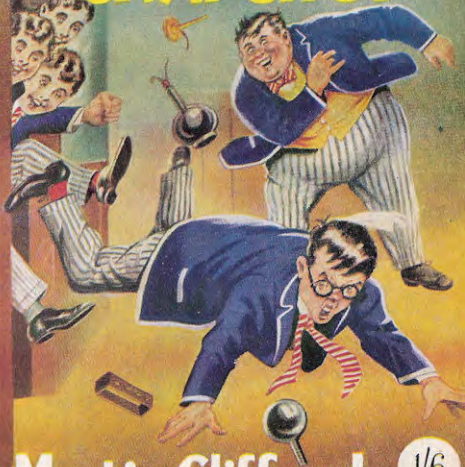




A BRAND-NEW ADVENTURE OF
TOM MERRY & CO. OF ST. JIM'S

SKIMPOLE'S SNAPSHOT



Martin Clifford

1/6

WHEN SKIMPOLE TAKES A SNAPSHOT,
THE ANSWERS IN THE NEGATIVE

No.5

SKIMPOLE'S SNAPSHOT !

Martin Clifford



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TOM MERRY'S SECRET
TOM MERRY'S RIVAL
THE MAN FROM THE PAST
WHO RAGGED RAILTON ?
TROUBLE FOR TRIMBLE

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Our Cover Picture

*(Portrayed by C. H. Chapman—
the famous Billy Bunter artist).*

Helped by three lunging feet, Herbert Skimpole departed from No. 10 Study in haste.

"My instruments—my chemicals!" he gasped.

"Coming!" answered Manners.

They followed him with a crash and a clatter. Skimpole, spluttering in the passage, was surrounded by the wreck of his paraphernalia....

Skimpole's Snapshot

by Martin Clifford

Herbert Skimpole, "scientist" of St. Jim's, had no camera. But that did not deter him from entering the Rylcombe Gazette's Photographic Competition—he simply walked into the study of Tom Merry & Co., and, since there was no one there, he helped himself to Harry Manners' treasured camera, and went to take a prize-winning "snap."

But the snapshot taken by the learned junior was no ordinary one. It was the sort of picture that would have been dynamite if it reached the wrong hands—more dangerous even than Skimpole's scientific experiments.

For days, a bullying prefect of the Sixth Form lived in fear of expulsion, in the shadow of Skimpole's Snapshot, and St. Jim's boys were amazed to see a prefect meekly taking orders from a Shell junior!

And the situation would certainly have ended in disaster if Tom Merry had not intervened—and if Cardew the Cad had not played a clever trick on D'Arcy.



1

A Spot of Bother

TOM MERRY sniffed.
Manners sniffed.

Monty Lowther sniffed.

Three emphatic sniffs, in fact, were blended into one, outside No. 10 Study in the Shell passage, in the School House at St. Jim's.

"What the dickens—!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

It was really surprising. It was also disconcerting. Indeed, it really was a little alarming.

The "Terrible Three" had come up to their study to tea. They

were a little late, having been at the cricket nets. But instead of banging the door open, as usual, and tramping in, they stopped outside No. 10 Study, in astonishment, and sniffed!

Something seemed to be wrong in that study. Oozing from it, as it were, was a very striking smell. It was a powerful smell. It was a most unpleasant smell. It was nothing at all like attar-of-roses. It smelt as if all the vilest chemicals in the world had been collected in Tom Merry's study, and were letting off steam there.

Junior studies were not always in apple-pie order. There were untidy fellows at St. Jim's, like Gore of the Shell: slovenly fellows like Trimble of the Fourth: even fellows who did not wash if they could help it, like Piggott of the Third. But Tom Merry's study was always neat and clean. If Monty Lowther left things lying about, Manners would always put them away: and there certainly never was anything in the study to offend the nose. In some studies a forgotten sardine might linger in the cupboard till it made its presence disagreeably known; but not in Tom's.

So this was quite astonishing, as well as unpleasant. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther stared at the door, wondering what on earth could have happened in their study.

"Drains!" said Manners.

"It's worse than that!" said Lowther.

"Well, let's see what it is, you fellows," said Tom. "Better hold your noses! Something's jolly well up!"

He threw open the door.

"Urrrrrgh!" ejaculated all three, as the scent, released by the opening door, rolled out into the passage in more powerful volume.

They sniffed! They coughed! Then, with their noses compressed by fingers, they stared into their study.

A haze hung over the room. And it was not unoccupied, as they would naturally have expected to find it. A bony youth, with a large bony forehead and a large pair of spectacles clamped on a bony nose, was standing by the study table with a measuring glass in his hand, and an intent expression on his bony face. It was Herbert Skimpole of the Shell, who belonged to the next study, and certainly had no business in Tom Merry's. But there he was.

There were glasses, retorts, all sorts of things, on the table. Skimpole, it seemed, was busy with chemicals. He seemed impervious to the ghastly smells he was raising in the study. Skimpole was a scientific youth, and such trifles passed him by like the idle wind which he regarded not.

He was so deep in his experiment, whatever it was, that he did not even notice that the door was open, and three wrathful faces staring in. Neither his eyes nor his spectacles turned on them.

"Skimpole!" gasped Manners.

"That biological blitherer!" exclaimed Lowther.

"You thumping ass, what are you doing here?" roared Tom Merry.

Skimpole jumped, and the glass fell from his hand. There was a loud crack as contact with the floor detached it into fragments. The scientific member of the St. Jim's Shell would never do any more measuring with that particular glass.

"Oh!" ejaculated Skimpole, blinking round through his spectacles like a startled owl. "Oh! My dear fellows—"

"What are you up to here?" yelled Tom.

"My dear Merry. By concentrating your attention upon the paraphernalia I have brought into the study, surely you are capable of elucidating that I am conducting a chemical experiment."

"Swallowed a dictionary, as usual!" hooted Lowther.

"My dear Lowther—"

"I'll 'dear Lowther' you, you smelly fathead!" howled Lowther.

"What are you doing it in our study for? Can't you keep in your own?"

Skimpole shook his head.

"Gore is so very obtuse and unreasonable," he explained.

"Even Talbot objects to the smell of the chemicals. But Gore was actually violent. He kicked me—"

"Jolly good idea of Gore's," said Lowther. "We'll do the same."

Tom Merry cut across to the window, and threw it wide open. Manners grasped a newspaper, and began to wave it in the air. Monty Lowther looked like grasping Skimpole. That cheerful youth seemed quite unaware of his danger. Skimmy never seemed able to understand why other St. Jim's fellows did not share his deep interest in scientific pursuits.

"Perhaps you fellows wouldn't mind going down to hall to tea," he suggested. "I am very busy now, and do not wish to be interrupted. I hope you have not come up to tea here."

"Just that!" said Manners.

"It is very awkward, when I am so busy. But perhaps you would not mind having your tea on a box, or on the floor!" suggested Skimpole, brightly. "You see, I really must not be interrupted. I am on the track!"

"On the track of what, you howling ass?" asked Tom Merry.

"A new discovery," said Skimpole, beaming. "A concentrated chemical ray—"

"A—a—a whatter?"

"A concentrated chemical ray—"

"There isn't such a thing," said Manners, staring.

"Not at present," admitted Skimpole. "But I am on the track. Here, of course, my work must be on a small scale. Later, it will be developed on gigantic lines, in huge factories. The atom bomb will be left far behind. It will be merely a toy in comparison. When my discovery is completed, it will be possible to kill three hundred thousand persons by merely pressing a button!" said Skimpole, with a beaming smile. "Think of that!"

Tom Merry and Co. gazed at him. They did not seem very enthusiastic about killing three hundred thousand people all at once!

"Science is a wonderful thing, my dear fellows," said Skimpole. "Now that science is making such vast strides, human life on this planet hangs on a mere thread! Is it not glorious?"

"Oh, frightfully!" gasped Tom Merry. "Now get out of this study and take your silly muck along with you."

"My dear Merry—"

"Where's my camera?" exclaimed Manners, suddenly. Manners' eye was always open for his camera. It was the darling of his heart. And it was missing from its usual place on the shelf.

"I am using it, my dear Manners—"

"*Using my camera among all that muck!*" shrieked Manners.

"I have not taken it out of the case, Manners; merely used the case as a stand for a retort. Some chemicals have been spilled on it, and the leather is somewhat burned and discoloured, but you will not mind that, my dear fellow, in the interests of science—Yaroooooooooh!"

It seemed that Manners did mind!

Utterly regardless of the interests of science, he leaped at the table, and dragged his camera case away, with a crash of glasses right and left. Then he leaped at Skimpole.

"Here, hold on, Manners," gasped Tom.

"My camera—!" yelled Manners.

"Go easy, old chap," urged Monty Lowther.

"My camera!"

"Oh! ow! ooogh!" Draggimoff!" yelled Skimpole, as Manners got his head into chancery, punching him with rapidity and vigour. "Help! Oh, crikey. Whoop!"

Skimpole forgot even science. He wriggled, he struggled, he roared. He gasped and he squeaked and he yelled. Manners continued to punch till his chums seized him and fairly dragged him off the suffering Skimmy.

"Let go!" roared Manners. "My camera! Look at the case! The camera may be damaged, too. He hasn't had enough—lemme gerrat him."

"He's had enough, old chap," said Tom, soothingly.

"He hasn't!" roared Manners.

"Let's ask Skimmy!" suggested Monty Lowther. "He ought to know! Have you had enough, Skimmy?"

"Wow! ow! wooh! Ooooh! Ow! wow!" spluttered Skimpole. "Ooogh! Wooh! Oh, dear! Oh, crikey! Wooooh!"

"That sounds as if he thinks he's had enough," said Lowther. "Chuck it, Manners, old man, and we'll all kick him out of the study together."

"Go it!" said Tom.

"My dear fellows—ow! Please terminate this extremely rough—varoooh! Oh, crumbs! Whooooop!"

Helped by three lunging feet, Herbert Skimpole departed from No. 10 Study in haste. He blinked back through the doorway, his spectacles slanting on his bony nose.

"My instruments—my chemicals—!" he gasped.

"Coming!" answered Manners.

They followed him with a crash and a clatter. Skimpole, spluttering in the passage, was surrounded by the wreck of his paraphernalia, rather like Marius in the ruins of Carthage. Then the door slammed on him.

It was some time before Tom Merry and Co. could clear the study of chemical smells, and sit down to tea. Tea was unusually late that day in No. 10. But they were comforted by the reflection that it was likely to be a long time—a very long time—before Skimpole started any more scientific experiments in their study.

Big Idea!

"BLAKE, deah boy, how much tin have you got?"
 "Nix!"

"How much have you got, Hewwies?"

"Same amount."

"And you, Dig?"

"Just the same!"

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, thoughtfully.
 "This study is wathah on the wocks, deah boys."

Blake and Herries and Digby, of the Fourth Form, nodded a glum assent. Study No. 6 in the Fourth was undoubtedly very near the rocks, in a financial sense.

Such things will happen, in the best-regulated studies! There were four members to the study: and all four were in the sad state of the seed in the parable, which fell in a stony place.

"What about you, Gussy?" demanded Blake. "Isn't it high time your governor coughed up a fiver?"

Arthur Augustus shook his head, sadly. Lord Eastwood, his noble pater, sometimes did send a fiver. On such occasions there were festivities in Study No. 6. But latterly, fivers seemed to have become scarce at Eastwood House. At all events, none had been despatched to the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

"I believe the governah is wathah wowwied about income-tax," he said. "He weferred to it in his last lettah, but he did not enclose anythin' in the lettah. Income-tax, I believe, is wathah a wowwv."

"I believe it is!" grinned Blake. "I've heard my pater make remarks on the subject! Well, we're all stony—"

"Yaas, wathah! It would be wathah useful, in pwesent circumstances, to bag thwee guineas!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "It is not a large sum, but it would come in vewy useful."

"Oh, quite!" said Digby. "Tell us the bush it grows on, and we'll go out and gather it in at once."

"Weally, Dig—"

"How the thump are we to get three guineas, fathead?" demanded Herries, staring at the swell of St. Jim's.

"I wefuse to be addressed as a fathead, Hewwies."

"Well, what are you burbling about, anyway?" demanded Blake.

"If you descwibe my wemarks as burblin', Blake—"

"Where are we to get three guineas." roared Blake.

"Pway do not wear at a fellow, Blake! I have told you more than once that it thwows me into a fluttah to be woared at. If you will have the gweat kindness to listen instead of wearin' at a chap, I will explain where the thwee guineas is to come fwom."

Arthur Augustus picked up a copy of the *Rylcombe Gazette* from the armchair. He had been looking at it when his three chums came into the study. Blake and Herries and Dig stared at it, and at him. If there was even the remotest chance of bagging such a sum as three guineas, there was no doubt that they were very much interested. Arthur Augustus might describe three guineas as not a large sum, but it was wealth to the average Fourth-Form junior at St. Jim's. In fact, a tenth part as much would have been exceedingly welcome in Study No. 6 in its present arid state.

"Look at this!" said Arthur Augustus, indicating a paragraph in the local newspaper with a spotless finger.

They looked. It ran:

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

First Prize

£3 3 0

Second, Third, and Fourth Prizes, Book Tokens.

This Competition is open to all readers of the *Gazette*. Photographs of scenes of local interest must be sent in to this office not later than Saturday. They will be judged on their merits, and the prize awarded to the one considered the best by the Adjudicators. The prize-winning photograph will be published in the next issue of the *Gazette*.

"What do you fellows think of that," asked Arthur Augustus, when Blake and Herries and Dig had read, marked, learned and

inwardly digested the paragraph.

"Is that where the three guineas is to come from?" hooted Blake.

"Yaas, wathah."

"As good as in your pocket?" asked Dig, sarcastically.

"Well, no! It is not a certainty," confessed Arthur Augustus. "Pwobably there will be a lot of entwants. But I wathah think that I could take a pwetty good photogwaph, what?"

"What do you know about photography?" asked Herries.

"Nothin', at pwesent—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But it is not much to a bwainy fellow, Dig," said Arthur Augustus, confidently. "Anybody can take photogwaphs. I have seen that chap Mannahs, in the Shell, takin' them, and it is quite easy. You just point the camewah at somethin' and pwess somethin' or othah, and snap—there you are, and you've got your photogwaph! Then you take it down to the darkroom, and dip it in somethin' or othah, or soak it, or wash it, or somethin' and there you are again! Nothin' could be easiah, weally."

"Simple as that?" said Dig, still sarcastic.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Sounds jolly easy," said Blake, also sarcastic. "I can see you walking off with that three guineas, Gussy."

"Sort of!" grinned Herries.

"Well, I shall twy, at any wate," said Arthur Augustus. "I wathah think I may pull it off, and if I bag the thwee guineas, of course, I shall whack it out all wound the study. We will have wathah a feed heah, and ask Tom Mewwy and Mannahs and Lowthah, and old Talbot, and that new chap, Widd, and—"

"If they don't get any feed till you've won that three guineas, old man, they're going to be a hungry lot," said Blake. "Isn't there just one thing you've overlooked?"

"What is that, Blake?"

"Nobody in this study has got a camera. I've heard that a camera's rather needed for taking photographs. Correct me if I'm wrong!" added Blake, with devastating sarcasm.

"I am quite awah, Blake, that there is no camewah in the study. But I suppose we can bowwow a camewah," said Arthur Augustus, calmly. "Mannahs of the Shell has a camewah, and I shall bowwow it. I believe it is a vewy good camewah—I know Mannahs thinks a lot of it. He has taken some vewy good photogwaphs with it, though I hope I shall be able to take some wathah bettah ones. I wegard it as vewy pwobable that the *Gazette's* thwee guineas will come to this study. It is only

SKIMPOLE'S SNAPSHOT I

Monday now, so there is lots of time befoah Saturday. What do you fellows think of the ideah?"

Blake and Co. chuckled.

Certainly, they would have been glad to see their noble pal bag those three guineas for the best photograph in the competition. They would have been glad to see that useful sum "whacked out" in Study No. 6. But as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy knew nothing about photography, they did not regard him as a probable prize-winner. Gussy's own faith in his powers as a brainy man was far from shared by his comrades.

"You want to know what we think of the idea?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah."

"Well, I think it's rotten. What do you think, Dig?"

"Putrid!" said Dig.

"What do you think, Herries?"

"Piffle!" said Herries.

"Weally, you fellows—!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, indignantly.

"Oh, come on, you men," said Blake. "Gussy's stony, same as we are—nothing in the study: and we shall be late for the scramble in hall if we don't dash!"

"But weally, Blake—"

"Bow-wow!"

Blake and Herries and Dig left the study to dash for hall. Tea in hall was the last resource of the "stony," and it was usually described by the junior as "door-steps and dish-water." Such as it was, however, they did not want to be late for it. It was a case of any port in a storm.

Arthur Augustus did not follow them. Gussy was full of his big idea. Study No. 6 had struck a stony patch, and there was an arid vista ahead: and Arthur Augustus hoped to be the fellow who was going to pull the study out of that Slough of Despond. Leaving his chums to dash for hall, Arthur Augustus ambled away to the Shell passage, to see Manners about borrowing a camera.

3

Three in a Tree !

"KNOX!" said Monty Lowther.

But what on earth's he up to?" asked Manners.

"Goodness knows!" said Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three were quite puzzled. They stared across the field at Gerald Knox, of the Sixth Form, whose proceedings, at the moment, were undoubtedly peculiar.

Tom Merry and Co. were sitting, in a row, on a branch of a big leafy beech tree, in a field off Rylcombe Lane. That field was bounded on two sides by low fences, on one side by the hedge that barred it off from Rylcombe Lane, and on the fourth side by the high fence of the Green Man public-house. The three had been for a ramble along the river after class, and had stopped on their homeward way for a rest. As there was nothing else to sit upon, they had hopped up into the beech, to sit on a branch: where they were now comfortably ensconced, disposing of a packet of toffee which Monty Lowther had produced from his pocket.

On the trunk of the tree in which they sat, was nailed a board, which bore the familiar legend, "Trepassers will be Prosecuted." That warning notice the Shell fellows had somewhat thoughtlessly disregarded.

But really they did not feel that they were trespassing. The beech tree was only a few yards from the lane—indeed, it might almost have been considered a part of the hedge. They had simply pushed through, and clambered up—just to sit on the branch and rest for ten minutes or so and scoff toffee—and they were quite assured that Farmer Dobson, to whom the field belonged, would not have regarded that as trespassing. In fact, had Mr. Dobson happened along, they would have called out a cheery greeting to him, and would undoubtedly have received the same in return.

However, Farmer Dobson was nowhere in the offing. A figure came into sight, through a gap in the hedge at a short distance: but it was that of Knox of the Sixth, a School House prefect of St. Jim's. And Knox's actions, after coming through the hedge, were quite odd and puzzling. He stood there, behind the hedge, his head extended into the gap, looking up and down Rylcombe Lane with a searching eye, as if to make sure that nobody was about. Then he turned round, and scanned the field in all directions, watchfully, like a wary fox. As he did not think of looking upwards, he did not notice the three juniors staring at him from the tree.

"What the dickens is the matter with him?" said Tom Merry. "Can't be anybody after him—a prefect!"

"Taking a short cut across the field to the river, perhaps," said Lowther. "But old Dobson wouldn't mind a fellow cutting across—no need for Knoxey to be afraid of him."

Manners gave a little start, as a new thought came into his mind.

"Is it that?" he said, "Or—?"

"Or what?" asked Tom Merry and Lowther together. They could think of no reason for the wary and excessive caution Knox was displaying.

Manners jerked a thumb towards the high fence of the Green Man.

"Or that?" he said, dryly.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tom.

Monty Lowther grinned.

"That's it!" he said. "That's why the dear man's so jolly cautious. He's going out of bounds."

"Look's like it," said Manners, with a curl of the lip. "I wonder how long he'd stay a prefect, if Railton or the Head could see him."

Tom Merry nodded slowly. He realised, now that Manners suggested it, that that was the probable explanation. There are black sheep in every flock: and Knox of the Sixth was one of them. There was a gap in that fence of the Green Man, through which Cardew of the Fourth was known sometimes to dodge: and it looked as if Knox of the Sixth was at the same game. Many fellows in the Lower School knew more about Knox's manners and customs than the Head ever guessed.

"Rotter!" said Tom. "Well, it's no bizney of ours. But—"

"But what?" asked Lowther.

"If he's heading for that show, we'd better not see him go in. He doesn't know we're here, and it's hardly fair to watch him, off his guard."

"True, O King!" said Monty Lowther. "Likewise he would be frightfully ratty if junior men saw him breaking bounds: and we don't want him on our track. He's too jolly fond of handling the ashplant." Lowther chuckled. "Like to call to him, and give him a few words of sage advice, as Gussy did with Cardew the other day?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"No: but if he does head for that gap, we'll let him know we're here—and he can please himself about going in to see Bill Lodgey."

"Better," agreed Manners.

It was soon clear for what spot Knox was heading. Having scanned the horizon in every direction, and satisfied himself that no eye was upon him, he cut suddenly across towards the gap in the Green Man fence: passing within a few yards of the beech tree as he cut.

There was no doubt now: and it was time for the Terrible Three to put him wise that he was not, as he fancied, unseen and unobserved. They had no desire whatever to pry into Knox's dingy secrets: and it was certain that, as Monty had remarked, he would be frightfully "ratty" if he learned that juniors had watched him going out of bounds. And Knox, who was a good deal of a bully, could make himself extremely unpleasant if he liked.

Monty Lowther suddenly started to whistle a tune. That was the simplest way of letting Knox know that somebody was on the spot.

The juniors could not help grinning, at the start, or rather jump, that Gerald Knox gave, as the rather shrill whistling of "Margherita, so beautiful to see!" impinged suddenly on his ears.

He was moving at a rapid trot, evidently anxious to get to his destination as quickly as possible, now that he had made up his mind. But he stopped dead, staring round him with popping eyes.

Still he did not look upward: and seeing no one near at hand, and still hearing the whistling, the look of bewilderment that came over his face was so ludicrous, that the Terrible Three burst into a laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the beech tree instead of the whistling.

Knox, staring round, did not see them. But at least it occurred to him to look up at the tree. A black look came over his face, at the sight of three juniors sitting on a horizontal branch, in a cheery row.

"Oh!" ejaculated Knox. He came towards the tree, his eyes glittering at the Shell fellows above. "What are you doing up there?"

"Just taking a rest, Knox," answered Tom Merry, politely.

Knox breathed hard.

He wondered whether the juniors, sitting in the tree, had guessed for what he was heading, when he cut across the field towards the gap in the fence. One moment's reflection made it clear that there was no doubt of it. Luckily, he had not reached the gap—he was still at a distance from it, when he was warned of their presence. But for that warning whistle, he would certainly have gone out of bounds under their eyes. As it was, he had not committed himself; and he had nothing to fear if they talked about the incident. But the certainty that the juniors knew roused Knox's deepest ire.

"Taking a rest, are you?" he said, venomously. "Can't you read?"

"Read?" repeated Tom, puzzled.

"There's a notice on that tree, that trespassers on this land will be prosecuted."

"Oh! Yes! I know."

"Oh, you know, do you?" said Knox. "You know you're trespassing."

"Not exactly that," said Tom. "Mr. Dobson wouldn't mind us sitting on his tree."

"Has he told you so?" sneered Knox.

"Well, not precisely."

"I fancied not! Come down out of that tree at once."

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther looked at him. Then, quietly, they descended from the tree. An order from a Sixth-Form prefect was law to members of the Lower School: and Knox was a prefect, black sheep as he was. They had to come down from the tree at his command.

They stood before him, with rather grim faces. By that time, they rather regretted that they had warned him of their presence. Knox, plainly, was deeply exasperated by what they had seen: and probably feared that they would gossip about it at the school. So he was going to make the most of the fact that they were "trespassing" in Farmer Dobson's field: trespassing on farmers' lands being a matter regarded with a very serious and severe eye by their House-master.

"Go back to the school at once!" said Knox. "Or rather, I'll take you there. No more trespassing for you. I shall report this to Mr. Railton."

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

"Look here, Knox—!" he began, angrily.

"That will do," said Knox. "There have been complaints at the school about St. Jim's boys trespassing, and frightening the farmers' sheep—"

"There are no sheep in this field, and we shouldn't be such fools as to frighten them, if there were—"

"I've said that will do!" snapped Knox. "You will come back to the school with me now, and go before your House-master."

"Are you going to tell Railton that you found us trespassing, Knox?" asked Manners, very quietly.

"I certainly am!" answered Knox, with emphasis.

"Are you going to tell him at the same time that you were trespassing yourself?" asked Manners.

"That will do, Manners. Come with me at once."

"You're not going back to the school now?" asked Manners.

"I am—with you! What do you mean?"

"Oh, I thought you might have an engagement on hand," said Manners, coolly. "You weren't cutting across this field for nothing, were you?"

"Shut up, Manners, old man," whispered Tom Merry, hurriedly, and Lowther gave his chum a warning nudge. It really was not safe to talk to Knox like that.

Manners shrugged his shoulders.

Knox gave him a black and bitter look. Manners' words were proof, if he needed it, that the juniors knew what his intention had been—an intention he considered it necessary to give up, since they had seen him. It was only judicious, in the circumstances, to postpone his call on Bill Lodgey: but that necessity added to his anger.

"You cheeky young rascal! I don't know what you mean," he muttered.

"I'll explain if you like."

"That's enough! I've ordered you to come back with me to the school!" snapped Knox: and with that, he plunged through the hedge into Rylcombe Lane.

And the Terrible Three, with rather deep feelings, followed him, and walked back by the lane to St. Jim's, in the distinguished but very unwelcome company of a Sixth-Form prefect.

Swipes!

MR. RAILTON, House-master of the School House, laid down his pen, and called "Come in," as there was a tap at his study door.

He raised his eyebrows slightly, as Knox of the Sixth presented himself, followed into the study by three juniors of the Shell.

"What is it, Knox?" he asked.

"I thought I had better report these juniors to you, sir," said Knox, with the smooth and dutiful manner he was accustomed to adopt towards masters. "It is rather a serious matter."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Railton. "What—?"

"Trespassing on farm lands, sir."

Mr. Railton frowned.

"That certainly is serious, Knox," he said. "But I am surprised at this, in these boys—they are not generally thoughtless and reckless. Are you sure that there is no mistake?"

"I caught them myself, sir, climbing a tree on Farmer Dobson's land. It was Mr. Dobson who complained last week about his sheep being chased in the meadow."

"That was the action of that foolish boy Trimble, of the Fourth Form," said Mr. Railton. "I am sure that Merry and Manners and Lowther have done nothing of that kind."

"Certainly not, sir," said Tom.

"You were on Farmer Dobson's land?"

"Yes, sir. But—"

"Without permission from the farmer?"

"He wouldn't have minded—"

"That is not for you to judge, Merry! Did you have permission from the farmer or not?" rapped Mr. Railton.

"No sir."

"Then you were trespassing—apparently to climb trees," said Mr. Railton, severely. "You were aware of this, Merry."

"There was a 'Trespassers will be Prosecuted' board nailed on the tree they had climbed, sir," said Knox.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Then the boys can have been in no possible doubt about the matter. I am glad that you have reported this to me, Knox. Everything must be done to keep up good relations with the farmers near the school: even the slightest damage to crops, or interference with cattle, is a very serious matter in these days of food shortage. Merry, Manners, Lowther, I have no alternative but to cane you for this."

"There were neither cattle nor crops in the field, sir," said Tom.

"And we only sat on a branch to rest after a walk," said Monty Lowther.

"That is immaterial," said the House-master. "You have been caught in the act of trespassing by a Sixth-Form prefect, who has done his duty in reporting the matter to me."

"There's just one thing, sir," said Manners, between compressed lips.

"What do you mean, Manners?"

"We were doing no harm at all, sir, as Knox knows quite well—"

"That will do, Manners."

"But will you ask Knox, sir, what he was doing on Farmer Dobson's land, trespassing the same as we were—if we were?" said Manners.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther were silent. They did not see much use in a counter-attack, as it were, on the bully of the Sixth. But Manners, quiet fellow as he was, had a stubborn strain in him.

"Oh!" said Mr. Railton, rather taken aback.

"That is very easily explained, sir," said Knox, smoothly, though his eyes glinted at Manners for a moment. "As these juniors were trespassing, I thought it my duty to bring them back to the school, and I had to go as far as the tree they had climbed, in order to do so."

"Quite so," said Mr. Railton. "You need say no more, Manners."

Manners' lips set harder.

"Knox did not know we were in the field at all, when he came through the hedge, sir," he said, deliberately. "He did not come into the field to fetch us out. He came in for reasons of his own."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Railton.

"That's true, sir," said Tom Merry, coming to the aid of his chum. "Knox would never have known we were there at all, if one of us hadn't whistled and let him know."

"Nonsense!" repeated Mr. Railton. "Are you asking me to believe that a Sixth-Form prefect trespassed in a field with no object, like a foolish boy in the Third Form? Say no more."

"Oh, he had an object," said Manners, in the same deliberate way. "Since he has taken the trouble to report us, sir, he should tell you the whole story."

"What do you mean, Manners?"

"I mean, sir, that Knox should be asked where he was going, when he cut across that field towards the gap in the fence of the Green man."

Mr. Railton fairly jumped.

"Manners!" he exclaimed. "Are you implying—are you insinuating—are you aware that you are speaking of a Sixth-Form prefect, appointed and trusted by your Head-master?"

"Thank you, sir," said Knox. "I need hardly say, sir, that what this junior implies is wholly without foundation."

"You need not, Knox, as I am quite assured of that!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Manners, you appear to have a very suspicious mind, if you believe that there is anything whatever in what you have just said. I am quite shocked that you should say such a thing, merely because Knox has done his duty—as a prefect in reporting you for trespassing."

Manners breathed hard. He realised now, as Tom and Monty had realised earlier, that a counter-attack on Knox was futile. There was nothing against Knox, except the juniors' belief of what his intentions had been. They had no doubt: but they could hardly expect a House-master to take their opinion as evidence. Manners had only succeeded in making Railton angry, and matters worse.

The House-master rose from the table, with a very stern brow. He picked up a cane, and pointed with it to a chair.

"Merry! Bend over that chair!"

Tom Merry, in silence, bent over.

Swipe!

"You, Lowther!"

Monty Lowther bent over in turn.

Swipe!

"Manners!"

Manners, with a knitted brow, and set lips, bent over the chair. He was not blaming Railton, who could hardly have acted other than as he was doing, in the circumstances. But his feelings

towards Gerald Knox were deep: very deep indeed.

Swipe! Swipe! Swipe!

Tom and Monty had escaped with a swipe apiece. Harry Manners had three: the extra two, evidently, being for his reckless words about Knox. His face was darker than ever as he rose after the infliction.

"I trust that this will be a warning to all three of you," said Mr. Railton, sternly. "If you are reported to me for trespassing again, I shall send you to your Head-master. Now leave my study."

In silence, the three juniors left it. They went quietly down the passage. They came on Blake and Herries and Digby as they went to the staircase.

"Coming down to the gym" asked Blake.

"Not just now," said Tom, with a faint smile.

"Whops from Railton," explained Monty Lowther. "We're not feeling just like mingling in the throng of the happy and gay, at the moment."

"Rough luck," said Blake, sympathetically. "What has Railton been whipping you for?"

"That's an easy one," said Manners. "We saw Knox of the Sixth heading for a pub, and the dear man was annoyed."

"Eh! What?" Blake stared. "Better not shout that out, old man—you'll have the pre's on your track."

"I don't mind telling all St. Jim's," answered Manners, savagely. Three cuts from Railton's cane had evidently ruffled Harry Manners' usually quiet and placid temper.

"Better not, all the same," grinned Blake. "Come on, you men."

The Fourth-Formers went on their way: and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther went up the stairs. So long as the twinges of those swipes lasted, they preferred to keep their own company, in the seclusion of their study. They tramped up the passage to No. 10 in the Shell. But for the second time they found their study unexpectedly occupied.

It was not Skimpole this time, as it had been on Saturday. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's was standing at the table, with an open camera before him: and he glanced round with a cheery smile as the Terrible Three came in—a smile that was not reflected in the very least on the face of Harry Manners.

5

Stumped!

"**HEAH** you are, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, cheerily. "I've been waitin' for you. Howevah, I have not been wastin' my time, as I have been lookin' at Mannahs' camewah—"

"My camera!" breathed Manners.

"Yaas, old chap! You see," explained Arthur Augustus, "I am goin' in for the photogwaphic competition in the Wylcombe Gazette, and wathah twust that I shall be able to wope in the thwee guineas pwize. So I came along to bowwow your camewah, old fellow."

"Borrow my camera!" articulated Manners.

"Yaas, wathah! You see, I have no camewah, and a camewah is absolutely necessary for takin' photogwaphs. Luckily I wemembahed that you had one, old chap. I have been lookin' at it while I've been waitin' for you fellows to come in—"

"You've opened my camera!" said Manners, in a sort of dazed voice, as if he could not believe what his eyes saw.

"I wanted to see what it was like inside, of course," said Arthur Augustus, innocently. "I don't know much about camewahs, but a fellow can always learn, you know—"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Monty Lowther.

Manners did not speak. He seemed unable to speak. He gazed at Arthur Augustus, and at the open camera. Gussy, as he innocently confessed, did not know much about cameras. Among the other things that he did not know, apparently he did not know that a film exposed to the daylight became useless. There was a roll of eight films in that camera. Some had been taken: the rest were waiting for use. But those that had been taken, and those that were still blank, were equally useless now.

Gussy had taken out the camera back, and it was wide open to the summer sunshine from the window.

Photographic films were expensive. They were hard to get. And Arthur Augustus, in his investigations into the camera, had destroyed eight expensive films at one fell swoop, though he was still happily ignorant of the fact, and did not realise in the least that anything was the matter.

"I shall be vewy glad if you will lend me your camewah, Mannahs," he went on. "I shall, of course, take ewevy care of it. I am sowwy to say that it dwopped on the floor when I was takin' it off the shelf—"

"You dropped my camera?"

"But I shall be vewy careful not to dwop it again, Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus, reassuringly. "I am wathah a careful chap, you know. I suppose the black woll inside is the film, that you take the photogwaphs on? It has come loose at one end, and seems vewy difficult to fix again. Pewwaps you will show me how you do it, Mananhhs."

Manners gasped.

Tom Merry and Lowther could only wait for the storm to burst! But Manners remained calm. It was a deadly calmness.

"You've opened that camera in broad daylight," he said, chokingly.

"Yaas! This is a vewy sunny window, and I held it up wight in the light to look at it inside, Mannahs."

"I'd taken three photographs on that roll. There were five I was going to use. You've ruined the lot."

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, you ass, Gussy!" said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You born idiot!" said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Better cut, old chap," said Tom hurriedly, as Manners went to a corner of the study, where a cricket stump was standing.

"Eh?" Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass on Tom, in surprise. "Did you say cut, Tom Mewwy? But I came heah to bowow Mannahs' camewah—"

"Hook it, you ass!" breathed Lowther.

"But I have not yet—Bai Jove! What are you goin' to do with that stump, Mannahs! Oh, cwikey! Yawoooooooooh!" roared Arthur Augustus, as Manners, without replying, demonstrated by action what he was going to do with the stump. "Gweat Scott! Gone mad? Oh, cwumbs! Keep off! Yawooooooooh!"

Whop! whop! whop!

"Manners, old man!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Manners, old chap!" exclaimed Lowther.

Whop! whop! whop!

Arthur Augustus yelled frantically. Manners was swiping with that cricket stump, as Railton had never dreamed of swiping with the cane. He did not seem to care where the whops landed, so long as they landed on the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy somewhere. Whop! whop! whop!

"Yawwooh! Stoppit!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, dodging frantically. "What is the mattah with you, Mannahs? Have you gone off your wockah? Keep that stump away, you mad ass. Oh, cwikey!"

Whop! whop! whop!

Arthur Augustus dodged round the study table. After him shot Manners, still swiping. After the affair with Knox, and the caning in Railton's study, Manners was not in a good temper, to begin with. And the handling of his camera, and the destruction of his films, had put the lid on, so to speak. He pursued Arthur Augustus ferociously round the table, with the swiping stump. Tom Merry caught at his arm, but Manners shoved him off so unceremoniously that he sat down on the study carpet. Monty Lowther made an attempt to interpose, but retreated again, with a yell, from a swipe of the stump! Manners was not to be balked of his prey!

Whop! whop! whop! rang on Arthur Augustus as he dodged.

"Wow! Oh, cwikey! Dwag him away!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "He has gone off his wockah! Oh, cwikey! Keep him off!"

"Manners—!" gasped Tom Merry, scrambling to his feet.

"Keep out of the way, you ass! I'll teach him to open my camera in the daylight and spoil my films!" roared Manners.

Whop! whop! whop!

"Oh, cwumbs! Oh, cwikey! Yow-ow-ow! Oh, suffewin' cats! Oh, deah!"

Arthur Augustus made a bound for the door. Manners made another bound, after him. Lowther put out a foot in time, and Manners stumbled over it, and sat on the floor. Arthur Augustus, going strong, disappeared into the passage.

"You silly chump!" roared Manners.

"Chuck it, old man—"

"Gerrou out of the way!"

Manners leaped up, and stump in hand, rushed out of the study. He tore down the passage, with a brandished stump. It was Herbert Skimpole's ill-luck that he came out of his study at the

same moment. He did not see Manners coming, and Manners was going too fast to stop.

Crash!

"Oh!" roared Skimpole.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry, staring out of No. 10.

"Poor old Skimmy!" gasped Lowther.

Manners reeled from the shock, and sat down in the passage. Skimpole was strewn along the floor, spluttering.

"Oh, dear; What was that? Something impinged upon me with extraordinary velocity, and completely unbalanced my equilibrium!" gasped Skimpole. "I feel almost disintegrated! Wow!"

"You clumsy ass, what did you get in the way for?" roared Manners, scrambling up. "You biological blitherer—"

"My dear Manners—wow!"

Whop!

Manners circumnavigated the sprawling Skimpole, giving him a lick with the stump in passing. Skimpole yelled, and Manners flew on. On the study landing, at the end of the passage, he glimpsed Arthur Augustus heading for the stairs, and charged.

Arthur Augustus skipped down the stairs like a very active kangaroo. Manners paused. The sight of Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, below, gave him pause: and he realised that he had better not carry the pursuit further. Breathing hard, he went back to his study.

"My dear Manners," bleated Skimpole, blinking at him as he came. "Whatever is the cause of this extraordinary ebullition? What—varoooooh!" Skimpole backed into his study, with a yell, as Manners lunged at him with the business-end of the stump. Manners tramped into No. 10 and slammed the door as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in a very pink and breathless state, escaped into the quad, where he found Blake and Herries and Dig.

"What the thump—?" exclaimed Blake, staring at the breathless swell of St. Jim's.

"Wally wound me, deah boys," gasped Arthur Augustus. "Mannahs has gone off his wockah, and is aftah me with a cwicket stump."

"What have you been doing?"

"Nothin' at all, Blake. I simply went to his study to bowwow his camewah, and he seemed to get excited because I had opened it in the daylight—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake and Herries and Dig. They knew a little more about cameras than their noble chum.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake. "If you've spoiled his films, no

wonder he took a cricket stump to you! I'd have taken a bat!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' to laugh at," gasped Arthur Augustus. "Mannahs has acted like a wuffian, and I have sevewal aches and pains. I shall not bowwow his camewah now. I will find some othah fellow to lend me a camewah to bag that thwee guineas. If Mannahs offahs me his camewah, aftah this, I shall wefuse it. I will have nothin' whatevah to do with Mannahs and his camewah!"

Which was quite a wise decision for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to arrive at: for really, his aristocratic life would hardly have been safe, if he had re-visited No. 10 in the Shell in search of a camera.

6

Arthur Augustus Asks For It!

"*QUALIS apes aestate nova per flores rura exercet
sub sole labor—*" murmured Cardew, in the
Fourth-Form room.

"Construe!" said Mr. Latham.

"As bees in early summer ply their labour under the sunshine—"

Mr. Latham, the Master of the Fourth, nodded approval as Cardew went on. Ralph Reckness Cardew did not always hand out a good "con": but he could when he liked, and he was doing so now.

Other fellows in the Fourth Form listened-in, and waited their turn. But one fellow was not listening-in.

That was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus, undoubtedly, ought to have been giving attention to the lesson. Generally he did so. Fellows like Baggy Trimble would let their attention stray, from sheer laziness. Fellows like Blake, or Figgins of the New House, might be thinking of projecting ink-balls, instead of concentrating on the deathless verse of P. Vergilius Mayo. But Arthur Augustus's manners were always irreproachable, even in form: he was there to learn, or at least to put up a polite appearance of learning: and if he regarded Virgil as a bore, as perhaps he did, he was careful to give no sign of the fact.

But on the present occasion, as it happened, Arthur Augustus's aristocratic brain was wandering to other things.

The big idea he had propounded in Study No. 6 the previous day was in his noble mind. In the stony state of the study, it was eminently desirable to bag that handsome three guineas, offered by the local paper for the best photograph of local interest.

Other fellows were going in for that competition: among them Manners of the Shell. Those other fellows were the happy possessors of cameras. But Arthur Augustus was camera-less: and fellows who were going to take photographs in the hope of bagging a handsome prize, were not eager, or indeed willing, to lend their cameras. It was a problem that Arthur Augustus had to solve.

He was very keen on it. He was very keen, too, to beat Manners in the competition, if he could, since he had heard that Manners was going in for it. Gussy was not the man to owe grudges. Far from it. But after that unexpected stumping in No. 10 Study, it would really have been a satisfaction to beat Harry Manners at his own game, as it were. Arthur Augustus would have been extremely pleased to walk off with the first prize of three guineas, leaving Manners with a book token or nothing at all. It would show Manners that he was not the only pebble on the beach, when it came to taking photographs.

But he had to have a camera. That was essential—a *sine qua non*. What Gussy did not know about photography, would have filled a photographic library with large volumes: but he knew that he had to have a camera!

The question was, whose? And as Cardew stood up to construe, and Gussy's eyes fell on him, he remembered that Cardew had a little pocket-camera, which he had sometimes seen him using.

Cardew often took up things, pursued them with zest for a short time, and then threw them aside and forgot all about his zest. He had not been seen to use that camera lately: and as he had tired of his temporary hobby, was not likely to enter the competition: especially as the prize was little or nothing to the well-provided grandson of Lord Reckness. So Arthur Augustus, at that moment, was thinking, not of Cardew's construe, but of his camera.

"Bai Jove!" he whispered to Blake. "It's all wight, Blake."

Blake nodded.

"Cardew's good on con this morning," he whispered back. "Let's hope Lathom will let him run on, and forget other fellows."

"I was not alludin' to his con, Blake! But I wathah think I have solved the pwoblem of that camewah. Cardew has a pocket camewah, and that will be all wight."

"Hardly," said Blake. "I've seen it."

"Bai Jove! Don't you think Cardew's camewah is all wight, Blake?" asked Arthur Augustus, anxiously.

"No: it's all black."

"You uttah ass!" breathed Arthur Augustus, realising that Blake was indulging a playful humour. "I said wight, not white. I am goin' to bowwow Cardew's camewah. He is not exactly a fwiend of mine, but aftah all he is a welation, and we have been on wathah bettah terms since he owned up ovah that affaih of the wag in Wailton's study. I do not wegard him as a wat, as I did: so there is no weason why I should not bowwow his pocket-camewah—"

"D'Arcy!" came a rap from Mr. Lathom.

"Oh! Yaas, sir!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, remembering that he was in the form-room, and that a lesson was going on.

"You are talking in class, D'Arcy!"

"Oh! Sowwy, sir—I only said—"

"That will do. You are not giving attention to the lesson," snapped Mr. Latham. "You may sit down, Cardew. You will go on, D'Arcy."

"Oh! Bai Jove!"

It was rather exasperating to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, to be called back so suddenly from the important matter of the camera, to the very much less important matter of a Latin lesson. It was also rather awkward: for as he had not been giving ear to Cardew's construe, he was utterly unaware of the point at which Cardew had arrived. So, although the problem of the camera was perhaps solved, the swell of St. Jim's was now presented with another problem—where to go on.

He blinked at the Latin page, with Mr. Lathom's eyes and spectacles severely upon him. Ernest Levison leaned over his desk and whispered:

"Go on from '*fragrantia mela*'—"

"Line four-three-seven," whispered Sidney Clive.

"Vewy many thanks, deah boys," murmured Arthur Augustus.

If Mr. Lathom observed that spot of whispering, he took no note of it. Lathom was generally a very easy-going and good-natured little gentleman. Arthur Augustus, having found his place, went on at "*O Fortunati, quorum jam moenia surgunt*." It is sad to relate that that easy line presented difficulties to Arthur Augustus's aristocratic intellect—but no doubt his preoccupation with cameras and three-guinea prizes was partly the cause.

"I am waiting, D'Arcy," said Mr. Lathom.

"Oh! Yaas, sir! O happy walls that wise alweady!" said Arthur Augustus, in the happy belief that that was a translation of the Virgilian line.

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Lathom.

"Oh, gad!" murmured Cardew. There was a giggle from

Buggy Trimble, and a chuckle from several other fellows.

"Isn't that wight, sir?" asked Arthur Augustus, innocently.

"I think that is wight, sir."

"You think that is right, D'Arcy?" articulated Mr. Lathom.

"Yaas, wathah, sir."

"That line, D'Arcy, should be translated 'O happy ones whose walls already rise!'"

"Bai Jove! Isn't that vewy much the same thing, sir?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Bless my soul! It is very far from being much the same thing, D'Arcy. You have been giving no attention to the lesson, D'Arcy. You will remain in the form-room during break this morning, and write out that line twenty times, with the translation."

"Oh, cwumbs!"

"You may go on, Blake," said Mr. Lathom, dismissing Arthur Augustus from mind with a frown.

Arthur Augustus sat crushed. Having thought of Cardew and his pocket-camera, he was very anxious to speak to Cardew about it, and borrow it before some other camera-less competitor did. But there was no break that morning for Arthur Augustus.

The expression on his noble visage, when the form was dismissed in break, was so doleful, that Mr. Lathom gave him a searching glance. No doubt he had recovered, by that time, from the effects of Gussy's howler.

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir!" moaned Arthur Augustus.

"You were not attending to the lesson," said Mr. Lathom.

"You were thinking about other matters, D'Arcy."

Buggy Trimble would have answered "Oh, no, sir!" at once. But that was not Arthur Augustus's way. He could not have told an untruth to save his life.

"Yaas, sir, I am vewy sowwy, but I was thinkin' about takin' photogwaphs," he confessed. "I am wathah keen on it, sir."

"Oh!" said Mr. Lathom. He might have frowned—but he smiled. Lathom himself was given to photography, and often pattered about with a camera, and was often in possession of the dark-room when Manners wanted it. "Is that the case, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir. I wealise that I should not have been thinkin' about it in the form-room, sir, but—"

"Well, well," said Mr. Lathom, benevolently. "Certainly you should put other matters from your mind, when you are in form, D'Arcy: but I am glad to see that you are taking up a very interesting and very intelligent pursuit. I shall be very glad to

give you any assistance you may need."

"Oh! Thank you vewy much, sir."

"And you may now leave the form-room, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove! You are vewy kind, sir," gasped Artnur Augustus. He almost shot out of the form-room. The "happy ones whose walls already rose" were completely dismissed from mind!

"Seen Cardew, Tom Mewwy?" he asked, catching Tom by the arm at the end of the passage. The Terrible Three were going out.

"Cardew?" repeated Tom. "Not another row, Gussy?" Arthur Augustus and Ralph Cardew were relatives: but there had been frequent spots of bother—indeed, it was only a week or two since they had been "scrapping."

"Nothin' of the kind, Tom Mewwy. I am goin' to bowwow his camewah," explained Arthur Augustus.

"I can see him jumping to lend it to you," said Monty Lowther, grinning.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Silly ass if he does!" growled Manners.

"Wats to you Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus, loftily. "I wegard you as vewy much of a wuffian, and I would not bowwow your camewah if you offahed it on your bended knees. I twust I shall beat you in the competition, too. You weally deserve it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners.

"Pewwaps you think that impwobable, Mannahs?"

"Sort of!" chuckled Manners.

"We shall see," said Arthur Augustus, disdainfully. "It all depends weally on my gettin' hold of a camewah. If you have seen Cardew, you fellows—"

"Cardew's gone up to his study, with his pals, I think," said Tom. "Best of luck, Gussy, if you get that camera. Don't keep it wide open in the sunshine with the films in it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats!" retorted Arthur Augustus: and he hurried up the stairs, leaving the Terrible Three laughing, and headed for No. 9 Study in the Fourth.

Nothing In It !

"CARDEW, deah boy—"

"Too late!"

"Bai Jove! What do you mean, Cardew?"

"We've finished the ginger-pop."

"Weally, Cardew—"

"And so the poor dog had none," sighed Cardew.

Levison and Clive grinned.

The three were in No. 9 in the Fourth, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked in. There was a ginger-beer bottle on the table, and a glass, a cup, and a jug—all empty. Apparently the three chums of No. 9 had gone to the study to dispose of the ginger-beer: and had just completed the operation when the swell of St. Jim's arrived.

"Sorry," went on Cardew. "If I'd known you were dropping in for a whack in the ginger-pop—"

"You uttah ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I was not dwoppin' in for a whack in the gingah-pop—"

"Not?" asked Cardew.

"Certainly not! Do you think I am a spongin' boundah like Twimble, dwoppin' into studies to see if anythin' is goin'?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, heatedly.

"Aren't you?"

"Bai Jove! You wottah—"

"Shut up, Cardew," said Levison, hastily.

"Only Cardew's silly jokes, old man," said Sidney Clive, soothingly. "Trot in, D'Arcy—always glad to see you."

Arthur Augustus breathed hard, and his look at Ralph Reckness Cardew was certainly not that of an affectionate relative. He was tempted to turn on his heel, and retire from No. 9 Study in contemptuous disdain.

"Yes, trot in," drawled Cardew. "If you've called to inquire about my nose, it's quite recovered since you punched it the other day."

"I wegwet that I punched your nose so vewy hard, Cardew, but you will acknowledge that you asked for it," said Arthur Augustus, "and since you owned up to Wailton about the waggin' in his study, I assuah you that I no longah wegard you as a wat."

Cardew looked at him. He had not forgotten his defeat at the hands of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the fight behind the gym, and he was considering whether to try his luck again: beginning by barging D'Arcy headlong out of the study. Levison and Clive, reading the thought in his face, hastily interposed.

"What is it, D'Arcy?" asked Levison. "You came here for something—"

"Yaas, wathah! I was goin' to ask Cardew to lend me that little pocket-camewah of his, but—"

"My camera!" said Cardew, staring at him.

"You see, I am goin' in for the photogwaphic competition in the *Wylcombe Gazette*," explained Arthur Augustus. "I was goin' to bowwow Mannahs' camewah, but he was so vewy wude—in fact, wuffianly—about it, that nothin' whatevah would induce me to bowwow his camewah now. While we were in form I wemembahed that I had seen you with a camewah, Cardew. However," added Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "if you are still feelin' sore about that scwap, Cardew, I will dwop the subject."

"Oh, rot," said Levison. "Cardew will lend you his camera. He never uses it now."

"Of course," said Clive.

Cardew smiled.

"So you're goin' for that three-guinea prize?" he asked. "Know a lot about photography?"

"At pwesent, vewy little," confessed Arthur Augustus. "But a bwainy chap can soon pick up a simple thing like that. In fact, I have alweady learned, fwom the way Mannahs cawwied on, that it is much bettah not to open a camewah in the daylight. It spoils the films."

"Oh!" gasped Cardew. "You've learned that much?"

"Yaas, wathah! I am pwetty quick on the uptake, you know," said Arthur Augustus, modestly. "If there is anythin' else to learn, I shall soon get on to it. I expect that is why they have dark-rooms, you know—because it spoils the films to open the camewah in the daylight—"

"A Daniel come to judgment!" said Cardew. "D'Arcy's learnin' the whole game, isn't he, you fellows?"

"I can see him walking off with the prize!" grinned Levison. And Clive chuckled.

"But it all depends on gettin' hold of a camewah," went on Arthur Augustus. "If I can bowwow a camewah, I shall go out aftah class this aftahnoon, and take some photogwaphs of local scenewy. Lathom is goin' to help me with the photogwaphs—I believe they have to be developed, or somethin'—"

"I believe they do!" said Cardew, gravely.

He turned to the study cupboard.

"My camera's here," he said. "You can certainly borrow it if you like, D'Arcy! Glad to lend it."

"That is vewy good of you, Cardew. I am vewy glad to see that you bear no malice for gettin' a lickin'—"

"What?"

"And I assuah you," said Arthur Augustus, benevolently, "that I no longah wegard you as a wat, Cardew."

Levison and Clive rather expected Cardew to turn from the cupboard, and hand Arthur Augustus something less welcome than a camera. Arthur Augustus prided himself upon being a fellow of tact and judgment: but really, a little more tact would not have come amiss.

Cardew, however, seemed quite unperturbed. He groped in the cupboard, and picked up a little pocket-camera. It was small: but it was quite a good camera, and Cardew had taken some very good pictures with it before, in his usual unstable way, he tired of the hobby.

He glanced over his shoulder.

"Better let me get it ready for you," he remarked. "If you're not used to handlin' a camera, you mightn't get the films in right."

"That is vewy good of you, Cardew."

"Not at all! "Always anxious to oblige," said Cardew, and he turned back to the cupboard, and fumbled there.

Levison and Clive watched him, in some surprise. They were rather relieved that Cardew was willing to lend the camera to his relative, regardless of the spots of trouble that had occurred. But certainly they had not expected him to take the trouble to load it, and get it ready for the amateur photographer. They were rather pleased to see him so kind and obliging.

"Here you are, D'Arcy," Cardew handed the camera to Arthur Augustus, at last. "Mind you don't open it in the daylight. When you've taken one picture, you turn this little knob—see?—and then take another, till you've taken the lot. Quite simple, as long as you keep the camera shut."

"I will be vewy careful indeed to keep it shut, Cardew, and thank you vewy much," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, don't mench," said Cardew, negligently.

"But you must allow me to pay for the film, Cardew. Films cost money. I happen to be stony at the pwesent moment, but I will borrow ~~it~~ from Tom Mewwy or old Talbot."

"Couldn't think of it," answered Cardew, shaking his head.

"But, my dear chap—!" expostulated Arthur Augustus. "I weally cannot wush you for the film. It is vewy kind of you to lend me the camewah, but I weally and twuly must pay the cost of the film."

"The fact is, I've no use for anything in that camera, and that's that," said Cardew. "I should be taking your money for nothin. Don't say anything more about it."

"But weally, Cardew—"

"Not another word!" said Cardew. "Best of luck with your photography, and may you bag the first prize."

"That is wealy wippin' of you, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus.

"And I wepeat, most sincerely, mv dear chap, that I no longah wegard you as a wat, and in fact I wegwet that I evah did wegard you as a wat."

With that final tactful speech, Arthur Augustus walked out of No: 9 Study with the camera, leaving Clive and Levison grinning, and Cardew smiling sardonically.

"Sort of fellow to make his relations love him, isn't he?" remarked Cardew.

Levison laughed.

"Well, he's a jolly good chap, even if he is a bit of an ass," he said. "I'm glad you lent him the camera: and it was jolly decent of you to give him the film for nothin, and take the trouble to load it for him."

"Think so?"

"Yes, I do," said Levison.

"And so do I," said Clive. "Gussy would have mucked up the film loading the camera, you can bank on that. It was jolly good-natured of you to load it for him. He will be able to take some pictures now, if he remembers not to open it and spoil the film."

"Yes, I hope he won't open that camera," assented Cardew.

"It would rather spoil the game, if he did. Well, I'm glad you fellows think me so decent and good-natured—I don't often get tributes like that. I hope D'Arcy will think the same, after he's gone snapping after class with that camera. Come on—let's get a trot in the quad before the bell goes."

They went down from the studies: the sardonic smile lingering on Cardew's face as they went.

Neither Levison nor Clive guessed, any more than Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dreamed, that he had only pretended to load that camera at the study cupboard, and that, in point of fact, there was no film inside it at all! It amused Cardew to think of Arthur Augustus trotting that camera round the lanes after class, taking snap after snap to no purpose: and returning, at last, to the school, to develop the photographs that were not there, and to discover that he had been trotting round an empty camera. After which experience, it was probable, Arthur Augustus would once more regard Cardew as a "wat."

Snap !

"TALBOT, my dear fellow—" said Skimpole. "Stop a minute."

Talbot of the Shell was coming out of the House after class, in flannels, with his bat under his arm, when Skimpole stopped him, poking him in the ribs with a bony knuckle in the objectionable way he had.

"Ow!" ejaculated Talbot. "Don't puncture me, you ass! What is it?" He stopped, good-naturedly. Talbot was always patient with the egregious Skimmy, though he drew the line at evil-smelling chemicals in the study: contrasting 'considerably with George Gore, who was often extremely rough-and-ready in his methods. Talbot was the peace-maker in the study they shared in the Shell: and his pacific intervention was often needed.

Skimpole blinked at him, through the large steel-rimmed spectacles that made him look like a very thoughtful and very solemn owl.

"Do you know where Manners is, Talbot?" he asked.

"He went out with Tom Merry and Lowther after class," answered Talbot.

"Oh, dear! That is very unfortunate," said Skimpole. "Now I shall not be able to ask him to lend me his camera."

Talbot smiled. He thought it extremely unlikely that Skimpole's request for the loan of that camera would be granted, if made. Manners was quite a kind and good-natured fellow: but that camera was the apple of his eye, and he certainly did not care to trust it in other hands.

"You see," continued Skimpole. "I desire to enter the *Rylcombe Gazette* competition, Talbot. The sum of three guineas, although moderate, would be exceedingly useful to me, in replacing some of my things that were unfortunately broken on Saturday, owing to Manners getting incomprehensibly excited about some chemicals spilled on his camera-case. But if Manners has gone

out, I cannot ask him to lend me the camera. I wonder if he would object to my taking it from his study to use, without asking leave? What do you think, Talbot?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Talbot. "I rather think, he would, Skimmy. You'd better give Manners' camera a wide berth, old man."

And Talbot went on his way to Little Side, to join Blake and Herries and Dig and other fellows at cricket practice. Skimpole blinked after him owlishly, shook his head, and went into the House. Talbot's advice was undoubtedly good: but, like so much good advice, it was wasted.

Skimpole of the Shell, like D'Arcy of the Fourth, was in need of a camera for the prize competition. Arthur Augustus had gone forth after class to take snaps with Cardew's camera, in happy ignorance of the fact that there was nothing in it. Skimpole planned to go forth with Manners' camera, and, had Manners been at home, would have asked for it to be lent to him. As Manners was not at home, either he had to give up the idea, or borrow the camera without asking leave of the owner. He decided on the latter, hoping that Manners wouldn't mind!—which showed that Skimmy had a hopeful nature!

Nobody was in No. 10 in the Shell when Skimpole blinked in. The camera, in its leather case, was on the shelf, and Skimmy lifted it down.

Skimmy knew a little more about photography than D'Arcy knew. He took the camera out of the case to see whether it was loaded. Manners generally kept it loaded ready for use. He was a very careful fellow with film, not only because film was expensive, but also because he disliked wasting anything. With a roll of eight inside, he would sometimes take one or two snaps, and leave the rest of the film to be used later, winding it carefully to the next blank in readiness for use.

Skimpole, blinking at it, noted that "No. 3" was visible, which meant that Manners had taken two pictures on the film inside, leaving six more yet to be used.

That, Skimpole thought, was quite all right.

He could take six pictures on that roll, thus finishing off the film. Then Manners, who was skilful in such things, could develop it and fix it in the dark-room: afterwards cutting off his own two pictures, and handing Skimpole his six. Skimmy was prepared to pay for his share of the film: so, as far as he could see, it was all right all round—unless Manners had some unreasonable objection to lending his camera at all! If he had, Skimmy was prepared to disregard it, and hope for the best.

He put the camera back into the leather case, slung it on his shoulder by the strap, and emerged from the study.

He met his study-mate, Gore, as he went down the passage. George Gore stared at the slung camera-case.

"I never knew you had a camera," he said.

"This is Manners' camera, my dear Gore—" explained Skimpole. "I have borrowed it for an hour or two."

"Oh, scissors!" ejaculated Gore. "Does Manners know?"

"Not at present—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gore.

Skimpole blinked at him in surprise.

"I see no occasion for such an ebullition of risibility, my dear Gore," he said. "Why this inexplicable paroxysm of merriment?"

"Made your will?" asked Gore.

"Certainly not."

"You'd better, before Manners finds out that you've bagged his camera," chuckled Gore. "There will be a dead donkey lying about soon afterwards."

Gore went into his study, laughing. Skimpole went on his way, no more deterred by Gore's remarks than by Talbot's advice. He was going to be quite careful with that camera, and why should Manners not be quite placable, when he returned it safe and sound?

Skimpole ambled cheerfully out of gates, and down Rylcombe Lane. He blinked round him through his spectacles for scenes of local interest, as required by the conditions of the *Rylcombe Gazette* competition.

Half-way down the lane, he blinked round at the sound of a "snap" in a gap in the hedge. A very elegant youth was standing there, camera in hand—a little pocket-camera. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had just snapped a haystack, with a cow in the offing.

"Bai Jove! I think that will be wathah good," remarked Arthur Augustus, with satisfaction. "Hallo! You photogwaphin' too, Skimmy?"

"Yes, my dear D'Arcy," answered Skimpole. "I have borrowed Manners' camera—"

"He is wathah a wottah not to lend it to me, if he has lent it to you," said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, Cardew has lent me his pocket-camewah, and I hope it will be just as good, though it is vewy much smallah. I wathah think my haystack will come out well, Skimmy. You can take it too, if you like."

"I think I shall begin with a snap of the inn," said Skimpole. "The Green Man is a considerably old and picturesque building,

and would doubtless be considered a spot of local interest."

"Mind you, don't go out of bounds, then," cautioned Arthur Augustus. "Knox of the Sixth passed me ten minutes ago, and he might spot you."

"I shall certainly not go out of bounds, D'Arcy! I should regard such a proceeding as an unworthy act," said Skimpole, in his solemn way. "There is a gap in the fence, off Farmer Dobson's field, where I can get a very good view of the inn, and I can take my snap there, without impinging upon the prohibited precincts of the Green Man."

And Skimpole ambled on, leaving the cheery Gussy to score some more blanks with an empty camera.

He pushed through the hedge, near the tree in which the Terrible Three had been caught the day before, and headed for the gap in the Green Man fence.

Knox of the Sixth, if he was anywhere about, had no terrors for Skimpole. Skimmy was not the man to go out of bounds in such a quarter as the Green Man. True he was entering a field where trespassers, according to the board on the tree, would be prosecuted: but like Tom Merry and Co. he saw no harm in entering a vacant field. Skimmy was not thinking of trespassers or of prosecution: he was thinking of getting a snap of the Green Man, which really was a picturesque ancient building, and often snapped by photographers.

He arrived at the gap in the fence, and blinked through.

The old inn garden was untidy and weedy: but it looked, with its hollyhocks and Canterbury Bells, very pleasant in the summer sunshine. Further back was the old inn, with its gables and red roof. Skimpole, carefully keeping outside the fence, took aim with Manners' camera, blinking earnestly into the view-finder.

Snap!

Just as he snapped, two figures appeared in the garden, in full view, coming round a clump of trees.

They were, of course, very tiny in the view-finder, at which Skimpole was blinking, and he did not immediately recognise them. He snapped. Those two figures were indelibly recorded on the film within.

Then Skimpole blinked up.

"Oh!" he ejaculated, his spectacles nearly falling off in his surprise, as he blinked through the gap at the two figures.

One was that of Mr. Bill Lodgev, the disreputable racing man who patronized the Green Man. The other was that of Gerald Knox, of the Sixth Form at St. Jim's.

Skimpole's eyes popped at Knox.

A Sixth-Form prefect of St. Jim's, in the garden of the Green Man, in conversation with a racing man! It would not have surprised Tom Merry and Co., who knew something about Knox and his manners and customs. But it was surprising, as well as shocking, to Skimmy. Skimpole's bony nose was too deep in biology, anthropology, and other "ologies" for him to see or know much of what went on around him. It was quite a startling discovery to him that Knox of the Sixth was a breaker of bounds and a "pub-crawler."

He stood staring.

Knox of the Sixth looked round, at the sound of the snap.

He jumped almost clear of the ground, as he saw Skimpole with levelled camera, goggling at him over it, at the gap in the fence.

Bill Lodgey stared round, too.

"My eye!" he ejaculated. "Oo's that? Wot's that?"

"Oh!" gasped Knox.

For a moment, Knox's brain almost reeled. He realised what had happened. He had been photographed—snapped in the garden of the Green Man, in company with Bill Lodgey, with the Green Man itself in the background. If that snap was seen at the school, he was finished—his number was up—it was the "sack" short and sharp! All the more because he was a prefect, and trusted, the Head would be relentless—he was a lost man.

For a moment he stood staring at Skimpole—a long moment. Then, with an expression on his face that frightened poor Skimmy almost out of his wits, he rushed across the garden towards the gap in the fence. A tiger leaping on its prey could not have looked more fierce and furious than Knox at that moment.

Skimpole gave him one blink.

He did not stay for a second blink. He turned and fled. Skimmy was no athlete; but that awful expression on Knox's countenance spurred him on, and terror lent him wings. He flew across the field at a pace which looked as if he had a good chance for the School quarter-mile. Knox of the Sixth scrambled through the gap and rushed after him.

"Stop!" roared Knox.

Skimpole was not likely to stop—not after that glimpse of Knox's furious face. He raced! With the camera clutched in his hand, his spectacles slanting on his bony nose, the camera-case on its strap flying out behind him, Skimpole fled for his life, with Knox of the Sixth panting desperately on his track.

Back Up !

"NO!" said Manners.

"Yes!" said Monty Lowther.

"Um!" said Tom Merry.

The chums of the Shell were on the tow-path by the silvery Ryll. They had stopped at a willow hedge that separated the tow-path from Dobson's Field.

It was a short cut across that field to Rylcombe Lane and the school, on their homeward way, after a stroll by the river. And although a board was nailed up in the field, announcing that trespassers would be prosecuted, St. Jim's fellows often did, as a matter of fact, take a short cut across it, and Mr. Dobson had never made any fuss.

But the occurrence of the previous day was a warning to Manners, at least, even if the more casual and careless Lowther disregarded it. There had been "swipes" in Railton's study as a consequence of going into that field, owing to Knox of the Sixth. Manners was a rather more thoughtful fellow than his comrades, and he raised objections at once.

"Oh, don't be a goat, Manners, old man," said Monty. "Think Knox of the Sixth will be spotted about to-day as he was yesterday?"

"Shouldn't wonder," answered Manners. "He had to give up calling on Bill Lodgey yesterday—might drop in to-day."

"Oh, rot!"

"Knox or no Knox, we're not going to ask for more trouble with Railton," said Manners. "Keep out of that field."

"Manners is right, Monty," said Tom, with a nod.

"Rot!" repeated Monty Lowther. "We could cut across in five minutes. And—what on earth's that?"

He broke off, in surprise, at a sound from the further side of the willow hedge that bordered the tow-path. It was a sound

of panting, gasping, and spluttering, as of someone putting on frantic speed with a shortage of wind.

"Somebody in a hurry!" said Tom Merry.

Manners parted the willows, and looked into the field.

"That ass Skimpole!" he said.

"What on earth's up with him?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Looks as if he had a bull after him!"

The three stared through the willows. Across the field came Herbert Skimpole of the Shell, charging at top speed, at a rate no one would ever have expected of the weedy, seedy scientific member of the St. Jim's Shell.

"Can't be a bull in the field—!" said Lowther.

"Might be," said Tom. "Skimmy looks as if he's running for his life! Here, Skimmy, this way!" He dragged willows aside, and waved a hand to Skimpole, and shouted: "This way—you can get through here! This way, Skimmy."

Skimpole gave him a blink, and charged on. He tumbled headlong through the willows, the Terrible Three helping him through, and rolled over breathless in the grass of the tow-path.

A camera in his hand slipped from his grasp, and lay in the grass. Manners, always careful of cameras, whether his own or anyone else's, picked it up, as Skimpole lay spluttering.

"Here, Skimmy—why—what—this is my camera!" yelled Manners, recognizing it. "My camera—what are you doing with my camera?"

"Urrrrrrggh!" gasped Skimpole.

"You've bagged my camera from my study—"

"Oooooooooogh!"

"By gum, I'll boot him all the way back to St. Jim's," roared Manners. "I'd taken two pictures—if he's spoiled them—"

"Perhaps he hasn't!" said Tom Merry, soothingly. "Keep cool, old man."

"He may have opened it like that ass D'Arcy yesterday—"

"Ooogh! I—I haven't opened it, Manners," gasped Skimpole, sitting up dizzily. "I have taken one picture, that is all! Oooooooooogh! Grooogh! Look back, will you, and see if Knox is coming!"

"Knox!" repeated Tom Merry.

"Ooogh! Grooogh! Yes!" spluttered Skimpole. "He was after me—I have no idea why, but he looked awful—I had just taken a snap of the Green Man, through the gap in the fence, when he rushed at me like a wild animal—oh, dear!"

"Oh, my hat! Here comes Knox!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, as a pursuing figure burst through the willows on to the tow-

path. It was Knox of the Sixth, red in the face, panting for breath.

He spotted Skimpole sitting in the grass: and taking no notice of the other fellows, rushed at him. Skimpole gave a yell of terror.

"Oh! Keep off! Keep him off, you fellows! Oh, help! I think Knox must be suffering from some mental aberration—yaroooh!"

Knox grasped him, and dragged him to his feet, by the collar. Skimpole sagged in his grasp like a bundle of rags.

"Give me that camera!" panted Knox.

"Grooogh! Oooogh! I—!"

Shake! shake! shake!

Skimpole sagged, and sagged, and squeaked, and gurgled, as Knox shook him savagely.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther stared on in absolute amazement. What was the matter with Knox of the Sixth, they could not begin to guess. He seemed to be beside himself with rage: but it was not only rage that was written in his red and furious face: there was fear also. Knox was frightened about something, though what it was, was quite a mystery.

"Give me that camera at once!" hissed Knox. "Do you hear? By gad, I'll smash you if you don't hand it over at once!"

Gerald Knox's one idea was to get hold of the camera, and destroy the photograph that had been taken. He simply dared not allow it to remain in existence. Now that he had run Skimpole down, it seemed an easy matter—and if the camera had still been in Skimmy's hand, he would have snatched it. But Skimmy's hands were empty: and Knox was prepared to shake him till his teeth rattled, and smack his head till he saw stars, to make him hand over that camera.

"Where is it?" he roared.

"Groooooogh!"

"Where's that camera, you gibbering blockhead?"

"Urrrrgh—"

"If you don't hand over your camera at once—"

"Urggh! It's not mine—it's Manners'—!" gasped Skimpole.

"I don't care whose it is—hand it over!"

"Urrrggh! I haven't got it!" gurgled Skimmy. "Manners has got it! Oooogh."

"Oh!" gasped Knox.

He pitched Skimpole away from him, sending him sprawling headlong in the grass again, and turned on Manners. The camera was in Manners' hand: and Manners, with a grim look,

put his hand behind him. He could not imagine why Knox of the Sixth wanted that camera: but he was quite certain that he was not going to hand it over to him.

Knox stretched out his hand.

"Give me that camera, Manners," he panted.

"What do you want it for?" asked Manners, coolly.

"Never mind that! Give it me."

"But I do mind that," said Manners, in the same cool tone.

"This is my camera, which Skimpole borrowed from my study. Tell me what you want it for."

Knox's eyes blazed at him, and he came nearer.

"Give me that camera, or I'll knock you spinning, and take it," he said, between his teeth.

"Will you?" said Manners, grimly. "Stand by me, you fellows! Knox can report this to Railton, if he likes, and we'll see what Railton says about a Sixth-Form man taking away a fellow's camera by force. Back me up!"

"What-ho!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"You jolly well bet!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

And they jumped to their comrade's side, fully prepared to back him up. Knox of the Sixth was a prefect: and, as such, a person in authority over juniors. But he was now exceeding a prefect's authority to such an extent that the Terrible Three had no hesitation whatever in standing up to him.

The three stood together, facing Knox: and it was so clear that all three would pile on him, if he laid a hand on Manners, that the bully of the Sixth stopped. He seemed hardly able to restrain himself from springing at the three: but prudence prevailed. The three of them together could have handled Knox, big Sixth-Form man as he was: and their looks showed that they were ready to do it—more than ready. They had not forgotten the occurrence of the previous day—Manners least of the three—and if Knox asked for it, Knox was going to get it. But he paused, in time, and tried to calm himself.

"I order you to hand me that camera, Manners," he said, in a choking voice. "I order you, as a prefect."

"You can order me, till you're black in the face," answered Manners, coolly, "and I shan't do it. I'll go with you to Railton, if you like, and put it up to him."

Knox gasped. The bare thought of Mr. Railton being brought into the matter made him feel cold down the back. At any cost, at all costs, that fatal snap had to be kept from Railton's knowledge.

"I tell you, hand it to me," he articulated.

"What do you want it for?"

"That's my business. Hand it over."

"I think it's my business, as it's my camera," answered Manners. "There are two pictures I've taken, in it, and I'm rather particular about my photographs."

"Look here, Knox, if you've not gone off your rocker, what do you want Manners' camera for?" demanded Tom Merry.

Knox panted. Force did not look like a paying proposition: and he had to come down to peaceable methods.

"That young rascal Skimpole has taken a photograph of me," he breathed. "I don't choose to let juniors snap me with a camera. I'm going to take the film out."

Manners stared at him.

"You're going to take the film out!" he repeated. "Don't you know enough about photography to know that films can't be taken out in the daylight? There's a roll of eight in that camera, only three used—"

"I'll pay for the film" snapped Knox.

"And what about my photographs!" hooted Manners. "Skimpole's snap doesn't matter a bean, but I tell you I'd taken two pictures. Think I'm going to let you spoil them?"

"Never mind your silly photographs—"

"Look here, Knox—!" said Monty Lowther.

"You shut up, Lowther! Manners, give me that camera at once, or take out the film and give it to me—that will do."

"I can see myself doing it!" said Manners, disdainfully. "But I'll tell you what I'll do, if you're so particular about Skimmy not having a snap of you. I'll wind up the roll, so that it can be taken out, and develop it as soon as I get back to the school, if you like to pay for the five films that will be wasted. I can't lose my two pictures."

"Develop it!" repeated Knox. "I don't want it developed. I want to destroy that snap at once."

"And my pictures along with it?" hooted Manners.

"That can't be helped."

"Can't it?" said Manners, grimly. "I rather think it can, Knox. "Nobody's going to touch this camera till my pictures are developed and fixed."

"Have a little sense, Knox," said Tom Merry. "I suppose you know that the eight films are all in one roll—"

"Hold your tongue! Manners, take that film out of the camera at once, or I'll take it away from you and throw it in the river."

"Will you?" said Manners. "Not while the three of us can

stop you, Knox. Try it on if you like."

"Will you hand me that film?" shrieked Knox.

"No, I won't."

Knox's self-control snapped, at that. He made a fierce leap at Manners, and grasped him in both hands. Manners was a sturdy fellow: but he would not have had much chance against the big Sixth-Form man on his own. He was not on his own, though—he had two sturdy comrades to back him up. The moment Knox's grasp was on Manners, Tom Merry and Lowther grasped Knox: and the four of them rocked to and fro for a moment, and then Knox went sprawling in the grass. Three of them were too much—much too much—for Gerald Knox.

He sprawled on his back, spluttering.

Manners glared down at him, with glinting eyes.

"Now come on again, you bully, if you like!" he said. "We'll give you some more of the same, you rotter."

Knox could only sprawl and splutter.

Manners turned to Skimpole, who was blinking on at the scene, blankly.

"Give me my camera-case, you fat-headed freak. You ever touch my camera again, and I'll push your silly face through the back of your silly head."

"My dear Manners—!" bleated Skimpole.

"Shut up, and give me that camera-case."

Skimpole unslung the camera-case, and Manners packed the camera into it, and slung it over his shoulder. Knox sat up, gasping.

"Manners—!" he panted.

Manners did not even look at him.

"Come on, you fellows," he said, and started up the tow-path, and Tom Merry and Monty Lowther followed him: leaving Knox of the Sixth sitting and staring after them, the most perturbed and alarmed black sheep that ever went out of bounds to see a man about a horse!

Too Bad !

"ANY luck?" asked Cardew, with a pleasant smile.

Cardew, Levison, and Clive were coming in when Arthur Augustus arrived at the School House, with a pocket-camera in his hand, and a satisfied smile on his face.

Cardew eyed him curiously.

Arthur Augustus was a most confiding youth, the most unsuspicious of fellows : but Cardew rather wondered whether even Gussy could really have gone out on a photographic ramble, with an empty camera, to score a succession of blanks, without tumbling to the fact that his aristocratic leg had been pulled.

But he need not have doubted. Not the faintest suspicion had dawned on the mind of the swell of St. Jim's.

Had Gussy known the first thing about cameras, he would have been aware that the number on each film would have shown up in turn, when he turned the knob : but apparently he did not know the first thing about cameras. If ever he had, he had forgotten. He was in a very satisfied mood, and he beamed on Cardew.

"Yaas, wathah!" he answered. "I have taken eight snaps, Cardew—I believe there are eight films in a woll! I fancy some of them will be all wight, what? One of them, a haystack with a cow, is very good, I believe. I twust that it will take the pwize."

"What a trustin' nature!" murmured Cardew.

"I am goin' to Mr. Lathom, now," continued Arthur Augustus. "He is goin' to develop the films for me, which I think is vewy kind of him. I might not be able to develop them satisfactorily myself," explained Gussy, "as I have nevah done any befoah, and don't know how it is done!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Clive. "In those circumstances, it does seem just possible that they mightn't turn out satisfactory."

"Barely!" grinned Levison.

"It will be all wight, with Lathom, though," said Arthur Augustus. "He knows all about photogwaphy. I shall pick out the vewy best picture for the *Wylcombe Gazette*, and twust that it will beat Mannahs' picture, aftah the wuffianly way he acted about his camewah."

And Arthur Augustus went into the House, cheery as a cricket. Cardew chuckled.

"Can you beat it?" he said.

"Well, he might have luck," said Clive. "He doesn't know a thing about taking photographs, but he might have landed on a good snap by chance. If Lathom does the rest, it would be all right."

"Think so?" asked Cardew.

"Well, why not?" asked Levison, puzzled. "Gussy may be a bit of an ass, but even he can look in a view-finder and snap, I suppose."

"Yes, so far as that goes," assented Cardew. "But unless there's a film inside the camera, I don't quite see what use it would be."

"You loaded it for him, so that's all right."

"Did I?" drawled Cardew.

"Well, didn't you?" Levison and Clive both stared at him.

"Not the least little bit in the world," smiled Cardew. "Matter of fact, I hadn't any film, even if I'd wanted to load it. And I didn't want to."

"What?" exclaimed Clive.

"Oh, my hat!" Levison jumped. "Mean to say that camera is empty?"

"Quite!"

"Why, you ass, D'Arcy fancies that it's full of photographs, and he's taking them to Lathom to develop for him—" exclaimed Levison. "Mean to say that he's been wandering round ever since class with an empty camera, thinking that he was taking photographs?"

"Looks like it," yawned Cardew. "I know there's no films in that camera, at any rate! And it never dawned on him all the time! What a brain!"

"It's too bad to pull his leg like that," said Levison, laughing.

"Too jolly bad!" said Clive: but he could not help laughing, too.

"Oh, quite—especially as he was so tactful when he borrowed the camera," sighed Cardew. "I hardly think that he will bag the *Rylcombe Gazette* prize with those snaps! What?"

The three went in to tea, wondering how Arthur Augustus

was getting on with Mr. Lathom. Arthur Augustus, still in a state of blissful ignorance about those photographs he had taken—or rather, had not taken—tapped cheerily at his Form-master's study door.

Mr. Lathom gave him quite a kindly glance as he came in. Interest in his own particular hobby was a passport to Lathom's good grace.

"Ah! You have been taking photographs, D'Arcy?" said the Fourth-Form master, benevolently, as he noted the camera in Arthur Augustus's hand.

"Yaas, wathah, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I have been wound the lanes, sir, and taken the whole woll of films in the camewah. I twust that there will be at least one or two good pictures among them, sir."

"I hope so," said Mr. Lathom, kindly. "I am very glad to see you taking such an intelligent interest in such a pursuit, D'Arcy. I shall have much pleasure in developing and fixing the films for you, as you are unused to such work."

"You are vewy kind, sir."

"Not at all," said Mr. Lathom. "You may hand me the camera."

Arthur Augustus handed it to him. Mr. Lathom proceeded to open the back, to take out the roll of film.

"Bai Jove! Won't it spoil the films, if you open it in the daylight, sir?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. That much of photography, at least, had been impressed on Gussy's mind.

Mr. Lathom blinked at him, over his spectacles.

"Did you not wind up the roll of film?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah, sir! I kept on turnin' and turnin'—"

"Then the camera may be opened, D'Arcy. When the roll of film is quite wound up inside, it is protected by light-proof paper, and may be safely removed from the camera," explained Mr. Lathom. "It must not, of course, be unrolled again until taken into the dark-room, and exposed only to the red light."

"Oh! I—I see, sir." Arthur Augustus was learning more and more!

Mr. Lathom opened the camera.

Then he stared into it.

As he was holding it with the open back towards himself, Arthur Augustus could not see into it: and he wondered why a very extraordinary expression came over Mr. Lathom's face.

It was quite an extraordinary expression!

Lathom had naturally expected to find a roll of film in that camera, which he had very kindly undertaken to develop for that

member of his form who was taking an intelligent interest in an interesting pursuit! But there was no roll to be found. Lathom stared into an empty camera.

He stared blankly: and then, under the impression that this was a practical joke on the part of that member of his form, he knitted his brows.

"D'Arcy!" he rapped. He glared at the surprised Arthur Augustus, over the empty camera.

"Yaas, sir!" stammered Arthur Augustus.

"How dare you?"

"Weally, Mr. Lathom—"

"How dare you, I repeat?" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, angrily. "Have you pretended to take an interest in photography, D'Arcy, for the purpose of playing this foolish, this senseless, prank, on your Form-master?"

Arthur Augustus almost fell down, in his astonishment! Evidently, Lathom was angry—but why, Arthur Augustus could not begin to guess.

Mr. Lathom rose to his feet.

"Is anything the matter?" he repeated. "Yes, D'Arcy, something very serious is the matter. This foolish trick—"

"What twick, sir?" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"After asking my assistance with your photography, after deluding me into the belief that you were taking an intelligent interest in it, after telling me that you had taken photographs for me to develop for you, you bring me an empty camera!" thundered Mr. Lathom. "There is no film in this camera, D'Arcy—you have not been taking photographs at all—"

"Oh, cwumbs!"

"Such a senseless prank on your Form-master—"

"Oh, cwickey!"

"Take that camera away! Leave my study! Go at once to your own, and write out two hundred lines of the first book of the *Aeneid*—"

"But, sir—!" gasped Arthur Augustus, bewildered.

"Go!"

"But weally, sir—"

"Leave my study this instant, D'Arcy! Another word, and I shall cane you!" thundered Mr. Lathom.

"Oh, Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augutsus D'Arcy almost tottered from the study, with an empty camera in his left hand. He left Mr. Lathom frowning thunderously. Such a practical joke—such a senseless prank,

indeed—was more than enough to rouse Mr. Lathom's deep ire!

Quite unconscious of having played a practical joke, or a senseless prank, the unfortunate swell of St. Jim's tottered away with the camera. However, staring into the camera, in the passage, he could see that it was empty: though how and why it was empty did not dawn on his noble brain.

He was in his own study, No. 6 in the Fourth, when Blake and Herries and Dig came in after the cricket. They stared at his occupation.

"Lines?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus, dismally. "Two hundwed for Lathom."

"Didn't you go out taking photographs for the competish?" asked Digby.

"Yaas, but—"

"Lathom was going to help you," said Herries. "What's he given you lines for instead?"

"That ass Cardew!" said Arthur Augustus. "He forgot to put any film in the camewah, you know—"

"What?" roared Blake and Herries and Digby with one voice.

"The w'etched thing was empty, so I had not taken any photogwaphs aftah all—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Lathom thought I was pullin' his leg, you know—"

"Oh, you ass—!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You crass chump—!"

"I nevah knew that Cardew had forgotten to put in the film! Cardew knows all about camewahs, and he loaded it for me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows, there is nothin' to laugh at in Cardew forgettin' to put in the film—!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake. "Bet you he forgot! You be-nighted cuckoo, he was pulling your leg all the time!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Herries. "Have you been taking photographs ever since class with nothing in the camera, Gussy?"

"It appeahs so, Hewwies—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the three.

Arthur Augustus rose from the table. His face was pink with wrath. It dawned on his noble brain that Cardew had been pulling his leg all along. Really—now he thought of it—it seemed quite impossible that a fellow could fancy he had loaded a camera with film, when he had put nothing at all in it.

"Bai Jove! That wottah Cardew—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatevah to laugh at—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus, in wrath, strode from the study, leaving Blake and Co. yelling. He gave quite a bang at the door of No. 9 and pitched it open. Levison and Clive and Cardew, who were sitting down to tea round the table, looked at him. Arthur Augustus strode in, and banged down a pocket-camera on the table.

"Cardew—!"

"Done with it?" asked Cardew, affably.

"Yaas, wathah, and done with you, you wottah!" hooted Arthur Augustus. "Earliah to-day, Cardew, I told you that I no longah wegarded you as a wat! I withdwaw that statement, Cardew! I wegard you as a wat! I have come heah to tell you, Cardew, that I wegard you as a wat!"

And having thus delivered himself, Arthur Augustus walked out of the study, and returned to No. 6, to get on with his lines for Lathom.

11

A Startling Discovery!

"WHAT'S up?"

"Seen a ghost?"

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther asked those questions, simultaneously, as Manners came into No. 10 Study in the Shell.

Manners did not often show signs of excitement. He was a quiet, steady, sedate fellow. But his look was quite unusual now. He seemed breathless, and his eyes sparkled, and he was in hot haste. Without answering his friends, he cut across to the study window.

"Plenty of sun!" he said, breathlessly.

"But what—?"

"Don't jaw! Got to print out this film! I'm not sure yet—"

"Sure of what?"

"What I've seen in the negative! I suppose you know that in the negative the lights are dark, and the darks light! But I'm almost sure. Hand me that printing frame—"

"But what—?" yelled Monty Lowther.

"Don't jaw now—!"

"What—?" howled Tom Merry.

"You're bothering me—shut up!" said Manners, testily. "If it's so—and I thing it's so—I'll make that cad sit up! I've got to make sure! Don't worry."

"Mad as a hatter!" said Monty Lowther. "Look here, Manners, were going to have tea—"

"Have tea, and shut up."

"We've waited for you—!" said Tom.

"Don't wait! Just shut up."

Manners, with his back to them, was busy with negative and printing-frame at the window. Manners often printed out his

photographs on the stone sill of the study window, where the summer sun shone brightly. From of old, his comrades knew that when Manners was deep in photographic work, it was useless to reason with him—he was deaf and blind to all other considerations. On this occasion he seemed a little deafer and blinder than usual: so they gave him his head.

They sat down to tea, for which they were more than ready.

On the way back to the school, after the somewhat exciting encounter with Knox of the Sixth, Manners had taken shots of riverside scenes, and used up what remained of the roll of film in the camera. That roll now contained seven pictures taken by Manners, and one taken by Herbert Skimpole. The juniors were rather curious to see Skimpole's snap, about which Knox had been so unaccountably excited. When they came in, Manners went at once to the dark-room to develop his roll of film, while Tom and Monty went up to the study to get tea ready.

They expected Manners to come up with his negative: but had hardly expected to see him rush into the study in a state of breathless excitement: of which they could not even begin to guess the cause.

However, Tom and Monty were more interested in tea than in photographs, and they proceeded with tea, while Manners potted at the window, and watched his print with an eagle eye.

"Him!" he suddenly ejaculated.

"Him!" repeated Tom Merry, looking round.

"Yes, him all right! I wasn't sure in the dark-room—almost sure—you could have knocked me down with a coke-hammer when it came out in the dish—but I wasn't quite sure—Him!" trilled Manners.

"Hymn ancient or modern?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Oh, don't be an ass! It's him!" Manners, in his excitement, had forgotten even his grammar.

"That wouldn't do for Linton!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Nominative case, old bean—"

"Br-r-r! It's Knox!" breathed Manners.

"Knox?" repeated Tom.

"Yes! You remember that goat Skimpole snapped him, and Knox was as mad as a hatter, and we didn't know why! I know now!" grinned Manners. "No wonder he wanted to get hold of the film! No wonder! Ha, ha!"

"But what—?"

"I'll show you in a tick! I'm just going to take it out of the frame. This is Skimmy's snap that I'm printing out—I'm not bothering about mine, at present! Skimmy's—"

"Good one?" asked Tom.

"Topping!" chuckled Manners.

"Likely to get the prize in the *Rylcombe Gazette*?" asked Tom. "Good luck for old Skimmy, if it is."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners. "They're going to publish the prize-winner in the local rag. I'd like to see this published! Knox would love it! Ha, ha!"

"But if it's a good picture—"

"Fine! Skimmy got him a treat! Garden of the Green Man, with the pub in the background, and Knox of the Sixth talking to Bill Lodgey, chummy as you please—"

"WHAT!" yelled Tom Merry and Lowther together.

"Look!"

Manners took the print from the frame. Tom Merry and Lowther rushed to look at it. They looked—they gazed—they stared—they almost goggled. Knox's excitement and fury had seemed inexplicable, at the time. But they were quite explicable now that the chums of the Shell saw the photograph that Skimpole had inadvertently taken of the black sheep of the Sixth!

That snap had been a perfectly successful one. It had produced an excellent negative. The print showed Knox of the Sixth standing in the inn garden, with the Green Man backing him, in obviously friendly company with Bill Lodgey, the racing tout. It was clear, indisputable evidence that Gerald Knox, prefect of the Sixth Form, was a visitor at the Green Man, that he was on friendly terms with the racing man: that he was, in fact, a black sheep of the blackest dye—and booked for the sack, short and sharp, if that picture came under the eyes of anyone in authority at St. Jim's!

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

"Oh!" breathed Lowther.

Manners' eyes danced!

"Knox got us whops from Railton yesterday!" he chuckled. "Not because we'd done anything, but because he knew we knew he was heading for that pub! Railton told me I had a suspicious mind! Think he'd have a suspicious mind himself if he saw this snap of Knox chumming with Bill Lodgey?"

Tom Merry whistled.

"Extra whops for me, because I spoke out!" said Manners. "Mustn't say such things about a trusted prefect! What? Well, if hearing isn't believing, *seeing* is! I've got that bully on toast now."

"Phew!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"But—I" said Tom.

"No wonder he wanted to grab that camera!" grinned Manners. "By gum! Knox won't be throwing his weight about quite so much—after this! This is where he sings small! This is where he crawls! Ha, ha."

"But—I say—I!"

"Good old Skimmy," chuckled Manners. "He's the sort of idiot to do this by accident—by gum, he's put that cad just where we want him! Knox on toast—ha, ha!"

And Manners laughed, loud and long. Knox had had the upper hand, and had used it without scruple. But now Manners had the upper hand, and the change-over looked like being extremely uncomfortable for the black sheep of the Sixth!

The Upper Hand!

"COME in!"

Manners chuckled, as he called out in response to a tap at the door of No. 10 in the Shell.

The Terrible Three had finished their tea, when that tap came. Manners had been grinning cheerfully over the tea-table. He had been extremely "sore" over those whops in Railton's study. Now he was in great spirits. He was expecting to hear from Knox of the Sixth—now that he knew what it was that had caused Knox's angry excitement that afternoon. And when that tap came at the door of No. 10, he had little doubt that the visitor was Gerald Knox. It was not Knox's custom to knock at a junior door before entering—he had no politeness to waste on juniors. Now, no doubt, he was in a more conciliatory mood than was customary with him.

The door opened. It was Knox: and he came in. But he did not come with his accustomed overbearing manner. He was very subdued.

Manners smiled at him. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther regarded him curiously. They all knew why he had come.

"Oh! You're here," said Knox, awkwardly.

"All at home, and quite pleased to see a distinguished visitor," said Manners, cheerily. "Kind of you to give us a look-in, Knox! We don't get a lot of visits from Six-Form pre's."

"Want anything, Knox?" asked Monty Lowther, politely.

"Well, yes," said Knox. "I—I'm sorry I cut up rusty on the low-path this afternoon. I—I rather lost my temper—"

"Lost your temper?"

"Well, yes," mumbled Knox.

"Don't try to find it again," advised Monty.

"Wha-a-t?"

"It was a rotten bad one," explained Monty. "If you've lost it, let it go."

Knox looked at him. He was evidently in no mood for Monty Lowther's little jokes. At any other time, jesting in that way with a Sixth-Form prefect might have had painful results for a junior. But Knox was in no position now to throw his weight about in No. 10 Study.

"I—I came here to speak to you, Manners," he said, taking no further notice of the funny man of the Shell.

"To tell me you're sorry you cut up rusty?" smiled Manners.

"Yes," mumbled Knox.

"I know just how sorry you are!" assented Manners. "No need to tell me! Is that the lot?"

Knox stood looking at him. Evidently, it was not the lot. Knox was there for that photograph—if he could get it!

"Look here, that young ass Skimpole snapped me this afternoon, and I told you I don't choose to have juniors snapping me," muttered Knox. "As it seems that he was using your camera, Manners, I suppose you've got the photograph."

"Right on the wicket," said Manners, with a nod.

"Have you developed it yet?"

"Oh, yes."

"And taken a print?"

Knox breathed hard. The photographic process having gone thus far, he knew that the Shell fellows knew the whole story: that Skimpole had snapped him at the Green Man, and that his number was up, if the result came to light. The colour flushed into his face.

"Then—you know—?" he stammered.

"We know quite a lot!" agreed Manners. "No more than we knew yesterday, if you come to that! Railton told me yesterday that I had a suspicious mind! Think he'd say the same to-day?"

Knox gasped.

"Look here, Manners—"

"Looking!" said Manners.

"Is it a good photograph—has it come out clear?" asked Knox.

"First-rate!" grinned Manners. "Two ugly mugs in it, both recognisable a mile off—yours and Bill Lodgey's."

"Let me see it, will you?"

"Pleasure!" said Manners.

He took the photographic print from his pocket. Tom Merry and Lowther stared, as he held it out, unconcernedly, for Knox to see! They fully expected Knox to snatch at it: and could hardly understand Manners giving him the chance.

They were right—the next moment, Knox snatched!

In a split second, the print was in his hand, not in Manners'. He panted aloud with relief.

He gave the photograph one stare. At a glance he saw that it was enough, more than enough, to get him expelled from St. Jim's. But it was in his hand now.

"Like to keep it?" asked Manners.

"You young cub!" breathed Knox.

"Dear me!" said Manners. "What a change! Didn't you fellows notice how jolly polite Knox was when he came in? He seems to have chucked it all of a sudden! I wonder why!"

"By gad!" said Knox, between his teeth. He tore the print into fragments, and put the fragments carefully into his pocket. Then his eyes blazed at Manners, and his hands clenched. "Now follow me, Manners."

"What for?"

"Follow me to my study! I'm going to give you six!" said Knox. "You handled me on the tow-path: and if you fancy you can get by with handling a prefect, you're going to find out your mistake. You're going to be sorry for your cheek, you young cub—as sorry as I can make you."

"Look here, Knox—!" began Tom Merry.

"You can hold your tongue, and come along with Manners—you too, Lowther! All three of you are going to get what you've asked for. Or perhaps you'd rather go to Railton!" sneered Knox. He grinned: a very different Knox, now that the tell-tale photograph was destroyed.

Manners rose from the table, with a yawn.

"Come on, you men," he said. "If Knox wants us, we must obey a Sixth-Form prefect, you know—to hear is to obey! Let's get it over—I want to print out some more copies of the negative while the light's good."

Knox jumped almost clear of the floor.

He had forgotten the negative!

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry and Lowther, quite entertained by the sudden change of expression that came over Gerald Knox's face. They, like Knox, had forgotten the negative: but they understood now why Manners had so easily allowed the bully of the Sixth to snatch the print. So long as he had the negative, he could print as many copies as he liked.

"Oh!" gasped Knox.

"You don't seem to know a lot about photography, Knox," remarked Manners. "Think I'd have let you snatch that print, if I couldn't have taken more? My dear ass, I let you snatch

it, just to pull your leg, and see how you'd behave afterwards!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—!" Knox panted. "Give me the negative!"

"Want to look at it?" asked Manners.

"Yes, yes."

"Then you can want!" said Manners, cheerfully. "Go on wanting! Keep it up as long as it amuses you! You won't get your paws on that negative, Knox!"

"I'll smash you—!"

"Get on with it! We chucked you over on the tow-path, and we'll chuck you out of this study, as soon as you like," said Manners. "Or wouldn't you like to take us to Railton?" he went on, banteringly. "We'll come to your study—or we'll go with you to Railton's—just as you like! Or why not go to the Head—I'm sure Dr. Holmes would like to hear about that photograph! Stands to reason he would like to see such a topping photograph of his trusted prefect!"

Knox's face became quite pale.

"Will you give me that negative?" he hissed.

"No!"

"Are you going to take prints from it?"

"Yes!"

"What—what are you going to do with them?"

"Oh, lots of things," yawned Manners. "As Skimmy took the snap, he's entitled to one copy, to send in to the *Rylcombe Gazette* for their photographic competition—!"

"What?" gasped Knox.

"They want pictures of spots of local interest," explained Manners, airily. "Skimmy's might be just what they want! View of the Green Man, you know—with two figures showing up well—a St. Jim's prefect and a bookie! Rather a unique picture what? Like to see it published in the *Rylcombe Gazette*?"

Knox almost tottered.

"And I suppose I ought to let the Head have a copy," went on Manners, thoughtfully. "As you're one of his trusted prefects, you know!"

"I—I—I—!" panted Knox.

"And Railton must have one," said Manners, decidedly. "It will make him understand that a fellow hasn't a suspicious mind, in thinking that a blackguard was going out of bounds in a pub, what?"

"What—what did you call me?"

"Blackguard!" said Manners, coolly. "Don't you think it fits? Rotter and worm and pub-crawling outsider, if you like that better."

Knox made a stride at him. Tom Merry and Lowther jumped to their feet. Manners, certainly, was talking to Knox, in a way in which no St. Jim's prefect had ever been talked to before. But they were quite prepared to pitch Knox headlong out of No. 10 Study.

"Give me that negative!" hissed Knox.

"Rats!"

"Then I'll take it!"

His grasp was on Manners, the next moment. Three pairs of hands returned grasp for grasp. For the second time that afternoon, Knox discovered that three pairs of hands exerted more force than one pair. He went sprawling backwards through the doorway, and landed in the passage.

"Man down!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

Knox scrambled to his feet, red and furious. He glared in at the doorway with a glare that the fabled basilisk might have envied but could never have equalled. Manners smiled at him:

"Now let's all go to Railton," he said. "Like us to come, Knox. I'm sure old Railton would like to have a squint at that negative! We've chucked you out of our study, and it's up to you, as a prefect, to report us to our House-master! Shall we all go together?"

Knox gave him a look—a long and bitter look. Then he turned and tramped away down the passage. He was powerless, and he had to realise that he was powerless. His feelings could not have been expressed in words—but he had to go, and he went.

"Dear old Knox!" said Manners, lightly. "We shall soon have him feeding out of our hand, at this rate."

"But—" said Tom.

"Well, what?" asked Manners.

"You're not going to let Railton see that picture, old chap."

"Why not?"

"It's the sack for Knox, if you do—"

"Oughtn't he to be sacked?"

"I—I suppose so. But—but—you can't give a man away," said Tom, shaking his head. "What a Sixth-Form man does is nothing to do with us: it's for Kildare, or the beaks, to see to all that—not us!"

"Knox has been so nice to us!" jeered Manners.

"He hasn't—he's been a bullying rotter! All the same, you can't give a man away," said Tom.

"Couldn't, old chap," concurred Lowther.

"Perhaps not!" said Manners. "I'm keeping that negative in my pocket. Like me to hand it to Knox—and then all three of

us bend over in his study and take six?" he added, sarcastically.

"Um! No! But—"

"I thought not!" grinned Manners. "We've drawn Knox's teeth row, old beans, and we're going to keep them drawn. He had the upper hand yesterday—I've got it to-day—and one good turn deserves another."

"But—!" said Tom, slowly.

"Pack up your butts! I'm going to take good care of that negative."

"But—!" said Tom, uneasily.

"Oh, rats!"

Manners, for the present at least, was not to be argued with. He had the upper hand now, and it was not surprising, perhaps, that he wanted to keep it. And that, for the present, was that!

13

Toe the Line!

CRASH!
Bump!

"Oh, gad!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

It was a sudden and unexpected collision.

Gerald Knox of the Sixth Form was about to walk into the school shop. From the doorway of that little establishment in the corner of the old quad, Baggy Trimble suddenly emerged, in flight. He shot by right under Knox's nose, and fled, so close that he almost brushed him in passing. Knox stared after Baggy with an angry brow, and was about to call to him, when another figure hurtled out of the doorway, in pursuit of Baggy. This time it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. And this time the hurtler did not brush by Knox—he crashed right into him.

Knox staggered back, and sat down on the earth.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy staggered back, and reeled against the tuck-shop.

Both were winded.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry, from a distance. The Terrible Three were in the quad, witnesses of that sudden crash.

"Man down!" grinned Lowther.

"Knox seems rather fond of sprawling about this afternoon," remarked Manners.

Knox did not look as if he was fond of it! His face was red with wrath as he scrambled up.

"Oh, cwikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Sowwy, Knox! Vewwy sowwy I wan into you. I was aftah Twinmble—"

"You—you—you!" gasped Knox.

Augustus was about to rush on after the fleeing Baggy, when Knox grabbed at him. "Bai Jove! Pway do not get watty, Knox, ovah an accident!"

Arthur Augustus jumped back and eluded the grab.

Blake and Herries and Dig appeared in the shop doorway, from inside.

"Got him?" asked Blake. "Oh! What—?"

"What's happened?" asked Herries.

"I wan into Knox!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Weally, it was not my fault—I did not know that he was just outside the door—and I was in wathah a huwwy—"

"Just an accident, Knox," said Dig.

The Fourth-Formers eyed Knox very uneasily. He was panting for breath, and obviously in the worst temper ever. It was true that it was an accident—a sheer accident—but it was equally true that such accidents were not expected to happen, and that a junior who up-ended a Sixth-Form prefect was very likely to have something coming to him, in consequence.

It was all Baggy Trimble's fault. Arthur Augustus, after completing his lines for Lathom, had repaired to the tuck-shop with his friends for refreshments; Blake having borrowed a half-crown from Talbot of the Shell, which he was nobly prepared to expend to the last halfpenny in the good cause. That day Dame Taggles had meringues, which did not always happen. And Baggy, who was haunting the tuck-shop like a hungry fat ghost, had helped himself to D'Arcy's meringue while Arthur Augustus's attention was momentarily elsewhere. Hence the sudden flight, and pursuit, which had ended so disastrously. Baggy had fled, with his capacious mouth crammed with meringue; Arthur Augustus had rushed after him, his aristocratic countenance full of wrath! Neither of them had reflected that somebody might be outside the doorway. It was just Baggy's good luck that he hadn't up-ended Knox, and that D'Arcy had.

Baggy, still going strong, vanished in the distance. Arthur Augustus would have been glad to vanish also. But Knox of the Sixth was in the way.

Knox panted and gurgled for breath. Even a good-tempered fellow might have been annoyed—and Knox was very far from being a good-tempered fellow. And since his visit to No. 10 in the Shell, his temper, never good, had been at its very worst. He could not deal with Manners—he dared not. But he could deal with this Fourth-Form junior who had up-ended him, and he was going to.

"You—you—you young rascal!" he gurgled. "You've knocked me over—"

"I am weally fwightfully sowwy, Knox—"

"Go to my study and wait for me there!" panted Knox. "I'll give you a lesson about rushing into Sixth-Form men and knocking them over, you mad young ass."

"But weally, Knox—!"

"Go to my study at once!" snapped Knox.

"Oh, vewy well!"

Knox, scowling—with a specially black scowl for the Terrible Three, as he noted them in the offing—went into the shop. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was left in a state of dismay.

"Bai Jove, you fellows," he remarked. "This is wathah wotten!"

Knox looks as if somethin' has put him into a feahful tempah—"

"Well, you seem to have up-ended him," remarked Herries.

"Not the sort of thing to improve a man's temper."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"That fat rotter, Trimble!" said Dig. "Look here, Gussy, we'll go and look for Trimble and kick him, while you're getting six from Knox."

"We'll kick him all round the quad, old chap," said Blake, consolingly.

But Arthur Augustus, as he trailed away to the House, did not look, or feel, much consoled. Kicking Trimble was, no doubt, all to the good: but it did not help much. Only too clearly, Arthur Augustus was going to get six of the very best, when Knox came to his study. Knox was the man to handle the ashplant with very little excuse: and now he had a good one—for certainly Lower boys were not expected to rush about up-ending prefects.

It was a somewhat sad and sorrowful Gussy who arrived in Knox's study in the Sixth, and waited there for him to come in, while Blake and Herries and Digby went in search of Baggy Trimble, to bestow on his fat person the kicking he undoubtedly deserved.

"Poor old Gussy!" said Tom Merry, commiseratingly, as the Terrible Three strolled on. "He's got it coming."

Manners' lip curled.

"Knox is going to give him what he dare not give us!" he said.

"Well, Gussy did bowl him over!" said Lowther. "Chap ought to look where he's going, you know."

"One whop would be enough for that!" said Manners. "Think Knox is going to let him off with one whop, as Kildare or Darrell or Langton would?"

"Um! He didn't look like it."

"Well, he's not going to give him six!" said Manners. Tom and Monty stared at him.

"Bet you he is," said Monty. "Looked as if he might make it a dozen! What the dickens do you mean?"

"I mean that he's not going to give Gussy six!" answered Manners, coolly.

"You can't stop him," said Tom.

"Can't I?" said Manners. "I might ask him, as a favour, not to, you know."

"Potty?" asked Tom. "I can see Knox granting you favours, after that row in our study!"

"Oh, you never know," said Manners. "Let's go in. Gussy's rather a pal of ours, and I don't see letting that bully take it out of him, if we can stop him."

Manners walked away towards the House. Tom and Monty exchanged a quick look, as it dawned on both of them what Manners had in mind. They hurried after their chum. Tom caught him by the arm.

"Manners, old man—!" he said.

"Well?" Manners glanced round at him.

"If you mean about that photograph—!"

"Guessed it?" asked Manners, sarcastically.

"I—I don't think—"

"You don't!" agreed Manners. "Not in your line, old chap."

"Oh, don't be an ass! I don't think you ought to hold that thing over Knox's head in this way—"

"Don't you?" asked Manners, rather unpleasantly.

"No, I don't!" said Tom, bluntly.

"You'd rather let him let his temper rip on poor old Gussy?" jeered Manners. "Well, I don't agree with you, that's all. I know what I'm going to do."

He went into the House, and walked coolly into Knox's study. Tom and Monty, feeling far from comfortable in their minds, waited for him in the passage.

In the study, Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass on Manners as he came in.

"Bai Jove! You, too, Mannahs?" he exclaimed. "Has Knox sent you heah for six?"

"Oh, no. I've just dropped in," drawled Manners. "Only a chat with Knox when he comes in, D'Arcy. Had any luck with your photography?"

"Wathah not! That wat Cardew lent me a camewah without any film in it, so there was nothin' in it when I had finished takin' snaps, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Mannahs, I see nothin' to laugh at in Cardew's wotten twick. I told him that I wegarded him as a wat!"

"That was awfully rough on him!" said Manners, solemnly.

"The fact is, I meant to be wuff on him!" said Arthur Augustus. "Aftah such a wotten twick on a fellow, I considahed that he deserved it: and I went to his study and told him quite plainly that I wegarded him as a wat. I should vewy much like to tell Knox the same, only of course a fellow can't, with a pwe."

"Here he comes!" said Manners.

There was a step in the doorway, and Knox of the Sixth came in. He gave Arthur Augustus D'Arcy a grim look: and then, noticing Manners in the study, stared at him malevolently.

"What do you want here, Manners?" he asked, between his teeth.

"Only a word or two, Knox," answered Manners, calmly. "D'Arcy ran into you at the tuck shop quite by accident—"

"Mind your own business."

"I'm making this my business," answered Manners. "As it was an accident, I want you to let the matter drop."

Knox's eyes almost flamed.

"Get out of my study," he said, hoarsely.

"Bettah cut, Mannahs, old man," whispered Arthur Augustus, anxiously. "You can't do anythin', old chap."

"You want me to go, Knox?" asked Manners.

"I've told you to go!" hissed Knox.

"O.K.," said Manners, carelessly. "By the way, take a squint at the notice-board next time you pass it, Knox. I've got a photograph I'm thinking of pinning up there, and I expect you'll find a crowd looking for it."

Knox gasped for breath.

The look he gave Harry Manners was almost homicidal. He made a movement towards him, with clenched hands. Manners faced him perfectly calmly, quite enjoying the situation. It was rather a new experience to have the bully of the Sixth in the hollow of his hand.

"Better think twice, Knoxev," he drawled. "This is where you toe the line, old boy."

Knox paused, almost choking. Arthur Augustus gazed from one to the other, in sheer wonder. For a moment or two, Knox looked as if he would throw prudence to the winds, and spring on Manners like a tiger. But he dared not.

"Get out of my study!" he breathed, at last.

"Pleasure," answered Manners, affably. "Is D'Arcy coming

with me?"

"Yes, if you like!" gasped Knox.

"You're letting it drop?"

"Yes!" Knox could hardly get it out! But it had to be got out: and out it came.

"Thanks," said Manners, politely. "Come on, D'Arcy—Knox is letting you off, and if he changes his mind later, just mention it to me, and I'll see that he chucks it. Come on."

"Bai Jove!" said the bewildered Gussy. "I weally fail to undahstand this, Mannahs. Am I to go, Knox?"

"Yes!" hissed Knox. "Get out."

"Thank you vewy much, Knox," said Arthur Augustus, politely. "And I wepeat that I am vewy sowwy that I knocked you ovah—"

"Get out!"

"It was wholly a vewy unfortunate accident, you know—"

"Come on," said Manners, laughing, and he grasped Arthur Augustus by the arm, and marched him out of the study. Knox shut the door after them with a bang that woke all the echoes of the Sixth-Form studies.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther met them at the corner of the passage.

"Licked?" asked Tom.

"Not at all, deah boy," answered Arthur Augustus, cheerily. "It is weally vewy peculiah. Knox was in a feahful tempah—in fact, he was in an awful wage—wasn't he, Mannahs?"

"He was!" assented Manners.

"And yet he let me off the whoppin'," said Arthur Augustus. "Mannahs said somethin' about a photogwaph which I weally quite failed to compwehend—what did you mean, Mannahs?"

"Oh, Knox understood all right," said Manners, carelessly.

"It is weally vewy wemarkable," said Arthur Augustus, perplexed. "I did not know that Knox was intewested in photogwaphy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners. "He is, Gussy! 'Awfully interested just at present—quite a hobby of his."

"Well, he has let me off, anyhow," said Arthur Augustus, "and I am vewy glad not to have six, and aftah all, I did up-end Knox, you know. I must let Blake and Hewwies and Dig heah about this—it is weally vewy odd."

Arthur Augustus hurried off in search of his chums, to tell them the good news. Manners looked at his friends with a sarcastic smile.

"You don't quite like the idea of making Knox toe the line like that?" he asked.

"Well, no," said Tom.

"You'd rather Gussy had had six?"

"Oh! No!"

"Then you're talking rot!" said Manners. "You can't have it both ways! And I'll tell you what," he went on, deliberately. "I've got the whip-hand of that bully, and I'm going to keep it! Knox is going to toe the line, and I'm going to make him. That's fixed and settled, as fixed and settled as the jolly old laws of the jolly old Medes and Persians!"

Tom and Monty were silent, but Manners was humming a tune, as they went out into the quad. The chums of the Shell did not, for once, quite see eye to eye: but as Harry Manners was quite determined to go his own way, there was nothing to be said.

Knox, in his study, was left in a most unenviable mood. So far, the worst had not happened: that tell-tale snap had not been seen outside No. 10 in the Shell. But there was peril that it might come to light any day, any hour, any moment. And the black sheep of the Sixth had to realise that he had, as Manners said, to toe the line, lest worse should befall him.

Trimble Turns the Key

"OH, scissors! He's coming!" breathed Baggy Trimble.

The fat Baggy was surprised.

He was also pleased.

It was Wednesday afternoon. That afternoon, a junior House match was on, and the studies were deserted. Tom Merry's team was playing Figgins and Co. of the New House: and the Terrible Three were all in the School House side. No. 10 Study was, in consequence, vacant, and likely to remain so for a long time. Talbot's study, next to it, was vacant also—excepting for Baggy Trimble. Talbot and Gore were playing cricket: and Skimpole was in the Laboratory, deep in chemicals. Why Baggy Trimble had ensconced himself in Talbot's vacant study, might have perplexed any fellow who had found him there—and still more, why he kept the door an inch or two ajar, and blinked out every now and then into the passage with a watchful and wary eye.

Manners could have explained: for it was Manners who had caused Baggy to take up his post there.

Baggy had a study key in his fat hand. It was the key of No. 10. And Baggy's instructions were to keep watch and ward, and if Knox of the Sixth "nosed" into No. 10, to slip along and lock the door on him!

Manners surmised—or rather guessed accurately—that Knox would not lose such an opportunity of searching No. 10. If he did, he was not likely to enjoy his visit to No. 10, or to find the negative!

Baggy was willing to oblige. Not that Baggy was an obliging fellow. But he had been promised a bag of jam-tarts for his services. Baggy was the most obliging fellow in the world, when

jam-tarts were to be the reward. All that Baggy doubted was whether Knox would come along to No. 10: as he knew nothing about the Green Man snap, and could not imagine why Knox should. However, if Knox did, Baggy was on the spot, ready.

And now he was coming.

Baggy peering into the passage, sighted Gerald Knox in the distance, coming along from the landing.

He was surprised to see him: but he was also pleased. Once Knox was safely locked in No. 10, Baggy's vigil was over, and he was free to demand the promised jam-tarts.

With the door of Talbot's study only half an inch ajar, Baggy peered out curiously at the Sixth-Form man as he came.

Knox was not walking with his usual somewhat swaggering gait. He was walking quickly, but quietly, making hardly a sound as he came up the passage: and he was glancing watchfully round him. His whole aspect indicated stealth and a fear of being seen.

Baggy was puzzled. He could not begin to guess why Knox of the Sixth, a prefect, should pay a surreptitious visit to a junior study on a half-holiday: or what his game could possibly be, when he got there. It was quite perplexing to Trimble. But whatever Knox's secret motive might be, there he was—sneaking up the passage to No. 10—"sneaking" was really the only word to describe it.

As he came nearer, Baggy backed away from the door, careful not to be spotted through the narrow aperture.

A minute later, Knox's stealthy steps passed the door.

Baggy listened, with all his fat ears. He heard the door-handle of the next study turn, and then the door close.

There was no doubt about it! Knox had gone into Tom Merry's study and shut the door after him.

"Oh, crumbs!" breathed Baggy.

He peered out again. The passage was deserted. He put his fat head out, and stared up and down the passage. No one was in sight. Inexplicable as it was—to Baggy—Knox of the Sixth had disappeared into a study—Tom Merry's study—and there he was now.

Baggy grinned.

He had been half-an-hour on the watch. It was worth it, for a bag of jam-tarts! But he had to be very careful now. There was no risk, so long as he was cautious: but he had to be careful. If Knox should discover a junior who had locked him in a study, the result would have been altogether too painful for Baggy to contemplate. Not for a world of jam-tarts would he

have let Knox know, or suspect, who had done it. But with a locked door between him and Knox, where was the risk?

Baggy tiptoed along to Tom Merry's door, key in hand.

There he paused, palpitating a little, to listen. There was a sound of a movement in the room. Then he heard a muttering voice:

"It's here somewhere! It must be here! I've got to find it—that young villain—I've got to find it."

Baggy heard a fumbling among papers.

Knox was searching in the study for something. Baggy could not imagine what. But at any rate, he was busy: he was not coming towards the door. Slowly, carefully, soundlessly, Baggy inserted the key into the outside of the lock.

Click!

Baggy would have preferred to carry out that operation entirely without a sound. But he could not help the key clicking as it turned in the lock. That click was followed by a startled ejaculation in the study within.

"What—!"

Baggy's fat heart was beating rather fast. But he grinned. With a locked door between them, Baggy was all right.

But he did not linger. He jerked out the key, dropped it into his pocket, and scuttled away down the passage.

He heard, as he went, a sound of wrenching at the study door. Knox was dragging at the door-handle from within. Knox's feelings, when he found that the door was locked on the outside, were absolutely indescribable. His search in Manners' study had been intended to be entirely secret: and it had never occurred to him that the astute Manners might guess! Manners was safe on the cricket ground, and the coast was clear—so far as Knox had known. He had taken that for granted. It was borne in upon his mind now that he had taken a little too much for granted.

He wrenched and dragged, at the door, in vain. Then, in a fury, he hammered on it with his fist, and shouted:

"Manners! Unlock this door!"

He could only conclude that Manners had not, after all, gone down to the cricket. Manners had done this!

Bang! bang! bang!

"Open this door, you young rascal!" roared Knox.

But answer there came none. Baggy Trimble was already out

of the House, rolling down to the cricket ground with a grin on his fat face.

Bang! Thump! Kick!

"Manners! I'll smash you! Let me out, I tell you."

Only echo answered Knox's roar.

He thumped frantically on the upper panels, and kicked on the lower. For some minutes, he was too enraged to think of prudence. That young rascal had watched for him, and locked him in. All Knox wanted, just then, was to get his hands on him.

But he realised, at last, that the young rascal who had locked him in was gone. He stood in the study almost spluttering with rage. He was locked in that study—and how long did the young rascal intend to keep him so? Hours, perhaps—all the afternoon, very likely! Knox could have groaned with fury. He gave a frantic kick at the door—but the solid old oak was much too solid to be affected thereby. He was a prisoner—till Manners chose to let him out!—unless some other fellow came up to the studies and rescued him, which was improbable on a half-holiday, with a cricket match going on.

Baggy Trimble might, perhaps, have guessed what Knox of the Sixth was feeling like, if he had bothered about it at all. But Baggy didn't! Baggy was thinking of jam-tarts: and he rolled down to Little Side in search of Manners. He found him among the batsmen at the pavilion, waiting his turn to bat. Tom Merry and Talbot were at the wickets, and running—the New House men were hunting the leather; but Baggy was not interested in cricket. He gave Manners a nudge in the ribs with a fat thumb.

"I say, Manners—!", he burred.

Manners shook him off. His eyes were on the game. The ball was coming in to the New House wicket-keeper, and Tom Merry's bat still yards from the crease. Baggy, blind to cricket, gave an indignant snort.

"Look here, Manners—"

"Shut up!" snapped Manners, without looking round.

"But I say—!" howled the indignant Baggy.

"Oh, good! Good old Tom!" exclaimed Manners. The bat was on the crease just in time. Good man! Bravo!"

"Look here, Manners, you swob—!" hooted Baggy.

Manners looked round at him at last. Baggy held out a study

door-key. Then Manners remembered Knox, whose existence he had completely forgotten, in his keener interest in the summer game.

"Oh!" he said. He took the key, and smiled. "Thanks! He's in the study?"

"What-ho!" grinned Baggy.

"Good egg!"

"He won't get out in a hurry," chuckled Baggy. "He was banging on the door—he, he, he! Mind, don't you let out that it was me! I say, where's those jam-tarts?"

Manners pointed to a paper bag on a bench. Baggy pounced upon it, and departed with it. Everybody else was very keen on the House match: but Baggy had no time for such trifles. Baggy sat under a shady tree, with the bag on his fat knees, and devoured jam-tarts—as oblivious of the cricket as he was of Knox of the Sixth, raging in Tom Merry's study in the School House.

Skimpole to the Rescue!

“DEAR me!” said Skimpole, blinking.
Thump! Thump!

Skimpole came up the Shell passage, and was quite startled to hear that loud and energetic thumping from inside one of the studies.

Why any fellow, in a Shell study, should thump on the inside of the door, was quite a mystery to Skimpole.

Had it occurred to him that a fellow was locked in a study, even Skimmy would have understood. But that simple explanation did not occur to Skimmy's powerful scientific brain.

Thump! Bang! Kick!

“Extraordinary!” said Skimpole. “That is Tom Merry's study. I thought he was at the cricket. Apparently he is in his study. But why is he thumping and kicking the door in that remarkable manner?”

Bang! Bang!

Knox, in the study, was getting excited. He had been there quite a long time. He was almost tempted to wield a chair, or a table-leg, in an attempt to knock the door to pieces. But such heroic measures would certainly have attracted more attention than Knox desired. He did not want his House-master to come up, and find him locked in a junior study. Railton certainly would have inquired what he was doing in that study, anyway, and it would not have been easy to explain. Neither could he think of reporting Manners for locking him in—so long as Manners had the print, and the negative, of that fatal photograph! Knox raged in that study rather like a tiger in a cage: till at length his ears were gladdened by a sound of footsteps. Some fellow had come up to the Shell studies: and Knox

hoped that it might mean release. He banged and kicked to attract attention: which he certainly did. Skimpole stood blinking at that door like an owl, wondering why Tom Merry was kicking up such a shindy!

Bang! Thump! Kick! Thump! Bang!

"Really, this is very extraordinary indeed!" murmured Skimpole. "Tom Merry has always seemed to me a quite level-headed person, but this really does sound as if some cerebral weakness may have developed. But perhaps it is Lowther—or Manners! Manners, perhaps, may have another access of unaccountable violence, as he had on Saturday, when he became extraordinarily excited over such a trifling circumstance as some acid discolouring the case of his camera."

"Who's there?" came a yell from the study. Knox could hear someone in the passage.

"Good gracious! That is not Tom Merry's voice, or Lowther's, or Manners'!" murmured Skimpole. "I wonder who it is, and why he is creating such a commotion in Tom Merry's study."

"Is somebody there?" howled Knox.

"Certainly," answered Skimpole. "I am here. I was about to go to my study, when my ears were unexpectedly assailed by the extraordinary commotion you are causing—"

"Open this door!"

"Eh?"

"You young idiot, the door's locked! Open it!" roared Knox.

"Is the door locked?" exclaimed Skimpole, in surprise.

"Yes, you young fool! Unlock it," howled Knox. "Who are you? Your voice sounds like that young idiot Skimpole. Unlock the door at once."

"Is that Knox speaking?" asked Skimpole, recognising the prefect's voice at last.

"Yes," roared Knox, "and if you don't unlock this door immediately, I'll march you off to my study and give you six!"

"But why do you not unlock it yourself, Knox?" asked Skimpole. "I cannot imagine why you have locked yourself in Tom Merry's study: but since you have done so, why do you not unlock the door, if you desire to emerge!"

"You gabbling young lunatic, it's locked on the outside!" shrieked Knox.

"Most extraordinary!" said Skimpole. "How did you contrive to lock the door on the outside, Knox, from inside your study?"

"I—I—I'll smash you!" gasped Knox. "I've been locked in by a young rascal. Will you unlock the door or not, you goat?"

"Oh! I comprehend now," said Skimpole, as his scientific brain assimilated that simple fact. "Some person has locked you in the study. I should be very glad to unlock the door and enable you to emerge, Knox—but"

"Do it at once!" yelled Knox.

"I fear that it is impossible, Knox. I do not think that even Professor Balmcrumpet himself, great scientist as he is, could devise a practicable method of unlocking a door, minus the key. It is quite beyond my powers."

"Oh!" gasped Knox. "Isn't the key in the lock?"

"The answer to that question is in the negative, Knox. If the key were in the lock, I should assuredly be able to discern it, as I am standing approximately only a foot and a half from the door. The key, being of a solid metallic substance, would scarcely be invisible to me. As I cannot see it—"

"That young villain has taken it away with him, then!" gasped Knox. "I—I—I'll smash him! I—I—I'll—I've got to get out of this study somehow."

"As the door cannot be opened without a key, that problem seems to present certain difficulties," said Skimpole, thoughtfully. "It would, of course, be possible to descend from the window—"

"The window's thirty feet up, you young idiot!" yapped Knox.

"I am aware of that circumstance, Knox, but it is possible to descend from much greater heights, with perfect security, by means of a parachute—"

"A what?" yelled Knox.

"A parachute, my dear Knox. It is a quite simple expedient, adopted by airmen when baling out of a 'plane," explained Skimpole. "I have no doubt that you could descend from the window with perfect facility, by means of a parachute—"

"Do you think there's a parachute in this study?" shrieked Knox.

"O! No! Probably not," agreed Skimpole. "I did not think of that, for the moment. I was merely explaining the possibility—"

"You potty young ass—!"

"My dear Knox—"

"If I could get at you, I'd smash you!" howled Knox.

"Dear me! In that case, Knox, it would be somewhat injudicious on my part to make further endeavours to release you from incarceration—"

"I—I—I mean—I—I mean—it—it's all right—just get the door open somehow," gasped Knox. "I—I—I'll be no end obliged, Skimpole! Get me out of this and it's all right."

Knox would have given a good deal to get his hands on the long-winded Skimmy, and smack his scientific head right and left. But he realised that with solid oak between, it was judicious to moderate his transports, as it were. Skimmy's scientific head could wait till it was within reach of smacking!

"I will undoubtedly use my best endeavours to extricate you from your predicament, Knox," said Skimpole. "But as I have observed, even Professor Balmcrumpet himself could scarcely elucidate the problem of unlocking a door without a key. Have you thought of the chimney?"

"The—the chimney?" stuttered Knox.

"If you ascended the chimney, Knox, and emerged upon the roof—"

"You young idiot!"

"I am only making suggestions, Knox, which might prove useful and efficacious in this emergency. No doubt you would encounter a considerable accumulation of soot in the chimney, which would be somewhat discomforting, but—"

"Get a key from another study, and try it in the lock!" howled Knox.

"Oh! That expedient had not occurred to me, Knox! I will certainly fetch the key from my own study."

"Hurry up!" hissed Knox.

Skimpole ambled along to the next study. Knox breathed fury while he waited for him to return. He had been a couple of hours in that study already, and if Skimpole failed him, he might have to remain there two or three more! It really was not a happy or pleasant way of passing a half-holiday. He had not even the consolation of hoping to find that negative in No. 10. Manners, or some fellow set on by Manners, had locked him in—and he realised that that certainly would not have happened, had the negative been in the study for him to find. It was undoubtedly somewhere else: and he had come to No. 10 in the Shell on a wild-goose chase—to spend the afternoon there for nothing!

In a couple of minutes Skimpole was back again. Knox gave a gasp of relief as he heard the key grate in the lock. He no longer hoped to find that perilous negative: but at least he was going to get out of the study.

But was he? Skimpole's squeak came through the door.

"My dear Knox—"

"Unlock that door, you young fathead!" hissed Knox.

"I regret to say that the key does not fit, Knox. That is very

easily accounted for, by the circumstance that the locks are of somewhat different sizes. The key will not quite turn."

"Make it!" roared Knox.

"I am exerting all the muscular powers of my fingers, Knox, but I am unable to bring sufficient force to bear on the key," explained Skimpole. "I have no doubt that it would turn if a sufficient pressure were concentrated on it. Pray be patient, Knox! By passing something through the orifice at this end of the key, I shall be able to increase the leverage, and thus intensify the pressure. I have a penknife in my pocket, Knox, which I trust will answer the purpose."

Skimpole pushed the penknife through the orifice, and grasped it with both hands. He was thus, as he had stated, able to bring very much more pressure to bear on the key. Had it fitted, or nearly fitted, the lock, no doubt that additional pressure would have done the trick. As it was, there was a sudden loud crack, followed by an ejaculation from Skimmy.

"Dear me! The key has broken in the lock!"

Knox gave a yell of fury that a Red Indian might have envied.

"You young idiot! Have you broken the key in the lock?"

"I have not broken it, Knox, but the concentration of pressure certainly seems to have done so! I fear, Knox, that it will now be quite impossible to open the door at all, unless a locksmith is sent for. Would you like me to go down to Mr. Railton and request him to send for a locksmith?"

"I'll smash you—"

"Really, my dear Knox—"

"I—I—I'll give you such a hiding—"

"I fail to see any adequate cause for this ebullition of personal animosity on your part, Knox," said Skimpole, warmly. "I came up to my study for a book which I need for the experiment I am making in the Lab, and I have expended a considerable amount of time in endeavouring to extricate you from your incarceration. If you would like me to proceed to Mr. Railton and acquaint him with your predicament—"

"I'll thrash you—"

"I gather, Knox, that you do not desire me to request Mr. Railton's intervention. As there appears to be nothing further I can do for your assistance, I will return to the Lab—"

"You—you—you—!" gurgled Knox.

"I regret, Knox, that there is nothing further I can do. Perhaps Tom Merry may be able to think of something when he comes in after the cricket."

With that, Skimpole ambled away—quite sorry that he was able to do nothing further for the imprisoned prefect, but anxious to get back to the Lab and his scientific experiment there.

Knox was left almost foaming! Skimpole's attempt at rescue had put the lid on. Other fellows might come up to the studies, but no fellow would be able to deal with a lock that had a key twisted and broken in it. Knox was a prisoner till Tom Merry and Co. came in—indeed, he did not quite see how he was going to get out, even when they did come in. Anyhow, he was booked to inhabit No. 10 Study in the Shell till the cricket was over—and he could only wonder furiously how long that was going to be.

16

Entertaining!

"COME on, you men," said Manners.

Manners of the Shell was smiling as he came up to the study landing with a crowd of other School House juniors. Manners had reason to be pleased with himself and things generally that afternoon. He had contributed thirty runs to the total by which Figgins and Co. had been beaten in the junior House match, which was satisfactory to him as a cricketer. And he anticipated quite an entertainment when Gerald Knox was let, at last, out of the locked study. He had no doubt that Knox's face would be worth seeing when he emerged. And he was not going to keep that entertainment to himself!

"Anything on?" asked Jack Blake.

"Well, yes," said Manners. "I'm going to let a wild animal out of a cage."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"What are you driving at, Manners?" asked Tom Merry, staring. Tom and Monty Lowther were unaware, so far, of what Manners had planned that afternoon.

"Yaas, wathah! What the dickens are you dwivin' at, Mannahs?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Come on and see," answered Manners. And he went up the Shell passage, with a study key in his hand.

The whole crowd followed him, wondering what was going on. Sounds of tramping footsteps in No. 10 Study greeted their ears, as they arrived at No. 10.

"Hallo, there's somebody in our study," said Monty Lowther, in surprise.

"That's the wild animal I'm going to let out," explained Manners. "Knox of the Sixth is the animal, and I've no doubt at all that he's wild—by this time."

"What the thump's Knox in our study for?" asked Tom.

"Looking for something he couldn't find, I fancy," said Manners, laughing. "Anyhow, he's there, and the key was turned on him."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Sounds a bit like a wild animal in a cage, doesn't he?" chuckled Manners.

Knox was tramping savagely about the study. But the tramping came to a stop, as he heard the juniors outside. There was a heavy thump on the door.

"Manners! Is that you, Manners, you young villain?"

"Oh, quite! Is that you Knox, you old villain?"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "You will get six, if you talk to a pwefect like that, Mannahs, old boy."

"Hardly," smiled Manners. "I don't think Knox will be giving me six in a hurry—or taking me to Railton again, either. Had a nice afternoon, Knox?"

"I'll smash you—"

"Found anything in the study?" went on Manners.

"Will you let me out of this?"

"Oh, certainly! We want our study now, and we certainly don't want your company in it, Knox. You can come out, and sneak away."

The juniors simply stared at Manners. How a Shell fellow found the nerve to talk to a Sixth-Form prefect in this style, was a mystery to them. Only Tom Merry and Monty Lowther understood.

"Get that door open!" roared Knox.

"Pleased," answered Manners. "I hope you've done no damage in the study, Knox. You're rather an untidy brute in your own, I believe. If you've upset anything, you'll have to put it right before you go."

"Well, this takes the cake!" said Jack Blake. "Knox will take the skin off you when he comes out, Manners."

"Yaas, wathah."

"I hardly think so," yawned Manners. "If Knox thinks of licking me, I shall tell him that the answer's in the negative."

Tom Merry laughed, and Lowther grinned. The double meaning was lost on the other juniors, who knew nothing of the photographic negative.

Manners jammed the key into the lock. There it jammed, half-way in. Half of Skimpole's key was embedded in the interior of that lock.

"Oh, scissors!" exclaimed Manners. "What's wrong with the lock? Great pip! Somebody's busted a key in it."

"Will you get that door open?" howled Knox. He could hear a crowd of fellows in the passage, and he knew that, when he emerged, he would have to run the gauntlet of innumerable staring eyes. He was very anxious to get it over.

"Can't!" answered Manners. "Some ass has been trying to open this door with a key that wouldn't fit, and it's busted in the lock. My key won't go in. 'Fraid you'll have to stay there, Knox."

"You little scoundrel—"

"You big scoundrel!" retorted Manners.

"I suppose somebody was trying to let Knox out," said Tom. "Dash it all, we've got to get into our study, Manners. There's prep, you know."

"Knox can't stay there for the rest of his natural life," chuckled Lowther. "He seems to be tired of the place, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" He weally seems to be in a feahful wage," remarked Arthur Augustus. "It is wathah bad form for a pwefect to fly into a wage. But Knox nevah was a sticklah for good form."

"Let me out of this!" roared Knox.

"Tell us how!" suggested Manners. "My key won't unlock the door. We shall have to do our prep in some other study, you fellows."

"But what about Knox?" exclaimed Tom.

Manners shrugged his shoulders.

"Knox sneaked into our study of his own accord. He can stay there till he can get out. No bisney of ours."

Thump! Thump! Thump! Manners' words, which came through the door to his ears, seemed to add to Knox's fury. He thumped and banged on the door.

"Pewwaps we had bettah call Wailton," suggested Arthur Augustus.

Manners chuckled.

"Better ask Knox first," he said. "He may not want the House beak to know about him sneaking and spying in a junior study while fellows are playing cricket."

"But what on earth did he want there?" asked Levison.

"Something he couldn't find. He's for it now," said Manners, cheerfully. "A pre who tries to burgle a study can take what's coming to him. Make yourself comfortable there, Knox—stay as long as you like. Mind if we do our prep in your study, Talbot?"

"Not at all," said Talbot, laughing. "But you really must let Knox out, or we shall have the beaks up here. You've got a tool-box, Blake."

"I'll get it, if you like," said Blake.

"Is Knox worth the trouble?" asked Manners. "He hasn't even asked us politely to let him out. Here, Knox—"

"You young rascal—"

"You old rascal—!"

"Let me out of this!"

"Blake will get his tool-box, and crack the lock, if you ask us nicely, Knox. Not otherwise."

"I'll smash you!" yelled Knox.

"That isn't asking nicely."

"Wathah not," chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"Say 'please pretty,' and I'll ask Blake to get his tool-box and go to work," said Manners. "Take your time, Knox."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I—" Knox's voice came in a suffocated gurgle. "I—I—I—please!" He got it out.

"'Please pretty,' please," said Manners.

"I—I—I—I—" gurgled Knox.

"You won't get out till you say 'please pretty,' Knox," said Manners, calmly. "If you butt into a nice-mannered study like ours, you must expect to be taught manners. Stay there till you cough it up!"

"Pip—pip—pip—" Knox stuttered. He could hardly speak for fury. But he had to get it out, or stay in the study. "Pip—pip—please pretty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the crowd in the passage.

"O.K." said Manners. "Get that tool-box, will you, Blake."

Blake, chuckling, cut off to No. 6 in the Fourth for his tool-box. He had to push his way through a swarming crowd when he came back with it. More and more fellows had heard that something unusual was happening in the Shell quarters, and had come along to see what it was. Nearly all the Shell and the Fourth, and Wally and Co., with a crowd of Third-Form fags, and Cutts of the Fifth, and two or three other Fifth-Form men, were crowding in the passage.

Knox listened to them, with crimson face, and feelings too deep for words. If this went on, half the House would soon be swarming outside No. 10 in the Shell. Kildare of the Sixth might come up, and it would be difficult to explain to the head-prefect what he had been doing in Tom Merry's study at all. Railton might come up: and it would be still more difficult to explain to

Railton. The sound of Jack Blake at work with his tools on the lock was a glad sound to Knox's burning ears.

Blake rather prided himself on his skill in handling tools. There was a lot of banging and wrenching, and the door did not look improved by his ministrations: but the jammed lock parted at last, and Knox, with infinite relief, was able to drag the door open.

Knox emerged into the passage with flaming face.

He gave Manners a look—a concentrated look. What he would have liked to do was very evident in that look. Most of the juniors expected him to jump at Manners. But the bully of the Sixth did not dare to do what he would have liked to do. He pushed his way savagely through the swarming, grinning crowd in the Shell passage. Arthur Augustus staggered from a jabbing elbow.

"Bai Jove! Pway do not barge a fellow ovah, Knox," expostulated Arthur Augustus, indignantly.

"Mind where you're shoving, Knox," snapped Manners. "Behave yourself, can't you?"

Even at that, Knox did not turn on him. He pushed and shoved on, and got through the crowd. With crimson face, and burning ears, he fairly ran across the study landing, and disappeared down the stairs.

17

Cardew Caught!

"CARDEW—!"

"Have one?"

"I wegard you as a wottah, Cardew!"

"Dear me!"

"And I considah—gwoogh! oooogh! Ooooch!" spluttered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Ooooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the following afternoon: and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, strolling under the old elms in a secluded spot near the school wall, had come upon his relative, Ralph Reckness Cardew.

In that secluded spot, Cardew was smoking a cigarette. The scapegrace of the Fourth was rather given to smoking cigarettes, but Levison's and Clive's ideas on the subject made No. 9 Study uncomfortable as a smoke-room. So there was Cardew, leaning on the trunk of an elm, out of sight of the House, smoking, when the swell of St. Jim's happened along.

Since the affair of the empty camera, when Arthur Augustus had told Cardew what he thought of him, Gussy had not spoken to his relative. But he paused to speak to him now. Arthur Augustus was always ready with a word in season for his erring relative. Sad to relate, Cardew, instead of being properly impressed by the word in season, puffed a volume of smoke into Arthur Augustus's noble face, catching him with his mouth open, and causing him to choke and splutter wildly.

D'Arcy spluttered and Cardew laughed. He seemed to find that little scene quite amusing.

"Ooogh! Gwoogh! You cheekay wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I have a vewy gweat mind to give you a—gwoogh—to give you a—oooch—a feahful thwashin', Cardew! Gurrrrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Woooooogh! I wegard that as a wotten, wascally twick, Cardew, and I wegard you as a wank outsidah and a wat!" exclaimed the indignant Gussy. "And you would not think it a laughin' mattah, Cardew, if a pwefect dwopped on you and caught you smokin', which you know vewy well is against the wules. How would you like to be taken to Mr. Wailton and weported?"

"Not the least little bit in the world," drawled Cardew. "Railton's rather ratty with me, since that raggin' in his study the other day—I'm steering clear of our beloved House-master. But a pwefect isn't likely to wander into this secluded spot, Gussy, if you're so concerned about me. Unless," added Cardew, with a chuckle, "he wanted to put on a smoke himself! I fancy Knox of the Sixth does at times!"

"Knox would certainly dwop on you, or any fellow, if he had a chance," said Arthur Augustus. "He is always a wathah bad-tempahed bwute, but he has been worse-tempahed than evah lately, for some weason. I weally believe that he would like to w'eak his tempah on anybody. I wecommend you to thwow away that cigawette, Cardew, you are in Wailton's bad books alweady—"

"Don't I know it?" sighed Cardew.

"Wailton would certainly be vewy severe—"

"Dear old Railton!"

"He might send you up to the Head!"

"Nice old boy, the Head—but I don't really want to see him!" said Cardew. "I'll tell you what, Gussy! You keep a look-out."

"What?"

"And warn me if you see a pre coming along! And I'll let you have one of my cigarettes, as a reward."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not reply to that in words. He bestowed upon his relative a stare of ineffable scorn, and turned on his heel.

Cardew chuckled.

But his chuckle died away suddenly, as a big Sixth-Form man came suddenly round one of the old elms in that secluded corner. It was Knox of the Sixth, and he was fumbling in his pocket as he came. Possibly Cardew was right in his surmise that Knox was a fellow likely to seek a sequestered spot for a quiet smoke!

But if Knox was thinking of a quiet smoke in that corner behind the elms, he gave up that idea at once, at the sight of the juniors there. He stared at Cardew, taking no heed of Arthur Augustus.

"You young sween!" exclaimed Knox.

Cardew flushed. He was fairly caught. Knox had come on

the scene so suddenly that he had no chance of throwing the cigarette away, or even removing it from his mouth, before he was spotted. He stood there, staring at Knox, over the curling smoke from the cigarette—fairly caught!

Knox frowned at him sternly. Whatever his own manners and customs might be, Knox was certainly not tolerant of the same manners and customs in a Lower boy. No doubt, too, in the present state of his temper, he was rather pleased to drop on a victim. Moreover, since Cardew's recent exploits, the House prefects had been warned to keep an eye on him, and report him for any delinquency. Knox was not a very dutiful prefect: but he was quite prepared to do his duty so far as Cardew was concerned.

"So I've caught you, you smoky young sweep," he said. "You'll go to your House-master for this. Throw that cigarette away."

Cardew, his eyes glinting, obeyed in silence.

"Now, follow me to the House," snapped Knox: and he turned and strode away.

Cardew stood breathing hard. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass on him, with a glance of commiseration.

"Bai Jove! You're for it," he remarked. "I weally wish you had taken my advice, and thwown that wotten cigawette away befoah Knox came up, Cardew?"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Cardew.

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Go and eat coke."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort—I mean, I wegard you as a cheeky ass, Cardew. You will get into a feahful wow with Wailton."

Cardew gave him a black look. He was well aware of that, without Arthur Augustus telling him. In the case of almost any other junior in the House, any thoughtless fellow who had been found smoking a cigarette, Railton would have been lenient—a hundred lines would have met the case. But it was not so with Ralph Reckness Cardew. Too much had become known of his escapades, and his House-master regarded him with grim disfavour. Cardew could not kick over the traces without being called to severe account—if caught! And he had been fairly caught now. "Six of the best" was the least he could expect: and it was even possible that Railton might send him up to the Head. Certainly Cardew wished now that he had taken his relative's sage advice, in time! But he was not feeling grateful for that advice, all the same. He was feeling more inclined to punch Gussy's noble head!

"I am sowwy, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus. "It is weally vewy weckless of you to play the goat like this, with the House beak and the pwe's down on you alweady. Pewwaps it will be a warnin' to you, though!"

"You gabblin' ass!"

"Weally, Cardew, I am only expwessin' sympathy—"

"Pack it up, you fool!"

"Bai Jove! If you are goin' to weply to my sympathetic wemarks with such oppwobwious expressions, Cardew, I will leave you to it."

"Oh, get out, and give a fellow a rest," snarled Cardew.

"You had bettah follow Knox, as he told you, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus, lingering for one more word of fatherly advice.

"He will be vewy watty if he has to come back for you."

"Mind your own business."

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Will you get out, you burblin' dummy?"

"I will certainly get out, Cardew, and shall be vewy pleased to be welieved of your company," answered Arthur Augustus, disdainfully, and he walked away round the elms, leaving Ralph Reckness Cardew to follow Knox, at his leisure.

18

Stop It !

"MANNNAHS, deah boy—"

"Hallo, Gussy," said Manners, cheerily.

The Terrible Three were sauntering in the quad, when Arthur Augustus came along, after leaving Cardew in the corner behind the elms. And at the sight of them, a new idea seemed to come into Gussy's noble mind, and he hurried to intercept the Shell fellows :

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther gave him a curious look. Arthur Augustus's aristocratic face was clouded : in fact, he wore a worried expression. The chums of the Shell were more than willing to help, if there was a spot of trouble about, and there was anything that they could do.

"Anything up?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah."

"Give it a name," said Monty Lowther. "Somebody been putting ink in your topper?"

"No, it is not so bad 'as that," said Arthur Augustus, innocently. "But I am wathah wowwied about my welative—"

"Cardew?" asked Tom.

"Yaas ! Knox is goin' to weport him to Wailton, and you know how watty Wailton is with him now," said Arthur Augustus. "Knox caught him smokin' a cigawette in the cornah behind the elms—"

"Smoky sweep !" said Tom.

"Yaas, I quite agwee, Tom Mewwy, but it is wathah wuff on him, all the same. You see, he has been in a vewy bad wow lately, and Wailton is down on him. It will be much more sewious for Cardew than for any othah fellow, in the circs. He might have to go up to the Head, and that would be vewy sewious."

"Quite solemn, in fact," agreed Monty Lowther.

"Pewwaps you could help, Mannahs."

"Eh! How could I help?" asked Manners, staring.

"You seem to have some influence with Knox—"

"Oh!" exclaimed Manners.

"Don't you wemembah, the othah day, when I wushed into Knox quite by accident, the bwute was goin' to give me six," said Arthur Augustus. "You asked him to let me off, and vewy gwheatly to my surpwise, he did so. Do you think he would let Cardew off weportin' him, if you asked him?"

"Oh!" repeated Manners.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther exchanged a glance. Manners looked very thoughtful. Certainly, he had used his "influence" with Knox to get D'Arcy off an undeserved licking. It was rather a different matter with Cardew. On the other hand, Arthur Augustus was visibly distressed by the prospect before his relative.

"If you think you could do anythin', deah boy, I should be feahfully obliged," said Arthur Augustus. "It was vewy we-markable the way Knox let me off, because you put in a word. He might do the same again."

"He might!" grinned Manners. "Very likely, I think—if I asked him."

"Look here, Manners—!" said Tom Merry, restively.

"Well?" Manners almost snapped.

"There's a limit!" said Monty Lowther.

"Is there?" said Manners, quite unpleasantly. "What about a limit for Knox? A prefect who goes pub-visiting doesn't seem to have much of a limit. Like his cheek to carry on as a pre, when he would be sacked if the Head knew what we know."

"Well, yes," said Tom. "But—"

"But—!" said Monty Lowther.

"Any billy-goats in your family?" asked Manners. "You seem frightfully keen on butting! I don't care a boiled bean about Cardew, but I'm going to oblige Gussy if he wants me to."

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass from one to another of the Terrible Three, not understanding in the least what they were talking about. All Gussy understood was that Knox, for some reasons or other, was willing to grant requests from Manners of the Shell. Whether he would have approved of Manners' method was another matter: but of that he knew nothing.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, if Mannahs can get Cardew off, I should take it as a vewy gwreat favah," he said. "It is not as

if it was a mattah of lines, or Extwa School—it weally means vewy bad twouble for my welative—”

“I’ll do it,” said Manners.

“You think Knox would let him off that weport if you asked him. Mannahs?”

“Bank on it,” smiled Manners.

Arthur Augustus looked very much relieved.

“I am feahfully obliged to you, old chap,” he said. “Cardew is wathah a wottah, and wathah a wat, but in the cires—”

“O.K.,” said Manners. “Go and tell him it’s all right.”

“Yaas, wathah!”

Cardew had not yet appeared in sight. He seemed in no hurry to obey Knox’s behest. Arthur Augustus hurried back to the corner behind the elms, where he had left him, and found Cardew still leaning on the tree, his hands in his pockets, and a sullen scowl on his face. He greeted Arthur Augustus with a still blacker scowl.

“What do you want, you dummy?” he snapped.

Arthur Augustus beamed on him.

“It’s all wight, Cardew,” he said.

“What’s all right, fathhead?”

“I have wequested Mannahs to ask Knox to let you off that weport—”

“You silly ass!”

“Weally, Cardew—”

“You burbling chump. Do you think Knox will take any notice of Manners?” snapped Cardew, staring at him. “Why should he?”

“I weally do not know, Cardew, but Mannahs thinks that he will—”

“Rubbish!”

“Bai Jove! Heah comes Knox.”

Knox of the Sixth came round the elms, with knitted brows. Half-way to the House, he had glanced round, and discovered that Cardew was not following him as bidden. He had come back for him in a far from pleasant temper.

“You young sweep, didn’t I tell you to follow me to the House?” he exclaimed. “What do you mean by this? Do you want me to walk you in by the collar?”

Cardew gave him a bitter look.

“You can report me to Railton,” he answered, sullenly. “Railton can send for me if he wants me.”

“You’re coming now, and you’re coming with me,” said Knox, and he stretched out a hand to grasp Cardew’s collar.

"Stop that, Knox, please."

It was Manners' voice. He had followed Knox to the spot, coolly prepared to intervene, as he had promised Arthur Augustus. Knox spun round, staring at him, with quite a deadly look.

"Get out of this, Manners," he muttered.

"Not at all," answered Manners. "Leave Cardew alone, please. I'd rather you let the matter drop, Knox."

"You cheeky young scoundrel—!" Knox panted. "You dare—"

"Oh, come off it, Knox," said Manners. "Cardew's rather a sweep, but you're not the man to sit in judgment on him."

"I'm taking him to Railton!" breathed Knox.

"O.K.," said Manners. "I'll come too! I've a photograph in my pocket that I'm sure Railton would be interested to see."

Arthur Augustus gazed in bewilderment at them. Cardew gave Manners a quick, searching look. He was much keener on the uptake than his noble relative. If Knox took all this from Manners, it was clear to Cardew, if not to Gussy, that the Shell fellow had some hold over him.

And Knox did take it! He had to take it! Whether Cardew was caned by his House-master, or sent up to the Head, or whatever might not happen to him, did not concern Knox very much. But the revelation of the Green Man snap in Railton's study concerned him very much indeed. Knox did not want to catch an early morning train for home!

He almost stuttered with fury. But he did not speak again. He turned and walked away. But Manners called to him.

"Stop a minute, Knox! Do you hear? Stop!"

Knox stopped, trembling with rage.

"Are you reporting Cardew or not?" snapped Manners. "Yes or no?"

"No!" breathed Knox.

"That's all right, then. You can cut!"

At that, Knox almost rushed back at him. He, a prefect of the Sixth Form, was told that he could cut, by a junior in the Shell!

But he controlled his fury—he had to control it. He tramped away and disappeared.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "This is vewy puzzlin', Mannahs, old man. Knox doesn't seem at all fwriendly to you—"

"Not?" smiled Manners.

"Wathah not! Yet he gwants your wequest," said the puzzled Gussy. "I am vewy glad of it, but it is vewy perplexin' indeed. Howevah, I am extwemely obliged to you for keepin' my wela-tive out of a feahful wow—very much obliged indeed, Mannahs."

"Oh, don't mench," said Manners.

Arthur Augustus walked away, much puzzled, but considerably relieved. Manners rejoined his friends in the quad, leaving Cardew as relieved, probably, as Gussy, and almost equally puzzled. He could see, if Gussy could not, that Manners had the upper hand of the bully of the Sixth: but he could not begin to guess how or why.

Manners was smiling, as he rejoined Tom Merry and Monty Lowther.

"O.K.," he said, lightly.

"You've got Cardew off?" asked Tom.

"Quite! That bully has to jump when I say jump," said Manners, coolly.

"It won't do, Manners," said Tom, quietly.

"Won't it?" jeered Manners.

"No! It's not good enough," said Tom, shaking his head.

"It won't do—"

"It won't, old chap," said Monty Lowther.

"Glad to hear your opinion," yawned Manners. "It won't make any difference, though. Knox rubbed it in pretty hard, when he had the upper hand—now he's getting some of his own medicine—and he's going on getting it."

"But—!" said Tom.

"More billy-goating? Chuck it," said Manners, and he turned and walked away, apparently having had enough, for the present, of his friends' company.

Snap for Skimpole !

HERBERT SKIMPOLE blinked in at the doorway of No. 10 Study in the Shell, with his accustomed

owlish blink.

Three Shell fellows were at tea there : in unaccustomed silence. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther did not seem in their usual cheery and chummy mood.

There was, in fact, a slight rift in the lute. Tom Merry could not help feeling troubled over the line Manners was taking, and Monty Lowther shared his view. Manners, apparently, had no intention of changing his line : and, like an obstinate horse, had to be given his head. So there was considerable restraint at tea in the study for once.

Herbert Skimpole's squeaky bleat shattered the silence.

"My dear Manners—"

Manners glanced round.

"Oh, trot in, Skimmy," he said. "Don't say you want to borrow my camera again, or I shall brain you with the poker?"

Skimpole ambled in. There was a thoughtful and rather worried expression on his bony face.

"It is about the photograph, Manners," he said. "You are, in all probability, not unaware of the circumstance that it is my intention to enter the *Rylcombe Gazette* photographic competition. If you will not lend me your camera—"

"No 'if' about that, fathead."

"But you are aware, my dear Manners, that I had taken one snap with it, before Knox interrupted me by rushing at me in the extraordinary way he did, and chasing me across the field to the tow-path. Doubtless you have developed your own films, and my one along with them."

"Doubtless!" grinned Manners.

"Of course you are entitled to retain the negative, as the film was your property," said Skimpole. "But if you have printed

out the photograph, Manners, please give me the print. I desire to use it for the *Rylcombe Gazette* competition. All entries must go in by Saturday—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners.

Skimpole blinked at him in surprise.

"Why this outbreak of risibility, Manners?" he asked. "I am sure you will acknowledge that I am entitled to a copy of the photograph I took, even if I was using your camera without first having obtained your consent to its use. The possibility exists, my dear Manners, that my snap may win the prize of three guineas, and I am very much in need of the money to replace the scientific apparatus which was unfortunately destroyed in this study last Saturday. You will remember being unaccountably excited and pitching my things into the passage—"

"You can't have that snap, Skimmy," said Tom Merry.

"Why not, my dear Merry?"

"Well, there's jolly good reasons," said Tom.

"I trust that I am a sufficiently reasonable fellow to admit the cogency of any adequate reason that may be advanced, my dear Merry, and if you will elucidate the matter with more clarity—"

Monty Lowther picked up a jam tart from the dish.

"Stand quite still, Skimmy," he said.

"I am standing motionless, Lowther. But why—?"

"I'm going to see if I can land this tart right on your boko," explained Lowther. "Don't move while I take aim."

"My dear Lowther—"

"Here goes!"

Lowther's hand went up, with the tart in it. But Skimpole did not continue to stand still. He slipped into the passage like an active kangaroo, and banged the door after him. Apparently he did not want Lowther's marksmanship put to the test, with his bony nose as the target.

Manners smiled sarcastically.

"You fellows are jolly particular about Knox," he remarked. "You're not so jolly particular about Skimmy. After all, what he said was reasonable. He's entitled to a print of his own photograph."

"Not that one," said Tom. "He wouldn't use it as you're doing—but he's fool enough to let it be seen—he might even send it to the *Rylcombe Gazette* as a snap of the Green Man—"

"He wouldn't use it as I'm doing," repeated Manners, his face flushing. "Is there anything wrong in what I'm doing with it, Tom Merry?"

Tom did not answer that.

"Gone dumb?" jeered Manners.

Tom Merry looked at him steadily, across the table.

"I'll speak out, Manners," he said. "I know you don't realise it, but what you're doing isn't up to the mark. Knox is a bully, I know, and a pub-visiting rat, and he landed us in a row with Railton out of sheer malice—I know all that. But holding something over a fellow's head, and making him dance to your tune, isn't playing the game."

"Think not?" sneered Manners.

"I know not," said Tom, quietly, "and later on you'll think the same, old fellow, and wish you hadn't."

"I got D'Arcy off a licking he didn't deserve—"

"Yes—and then Cardew off one he did deserve," said Tom.

"Next thing, I suppose, you'll be getting Baggy Trimble off a licking for pilfering tuck in the studies, if it happens to be Knox who spots him."

"Oh, don't talk rot!"

"Tom's right, old chap," said Monty Lowther. "Holding a thing like that over a fellow's head is rotten. Knox being a rotter doesn't make any difference to that!"

"You're both against me, it seems," said Manners.

"Oh, I won't say any more," said Tom. "You know what we think, and that's enough. Only you're letting yourself down, playing this game with Knox."

"Chuck it at that," said Manners.

"Oh, all right."

Nothing more was said, while tea lasted. When the silent meal was over, Manners rose to his feet. He took a cardboard carton out of the inner pocket of his jacket, and from it extracted a photographic negative.

His friends watched him, wondering whether Manners had, at last, changed his mind. Apparently he had.

"That's the negative," he said. He threw it on the table.

"You can take it to Knox, if you like."

"If you mean that—!" said Tom, with a deep breath.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

Tom picked up the negative. It was the negative of Skimpy's Green Man snap, for which Knox had hunted in No. 10 Study the day before, with such unpleasant results to himself.

"Knox will be jolly glad to get hold of that," remarked Lowther.

"I'll take it to him," said Tom. "But—"

"Butting again?" jeered Manners.

"If the negative is destroyed, no more prints can be taken," said Tom. "That's all right! But you've got a print of it—"

"Just one!" agreed Manners.

"Well, if you keep that, things will be the same as before, even if Knox burns this negative," said Tom.

"I'm not going to keep it," said Manners, coolly. "Haven't you explained to me that it's not good enough, not playing the game, and letting myself down, and all that? Skimpole took that photograph, and he said quite reasonably that he's entitled to a copy of it. I'm going to give it to Skimmy."

"It might get Knox sacked if you did—"

"Dear me!" said Manners. "Are you going to tell me next that it's my special business to keep Knox's blackguardly secrets for him? To the extent of keeping away from Skimpole a photograph that really belongs to him? It was taken on my film, and in my camera, but the photograph is Skimmy's. Now that we're all being so jolly particular, do you want me to begin by pinching Skimmy's snap?"

Tom Merry and Lowther looked at him, in silence. Manners, undoubtedly, had them there!

"Skimmy's such a fool," said Tom, at last. "He's quite capable of sending that snap in to the *Rylcombe Gazette*, without caring about Knox being in it."

"Why shouldn't he, as it's his?"

"Look here, Manners—"

"Can't see that it's any business of ours, what Skimmy does with his own snap," said Manners. "Are we at St. Jim's to stand between Knox, and his getting found out in pub-visiting?"

"No, you ass! But—"

"Skimmy can do exactly as he likes with his own property," said Manners. "It's not for me to dictate to him. I'm not going to claim this snap, because it was taken on my film. That would be rather mean, I think. Actually it's a jolly good snap, and might walk off with the prize—I don't suppose they'd mind Knox's ugly mug being in it. Are we going to stand between Skimmy and getting a three guinea prize, when he's told us he's hard up?"

"But—!"

"Thanks—I've had enough billy-goating! I'm taking the print to Skimmy, as it's his! Really I oughtn't to have kept it all this while. But now we're being so very particular, I'm going to take it to him at once."

"Manners, old man—"

Manners walked out of the study.

One Good Turn....

"GUSSY, old bean—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was talking to Blake and Herries and Dig in the quad. But he suspended his remarks to Blake and Herries and Dig, to turn round and look at Cardew. He jammed his celebrated eyeglass a little more firmly into his noble eye, and fixed it severely on the scapegrace of the Fourth.

"Pway do not address me as old bean, Cardew," he said, stiffly. "I wegard you with disdain. I am vewy glad you have got off bein' weported to Wailton, but that does not pwevent me fwom wegardin' you as wathah a wottah. Pway keep your distance."

Cardew smiled. Both D'Arcy's look and words were quite withering. But Cardew did not seem withered.

"I have not forgotten," went on Arthur Augustus, sternly, "that a couple of days ago, Cardew, you caused me to walk wound with an empty camewah, thinkin' I was takin' photo-gwaphs, when in fact I was takin' nothin' at all—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from Blake and Herries and Dig in chorus.

"Weally, you fellows, there is nothin' whatevah to cackle at in Cardew's wotten twick," said Arthur Augustus, severely. "I supposed that I was takin' snaps, but as there was nothin' in the camewah I was actually takin' nothin' at all, and Lathom fancied I was pullin' his leg, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats!" said Arthur Augustus, crossly. "And as for you, Cardew—"

"I apologize!" said Cardew, meekly.

"Oh!" Arthur Augustus's frowning brow cleared. "Vewy well, Cardew—an apology, fwom one gentleman to anothah, sets the mattah wight! I no longah wegard you as a wat!"

"For this relief, much thanks!" murmured Cardew.

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Only quoting Shakespeare, old bean! But look here," said Cardew. He held up the little pocket-camera, which Arthur Augustus had walked round so hopefully, and with such blank results. "What about having another shot? Lots of time to get a snap in at the *Gazette* office for Saturday."

Blake winked at Herries and Dig.

"Any film in the camera this time?" he asked.

"Chuck it, Cardew," said Herries. "That chicken won't fight a second time."

"Not even with Gussy!" agreed Dig.

"Honest Injun!" said Cardew. "I mean it, Gussy! Look here, come for a trot with the camera now—"

"And take some more blanks!" said Blake.

"I said honest Injun!" snapped Cardew.

"Is your Injun honest, though?" grinned Blake. "Look here, Cardew, if you're not pulling D'Arcy's leg again, what's your game?"

Cardew did not reply to that. As a matter of fact, he was in earnest, for a very simple reason. Arthur Augustus had saved his bacon that afternoon: and it went against the grain with Cardew to remain under an obligation. Also it had made him feel a little remorseful. So, in his own way, he was going to do what he could to make up.

"It's all wight, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, cheerfully. "When a chap says 'Honest Injun' it's all wight. Is the camewah loaded, Cardew?"

"Yes! Blake can look at it, if he likes," said Cardew, sourly.

"That is quite-unnecessawy, deah bov, as you have made it honest Injun," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall be vewy glad to bowwow the camewah, Cardew, and have a shot aftah all for the *Wylcombe Gazette* pwize. We are fwightfully stony in our study, and the thwee guineas would come in wemarkably useful, if we get it."

"If!" said Herries, with a grin.

"I see no weason why we should not, Hewwies. At any wate I am goin' to twy," said Arthur Augustus, and he took the camera from Cardew.

"I know something about photography, and I'll help all I can," said Cardew.

"That is vewy kind of you, Cardew, but I fancy I shall be able to take snaps all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "I believe it is vewy easy—you just point the camewah at somethin' and snap,

and there you are—very simple, you know.”
 “Oh! Yes!” gasped Cardew. “Easy as falling off a form!”
 Blake chuckled.
 “There’s such things as correct focus, and over-exposure, and under-exposure, Gussy,” he remarked.
 “Are there weally?” said Arthur Augustus innocently. “Bai Jove! Pewwaps there may be more in it than meets the eye, you know.”

“Perhaps!” chuckled Herries.
 “Howevah, I fancy I shall get on all wight,” said Arthur Augustus, confidently. “I daresay it needs bwains, but I am wathah a bwainy chap, you know. But if you care to twot wound with me, Cardew, while I am takin’ the snaps, I shall be vevy pleased,” he added, graciously.
 “Come on, then,” said Cardew.

“Wight-ho!”
 Blake and Herries and Dig grinned, as Arthur Augustus walked away with Cardew. “Honest Injun” satisfied the unsuspecting Gussy, but his friends had little doubt that Cardew was pulling his noble leg again. For once, however, they were unjust to the scapegrace of St. Jim’s: Cardew was going to help Gussy to take some good photographs, if he could. He soon found, however, that that was not so simple a task as it might have seemed. Arthur Augustus paused at a gap in the hedge in Rylcombe Lane. Snap!

“That’s one!” he remarked, cheerily.
 Cardew stared at him.
 “What have you taken?” he asked.
 “That haystack, deah boy—the same one that I took the othah day, when there was no film in the camewah. I wathah think it will make a good picture.”

“Did you look in the view-finder?”
 “Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that.”
 “Oh, my hat!” murmured Cardew.
 A little later, Arthur Augustus halted again, to photograph wagon and horses at the trough outside the Green Man. This time he gazed long and earnestly into the view-finder. But as he inadvertently jerked the camera up, in snapping, it was unlike that he recorded anything but a curl of smoke from a chimney or a passing cloud in the blue of the summer sky.

However, Arthur Augustus was satisfied. He was, indeed, finishing photography a very easy business.
 “That’s two!” he remarked.
 “Is it?” murmured Cardew.

"Yaas, wathah! Quite easy, isn't it?" said Arthur Augustus.

"Easy as pie!" grinned Cardew.

"I wathah think I will take the old church next. That ought to make a vewy good picture."

"Shall I help you focus the camera—?"

"Not at all, deah boy. I'm gettin' on all wight," answered Arthur Augustus, reassuringly. "It is weally vewy easy."

"Oh, gad!" murmured Cardew.

"What did you say, deah boy?"

"I said carry on! You're getting on fine!"

"Yaas, I wathah think I can take photogwaphs!" assented Arthur Augustus. And he carried on, cheerfully.

Six times more did Arthur Augustus halt for action. Each time Cardew watched him with interest, without any further offers of help. As on each several occasion, the amateur photographer had the camera out of focus, or jerked it in snapping, or some other such mischance accrued. It was quite an interesting question what those photographs would look like when developed. Only one thing was certain: that if one of them was presented at the *Rylcombe Gazette* office, it might cause entertainment in that establishment, but assuredly nothing in the nature of prize-giving.

However, as Arthur Augustus was pleased and satisfied, that was the chief thing. He was happily unconscious of having expended a roll of film for nothing.

"That's the lot," he said. "Plenty of time left for a knock at the nets, when we get back. Vewy many thanks for lendin' me your camewah, Cardew. Mannahs is goin' in for this competish, I believe; but I twust that I shall beat Mannahs."

"I don't think Manners' pictures will be anything like yours," said Cardew, gravely.

"That is wathah flattewin', as I am weally a beginnah, Cardew. I should weally like to walk off with the pwize, as we are stony in our study. May as well walk back now: I should like a spot of cricket befoah lock-ups."

"I'll carry the camera," said Cardew.

"Just as you like, deah boy."

They started back to the school. Arthur Augustus had been keen on taking the camera for a walk: but he was also keen on a spot of cricket with his chums, and Cardew, sauntering slowly, was left behind—with the camera. Arthur Augustus disappeared in the winding lane ahead, and Cardew halted.

He opened the camera, took out the roll of film, and tossed it over the hedge. Then he took a new roll from his pocket, and

fitted it on the camera, grinning. Arthur Augustus was blissfully unconscious that his exploits as a photographer had merely spoiled a roll of film: and Cardew did not intend to tell him. He had quite a different idea.

For the next half-hour, Cardew was busy, taking photographs, in quite a different manner from Gussy's. Cardew could do many things when he took the trouble, and photography was one of them. By the time he had finished, he had eight good pictures on his roll, and then he walked back to the school. He sauntered into the School House, as Blake and Co. came in after the spot of cricket.

"Oh, here he is," exclaimed Blake. "How have you been pulling Gussy's leg this time, Cardew?"

"Weally, Blake—!" protested Arthur Augustus. "Cardew has been doin' nothin' of the sort. You have the camewah safe, Cardew?"

"Here it is," answered Cardew. "Like me to develop the film for you, D'Arcy? I'll get the key from Lathom, and cut down to the dark-room, if you like."

"That is weally vewy kind of you Cardew."

"Not at all," said Cardew, affably.

And he went to Mr. Lathom's study, to ask for the key of the dark-room. Arthur Augustus gave Blake a severe glance.

"Cardew is weally a vewy obligin' chap," he said. "I am vewy glad that I told him that I no longah wegarded him as a wat."

"He's been pulling your leg somehow," said Blake.

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus.

Cardew had, in fact, pulled Arthur Augustus's noble leg, though this time with good intentions! It was quite an excellent photograph that was selected for the *Rylcombe Gazette*: and not the faintest suspicion ever entered Arthur Augustus's mind that it had not been taken by his own aristocratic hands!

Just Like Skimpole !

"SKIMPOLE !"

"Oh ! Do not interrupt me, Manners."

"Look here—!"

"I am very busy, my dear Manners," said Skimpole, blinking owlishly at Manners as he came into the study, with a photographic print in his hand. "Very much depends on the experiment I am now making. Possibly the whole future of the human race, and the termination of the existence of mankind on this planet!" added Skimpole, with a beaming smile.

Manners grinned.

He was not, as a matter of fact, particularly keen on the termination of the existence of mankind on the planet. But he did not think that that was likely to be the catastrophic result of Skimmy's experiment. Science might be making giant strides in that direction, as Skimmy happily believed: but such gorgeous results were not likely to be achieved in Skimmy's study at St. Jim's. So far, at all events, Skimmy's experiments seemed to have produced nothing but accumulations of ghastly smells.

Skimpole was standing at the study table, with a glass retort in his bony hand, half-filled with some fluid. On the table were several sheets covered with algebraic symbols, of which Skimmy perhaps knew the meaning. They looked rather as if a spider had dipped itself in the ink and then crawled over the paper.

"Do you know what would happen, my dear Manners, if I should drop this retort?" went on the cheery Skimmy.

"I expect it would break," answered Manners.

"Undoubtedly, Manners! But that is not all," smiled Skimpole. "It would blow the whole House up in the air like a rocket."

"I don't think," said Manners.

"Of course, this chemical explosive is at present on a very small scale," explained Skimpole. "Developed on more extensive lines, it will possess sufficient power to extinguish a city the size of London, at the simple pressure of a button. But the minute quantity I have so far succeeded in producing would do no more than scatter the remnants of this school over the county of Sussex."

"Perhaps not even quite so much!" grinned Manners. "Look here, you ass, never mind that rot! Here's your photograph."

He held it out and Skimpole blinked at it.

"Oh! I have no time to bother about that now, Manners. If you would care to watch my experiment—"

"I wouldn't!" said Manners. "Here's your snap-shot, and you can do as you like with it."

He tossed the print on top of the algebraic sheets on the table. Skimpole hardly glanced at it.

"Oh, thanks," he said. "When I have time, I shall send it to the *Rylcombe Gazette* for the photographic competition—but at the moment, I have far more important matters on my mind. The fluid in this retort—"

"Bow-wow!" said Manners, and he turned to leave the study. He almost ran into Tom Merry and Monty Lowther in the doorway.

"Manners, old man—!" said Tom.

"That print, old chap—!" said Lowther.

"Feeling deeply concerned about Knox?" asked Manners, sarcastically. "No good talking to me—that print's Skimpole's, and there it is. You can talk to Skimmy if you like."

"Skimmy, old bean—!" began Tom.

"Please do not interrupt me now, my dear Merry! I am exceedingly busy," said Skimpole. "As I have mentioned to Manners, the fate of the entire human race depends on the experiment I am now conducting."

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom.

"If I should drop this retort—!" said Skimpole. "OH!" Skimmy had a way of dropping things. The retort slipped from his bony fingers as he was speaking! "Oh! Run! Run for your lives! Oh—!"

Crack!

The retort dropped on the algebraic papers on the table. It cracked as it fell on them. The fluid it contained ran out in streams.

Skimpole, whose faith in his own scientific experiments was

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quite touching, stood with blanched face, expecting something in the nature of the crack of doom.

But there was no crack of doom! The ancient establishment of St. Jim's did not dissolve into space. Nothing happened, except that the retort was smashed in pieces, and the chemical it contained swamped the papers and the photographic print that lay on them, and a ghastly smell permeated the study.

Skimpole blinked.

"Dear me!" he said. "Is it possible, after all, that there was some error in my calculations?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Please do not laugh, my dear fellows," said Skimpole. "This is a most disappointing result of my experiment. According to my theory, the explosive force in that retort should have been sufficient to hurl the whole House to the sky. Yet it has not happened."

"Not quite!" grinned Monty Lowther. "I'm sure that we should have noticed it, if it had!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a dreadful disappointment!" sighed Skimpole. "I shall have to make the whole experiment over again, and detect the point where some error may have crept in! Oh, dear! All my papers are spoiled! The chemical has made them quite indecipherable! I shall have to work them out all over again! The path of scientific investigation is a thorny one, my dear fellows."

"Oh, crumbs!" exclaimed Lowther. "Look at the photograph!"

Tom Merry laughed.

The photographic print had suffered the same fate as Skimmy's algebra. It was completely obliterated by the swamping chemical fluid. Skimmy's snapshot was not likely to bag the prize in the *Rylcombe Gazette* competition now! It was the end of Skimmy's snap.

"That's that!" remarked Tom.

Manners shrugged his shoulders. Perhaps he was not wholly sorry that the snap had ceased to exist.

"Dear me!" said Skimpole, blinking at the obliterated photograph. "That is very unfortunate. I had hoped to secure the three guinea prize, to replace the apparatus I have lost. However, there is still time—no doubt you will lend me your camera to-morrow, my dear Manners—"

"Just a spot of doubt, I think," answered Manners. "Let me catch you anywhere near my camera."

"But, my dear Manners—"

"Fathead!"

The Terrible Three, grinning, left the study, leaving Skimpole blinking mournfully at the wreck on his table. Really it seemed quite a deep disappointment to Skimmy, that St. Jim's had not, after all, been blown sky high!

"Where are you going, Tom?" asked Manners, in the passage, as Tom Merry headed for the stairs.

"I'm going to see Knox—"

"Taking him that negative?"

"Yes."

"Oh, all right! I expect we shall hear from him, when he knows he's safe," said Manners. "I don't care, if you don't."

"I don't!" answered Tom.

And he cut down the stairs, and a minute or two later tapped at Knox's study door in the Sixth. Knox gave him a scowl as he entered.

"What do you want?" he snapped.

"Nothing," answered Tom, cheerfully.

"Then what—?"

Tom threw the negative on the table. Knox stared at it. Then, realising what it was, he clutched it up.

"That's the negative of the snap-shot Skimpole took at the Green Man the other day, Knox, said Tom, quietly. "You'd better burn it. There are no prints of it now, and nothing more for you to worry about."

With that, and without waiting for an answer, Tom Merry walked out of the study, leaving Gerald Knox staring after him blankly.

"**TWOT** in, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, beaming.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther trotted in.

A feast was on in Study No. 6 in the Fourth.

It was a week later. During that week, Study No. 6 had not

recovered from its stony state—till now! Now it was like a land flowing with milk and honey!

There were guests already in the study when the Terrible Three arrived. Talbot of the Shell was there, and Levison and Clive and Cardew of the Fourth. Blake and Herries and Dig were busy setting out good things on the table. All faces were bright and cheerful—Tom Merry and Co.'s as cheerful as any. They had not "heard from Knox," as Manners had rather doubted that they would when he found himself safe after all. Perhaps in Knox's suspicious mind lingered some misgiving that another print of Skimpole's snap-shot might yet be in existence! Anyhow, he steered clear of the Terrible Three: and they were only too glad to steer clear of him. On the present festive occasion, they had quite dismissed Knox from mind, and in fact forgotten that the dingy fellow existed at all.

"It's goin' to be wathah a spwead, you fellows," said Arthur Augustus. "We have been wathah up against it lately: but it's all wight now."

"Right as rain!" said Blake.

"Beats me how Gussy got that prize, all the same," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"You don't know the first thing about photography, Gussy," said Dig.

"Weally, Dig—"

"Beats me hollow!" said Blake. "But there it was, in the *Rylcombe Gazette*—first prize to Gussy, and he's got the three guineas—"

"Jolly good luck!" said Tom Merry.

"Toppin!" agreed Lowther.

"Sowwy I beat you, Mannahs, but somebody had to bag the first pwise, you know," said Arthur Augustus, consolingly.

"O.K.," said Manners. "I saw it in the paper, and it was jolly good! How the thump did you manage it, Gussy?"

"The fact is, deah boy, that it was vewy easy," explained Arthur Augustus. "There's not much difficulty in takin' a good photograph—for a bwainy chap, I mean. I just did it! Cardew vewy kindly lent me his camewah, and I just did it! That is weally all there was about it!"

Manners glanced at Cardew. He was puzzled, as all Arthur Augustus's friends were puzzled, by the unexpected and surprising fact that Gussy had gained first prize in the *Rylcombe Gazette* competition. Cardew could have explained—but Cardew's face expressed nothing.

"Beats me," repeated Blake. "You see, it was Gussy's idea to go in for it, and bag the three guineas, because the study was stony. Fancy Gussy having an idea that worked!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"But it did work, it seems," said Tom Merry. "Gratters, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah, it worked all wight!" said Arthur Augustus. "The pwize came along to-day, and now we are wollin' in it! Tuck in, you fellows."

And they tucked in!

THE END

REMEMBER TOM MERRY ?

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