we should have realised that it was just the thing that Mellish would do, and the thing that Mannahs is incapable of doin'."

"Of course!" said Tom Merry. "We're a set of prize asses! But I notice it is always easy to say these sort of things when the real truth comes out. I think the least said about the matter the better. It was caddish of us to suspect a chum we've known for years to be truthful and honourable!"

Manners laughed awkwardly.

"Don't talk rot," he said. "It's all over now, chaps, and I'm jolly glad."



I think you'll admit that I'm not really a coward—"

"Admit it!" interrupted Blake. "Why, we'll go and bellow it from the housetops!" He looked round him eagerly and beckoned to fellows all over the quad. "Hi, Figgy! Kerr! Wynn! Kangaroo! Come here! You're wanted urgently!"

Juniors from all parts of the quad came over, and they were told the truth about the Rylcombe Lane affair. It caused no little surprise, and Manners found the tide turning in his favour.

And while the excitement was at its height, Manners happened to look over towards the gates. Then he started. For a stranger had just entered, and was even at that moment approaching.

It was the owner of the burnt house in Wayland—the father of the child Manners had saved from certain death!

"My hat!" murmured Manners to himself. "What the dickens has he come here for? If he sees me—"

But Manners didn't finish. He pushed his way through the juniors and hastened across the quad. They were about to rush after him when the stranger came up.

"Good-morning, boys!" he said politely.

"Good-morning, sir!" they chorused.

"I'm the owner of the house that was burned in Wayland yesterday—Mr. Overton," he went on. "A boy belonging to this school performed one of the most heroic acts I have ever witnessed. He saved my little boy from certain death, and then, while I was not looking, slipped off without even giving me his name. Perhaps you know who the hero is—perhaps he has told you of his adventure?"

"No, sir," replied Tom Merry. "We've no idea who he is. We were talking about the matter only a little while ago. The chap must have come in and said nothing about it."

"Then he is as modest as he is plucky," said Mr. Overton. "But I mean to find out who he is—"

"My hat!" roared Monty Lowther suddenly. "Could it have been Manners, after all? He wasn't on the playing fields yesterday afternoon."

The juniors looked at one another excitedly.

"Gweat Scott! I wondah if you are wight, Lowthah?" exclaimed D'Arcy. "If you are, it will be a feathah in Mannahs' cap, with a vengeance! It will be wathah funny if we have been shunnin' him as a coward when he is a hewo all the time."

The juniors looked at one another.

"Where is Manners, anyhow?" demanded Tom Merry. "I'm blessed if he hasn't hooked it!"

"Then you may be sure he is the boy I'm looking for," said Mr. Overton. "He must have seen me coming and escaped while he had the chance."

"Let's find him, then," said Tom Merry.

Thereupon the juniors began a search for the missing hero, and eventually he was run to earth in the gym. Manners, looking rather uncomfortable, was brought before Mr. Overton. That gentleman took his hand in a warm grasp.

"My boy," he said fervently, "I shall never be able to thank you for the service you have rendered me. My words are inadequate, and I can only say that I am grateful from the bottom of my heart!"

Manners murmured some words confusedly. And when Mr. Overton had released him he endeavoured to break through the enthusiastic ring of juniors.

"No, you don't!" shouted Figgins, grabbing him. "My hat! I don't think we've ever done a greater injustice to anybody than we have to Manners. We're all sorts of cads, and we must show him that we're all jolly sorry."

The extent of the injustice they had done Manners had dawned upon all the juniors. It was astounding to realise that they had shunned him as a coward and a liar, when he was really exactly the opposite. And, to do the juniors justice, they did not excuse themselves in the least. They condemned one another wholeheartedly, and Manners received such an ovation that when the bell rang for dinner he was hot, dishevelled, and breathless.

Three times he had been carried round the quad, and his chums had shown him how tremendously sorry they were.

And what a difference from yesterday! Then everyone had shunned him. Now he could do nothing wrong. He was the hero of the day—and, by all appearances, he was to be the hero for many days to come.

That evening, in the presence of the whole school, Dr. Holmes shook hands with Manners and told him that he was proud to have such a pupil at St. Jim's. The story of the fire was retold, and the old Hall rang with cheers from juniors and seniors alike.

The juniors were too enthusiastic about Manners' bravery, and too penitent over the Rylcombe Lane affair, to dream of wanting proof that Manners' story of the bull had been correct.

And yet the truth of Manners' statement was to be proved by the juniors before so very long. The following day the Terrible Three and Blake & Co. took a jaunt down to the village to fetch a hamper from the station; and as they proceeded on their way, animatedly conjecturing what the hamper would contain, they passed the cottages which had been the scene of the adventure early in the week.

They were all talking and laughing cheerfully, and had almost passed the

(Continued on page 28.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,478.

THE SCHOOL BULLY WHOSE SCHEME OF REVENGE RECOILED ON HIS OWN HEAD!

THE MAKING OF HARRY WHARTON!

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK.

Peter Hazeldene, the cad of the Remove, is called upon to face the consequences—a ragging at the hands of his angry Form-fellows—of trying to cheat Harry Wharton out of the first prize in an exam. He successfully eludes the vengeance of the Remove for a time, but he is at last cornered under the elms in the Close, when he appeals to Harry Wharton to help him.

Wharton, who, with Bob Cherry and Nugent, refuses to take part in the ragging, knows what it is to be put through the mill by the Remove, and he has pity on Hazeldene. But he is unable to help him.

While Hazeldene is struggling in the hands of his Form-fellows, a locket drops out of his pocket, and Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, picks it up. It contains the photograph of a pretty girl, Hazeldene's sister. Bulstrode refuses to return it, and Hazeldene challenges him to a fight, showing a courage of which the Removites never thought him capable. He is, of course, beaten by the Remove bully.

Wharton then takes a hand. He is just about to fight Bulstrode for the locket when Bob Cherry, Nugent, and Billy Bunter, who have been out for the afternoon, come on the scene.

Bob Cherry Takes a Hand!

"MIND your own business, Cherry!" snarled Bulstrode. "And keep out of the way, hang you!"

"Keep your wool on!" said Bob Cherry coolly. "I can see there's a little rumpus on, but there's no need to break your neck about the matter, you know. Are you going to fight this rotter, Wharton?"

"Yes."

"Then you'll want a second."

"That's my business!" said Nugent, stepping forward quickly. "I'm glad I've come back in time, Harry," he added.

Wharton nodded without speaking.

"Oh, come on!" growled Bulstrode impatiently. "Are you going to keep me here all the afternoon, Wharton?"

"I'm ready."

"Time!" called out Trevor, watch in hand.

The two adversaries faced each other. "Go it, ye cripples!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

And they went it with a vengeance. Bulstrode was in the worst of tempers, and just in the humour to wreak his wrath on the first victim that came to hand. He meant to give Harry Wharton the hiding of his life then and there, under the old elms, the scene of many a fight between Greyfriars fellows.

Strange to say, the feeling of the Remove, usually dead against Wharton, had veered round, and there was now hardly a fellow on the spot who would not have been glad to see him lick the bully of the Remove.

Hazeldene leaned against a tree, breathing hard, exhausted and full of aches and pains from his licking from Bulstrode. His eyes were gleaming with impotent rage and spite as he watched the Remove bully. He hoped, but without much expectation of seeing the hope realised, that Bulstrode would meet his match in Wharton.

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,478.

By Frank Richards.

But Bulstrode, when he attempted to carry off the fight with a savage rush and a hot attack, found that he was meeting a foe very different from Hazeldene.

Harry Wharton had steadily practised with the gloves since coming to Greyfriars, and though he had been licked once by Bob Cherry, he had improved considerably since then, and was now no mean foe for any member of the Remove.

Then Bulstrode, powerful fellow as he was, had been to some extent fatigued by the fight with Hazeldene, and so was not in the best of condition.

Harry Wharton stood out the first round without receiving a blow, while his fists came home two or three times on the features of Bulstrode.

He had had decidedly the best of it by the time a rest was called, and Nugent patted him approvingly on the shoulder when the round ended.

"Good!" he said laconically. "Keep that up, and you'll do."

"By Jove, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "You've picked up wonderfully since—" He broke off with a laugh.

Revenge is sweet, but it leaves a sour taste in the mouth of Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove!

Harry Wharton finished the sentence for him.

"Since the time you licked me in the gym," he said.

"Well—yes."

"Perhaps I should give a different account of myself now."

"Perhaps," said Bob carelessly. "I suppose you don't want to try? My hat, what a giddy warrior you are! Isn't one fight on your hands enough?"

Harry laughed, and as time was called just then, he turned to face his foe again.

During the first round Bob Cherry and Nugent had learned the cause of the fight from Russell, and Nugent was glad to learn it. Harry had found himself in many a row since coming to Greyfriars owing to his peculiar temper, but there was no doubt that in the present instance he was quite in the right, and had the sympathy of the Form upon his side.

"I shouldn't wonder if he pulled it off, Nugent," remarked Bob Cherry, as he watched the progress of the second round. "He's getting in as much hitting as Bulstrode. By Jove, there goes Bulstrode!"

A sharp uppercut from Harry had sent the bully of the Remove reeling.

He was helplessly exposed to attack, and Harry Wharton could have followed up the blow with right and left; but he did not. He stepped back, waiting for Bulstrode to recover himself.

There was a murmur among the Removites at this. It was chivalry,

but an excess of chivalry was out of place in a fight with a bully like Bulstrode. And the latter showed little thanks for the grace. He recovered himself and rushed quickly at Wharton, with a savage look on his bruised face.

Hard and fast came his blows—so rapid and powerful that Wharton's guard was beaten down, and then a heavy fist came like a lump of iron on his mouth.

Down went Harry as if he had been shot, hitting the ground with a bone-jarring bump.

"Time!" called out Trevor.

Bulstrode gave a grunt of disappointment.

The call of time came opportunely to save Harry from utter defeat, for Bulstrode would not have followed his adversary's generous example.

Nugent helped Wharton to his feet.

Harry was looking dazed, and there was a trickle of blood from the corner of his mouth. Nugent made a knee for him, and Harry sank upon it with a gasp.

Bob Cherry shook his head solemnly.

"It won't do, Wharton!" he said. "You mustn't spare a chap like Bulstrode. Go for him as hard and as often as you can, and you'll knock him out. That's the only way."

Harry Wharton nodded.

Nugent wiped the blood from his mouth, and he seemed fairly recovered at the end of the minute's rest.

Bulstrode was grinning as he faced Wharton for the third round.

He had some doubts at first, but now he was quite confident of victory, and he pressed his enemy hard.

And Nugent gave up the hope of seeing Wharton win now, as they saw Bulstrode driving him round the ring, and getting in blow after blow with hardly a counter in return.

Bob's cheery face assumed a glum expression.

"He's finished, Nugent," he whispered. "He won't last longer than this round."

Nugent nodded gloomily.

"But Bulstrode is not going to have it all his own way," said Bob Cherry, with a determined expression about his mouth. "He's not going to keep Hazeldene's locket, unless he wants a third fight on his hands."

"And a fourth!" grinned Nugent.

"Right-ho! It's time somebody dropped on him heavy and gave him a lesson," agreed Bob.

There was a sudden shout from the Remove.

Harry Wharton had rushed in to deliver a heavy blow, taking advantage of a tempting opening; but it was only a feint. Bulstrode's left swept his arm up, and then the bully's right came out like a battering-ram.

The blow knocked Wharton fairly off his feet and flung him back to the ground.

"Now," said Bulstrode, "do you want any more?"

Nugent helped up his chief. Harry was looking stunned, and was quite unable to go on. Time was called, and he was still gasping on Nugent's knee.

Bulstrode was pretty well winded and considerably bruised, but he was grinning with satisfaction. He had proved the victor in two fights in succession,

MORE FUN AND EXCITEMENT WITH HARRY WHARTON & CO. IN THEIR EARLY DAYS AT GREYFRIARS.



As Bob Cherry lathered on a handful of the black compound, Bulstrode's features disappeared under a sticky coating. As his mouth was open at the time he received a taste of coal, jam, and sardines, beautifully mingled together! "Ugh! Groo-oogh!" gasped the Remove bully.

and more firmly than ever his position as cock of the Remove was established. "Any more coming on?" he asked vauntingly.

Bob Cherry stepped quickly forward. "Yes," he said.

"What do you want, Cherry?" "I want you to give Hazeldene his locket."

"I shall do nothing of the kind!"

"Then I shall have to make you!"

"Stand back, Cherry!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "If you want a fight, I'll fight you to-morrow. I'm not fit now. I appeal to all the fellows."

"That's right enough," said King. The rest were silent.

Bob Cherry shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't want a fight," he said. "If you want one, I'm ready to meet you to-morrow, or any other time. What I want is for you to give Hazeldene back his locket, and if you don't, I'll make you!"

"I won't, confound you!"

Bob Cherry removed his jacket.

"Very well; we'll see all about that. Put up your hands!"

"I tell you I won't fight now!"

"I don't care whether you fight me or not; you are going to give up that locket, or else I shall take it from you by force."

Bulstrode, with a savage look, threw the locket on the ground at his feet.

"There it is, hang you!" he exclaimed. "And, remember, Cherry, I'll make you suffer for this!"

And he dragged on his jacket and strode sulkily away. Bob Cherry, quite unmoved by the threat of the bully of the Remove, picked up the locket and tossed it to Hazeldene, who received it eagerly enough.

Bob put on his jacket. Hazeldene helped him, apparently for once in his life desirous of being obliging. The Removites dispersed from the spot, the excitement being over. The "ragging" of Hazeldene had been tacitly abandoned. It was felt that he had received

punishment enough at the hands of Bulstrode, and, besides, the contempt the Remove fellows felt for him was mingled now with something of respect.

"I say, Cherry, I'm much obliged to you," muttered Hazeldene.

Bob Cherry nodded carelessly enough. "I mean it," said the cad of the Remove eagerly. "I wish I could do something to prove it."

"Oh, you can, if you like," said Bob. "Be a little less of a soapy rotter, you know, and I'll call it quits."

Hazeldene smiled a sickly smile, and Bob Cherry walked away with Nugent and Harry Wharton.

Bob Cherry Goes Shopping!

"COME in, Cherry!" It was Nugent who spoke as the three juniors came along the passage and arrived at the door of Study No. 1.

"Yes, do come in!" said Harry Wharton.

"Right-ho!" said Bob cheerily.

Billy Bunter was already in the study, and he had the fire going and the tea kettle singing away on the trivet.

"I say, you fellows, I thought I'd get the place ready for tea, you know," he remarked. "I want you to let me stand you a tea."

Nugent gave a gasp of astonishment. "You, Bunter! You stand anybody anything! Have you received that famous postal order, then, or is the world coming to an end?"

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles with an air of great dignity.

"I really don't see why I shouldn't stand you fellows a feed sometimes," he said. "I've had tea with you quite a number of times this term. I don't see why you should refuse my treat when it comes round."

"Certainly not!" Nugent hastened to assure him. "We won't refuse."

"Good! Then when my postal order comes—"

"Hasn't it come yet?"

"N-no; there's been some delay." "But how are you going to stand us a feed this afternoon?"

"I wasn't speaking about this afternoon," explained Bunter. "I meant that I want you fellows to let me stand you a feed as soon as I am in funds, because I'm going to ask you to ask me to tea to-day, you see."

Nugent burst into a roar of laughter.

"You'll be the death of me yet, Bunter—you and your postal order!" he exclaimed. "Never mind, you're welcome to have tea with us as often as you like. Still, if you want to stand us something, you shall stand us a basin of hot water and a sponge to rub down Wharton's chivvy."

"Right-ho, Nugent; I'll get them at once."

And the obliging Bunter soon ferreted out the required articles, and Harry Wharton began to give his battered face a much-needed sponging.

Bob Cherry looked round the cosy study regretfully.

"My hat!" he said. "I wish I had my quarters here with you chaps. I'm stuck up in the passage with two fellows I don't pull with. I'd like to change with Bulstrode."

"Good idea!" said Nugent eagerly. "I wish we could get you in this study in place of Bulstrode, Cherry. It would be a change for the better, eh, Harry?"

"Yes, rather!" said Wharton, with unusual cordiality.

"I wonder if it could be fixed?" Bob Cherry remarked thoughtfully. "Bulstrode wouldn't change to oblige us, of course."

"Not much! The brute would stick all the tighter if he thought he was worrying us," said Nugent, with a shake of the head.

"He might be made to believe he would be more comfy in another study, though," said Bob Cherry, with a glimmer of fun in his eyes. "There's more ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream. But never mind that now. I don't suppose Bulstrode will worry us for a bit. The question before the meeting now is tea. Got anything in the cupboard?"

"Yes, a little; nothing special, you know. Really, we ought to have something special to celebrate the occasion."

"Do you feel up to a feed, Wharton?"

Harry smiled rather feebly through the water that was running down his face. The dark bruises showed up clearly on the white skin.

"Well, not exactly," he said. "That chap Bulstrode hits like a battering-ram, and I can't say I feel up to anything just now, except a cup of tea."

"That's what I thought. You can make the tea, Bunter."

"Certainly, Cherry."

"We'll have a feed this evening," said Bob. "What do you say to clubbing together and doing the thing in really decent style? If we stand five bob each, we can get up a really ripping feed and enough for four."

"I'll stand my whack, too, Cherry," said Billy Bunter. "I shall have my postal order by the next post."

"Never mind your whack, Bunter; we'll treat you."

"Not at all, Cherry. I'm not a fellow to sponge on anybody, you know. If my postal order comes by the next post I'll stand my whack."

"Right-ho! If the postal order comes!" grinned Bob. "Otherwise we shall have to do the shopping on fifteen bob, if you fellows like the idea."

"Rather!" said Nugent. "What do you say, Harry?"

"Good!"

"Then it's settled," said Bob Cherry. "Let's have tea, and then I'll go and do the shopping and send the things up to the study here. I suppose we had better feed here, and not in my study. Four are enough for a feed."

"Rather!" said Nugent. "Bring the Tommy up here, and we'll have a good time after prep."

Harry Wharton looked all the better for the wash, but his face was rather bruised and cut. The four juniors had tea together, and a cheerful meal it was. Harry Wharton's face felt sore, but it was his way to bear that quietly. He was cheerful enough over tea.

In spite of hot words and even blows which had passed between them, the three juniors felt drawn together. Each recognised sterling qualities in the others, and it seemed to be just in the fitness of things that they should be friends.

Bulstrode looked into the study while the four were at tea. He scowled at them, and did not come in. Although he had proved the victor in the combats under the elms, he was feeling very much the effects of the fighting, and was in a little better condition than Harry Wharton. Morose as his temper was, he did not feel in form for a row, and so he let the juniors take their tea undisturbed in Study No. 1.

At Greyfriars, as at many Public schools, there was a tuckshop kept within the school precincts, open to the boys at certain hours of the day. It was there Bob Cherry made for after tea, and with him went the obliging Billy Bunter, to carry the parcels.

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Bob Cherry looked over the stock in the school shop with the eye of a connoisseur. He knew what he wanted, and he was an experienced shopper—in the tuck line, at all events.

The goods sold in the shop were not equal in quality to those sold in the village, but convenience in the matter of shopping was the great thing.

It was now close on locking-up, and it would have been impossible to go down to the village and return before the gates were closed for the night. And it was a serious matter for a junior to be absent from calling-over at Greyfriars.

Bob Cherry, with the consciousness that he had good money in his pocket, allowed himself the privilege of examining everything in the shop before he made his purchases, but he finally completed them.

"You can take that little lot up to the study," said Bob Cherry, when Bunter was fully laden with parcels. "I'll carry the rest."

"Certainly, Cherry!"

He marched off towards Study No. 1. As he reached the Remove passage, he met Bulstrode. The bully of the Remove looked at him curiously.

"Hallo, where are you taking all those things?" he asked, eyeing Billy Bunter's cargo with amazement.

Bunter looked a little nervous. "I'm taking them along to the study," he said. "They belong to Cherry, Wharton, and Nugent. Let me pass, Bulstrode."

Bulstrode grinned evilly.

"I've a good mind to chuck the lot over the banister, and you after them!" he remarked.

Bunter backed away from him quickly.

"I say, Bulstrode, don't be a beastly bully, you know! Bob Cherry's just coming up—"

Bulstrode scowled as he heard a footstep on the stairs. He stepped aside and allowed room for Bunter to pass, which the Owl promptly did with great relief. He scudded along to the study as fast as he could go.

But it was not Bob Cherry's footsteps which Bulstrode had heard on the stairs. Bob was settling the bill in the tuckshop. As Bulstrode walked on he came face to face with Hazeldene, who was just coming upstairs.

Bulstrode was about the last fellow at Greyfriars whom Hazeldene desired to meet. The bully of the Remove grinned savagely.

"You rotter!" he remarked. "You managed to sneak out of the ragging, after all, but I'll see that you get it, you squirming toad! What are you nosing along here for? Your study's farther up."

"I was coming to speak to Bunter."

Bulstrode sniffed.

"You saw he was carrying the things for a feed, you mean, and thought you'd come in on the scene. I know you! Well, you won't! I'm giving a feed in Study No. 1, but you won't be there, I can tell you!"

Hazeldene's eyes glinted.

"I wouldn't come if you asked me!" he retorted.

"By Jove, I'll sling you down the stairs for two pins!" exclaimed Bulstrode.

Hazeldene ran down the stairs as the bully made a movement towards him. Bulstrode burst into a laugh. He was still laughing as he walked away. An idea was in his mind which seemed to afford him considerable amusement.

The Feed That Didn't Come Off!

SEVEN boomed out from the old tower of Greyfriars, and Bob Cherry peeled off the boxing gloves. Cherry, Wharton, and Nugent had been having a few rounds in the gym.

Harry was feeling quite himself again now, and, with the conviction in his mind that he had not had his last encounter with Bulstrode, he was neglecting no opportunity of fitting himself for a harder tussle when next they met.

"Time!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. Harry Wharton nodded and took off the gloves. It was the first time he had had them on with Bob since the new boy had beaten him in earnest combat, and the recollection came oddly to his mind now. He was growing to like Bob Cherry, with his careless, frank ways, more than ever he believed he would like any fellow at Greyfriars.

"Right-ho!" said Nugent. "We've good time to finish prep, and then for the feed. Come along!"

The three juniors left the gym. The light was burning in Study No. 1 when they arrived there, and Billy Bunter was standing inside the open door, with an expression of astonishment on his face.

"First in the field, as usual, when there's a feed about!" grinned Nugent. Then his tone changed as he caught sight of Billy Bunter's face. "What's the matter, Bunter?"

The Owl of the Remove blinked at him without replying.

"What's the matter with you? What are you blinking at, Bunter?"

"It's the grub, you know."

"What about the grub?"

"It's gone!"

There was a moment of silence in the study—silence that might have been felt. Then:

"Gone?" yelled the three voices at once.

"Yes, gone!"

"Where has it gone?"

"I don't know," blinked Bunter; "but it's gone. I've only just got here myself, you know, a minute or two ago. Then I looked into the cupboard, and the grub was gone!"

Bob Cherry crossed to the cupboard and gazed into it. The provisions certainly were gone. They had been packed away there, and had filled up most of the cupboard. Now it was nearly empty!

The juniors stared at one another in dismay.

"Somebody's raided our blessed grub!" ejaculated Cherry at last.

"Perhaps it's been hidden somewhere about the study for a joke," suggested Nugent. "Have you looked, Bunter?"

"No; I haven't had time yet. I was so flabbergasted—"

"Let's look, then," said Bob Cherry.

They hunted through the study. A whoop from Bob Cherry announced the discovery of the missing provender. Wharton and Nugent hastened to him.

"My only hat!" gasped Nugent.

The provisions were found. Bob Cherry was staring into the coal-locker, and there they were—utterly ruined! Pots of jam and marmalade were broken and mingled with coal-dust, sausages, opened tins of sardines, jars of preserved fruits, cakes, and biscuits, and chocolates—all were mixed in a ghastly mess along with coal and cinders.

The splendid feed, which had cost the juniors fifteen shillings in hard cash, was utterly done for. And fifteen shillings was a considerable sum to boys in the Remove.

Bob Cherry stared at the ruin with mouth agape.

"My hat!" he gasped at last. "We're done this time; but who's the funny merchant who has played this jape on us?"

"We'll find him out!" said Wharton fiercely.

"By Jupiter, we will!" exclaimed Nugent. "I could forgive a raid, even if they collared all the grub and scoffed it; but to destroy good food like this—why, it's utterly caddish!"

"Caddish isn't the word for it!" said Bob Cherry. "It's ghastly! Horrible! All that grub gone! Oh, it's too bad for words!"

"But who can have done it?" said Wharton. "Was it Bulstrode, do you think?"

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"No; I should have thought so at once, but I remember he came into the gym at the same time as we did, and he was still there when we left."

"Ah, that settles that!" said Nugent. "It wasn't Bulstrode. It's just like a trick that Vaseline would play. But surely he wouldn't serve us like this after what you fellows did for him to-day?"

"If he has—" began Bob Cherry.

But Billy Bunter interrupted him. "That reminds me, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "About twenty minutes ago, when I was in the Common-room, Hazeldene came in, and one of the fellows asked him if he had been making up a fire with his hands, because there was coal-dust on them."

"My hat! There you are!"

"It was Vaseline!"

"The—the beastly outsider! After what we did for him, too!" exclaimed Nugent. "Why, the ungrateful brute ought to be scragged!"

"And he will be!" said Bob Cherry quietly. "I don't think we're the kind of fellows to take a thing like this lying down. Go and see if Hazeldene's in his study, Bunter."

"Certainly!"

Billy Bunter scuttled away. He returned in less than a minute to report that Hazeldene was in his study—and alone.

"He chucked a book at me when I opened the door," said Bunter. "It caught me a cosh on the boko."

"Come along, then," said Bob Cherry. "We'll make him come and see this mess and own up if he did it. Then—"

He did not finish, but his look was ominous. Billy Bunter followed the three into the passage. He was rubbing his nose vengefully.

"That's right, Cherry! He caught me a cosh on the boko!"

The juniors hurried along to the door of Study No. 3, and threw it open without the preliminary of knocking. Hazeldene started to his feet in alarm at the sight of three angry juniors bursting into the room.

"What—what do you want?" he stammered.

"We want you!" said Bob Cherry grimly.

"But what—what—"

"Come along to our study."

"Certainly; I don't mind. But—but is Bulstrode there?"

"No, Bulstrode isn't there."

"Then I don't mind. You needn't hold my collar; I'll come."

"I think I'll make sure of you," remarked Bob Cherry, and, keeping a tight grip on Hazeldene's collar, he marched him out of the study and along the passage, and in at the door of Study No. 1, Wharton and Nugent following.

Hazeldene wriggled in Bob Cherry's

grasp, but he did not struggle to escape. He knew that that would be useless. Wharton closed the door, and Bob Cherry's hand slid from Hazeldene's collar. He pointed to the coal-locker.

"Look there, you cad!"

Hazeldene looked.

"Did you do that?"

"Yes."

The open, unhesitating avowal, which they had been far from expecting, amazed the juniors. They stared at Hazeldene in silence for a minute.

"You did, did you?" said Bob Cherry at last.

"Yes. What does it matter to you?"

"Matter to me?" howled Bob.

"What does it matter to me when I blued fifteen bob on that grub?"

Hazeldene uttered a sharp ejaculation.

"What are you talking about? It wasn't your grub!"

"It was ours! We three paid for it, at all events."

"You three—yours?"

"No gammon, Vaseline!" said Bob

the coal-locker. I did it to be even with him. I wouldn't have done it if I had known it belonged to you fellows."

There was an unusual earnestness in Hazeldene's look and voice, and the juniors could not help but believe him.

"You are such a fearful fabricator!" Bob Cherry remarked. "But I suppose you are telling the truth this time?"

"I swear I am!" said Hazeldene eagerly.

"Of course, it's plain enough why Bulstrode led you to believe that the grub was his. Nugent remarked. "The rotter knew you would do something of this sort for revenge upon him, and that's his way of trying to get square with us."

"I—I see it now."

"But the question is—what's going to be done?" said Bob Cherry.

"There's all the grub gone to ruin, and the school shop has been closed for an hour, and they have strict orders from the Head not to open after hours to anybody."

Nugent nodded gloomily.

"The feed's a goner!"

"I say, you fellows, you'd better put Hazeldene through it, you know, for mucking up the feed," Billy Bunter remarked.

"He didn't know it was ours, Bunter."

"Well, he's an awful liar, you know—aren't you, Vaseline? And, anyway, it's a crime to muck up good grub like that! And he caught me an awful cosh on the boko!"

"Hang your boko! What are we going to do?" asked Bob Cherry.

"There's fifteen bob gone west, and even if we could raise the funds, there's no way of getting a new feed. And I was purposely sparing at tea-time so as to have plenty of room for it! It's rotten!"

"Can't be helped," said Wharton. "We shall have to have a feed some other time, that's all. We're done in this time."

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"That's all very well," he said; "but we were looking forward to a feed to-night. Can you suggest anything, Vaseline, you funny lunatic?"

"Yes, I think so," said Hazeldene.

"Go ahead, then," said Bob Cherry tersely.

"If you raise the funds—"

"I dare say we could manage the tin, but the school shop's closed and the gates are locked."

"I'll break bounds, if you like, and go down to the village and bring it in."

Bob Cherry stared at him in amazement.

"You're joking, I presume?"

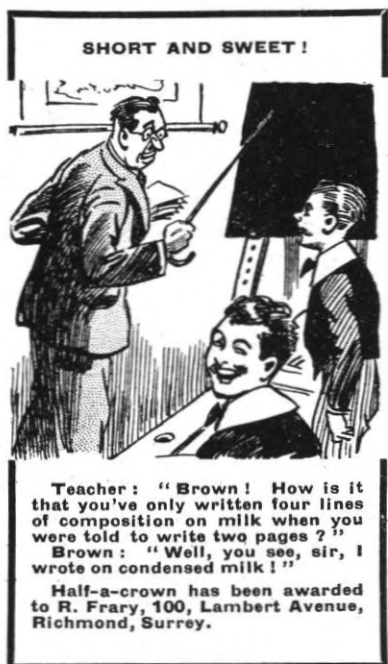
"No, I'm not. I'll go down to the village and get the grub," said Hazeldene resolutely.

Catching the Culprit!

BOB CHERRY looked keenly at the cad of the Remove. Hazeldene was evidently in earnest, but Bob did not quite understand it. To break bounds after dark at Greyfriars meant a flogging in the case of discovery, and Hazeldene, more than any other fellow in the Remove, shrank from such an infliction.

He never could bear pain, and there was hardly any meanness he would not have been guilty of to avoid it. Yet here he was offering to take a risk which the others would have seriously reflected upon before facing.

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"I can't quite make you out, Vaseline," said Bob Cherry at last. "Do you really mean that you will go down to the village?"

"Yes,"
"You know what it means if you're spotted?"

"I shall be careful."

"There's time to do it," Bob Cherry remarked thoughtfully. "Of course, you ought to be the one to go, after mucking up our grub like that, but I shan't believe you till you've been put to the test."

"Put me to the test, then."

"What do you say, you chaps?"

"I think it's a jolly good idea, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, before the others could speak. "It would be too awful to miss a feed we've counted on. You see, we might have another feed to-morrow, but it wouldn't be the same. We should always have a feeling that we were one feed behind, as it were."

Bob Cherry laughed.

"Oh, dry up, Bunter! You make me feel hungry when you talk about grub."

"That's all very well, Cherry—"

"What do you think, Wharton, and you, Nugent? Shall we let Hazeldene go down to the village shop for a new supply? He could get it in by the time we've finished our prep, if he really goes."

"I mean to go," said Hazeldene.

"I don't see why not," said Nugent. "He certainly ought to do it after the way he's spoiled our feed, and we've let him off for it."

"Quite right!" said Wharton.

"But," continued Nugent, "my belief is that Vaseline will come squirming back and say he can't manage it."

"Very likely," said Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, if he does, we ought to rag him, you know, and make—"

"Let him try, at all events," said Bob Cherry. "Now it's a question of raising the wind. I'm afraid I can only stump up to the tune of three bob."

Nugent felt in his pockets.

"Two-and-threepence," he said, turning the contents out on the table.

"How are you fixed, Harry?"

Wharton smiled

"I think I can make it up all right," he remarked. "My uncle has at least one good point—he keeps me well supplied with tin. Here you are."

"By Jove! You are well fixed," Bob Cherry remarked, as Harry Wharton turned out a ten-shilling note and a dozen silver coins.

"Better make it up to the fifteen bob again," said Nugent, "and we'll square up our whack afterwards."

"That's all right."

And fifteen shillings were handed over to Hazeldene. He slipped the money into his pocket.

"Mind you don't lose it," said Billy Bunter. "If you come back and say you've lost it, we shall know that you only funk going to the village—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But, I say, Cherry—"

"You talk too much! We'd better go down and help Vaseline over the wall, you chaps, if he's really going," Bob remarked.

The others assented, and the four left the study, leaving the Owl behind. Hazeldene started as he met Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, in the passage. Wingate did not even look at him, but the sight of the school captain

brought home to him the risk he was running.

Bob Cherry grinned as he saw Hazeldene's face change.

"What price breaking bounds now?"

he murmured.

"I'm going," said Hazeldene.

"My hat, he's sticking it out!" said Bob Cherry. "I shouldn't wonder if the beggar hasn't an ounce of pluck somewhere. He stood up to Bulstrode, after all. I hope you'll bring it off, Hazeldene."

"Wait a minute while I get a bag out of my study."

"Right-ho!"

Hazeldene kept the bag under his arm as they left the House. It was a soft cloth bag, and folded up into a small compass. When it was filled out with the goods from the village shop it would be a different matter, however. The juniors crossed the Close to a well-known spot where the wall was accessible.

"We'll be here to help you back over the wall," said Bob Cherry. "How long will it take you to get there and back?"

"About three-quarters of an hour, including the shopping."

"Good! We'll leave it until a quarter past eight, then. When the quarter chimes we'll be here waiting to help you in. No good hanging about, you know, or some beastly senior is sure to spot us and get suspicious."

"I'll remember."

"And we'll yank the bag up to our study window with cord," added Bob Cherry. "It would be remarked on if we carried it upstairs."

"That's pretty certain," said Nugent.

"Now, up you go!"

Wharton and Cherry gave Hazeldene a bunk up the wall, and he caught the top and drew himself upon it.

"Remember, a quarter past eight!" whispered Bob Cherry.

"Right you are!"

And Hazeldene dropped on the outer side of the wall. They heard the thud of his feet in the road, followed by soft footsteps, and then silence. Hazeldene was gone upon his mission.

"Well, he's started, at all events," Bob Cherry remarked. "He's sticking it out well, so far. I wonder whether he'll get as far as the village?"

"More likely he'll lose his nerve and come back without the stuff," said Nugent, with a shrug of the shoulders.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"It won't be much good, if he does," he remarked. "We're not going to come here to help him in till a quarter past eight, and he can't get over the wall without our assistance."

"I have an idea that he means business," Harry Wharton said quietly. "There's something decent in that chap, though he's an unspeakable rotter sometimes. I believe he will do what he has promised."

"Well, we shall see."

The juniors returned to the School House. As they came up to the study again, Bob Cherry suddenly seized his companions and stopped them.

"Look!" he whispered.

The light was streaming out from Study No. 1 into the passage. It showed the shadow of a form standing just within the door, and even in the shadow there was no mistaking the burly figure and the broad shoulders.

"Bulstrode!" murmured Nugent.

Bob Cherry nodded.

"He's gone to look at the muck Hazeldene has made of the feed," he whispered. "You see, he wasn't really sure that the wheeze would work."

"Come on!" muttered Wharton.

The chums of the Remove ran swiftly and silently along the passage. They looked into the study, but Bulstrode did not turn his head, not hearing their approach. The bully of the Remove was speaking to Bunter.

"Hazeldene did it, did he?" he said. "Well, he has made a mess of it, and no mistake. Rather ungrateful, too, considering."

"He thought the stuff was yours, you know, Bulstrode," said Billy Bunter.

"You told him it was."

Bulstrode chuckled.

"Did I? I dare say he thought something of the kind. Ha, ha, ha! What did Cherry and Wharton do with him?"

"They haven't done anything."
"My hat, have they let him off? I wouldn't! I would have ragged him baldheaded if the stuff had been mine!" said Bulstrode. "By Jove, it does look an awful muck! Ha, ha, ha!"

"It does," agreed Billy Bunter, blinking through his big spectacles. "I think you ought to clear it up, Bulstrode."

"Catch me!"

"You're responsible. But who is that standing behind you, Bulstrode? Is it Cherry, or Wharton?"

Bulstrode gave a gasp of alarm, and whirled round.

But there was no escape for him. The sturdy forms of the chums of the Remove blocked up the doorway.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "How do you do, Bulstrode? Come to see the fun—eh? Awfully funny thing that, isn't it?"

"Yes, rather funny," said Bulstrode.

He looked uneasily at the three.

"Good joke!" agreed Bob Cherry.

"Fifteen bobs' worth of good grub chucked away, and Vaseline very nearly licked for doing it, when he only did it because you had led him to believe that the stuff was yours."

"Oh, that chap's an awful liar!"

"Why, I just heard you admit it to Billy Bunter!"

"That he did!" said Bunter. "I thought he ought to clear up all the mess. I told him so. You must have heard me, you fellows."

"No, fear!" said Bulstrode.

"I should have thought you would offer to clear all that out of the coal-locker," said Bob Cherry, "and carry it away somewhere."

"Not much!"

"But suppose," went on Bob Cherry blandly, "the alternative were to have your classic features rubbed in it, Bulstrode, old chap?"

Bulstrode made a movement to get through the doorway. The three juniors closed up and stopped him there. He could not push through.

"Let me pass!" he exclaimed angrily.

"Are you in a hurry?"

"Yes, I am! Get out of the way!"

"Can't be did, my son. You're going to clear all that muck out of the coal-locker first. Don't be in such a hurry to get out of your own study."

"Let me pass, or—"

"Rats!"

Bob Cherry made a sign, and three pairs of hands seized the bully of the Remove. He struggled fiercely, but against such odds even the burly Bulstrode was powerless.

He was dragged over to the coal-locker, and held there by Nugent and Wharton. His face went pale with horrid anticipation as he looked upon the sticky mess of coaldust, marmalade, jam, preserves, and sardines.

Bob Cherry drew upon his hands the

pair of old gloves which the juniors used when they tidied the grate. Thus guarded, he fished out a handful of the sticky mess from the coal-locker.

Bulstrode wriggled furiously. "Don't dare to touch me with that!" he shrieked. "I—ow—ooch!"

Taking not the slightest notice of his remonstrances, Bob Cherry lathered that handful of muck over his face.

Bulstrode's features disappeared under a sticky coating, and as his mouth was open at the time, he received a pleasant taste of coal, jam, and sardines, beautifully mingled together.

"Ugh! Groo—ooch! Groogh!"

"What is he talking about?" asked Bob Cherry. "That's either Esperanto or Cherokee. I should imagine. Have some more, Bulstrode?"

"Groo—ooch!"

"I suppose that means yes? Well, there's plenty!"

And Bob Cherry rubbed another handful upon Bulstrode's face, and smothered it over his features and in his hair with a liberal hand.

Bulstrode gasped and choked and wriggled, but it was of no avail. The juniors held him firmly while strict justice was laded out to him.

"Are you going to take away this muck now, Bulstrode?"

"Ger-oo-groo! No!"

"Will you have some more then?"

"Groogh—geroogh!"

Another handful was smacked upon the bully's face and rubbed well in. He squirmed and wriggled frantically.

"Will you clear it up now, Bulstrode?"

"Yes!" yelled the unfortunate bully of the Remove.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I thought he would listen to reason at last," he remarked. "There's a scuttle here you can use, Bulstrode. Get it out of the coal-locker and carry it away, and do what you like with it. Get a move on! We've got to do our prep to-night, and we can't waste much more time on your education."

"I'll—I'll—"

"Buck up, old fellow, unless you'd rather have some more on your chivvy."

They released Bulstrode. The spirit had been quite taken out of the bully of the Remove, and he obeyed Bob Cherry's directions without a murmur.

The horrible compound in the coal-locker was taken out and placed in the scuttle by Bulstrode, while the chums stood round watching him, ready to give him another lesson if he showed fight. But he did not; he had had enough.

"Now you can take it away," said Bob Cherry, when he had finished.

"You needn't trouble to bring the scuttle back now. I'd rather you cleaned yourself a bit before I see you again. You're not pretty to look at as you are."

"I'll—I'll—"

"Never mind all that now, Bulstrode. Your conversation's very interesting, but we've got our prep to do. Travel!"

Bulstrode, with a savage scowl under the thick lathering of stickiness, lifted the scuttle and made for the door.

The chums grinned after him as he departed. Never had the bully of the Remove received so profound a humiliation, and never had he more deserved one. He had expected that some punishment of this kind would fall upon Hazeldene, at the hands of the incensed chums, but justice had found out the right victim in a rather unexpected manner.

Several Removites met him in the passage, and stared at him in utter



Carberry was about to dash in pursuit of the fleeing juniors when a chunk of turf caught him a smack in the neck. The prefect gave a howl of rage. Wharton stayed only long enough to see the result of his action before he scudded away. The bully of the Sixth would not be safe at close quarters after that!

astonishment. The news ran through the studies, and there was a rush of the Remove to look at Bulstrode. The unfortunate bully of the Form had to run the gauntlet of dozens of grinning faces before he slammed the scuttle down in a corner and escaped to a bath-room.

And when he had cleaned himself—a by no means rapid and easy task—he felt far too tired to think of coming to close quarters with the chums of the Remove again that evening. He vowed vengeance as he washed and washed, but he did not think of attempting to put it into execution at present. He had had enough of Cherry, Wharton, and Nugent for the time.

Bob Cherry closed the door after the departing bully, and his laugh rang through his room. Nugent joined in it, and Billy Bunter cackled away for all he was worth. Even Wharton was laughing.

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "I think Bulstrode has had a lesson this time! He won't be quite so ready to spoil a fellow's feast on another occasion."

"I should say not! Now let's get the prep done, or we shan't be finished before Hazeldene gets back with the grub," said Nugent.

"Right you are! Shall I do mine in here with you?"

"Rather, old chap!"

"There's room for three," said Harry. "Mine's done. And I suppose Bulstrode won't give us a visit again for some time."

"Ha, ha! No, I fancy not."

Bob Cherry, Nugent, and Billy Bunter were soon hard at work. The preparation was got through in record time, and then Bob Cherry looked at his watch.

"What is it?" asked Nugent, as he pushed his books away.

"Ten minutes past eight."

"Time we were moving, then."

Bob Cherry rose from his chair.

"You're right; let's get out. If Hazeldene is up to time he'll be waiting

for us at a quarter past. You can stay here, Bunter, while we're gone. You can put the room tidy and shove the books away and lay the cloth."

"Certainly, Cherry."

And leaving Billy Bunter thus industriously occupied, the chums of the Remove quitted the study and the House, and made their way to the school wall at the spot where they were to wait for the return of Hazeldene.

The quarter chimed out from the clock tower as they reached it.

Hazeldene Keeps His Word!

BOB CHERRY drew closer to the wall, and Nugent and Wharton helped him up. The darkness was thick under the trees, which grew close to the wall and shadowed the lane beyond.

There was no one in sight, but the gloom was too thick for him to see far. He listened in the silence of the night.

"Not there—eh?" came Nugent's whisper from below.

"Shut up! I think I can hear somebody," replied Bob.

The others were silent. Through the dimness of the lane came the sound of footsteps, and a dark form, with a bag hoisted upon its shoulder, came looming up from the gloom.

Bob gave a whistle. It was replied to by another from the shadowy figure, and the latter came to a halt under the wall and placed the bag on the ground.

"Is that you, Vaseline?"

"Yes."

"Got the tommy?"

"Yes, rather! It's in the bag here."

"Then you've done it? I say, Nugent, here's Vaseline, and he's got the grub in the bag."

"Hand it over then," said Nugent.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Right ho!" He lowered a cord outside the wall. "Fasten that to the bag, Vaseline, and I'll pull it up."

Hazeldene bent down and secured the cord to the bag.

"Pull away, Cherry."

Bob Cherry pulled, and the bag came up slowly. He caught it in his hand and lowered it to Nugent and Wharton. Harry took it, while Nugent prepared to help the climbers down.

The bag was well filled, and Hazeldene must have felt the weight of it during the long walk from the village.

"Give us your fin, Hazeldene," said Bob Cherry, leaning his chest on the wall, and reaching down his hands to Hazeldene.

The latter caught hold of him, and with Bob's assistance climbed the wall, and gained a grip on the top. Then he came lightly over, and dropped on the inner side of the wall, followed by Bob Cherry.

"Good for you, Vaseline!"

"Ssh!" muttered Hazeldene.

There was a footstep in the Close near at hand, and a tall form loomed up in the darkness. One of the prefects had discovered them.

Harry Wharton thrust the heavy bag into Nugent's hand.

"Get that away!" he muttered. "You others cut off to the study. I'll stop that chap. I know who it is; it's Carberry, the prefect. Cut off!"

The voice of the prefect was heard the next moment.

"Hallo! Who's that whispering there? What are you doing out of the House at this time, you young rascals?"

"Cut it!" muttered Wharton.

The juniors found themselves obeying him. Nugent and Cherry rushed the bag off to the wall under the study window, while Hazeldene made for Study No. 1 to let down the cord to pull it up.

Harry Wharton remained behind his chums. It was necessary to take some risk to save the provisions, which, of course, would have been confiscated if discovered, to say nothing of more serious consequences of the escapade.

"Who is that?" asked Carberry again.

He heard the retreating footsteps of the juniors, and was about to dash in pursuit when a chunk of turf caught him in the neck.

Carberry gave a howl of rage. The bully of the Sixth was never sweet-tempered, and he felt furious now. He made a dash in the direction whence the missile came, and caught sight of a dim, fleeing figure.

"Stop, you young scoundrel!" he roared, springing in pursuit. "I know who you are."

Harry Wharton smiled in the darkness as he ran. He knew very well that the prefect did not know who he was.

He dashed on, the heavy footsteps of

the prefect clumping behind him and growing nearer at every stride. But Harry was not at a loss. He dashed round the fountain in the Close, and then, instead of running on, halted and crouched in the shadow of the basin.

The heavy footsteps of the prefect went racing by, and he vanished in the darkness.

Harry Wharton dashed away swiftly, and in a minute more was in the School House and ascending the stairs three at a time.

He ran along the passage and into Study No. 1. Bob Cherry and Nugent were already there. Hazeldene was closing the window. The bag, with the cord attached to it, lay on the floor.

"Here you are!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, with great relief. "We've only just got here. I was afraid Carberry had collared you."

"I gave him the slip," said Harry. Billy Bunter had the bag open now.

He gave a chuckle of satisfaction as he turned the good things out.

"I say, this is really ripping!" he exclaimed. "It's better than the last lot. My hat, Vaseline, you've done very well with the fifteen bob, and no mistake!"

"And I'm just about hungry enough for a good feed, too!" said Bob Cherry.

"Same here!" said Nugent. "How are you, Harry?"

"Hungry as a hunter!" said Wharton, laughing. "I—Where are you going, Hazeldene?"

Hazeldene had crossed quietly to the door and opened it. He would have been gone in another moment. He looked back, colouring as Harry called him.

"I've done what I promised," he said. "And now I'll get along."

"Rot!" exclaimed Bob Cherry warmly. "You're going to stay and join us."

"I didn't do it for that, Cherry. I went because—"

"I know all about that; but now you've done it you're going to stay to the feed," said Bob Cherry.

"Well, if you really want me—"

"Of course we do!" exclaimed Bob.

"Right-ho, then! The long walk has given me a very good appetite," said Hazeldene. "I'll join you with pleasure!"

And he did. And one of the finest feeds the Greyfriars junior had ever had was the one Hazeldene enjoyed in Study No. 1.

(Harry Wharton & Co. are in the thick of excitement again next week, when Hazeldene's sister is kidnapped by gypsies! Look out for their gripping adventures on the trail of the kidnappers.)

THEY CALLED HIM A COWARD!

(Continued from page 21.)

spot, when Arthur Augustus came to a sudden halt.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

"What's the matter, Gussy?"

"Gheat! Scott!" murmured the swell of the School House. "Pway look at those two cottages, deah boys!"

One cottage was precisely the same as before; but the other—the one which had been empty—was now very evidently occupied. The front door stood open, and playing on the front path was a little baby girl.

"Is—is that the child, Manners?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes, that's the one," replied Manners. "But come on; we shall never get to the station if we stop here."

The proof was complete.

Manners had told the truth from the first.

The following morning a parcel arrived for Manners, and he untied it with some curiosity, for he could see by the postmark that it had been dispatched from Wayland. To his delight and joy, it contained a magnificent camera—one of the most expensive variety—and with it were all the requisites of the photographer's art. A card inside told Manners that it was a "little token of esteem from a grateful father."

"By Jove! Mr. Overton's a brick!" declared Manners, gazing at his new possession excitedly. "This is a ripping camera, chaps, and I'll bet it'll take magnificent photos! But how the dickens did he know that I was interested in photography?"

"I told him," said Tom Merry. "He asked me what your pet hobby was. And I couldn't tell a fib, could I?"

"You bouncer!" exclaimed Manners. "So I've got you to thank for this?"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry.

After that Manners' camera was in continual use, and it never failed to remind the juniors of the time when its owner had been condemned by all and called a coward.

(Next Wednesday: "THE LAUGH'S ON THE FIRST ELEVEN!" It's great! It's a scream! It's the jape of the term! You simply must read what happened when the Rajah of Jai's cricket team visited St. Jim's. Make sure you don't miss this sparkling yarn of sport and fun. Order your GEM early.)



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