

STUPENDOUS OFFER TO ALL—6 STEAM ENGINES
and 50 AEROPLANES must be won!

The POPULAR

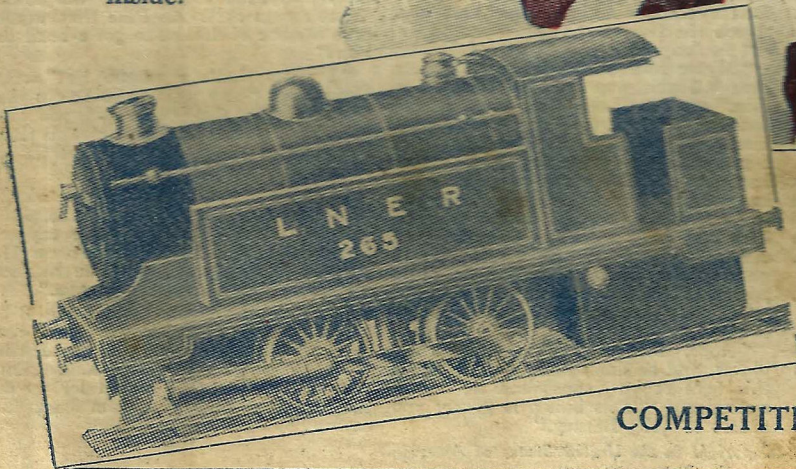
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EVERY
TUESDAY.



DRIVEN OFF THE RANCH! A thrilling incident taken from the fine Western Yarn inside.



A "BOWMAN"
STEAM ENGINE
—ONE OF THE
MANY TOPPING
PRIZES OFFERED
in the SIMPLE
COMPETITION IN THIS ISSUE!



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Heavy Hand!

"D ODD!"

"Yes, Knowles?"

The three Tommies—Dodd, Cook, and Doyle—of Rookwood were in their study in Manders' House when Knowles of the Sixth looked in. They were having tea, greatly relieved by the fact that their new study-mate, Marcus Manders, was not present.

The new junior in the Modern Fourth was "in Coventry." His offences during the brief period he had been at Rookwood had been many and various. Never had any Rookwooder succeeded in making himself so thoroughly and unanimously disliked in so short a time. And Marcus, being the nephew and favourite of Mr. Manders, Housemaster of Manders' House, he could not be dealt with by the fellows of that House as they would have liked to deal with him. Pommelling "young Manders" only meant taking a caning from "old Manders," which was not good enough. So the only resource of Tommy Dodd & Co. was to send him to Coventry, which they had done.

In Manders' House not a fellow would speak to him, or answer him if he spoke. After a time Marcus Manders began to find it wearying. Several times he had reported fellows to his uncle for "calling him names." Certainly a large number of uncomplimentary epithets had been addressed to him, such as "sneak" and "worm" and "tell-tale," before he had been sent to Coventry. But now the fellows did not even call him names, and Marcus would have been glad if some of them had broken the silence, even by calling him a sneak or a toad or a tick!

In the study the three Tommies ignored Marcus utterly, and the sneak of Manders' House seemed to have become fed-up with the chilly silence which always followed his entrance.

Knowles of the Sixth glanced rather curiously at the three Modern juniors, and they eyed him rather doubtfully. Knowles was a good deal given to bullying, and the Tommies had had their

troubles with him, but since the coming of Marcus Manders they had found Knowles quite kind. The cheeky Marcus, sure of his uncle's protection, "checked" the prefects, including Knowles, head prefect and captain of the House. He was safe from the asphalt; the Modern prefects were not looking for trouble with their Housemaster. And the fact that Tommy Dodd had licked the cheeky young rascal on his first day at Rookwood seemed to have found him favour in the House captain's eyes.

"What have you been up to, Dodd?" asked Knowles quite genially.

"Nothing, that I know of."

"You're wanted in Mr. Manders' study."

"Oh!" said Tommy Dodd, his face falling.

"Have you been punching young Manders again?"

"No fear!" said Tommy Dodd. "I haven't touched the cad since I was licked last time. I haven't said a word to him."

The three Tommies grinned as they saw the disappointed expression on Knowles' face. Apparently, he had hoped to hear that young Manders had been punched.

"Well, if you've done nothing, all right!" said the Modern prefect. "But the young cad was in Mr. Manders' study when he sent for you. You'd better go at once."

"Yes, Knowles."

Tommy Dodd took his way to the Housemaster's study in some trepidation. Mr. Manders was a gentleman with a sharp and irritable temper, rather given to punishing first and inquiring afterwards, and no fellow ever liked being called into his study. But Tommy had been extremely careful in his treatment of Mr. Manders' nephew, and he really could not see what could possibly have been reported against him now.

"Come in, Dodd!"

Mr. Manders' sharp eyes glinted at the captain of the Modern Fourth.

Tommy Dodd entered.

Marcus Manders was standing before the fire with a lurking grin on his face.

That Marcus Manders, the sneak, unspeakable toad and worm, must be cured, Jimmy Silver & Co. are determined. And it is Arthur Edward Lovell who ultimately "works the oracle," and gives the unpopular new boy a much needed lesson!

TOEING THE LINE!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

Tommy Dodd ignored him, keeping his eyes on the Housemaster.

"Dodd, I have heard something very serious from my nephew," said Mr. Manders.

"Indeed, sir," said Dodd.

"It appears that there is a conspiracy against my nephew in the Form he belongs to," said Mr. Manders.

"Oh!"

Tommy Dodd had a glimmering now of what was coming.

"My nephew was ill-used on his first day in the school, and very properly reported the matter to me," said Mr. Manders. "Since then it appears that he has been the victim of a conspiracy, of which I suspect you to be the leader."

"I don't know anything about any conspiracy, sir," said Tommy Dodd. "I have not even spoken to Manders of the Fourth, sir."

Mr. Manders' eyes glittered. Tommy Dodd made that statement quite innocently, as if that very circumstance was the head and front of his offending, so to speak.

"My nephew has been the victim of a conspiracy," repeated Roger Manders, raising his voice. "It is called, I believe, sending him to Coventry. I believe that is the term used."

Tommy Dodd did not answer.

"Dare you deny, Dodd, that you and your friends have entered into a league against my nephew, and no one speaks to him, or answers him, if he speaks first?"

"No, sir," said Dodd quietly; "I don't deny that."

"You have, in fact, sent him to Coventry, as I believe you call it?"

"Yes, sir."

"You dare to admit it, Dodd?"

"You asked me, sir!"

Mr. Manders compressed his lips.

"Is this your view of the way in which your Housemaster's nephew should be treated in his uncle's House at Rookwood?"

"A fellow isn't bound to speak to a fellow he doesn't like, sir," said Tommy Dodd uncomfortably. "I never speak to Leggett, either."

"Is Leggett sent to Coventry?"

"N-n-no, sir."

"Then the two cases are not the same. Do you state that they are the same?"

"No, sir."

"Then you are prevaricating, Dodd."

Tommy Dodd flushed.

"I didn't mean that, sir. I only mean that if nobody wants to speak to Manders of the Fourth, a fellow isn't bound to."

"All this is prevarication, Dodd. Is it not the case that there is an arrangement, or compact, in the Modern Fourth Form, that no member of that Form shall communicate with my nephew?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Quite so. This must cease at once, Dodd."

Tommy Dodd's face set obstinately. Mr. Manders was much given to fussy interference and meddling, but really this was too "thick." It was a pretty state of affairs, Tommy Dodd considered, if a fellow was not to choose what fellow he would speak to without instruction from his Housemaster.

"You understand me, Dodd?"

"I understand you, sir."

"My nephew is present. Kindly tell him at once that you are sorry for what has happened, and that nothing further of this kind will take place."

Marcus Manders grinned at Tommy Dodd.

The captain of the Modern Fourth set his lips.

"Do you hear me, Dodd?" exclaimed Mr. Manders, taking up a cane from his table.

"Yes, sir; but—but I can't speak to Manders of the Fourth, sir. He's sent to Coventry," stammered Tommy Dodd.

"You dare to utter such words in my very presence!" thundered Mr. Manders. "You astonish me, Dodd!"

"You see, sir—"

"I see that I have to deal with a rebellious and impudent boy!" exclaimed Mr. Manders. "This is of a piece with your previous conduct, Dodd. You are the leader of this persecution of my nephew. I order you to speak to him at once, in my presence, or take the consequences of disobedience."

Mr. Manders swished his cane.

"I—I can't, sir."

"Hold out your hand, Dodd!"

Swish!

"The other hand!"

Swish!

"Now," said Mr. Manders, laying down the cane, "I have punished you for your impertinence, Dodd. I have said that this persecution of my nephew must cease. I will not tolerate it, Dodd."

Tommy Dodd squeezed his hands in anguish. But he did not speak to Marcus Manders, or look at him.

"From this date," went on Mr. Manders, "all holidays are cancelled for the Modern boys in the Fourth Form. Special tasks will be set for Wednesday and Saturday, afternoons, the customary half-holidays."

"Wh-a-at!"

"Extra classes will be held, under my personal supervision, on those afternoons. An extra hour daily will be given to mathematics."

"Oh!"

"This will continue, Dodd, until you and the other members of your Form express your regret to my nephew for your unfeeling and cowardly persecution and cease that persecution. You may go, Dodd."

Tommy Dodd went.

Mr. Manders had come down heavy. Even upon the dull, obstinate mind of the Modern master it had dawned that he could not order juniors to speak to his nephew, or to answer his nephew's

unwelcome remarks. At all events, such an order was one that could not be enforced. Neither was it practicable to inflict incessant canings on such frivolous grounds. But Mr. Manders was the fount of authority in his own House. Only the Head was above him, and junior schoolboys were not likely to take the tremendous step of appealing to the headmaster against the Housemaster. Mr. Manders' wholesale sentence of detentions meant no more football for the Modern Fourth, among other things, and Mr. Manders undoubtedly had the power to enforce that sentence.

Tommy Dodd almost tottered into his study. Cook and Doyle looked at him in alarm.

"What's the row?" they exclaimed together.

"We're dished."

"But what—"

Tommy Dodd explained breathlessly. "Oh, my hat!" said Cook, with a whistle. "Why, that means scratching all the House matches, or, at least, keeping out of them! It means no Moderns playing for school this term in Jimmy Silver's team!"

"Manders can't mean it!" said Doyle.

"He does mean it," said Tommy Dodd.

"Then—"

"We're dished! That unspeakable toad, young Manders, has done us again! If we cut him, we've got to cut footer, too, for the rest of the term. We're dished, and he knows it!"

And for several minutes Tommy Dodd poured out a stream of eloquence, all on the subject of that unspeakable toad, young Manders, who, most indubitably, had dished the fellows who had sent him to Coventry.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Mr. Dalton is Not Taking Any!

JIMMY SILVER was surprised.

The Rookwood Fourth were in class, in third lesson the following morning. Third lesson dealt with that important branch of knowledge, geography, and Moderns and Classics were all in the Form-room together, with Mr. Dalton. Among the Moderns was the new fellow, Marcus Manders.

And Jimmy Silver, to his great surprise, saw Manders lean over and make a remark to Tommy Dodd, which was answered.

Marcus Manders grinned as he spoke to Dodd, and grinned still more as Dodd answered him.

The sentence of Coventry, apparently, was revoked.

Arthur Edward Lovell gave a grunt. He had observed the incident also.

"They've let that cad out of Coventry!" he whispered to the captain of the Fourth.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Looks like it."

"Well, we jolly well won't!" said Arthur Edward. "The Moderns can speak to him if they like; but he won't get anything more than a boot on the Classical side."

Marcus Manders whispered to Tommy Cook, and Tommy Cook answered his whisper with a grimace. A few minutes later he made a remark to Tommy Doyle, who also murmured something in response. Then he whispered to Towle, who made a hideous grimace, but spoke to him in return.

For some reason—unknown, so far, to Jimmy Silver & Co.—the Moderns had let Mr. Manders' nephew out of the cold shades of Coventry, and the cheeky youth was obviously "showing off" the fact that he had brought his House-fellows to heel. There could have been

no occasion for all this whispering in class, save young Manders' desire to show the Classical fellows that he had scored over the fellows who had cut him.

Mr. Dalton, who for a few minutes had been busy with an atlas on his desk, looked round rather grimly.

"Manders!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You must not talk in class."

"Indeed, sir!" said Marcus Manders.

Mr. Dalton eyed him. He had already spotted a disposition to impudence on Marcus Manders' part. It seemed that young Manders fancied that he could be "sidey," even with the staff, on account of his relationship to a member of the staff.

"I have had occasion to speak to you before, Manders," said Mr. Dalton quietly. "I am dealing with you leniently because you are a new boy, and unaccustomed to Rookwood, as yet. I will now tell you plainly, Manders, that I do not approve of your manner, which is impertinent, and I warn you that impertinence in this Form-room will not be tolerated."

"Indeed!" said Manders.

The Fourth Form looked on with keen interest. Marcus Manders was fairly asking for it, and Mr. Dalton was not likely to be asked in vain.

Richard Dalton picked up a cane from his desk.

"Stand out before the class, Manders!"

"What for, sir?"

"To be caned."

"You are not going to cane me, Mr. Dalton?" said Marcus Manders, eyeing the Classical Form master evilly.

"I am certainly going to cane you, Manders. You will step out and bend over this form," said Mr. Dalton.

Fellows who had to "bend over" in the Form-room were generally objects of sympathy from the rest of the Form. But there was no sympathy for Marcus Manders. Every Modern there, and most of the Classics, looked forward with pleased anticipation to his licking.

"My uncle will not like my being caned, sir," said Manders.

"What?"

"My—my uncle—" faltered Manders. He faltered, in spite of himself, under the steady eyes of the Form master.

"I must explain to you, Manders, that your relationship to a Rookwood master makes no difference whatever to your position in your Form," said the master of the Fourth. "You must be a stupid boy to suppose that you are privileged in any way." He made a motion with the cane. "Step out, Manders!"

But at that point the craven spirit of the spy of Manders' House failed him. As Mr. Dalton was plainly in earnest, Marcus Manders backed down with great promptness.

"I am sorry, sir," he stammered. "If —if you will let me off this time, sir, I will be more careful."

Mr. Dalton laid his cane on his desk. "Very well," he said, "I will overlook your offence, Manders, as you are new here. But bear in mind that it must not occur again."

It was not likely to occur again. After that incident young Manders' manner was as meek and mild as could possibly be desired. Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged sarcastic looks. Tommy Cook winked at Tommy Dodd, and Manders, catching the wink, gave him an evil look.

Towards the end of the third lesson Tommy Cook refreshed himself with toffee from a place of concealment in

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

"Hat's Off!"

his desk, taking great care not to be observed by his Form master. The rule against bringing tuck into the Form-rooms was very strict. Hospitably, Tommy Cook passed wedges of toffee to Jimmy Silver and Lovell, who happened to be near him.

The voice of Marcus Manders was heard.

"Mr. Dalton, sir!"

"What is it, Manders?"

"Cook and Silver and Lovell are eating toffee, sir!"

A bombshell in the Fourth Form could scarcely have startled the Fourth Form more.

Mr. Dalton stared blankly at the informer. The juniors stared at him, too, scarcely believing their ears.

Marcus Manders smirked.

Obviously, he judged other masters by his excellent uncle, Roger Manders, and supposed that his information would be welcome to the master of the Fourth. Never had he made a greater mistake.

He had yet to learn that there was no other master at Rookwood who followed the system of Roger Manders.

For a moment or two there was breathless silence in the Form-room.

"You—you horrid toad!" breathed Cook.

"Silence, Manders!" rapped out Mr. Dalton.

"Yes, sir. Cook had the toffee in his desk, sir, and he gave some to Silver and Lovell," purred Marcus, still not understanding how matters stood. "I saw them, sir, and thought I ought to tell you, sir."

"I cannot believe, Manders, that you thought you ought to tell me. No boy could possibly act the part of an informer from a sense of duty!" said Mr. Dalton sternly.

"Wh-a-at?"

"The boys you mention have broken the rules. I cannot, however, punish them, as the matter has come to my knowledge in this underhand way."

"Oh!"

"I can scarcely imagine, Manders, where you have received your early training," said Mr. Dalton; "but I must warn you that this kind of thing is not tolerated at Rookwood. No boy is desired to give information about other boys; the part of an informer is base and dishonourable. I will overlook this, as you do not know our ways; but if you should volunteer information in the same way again I shall punish you severely."

"Oh!" gasped young Manders. Evidently, Richard Dalton was built upon lines very different from his respected Uncle Roger.

Manders sat with a burning face, fully conscious of the mocking and contemptuous looks of the rest of the Fourth.

"Mr. Dalton!" he gasped.

"Silence!" rapped out Richard Dalton.

And Marcus Manders was silent.

He sat sullenly through the remainder of third lesson, while the other fellows felt quite bucked by the incident. The peculiar ways of Marcus Manders prospered in his own House, but Mr. Dalton had made it clear that there was no demand for them in the Form-room. It was a defeat for the spy of Manders' House, and all the Fourth rejoiced in his discomfiture.

When the Fourth were dismissed after third lesson, the juniors crowded out, discussing the incident, and chuckling over it. Marcus scowled at the cheery crowd and walked away towards his House.

THE POPULAR.—No. 565.

"I T'S up to us!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, at tea in the end study. Lovell cracked his egg thoughtfully, and then raised his hand, pointing his remarks, as it were, with his egg-spoon.

"That worm!" he said.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome did not need to ask to whom Lovell was alluding.

"That reptile!" went on Lovell. "That tick! That unwashed toad! It's up to us."

"To wash him?" asked Raby, and Jimmy and Newcome chuckled.

"No, ass. It's up to us to educate him," said Lovell. "After all, I suppose he came to Rookwood to be educated. We'll educate him! The Modern fellows daren't lay a finger on him for their giddy lives. Well, they're helpless. But we're not. Old Manders can't touch a Classical chap."

"He can't," assented Jimmy Silver.

"So it's up to us," said Lovell. "As Classicals we're the senior side of Rookwood—the top side, properly speaking—the guardians and protectors of the poor old Moderns. See?"

"Better tell them so," grinned Newcome.

"Well, they ought to know it," said Lovell. "They never admit that we're top dogs, and they're often cheeky, and we have rows with them, but in a case like this we're going to look after them. Modern chaps can't touch that scurvy tick, but Classicals can touch him—and touch him hard! My idea is that we should wade in to make young Manders' life not worth living so long as he keeps up spying and sneaking, and general rottenness."

Arthur Edward Lovell looked round at his comrades.

It often happened that Arthur Edward had ideas, and it happened almost as often that his ideas were not received with enthusiastic applause in his own study.

But on this occasion three heads nodded approval at once. For once Arthur Edward had put his finger on the spot, so to speak.

"The fact is, I was thinking of something of the kind," said Jimmy Silver. "It's really a disgraceful state of affairs and not good enough for Rookwood. Duddy is being badly treated, and we can help him out it's up to us, as you say, Lovell."

"Hear, hear!" said Raby heartily. "I'm on. Any old thing, from kicking young Manders across the quad to boiling him in oil."

"I must say I'd be willing to walk across the quad any time to punch him," assented Newcome.

Lovell looked gratified. This was the unanimous support he felt that he merited, but which he did not always receive.

"Well, if you fellows are on," he said, "we'll take the young rogue in hand after tea. It may do him good. He doesn't understand Rookwood, and his jolly old uncle encourages him in sneaking, a thing no other Rookwood master would do. Manders is no gentleman, in point of fact."

"Hear, hear!"

After tea the Fistical Four left their study, and sallied out into the quadrangle to look for Marcus Manders. The whole Co. agreed that Lovell's wheeze was a good one—excellent, in fact. Every time Marcus Manders "sneaked" and brought punishment upon his House-fellows, the Fistical Four were going to do unto him as he

deserved, and they had hopes that in the long run young Manders would come to realise that spying and sneaking did not pay. Whether that desirable result was obtained or not, at least it would solace the persecuted Moderns to know that the sneak of Manders' House got it "in the neck" every time he landed them into trouble with their Housemaster.

"Seen young Manders?" asked Lovell, as he came on Tubby Muffin in the quadrangle.

"I've seen him, and don't want to see any more of him," grunted Muffin.

"He knocked your hat off!"

"Knocked your hat off?" said Jimmy. "I didn't believe he had pluck enough to knock anybody's hat off. Did you slaughter him?"

"Well, I was going to," said Tubby Muffin cautiously. "In fact, I am going to. Of course, I wouldn't let a Modern cad knock my hat off. I haven't licked him yet. Later on—"

The Fistical Four grinned. Reginald Muffin was not a fighting-man, and it was clear that he was going to think the matter out very seriously before he avenged that insult.

"Well, where is he now?" asked Raby.

"In the school shop stuffing doughnuts," said Tubby. "Greedy little beast, you know. He wouldn't offer a chap a doughnut, though he had half a dozen. Not that I'd have accepted one, of course. I spoke to him quite civilly."

"You needn't tell us that, if he had half a dozen doughnuts," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm sure butter wouldn't have melted in your mouth, Tubby."

"Well, a fellow can be civil," said Tubby, "and instead of offering a fellow a doughnut—I mean instead of answering civilly, he knocked my hat off. I came jolly near smashing him, I can tell you. But I thought that a fellow like that ought to be treated with contempt. I turned on my heel and left him," concluded Reginald Muffin loftily.

Jimmy Silver & Co. smiled, and walked on to Sergeant Kettle's little shop behind the beeches.

There they had a view of Marcus Manders, sitting at one of the little tables. Apparently he had finished the doughnuts, for he now had a cake before him, and was demolishing it at a good rate. Two or three Moderns were in the shop, and they gave the sneak of the House looks of dislike, but when Marcus Manders spoke to them, with a sneering grin on his meagre face, they answered with forced civility. The sentence of Coventry was very much a thing of the past; Mr. Manders' heavy hand had abolished it at a blow.

The Fistical Four strolled in, and Manders scowled at them. Lovell walked past the table, reached out, and knocked the hat from his head.

"Oh!" ejaculated Manders.

His hat flew across the tuckshop.

"Pass!" shouted Putty of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Oswald passed the hat to Putty, with a neat kick, and Putty of the Fourth took the pass, and sent the hat spinning out of the doorway. Gunner of the Classical Fourth was lounging in the doorway, and he brought down a heavy foot on the hat, and it crunched. It did not look much like a hat after Gunner's large foot had landed on it.

Manders sprang up with a furious face.

"You rotter, Lovell!" he shouted.

"Keep that for the Modern side, old bean!" said Lovell. "You mustn't call Classicals names! If you do, you get collared—like that—"

"Let go!" roared Manders, as Lovell gripped his collar.



AN "EGGS"-CELLENT NOSE DIVE! Marcus Manders spun away from Lovell's boot. His shins came in contact with a large box of eggs leaning against the sergeant's counter, and he plunged forward. Crash! Scrumch! "Groooogh!" "Oh, crumbs!" gasped Lovell. "Ha, ha, ha!" There was a howl of merriment in the tuckshop as Marcus Manders' head and shoulders disappeared into the eggs. (See Chapter 3.)

"And slewed round, like that—"
 "Leggo!"
 "And kicked like that—"
 "Yaroooh!"

Marcus Manders spun away from Lovell's boot. He spun helplessly, quite losing his balance. His shins came in contact with a large box of eggs leaning against the sergeant's counter, and he plunged forward.

Crash!
 Scrumch!
 "Groooocooogh!"
 "Oh crumbs!" gasped Lovell.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a howl of merriment in the tuckshop as Marcus Manders' head and shoulders disappeared into the eggs.

"That merchant needs a wash more than ever!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Go and put your head under the fountain, young Manders!"

"Go and show it to Mr. Manders!" chortled Oswald.

Marcus Manders spluttered furiously. He was smothered with eggs, his face and hair and ears streamed with them, and they streamed over his clothes in horrid, sticky streaks. Some of the eggs did not seem to have been of the freshest description, to judge by the aroma that floated around young Manders. He coughed and gasped and spluttered and gurgled wildly, while Moderns and Classics yelled with laughter. Even the old sergeant grinned, concerned as he was for his property.

Manders cast a furious glance round at the juniors. His eyes gleamed eggly at Arthur Edward Lovell.

"You wait a bit!" he gasped. "You wait till my uncle's seen this!"

"I'll wait with pleasure, old bean!" grinned Lovell. "I hope old Manders will enjoy the sight, it's enough to make a cat laugh, I assure you!"

With a furious glare, the sneak of Manders' House rushed from the tuckshop. Loud laughter could be heard from the quad as he passed fellows there, streaming with broken eggs.

"What on earth's happened to young Manders?" asked Tommy Dodd, coming into the tuckshop with Cook and Doyle.

"He fell into a box of eggs," said Lovell blandly. "Something jolted him—I think it was my boot—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Look 'ere who's going to pay for them eggs?" demanded Sergeant Kettle warmly.

Jimmy Silver chuckled.
 "Dear man, we'll have a whip round to pay for the eggs," he said. "It was worth it."

"Worth it!" chortled Tommy Dodd. "I should jolly well say it was, if the eggs were a bob each."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The eggs were paid for willingly; there was not a fellow there who would

not gladly have paid for a second lot to be used in the same way. Moderns and Classics were still chuckling over the episode when Muffin put his fat face into the doorway.

"You fellows, old Manders has just gone to Mr. Dalton's study—he's got young Manders with him. Something's up."

The laughter died away.
 "That's trouble for you, Lovell, I'm afraid," said Tommy Dodd anxiously. "Old Manders can't touch you, being a Classical; but he's gone to report to your Form master."

Lovell shrugged his shoulders.
 "Let him!" he said.
 "There'll be a row, old chap!" said Cook.

"My dear man, it's all right," said Lovell confidently. "Dicky Dalton is the man to see justice done. You see, young Manders was what the masters call the aggressor, when they're inquiring into a row. He started it."

"Did he?" ejaculated Tommy Dodd. "I can't imagine young Manders starting a row with anybody more dangerous than Tubby Muffin or Cuffy."

"Exactly. He started on Muffin, and I started on him!" chuckled Lovell. "I've got it all out and dried."

Bulkeley of the Classical Sixth looked in.
 "Lovell!"

"Yes, Bulkeley."
 "Come with me to Mr. Dalton's study."

"Certainly, Bulkeley."
 Arthur Edward Lovell cheerily followed the captain of Rookwood, and the whole crowd of juniors followed Arthur Edward Lovell.

Lovell's manner was respectful, but quite confident, when he entered his Form master's study. Richard Dalton met him with rather a severe look. Mr. Manders and his nephew were there, Marcus still showing many signs of the eggs after a hurried clean-up.

"There is the boy!" exclaimed Mr. Manders as Lovell entered. "That is THE POPULAR.—No. 565.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
 Once Too Often!

SCRUNCH! Scrumch! Smash! It was a large box, and it was stacked with eggs in straw. Eggs innumerable crashed and smashed round Marcus Manders as he plunged and struggled with his head and shoulders in the box. The juniors in the tuckshop yelled with laughter.

"Look 'ere, you stop that!" shouted Sergeant Kettle. "You'll 'ave to pay for them eggs! You 'ear me, Master Manders?"

"Grooooh! Ooooh!"
 Manders struggled out of the box. He lifted a horrid face, streaming with broken eggs and fragments of egg-shell and wisps of straw, and his extraordinary aspect made the juniors shriek.

"Ugh! Gug-gug-gug! Ooooh!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Ten shillings' worth of eggs gone!" howled the indignant sergeant. "Them eggs will 'ave to be paid for."

"Ooooh!" spluttered Marcus Manders. "You old fool—"

"What?"
 "Look at me—I'm smothered!" roared Manders, gouging egg from his eyes with both hands. "Ooooh! Grooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

the boy who hurled my nephew into a box of eggs, Mr. Dalton. The most severe—condign punishment—”

“I must inquire into the matter, Mr. Manders,” said the Classical master coldly.

“Undoubtedly,” hooted Mr. Manders. “But I will not allow my nephew to be ill-used by Classical boys, Mr. Dalton. I will not tolerate—”

“This matter is in my hands,” snapped Richard Dalton sharply. “Leave it to me, Mr. Manders. Lovell, Manders of the Modern Fourth accuses you of kicking him and causing him to fall into a box of eggs. What have you to say?”

“I kicked young Manders, sir,” said Lovell meekly. “He was the aggressor, sir.”

“It is false!” exclaimed Mr. Manders. “You were not present, sir,” said Lovell.

“Do not bandy words with me, boy! Mr. Dalton, I—”

“In what way was Manders of the Fourth the aggressor, Lovell?” asked Mr. Dalton, taking no heed of the excited Modern master.

“He applied what Mr. Manders calls an opprobrious epithet to me, sir,” said Lovell, with great meekness.

Mr. Dalton’s face twitched for a moment. There was a faint chuckle from the corridor outside, revealing the presence of a crowd of listening juniors.

“What do you mean, Lovell? Speak plainly.”

“He called me a rotter, sir, a very opprobrious epithet, as Mr. Manders will admit,” said Lovell. “Mr. Manders has caned fellows in his House, sir, for calling young Manders a rotter.”

“Hem!”

“Is a fellow to be called a rotter, sir, by another fellow?” asked Lovell, with an air of injured innocence.

“Certainly not!” said Mr. Dalton. “It appears, Mr. Manders, that your nephew was responsible for the trouble which—”

“I called him a rotter because he knocked my hat off, and the other fellows kicked it about,” shrieked Marcus.

“Oh! Did you knock off Manders’ hat, Lovell?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then it appears, Lovell, that you were the aggressor,” said Mr. Dalton sternly.

“No, sir; I knocked off young Manders’ hat, sir, because he had knocked off a Classical fellow’s hat—a fellow who couldn’t stand up for himself, sir.”

“A falsehood,” exclaimed Mr. Manders. “A palpable falsehood!”

“It was Muffin’s hat, sir,” said Lovell. “Muffin will bear out what I say.”

“Yes, rather!” came a fat voice from the corridor.

“Step in here, Muffin.”

Reginald Muffin rolled into the study. “Manders of the Fourth knocked your hat off?” asked Mr. Dalton.

“Yes, sir; in the tuckshop, sir,” said Tubby. “I spoke to him very civilly, sir, though all the fellows treat him like a cad and a rat, sir, as he really is—”

“That will do, Muffin! It appears, Manders, that you treated Muffin in the way you complain that Lovell treated you.”

“I—I didn’t!” gasped young Manders. “Lots of fellows saw him, sir!”

exclaimed Muffin. “Sergeant Kettle saw him, sir. Ask the sergeant, sir!”

“I shall certainly inquire—”

“I—I—I mean, I—I forgot!” stammered Marcus Manders in dismay.

THE POPULAR.—No. 565.

Mr. Dalton gave him an icy look. “You could not possibly have forgotten, Manders. You must mean that you spoke falsely in denying it, and have changed your mind on realising that your act of aggression can be proved by witnesses.”

Marcus Manders bit his lip. Mr. Manders gave his nephew a grim look.

“It so appears,” went on the Fourth Form master, “that Manders of the Fourth performed what you have described, Mr. Manders, as an act of hooliganism—an act of ruffianism—his victim being a boy much smaller than himself. Lovell—thoughtlessly, no doubt—did to your nephew what he had done to Muffin. The rest followed. In this matter, Mr. Manders, it is clear that Manders of the Fourth was the aggressor in the first instance, and was to blame for the whole occurrence. Lovell, you may go!”

“Thank you, sir!” said Arthur Edward demurely.

And Lovell joined his delighted comrades in the corridor.

Mr. Manders breathed hard. He realised that, with the help of his nephew, he had made a complete fool of himself.

Mr. Dalton gave him a cold look.

“I have inquired into this matter, Mr. Manders, because you reported it to me as a serious incident. I do not regard it in that light. If Rookwood masters are to inquire into every petty disagreement among the juniors, if every trivial incident is to be reported and made the subject of inquiry, we shall find our work very onerous, Mr. Manders. I am sorry to say that I have already found your nephew willing and eager to play the part of a tell-tale and informer, and I think he should be strongly discouraged from following this course. I think, sir, that it is your duty to discourage him.”

Mr. Manders gave a snort, and then turned to his nephew.

“Come with me, Marcus!” he snapped.

Through a grinning crowd of fellows Mr. Manders and his nephew walked out of the House. There was a black frown on Mr. Manders’ face, a rather apprehensive expression on his nephew’s. For once the favourite was in his Housemaster’s black books. Mr. Manders had made a fool of himself, and the worthy Marcus was the cause.

Five minutes later, Towle of the Modern Fourth came bolting out of Manders’ House, breathless with joyful excitement.

“You fellows!” he gasped. “What’s the giddy news?” asked Jimmy Silver.

“Old Manders—young Manders—licking!” gasped Towle, incoherent with excitement. “Six—young Manders! Yelling like a hyena—in old Manders’ study! Oh, ain’t it ripping!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

The juniors roared. Old Manders’ cane was in active play again, and this time it was young Manders who was getting the benefit of it! For once the sneak of Rookwood had sneaked not wisely, but too well. Tommy Dodd slapped Lovell on the back ecstatically. Classics and Moderns yelled with merriment, while Marcus Manders, in Mr. Manders’ study, was yelling in quite a different manner, and realising, perhaps, that there were drawbacks to the career of a sneak.

THE END.

(But Marcus Manders comes up smiling again next week and gives more trouble to the Modern and Classical chums. See: “MARCUS MANDERS ON THE BALL!”)

The Boy Who Came Back!

(Continued from page 12.)

“I did not say Squelch!” hooted the Remove master. “I said Quelch! My name is Quelch. I am your son’s former Form master at Greyfriars.”

“Oh, very good! What is it, Mr. Squelch—I mean, Quelch?”

“Your son William, who was expelled from the school, has had the audacity to return here!” hooted Mr. Quelch.

“Indeed!”

“Yes, indeed, sir.”

“I understood that he was going to visit friends,” said Mr. Bunter. “No doubt he was referring to friends at Greyfriars. Really, Mr. Quelch, this is disagreeable to me. No doubt the boys miss him, but a visit like this should not have been arranged, in the circumstances. Surely you see this.”

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

“Your son came here uninvited, sir!” he gasped. “I have rung you up, sir, to point out to you that it must not occur again.”

“It is for you to see that it does not occur again, sir!” snapped Mr. Bunter. “My son was dismissed from Greyfriars for reasons that appear to me totally inadequate. I have been put to great inconvenience. The affair has been a trouble to me. When I placed my son with Dr. Locke I did not expect him to be returned on my hands like this.”

“Your son’s conduct—”

“His conduct, sir, whatever it was, was doubtless the outcome of his training, which was in your care.”

“Wha-a-at?”

“And now,” resumed Mr. Bunter indignantly, “after handing my son over to me suddenly, almost without warning, you allow him to revisit the school, you encourage him to return—”

“Encourage him!” gasped Mr. Quelch.

“If it is your wish that he should return to Greyfriars as a pupil, I will consider the matter,” said Mr. Bunter.

“Bless my soul! I—I—”

“I am, I think, prepared to consent to this. At all events, I will consider the matter, and give you a favourable answer, if possible.”

“Sir!”

“It would have been better to communicate with me first. I must say, Mr. Quelch, that there seems to me something surreptitious about your encouraging William to come back to the school without my knowledge. Still, if you are anxious to have him back, I can make allowances.”

“I—I—I—” Mr. Quelch’s voice failed him.

“We will leave it at that,” said Mr. Bunter. “Tell the Head that I will give him a favourable answer if possible. Good-bye!”

“Sir—Mr. Bunter—listen to me—”

Only a buzz on the wires answered Mr. Quelch. William Samuel Bunter had rung off.

And his hopeful son was still lingering outside the gates of Greyfriars like a fat Peri at the gates of paradise.

THE END.

(Billy Bunter can’t hang on for ever at the gates of Greyfriars like this. He has no money, and no chance of getting back into his old school. But Bunter is an optimist, as you will see in next week’s long story of Harry Wharton & Co. entitled: “GETTING RID OF BUNTER!”)