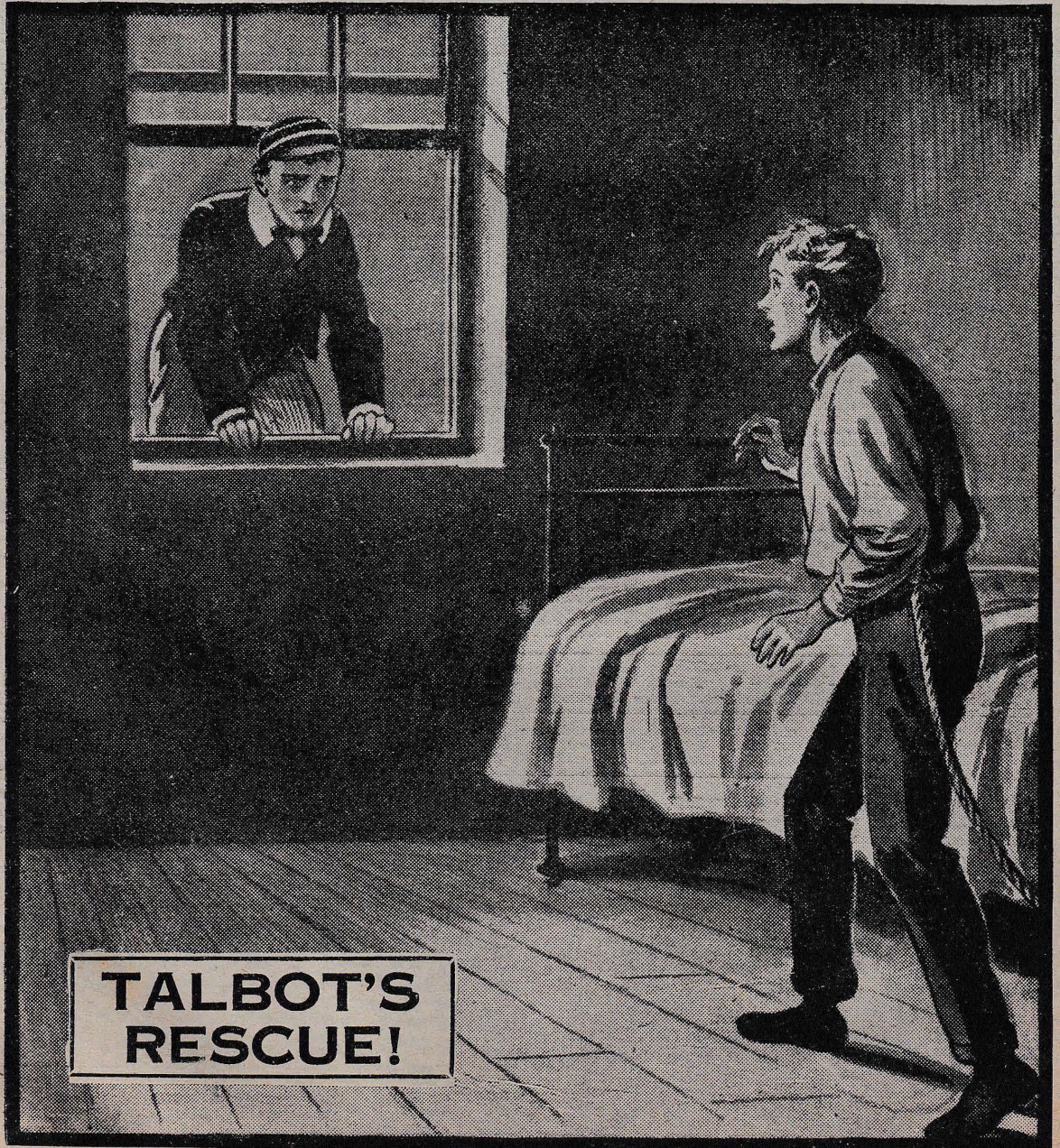
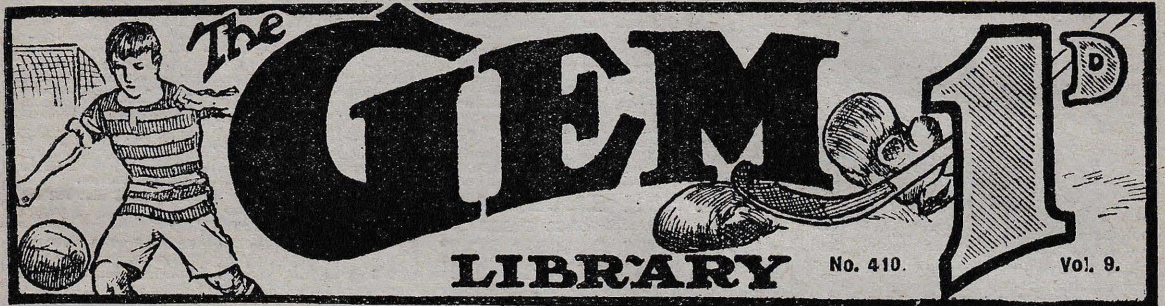


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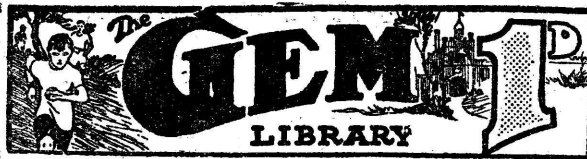
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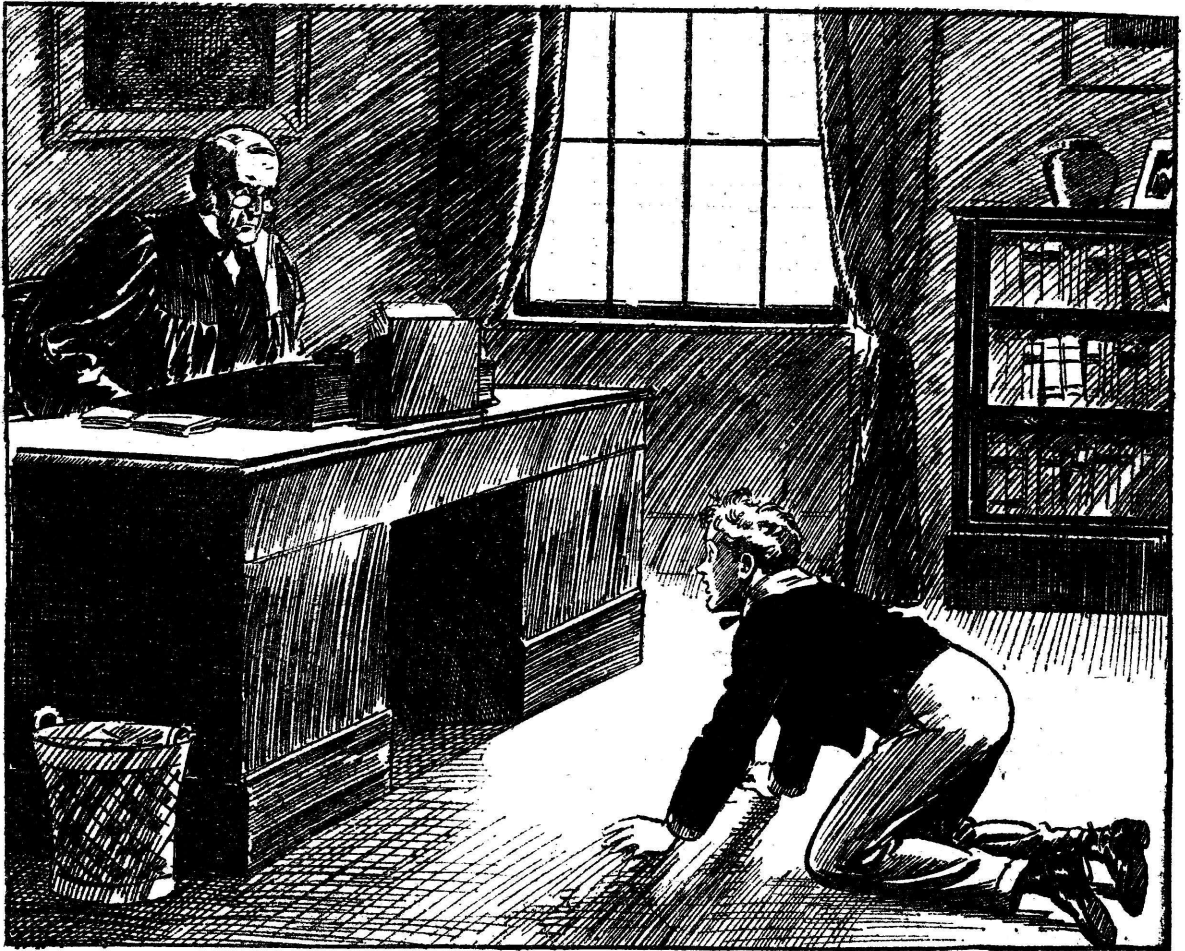
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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Dr. Holmes sat bolt upright at his table, and stared across it at Manners. He had certainly sent for him, but he had not expected to see him arrive in a heap, and to sprawl on his hands and knees before the table.  
(See Chapter 2.)

## CHAPTER 1. Routed Out!

**M**ASTER MANNERS is wanted!" Toby, the page, made that announcement, putting his head into Tom Merry's study in the School House.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther were there. Lowther was reading aloud his latest contribution for "Tom Merry's Weekly," and Tom was listening with heroic fortitude. Toby's announcement interrupted them.

"Master Manners—"

"Manners isn't here, fathead!" said Lowther, with a glare. "Go and eat coke! Now, where was I?"

"The 'Ead wants Master Manners," said Toby.  
"He can go and eat coke, too!"

"Oh, Master Lowther!"

"Where was I?" roared Lowther. "Oh, here we are! Herlock Sholmes rose to his feet. "My dear Jotson," he remarked—"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "It's funny, Monty, old man—quite as good as 'Chuckles.' But if the Head wants Manners, the Head's got to have Manners."

"He's certainly got no manners, interrupting a fellow like this!" said Lowther.

Somewhat consoled by that little joke, the humorist of the Shell laid down his manuscript.

Next Wednesday:

"TRUE BLUE!" AND "COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS!"

No. 410. (New Series.) Vol. 9.

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410



"If Master Manners ain't here, I don't know where he is," said Toby. "Which the 'Ead told me to find him and send him to the study."

"What the dickens is the row?" said Tom Merry. "Has Manners been snapping old Selby chasing his hat again? Is the Head in a wax, Toby?"

"No, Master Merry. He had a letter in his 'and."

"Well, it isn't a licking, then. Let's go and find Manners, Monty. It will be a licking if he keeps the Head waiting."

"That's all very well, but——"

"Oh, give Herlock Sholmes a rest! I've said it's funny, haven't I?"

"Fathead!"

"Thanks! Come on!"

Tom Merry and Lowther left the study in search of their chum. When the Head sent for a junior, that junior was supposed to be forthcoming at once. Keeping the Head waiting was unthinkable.

But Manners of the Shell seemed to have vanished.

Certainly he could not have gone out with his camera, for the dusk was falling; but he was not in the Shell passage, nor in the common-room. The chums of the Shell looked into Study No. 6, but Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy, who were having tea there, had seen nothing of Manners.

"Twy the dark-woom, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The duffah is always taking photogwaphs, or developin' photogwaphs, or pwintin' photogwaphs, or somethin'."

"Good egg! Thanks for the tip, Gussy!" said Lowther. "We only needed your mighty brain brought to bear on the subject——"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

Tom Merry and Lowther hurried downstairs. The dark-room was in the regions below. It belonged to Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, who was great on amateur photography. But Manners, who was still keener on cameras than Mr. Lathom, was allowed the run of it.

The door of the dark-room was closed. Tom Merry tried it, but it was locked. He hammered on the panels with his fist.

"Manners!" shouted Lowther.

There was a growl from the interior of the dark-room.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Manners, you're there? You're wanted!"

"Rats!"

"It's the Head!"

"More rats!"

Tom Merry thumped energetically on the door.

When Henry Manners was developing films, wild horses would not have dragged him away from the developing-tank. Even the awe-inspiring name of the Head had no effect upon him.

But his chums were more concerned for him than he was for himself. They thumped and kicked and shouted.

"Manners, you ass!"

"Manners, you fathead!"

"It's the Head, you duffer!"

"He wants you, you frabjous jabberwock!"

"Open the door, you idiot!"

"Come out, you dummy!"

There was a yell of exasperation from the amateur photographer of the Shell.

"Go away! I'm developing! Do you want to spoil the negative, you howling asses? Tell the Head to wait!"

Tom Merry chuckled. He was not very likely to tell the headmaster of St. Jim's to wait. Instead of carrying that message to the Head's study, he thumped on the door with a terrific thump that made it creak and groan.

Crash!

Manners had jumped as well as the door, and something had fallen in the dark-room. There was a howl of anguish.

"Oh, scissors! My film! Oh, you asses! Oh, crumbs!?"

There was a sound of wild groping. It was accompanied by ejaculations that were perfectly Hunnish in their ferocity.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry and Lowther.

"I'll 'Ha, ha, ha' you!" roared Manners.

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The door of the dark-room was thrown open. The red light streamed out from the darkness.

Manners rushed forth like a lion from his den.

"You asses! You duffers! You chumps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners had groped in the wreck in the dark-room, not wisely, but too well. There were smears of purple over his face, and a huge purple blob on his nose. The Shell fellows shrieked at the sight of him.

"Oh, you giddy picture!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Here——Hallo! Chuckit! Yoop!"

The infuriated Manners was smiting. Lowther rolled over on the floor, still roaring, but not with laughter.

"Hold on!" shouted Tom Merry. "Manners——Why, you fathead! Oh, crumbs!" Tom Merry rolled over Lowther. "Yaroooh! You dangerous lunatic! Yoop!"

"You've mucked up my film!" yelled Manners. "A three-bobber, you chumps! A dozen photographs, you burbling idiots! You—you—you——" Manners stuttered with wrath. "I'll squash you! I'll smother you with pyro! I'll——"

Monty Lowther jumped up.

"Collar him! He's got to go to the Head! Nail him!"

"Yes, rather! Come on, you mad ass!"

"Leggo!" roared Manners, as his chums seized him by either arm. "Leggo! I'm going to drench you with pyro!"

"Not good enough," said Tom Merry. "Come on! Face and all!"

"Leggo! I'll—I'll——"

"This way!" grinned Lowther.

Manners, wriggling desperately, was rushed away. With his empurpled face, he was certainly in no state to enter the august presence of the Head. But his chums were exasperated, and they did not stop to think of that. They rushed him down the passage at top speed, and along the wide corridor to the Head's study.

"Leggo, you chumps! I tell you——"

"Here we are!" panted Lowther. "Chuck him in!"

They had arrived at the door of the Head's study. Tom Merry disengaged one hand, and knocked at the door.

"Come in!" said the deep voice of Dr. Holmes.

Tom Merry opened the door. Manners made a last desperate struggle, but it was no use. He was in.

Tom Merry drew the door shut after he had gone in. Then the chums of the Shell looked at one another, panting.

"Couldn't keep the Head waiting, you know," murmured Lowther. "But—but I wonder what he'll say?"

Tom Merry wondered, too.

## CHAPTER 2.

### News for Manners!

**D**R. HOLMES sat bolt upright at his table, and stared across it at Manners.

He had sent for Manners, and he had expected him to arrive. But he had not expected to see him arrive in a heap, and to sprawl on his hands and knees before the table. But that was how Manners had come.

Dr. Holmes rose majestically to his feet.

"Manners!"

His voice was like the rumble of thunder. Manners blinked up at him, breathless. The Head started as he gazed at Manners' face. Manners was purple. He looked as if he had been drawing upon his supplies of pyro for use as a cosmetic.

"Manners!"

"Ye-es, sir!" gasped Manners, staggering up.

"How—how dare you enter my study in such a way?"

"I—I—I——"

"Why is your face in that disgustingly dirty state, Manners?"

"Mum-mum-my face, sir?" stammered Manners.

"Your face!" thundered the Head. "Look in the glass, boy! Is that a state in which to present yourself to your headmaster, Manners?"



Manners blinked into the glass and almost tottered.

"I—I'm sorry, sir! I—I was in the dark-room, and they routed me out and upset the tank, and—and——"

The Head's face relaxed.

"I am sorry if my summons interrupted you at a busy moment, Manners. If you came here in this state rather than keep me waiting, I excuse you. But why did you enter my study like a circus clown?"

"They—I mean I—that is—I—they——"

Dr. Holmes stepped to the door and threw it open. Tom Merry and Lowther made a strategic movement to retreat—too late!

"Merry! Lowther!"

"Yes, sir!" stammered the juniors.

"Are you responsible for the ridiculous way in which Manners entered my study?"

"Ahem! We—we didn't want you to be kept waiting, sir," stammered Tom Merry. "And—and we thought——"

"We thought Manners had better come as he was, rather than keep you waiting, sir," said Lowther meekly. The Head looked at them very hard.

"Quite right!" he said. "I am glad that you realise that your headmaster's time is valuable, Merry and Lowther."

"T-t-thank you, sir!"

"I am sure that you meant to oblige me."

"Ye-es, sir!"

"It is quite right and proper to be obliging, especially where your headmaster is concerned."

"Sus-sus-certainly, sir!"

"But there are ways of doing these things," added the Head grimly. "Your way is not the best that could be selected. You will take a hundred lines each. You may go."

"Oh!"

Dr. Holmes went back into his study. Manners was dabbing his face with his pocket-handkerchief. The only result was to make the handkerchief as purple as his face. A smile lurked at the corners of the doctor's mouth as he took his seat at the writing-table.

"Never mind your face, Manners. You are making matters worse, I think, instead of better."

Manners ceased dabbing, and blushed under the purple.

"I have sent for you, Manners, on account of a letter I have received."

"Yes, sir!"

"A new boy is coming into the School House—a lad named Loring. I understand that you are acquainted with him."

"I knew a chap of that name, sir," said Manners. "But that was in Switzerland, when I was there one vacation. He was keen on photography, and we chummed."

"This boy comes from Switzerland," said the Head. "His parents have resided there for many years, and the lad has been brought up in a Swiss school. But his father is naturally anxious for him to finish his education in England, and it has been arranged for him to come to this school. I now learn that he will arrive in London to-day, and he will come to St. Jim's to-morrow. His father mentions that he is acquainted with a junior here, named Manners, and I concluded that this would be yourself."

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Manners. "I remember Loring quite well. I haven't seen him for over a year, though."

"Now, Manners, the boy is coming from a foreign country, though he is English himself. The customs of an English school are, as you are doubtless aware, very different from those of a Swiss school. Oswald Loring will probably find himself a little strange at first in his new surroundings."

"Like a fish out of water, sir," said Manners.

"Ahem! Your expression, Manners, though somewhat inelegant, is just. As you are acquainted with the boy—in fact, it seems that you made friends——" The Head paused, and looked inquiringly at Manners.

"Well, we palled a good bit that vac, sir," said Manners. "We used to go out taking photographs together at Interlaken and Grindelwald. He was a decent

chap, though he had picked up rather a foreign accent among those Swiss."

"Under the circumstances, Manners, it has occurred to me that you could befriend this new boy a good deal, if you chose to do so, until he settles down into his place in the school. He will have much to learn."

"I'll back him up, sir," said Manners at once. "I shall be jolly glad to see him, and have a jaw about photographs!"

The Head smiled.

"Very well, Manners! He arrives at the school on Tuesday. Mr. Perks—a legal gentleman—will see him into the train at London. At Wayland Junction he will change for Rylcombe and this school. If you care to meet him at the junction, Manners, you will be excused from lessons to-morrow afternoon. I will speak to your Form-master."

"Certainly, sir! I'll take my camera—I—I mean I shall be jolly glad to go and meet the new chap, sir!"

"Very well! That is all, Manners. The express from London stops at Wayland Junction at three o'clock. You may go!"

"Yes, sir!" Manners hesitated.

He was thinking of his chums. Considering the way they had handled him a quarter of an hour before, it was really very decent of Manners. But Manners was a forgiving chap.

"Well?" said the Head.

"Ahem! I—I was thinking, sir, perhaps—perhaps the new chap might like to make a few acquaintances, sir, when—when we—I—go to meet him," said Manners diffidently. "It might make him feel a bit more at home, sir, if—if two or three of us met him at the station."

"Hum!"

"Tom—I mean Tom Merry—and Lowther, sir, would like a little run—I mean they would like no end to meet the new chap and make him feel at home."

Dr. Holmes laughed.

"Very well, Manners! You may take Lowther and Merry with you to-morrow afternoon. I will speak to Mr. Linton."

"Thank you, sir!" said the delighted Manners.

An extra half-holiday on the morrow was a consolation for the loss of his films. He left the Head's study feeling quite satisfied, and regarding the Head as a brick—as indeed he was.

## CHAPTER 3.

### Goals of Fire!

**T**OM MERRY and Monty Lowther were waiting for Manners at the end of the passage. They were looking wrathly.

They had received a hundred lines each for rendering valuable services to Manners. They had saved the Head's valuable time, and that was how they had been rewarded. Monty Lowther declared that the revered and reverend Head ought to be bumped. Bumping the Head was, however, quite out of the question. The chums of the Shell agreed that Manners should have it instead.

So when Manners came along the passage, with great satisfaction in his purpled face, his two chums were ready for him.

"Oh, here you are!" said Manners.

"Yes, here we are, fathead!" said Lowther warmly.

"It's ripping!" said Manners.

"It's what?"

"Topping! You fellows are in luck!"

"In luck?" howled Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather! Serve you right if you'd been licked! You deserved it after mucking up my films! You're in luck!"

"Oh, squash him!" said Lowther.

"Here, hold on!" roared Manners, as his wrathful chums collared him. "Wharrer you at? I tell you—leggo!—I say—yah!"

"Yank him away!" said Tom Merry. "If the Head hears us there'll be more lines!"

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



"I tell you—" raved Manners. "Yaroooh! Leggo my hair! Yooop! You're pulling it out! Why, you howling asses, I—yah!—oh!"

Headless of Manners' frantic expostulations, the Shell fellows rushed him away into the Form-room passage, and proceeded to administer punishment.

Bump!

"That's for my lines!" said Tom Merry.

"Yoooop!"

"Bai Jove! Is it battle-murdah, or sudden death?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, coming along the passage. "Whatevah is the mattah, deah boys?"

Bump!

"That's for my lines!" said Lowther.

"Yow! Help! Fathead! Whoop!"

"Bai Jove! What are you bumpin' Mannahs for, deah boys?"

"Lend me a hand, you fathead!" roared Manners, struggling in the grasp of his affectionate chums.

"I wefuse to be called a fathead, Mannahs!"

"Give him one more!" panted Lowther. "One each for us, and one for the Head!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

Manners sat on the floor and glared at his chums. He was speechless with wrath. Monty Lowther shook a warning forefinger at him.

"It's an ungrateful world, Manners," he said seriously, "and we don't expect any thanks from you. But reflect, my young friend—"

"Groooh! I'll pulverise you!" gasped Manners. "You—you idiots! I jolly well won't take you now! Groooh!"

"Eh? Take us where?"

Manners scrambled to his feet, and dusted down his clothes, and glared at his chums. The purple of pyro and the crimson of wrath mingled beautifully upon his countenance.

"You chumps! You duffers! After my getting you an extra half-holiday to-morrow, you ungrateful rotters! Yow-ow!"

Tom Merry and Lowther jumped simultaneously.

"An extra half-holiday?" exclaimed Tom.

"Yes, you hooligan!" roared Manners. "There's a new chap coming, the Head says—an old acquaintance of mine, and I've got to meet him, and I asked the Head—yow-ow!—to let me take you—groooh!—with me, and now I—yow-ow!—won't."

"My dear chap," said Lowther affectionately, "that was just like you! Why didn't you tell us before we bumped you?"

"You frabjous ass—groooh!—did you give me time? Yow!"

"An extra half-holiday," said Tom, rubbing his hands. "That's ripping! Bless the new chap—he's as welcome as the flowers in May! We'll come with you, Mannahs, old scout—rather!"

"You jolly well won't!" hooted Manners. "I'll leave you behind now."

"Bai Jove!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Aftah the way you have tweated Mannahs, you chaps, you must expect to take a back seat. Mannahs had better take me instead."

"Why, you cheeky ass—"

"I wefuse to be called a cheeky ass, Tom Mewwy. I wegard it as a wippin' ideah. Besides, it will give the new chap a vewy good impression of St. Jim's, if he sees me first," explained Arthur Augustus. "Boundahs like you ought not to be spwung on him all at once, you know. Mannahs, deah boy, am I comin'?"

Manners grimed.

"Gussy, old man, it can't be did." Manners was recovering now. "This new chap is coming from Switzerland, and he don't know much about the place here. If he saw you first, he might take the school for a private lunatic asylum, or something of the sort, and bolt right back to Switzerland."

"Why, you uttah ass—"

"Quite so," chimed in Lowther. "We shall have to let Gussy dawn on him gradually. It would be hardly the game to give him such a shock all at once. I suggest that the first day he's here Gussy should wear a mask, or a fire-screen, or something."

"Lowthah, you uttah wottah!"

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"You look rather dusty, Manners, old son," said Tom Merry amicably. "Come to the study and let's brush you down."

Manners grunted.

"I'll get you a hairbrush, Manners, old chap," murmured Lowther.

Manners snorted.

"It was all for your own good, you know," said Tom persuasively. "We've taken a lot of trouble with you."

Another snort.

"Now, Manners, old chap—"

Manners walked away.

"I wegard Mannahs as quite justified in being watty at your wuffianly conduct," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I should be watty myself. I wegard you as a pair of vewy wuff beasts!"

"You'd be watty if we bumped you!" asked Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah."

"Bump him!" said Lowther. "I'd like to see what a tailor's dummy is like when it's ratty."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you howwid wuffians— Wefuse me—yawoooh!—you feahful wottahs—wow!—you are wuinia' my twousahs— Whoop!"

Tom Merry and Lowther fled, laughing, leaving Arthur Augustus sitting on the floor, gasping for breath.

They went to look for Manners. With that extra half-holiday in prospect, Manners was an acquaintance to be cultivated. Tom Merry was of opinion that Lowther had been rather hasty in bumping him, and Lowther expressed his belief that Tom had played the giddy ox, as might have been expected of him.

Manners was splashing away energetically in a bath-room, and declined to reply to affectionate whispers through the keyhole. When he came out, he still had purple stains about his face and ears. He sniffed at the sight of his chums.

"What time do we start to-morrow?" asked Lowther.

"Any time you like, old chap, you know," said Tom Merry.

Manners burst into a laugh.

"We'll let you take your camera," added Lowther.

"You silly asses!" said Manners. "I've a jolly good mind to take Talbot and Kangy instead."

"Heap coals of fire on our heads, by taking us!" suggested Lowther. "You can't do better than heap coals of fire on a chap's head."

"And we're awfully anxious to meet that old acquaintance of yours," urged Tom Merry. "He must be a ripping chap, or you wouldn't have palled with him—ahem!"

"I don't know," said Manners. "I've palled with a couple of howling idiots, I know that! We have to get to Wayland at three to-morrow. Let's go and have tea."

"Hear, hear!"

Tom Merry and Lowther linked arms with their reconciled chum, and the Terrible Three marched away to tea, on the best of terms.

## CHAPTER 4.

### A Muck-up!

"I WONDAAH!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form made that remark, in a thoughtful sort of way, the following day after dinner.

D'Arcy of the Fourth had been buried in thought for some minutes.

"Well, what do you wonder?" asked Jack Blake, as D'Arcy paused. "Wondering whether McKenna is going to put a tax on silk hats?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Or neckties?" remarked Digby. "That would be a good wheeze. A tax of a tanner on new neckties, you know. Gussy, alone, would have to shell out hundreds of pounds."

"Pway don't be widic, Dig. I wondah whethah we ought to go ovah to Wayland this aftahnoon with those Shell boundahs."

"Of course we ought," said Blake. "It's a fine afternoon, and I'd rather have a spin on a bike than lessons any day. Rity one of us didn't know that new chap in Switzerland. Are you sure you never met him, Gussy,





Cutts & Co. were accustomed to acting promptly on such occasions. Almost in a twinkling, the cards were slipped into a drawer, cigarettes and ash-trays disappeared into a box—Gilmore jerked back the curtain from the open window, and St. Leger brandished a newspaper to dissipate the smoke. Tap! "Who's there?" called out Cutts, to gain time. (See Chapter 11.)

on one of your high-class holidays in foreign countries?"

"I do not wemembah meetin' him, Blake."

"Make an effort!" urged Blake. "You can remember lots of things, if you try. If you could remember meeting that kid Loring, you know, you could go and meet him, same as Manners. And you could ask to take us with you."

"But I cannot wemembah meeting him when I have nevah met him, Blake."

"What a rotten memory!" said Blake, in disgust.

"I was thinkin' that we ought to go, all the same. The chap comin' fwom a foweign countwy, you know, will feel wathah stwange at first, and it would be only wight to greet him in a wathah hearty way. Those Shell boundahs are weally not suitable. I think I shall put it to Mr. Lathom."

"Do!" grinned Blake.

Arthur Augustus, reflected a little further, and finally made his way to Mr. Lathom's study. He came back in about five minutes, with a frown upon his aristocratic brow.

"Lathom is wathah an ass," he confided to his chums.

"He says he does not see any necessity for me to miss my lessons this aftahnoon. I suppose it would be wathah bad form to ask the Head after Mr. Lathom has wefused."

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came out of the School House, looking very cheerful. Manners had his camera slung over his shoulder. An extra half-holiday seemed to agree with the chums of the Shell.

"Goin', deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Yaas, wathah," said Monty Lowther, with a humorous imitation of Arthur Augustus' own beautiful accent.

"Sorry you fellows can't come," said Tom Merry.

"Stick to your lessons, like good little boys. Ta-ta!"

"Fathead!" said Blake politely.

The Terrible Three walked away to the gates, and the bell called the Fourth-Formers to the Form-room. Arthur Augustus shook his head seriously as he went. He was quite doubtful about the impression the Terrible Three would make upon the new kid from Switzerland. A reception of the stranger from a strange land would have been much safer in his own hands, he was sure of that.

The Terrible Three sauntered away cheerily for Wayland. It was a fine, cold, clear afternoon, and they enjoyed the walk through the leafless wood, tramping through the thick carpet of dead leaves.

They arrived at Wayland Junction ten minutes before the hour.



"Lots of time!" remarked Tom Merry, glancing at the station clock. "Better get on the platform and wait for the express."

"We'll take the new kid for a trot round," said Manners. "No need to hurry to the school, you know. It's ripping weather for taking photographs."

The chums of the Shell waited on the platform, watching for the express. It was signalled at last.

When the train came buzzing into the station the juniors scanned the passengers as they alighted.

There were a dozen or so of them, mostly of the grown-up variety.

"You know the chap by sight," said Lowther. "You'd better pick him out, Manners."

"Well, I don't know that I remember him very clearly," said Manners. "A slim sort of pale chap, I remember. He doesn't seem to be here."

The three juniors stationed themselves near the barrier, and scanned each passenger as he or she passed out.

There were several soldiers, several women, a couple of old gentlemen and a farmer, and only one boy. But that certainly was not the new boy for St. Jim's. He was a youth in the uniform of a porter of Blankley's, of Wayland.

The juniors looked at one another when the passengers were gone. The express rolled on out of the station.

Manners gave a grunt.

"He hasn't come!" he remarked.

"Unless he's passed the station without noticing it," said Tom Merry, glancing after the express as it disappeared down the line. "Might have done that."

"Must be an ass if he has! The porters were yelling 'Wayland Junction' loud enough," said Lowther. "I suppose the Head wouldn't expect us to search the express from end to end for the young duffer."

"Hardly. Well, we've missed him!"

The juniors looked a little blank. They had been given that half-holiday specially to meet the new fellow and take him to St. Jim's. They wondered a little uneasily what had become of him.

"Can't have lost himself," said Tom Merry, at length. "If he was put into the train at the London end—"

"The Head said he would be," said Manners.

"Well, unless he got out, he must be still in it. I suppose he wouldn't get out before he got to Wayland Junction."

"Not unless he was off his rocker."

"Blessed if I see what's to be done. If he's gone on we can't overtake him. The next stop of the express is at Laxham, I believe. We can't overtake it!"

Manners made an irritable gesture.

"The young ass! That's what he's done, of course! Gone to sleep, perhaps, and missed his station. He'll find he's passed Wayland, and get out at the next stop. He can't get from Laxham to St. Jim's. He'll have to take a train back here. Let's see how long it will take him."

The juniors proceeded to the booking-office to make inquiries. They learned that the next stop of the express was indeed Laxham, ten miles distant; and that to get a train back to Wayland from Laxham it was necessary to wait there till four o'clock.

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"We can get the local to Laxham before four," he said; "the young ass may stick there, not knowing what to do, as he's never travelled in England before. I think we ought to go on to Laxham and spot him."

"What about my photographs?" demanded Manners.

"Well, we came out to meet that lost sheep, not really to take photographs," grinned Tom Merry. "The Head will expect us to do our best. Come on! The local goes in ten minutes, and we shall rope him in at Laxham."

Manners grunted discontentedly, but he assented. When the slow local train started for Laxham the Terrible Three were in it.

"Wasting the whole blessed afternoon!" growled

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Manners. "It gets dusk so jolly early now, I sha'n't have time for my photographs."

"I'll read you my latest for the 'Weekly,' if you like," offered Lowther; "I've got it in my pocket."

"Bow-wow!" said Manners ungratefully.

The local train crawled to Laxham. The chums of the Shell were feeling decidedly dissatisfied. As Manners remarked indignantly, they might as well have been at lessons as crawling about the country in local trains.

At Laxham they jumped out, well before four o'clock.

"We'll find him here," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Unless the blessed idiot has gone on to Southampton!" snorted Manners. "I shouldn't wonder."

"Oh, rats! He couldn't be ass enough."

But it soon looked as if the new boy had been ass enough, for there was no sign of him to be discovered at Laxham Station. If he had alighted there to take a train back to Wayland he should have been there still. But he wasn't. No person who could possibly have been Oswald Loring could be discovered in the station.

"Well, I'm blowed!" said Manners forcibly. "If this doesn't beat the band! Where on earth has the howling ass got to?"

"Still in the express!" grinned Lowther. "He's booked for Southampton, sure as a gun. Let's hope he won't take the steamer for France. He might, after this."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, he's not here," said Tom Merry. "We'd better get back to Wayland. We must take the four train, whether he does or not."

Up to the last moment the Terrible Three kept a watch for the new boy. But he did not appear, and at four o'clock another slow train bore them back to Wayland Junction.

They arrived there somewhat out of temper.

"Where on earth is the blessed idiot?" Manners demanded. "Perhaps, after all, he lost the express in London, and is coming on by the next."

"Bless him!" said Lowther. "The next express stops here at five; we'll give it a look in, and if he isn't in it, we'll give him a miss."

"And what about my photographs?"

"Oh, blow your photographs!"

The express from London came in at five. With great care the Terrible Three scanned the passengers who alighted. But it was clear at once that Oswald Loring was not among them. No boy of any sort alighted from the train.

"That's done it!" growled Manners. "Let's get back to the school. It's too dark now for taking any photographs."

And the Terrible Three, puzzled and annoyed, started to walk back to St. Jim's, Manners with his camera slung on his shoulder, still unused. Where the new boy might be was a mystery. If he had missed the first express he should have come on by the next, but he hadn't. If he had passed Wayland in the first express, he should have got out at Laxham—but he hadn't. The only possible conclusion was that he had gone to sleep, and had gone right on in the first express. Where he would wake up, and what he would do when he woke up, they could not guess. But they had done their best, and there was nothing more to be done.

"We shall have to tell the Head," said Manners, "and somebody ought to pay for our return tickets to Laxham, too. The young duffer ought to be scragged!"

Somewhat tired, and decidedly dissatisfied, the chums of St. Jim's arrived at the school. A surprise awaited them there.

## CHAPTER 5.

### The New Boy.

**B**AI Jove! Heah they are!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was lounging elegantly in the doorway of the School House as the Terrible Three came across the dusky quadrangle. He turned his eyeglass upon the Shell fellows, and smiled a lofty smile.



"Wathah a pity you didn't take me, aftah all, instead of those duffahs, Mannahs," he remarked.

"I don't see it," growled Manners. "We've had trouble enough, without a blessed born idiot bothering us!"

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"Oh, rats!"

Manners was a little irritable, which was not to be wondered at, under the circumstances.

"You have played the giddy ox, just as I expected," said D'Arcy calmly. "How on earth did you come to miss the new kid?"

"How could we help missing him, when he didn't come?" demanded Lowther.

"Wats!"

"What do you mean, fathead?"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead, Lowther. I weward you as havin' failed to do your dutay," said D'Arcy severely. "You were sent to meet the new kid, and I pwesume you went aaround takin' wotten photogwaphs instead of lookin' for him. The poor chap was left to find his way heah alone, and, of course, it took him a long time, bein' a stwangah in the place."

The Terrible Three jumped, as if moved by the same spring.

"Do you mean to say he's come?" roared Tom Merry.

"What rot!" growled Manners. "He hasn't come!"

"He has come, Mannahs!"

"Loring's come?" howled Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But—but he can't have!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "If you're trying to pull our leg, you duffer——"

"I am not doin' anything of the sort, Tom Mewwy. Loring came in an houah ago, and I saw him go to the Housemastah's studdy."

"Impossible!"

"He is still with Mr. Wailton," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Blake has seen him, too. Haven't you, Blake?"

"Of course I have!" said Blake, in wonder. "Lots of the fellows have seen him. A rather fat chap, with a foreign accent. He's jawing to Railton now."

"Well, that beats it!" said Tom Merry. "He didn't come in the express, that's certain; and we looked for him at Laxham, and then waited at Wayland for the next express. If he's come, how the merry dickens did he get here?"

"You must have missed him at the station."

"He wasn't there, I tell you."

"Well, he's here!" grinned Blake. "Here he comes, as a matter of fact."

The Terrible Three spun round to look at the youth who came along the passage from Mr. Railton's study.

He was a lad of about fifteen, somewhat plump in figure, with a fat face and light blue eyes. His Etons were well filled out by his plump figure. They looked a size too small for him.

He paused as he came up to the group of juniors.

"Excuse me," he said, with a slight foreign accent in his speech. "Can you tell me where to find Manners of the Shell?"

Manners stared at him.

"Are you Loring?" he asked.

"Yes; my name is Loring."

"The new kid from Switzerland?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't know you," said Manners.

The new boy smiled slightly.

"That is not surprising, as I am a stranger here," he said. "I have not been in England since I was a child until now."

"And you don't know me?" said Manners.

The new boy gave him a very sharp look.

"Unless you are Manners——" he began.

"I'm Manners."

"Ah, I thought I remembered you!" said Loring, holding out his hand. "But it is so long since we have met. You have not forgotten our friendship at Vevey?"

Manners shook hands with him mechanically.

"I don't remember your face a bit," he said. "You've grown fatter."

Loring laughed.

"Yes; I was a little pale and thin when you knew me before," he said. "My health has improved very much."

"Your eyes seem lighter," said Manners.

"Indeed! That is hardly possible, is it?" said Loring. "You are just the same, though I did not recall you for a moment. I am very glad to see you, Manners. I hope we shall be friends here, as we were in Switzerland. Mr. Railton has told me about you, and he says I am to share your study for the present."

"But how did you get here?" broke in Tom Merry.

Loring looked puzzled.

"To England, do you mean?" he asked. "I came the usual way, by Lausanne and Paris, and the boat from Boulogne; then from Folkestone to London."

"I don't mean that. How did you get here from London this afternoon?"

"By the express, of course!"

"To Wayland Junction?"

"Yes."

"What time did you get there?"

"Three o'clock."

"Great Scott!"

"I do not see why you should be surprised," said Loring, looking very perplexed. "It was arranged that I should do so. My father's lawyer, in London, saw me off in the express."

"And you landed at Wayland at three?"

"Certainly!"

"And—and then you came on to the school?"

"Yes. I missed the local train," said Loring. "I find I ought to have taken the local train from Wayland to Rylcombe, but I had forgotten that. So I had to walk, and I did not reach the school till five o'clock."

"You boundahs must have been asleep!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Wathah a pitay I wasn't with you—what?"

"I don't understand this," said Tom Merry, very quietly. "We went to meet you at Wayland, Loring."

The new boy gave a start.

"You did!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, we did. We were in good time, and we watched for you. We didn't see you get out of the express. We were watching all the time for you."

The colour wavered for a moment in Loring's fat cheeks.

"I—I do not understand it," he said, after a pause. "I certainly did not see you at Wayland Junction."

"And we didn't see you," said Lowther. "And if you'd got out of the express, we should jolly well have seen you!"

"Lowthah!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Loring flushed.

"I cannot account for it," he said. "I certainly came to Wayland—unless, indeed, I mistook the station. I—I am not accustomed to travelling alone, and—and I do not like asking strangers questions. Perhaps I alighted at the wrong station."

"The name's up plain enough," said Lowther.

"What was the station like where you got out?" asked Arthur Augustus, coming to the rescue of the new boy.

"A large station," said Loring. "There was a soldiers' camp within sight of it—crowds of men in khaki."

"Bai Jove, that must have been Abbotsford!"

"It certainly wasn't Wayland, if there was a khaki camp in sight from the station," said Tom Merry. "Abbotsford's the last stop before Wayland. What on earth did you get out there for?"

"I—I had asked a passenger," faltered Loring. "He said the next station was Wayland, and I got out in a hurry. I was afraid of going too far."

"And didn't you look at the name of the station?" asked Tom.

"I—I did not think of it. I thought it was Wayland, as I had been told that that was the next station."

"And you walked here from Abbotsford?" exclaimed Manners.

"I must have done so. I thought it was a very long way."

"By Jove, it was!"

"Well, I must say you're an ass!" said Tom Merry.

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"Blessed if you're safe to travel about alone! We thought you'd gone on to Southampton!"

Loring smiled.

"I should not be so silly as that," he said. "It is the first time I have travelled in England, and the railways are very different from those on the Continent. I—I was a little nervous. I was very afraid that I might pass my station. I am so sorry that you waited for me there. Of course, I did not know that I was to be met at the station."

"Weren't you told?" exclaimed Manners. "I understood that the Head had let you know."

Loring flushed again.

"I—I was very confused with so much travelling," he said. "Perhaps I was told; I forgot. I have hardly slept since I left Switzerland; I have had a bad headache with so much travelling. I am very sorry that you have had so much trouble."

"Oh, that's all right," said Tom. "I'm jolly glad you got here safe, after all. We were going to report to the Head that you must have gone on to Southampton. Blessed if I'd have guessed that you got out of the train too soon. Nothing to worry about. There's no harm done."

"It's all serene!" said Lowther.

Manners did not speak.

"You must be weedy for your tea, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus kindly. "Tea's just on weedy in Studay No. 6. Pway do us the honah to come!"

"Thank you so much!"

"You Shell boundahs comin'?" asked Arthur Augustus. "We're havin' wathah a spwead! My patah has turned up twumps at last!"

"What-ho!"

The Terrible Three and the new junior followed Arthur Augustus to Study No. 6, in which celebrated apartment Herries and Dig were busy with the "spread."

## CHAPTER 6.

### Manners Declines to be Reasonable!

**S**TUDY NO. 6 was quite festive. In a very short time Oswald Loring was quite at home with the School House fellows.

His misadventure in getting to St. Jim's gave the juniors the impression that he was a little "soft." To get out at the wrong station without discovering it, and let himself in for a ten-mile tramp across country, was decidedly "soft." Still, he seemed an agreeable fellow, and Study No. 6 was nothing if not hospitable.

The chap had come from a far-off land, and it was his first time in his native country since his infancy. The juniors felt that it was up to them to make his home-coming agreeable to him, and to give him a good impression of the school. As Blake privately remarked, it wasn't the custom of Study No. 6 to bother very much over new kids. But this especial new kid was a little out of the common, and, indeed, his very "softness" in bungling his journey to St. Jim's made them feel kindly disposed towards him, perhaps in a slightly lofty way.

When Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did anything, he did it in style. Loring told them that he had been put in the Shell, and it occurred to Gussy's powerful brain that it would be useful to him to make the acquaintance of some of his future Form-fellows under pleasant auspices in Study No. 6. So Talbot and Dane and Glyn and Kangaroo of the Shell were asked to the feed, which was rather a tax upon the accommodation of Study No. 6; but the merry party squeezed in somehow.

As an old acquaintance of Loring's, Manners was given a place next to him, but he slipped out of it, leaving it to someone else. Manners was in a silent and thoughtful mood.

Once or twice the new boy glanced at him, with a glance that was very penetrating. Manners did not seem to observe it.

In so numerous a gathering, Manners' silence was hardly observed, unless it was by Loring himself.

Manners uttered scarcely a word all the time.

When tea was over the Terrible Three took their leave,

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leaving Loring chatting very amicably with the fellows in No. 6. His queer Swiss accent rather amused the juniors.

Tom Merry clapped Manners on the shoulder in the passage.

"Cheero!" he remarked.

"Yes; buck up, kid," said Monty Lowther. "Nothing to grouse about, you know. Surely you're not still thinking of those blessed photographs you might have taken. Think of the films you've saved instead."

But Manners did not smile.

"What do you think of that new chap?" he asked.

"Rather a duffer, but all right, I should say," said Tom Merry.

"You think he's all right?"

"I don't see any reason to suppose that he isn't," said Tom, in surprise. "He seems frank enough, and good-natured."

"I noticed him eating with his knife once," said Manners.

"Well, so did I, as a matter of fact," confessed Tom. "But it isn't our business what he does with his knife. He's been brought up in a foreign country. They're not so particular about those things in Switzerland."

"He's got a jolly queer accent," said Manners.

"He's picked that up among the Swiss. I dare say it will work off in time. Anyway, what does it matter?"

"I mean he's got a German accent."

"Tain't so bad as all that."

"Loring lived among French Swiss," said Manners. "I remember he used to have an accent. But you pick up a French accent from French Swiss. You pick up a German accent among German Swiss."

"Do you mean to say that he's changed his accent since you knew him?"

"Yes."

"Well, perhaps he's lived among German Swiss since then."

"I don't see why he should, as his father lives at Vevey. That's in the Pays du Vaud—a French-Swiss canton."

Tom Merry stared at his chum.

"What's the matter with you, Manners? You seem to have taken a dislike to the kid, and you're the only fellow at St. Jim's who knows him, too."

"It's because he mucked up the photographing expedition this afternoon," grinned Lowther. "Manners could forgive anything but that."

"I don't like him," said Manners deliberately.

"Oh, bow-wow! You must be civil, anyway, as he's planked down in our study," said Tom. "I can't say I quite like that; I'd rather have kept the study to ourselves. But a giddy Housemaster's word is law. And he's put here because he's a friend of yours, Manners. I understood that you'd been quite chummy with him during your vac in Switzerland."

"We were pally," said Manners grudgingly. "But—"

"But what, fathead?"

"He's changed."

"Well, he seems to have improved. You said he was a skinny, pale chap, and he's grown fatter."

"I don't mean that. He tells lies."

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"He was telling lies about the way he got here," said Manners obstinately. "He was going to stick to it that he got out at Wayland, till he found that we had been there waiting for him. Then he spun us that yarn about mistaking the station and getting out at Abbotsford."

"Look here, Manners, you're off your rocker. Why on earth should he tell us whoppers about a thing that doesn't matter at all?"

"That's what I want to know," said Manners grimly, "and that's what I'm jolly well going to know, too. I'm not satisfied about him."

Monty Lowther yawned portentously.

"I'll tell you what," he said. "I'll read you something I'm doing for the 'Greyfriars Herald'—Wharton's paper, you know. It's awfully funny."

"Bow-wow!" said Manners. He walked away, leaving his two chums in a state of great astonishment.



"Well, this takes the cake," said Tom Merry, with a whistle. "Here's a new kid planted in our study because he's Manners' old pal, and Manners has got his back up at the very start. I was thinking that they'd always be out photographing together, and that we shouldn't see anything of Manners. Doesn't look much like that now. What's the matter with the new kid?"

Lowther grinned.

"He's got the wrong Swiss accent, and he eats with his knife," he said. "Manners will come round. It's all on account of those blessed photographs that never came off. We'll be civil to him, and wait for Manners to come round."

The Shell fellows went to their study, and a little later Oswald Loring came in. Tom Merry and Lowther greeted him cheerily, all the more so to make up for Manners' unaccountable shortcomings. They showed him where to put his books, and helped him unpack his box in the dormitory.

"Got your camera with you?" Lowther asked him.

"No; I have no camera," said Loring.

"But you're a jolly keen photographer, aren't you?" said Lowther, in surprise.

There was a pause before the new boy replied.

"I left my camera at home," he said.

"I dare say Manners will lend you his when you want it," said Tom Merry. "You used to do a lot of snapping with him at Vevey, didn't you?"

"Of—of course. But Manners does not seem to like me so much as he did at Vevey," said Loring.

Tom Merry felt a little uncomfortable.

"Oh, that's all right," he said. "Manners is rather rusty to-day. He's really as pleased as Punch that you've come."

Loring nodded, but did not reply. Later, in the study, Manners came in to do his preparation. He gave the new junior the briefest of nods, and sat down to his work without a word. Loring did not seem to notice his peculiar manner, but Tom Merry and Monty Lowther did, and they felt decidedly uncomfortable.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked in for Loring a little later, and took him away to the common-room. Then Manners' chums took him to task.

"Look here, why can't you be civil to the new kid?" Tom Merry demanded.

Manners grunted.

"What's the matter with him?" demanded Lowther.

"I don't like him."

"Oh, rats! Why shouldn't you? Besides, you can be civil to a fellow without liking him," said Lowther. "You said the very same thing to me when I was down on that chap Julian when he first came. And he turned out one of the very best."

"This chap won't," said Manners. "I don't trust him."

"I can see you've got your back up," said Tom Merry. "And I must say that I think it's a bit unreasonable. The new kid's done no harm. He mucked up our afternoon, I know, but he can't help being a bit of an ass."

"He's not a bit of an ass. He's a good bit of a rascal, in my opinion."

"For goodness' sake, cheese it, old chap! Blessed if I don't think you're wandering in your mind," said Tom Merry testily.

Manners grunted again, more emphatically than before, and the subject dropped. But this beginning did not promise well for the harmony of Tom Merry's study.

## CHAPTER 7. A Black Sheep

**O**SWALD LORING took his place in the Shell at St. Jim's, dropping in there without attracting any particular attention. New boys, after the first day, were not objects of very much interest, unless there was something out of the common about them.

Fellows like Talbot or Julian made their mark, and were a good deal in the public eye in the life of the Lower School. But, as a rule, a new fellow disappeared

into the crowd, as it were, and was not specially remarked. Thus it was with Loring.

He was quite commonplace in every way.

Only his slightly foreign accent marked him out from the rest of the fellows. He gave Mr. Linton satisfaction in class, but did not reach any especial eminence. He seemed to have plenty of money, but he spent it moderately. He did not play football—a circumstance that added to his general insignificance.

Tom Merry & Co., probably, would have seen little of him, and thought less, but for two circumstances—one, that he was in their study, and the other, that he was an old acquaintance of Manners, and that Manners avoided him.

As an old acquaintance, if not an old pal, it was really up to Manners to make the new fellow feel at home. Manners' neglect of his duties in that respect was quite flagrant.

Tom Merry and Lowther felt it incumbent upon them to make up, so far as they could, for their chum's shortcomings.

For that reason they went out of their way a little to be agreeable to Loring. Tom Merry offered, in the most friendly way, to initiate him into the mysteries of football, a game which Loring had had no opportunity of playing in Switzerland. But Loring did not accept the offer. He did not care for the game at all—a fact that lowered him considerably in Tom Merry's estimation.

Lowther was willing to help him, in the way of writing contributions for the "Weekly." But Loring did not care for that.

After a few days, in fact, the Shell fellows had to admit that their new study-mate was not a fellow they would really have chosen to chum with.

He was a good deal of a slacker. He did what he had to do, and no more. And he made friends outside the study, with fellows whom the Terrible Three did not pull with at all.

When Tom discovered that Loring was chumming with Levison and Mellish of the Fourth, and Crooke of the Shell, he was somewhat exercised in his mind. The fellow being new to the school, it was not satisfactory to see him falling into the hands of the black sheep of the House. Probably a similarity of tastes led him to seek their society; but Tom, after cogitating on the matter, decided to speak a word of warning.

He tackled Loring one afternoon after lessons, when the new junior was heading for the old tower. Tom had seen Levison and Crooke and Piggott disappear in that direction, and he guessed that a "smoking-bee" was on. He tapped the new junior kindly on the shoulder.

"Where are you off to?" he asked.

"Oh, just strolling!" said Loring.

Tom frowned a little. This was as near a falsehood as it could be, without actually being a lie. Loring certainly was strolling, but he was undoubtedly heading for the headquarters of the black sheep.

"I'm going to give you a word of advice," said Tom bluntly.

"Danke," said Loring. "I mean, thank you!"

"Danke!" repeated Tom. "It's queer how you drop into German words, Loring. You were brought up in French Switzerland, weren't you?"

"There are many German-Swiss there," said Loring. "In time I shall lose my Swiss accent, I hope. I have been accustomed to speaking both French and German in that country."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Well, it's about the friends you've made here," he said. "You're a new kid, and you don't know the ropes. Those fellows—Crooke and Levison—won't do you any good."

"Is that what you call to play the game, to speak of them so when they are not here?" asked Loring.

Tom Merry flushed scarlet.

"Why, you young rotter!" he began wrathfully. "Do you think I wouldn't say the same if they were present? What do you mean?"

"Nothing—nothing!" said Loring, backing away a little. "But they are my friends!"

"Well, they're precious bad friends for you," said



Tom shortly. "I'm telling you this because you're a new kid, and don't know the ropes. If you're caught smoking, for instance, it means a licking."

Loring shrugged his shoulders.

"And if you're found gambling, it may mean the sack!" said Tom. "That's the kind of thing that goes on in Crooke's set."

"Ah! You think it is so wicked to have a little flutter?"

"I think it's blackguardly, if that's what you mean."

"You are so particular!" said Loring. "In my country—I mean, in the country where I was brought up—there are gambling-tables in every casino, in nearly every town, and one can play as one chooses."

"I know that," said Tom. "But Switzerland isn't England. You'll find that there's a jolly big difference. The best thing you can do is to give Crooke & Co. a wide berth, and at any rate to keep out of a little flutter, as you call it."

"But life would be dull without some little excitement."

"If you want excitement, there's footer."

Loring yawned.

"You can take a hand in the amateur theatricals if you like, or footer, or boxing, or skating, or the 'Weekly,'" said Tom. "There's lots of things going on, if you want amusement. No need to act the giddy goat."

"It is a matter of taste, nicht war?"

"Well, if your tastes lie in that direction, I've got no more to say. I thought I ought to speak to you about it, as you're in my study."

"I am ever so much obliged to you."

There was an accent of sarcasm in Loring's voice that made Tom Merry flush again with anger. He turned abruptly on his heel, and Loring, smiling, sauntered on to the old tower, to join his merry friends there.

"How do you like him yourself?" asked Manners, joining Tom in the quad. "I heard what you said to him. Pretty specimen, ain't he?"

"Well, I don't want to be too down on him," said Tom. "It's true what he said. He was brought up in a country where they have gambling-tables in public, so I suppose it isn't easy for him to be decent. It's a pity he wasn't sent to England a bit earlier, I think."

"Do you still want him in your study?" growled Manners.

"We can't turn him out; I suppose," said Tom. "I can't say that I'm overjoyed to have him there. What puzzles me is that you're so much up against him, after you were pally with him in Switzerland."

"I knew him there only a fortnight, and he wasn't a bit like this during that time. He was different in every way—not only in looks. His father would have scalped him if he'd gone into one of the gambling casinos. He must have done it secretly, from what he said to you. Pretty specimen! He never smoked when I was with him, either. I suppose you don't think I'd pal with a smoky gambling rotter, do you? I can't understand it."

"And the worst of it is, that he's planted in our study as your old pal," said Tom ruefully. "He might change out, perhaps."

"I don't want him to do that," said Manners quickly.

"Why the dickens not?"

"Because I'm keeping an eye on him."

"What for?"

Manners paused quite a long time before replying. Tom Merry, greatly puzzled, regarded his chum curiously.

"I don't trust him," said Manners at last. "I can't tell you exactly what's in my mind—you'd only cackle. I can't feel sure yet. But I'm going to be sure."

"Blessed if you're not as mysterious as a newspaper serial!" said Tom Merry, with a smile. "Let's get down to the footer, and blow Loring!"

The chums of the Shell went down to the football ground. Meanwhile, the new junior was finding amusement, suited to his own peculiar taste, in rather a less creditable manner.

## CHAPTER 8.

### Birds of a Feather!

"HERE we are again!" said Crooke.

It was quite a merry little party in the old tower.

In that secluded spot, where masters and prefects were not likely to come, the black sheep of St. Jim's were met. The room half-way up the tower had no window, but the shattered old casement was screened by thick ivy. The old oaken door was still intact, and it was closed and fastened.

Loring was the last of the party to arrive. Levison and Mellish of the Fourth were already there, with Piggott of the Third, and Crooke and Clampe of the Shell. They were all smoking cigarettes when Loring came in, and they greeted him in a very friendly way.

Outside Crooke's select circle, Loring had made few, if any, friends. His peculiar tastes were not likely to win him friends among Tom Merry & Co. But it was really surprising how soon he had chummed up with Crooke & Co.

It was evidently a case of birds of a feather flocking together. Crooke and his set had recognised the new boy as a kindred spirit at once.

"Have a fag, chappy!" said Crooke, pushing the box towards Loring, who helped himself to a cigarette.

"Now, what's the little game?"

"Anything you like," said Loring.

"What games were you used to in Switzerland?" asked Levison.

"I have played la boule."

"What on earth's that?" asked Mellish.

"It is a game played with a ball, in a numbered bowl—something like roulette, but simpler," said Loring. "It is played in the public casinos in Switzerland. Every year we get hundreds of thousands of francs from silly English tourists with our la boule tables."

"We!" repeated Levison.

Loring coloured.

"I mean, the Swiss do," he said. "I have lived so long in Switzerland, that often I speak as a Swiss. But that game is not played in England. You are too good."

"Well, I'm not a particular chap," said Levison, "but I should think it pretty rotten if there were gambling casinos in England. The line ought to be drawn somewhere. I dare say it's good enough for Switzerland!"

"Pretty way to make a living, swindling tourists!" said Mellish. "I suppose fools and their money are soon parted!"

"Well, we can't play a rotten game like that here," said Crooke. "I don't know that I want to, either. Too much cheating in that kind of game. I've got some cards."

"Make it nap!" said Levison.

"I don't mind," said Loring, seating himself on a box. "Anything you like. I am not much accustomed to the game, but I will take my chance."

"That's sporting!" said Crooke approvingly.

"It's a cash game," said Levison, in a somewhat significant tone. "This little party never plays fer waste-paper!"

Loring laughed.

"Neither do I!" he said. "I am well heeled, as you would say!" He drew a handful of silver from his pocket. "I have notes also. I shall not soon go broke!"

"Money talks!" said Crooke, shuffling the cards.

"How are you fixed, Mellish?"

"I'll stick to the smokes," said Mellish. "Stony!"

"As usual!" sneered Crooke.

"My father ain't a moneylender," replied Mellish politely.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Levison, as Crooke was about to make an angry reply. "Let's get on with the game! Your deal, Crooke!"

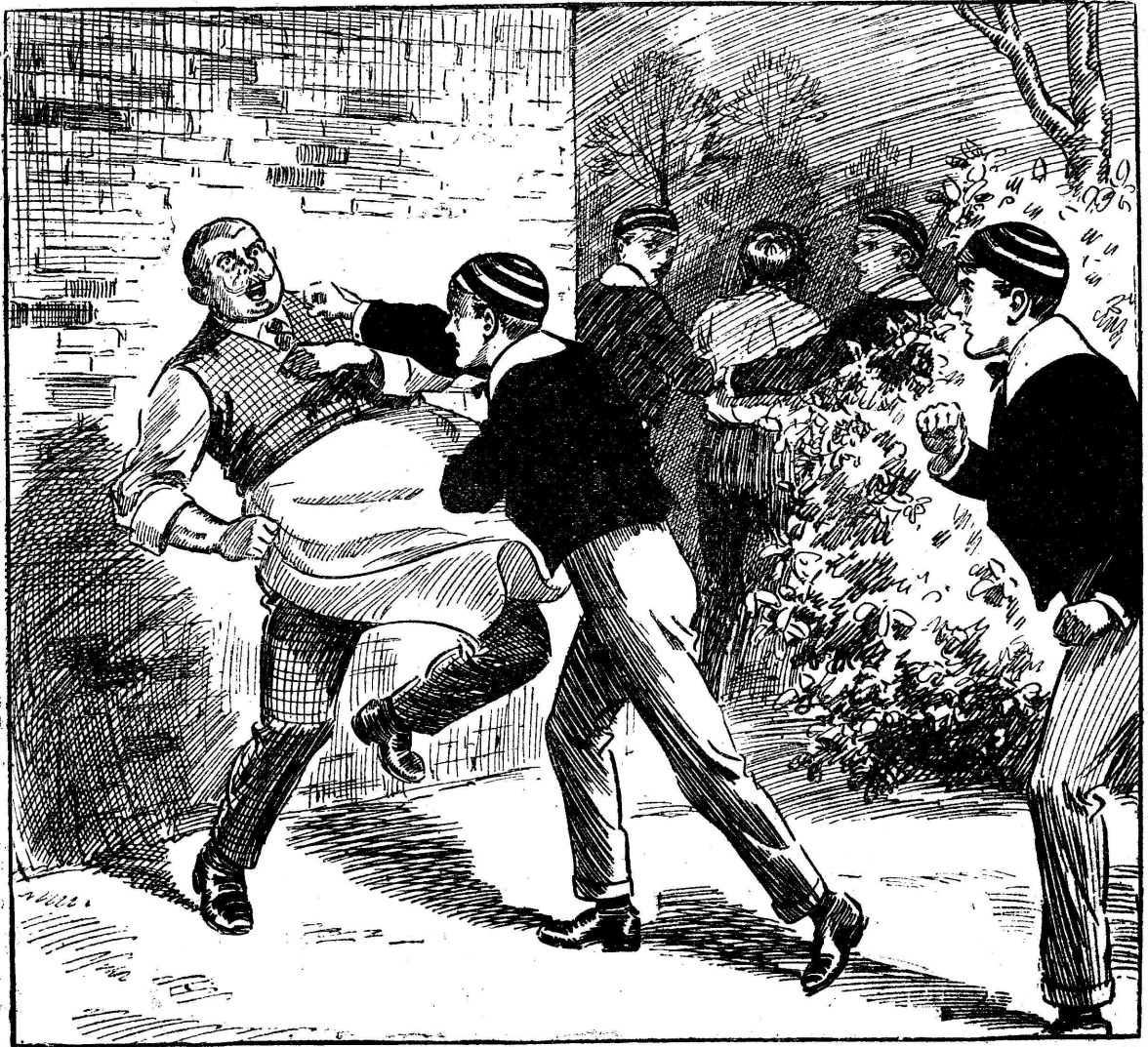
Five players began, while Mellish looked on and smoked cigarettes, eyeing the money enviously. Greedy looks were exchanged among the young rascals. Crooke & Co. felt quite friendly towards the new junior, who was a fellow so much after their own hearts; but it was not solely for that reason that they had invited him to the little party. They knew that he was well provided with money, and they intended to relieve him of it if

# ANSWERS

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Tom Merry made a single stride towards the fat rascal, his fist clenched. Without a word, he struck out straight from the shoulder, and the Swiss gave a gurgling yell, and rolled over on his back. (See Chapter 13.)

they could, making him pay for his entertainment, as Levison put it jocosely.

"But, although he had stated that he was not accustomed to the game, Loring showed that he could keep his end up very well.

"It was not till they had been playing for half an hour that it dawned upon the rest that the new junior was at least their equal with the cards.

Loring was winning. He played very cautiously; and when he lost, his losses were usually small; and when he won, his winnings were large. Croke had insisted upon shilling points in his usual boastful way, though Levison and Piggott and Clampe would have preferred a more moderate game. Croke, as usual, was reeking with money.

Quite a little pile of silver rose in front of Loring on the old box the young rascals were using as a card-table.

"You play jolly well for a chap who don't know the game," said Levison at last suspiciously.

"I was always lucky," said Loring.

"You are deuced lucky!"

"Your deal, Levison."

"Leave me out," said Levison; "I'm nearly at the end of my tether."

"Same here!" said Piggott.

"Two lame ducks already!" said Loring, with a grin.

"That is not very sporting! What have I won—a pound or so?"

"You won't find me chucking it," said Croke. "I'll play you till calling-over, if you like. I've got the dibs."

"Ah, that is sporting," said Loring. "Let us double the stakes, then. What is the use of fooling about for shillings?"

"Just as you like," said Croke.

"I don't care," said Clampe, a little uneasily, however.

Loring dealt, and went "nap." He won, and Croke and Clampe paid him ten shillings each, looking a little green as they did so.

Mellish and Piggott left, tired of watching a game they could not participate in. Levison remained. Loring glanced at him once or twice. There was a peculiar glitter in Levison's eyes. The black sheep of the Fourth was very keen, and he seemed to be remarkably interested in Loring's play.

In another half-hour Clampe of the Shell rose to his feet with a black brow. He had lost three pounds, and, though he was a wealthy fellow, he did not pretend to like it.

"Not going?" said Croke.

Clampe nodded, and walked out of the room.

"It's between you and me, Croke," smiled Loring.

"You are not afraid of a little loss, nicht war?"

"No, I'm not afraid!" granted Croke. "But don't

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talk rotten German to me! I don't like it! Won't you take a hand again, Levison?"

"No, thanks!"

Crooke felt in his pockets, and looked a little blank. Four pounds that had belonged to him now belonged to Loring. He hesitated a few moments, and then, with a boastful air, took a five-pound note from his pocket-book.

"Give me change for that," he said.

"Ah, you are game!" said Loring.

"I'll see you out, anyway!" growled Crooke.

Loring changed the banknote and put it in his pocket. The game went on, Levison watching more keenly than ever. Crooke's face was growing dark and troubled. He was losing hand-over-fist. Crooke had plenty of money—much more than was good for him, in fact—but he did not like parting with it. And he was parting with it now very fast.

When the five pounds were gone, he sat very still.

"You are going on?" asked Loring.

Crooke shook his head.

"But you have plenty of tin."

"What I've got I'm going to keep," said Crooke, rising to his feet. "You have the deuce's own luck. I'm fed up for to-day, anyway!"

Crooke quitted the room abruptly. Loring rose and yawned and stretched himself. Levison rose, too, and stepped between the new junior and the door.

"You've had ripping luck!" he remarked.

"Yes, pretty good!" said Loring carelessly.

"You've cleared a good bit—about fourteen pounds, I should say."

"Perhaps so!"

"Not so bad for one afternoon!" said Levison. "You'll make a pretty good thing out of this school, Loring, if you keep on like that!"

"Oh, luck will change!"

"Not while you play so well," said Levison deliberately.

"A player like you would be hard to beat, Loring. Not that I care about Crooke and Clampe—they swank over me with their filthy money, and they can look out for themselves. I'm not going to tell them anything."

Loring started.

"What could you tell them?" he exclaimed fiercely.

"I could tell them that you stock the cards, and deal from the bottom of the pack," said Levison coolly. "I could tell them that you slip aces in your sleeve."

"It is false!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"You could not prove it!"

"It wouldn't need proving, I think! Just a word to Crooke and Clampe would be enough! They'd make you shell out what you've robbed them of—or, at least, they'd be jolly careful about playing with you again! You are a professional swindler!" said Levison calmly. "I've been watching you for an hour! At first you beat even me, and I'm generally keen enough; but I spotted you at last! You've swindled at cards for years, or you couldn't do it so neatly. Don't mistake me—I don't care a two-penny rap for those swanking cads! They rub it in pretty hard about my being hard up—they think it's an honour for me to know them as they're rolling in oof. I'm looking out for myself. Will you lend me five quid?"

Loring looked at him fiercely for a moment or two, and then a grin came over his face. Without a word, he handed five pounds to Levison.

"That leaves you nine or so, and you're no more entitled to it than I am," said Levison. "Leave me out of your next card-party. Ta-ta!"

The unscrupulous cad of the Fourth sauntered out of the old tower richer than he had been for a whole term. Loring followed him more slowly.

## CHAPTER 9.

### A Startling Announcement!

"I'M not going to stand it!" Thus spoke Tom Merry.

It was a week or more since Loring's arrival at St. Jim's. In that week the new junior had succeeded in dissipating all Tom Merry's friendly feelings towards him.

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GRAND SCHOOL TUCK HAMPERS FOR BOYS & GIRLS. SEE "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD," 1<sup>d</sup>. TO-DAY!

Tom, in the innocence of his heart, had thought of saving the new fellow from contamination among the black sheep.

He had made the somewhat startling discovery since then that it was the black sheep who were in danger of contamination.

Crooke & Co. were undoubtedly "tough." But Oswald Loring from Switzerland was decidedly tougher.

Tom had so little to do with the fellows who prided themselves upon being "gamey," that he was slow to learn the new juniors' true character. But in the course of a week or two it was pretty plain.

The black sheep of St. Jim's dabbled in gambling; but Loring did not dabble in it; he seemed to live and breathe in it. Crooke & Co. were reckless enough; but since chumming with the new boy, they had grown more reckless and more hardened even in so short a time. Not that they were wholly pleased with their new friend. Loring's luck with cards was phenomenal.

In a couple of weeks his reputation among the juniors was worse than George Gerald Crooke's had ever been—worse than Levison's at its worst. Tom had found some excuse for him at first, in the fact that he had been brought up in a country where gambling is not frowned upon, and where indeed the Government draws large annual profits from the gaming casinos. But Tom had come to the end of his patience.

Loring seemed to seek out the worst fellows in the school, and to make them worse. He had been asked to a little party in Cutts' study. Cutts of the Fifth was a blade of the first water. But it leaked out afterwards that the little game of bridge in Cutts' study had ended disastrously for Cutts & Co. The extraordinary new boy had simply looted the blades of the Fifth.

Every fellow of vicious tastes was sure of kind attentions from Loring. He was always ready for a game—any game—and he seemed to possess a complete mastery of every variety of game. Foolish fellows who were not naturally vicious showed the worse traits in their character when they came under his influence.

Study No. 6 declined to have anything more to do with him. It was learned that Loring had proposed a "little game" in that celebrated study; and when Blake & Co. recovered from their astonishment, they pitched him out into the passage, neck and crop. Loring never set foot inside Study No. 6 again.

The schoolboy code of honour prevented the juniors from "giving away" the young rascal. But they would have been pleased enough if Kildare or Darrel had dropped upon him, and bowled him out. That was not likely to happen, however, for Loring was as cunning and cautious as he was unscrupulous.

Tom Merry & Co. did not think of "giving him away" to masters or prefects. But they did not want the young blackguard in their study. Hence Tom Merry's somewhat excited announcement that he was not going to stand it.

Monty Lowther nodded approval. Manners did not speak.

"It's disgusting," went on Tom hotly. "How you chummed up with that chap abroad, Manners, I can't make out. He's simply the limit."

"The outside edge," agreed Lowther.

"What did I tell you?" grunted Manners. "Wasn't I down on the rotter the first day he came, when he told us that pack of lies?"

"Well, we're not going to have him in this study," said Tom determinedly. "I'll give him the choice of changing out or being booted out. Let him go and chum with Crooke—they're birds of a feather."

"Crooke don't seem to love him much now," grinned Lowther. "I fancy he started out to skin Loring. Loring's done the skinning. He's been making a regular income out of poor old Crooke."

"Serve the silly ass right! But a filthy gambler isn't going to make this study his headquarters. He's got to go!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hold on!" said Manners quietly.

"Oh, rats! You don't want him here, I suppose?"

"You've slanged me for not chumming with him," said Manners.

"Well, that was before we found out what a beast he is!"

"Well, I haven't found out all I want to know, but I'm going to," said Manners. "I've been keeping an eye on him. It's jolly odd. But I've thought of a dodge. You be civil when he comes in. I'm going to."

"That'll be the first time, then," growled Tom.

"I've got my reasons. Shush!"

Loring came into the study. He yawned as he sat down to his prep. There was a faint odour of cigarette-smoke about him.

"Hallo, Loring!" said Manners, with unaccustomed affability. "You remember the way we used to go out snapping along Lake Lemmen. How would you like to come out on a photographing trot on Saturday afternoon?"

"Thanks—I don't care to!"

"You used to be very keen on cameras."

"I've given it up."

"You seemed to like it at Vevey," said Manners; "that was how we first got to know one another well. You remember the time we photographed the chateau on the shore—Chillon, I mean, where that prisoner was kept a long time ago?"

Loring nodded.

"That was a day!" said Manners reminiscently. "You remember how we were taking photographs from our boat, and the wash from the steamer upset us, and you went right in? Jolly lucky I got hold of you with the boathook, and fished you out!"

"Yes, it was lucky for me," said Loring.

"Did you ever get your camera back?" asked Manners.

"My camera?"

"Yes. You remember, surely, that it went overboard with you, and you were in an awful way about losing it. That was just before I left. Did you ever get it out of the lake?"

"No," said Loring. "I never troubled about it. I've given up photography. Excuse me, I'd like to get on with my prep; I'm late already."

"Oh, all serene!"

Manners had finished his prep, and he turned his attention to cutting films. Tom Merry and Lowther looked at him in a puzzled way. After cold-shouldering the new junior as he had done, it was odd that Manners should have started that chat over old times with him. Loring seemed to have had enough of it.

Loring yawned over his work, and "scamped" it as usual. When he had finished, he left the study at once. He was due at Cutts' quarters for another little game.

"Well," said Tom Merry, when he had gone, "have you gone off your rocker, Manners? What do you mean by chumming with that fellow, just when we were going to jump on his neck?"

"Jolly good reason, my son," said Manners.

"Blessed if I can see it!"

"You wouldn't," agreed Manners.

"Hallo! What the dickens are you up to now?" demanded Lowther, as Manners crossed to the door, opened it, glanced into the passage, and then closed the door again very carefully.

"I've got something to say to you chaps, and I don't want that young villain to hear," said Manners quietly.

"What the merry deuce is it? What on earth are you so thumping mysterious about, Manners?"

"I was surprised at first," said Manners slowly. "He isn't much like the Loring I met at Vevey. About the same age and build, only a bit fatter—of course, he might have grown fatter in a year. Then those lies he told us the day he came, and then, his turning out such a blackguard! I ought to kick myself for not tumbling to it before. I half-suspected it, but it seemed too thick. But I'm sure now."

"Sure of what?" almost shouted Tom Merry.

"About that young scoundrel."

"What about him?"

"He's not Oswald Loring!"

## CHAPTER 10.

## What Manners Knew.

"NOT Oswald Loring!"

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther repeated the words, in utter amazement.

They stared at Manners, wondering whether their chum had taken leave of his senses. Manners nodded calmly. He was evidently quite serious, amazing as his statement had been.

"He's not Oswald Loring!" he said. "He's no more Oswald Loring than I'm Lord Kitchener! He's a swindling impostor!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Lowther. "For goodness' sake, Manners, draw it mild! It's a bit too steep, you know."

"You've got that new chap on the brain, Manners," said Tom Merry. "Don't pile it on, though. You see, it's too altogether thick. He's a rotter and a rank outsider, but he can't be an impostor. That's all rot!"

"He's an impostor," repeated Manners steadily. "I'm sure of it now. I don't know who he is; but I don't believe he's English at all. Some Swiss rascal, I expect. Whoever he is, he's not Oswald Loring!"

"But who—why—what—how—"

"I sort of felt it at the very first," said Manners. "Of course, I only knew Loring for a fortnight, and that was a year ago. I didn't remember him very clearly. This chap is about the age he would be now, much the same build, only fatter. Of course, he might have grown fatter in a year. He's got a different Swiss accent—but he might have picked that up, too. I said the first day that his eyes seemed to have grown lighter, but I put that down to indistinct memory. He's played the trick so well that I was fairly taken in; though, I tell you, I felt it in my bones all the time that he wasn't the Loring I knew."

"I tell you it's too thick, Manners. You don't remember him very clearly, and that accounts for all you've mentioned."

"It would," said Manners; "and that's why I couldn't make up my mind. But now I've got proof."

"Trot out your proofs," said Monty Lowther incredulously.

"You've heard them already," said Manners. "You heard me talking to him about that photographing excursion on the Swiss lake—about taking the picture of the Chillon chateau from a boat, and getting upset by the wash of a steamer?"

"Yes; he remembered it all," said Tom, "and that jolly well proved that he is Loring!"

"He remembered it all," said Manners, "and that jolly well proves that he is not Loring!"

"How does it?"

"Because"—Manners spoke slowly and clearly—"because it never happened."

"Wha-a-t!"

"It never happened," said Manners calmly. "I was putting him to the test. When I was photographing with the real Loring in Switzerland, we never took photographs of Chillon from a boat on the lake. We were never upset by the wash of a steamer. Loring never tumbled into the water. He never lost his camera."

"Great Scott!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Manners grinned a little at the astonishment in the faces of his chums. He was rather pleased with his own awfully deep diplomacy.

"The whole incident was a yarn, from beginning to end," he went on. "I was inventing it to put the fellow to the test. Making out that he is Loring, he had to remember what I remembered of our times together. He pretended to remember all that. If it had really happened it would have proved that he was Loring, right enough. But it never did happen."

"Oh, Manners, you awfully deep bounder!"

"Are you satisfied now?" said Manners.

Tom Merry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Well, that puts the lid on," he confessed. "If that story was spoof, and Loring pretended to remember it—well! He couldn't remember it if it didn't happen, that's a cert. And it's not a thing he could make a mistake about. He would know right enough whether he was nearly drowned in Lake Lemmen."

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NEXT  
WEDNESDAY!

"TRUE BLUE!"



"And you never fished him out with a boathook!" ejaculated Lowther.

"Certainly I didn't, as he was never in the lake; but he remembered it all when I described it to him," grinned Manners. "You can see that he's a spoofer now, I suppose? If he'd been the real Loring, he'd have thought I was off my rocker when I told that story; he'd have said fast enough that it never happened. He wouldn't have agreed that it was lucky for him that I fished him out with the boathook, when I never did anything of the sort."

"Certainly he wouldn't," said Tom Merry. "He can't be Loring. But what the merry thunder! If he isn't Loring, who is he?"

"Some swindling hound who has come here in Loring's name to take Loring's place!" said Manners. "A Swiss, I fancy. Now I know it for certain; there's lots of things to prove it. Loring was awfully keen on cameras, and this chap hasn't touched a camera or looked at one since he's been here. Loring was a quiet, decent chap, and wouldn't have been found dead inside one of their rotten gambling dens. This chap is a born gambler and black-guard. Loring wasn't a smoker; this rotter is. Loring was a slim chap; this fellow is fat, just like a German-Swiss. Didn't you notice, too, that his clothes look as if they're made too small for him? Well, he's a size or two bigger than Loring, sideways. He's got Loring's clothes on."

"Oh!"

"He's come here with Loring's name and clothes and baggage, but he's not Loring."

"I can't catch on to it," said Tom, in utter amazement.

"It's quite certain that Loring was coming here, as his father was in correspondence with the Head about it."

"Loring was coming, right enough, but he never got here."

"But his father's lawyer met him in London, and put him in the express for Wayland," said Lowther.

"I've no doubt he did," said Manners. "But, as we know perfectly well, Loring never arrived at Wayland in the express. Somewhere between London and Wayland Loring disappeared, and this young villain took his place."

"Great Scott!"

"And that accounts," went on Manners, "for the chap not arriving where we were expecting him. I fancy he left London all right in the express. Perhaps this fellow was with him—travelling companion, perhaps. He must have known all about Loring, to be able to play this trick. If we hadn't been at Wayland Junction to meet him, he would have kept it up that he'd arrived there in the express at three. As he couldn't keep that up, he spun us that yarn about getting out at Abbotsford by mistake. Very likely he did get out at Abbotsford; he described the place all right, anyway. Loring must have got out with him and stayed there."

"But why should he?" howled Lowther.

"Of course, he hadn't any choice about it. It's impossible that Loring meant to have a hand in a trick like this. Why should he?"

"Then what's happened to the real Loring? Why has he kept away all this time?"

"That's what we've got to find out," said Manners. "He's being kept away by force; that's plain enough."

"Oh, my hat!"

There was a pause. Manners' conviction had forced itself upon the minds of his chums. Amazing as the discovery was, they could scarcely doubt it. In affecting to remember incidents in that Swiss holiday which had never really happened, the new junior had given himself away with a vengeance.

"Well, this fairly takes the cake!" said Lowther at last. "The young villain must be a regular criminal at this rate. The real chap Loring must have been kidnapped at Abbotsford or somewhere."

"Not the slightest doubt about that," said Manners. "This young scoundrel had an accomplice, and the fellow is keeping Loring somewhere."

"But—but I don't quite see the game," said Tom. "If it's as you think, Manners—and it looks like it—what's the fellow's object? He can't expect to keep this game up for ever."

Manners shook his head.

"Hardly. But he's safe enough for a long time. Loring's people live in Switzerland, so they can't see him and bowl him out. His allowance is paid to him through the Head by the lawyer chap in London. That lawyer chap would know it was spoof if he saw him, but, of course, he won't see him. Unless the real Loring gets away, he's safe here for the rest of the term. And can't you see his game? He's been at it openly enough. He's a professional swindler, and he's wedged himself into a big school, where there are lots of fellows with more money than brains. He's set out to skin them. It's an entirely new field for a professional gambler. I've no doubt he's a cheat as well. We know he always wins. He's made pounds and pounds out of Crooke & Co., and he's cleaned out these Fifth Form fools at bridge. If he's allowed to go on, he'll make a big sum out of it. He might make a hundred pounds in the term."

"I suppose he might."

"We know, too, that he's got fellows to play cards who used not to play. That's his business, to tempt silly asses into that kind of thing to skin them. Why, he even tried it on in Study No. 6, and they booted him out!"

"And at the end of the term?" said Tom.

"Well, I don't know his plans, of course; but he could disappear at the end of the term without leaving a trace behind. He'd never be found. He could go back to the hotel-kitchen where, I dare say, he belongs, or he might play the game on— He might work up an illness, so as not to go back to Switzerland for the vacation, and stay at the school. Then he'd have another term before him, safe as houses. He might work that for a year

# THE GREYFRIARS HERALD, $\frac{1}{2}$ lc.

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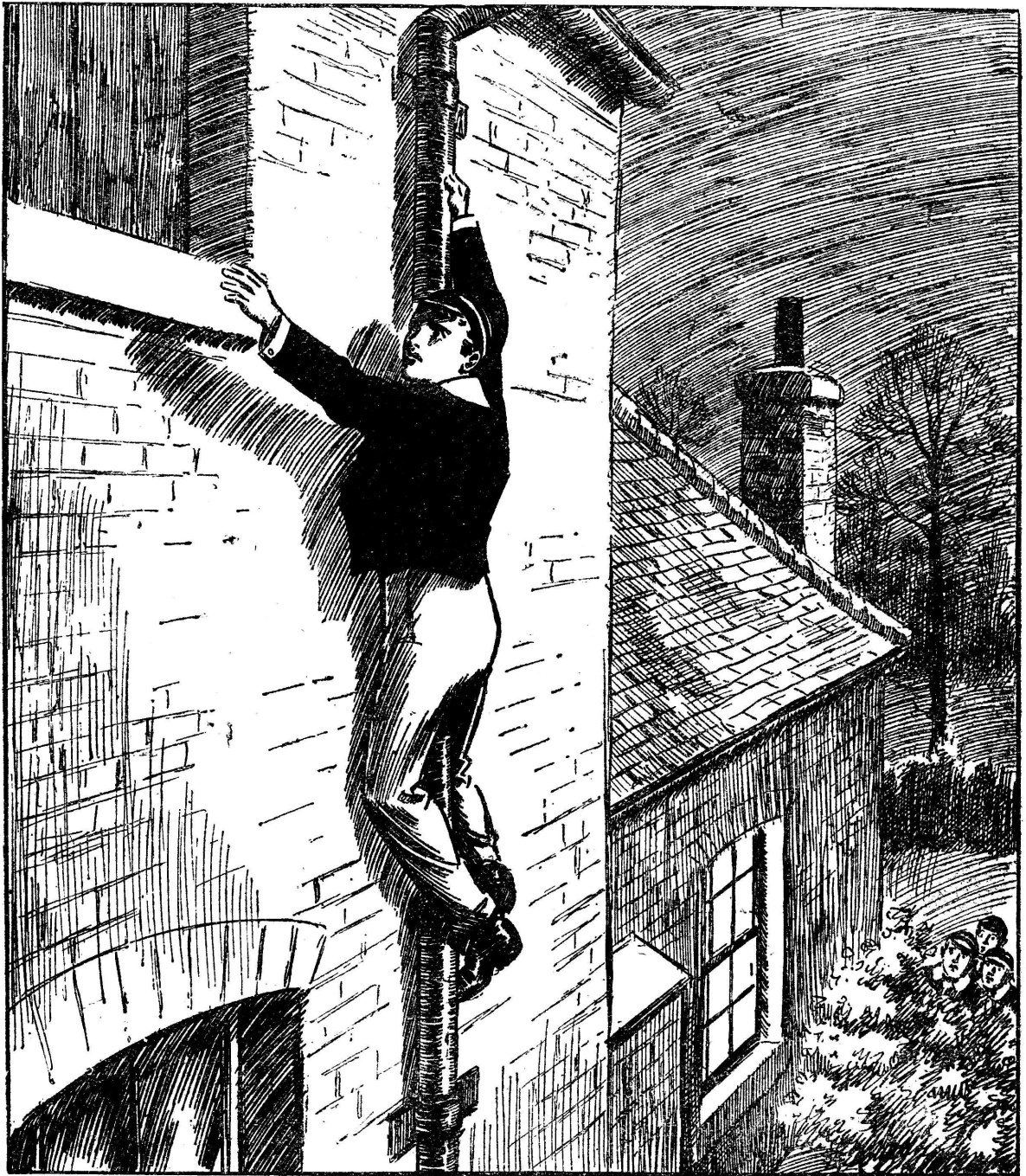


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Talbot reached the level of the window-sill, and paused there, breathing hard. Then, holding with one hand to the pipe, he reached to the sill, and caught it with the other. (See Chapter 13.)

or more. He's deep enough. And if the Head didn't bowl him out and sack him, he'd be making money hand-over-fist all the time—piles of quids out of those silly duffers who think they're seeing life when they play nap in the old tower."

"What a game!" said Monty Lowther. "He must be a cunning beast to think of such a scheme!"

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows.

"You seem to have worked it out all right, Manners," he said slowly. "I must say it looks as if you're right. But—but—but—"

"But——" agreed Lowther.

"But what, fathead?"

"It's too steep. We can't go to the Head or Railton and spin him a yarn like that. Suppose—I only say suppose—suppose you're mistaken? It's possible, at least. What blithering idiots we should look!"

"We couldn't risk it," said Lowther. "Why, we should be chipped to death if it turned out a mare's-nest! Besides, it would amount to slander."

Manners nodded.

"I've thought of all that," he said. "I know I'm not mistaken, but I admit there's a slim chance that we might be putting our foot in it. If we told the Head he would send for the lawyer chap from London to identify Loring."

"And suppose he identified him all right?" said Tom



Merry. "What blessed asses we should look—and worse than that!"

"I know—I know. I'm not thinking of that," said Manners. "It's sure enough, but we're not going to say anything till we're absolutely certain. That's what we've got to manage."

"And how?"

"Easy enough. If this chap is an impostor, taking Loring's name, he must know all about the kid—must be thoroughly posted about him and all that. That means that he must have known him in Switzerland—for a time, at least. I think very likely he travelled from Switzerland with him. I believe he's a Swiss. Well, suppose we find out whether Loring had a travelling-companion. That would be a beginning."

"But how—"

"The lawyer johnny in London would know, but we don't know his name or address. We couldn't get it from this swindler, that's certain, and we can't speak to the Head yet. We've got to find out for ourselves."

"Blessed if I see how!"

"Look at it," said Manners. "This cad worked off a yarn of getting out at Abbotsford by mistake. He described Abbotsford. So he knows the place. He must have been in the express with Loring, I should say; and if he got out at Abbotsford, as he seems to have done, Loring got out with him and stayed there. Somewhere there Loring must be kept a prisoner, in that case. The first place to begin to look is Abbotsford."

"Rather like looking for a needle in a haystack!" commented Lowther.

"I haven't finished yet. I know Loring's father at Vevey. I'm going to write to him."

"Oh!"

"I can't tell him what we suspect; it would alarm and worry him, and he's in bad health, too. But I can ask him questions without telling him too much. The letter will want wording carefully, of course. That will want thinking out. But—"

Manners ceased speaking suddenly as a tap came at the door of the study. Toby, the page, opened the door and put his head in.

"Master Loring," he said, "the Head—"

"He isn't here," said Tom Merry.

"The 'Ead wants him partickler," said Toby. "P'raps you know where he is, Master Tom?"

"Look for him in Cutts' study," said Tom.

"Thank you, Master Merry!"

Toby was withdrawing, when Manners called to him.

"Hold on a tick, Toby! What does the Head want Loring for?"

Toby grinned.

"Which he didn't tell me, Master Manners."

"Don't you start being funny in your old age, Toby! I mean, does it look like a licking?"

"I don't think so, Master Manners. The 'Ead didn't look waxy; only a bit worried," said Toby. "It's about the letter, I s'pose."

"The letter?" said Manners. "What letter, Toby? Tell me all about it, kid. I dare say you know that I was Loring's pal before he came here."

"Yes, Master Manners. I took up the letter to the 'Ead," said Toby—"a letter with a furrin postmark."

"A foreign postmark?" said Manners. "Was it Swiss?"

"Might 'ave been Swiss, or Rooshan, for all I know," said Toby. "Somethin' furrin and outlandish, that's all I know. Well, five minutes arter that the 'Ead rang, and he had the letter in his 'and, and he says, says he, 'Find Master Loring, and send him to me at once!' says he. So 'ere I come!"

The chums of the Shell exchanged a quick look.

After what they had just been discussing the incident struck them. The letter with the "furrin" postmark had been immediately followed by the summons for Loring to go to the Head—a sufficiently plain indication that the letter was about Loring, and doubtless from his father in Switzerland. Had something come to light already? That was the thought in their minds.

"You can leave it to me, Toby," said Manners. "I'll go and get Loring, and take him to the Head."

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"Thank you, Master Manners."

Toby departed cheerfully.

"What's the little game?" asked Tom Merry, when Toby was gone.

"That letter's from Mr. Loring, I fancy," said Manners quietly, "and Loring's sent for. Something may have come out. If it has, the young swindler will stuff the Head up with lies, of course."

"I suppose he will. But—"

"He won't if I'm there," said Manners grimly.

"You!"

"Yes, I! Ain't I Loring's old pal?" said Manners, with a grin. "Didn't the Head send for me, and put it to me to look after him a bit here? Well, then, as his old pal, I'm going into the lion's den with him. And if he starts telling any lies to the Head—"

Manners did not finish; he quitted the study. Tom Merry and Lowther, in a very disturbed state of mind, waited anxiously for his return.

## CHAPTER 11.

### The Letter from Switzerland!

CUTTIS of the Fifth was not looking happy.

His chums, Gilmore and St. Leger, were not looking happy either.

There was a little card-party on in Cutts' study, and Loring of the Shell had dropped in to take a hand. The four young rascals sat round the table with cards in their hands and cigarettes between their lips. The door was locked.

Cutts' favourite game was bridge, and the dandy of the Fifth did very well out of that game. Having discovered that the new fellow in the Shell was a "sport," and had plenty of money, Cutts had deigned to take notice of his existence. All was grist that came to Gerald Cutts' mill. He had no objection to including a junior in his little parties, if it was worth his while.



## An Apology

from Harry Wharton, the Editor of the

Great New Boys' Paper

## The Greyfriars Herald

EVERY MONDAY—ONE HALFPENNY!

"Greyfriars School, December 11th, 1915.

"Dear Boys and Girls,—

"I feel I must make an apology to all who have been unable to get the first number of the GREYFRIARS HERALD. As it is the first paper I have ever published, I ordered only a quarter of a million copies of Number One. These were sold right out in three days. Now I know that it is so popular, I have ordered more for each of the next numbers. Take my advice, and always get your copy first thing every Monday morning. That's the way to prevent disappointment.

"Your Friend and Editor,

Harry Wharton."

But at two bridge-parties Loring had succeeded in "stumping" Cutts, much to his astonishment and chagrin. To be "done" by a junior was not to be thought of. Loring had offered him his revenge, and Cutts was only too keen to play. On the present occasion the game was poker. At that game Cutts prided himself upon his skill; but it had gone the same way. In an hour or less the remarkable new junior had almost cleaned out Cutts & Co.

The blades of the Fifth had plenty of money, and they played for high stakes. Loring had already "bagged" over ten pounds from the trio, and the trio were looking rather green. Funds were beginning to run out, and Loring had stated his intention of not playing for waste-paper. It would have been a little too difficult for a junior to collect debts afterwards from seniors of the Fifth. He was more likely to collect thick ears if he tried.

"Getting near bed-time," said St. Leger uneasily. "We're going on," said Cutts, with a frown. "You can drop out if you like. Your deal, Loring."

"That is sporting," said Loring, with a smile, as he shuffled the cards.

Tap!  
The gamblers started as a knock came at the door. Cutts sprang to his feet.

"Who the dickens is that?" he muttered. "The Housemaster wouldn't—Quick with those cards!"

Cutts & Co. were accustomed to acting promptly on such occasions. Almost in a twinkling the cards were slipped into a drawer; cigarettes and ash-trays disappeared into a box. Gilmore jerked back the curtain from the open window, and St. Leger brandished a news-paper to dissipate the smoke.

Tap!  
"Who's there?" called out Cutts, to gain time.

"It's me—Manners."  
Gerald Cutts drew a quick breath of relief. It was not a master or a prefect.

"It's all right," he muttered. "Only a junior. You can buzz off, Manners. You're not wanted here."

"I want Loring," said Manners through the keyhole.

"Go and eat coke!" said Loring.

"The Head wants you in his study at once."

"Oh!"

"Better cut off," said Cutts quietly, unlocking the door. "Come back when you're through with the Head if there's time."

"Right-ho!" said Loring.

The new junior left the study. Manners nodded to him as he came out.

"The Head wants me?" asked Loring, giving him a quick look.

"Yes; he's sent for you," said Manners.

"What is it about—do you know?"

"I haven't seen the Head. But I'm coming with you."

"You needn't," said Loring curtly.

"Oh, yes, I'm coming," said Manners, hurrying along with the new junior, who would evidently have preferred to be rid of him. "Dash it all, you ought to be glad to have an old pal to see you through!

Tain't all lavender being called into the Head's study, you know."

"Look here—"

"Here we are!" said Manners, as they arrived at the Head's door. He tapped, and opened the door. "Trot in."

Loring gritted his teeth for a moment, but he went in, and Manners followed him. Dr. Holmes was seated at his writing-table, and a letter was before him, evidently the letter with the foreign postmark referred to by Toby. There was a very serious expression on Dr. Holmes' kind face. Something was evidently "up," though it did not look like a "row." Manners wondered for a moment what the Head would have thought if he had known from what scene Loring came at his summons.

"Ah, I sent for you, Loring!" said the Head.

"Yes, sir," said Loring.

The Head glanced at Manners. He had not sent for

Manners. He was about to make a remark, but he checked himself, and glanced at the letter before him.

"I did not send for you, Manners, but perhaps it is just as well that you are here with Loring," he said. "The matter affects you to a certain extent, as you are an old acquaintance and friend of Loring's."

"Yes, sir," said Manners.

"Loring, I have received a letter from your father. You have not mentioned to me that you had a travelling companion from Switzerland."

Manners drew a deep, deep breath.

"No, sir," said Loring calmly, little dreaming of what was passing in Manners' mind. "I did not think you would be interested, sir."

"Yet I asked you about your journey," said Dr. Holmes, regarding the new junior closely. "I had quite a long chat with you, Loring, the day you arrived. It is somewhat curious that you did not mention the circumstance."

"I am sorry, sir, if you think I was to blame," said Loring. "I was so tired and confused after so much travelling."

"Yes, yes, quite so," assented the Head. "Quite so, Loring. However, your father's letter refers to this travelling companion—this Swiss lad, Franz Ecker. Your father states that this lad was employed in his household at Vevey during the last two or three months before you left home, and that he left to take up a situation in England. He has a relation who keeps a refreshment establishment of some sort at Abbotsford, I understand. Your father kindly paid the fare to England for this young Swiss, and arranged for him to travel with you, to help you through the difficulties of the journey, but chiefly for his own sake, as he had explained that there was a good opening for him in this country."

"I believe that is so, sir."

"You are doubtless surprised by my referring to the matter," said the Head.

"A little, sir. I had almost forgotten Ecker."

"Pray tell me this, Loring—were you quite satisfied with this young person, Ecker?"

"He was a good servant, I believe, sir."

"Probably you did not guess his real character. Your father informs me that since the boy left Vevey he has become better acquainted with his character. It appears that this Ecker obtained employment in your father's house on false representations, that he had previously been concerned in the proceedings of a gambling company, had been employed at a gaming casino, and had been discharged from the place for theft of some of the ill-gotten profits of the gambling tables."

"Indeed, sir. I was not aware of that."

"Your father, of course, was not aware of it when he befriended the boy. Since learning the real character of Ecker he has naturally been alarmed as to the boy's possible influence over you. When you left home your father desired you to keep Ecker in sight, and befriend him so far as lay in your power. Naturally, he is now very anxious that you should have nothing to do with such a person."

"I suppose so, sir."

"I have therefore sent for you, Loring, to communicate your father's wishes and my own," said the Head gravely. "This unpleasant youth, Ecker, will probably claim acquaintance with you, and seek to know you. You must be careful never to see him, and never to correspond with him. You must never visit his relation's place at Abbotsford, where he is employed. If he should write to you, you must bring the letter to me, and not reply to it. You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"The boy is, in fact, a very dangerous acquaintance," said the Head. "I am thankful to see that he appears to have done you no harm, and I shall be able to write a reassuring letter to your father on the subject. Have you seen this young Swiss since you have been at the school?"

"No, sir."

"You have not visited Abbotsford?"

"Not once, sir."



"Very good," said the Head, evidently relieved. "There is no harm done. Pray bear my words in mind, Loring."

"Certainly, sir. I may say that I never liked the fellow," said Loring; "it was only to please my father that I let him travel with me."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Loring. Manners, as you are Loring's best friend here, I understand, you will bear this in mind also. If that dangerous youth should make any attempt to push his acquaintance with Loring, you will see that he does not succeed. As Loring is still quite new to this country and our customs you may be of very great assistance to him. It will be a friendly act, on your part, to help Loring to keep clear of such an acquaintance."

"I understand, sir," said Manners.

Manners' heart was thumping.

"That is all," said the Head. "You may go, my boys."

The two juniors quitted the study, and the Head's expression showed that he was relieved in his mind. The letter from Vevey had disturbed him, and he had shared Mr. Loring's anxiety. The new junior had succeeded in satisfying him.

In the passage Loring paused, and gave Manners a bitter look.

"Why did you come here?" he muttered. "You are no friend of mine. You came to hear what the Head had to say to me!"

"Well, I've heard it," said Manners coolly. "Nice sort of chap, this young Ecker—what? You seem to have his personal tastes, though you didn't tell the Head so."

"That is not your business."

"Isn't it?" said Manners. "Hasn't the Head asked me to look after you? Let me catch you with this Swiss chap, that's all!"

Loring burst into a laugh, and walked away. Manners laughed too, and returned to No. 9 Study in the Shell passage. Tom Merry and Lowther were waiting for him.

"Well?" said both together.

Manners, almost word for word, told what has passed in the Head's study. Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"It begins to look clear," he said.

"It does," said Lowther. "What is the next move, Manners? You're taking the lead in this little game."

"Abbotsford," said Manners. "It's a half-holiday to-morrow."

"There's the House match—"

"Blow the House match!"

And, upon due reflection, Tom Merry decided to "blow" the House match.

## CHAPTER 12.

### Talbot Takes a Hand.

"B AI Jove, that's wathah odd!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy said so—and therefore it was so. But a good many fellows as well as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy regarded it as odd.

It was Wednesday afternoon; and that afternoon School House and New House juniors were meeting on the football field. House matches at St. Jim's were very keenly contested. Fellows who had the luck to be selected to play very seldom gave them a miss. But on this especial occasion three of the best were standing out—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther.

"What the dickens does it mean?" asked Jack Blake, when he met the Terrible Three after dinner. "You three fellows standing out?"

"We are—we is!" said Lowther.

"You must be potty!" commented Blake.

"Tommy must be," agreed Lowther, "for he's going to ask you to captain the side this afternoon."

Blake brightened up considerably.

"Well, perhaps it's rather a good idea for you chaps to stand out once in a way," he remarked. "Going out?"

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"Yes, if you think you can skipper the side," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, that's all right! I'll undertake to beat the New House," said Blake cheerfully. "I hope you'll have a nice excursion. Have you filled up the places, or are you leaving that to me?"

"Well, put in Julian," said Tom Merry. "He's first-class. About the other two, suit yourself. I'm going to ask Talbot to come with us, too, so there'll be another place to fill, if he comes."

Blake whistled.

"Best winger we've got," he said. "Never mind. Lots of good stuff in the Fourth, if you only knew."

Tom Merry laughed.

"The Fourth will have a good chance this afternoon," he said. "You'll have Kangaroo and Dane and Glyn of the Shell, and Gore. You can pick seven out of the Fourth Form."

"Well, there's four in our study—four of the best. Then we'll have Julian, Reilly, and Hammond. We'll beat the New House all right!" said Blake confidently.

"Best of luck, my son!" said Tom.

And, leaving Blake to call his eleven together, the Terrible Three went to look for Talbot of the Shell. Talbot was in his study, swotting at Latin till it was time to change for the football match. He looked up with his pleasant smile as the trio came in.

"Hardly time yet," he said.

"Would you mind missing the House match?" asked Tom.

"Oh, just as you like!" said Talbot. "If there's another fellow you think—"

"Fathead!" said Tom. "There isn't another fellow in the School House who's a patch on you. It isn't that. We're going out on special business, and we'd like you to come, if you will. You can help us."

"Any old thing!" said Talbot, at once.

"I've fixed it up with Blake about the match. We'll explain out of gates what we're after. Walls have ears, you know," said Tom mysteriously.

Talbot smiled.

"Right you are. I won't ask you any questions, though you've made me jolly curious."

"What do you think of that new chap, Loring?"

Talbot frowned a little.

"I'd rather not say," he replied; "I couldn't say anything good of him."

"Exactly. And so say all of us!" grinned Lowther. "Get into your hat, we're catching the two-thirty."

The footballers were gathered on Little Side when the four Shell fellows came out of the School House and strolled down to the gates. They passed Loring in the quad. He was sauntering towards the old tower with Crooke and Mellish and Clampe. He gave the chums of the Shell a sneering glance.

On the footer ground Jack Blake was in high feather. He hadn't the slightest doubt that his team, under his able leadership, would wipe the ground with the champions of the New House. Figgins & Co. were in high feather, too. With Tom Merry and Talbot missing, Figgins hadn't the slightest doubt that he would wipe up the ground with the School House side. So both the junior skippers were highly pleased with the prospects of the afternoon.

Tom Merry cast rather a regretful glance towards the football ground as he went out with Lowther and Manners and Talbot. But it could not be helped, and he dismissed footer from his mind.

"Well, what's the little game?" asked Talbot, as they walked at a good rate down Rylcombe Lane, through the keen, frosty air.

"Go it, Manners, pitch him the yarn!"

Manners proceeded to "pitch the yarn." Talbot stopped, and stared at Manners in great astonishment.

"Well, my hat!" he ejaculated, at last.

"Rather knocks you out—what?" chuckled Lowther.

"Well, rather," confessed Talbot. "But I may say that I've thought there was something fishy about Loring ever since he came. You know, I had some rather queer experiences in my early days." He flushed a little. "That taught me how to spot a wrong 'un. Loring is a wrong

"un, if ever there was one. I had been thinking of speaking to you fellows about him—he ought not to be allowed to run on as he does, and he's too keen to let the prefects spot him. But if this is true, it will bring him up sharp."

"You think Manners has got it right?" asked Tom anxiously. He had great faith in the judgment of the junior who had once been known as the Toff.

"I think so," said Talbot. "After what you've told me there can't be much doubt about it. But what's the programme?"

"Well, our idea is that this fellow, Ecker, who travelled with the real Loring, has got rid of Loring somehow, and bagged his clothes and things and taken his place. If that's so, he must have put Loring somewhere. Now, his relation's place in Abbotsford is very likely the place. He's certainly got an accomplice, and what other accomplice could he have here but his relation? He's in a foreign country, you know."

Talbot nodded.

"We're going to find that relation and his place," said Manners, "and find out somehow if the real chap Loring is there. That's where we want you to help us, Talbot. I don't mind admitting that you can easily give us points in a game like this. We want you to take the lead; we'll follow."

"That's it," said Tom.

"Of course, I'll help you all I can," said Talbot. "Let's catch the train to Abbotsford first," he added, with a smile.

They hurried on to the station. The local train bore them away to Abbotsford, and during the journey they discussed their plans. In that discussion the cool, keen judgment of the Toff was very useful. He was exactly the fellow for such an emergency.

By the time they stepped out of the train at Abbotsford they had laid their plans, and, with considerable suppressed excitement, they set about putting them into execution.

## CHAPTER 13.

### The Toff to the Rescue!

**T**OM MERRY & CO. were very busy during the next hour. The first step was to discover the "refreshment establishment" kept by that relation of Ecker's. Whether his name was Ecker or not, they did not know. But the fact that he was a Swiss was a starting-point for the inquiry. They inquired for a refreshment establishment kept by a Swiss. At the railway-station they could learn nothing; at the bunshop they obtained no information. The Terrible Three looked a little blank. Abbotsford was a town of some size, and it looked as if the search would be a long one.

"Where next, O chief?" asked Monty Lowther.

"The police-station," said Talbot.

"Oh! Will they know—"

"The police are pretty certain to know about every refreshment place in the town," said Talbot. "If there's one kept by a Swiss, they're quite sure to know. Foreigners have to give an account of themselves in these days; and this man must be a German-Swiss, too, from the name of Ecker. He must have had to prove that he's a Swiss and not a German."

"Didn't I tell you Talbot would do the trick?" said Tom Merry admiringly. "Full steam ahead for the bobby-asylum."

The juniors made their way to the police-station. The inspector in charge looked rather curiously at Talbot when he asked his question, politely and respectfully, as to whether he could direct him to a refreshment place in Abbotsford kept by a Swiss.

"I should advise you young gentlemen to keep clear of the place," said the inspector drily. "It isn't exactly the place your headmaster would like you to visit."

"Then you know the place?" asked Talbot.

"Certainly!"

"We're not going there, exactly," said Talbot. "We're going to fetch away a chap belonging to our school, whom we believe is there. We've got reason to believe that he's there, and we want to get him away."

"Oh, that alters the case!" said the inspector, his manner becoming more genial. "You had better give your schoolfellow the tip to keep clear of that show, or he will get landed into trouble. The place is called Hoffmann's Tea-gardens, and it's on the Wayland Road, about a mile out of Abbotsford. That's the only refreshment place about here kept by a Swiss, so far as I know."

"Thank you very much, sir."

The juniors quitted the police-station, highly satisfied. They knew the Wayland Road well enough; they had cycled over it scores of times. They left Abbotsford behind them, and tramped away cheerfully into the country.

"Looks as if Ecker's relation hasn't a very savoury reputation," remarked Tom Merry. "That makes it all the more likely that Manners has hit the right nail on the head. But we'll soon see."

The early winter dusk was closing in as the chums of St. Jim's came up to the tea-gardens. They paused to observe the place. It was in a somewhat solitary position, but well-placed for catching the cycling traffic. There was an air of dilapidation about the place, which hinted that Mr. Hoffmann was not making money hand-over-fist. Probably the war had affected his business.

"Well?" said the Terrible Three, looking at Talbot for guidance.

"We can't search the place," remarked Lowther. "Even that inspector chap couldn't do that without a warrant."

"Come in, and use your eyes," said Talbot. "We're here, anyway; and we're not going till we find out whether Loring is there."

"What-ho!"

The juniors entered the somewhat dreary gardens. There were still stone tables under the leafless trees, but the garden was deserted. They passed on into the building. At that season there was little cycling on the road, which probably accounted for the deserted look of the place. There was only one man in the public room they entered—a rough-looking man, drinking beer.

At the end of the room was a little passage leading into the bar, from which direction came a clinking of glasses. The place was a public-house as well as a tea-gardens. But it was easy to see that little trade was being done. The juniors sat down at a table, and Talbot rapped with a coin. A fat man in a soiled apron came out of the bar.

"Vat you vant?" he asked, not over-civilly.

He looked like a German, from the crown of his blonde bullet head to the square toes of his large feet. This was evidently Mr. Hoffmann.

"Can we have ginger-beer here?" asked Talbot politely.

"Yes."

The fat man disappeared, and the juniors glanced at one another. This was the Swiss—the "relation of Ecker" mentioned in Mr. Loring's letter. There could be no doubt on that point.

He did not look a pleasant customer; his little piggy eyes were shifty in their expression, his fat face hard and coarse. His unprepossessing looks, added to his evidently poor circumstances, made it probable enough that he would be concerned in any scheme of rascality that promised profit. If he was, in reality, the accomplice of the impostor at St. Jim's, doubtless he received a share of the "loot" the so-called Loring was making by his peculiar methods at St. Jim's.

The fat Swiss returned with the ginger-beer.

"Vun shilling, please," he said.

It was plain that, during his residence in England, Mr. Hoffmann had not forgotten Swiss customs in dealing with travellers.

Talbot paid the shilling without demur, and the fat man returned to the bar. The juniors hardly touched the ginger-beer. They lingered about five minutes, and then Talbot rose, and his companions followed his example. They sauntered out into the dark garden.

From the front of the alehouse, light glimmered out over the road. But the back of the house was quite dark.

"Where now?" murmured Tom Merry.

Talbot led the way. Instead of returning to the gate on the road, the juniors went down the garden, where

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 410.



they could scan the back of the house. The house was a two-storey building. From the scraggy, leafless bushes in the garden, the juniors scanned the windows. There were eight of them, and one was covered with wooden shutters.

"You see that?" whispered Talbot. "An upper window—shuttered—"

"But—"

"Keep here while I scout. You can leave that to me; it isn't new to the Toff, you know."

"Talbot, old chap—"

"Wait here."

The Terrible Three remained in cover in the ragged bushes. Talbot glided away towards the house. A door opened, and a slatternly woman came out with a bucket. The juniors were well concealed by the dusk and the bushes, but they were anxious for Talbot. But the Toff had taken cover instantly at the sound of an opening door. There was a sound of the grinding of a pump and gurgling water. Then the woman went back into the house, and the door closed.

The Shell fellows peered through the darkness, but they could no longer see Talbot. What was the Toff doing? Tom Merry, straining his eyes through the gloom, caught a dark patch on the dark wall of the house. His heart beat hard. Talbot was climbing, slowly but steadily, up the rusty old rain-pipe clamped to the wall. It was a risky climb, and Tom strained his eyes, watching him anxiously. It was like old days for the Toff, those dark old days before he had come to St. Jim's.

The rain-pipe passed a foot from the sill of the shuttered window. Talbot reached the level of the window-sill, and paused there, breathing hard. Then, holding with one hand to the pipe, he reached to the sill, and caught it with the other. Tom's heart almost stopped beating. But the strong grasp of the Toff was upon the stone sill, and he hung there, his other hand followed, and he drew himself up slowly and surely upon the sill.

A gleam came into his eyes as he rested there on his knees. The shutter was fastened on the outside. He needed little more proof than that. But the Toff was not finished yet. His old skill, learned only too well in the old dark days, served him once more. His fingers were upon the padlock—a lock that would have defied any other fellow at St. Jim's. It did not defy long the fellow who had once been known as the prince of cracksmen. There was a slight sound, and the lock parted.

Talbot pressed to one side, and opened the other half of the now unfastened shutter. The room within was dark; the window was closed. In a couple of minutes more the lower sash opened to the light fingers of the Toff. He peered into the black darkness within.

There was a faint exclamation.

Someone was there, in the dense darkness of the shuttered room.

"Who is there?" It was a faint, whimpering voice—the voice of a boy. "Who is that?"

"A friend!" said Talbot quietly. "If you are Oswald Loring, I have come to help you."

He heard a gasp in the darkness, and a white face loomed up dimly.

"I am Oswald Loring." There was a faint foreign accent in the voice. "Who are you?"

"A St. Jim's chap," said Talbot. "I've come to get you out of this."

"Thank Heaven!"

"Don't make a row," whispered Talbot. "You're all right now. I've got friends here, too. You're safe now."

He climbed lightly in at the window. A glimmer of light came in from the opened window; the Toff could faintly see the room—a large, bare room, with a bed in one corner. The pale, scared face of the imprisoned boy glimmered before him. Even in the gloom Talbot could see that he was white and emaciated. He had not fared well at the hands of the Swiss. A leather belt was locked round his waist, and a strong rope attached to it, fastened to a staple in the wall. It did not allow him to move within two or three yards of the window. The Swiss had run no risks with his prisoner.

"You—you've come to help me?" muttered the faint voice. "Thank Heaven! I've been a prisoner here, I

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don't know how long—ever since that villain Ecker brought me here. He came with me from Switzerland. I've been half-starved, and—and when I called out once they beat me—"

The voice died away in a whimper.

"You're all right now," whispered Talbot. "I'll have you out of this in a jiffy."

His quick hands were at work. The door was bolted on the outside—there was no escape that way. But it was not needed. With rapid fingers Talbot twisted the bedclothes into a rope, and fastened it to the rope that secured the prisoner. With his knife he sawed it off from the staple in the wall. Then he drew the kidnapped junior to the window. Loring shrank back. It was clear that his cruel imprisonment had snapped away his nerve.

"It's safe enough," whispered Talbot. "I'll lower you down, and my pals down there will take you. Keep your pecker up—it's the only way out. There's no risk."

"I—I will do as you say. God bless you for coming here!"

In the Toff's strong hands the trembling junior was lifted through the window. He clung to the rope, still secured to his belt. Talbot lowered him steadily. There was a rustle below in the garden—the Terrible Three were running to the spot.

"He's got him!" panted Tom Merry.

The clinging figure on the rope came into the upstretched hands of the Terrible Three. They lowered him gently to the ground. In the room above Talbot secured the rope to the shutter, and came sliding down. He landed lightly beside his chums. Tom Merry squeezed his arm.

"Talbot, old fellow, it's Loring?"

"Yes, rather."

"And we've got him!" grinned Manners. "What did I tell you—what?"

"And the sooner we get him away, and send the police for that Swiss scoundrel, the better," said Talbot.

"What-ho!"

With the rescued junior in their midst, the Shell fellows hurried through the garden towards the road. There they had to pass through the light from the house. But they had nothing to fear now. There was no alarm in their breasts when they heard a sudden guttural ejaculation, and the fat Swiss came striding from a doorway. They had been seen; but the fat rascal had no terrors for them.

"Mein Gott!" The Swiss' jaw dropped as he saw Loring in the midst of the St. Jim's juniors. "Vat—vat—Ach, Gott!"

Tom Merry made a single stride towards the fat rascal, his fist clenched. Without a word he struck out straight from the shoulder. The Swiss gave a gurgling yell, and rolled over on his back. The juniors left him there, as they hurried out of the garden and down the dark road to Abbotsford.

## CHAPTER 14.

### A Dramatic Denouement!

**L**ORING!"  
"Adsum!"  
"Lowther!"  
No reply.

Mr. Railton was taking call-over in Big Hall at St. Jim's. Monty Lowther did not answer to his name.

"Lumley-Lumley!"

"Adsum!"

"Manners!"

Silence.

"Merry!"

Still no answer.

Mr. Railton frowned slightly. The Terrible Three were all absent. The roll went on, and Mr. Railton paused again on the name of Talbot when he came to it.

"Talbot!"

But no voice answered "Adsum!" Talbot was absent, too.

"Bai Jove, those boundahs are keepin' it up!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to Blake. "They don't seem very anxious to hear that we wiped up the gground with the New House at footah."

"We've jolly well done it, anyway," grinned Blake. "I wonder where they've got to. Hallo! What the merry thunder—" he broke off, in astonishment.

Mr. Railton had reached the end of the roll, and he was about to give the signal to dismiss, when the big door was flung suddenly open.

Tom Merry and Manners, Lowther and Talbot came in, and with them came another lad, a stranger to the eyes of the St. Jim's juniors—a lad with a thin, pale face, dressed in rough, old clothes and broken boots, leaning heavily on Manners' arm.

There was a buzz of amazement from the School House fellows. From the ranks of the Shell came a startled cry. Loring had started forward, his eyes fixed upon the stranger, his face white as death.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Railton sharply, fixing his eyes upon the new-comers. "You are late for calling-over. Who is this boy?"

"Loring, sir!" said Manners.

"What?"

"Oswald Loring, sir, the chap I knew in Switzerland!" said Manners.

"Manners! Are you wandering in your mind? Loring is here—"

"Don't let him get away!" roared Manners.

Loring of the Shell—the young rascal who had been known to all St. Jim's as Oswald Loring—had made a sudden rush for the door. The sight of the boy whose name and place he had taken had almost frozen him at first, but he had realised at once that the game was up. His only thought now was of escape. But escape was no longer possible.

As he dashed for the door, Tom Merry and Lowther and Talbot sprang upon him.

They grasped him forcibly and dragged him back.

"Let me go!" shrieked the junior. "Mein Gott! Let me go!"

"Not so fast, my pippin," chuckled Monty Lowther, as he ground his knuckles into the rascal's fat neck. "We can't part with you just yet, dear. Not till the bobbies come for you, my treasure!"

The young rascal was fighting like a cat—kicking, tearing, scratching, in his wild efforts to get free. But the juniors had him fast. They dragged him down, and Lowther, with a cheerful smile, sat upon him on the floor. There were shouts on all sides now, as the St. Jim's fellows crowded round in utter amazement. Mr. Railton rushed to the spot.

"Manners!" he shouted. "What does this mean?"

"It means that we've got Loring, sir, and that that Swiss swindler is shown up!" said Manners. "This chap is Oswald Loring, whom I knew in Vevey. I know him all right—he hasn't changed a bit. That young villain isn't Loring. He's a Swiss, and his name is Ecker!"

"Manners!"

"It's true, sir. This chap is the real Loring."

Mr. Railton gasped.

"Is it possible?"

"I am Oswald Loring, sir. That boy is Franz Ecker. He is a Swiss. He was employed in my father's house at Vevey, and he travelled to England with me."

"But—but—" the Housemaster stammered. "Do you mean to say, Loring—if you are Loring—that you stayed away, and allowed that boy to come here in your place?"

"I couldn't help it, sir. When we got to Abbotsford, we were to call at a place kept by Ecker's relation, Hoffmann. Ecker was to stay there. We went there, sir, and they gave me something to drink, and it must have been drugged. I woke up and found I was tied up in a room, with the window shuttered. I've been kept a prisoner there ever since—half starved, and beaten

if I called out. I—I didn't know why they did it. The Swiss told me nothing at all. I never knew Ecker had come here in my name, till these fellows told me. They got me out of the place. I don't know how they knew I was there. They got me out and brought me here, sir. Ecker's got my clothes on at this very minute."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Let that boy rise, Lowther. You need not sit upon him in that ridiculous manner. But take care that he does not escape. This is an astounding story. Merry, how did you know that Loring—"

"It was Manners, sir!" said Tom Merry. "He suspected the cad from the first, having known the real Loring in Switzerland."

"Yes, rather!" said Manners. "You see, sir, the cad didn't know that Loring had an old pal here. I think he got it first from you, sir. Then he tried to keep it up that he remembered me and our time together at Vevey, but I bowled him out. We didn't feel sure enough to go to the Head about it, so we made up our minds to find Loring, and we did it, too—rather! Talbot got him out. We couldn't have done that, but old Talbot did it like a shot."

Mr. Railton fixed his eyes upon the impostor, who was pale and trembling now, in the grasp of Tom Merry and Talbot.

"Have you anything to say?" he asked.

Ecker's lips moved, but he did not speak. There was nothing that he could say. But he found his voice at last:

"It was Hoffmann," he whimpered. "He suggested it. He—he said his business was failing. He would have to go, and—before that, we could make something by my coming here and—and— It was all his doing!"

"Hoffmann won't go now!" grinned Manners, as the young rascal's voice failed him. "The police are looking for Mr. Hoffman, dear boy, and, if he bolts, he won't get very far. You'll see your dear relative again soon—in chokey."

"Kildare, kindly see that this impudent young rascal is secured in the punishment-room till the police can be sent for. Loring, please come with me to the Head. You will come too, Manners."

The Hall was left in a buzz. Tom Merry & Co. were surrounded by an eager crowd, asking questions. The story of their adventures had to be told a dozen times. An hour later Inspector Skeat came up from Rylcombe, and Franz Ecker—the boy who had been known at St. Jim's as Loring of the Shell—departed with the inspector. The old school never saw him again.

It was a feather in the cap of the Terrible Three, quite putting in the shade the football victory which Blake & Co. had won in their absence. After his hard experience in the hands of the rascally Swiss, Loring was confined to the school sanatorium for a week, but the kind ministrations of Miss Marie soon brought him round. As it happened, Loring went into the Fourth Form, not the Shell, when he took his place among the St. Jim's fellows, and the Terrible Three were not displeased to have No. 9 Study to themselves again. But they made it a point to be very kind to Loring; though he was, as Lowther remarked, only a fag—Manners especially being very chummy with him. Loring proved to be as keen on photographs as during their old acquaintance, and that alone was enough to win Manners' heart. Certainly the real Loring was a very agreeable change after the Rascal of the School.

THE END.

Another Magnificent Long Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. next Wednesday.

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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# Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

## NOT INVENTED YET.

"Have you any alarm clocks?" inquired the customer of a jeweller recently.

"Yes, ma'am," said the man behind the counter. "About what price do you wish to pay for one?"

"The price is no object, if I can get the kind I'm after. What I want is one that will rouse our maid without waking the whole family!"

"I don't know of any such alarm clocks as that, ma'am," said the jeweller. "We just keep the ordinary kind—the kind that will wake the whole family without disturbing the maid!"—Sent in by Sydney B. Jones, Wavertree, Liverpool.

## "OH, DRY THOSE TEARS!"

Tears glistened in the big man's eyes as he gazed down at the inanimate body in the placid water before him. The wet skin shone white in the reflection of the sun's rays. The soft, rounded form was motionless.

"I can't do it—indeed, I can't!" he said brokenly to the woman beside him.

"Don't be a fool!" she answered. "It must be done, and you've got to do it! I have had enough of that sort of thing!"

"I can't," he replied; and the drops that had welled to his eyes trickled down his cheeks. "I've tried hard enough, you know, but I simply can't go on. Besides, it is not my work. You began it, so you'd better finish it. Here, take the knife!"

"Oh, all right, then!" said the woman, as she took the proffered knife.

Then, with a glance of contempt at her husband, she finished peeling the onion!—Sent in by George Sellwood, Canton, Cardiff.

## DID SHE FIND IT?

At a certain public-school it was the custom of the teachers to write on the blackboard any instructions they wished to give the woman who cleaned the class-room.

One evening, while cleaning one of the rooms, she saw written on the blackboard: "Find the greatest common denominator."

"Hallo!" she exclaimed. "They've lost that again, have they? Well, I've never been able to find it previously, so I don't expect I shall come across it now!"—Sent in by L. W. Jenn, Bideford, Devon.

## FULL SPEED AHEAD.

The new hand stood on the poop of the schooner beside the mate.

"Here, take the wheel for a little, will you?" said the mate. "I'll be back in a few minutes. Steer by that star, and you'll be all right."

The new hand began to steer the vessel, but soon got her right off the correct course. The star appeared astern instead of ahead.

With a feeling of pride, he shouted to the mate:

"Come up and find me another star, sir; I've passed that one you showed me!"—Sent in by H. Spottiswood, Middlesbrough.

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GRAND SCHOOL TUCK HAMPERS FOR BOYS & GIRLS. SEE "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD," 1<sup>0</sup>/<sub>2</sub> TO-DAY!

## HE SOON KNEW.

"Now, look here," said the patient father, "this is the forty-seventh question! If you ask me another, I shall put down my paper and give you a tanning on the spot!"

Young Hopeful (after a few moments' interval): "Which spot, father?"—Sent in by Bandboy H. Price, Portsmouth.

## GENEROSITY MISDIRECTED.

Miss Brighteyes (to her lover): "You must guess my age, Percy."

Percy: "Very well; I will send you a rose for every year of your life!"

At the florist's the young man's order was brief.

"Send Miss Brighteyes eighteen of your best roses," he said.

The Proprietor of the Shop (just after Percy had gone): "Throw in another dozen roses with that young man's order. He's one of our best customers!"—Sent in by Harry Hunt, Hunslet, Leeds.

## THE PLAIN TRUTH.

There had been a bad shipwreck, and the survivors were all taken into a big house, in the neighbourhood where they had been landed, for food and shelter.

The squire's daughter received them kindly, and presently asked one weather-beaten old salt:

"How did you feel when the waves were washing right over you, and you thought each moment might be your last?"

"Wet, miss—very wet!" was the prompt reply.—Sent in by W. A. Clark, Fulham, S.W.

## A VALUABLE STONE.

Old Jeremy Potts had been up to town to see his boy, and when he returned to the farm he was sporting a "diamond" tie-pin of imposing proportions.

After gazing at the gem in awed amazement for some considerable time, one of the farm hands ventured to ask:

"I say, gov'nor, be that a real diamond?"

Jeremy regarded the questioner with scorn.

"Real diamond? Why, for sure it is!" he exclaimed.

Then he added suavely: "Leastways, if it baint a real diamond, I don't mind saying as I've been done out of three-and-sixpence!"—Sent in by Walter Tyrel, St. Helens, Lancs.

## IRISH LOGIC.

"What a beautiful sun!" exclaimed the Englishman.

"Oh, the sun is all very well!" said his companion, an Irishman. "But the moon is easily worth two of it!"

"How so?" asked the astonished Englishman.

"Well," said Pat, "the moon affords us light in the night-time, when we most need it; whereas the sun is with us in the day-time, when there is no occasion for it!"—Sent in by E. Swann, Liverpool.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

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# OUR GRAND SCHOOL SERIAL!

## COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS



A Magnificent Serial Story dealing with the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's and their Girl Chum. Specially published at the earnest request of readers of the "Gem" Library.

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

### The Previous Instalments told how:—

ETHEL CLEVELAND, a pretty English girl, and cousin to ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, the swell of St. Jim's, goes to St. Freda's School to continue her education.

Upon arrival, she is kindly received by MISS PENFOLD, the principal.

DOLORES PELHAM, a handsome dark girl, being in disgrace at the school, is very unhappy. Ethel, however, is sympathetic towards her, and tries to be friendly.

ENID CRAVEN, a sneak, who is largely responsible for Dolores' unhappy position at the school, is urgently in need of money with which to settle a dress bill.

Dolores attempts to run away from the school in the middle of the night, and is brought back, against her will, by Ethel.

In the morning, however, Dolores is found to be missing; but she is eventually caught and brought back to the school.

Miss Penfold accuses Dolores of having stolen a five-pound note, which is missing from a desk in her room.

Ethel, however, discovers that Enid Craven has settled her account with Mrs. Scruton, the dressmaker, with a five-pound note.

She warns Mrs. Scruton to take the note back to Miss Penfold, as it was stolen, and then informs Dolores of her discovery.

(Now read on.)

### Light at Last.

Miss Penfold sat upright in the high-backed chair in her study, and the high back of the chair was not stiffer than Miss Penfold. Miss Penfold's face looked as hard as the oak of the table beside her. Her lips were in a thin, hard line. Miss Penfold was receiving a visitor, a person of whom she did not approve, which was the reason why Miss Penfold seemed to be suddenly turned into stone.

Mrs. Scruton looked very uneasy when she was shown in. She had intended to carry matters with a high hand, but the calm, cold stillness of Miss Penfold seemed to take the bravado out of the stout, stagey woman. Mrs. Scruton hesitated, and was lost. Her manner was unintentionally humble as she entered. But for the artificial colouring on her cheeks she would have looked pale.

Miss Penfold rose to her feet, but she did not ask her visitor to be seated. Her glance met Mrs. Scruton's like a rapier.

"You weren't expecting me?" said Mrs. Scruton, with an uneasy laugh.

"No."

"You may be glad I came," said the visitor spitefully. "I've come to ask you if this banknote belongs to you."

And she laid a five-pound note upon the table.

Then Miss Penfold's calmness was disturbed a little. She could not avoid giving a slight start as she looked at the note.

Her eyes sought the number at once.

"Yes," she said, "that note belongs to me. It was—was lost last night. Thank you very much for bringing it to me! Did you find it?"

Mrs. Scruton smiled unpleasantly.

"It was paid to me in the way of business," she said.

"Paid to you?"

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"By a girl belonging to this school."

"What was the girl's name?"

"Craven—Enid Craven."

Again Miss Penfold started. That was not the name she had expected to hear—though she could not imagine, either that Dolores had paid the note to Mrs. Scruton,

"Miss Craven paid you this banknote?" she asked.

"Yes."

"When?"

"To-day—about half-past twelve."

"Why?"

"She owed me an account—for long enough, too. I had told her I should come to you for it," said Mrs. Scruton insolently. "If you don't teach your girls to pay their just debts, you can't expect—"

"We need not discuss that," said Miss Penfold. "I need not say that Miss Craven's debt to you was unknown to me. What was the amount?"

"Two pounds, and Enid Craven has my receipt for the money."

"Then you will be paid."

Mrs. Scruton was silent. She was glad to have the money, and yet she felt a sense of defeat. Miss Penfold laid two sovereigns upon the table, and the visitor put them into her gaudy, silver-chained purse.

"Why did you bring the note to me?" asked Miss Penfold abruptly.

"Because I had my doubts," said Mrs. Scruton. "If it was stolen—"

"I did not say it was stolen," said Miss Penfold coldly.

"Thank you very much for returning it. I don't think I need detain you longer."

"I—"

"Good-afternoon!"

And Mrs. Scruton, almost before she knew it, was being shown out by the trim maid. Mrs. Scruton had intended to simply crush Miss Penfold—to make sneering remarks on the conduct of a school where banknotes were stolen—and to depart triumphant. Somehow, it had not worked out like that. She had a feeling of departing defeated; somehow, or other, the victory was not to her.

And Mrs. Scruton shook the dust of St. Freda's from her feet in a very bad temper.

Miss Penfold looked at the note again, and locked it up in her desk. Then she rang the bell, and sent the maid for Dolores and Enid Craven.

Dolores was the first to arrive. She came in with a strange brightness in her face. Miss Penfold looked at her in surprise. It seemed as if the Spanish girl already knew what she was about to tell her.

"Dolores, I have discovered that it was not you who took the banknote from my desk," said Miss Penfold quietly.

"Yes, Miss Penfold."

"You look as if you knew it already, Dolores," said Miss Penfold, with a curious glance at the girl. "I need not say how glad I am that the discovery has been made, Dolores. I am very sorry that I suspected you."

Dolores looked down.

"It was my fault," she said, in a low voice. "If I had not run away, you would not have thought so."

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NEXT  
WEDNESDAY:

"TRUE BLUE!"

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



"That is true."

"I—I did wrong," faltered Dolores. "I—I was very foolish—and—wicked. I—I am sorry that I ran away, Miss Penfold."

The head-mistress of St. Freda's drew a deep breath. This was a new line for Dolores to take. She had never expected those words of humble confession from the proud Spanish girl.

"You mean that, Dolores?"

"Yes, Miss Penfold. I—I did not see them as—as I do now," faltered Dolores. "Ethel has told me that—that—Well, I am sorry."

"And I am very glad to hear you say so," said Miss Penfold. "Since your innocence is proved, Dolores, I am inclined to deal more gently with your escapade of last night—as you seem to realise yourself how serious it was. If I should allow you to remain at St. Freda's—"

"Oh, Miss Penfold—"

"Would you try to make a fresh start—to do better?"

Dolores clasped her hands.

"I will try—oh, I will try hard!"

Miss Penfold's face softened wonderfully.

"You will have the influence of a dear, good girl to help you, Dolores," she said softly. "Make a friend of Ethel Cleveland, and you will never go far wrong."

"Yes—yes, I know it."

"Then—"

Miss Penfold paused as there was a tap at the door. Enid Craven came in, with a white, frightened face, her feet dragging unwillingly over the carpet.

She had seen Mrs. Scruton come and go, and she realised that she was lost. The wretched girl seemed hardly able to stand as she paused before the stern figure of the head-mistress.

Miss Penfold's face was very stern.

"I have only a few words to say to you, Enid Craven," she said coldly. "Mrs. Scruton has returned to me the bunknote you paid her. I know now who took it from my desk last night, and who tried to throw the blame of that wicked act upon Dolores!"

Enid gave a choked cry.

Dolores' glance had been bitter and scornful, but it changed now to one of pity, and she threw her strong arm round Enid, who seemed to be about to sink to the floor. Enid hardly knew who was supporting her.

"You confess, Enid?" said Miss Penfold quietly.

"Yes," moaned Enid miserably. "I—I—"

"You knew that Dolores was going to run away, and you hoped that the blame of your action would fall upon her?"

"I—I thought it would not hurt her, as she was going away," said Enid, with dry lips. "I—I was afraid Mrs. Scruton would come to you, and—and I should be expelled. I—I was horribly afraid. Oh, I—I—"

"I shall not expel you," said Miss Penfold. "You will leave St. Freda's, of course, but I will spare you the disgrace. This matter need not be spoken of. Dolores, I am sure, will say nothing. You must pack your box to-night, Enid, and leave the school to-morrow morning. I will write to your parents and explain."

Enid fell upon her knees.

"I—I dare not go home!" she moaned. "Oh, Miss Penfold, let me stay! I will never—never—"

"You cannot stay!"

Enid moaned again. Dolores' strong arm was round her. It was strange to see Dolores playing the protectress to the girl who had insulted and injured her. But that was the better and nobler side of the wayward nature.

"Miss Penfold, you have pardoned me," said Dolores hesitatingly. "Will you not give Enid a chance? She was frightened by that woman; she did not know how wicked she was. She will never do anything like it again—will you, Enid?"

"Oh, never, never—if Miss Penfold will let me stay."

The headmistress looked curiously at Dolores.

"Do you speak for Enid, Dolores?" she exclaimed. "You who were very nearly disgraced for life by her wicked action?"

"Yes," said Dolores.

Miss Penfold's face softened.

"Perhaps—perhaps I may forgive her," she said slowly. "If you can do so, I should. And if I believed that Enid really repented—"

"Oh, I do—I do!"

"I will take you at your word, Enid," said Miss Penfold. "I will give you another chance. And remember, too, that you owe it to the girl you have injured. You may go."

"Thank you, Miss Penfold," said Dolores quietly.

And Enid tottered from the room leaning upon the shoulder of the Spanish girl.

Ten minutes later Dolores rejoined Ethel Cleveland in the dormitory.

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GRAND SCHOOL TUCK HAMPERS FOR BOYS & GIRLS. SEE "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD," 1/2D. TO-DAY!

Cousin Ethel looked up quickly.

"It is all right?" she asked.

Dolores ran into her arms and hugged her.

"Yes, it is all right," she said; "and Miss Penfold has forgiven Enid, and we are to keep it a secret. I am sorry for Enid. She is such a coward. I don't like her, but I am glad she is to stay."

"And you?"

"I shall not leave St. Freda's. I don't want to leave St. Freda's now," said Dolores, with her arm round Ethel's waist, and looking fondly at the English girl. "We are going to be good friends, Ethel."

Ethel smiled brightly.

"Yes, indeed we are," she said. "Chums, Dolores."

And chums they were from that day.

### Nothing to Say.

"Tell us all about it, Ethel."

"About what?"

"It!" said Milly Pratt.

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"I have nothing to tell you," she said.

"You should not keep secrets," said Milly, waving a fat forefinger at Ethel. "It is—er—secretive to keep secrets."

Ethel laughed.

"But I have nothing to tell you."

"But something has happened," urged Claire Pomfret.

"Yes; but—"

"But you don't want to tell us?" said Emily North.

Ethel coloured a little.

"Not exactly that," she said. "But there is no need to talk about it, is there? It is not my business."

"Which is a polite way of telling us that it is not ours, either," said Claire, laughing. "Well, perhaps it isn't. Don't ask questions, Milly."

"Nonsense!" said Milly.

"Let's ask Dolores," suggested Emily.

But there was a general pause.

The Spanish girl was not one to be questioned with ease. The almost haughty reserve of her nature had broken down to Ethel, but to no one else. But the curiosity of the St. Freda's girls to know what had passed in Miss Penfold's study was too great. A group of them surrounded Dolores as she came towards Cousin Ethel.

"Dolores!"

"What has happened?"

"Are you going to leave?"

"What is it about, Enid?"

"Won't you tell us, Dolores?"

Dolores' black eyes shone for a moment.

"No," she said.

"Oh, Dolores!"

"Don't bother!"

Even Milly Pratt could not ask questions after that. Cousin Ethel and Dolores were left to themselves. The girls went to look for Enid Craven. She, at least, could be depended upon to tell them what she knew—at least, so they thought. Enid was well known to be a lover of tattle.

It was not easy to find Enid. But she was discovered at last in her cubicle. She was lying on her bed, and she turned a red and tear-stained face to the girls when they came in. The rims of her eyelids were very red, and her face, never beautiful, was more unprepossessing than usual.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Claire. "What is the matter, Enid?"

"Nothing," said Enid.

"What are you crying about?"

"Nothing!"

"What has Miss Penfold said to you?"

"Nothing!"

And Enid turned her face to the wall.

The girls were amazed. Even Enid was silent; and Milly Pratt exclaimed:

"What are we to do about it?"

"Let us mind our own business," suggested Claire Pomfret, who was somewhat given to sarcasm, especially at Milly's expense.

Milly sniffed. But that was what had to be done. That Dolores had been under an accusation, and that she had been proved to be innocent, the girls knew from Miss Penfold. More they were not to know.

Dolores made a gesture of disdain as the girls left her with Ethel.

"They are very curious," said Ethel. "But it is natural."

"Oh, it is insufferable!" said Dolores, with a curl of her red lip. "But, there," she added, with a sudden change of tone, "I am not going to be impatient any more. I hope the wretched affair will be forgotten; but I suppose it will

be a long time before they allow me to forget that I tried to run away from school. I am going to try and like Miss Penfold."

Ethel smiled. "You will succeed if you try," she said. "Miss Penfold is very kind. Have you seen Enid lately?"

Dolores gave a shrug of her shapely shoulders. "No; and I do not wish to. I cannot bear the sight of her."

"She must be feeling very unhappy."  
"Let her!"  
"Dolores!"

"Well, it is not more than she deserves," said Dolores. "What does it matter? You must not waste your thought upon her."

"I was just thinking of her," said Ethel quietly. "After all, she is very weak and foolish, and—and—"

Dolores laughed a little bitterly. "And you are feeling concerned about her?" she exclaimed. "You want to make a fuss of her—that bad girl, and my enemy?"

"I want to see her, certainly."  
"Don't see her. You should not speak to her again. You would not, if you were a true friend to me!" exclaimed Dolores passionately.

"Dolores!"  
Ethel's tone was very quiet, but the colour had flushed into her cheeks. Dolores looked at her with flashing eyes for a moment, then the big black eyes softened, and the proud lip trembled.

"I am sorry, Ethel," she said, in a low voice. "I—I won't speak like that again. Let us go and look for Enid."

"I will," said Ethel. "But you—"  
"I will come, too."

There was no denying Dolores. After her passionate outburst, she was all repentance. Nothing would satisfy her but finding Enid and ministering to her at once; and Cousin Ethel did not say her impulsive friend nay.

"I think she went to lie down," said Ethel. "Let us see."

They ascended to the dormitory. The crowd of inquirers came out of Enid's cubicle as they reached it.

"She won't tell you anything," said Milly Pratt.  
Cousin Ethel smiled, and passed into Enid's room with Dolores. The girls dispersed, with the exception of Milly. Milly was curious, and she had no great scruples in gratifying her curiosity. She slipped into the next cubicle, where it was quite easy to hear what was said in Enid's room, unless the voices were purposely lowered. The partitions between the rooms did not reach to the ceiling. But Milly was not destined to hear anything of great interest to her.

"Enid!" said Ethel softly.  
Enid Craven did not move. She lay with her face to the wall, her hair all loose, one arm thrown over her head.

"Enid!"  
She stirred at last, and turned her rimmed eyes upon the two girls.

"What have you come for?" she exclaimed angrily. "Miss Penfold has pardoned me, and you can let me alone!"  
Ethel coloured.

"Did you think that either of us had come to reproach you, Enid?" she said.

Enid's look was resentful and uncompromising. "What have you come for, then?" she exclaimed.

"Because we want to help you."  
"I don't want to be helped," said Enid sullenly.

"Yes, you do," said Ethel brightly. "You have a headache, dear, and you would like your forehead bathed, for one thing. Then you would like to see that Dolores has no ill-will towards you."

Enid looked at them doubtfully for some moments, and burst into miserable tears.

"I'm the most wretched girl in the world!" she sobbed.  
"Don't cry!" said Ethel softly. "It is all over now. Let me—"

Enid made no resistance. Her head was indeed throbbing, and her forehead was hot and dry. Her tears were shed, leaving her eyelids aching and hot. Cousin Ethel's gentle touch was like balm to her.

Dolores stood looking on. There was a disdainful look upon her dark, handsome face at first, and a puzzled expression, as if she never would understand Ethel. The Spanish girl could understand pardoning a defeated enemy. But this she could not understand.

But her expression softened as the minutes wore away—softened till the big tears stood in her eyes. There was a sound in the next cubicle; Milly Pratt had gone on her way in disgust. There was nothing for her to listen to here.

"Letter for you, Ethel!" said Milly Pratt.  
It was a bright, fresh morning, and Cousin Ethel had come

in from a walk in the grounds with Dolores before breakfast.

Milly Pratt always knew when there was a letter for anybody. She always knew when anybody wrote a letter, or received one, or expected one. She was especially well-informed about postcards, and knew what was written on them, as a rule, before the recipients did.

There was a rack for letters at the end of the dining-room, where the girls' correspondence was put, to be taken down themselves. Milly always spent some time there after a visit of the postman, when the letters were put up. Milly was interested in everybody's business but her own.

"Letter for you."  
"Where is it, Milly?"  
"In the rack," said Milly. "I would have brought it to you, but letters have to be opened in the presence of the Form-mistress. That's one of the rules."

Ethel went to take her letter. Miss Tyrrell was in the room, and the maids were bringing in the breakfast. Miss Tyrrell responded very kindly to Ethel's "Good-morning!" She was beginning to like the new girl very much, as indeed most of the occupants of St. Freda's were.

The Form-mistress looked at all letters received by the girls, and they had to be opened in her presence, which was a precaution against clandestine correspondence of any sort.

But that did not always prevent unknown communication with the outside world, even in St. Freda's and under the careful eye of Miss Penfold.

Ethel's eyes brightened as she took down the letter. It was in the small and elegant calligraphy of her cousin, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

Dolores looked at her a little sadly. "That is a letter from a relation?" she asked.

"Yes; from my cousin."  
"Ah, you have a cousin?"

"More than one," said Ethel, smiling. "This is from Arthur, whom I have mentioned to you. Arthur is a tremendous swell, but one of the kindest-hearted fellows in the world. I hope you will see him, Dolores, and I am sure you will like him."

#### A Letter from D'Arcy.

Dolores nodded without answering. She seldom had letters herself; her parents were far away, and seldom wrote. She had no relatives in England. It gave her a wistful feeling to see that letter in Cousin Ethel's hands. She wondered what Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was like. She did not foresee then what exceedingly good acquaintances they were to become, or what curious results were to follow. Ethel smiled as she read the letter:

"Study 6, School House, St. Jim's.  
"Dear Ethel,—We are playing a match with the New House to-morrow (Saturday) afternoon. Would you care to come and see it? It will be rather a good match. I am playing for the School House.

"I am sure you will come, like a dear girl, and so I shall come over and fetch you in a trap. If I'm not to come, send a wire, because I've got special early leave from Lathom, so as to get over to St. Freda's in time to catch you when you leave your lessons.

"It will be a good match, and I think you will enjoy seeing it.

"Your affectionate cousin,  
"ARTHUR.

"P.S.—It will be a very good match.  
"P.P.S.—Perhaps you might care to bring a friend."

Dolores looked at Cousin Ethel as she laughed. Ethel looked up and met her eyes, her own sparkling with fun.

"Will you read the letter, Dolores?" she asked.  
"May I?"

"I want you to."  
Dolores read the letter, and smiled.

"Will you go?" she said.  
"If Miss Penfold will give me leave, certainly," said Ethel;

"and in that case, Dolores, will you come with me?"  
"Oh, I should love to!"

Ethel squeezed her hand.  
"I will go and ask Miss Penfold at once. It will be jolly at St. Jim's, Dolores; the boys are so good and kind. The football match will be worth watching, too, as I suppose Figgins will be playing for the New House—I mean," said Ethel, colouring a little, "it will be a junior match, but the play is very good indeed!"

And Cousin Ethel went to Miss Penfold's study at once. She found the headmistress of St. Freda's there, and Miss Penfold greeted her with a kindly smile.

Ethel showed her the letter.

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



"May I go, Miss Penfold?" she asked.  
The principal read the letter.  
"Certainly," she said. "But what friend would you wish to take?"

"Dolores."  
Miss Penfold looked at her.  
"Dolores Pelham?"  
"Yes, please, Miss Penfold."  
"I have no objection," said the Head of St. Freda's, after a pause. "So you have made a special friend of Dolores, Ethel?"

"Yes," said Ethel.  
"And you like her?"  
"Very much."  
"I am sure your friendship will be good for her, at all events," said Miss Penfold. "Yes, you may certainly go."  
"Thank you, Miss Penfold!"

And Cousin Ethel left the study with a very happy face. Pleasant as she was finding her surroundings at St. Freda's, she was glad enough at the prospect of seeing again all her old friends at St. Jim's, and glad, too, to introduce Dolores to them. And during morning lessons in the big school-room, both Ethel and Dolores were looking forward keenly to the afternoon, and listening for the sound of wheels in the Close.

### The Runaway.

That Ethel Cleveland's cousin was coming after morning lessons to take Ethel away to St. Jim's for the afternoon, was known to St. Freda's. Naturally enough, the interest in the matter was great. Under cover of lessons, Ethel was asked all sorts of questions about Arthur Augustus—what he was like, whether he were nice, and so forth—and Ethel more than once drew a disapproving glance from Miss Tyrrell by speaking in class.

But she could hardly refuse to do so, when she was spoken to almost incessantly. She told all she could of Arthur Augustus; quite enough to increase the general interest the girls felt in him.

D'Arcy of St. Jim's would have been flattered if he had known how his coming to St. Freda's was looked for.

As a rule, the girls' visitors were relatives, and generally ancient and respectable relatives; and however kind and affectionate uncles and aunts might be, they had not the same interest as a young and handsome cousin, of course. Claire Pomfret had been a great heroine once when her brother, a midshipman in the Navy, came to see her; but Arthur Augustus seemed likely to have a greater vogue than even Midshipman Pomfret.

When morning classes were dismissed, Ethel glanced out into the Close. But there was no sign yet of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The distance by road was considerable, and D'Arcy had said that he was coming in a trap.

But dinner was scarcely over in the big dining-room when there was a sound of wheels.

Ethel started a little  
"It is the little cousin," said Dolores, with a smile.  
Ethel laughed.

"Arthur is not so little," she said. "Yes, I think it is he."  
The girls filed out of the dining-room, and Ethel and Dolores stepped out of the great door. A trap with a handsome horse was standing outside, and beside the horse Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was standing.

He raised his hat in his graceful way to Ethel.  
Then he came up the steps.  
"You will be able to come, deah gal?" he exclaimed.  
"Oh, yes!" said Ethel brightly.  
"Good!"

There were a crowd of girls peeping round the door and from the hall window as D'Arcy was introduced to Dolores. Dolores' black eyes gleamed upon him, and then drooped. Whether she liked her cousin or not Ethel could not tell, but Dolores met him with a grave Spanish courtesy that was very like D'Arcy's own grand manner.

"He is handsome," murmured Claire Pomfret, from the edge of the door.

"I like his nose," said Emily North.  
"He is beautifully dressed."  
"And what a dandy!"  
"Ethel is lucky!"

"I don't see what there is in Ethel Cleveland to make that nice boy come over to see her," Enid Craven said.

Quite unconscious of the remarks of the St. Freda's girls, D'Arcy chatted cheerfully to the two girls on the school-house steps. He manifested great pleasure when he heard that Dolores was the friend Ethel had selected to accompany her to St. Jim's.

"It will be weally delightful," said D'Arcy, in his most

gallant manner. "You are weally conferrin' a gweat honah upon us, Miss Pelham."

And a ripple of mirth ran through the girls behind the door at D'Arcy's beautiful accent.

"Isn't he nice?" murmured Emily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hush! He will hear you!"

But D'Arcy was quite unconscious.

"Are you gals weady to start?" he asked. "It's a pwoetty long dwive to St. Jim's, you know, and the kick-off is wathah earlay to-day."

"The what?" said Dolores.

"The kick-off, deah gal. We are playin' a footah match, you know. I suppose you know football?"

"I have never seen a match," said Dolores.

D'Arcy's eyes opened in surprise.

"Bai Jove!"

"It is played with a ball, like cricket, I think?" Dolores remarked, and so gravely that even Ethel could not tell whether she were making fun of D'Arcy or not.

"Yaas," said Arthur Augustus, a little puzzled. "It is certainly played with a ball, Miss Pelham, but—but not much like cwicket. It is a vevy diffewent ball. But you will see it at St. Jim's. If you are weady—"

"Five minutes," said Ethel.

"I will wait, with pleasure, deah gal."

Arthur Augustus settled down to wait for a quarter of an hour. But Ethel was as good as her word, and in five minutes she came down in her pretty coat and hat which made her look more charming than ever. But it is to be feared that D'Arcy was not all eyes to look at his cousin as usual. Dolores' dark, beautiful face contrasted with Ethel's fair skin and blue eyes, and Dolores looked very beautiful, and several times it seemed that Arthur Augustus could not take his eyes off her.

That was D'Arcy's way.

The number of times he had been in love his friends had given up counting. D'Arcy's love affairs, of course, were not of a serious character; he was a very nice boy, and there was nothing whatever precocious about him. His love-making consisted wholly of doleful looks, polite attentions, and blushes. Cousin Ethel, who knew the symptoms—having herself once been the cause of similar ones—smiled amusedly.

"Well, we are ready, Arthur," she said.

"Yaas, deah gal."

D'Arcy handed the two girls into the trap. Then he mounted himself, and gathered up the reins, and turned the horse under the fire of at least forty pairs of bright eyes, all of which he was quite unconscious of.

D'Arcy was a good driver.

He "tooled" the trap out of the gates of St. Freda's in fine style, and they went rattling down the broad, white country road.

It was a keen and fine afternoon, and the cheeks of the two girls were glowing with health and happiness.

D'Arcy beamed upon them with his most genial smiles when he was not attending to the horse, which was rather fresh.

"We shall soon be at St. Jim's at this wate," he remarked.  
"Would eithah of you care to dwive?"

Cousin Ethel, who understood what a mental sacrifice that question entailed, shook her head.

"Oh, no, Arthur!" she said.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Dolores.

"Would you, Miss Pelham?"

"Yes," said Dolores.

D'Arcy did not move a muscle of his face. When he made the offer, he was prepared for the worst.

"Pway take my seat, deah gal," he said

Dolores took the reins.

Arthur Augustus settled down beside Cousin Ethel.

"Bai Jove, your fwienid can dwive!" he remarked.

"Yes, it appears so," said Ethel.

"I say," said Arthur Augustus, lowering his voice. "I—I say, what a stunnin' gal your fwienid is!"

Ethel smiled.

"She is indeed," she said.

"Have you known her long?"

"Only while I've been at St. Freda's—less than a fortnight."

"But you are gweat chums?"

"Oh, yes, great chums!" said Ethel.

"I suppose you will be often bwingin' her ovah to St. Jim's when you come?" D'Arcy asked, extremely diplomatically, as he thought.

Cousin Ethel laughed merrily.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my poor Arthur!"

D'Arcy flushed crimson.

"Weally, Ethel, deah gal—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus took off his eyeglass and polished it. He could think of nothing else to do for the moment. He was quite surprised to see that Cousin Ethel was not a whit hoodwinked by his diplomacy.

"You see, deah gal—" he murmured feebly.

But Cousin Ethel only laughed, and D'Arcy's voice trailed away. His colour was of a very fine crimson by this time. The trap was bowling along, and the Spanish girl looked back to see what was the cause of the laughter. D'Arcy coloured yet more deeply under her glance.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Look aftah that boundah of a horse, you know. If he gets the bit between his teeth—"

"Oh, I can manage him!" said Dolores.

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

D'Arcy half rose.

As a matter of fact, the horse was giving Dolores some trouble now. He was very fresh and skittish, and he had felt a weaker hand on the reins. The girl pulled hard to keep him in. From a turn of the road ahead of them came the toot-toot of an approaching motor.

"Hold him in!" cried D'Arcy.

Round the bend of the road, with a whirring of dust and petrol fumes, the car swept. It shot past the trap in a twinkling, and was gone with a hooting of the horn, leaving a mass of smelly dust to mark its passage.

"The woadhog!" muttered D'Arcy.

The startled horse gave a leap forward. Dolores clutched the reins tight. Too late! The toss of the startled head almost dragged them from her hands.

"Hold hard!" shrieked D'Arcy.

He flung himself forward and grasped the reins from Dolores' hands. But the horse had fairly bolted now. D'Arcy's grip on the ribbons was without effect, and the trap thundered along the road at a tremendous speed, rocking and swaying to and fro behind the galloping horse.

### Figgins to the Rescue.

"Gweat Scott!"

That one exclamation escaped D'Arcy; then his lips were set as hard as iron, and his hands were like iron on the ribbons.

He did not look at the girls; he looked at nothing but the horse, with his brows so deeply corrugated that his eyeglass almost disappeared.

"Oh!" murmured Ethel.

Then she, too, was silent.

She clasped Dolores' hand, and found it cold and firm. Dolores was not frightened. Only her big black eyes were wide open, and fastened upon the ribbon of road that unrolled before the tearing horse.

D'Arcy's grip was hard on the reins. But the horse was powerful, wildly excited, and he had fairly bolted now. D'Arcy dragged in vain.

On and on, at top speed, swaying till the trap threatened to overturn at every leap of the horse—jolting, rocking! Once the near wheel narrowly escaped the edge of a ditch. At another moment D'Arcy's iron grasp on the reins just turned the horse from a high hedge at a corner.

Clatter! Crash! Clatter!

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus at last.

He knew the terrible danger all three of them were in, and thanked his stars that it was a lonely country road.

Suddenly, from the distance, came a loud ringing of bicycle bells.

Three cyclists loomed up in the distance ahead.

D'Arcy shouted.

"Get aside!"

The three riders dismounted, dragging their machines to the side of the road. The trap was almost upon them by that time, so great was the speed of the runaway.

A tall figure in Norfolk jacket and knickers sprang out into the road.

"Figgins!" gasped D'Arcy.

Figgins, the long-legged junior of the New House at St. Jim's, stood ready, his eyes fastened upon the approaching trap.

He was evidently intending to spring.

"Oh, don't—don't!" cried Ethel, hardly conscious of what she was saying. But her voice did not reach Figgins; the rush of air past the tearing trap carried it far behind.

"Figgins— Bai Jove!"

Figgins had leaped at the horse's head as it came level.

The frantic animal shied from him, and if Figgins had missed, and gone down in the dust just then—Cousin Ethel cried aloud at the thought. But Figgins did not miss. On cricket-field and footer-field Figgins had learned to have a sure eye and a sure hand.

He was holding on, and the whole weight of him was upon the horse's head, and it was dragging the animal down.

The wild, tossing head sank and sank, yet still the frantic brute rushed on, and Figgins was dragged along in leaps and jerks, still holding desperately on.

D'Arcy dragged and dragged, and, aided by Figgy's weight, he pulled in the unruly steed at last.

It stopped, shaking and trembling, and covered with sweat, the fire gone out of it, and shivering with the reaction now.

Figgins still held it at the head.

D'Arcy jumped into the road.

Figgins gave him a breathless grin.

"Lucky we came along, Gussy, old chap!" he gasped.

"Bai Jove! It was awfully bwave of you, Figgy, old boy!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

Cousin Ethel and Dolores descended. Both of them were white and trembling now that the danger was over.

"Oh!" said Cousin Ethel. "Yes, it was brave of you, Figgins. Perhaps you have saved our lives."

"Oh, I should have stopped the horse pweetly soon!" said D'Arcy. "But it was remarkably bwave of Figgins!"

Figgins turned very red.

"Oh, don't pile it on!" he exclaimed. "Kerr and Wynn would have done the same, only I happened to be first. Cheese it, Gussy!"

"Weally, deah boy—"

Kerr and Wynn, the other two cyclists, came up. Figgins & Co. were introduced to Dolores, who gave Figgins an expressive glance from her black eyes. The long-limbed junior's courage had made more impression upon the Spanish girl than Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's elegant manners.

"I—I dare say you girls are too scared to drive any farther in the trap," Figgins remarked, looking away from Cousin Ethel. "We're not far from St. Jim's now, if you'd care to walk the rest of the distance."

"I should," said Dolores.

Cousin Ethel hesitated. She would have preferred to walk, perhaps, but it was cruel to desert Arthur Augustus in that way. She wished for a moment that Dolores had not answered Figgins.

"Oh, the horse is all wight now!" said Arthur Augustus, who never noticed undercurrents. "Look! He's as tame as a rabbit!"

"It was all my fault," said Dolores. "I let him run away."

"Oh, not at all, deah gal! It was weally my fault."

"Things generally are Gussy's fault," Kerr remarked. "Luckily there's no damage done. You had better walk the rest of the way."

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Figgy can put his bike in the trap," suggested Fatty Wynn. "It won't matter so much as a lady if you get it smashed up, Gussy."

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Good egg!" exclaimed Figgins. "I suppose we're going to walk?"

"Weally, Figgins—"

Cousin Ethel glanced at the horse. It could not be pretended that the animal was not quiet enough now. D'Arcy was quite distressed. He had not uttered a word of reproach at the mishap caused by Dolores, and it was rather hard that he should be deprived of his proteges in this way. But he never had disloyalty to fear from his Cousin Ethel.

"The horse is quiet enough, I think," said Ethel. "I shall drive."

"No, you will walk with me," said Dolores.

"But—"

Dolores drew Ethel's arm within her own.

"I would rather walk," she said, "and you will walk with me, and your kind cousin will not object."

"Certainly not, if you would wathah," said D'Arcy, "though weally I assure you that the horse is all wight."

Dolores had said nothing on that point. She had simply said that she would walk. Whatever Dolores might do, she would never speak what was not true. Wayward and wilful she was, but nothing more than that.

Ethel was awkwardly placed. Dolores was bent upon walking, and she could hardly leave her friend to walk alone with boys she had never met before.

Her eyes met D'Arcy's.

"Pway walk, deah gal," said D'Arcy at once. "Aftah all, pewpaws the horse might get a bit skittish again."

"Very well," said Ethel very quietly.

Dolores knew that she had displeased her friend. She pressed Ethel's arm, but the pressure was not returned.

(Another long instalment of this grand school serial *Pext Wednesday*, describing a stirring footer match at St. Jim's. Order your copy early.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 410.

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





# THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to —  
**EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.**  
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON ST. LONDON E.C.  
 OUR · · THREE · · COMPANION · · PAPERS !  
 "THE MAGNET" THE "PENNY CHUCKLES."  
 — LIBRARY — POPULAR — — 1/2 —  
 EVERY MONDAY | EVERY FRIDAY | EVERY SATURDAY.

For Next Wednesday:

**"TRUE BLUE!"**

By Martin Clifford.

In next Wednesday's grand, long, complete story of school life we are introduced not only to an exceedingly charming young lady, but to a new Teutonic master known as Herr Muller. The latter, as is only natural, soon finds that he has walked into a hornet's nest, the whole of the Lower School being up against him, with the exception of the elegant Gussy, who, for reasons best known to himself, backs up Herr Muller through thick and thin. When his real identity is ultimately made known, and his reasons for taking a temporary post at St. Jim's are explained, Tom Merry & Co. feel compelled to agree with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, that the new master is thoroughly

**"TRUE BLUE!"**

## A COLOSSAL SUCCESS!

Unprecedented Demand for the "Greyfriars Herald."

From Number One, our latest companion paper went with a bound. Indeed, on the first morning of issue, it was completely sold out—lock, stock, and barrel, and it therefore became necessary to execute a huge reprint order.

What wonderful enthusiasm! What magnificent support! I feel that I owe my loyal chums a debt almost too great to repay. I asked them to rally round, and the "Greyfriars Herald" went like magic. "Sold out!" was the universal cry of the newsagents and booksellers. One lady who controls a paper-shop in the heart of London told me that if she had had two hundred copies she would have sold the lot!

## THE EVER-TEMPTING TUCK-HAMPER.

One of the chief factors in the popularity of the "Herald" was the wonderful competition, news of which spread like wildfire throughout the country. Coupons literally poured into Gough House, where the specially-qualified Competition Staff were given such a busy time that there was every indication of their becoming prematurely grey-headed. However, the work of adjudication has now been practically accomplished, and it is hoped to publish the result of the first contest very shortly. Meanwhile, I should advise my chums to keep pegging away. The competition will continue to run for quite a lengthy period, so if you fail to win on the first few occasions, you may still have another shot.

## YOUR EDITOR'S BEST THANKS.

I should indeed be ungrateful to allow this Chat Page to be printed without some sort of an acknowledgment of the efforts made by loyal Gemites to promote the interests of our new baby paper—excuse the term.

I really am most delighted with the splendid enthusiasm shown by all my reader-chums, each of whom I should like to shake by the hand. But though I must deny myself this pleasure, yet I embrace this opportunity of cordially thanking one and all for their loyal support, at the same time wishing them a very merry Christmas, and a bright and flourishing New Year!

## READERS' PHOTOGRAPHS.

Some time ago I asked my chums to send me their photographs, hoping to reproduce them in our Double Number. This has been found impossible, but I have arranged to have

them displayed in our companion paper the "Magnet" Library, and intend to make it a regular feature in that paper. In order to do this, however, it will be necessary for me to receive

## HUNDREDS OF PHOTOGRAPHS,

and the senders should write their names and addresses on the back.

Owing to the treatment which has to be meted out to each photograph in our Process Department, they can in no circumstance be returned, but, of course, readers will be able to buy several copies of their portraits in the "Magnet," which renders the return of the photographs unnecessary.

Buck up, boys and girls, and send in your photographs right away!

## PRIVATE CHALLONER, D.C.M.

A Member of Our Staff Who Killed Nine Germans.

Private F. G. Challoner, of the 6th (City of London) Battalion, London Regiment (T.F.), who was attached to our staff prior to the outbreak of war, has recently covered himself with glory in Flanders. He showed conspicuous gallantry at Loos, when he charged the German first line trenches, bayoneting and shooting nine of the enemy, and giving a very fine example to all who were with him.

For this wonderful deed of daring, Private Challoner has been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal by his Majesty the King, and every Gemite should be proud to learn of such a glorious achievement on the part of one who is so closely attached to their favourite paper.

## "SCHOOL AND SPORT" STILL OBTAINABLE.

### Gigantic Reprint Order Executed!

So vast was the popularity of the latest threepenny book-story of Tom Merry & Co., and their famous rivals, that it sold out in almost record time. It was feared that no further copies could be printed, owing to the war, but so great, so insistent was the demand all over the world, that I had no recourse but to instruct the printers to issue another quarter of a million copies. These are now on sale, and every Gemite who has not had the pleasure of reading Frank Richards' delightful masterpiece should ask his newsagent at once for

THE "BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY  
 No. 3191

## REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Lance-Corporal W. S. Bowsey (British Expeditionary Force).—Thank you very much for your splendid letter. The story you mention brought shoals of congratulatory letters into my sanctum. In reply to your question, Cousin Ethel's regard for Figgins is one of pure friendship. Best wishes for a Merry Christmas!

"A Kennington Reader."—Many thanks for pointing out error.

A. E. Brandon.—Thank you for persuading so many of your chums to join the "Chuckles" Club, a concern which continues to flourish right royally. Indeed, the champion coloured comic is quite the rage just now.

Violet D. (Johannesburg).—You are the first girl reader who has ever thought fit to abuse the "Gem," and I hope you will be the last. No, I refuse to publish your epistle on

(Continued on page iv of cover.)



# ONE MILLION GREY HAIR TREATMENTS FREE!

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## NEW SCIENTIFIC FORMULA WHICH OVERCOMES THE NEED FOR DYES & STAINS.

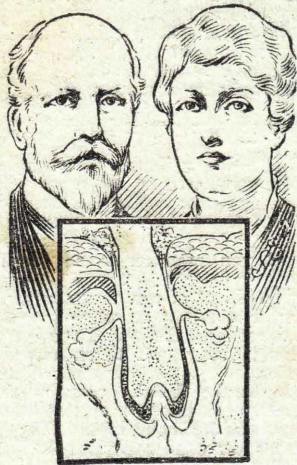
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Send for this gift now. You will always look back upon the day you do so with pleasure and delight. Of course, after you have once seen for yourself the wonderful effect of "Astol" you can always obtain further supplies from any chemist at 2s. 9d. and 4s. 6d. a bottle; "Cremex" Shampoo Powders, seven



Note the wonderful change that even a short course of "Astol" makes in the appearance. Why be worried longer with grey hair trouble? Send to-day for your free supply of "Astol" and commence to regain the natural rich colour of your hair.



**POST THIS "GIFT OF YOUTH" COUPON**

TO THE EDWARDS' HARLENE CO.,  
20-26, Lamb's Conduit Street, London, W.C.

Dear Sir,—Please send me a free trial supply of "Astol" and "Cremex" with full particulars how I may restore my grey hair to its former colour. I enclose 4d. stamps for postage to any part of the world. (Foreign stamps accepted.)

Name .....

Address .....

GEM, December 18th 1915



## REPLIES IN BRIEF—continued.

my Chat Page, which should be utilised for other and worthier subjects.

"The Secret Society of the Human Spider" (Manchester).—My aunt! If it is your avowed intention to murder every Mancunian whom you see reading the "Gem," I wish you joy of the job! Seriously, though, don't you think it is rather bad form to play practical jokes just now?

"Talbotite."—Many thanks for your cheery promise of support.

"Gussy" (Bradford).—No, Manners hasn't a minor. Your sketch of a Prussian baby-killer was most amusing.

C. A. Balfour (Chiswick).—I don't think it is asking too much of my chums to send in their jokes on postcards. As a matter of fact, they ought to be pleased with the economical side of the question. Many thanks for promising to back up the good old "Gem" Library through thick and thin.

J. Strange.—You must take things as they come, and not make a fuss over such trivial details. Candidly, you are lucky to get your "Gem" at all, for it is little short of marvellous how things have been kept going in the absence of our fighting staff.

C. A. B. (Peckham).—Mr. Railton has been discharged from the Army.

A. & C. (Bradford).—Many thanks for pointing out error. Sorry I am unable to give you the details you require concerning the British Fleet.

I. G. (Belfast).—It is a very flattering suggestion on your part—viz., that I should raise the price of the "Greyfriars Herald" to one penny; but I prefer to keep it the best half-penny worth on the market.

W. S. H. (Halifax).—Yes, I think you were quite justified in taking up the cudgels on behalf of the "Gem" Library when you heard the latter being slandered.

F. R. (Fulham).—Both Mr. Carrington and Herr Schneider are still at St. Jim's. I do not care to predict the possible result of an encounter with the gloves between Tom Merry and Talbot.

"Herlock Sholmes" (Brixton Hill).—You have my full permission to do as you suggest. Best wishes!

Marjorie L. (Woolwich).—Are there any other Gemites at Woolwich? What a question! The place simply swarms with them. I do not disagree with your criticism of Grandy's spelling; at the same time, a little exaggeration is often necessary for the sake of effect.

J. H. F. (Waterford).—Many thanks for a most sound and sensible letter!

A. F., F. C., and G. M. (Tadcaster).—Figgins is the taller of the St. Jim's juniors, and Kildare and Wingate are about the same height. It is always impossible for me to give my readers a reply in the short space of a week, as we go to press nearly a month in advance.

Fred S. Smith.—The fact that not a single copy of the "Greyfriars Herald" was obtainable in your town was almost entirely the fault of the would-be readers. They didn't order in advance; consequently, the newsagents didn't take the trouble to get them. I hope you will take warning by this in future.

"Red Domino."—Thank you for your letter and loyal support. For particulars concerning the corps you mention, apply at the nearest recruiting office.

H. C. Grover, 62, The Mall, Southgate, Middlesex, is anxious to form a "Gem" League in his district.

Lewis G. R. (Leigh-on-Sea).—No really loyal reader of the "Gem" would expect to receive commission for recommending the paper to his chums.

Bob Williams (Liverpool).—Hard luck, Bob! I very much doubt if you could get many back numbers of the "Gem" now. Those readers who have taken the paper from No. 1 are loth to part with their copies. I was interested to hear how you became a reader.

"Tom" and "Cyril" (Birmingham).—I will endeavour to do as you suggest.

Harold C. Kent (Christchurch, N.Z.).—Storyettes not quite up to standard. Have another shot!

George Rogers (Studley).—See reply to Fred S. Smith, printed above.

J. L. and S. S. (London).—The suggestion that the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. should be filmed for the cinema has long been in contemplation, but there are numerous drawbacks. Where, for instance, are the actors coming from?

"A Loyal Gemite" (High Wycombe).—Yes; Marie Rivers is already acquainted with Cousin Ethel. I am not the editor of the paper you mention; which is, nevertheless, a very sound journal for British boys.

J. Jones (Treharris).—Your abusive and idiotic letter has been consigned to the wastepaper-basket. I might have made a public example of you, but on second thoughts I decided that you weren't worth it.

"Honestly" (Millwall).—Many thanks for the splendid work you are doing on behalf of the companion papers!

"A Twickenhamite."—Koumi Rao is an Indian, and I don't remember ever having said anything to the contrary.

W. G. (Pimstead).—I will bear your suggestion in mind.

G. T. (Melbourne).—I would refer you to the special four-page supplement which was given away with our Christmas Double Number.

D. W. J. (Walsall).—I am indeed grateful to you for your loyal support, and for your appreciation of the "Greyfriars Herald."

Mabel Wright (Watford).—I am afraid I cannot see my way clear to bring the "Gem" out twice a week. At the same time, I admire the keenness which prompts such a suggestion. I do not think a competition on the lines you mention would appeal to the majority of my readers.

Albert S. (Yorkshire).—See reply to G. T. (Melbourne), printed above.

G. G. (Inverness) writes that all readers who have spare copies of the "Gem" to dispose of in his district should send them to the Convalescent Home, Hedgefield, Culduthal Road, Inverness, where they are badly needed by wounded soldiers. That's very thoughtful of you, G. G.!

P. G. (Sutton).—I see nothing miraculous in the incident you name. Dick Julian, you must remember, is a skilled photographer.

J. W. H. (London, E.).—Hope you enjoyed "School and Sport."

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Albert Hamley (Cornwall).—Very many thanks for your splendid letter!

J. J. D. (co. Cork).—More will be heard of the character you mention in due course.

J. T. S. (Balham).—Glad to hear of the successes achieved by the football club of which you are secretary.

Frederick M. (Wolverhampton).—There is a great deal to be said for your point of view, and I will have a chat with Mr. Martin Clifford on the subject.

C. G. Baker (London, W.C.).—The "Magnet" Library is not issued in volume form. There have been two threepenny book stories published from Frank Richards' pen. The first, entitled "The Boy Without a Name" can be obtained by sending four penny stamps to the Editor, and the latest story, "School and Sport!" is still on sale at most newsagents. The other story you mention is long since out of print.

Sydney J. (South Shields).—I am sincerely grateful to you for your splendid letter of appreciation, and cordially reciprocate your good wishes.

"Footballer" (Manchester).—I am sure "School and Sport" was a story after your own heart.

"A Barrow Scout."—When Tom Merry said to his Form-master, "We're all first-class scouts, sir!" he meant ripping scouts, not that he and his chums had gained the first-class scout badge, although, as a matter of fact, they have done so.

"Clerk" (Ipswich).—Glad to hear you enjoyed "A Stolen Holiday!"

S. T. Gray (London, E.C.).—Many thanks for your letter. Storyettes should always be submitted on postcards.

"Dear Old Dublin."—Thanks once again for writing me such an interesting letter. Good luck to your fighting brother!

Leslie D.—The character you mention is no longer at St. Jim's.

"Incognito" (Barnstaple).—Most of my chums agree that it was downright caddish for a fellow to write an abusive anonymous letter to a girl reader. He would receive short shrift if only we knew his identity. I much admire the sensible tone of your letter.

"Ally-Ally-Ho!" (Nottingham).—Thanks very much for your letter, and for so kindly obtaining three new readers. They don't want much persuading—nowadays! No; I do not think Levison will ever enter upon a permanent reform. As for Lord Mauleverer, of "Magnet" fame, you will see a good deal about him in the "Greyfriars Herald." A Merry Christmas to you!

Harry Sewell (Kennington).—You are under a misapprehension. Penfold is at Greyfriars, not at St. Jim's, as you state in your letter. Your typing is quite good for a beginner.

Eric Lloyd (Cheshire).—I was very interested to hear of the splendid League you have formed.

"Remington" (Preston).—You have doubtless seen by this time my explanation on the subject of readers' photographs.

G. R. Calderwood.—There are many fine stories of Talbot coming along.

William N. M. (Auchtermuchty).—I was delighted to hear from you again. I seem to have some very keen readers up your way.

Your Editor



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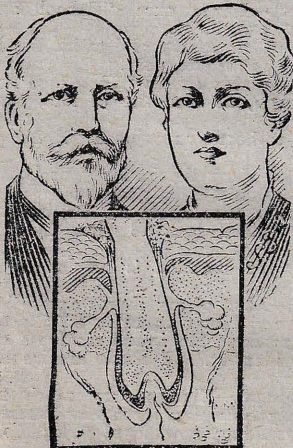
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In addition you will receive a supply of the splendid tonic hair and scalp cleanser "Cremex" Shampoo Powder.

"Astol" is practically colourless. It does not stain the scalp or discolour the fingers. It does not dye or stain the hair in the smallest degree.

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Sydney J. (South Shields).—I am sincerely grateful to you for your splendid letter of appreciation, and cordially reciprocate your good wishes.

"Footballer" (Manchester).—I am sure "School and Sport" was a story after your own heart.

"A Barrow Scout."—When Tom Merry said to his Form-master, "We're all first-class scouts, sir!" he meant ripping scouts, not that he and his chums had gained the first-class scout badge, although, as a matter of fact, they have done so.

"Clerk" (Ipswich).—Glad to hear you enjoyed "A Stolen Holiday!"

S. T. Gray (London, E.C.).—Many thanks for your letter. Storyettes should always be submitted on postcards.

"Dear Old Dublin."—Thanks once again for writing me such an interesting letter. Good luck to your fighting brother!

Leslie D.—The character you mention is no longer at St. Jim's.

"Incognito" (Barnstaple).—Most of my chums agree that it was downright caddish for a fellow to write an abusive anonymous letter to a girl reader. He would receive short shrift if only we knew his identity. I much admire the sensible tone of your letter.

"Ally-Ally-Ho!" (Nottingham).—Thanks very much for your letter, and for so kindly obtaining three new readers. They don't want much persuading nowadays! No; I do not think Levison will ever enter upon a permanent reform. As for Lord Mauléverer, of "Magnet" fame, you will see a good deal about him in the "Greyfriars Herald." A Merry Christmas to you!

Harry Sewell (Kennington).—You are under a misapprehension. Penfold is at Greyfriars, not at St. Jim's, as you state in your letter. Your typing is quite good for a beginner.

Eric Lloyd (Cheshire).—I was very interested to hear of the splendid League you have formed.

"Remington" (Preston).—You have doubtless seen by this time my explanation on the subject of readers' photographs.

G. R. Calderwood.—There are many fine stories of Talbot coming along.

William N. M. (Auchtermuchty).—I was delighted to hear from you again. I seem to have some very keen readers up your way.

Your Editor